

**CIHM  
Microfiche  
Series  
(Monographs)**

**ICMH  
Collection de  
microfiches  
(monographies)**



**Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques**

**© 1998**

## Technical and Bibliographic Notes / Notes techniques et bibliographiques

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

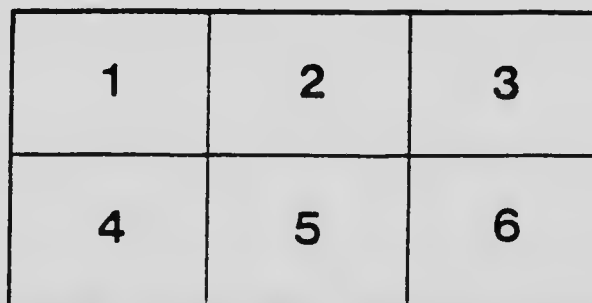
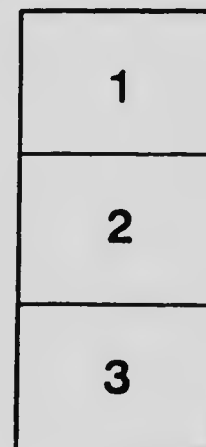
National Library of Canada

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

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

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol  $\rightarrow$  (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol  $\nabla$  (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

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



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

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

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

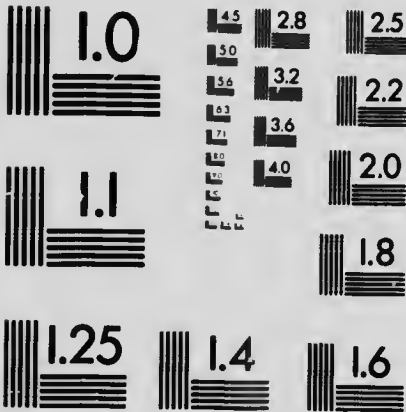
Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés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

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

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

# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



**APPLIED IMAGE Inc**

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



THE MISTRESS OF KINGDOMS  
OR  
SMOKING FLAX

"Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called The Mistress of Kingdoms. . . . Now therefore hear this, . . . thou that sittest securely, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and there is none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: but these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day."—ISAIAH xlvii. 5-9.

THE MISTRESS OF  
KINGDOMS

. OR

SMOKING FLAX

A NOVEL

BY

BRIDGET MACLAGAN

TORONTO  
BELL AND COCKBURN

1913



PS8425

L34

M57

1913

\*\*\*

*All rights reserved*

*Printed in Great Britain by Billing & Sons, Ltd., Guildford*

# CONTENTS

## PART I

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE DESERT OF DECEASEMENT - - -	I
II. A GAMBLE ON GOD - - -	11
III. CHILDREN OF WISDOM - - -	21
IV. THE GARMENT OF A CHILD - - -	32
V. ANN'S POINT OF VIEW - - -	48
VI. THE SERPENT'S TOOTH - - -	59
VII. BREAD AND BUTTER AND ROSES - - -	68
VIII. WITHERING LEAVES - - -	81
IX. GRANDFATHER CRAIG'S PORTRAIT - - -	90
X. ANOTHER DAY - - -	104

## PART II

I. BY THE CALCUTTA MAIL - - -	113
II. IN A MISSION BUNGALOW - - -	124
III. THE FAKIR PADRE - - -	134
IV. AN ANTICHRIST IN THE JUNGLE - - -	147
V. A CHRIST IN THE BAZAAR - - -	156
VI. A LITTLE GREEN MEASURING-WORM - - -	171
VII. ABOUT A POLE, AND A PEARL, AND A PAIR OF GREEN SHOES - - -	183
VIII. A PATH CLIMBING UPWARD - - -	191

CHAPTER	PAGE
IX. THE JOURNEY - - - - -	204
X. LITTLE BATTLINGS IN EXILE - - - - -	210
XI DEFEAT - - - - -	220

## PART III

I. A CITY AFFORDING NO HABITATION - - - - -	231
II. A PORTRAIT OF ONESELF - - - - -	244
III. THE ANTICIPATION - - - - -	253
IV. THE REALIZATION - - - - -	263
V. ONE OF SCHUMANN'S SONGS - - - - -	267
VI. EVENING AT CRAIG MANOR - - - - -	278
VII. MORNING - - - - -	289
VIII. THE WAY OF FEAR - - - - -	294
IX. THE DEATH OF ONE'S CHILD - - - - -	303
X. A JOURNEY'S END - - - - -	313

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### THE DESERT OF BEREAVEMENT

It was the blank emptiness of her heart that baffled and distressed her. She had expected the intruding of a rich tumultuous grief; and she was experiencing nothing of the kind. On the journey, after the little pricking shock of the telegram, she had enjoyed quite a real, anticipatory pain; now, face to face with the dead body of her father, the last puff of her emotion collapsed like wind in a punctured balloon. Lying sleepless while the train rushed through the dark, she had worked herself into a fine frenzy, a frenzy that had produced some rather good verse. The lines had sung from her brain with intoxicating ease, rhythmized to the engine's pounding roar; while she rolled from side to side in her berth, staring in an ecstatic vision at the heavy curtains closing her into her jolting solitude.

In the morning she had scribbled the poem down on paper, wondering lackadaisically how it had ever come into being, and had then spent some hours alternately stuffing her brain with magazine stories and picturing complacently to herself what it would mean to be mistress of her own fortune. The tragic aspect of her inheritance had become distractingly tinged with the colours of many picturesque possibilities. She beheld herself an heiress, and a beauty, the cynosure of admiring, covetous eyes; she stared into the mirror opposite her with excited scrutiny, gambling in

imagination on the potency of that face of hers. By this time she had lunched. She had been positively shivery with excitement ; and then she had collapsed in deep, overwhelming disgust with the sordid trend of her thoughts. Finally, she had expected the flame of a real anguish to burn up all such rubbish when she came full upon the actual tragic fact. She knelt by the dead body, and waited for the purifying fire to touch her.

She waited in vain. What sensations visited her worn nerve-organism were akin to pleasure, not to agony. The strange quiet of the death-chamber was a rest to her jaded senses, the stark finality of the death-bed a relief to her restlessly meandering brain. Immanent mystery was about her, a sea in which she could float, passive. And for a while she floated, hoping that in this awfulness she might lose her tiresome self ; but she could not, and presently she began again to analyze her feelings, and, again shocked by their cold-bloodedness, she told herself in frightened reiteration that, in spite of all her past obstinacy and her present heartless imagining, she had loved her father. She had long balanced against the unnaturalness of her youth her quite normal and humble love for him ; and now she became conscious of a growing terror lest the comfort of this guarantee be taken from her. Was she not capable of grieving over his death ? . . . She threw her arms across the bed in an agony of self-searching.

Poor child—he had quieted and steadied her so many times—he was dead now.

Everything had seemed so natural to Barbara Witherow when she first reached home that she had not realized the imminent tragedy. She had been so tired that she had forgotten the delirious dreams of the journey in the soothing, familiar facts of arrival. Her brother had been at the station ; as uncommunica-

tive as ever, his face only a shade more intensely self-compressed than usual. During the drive to the house they had said nothing; she had been content to enjoy the physical luxury of it all, in a hiatus of thought. The controlled movement of the motor-brougham as it glided swiftly through the wet night streets, the smell of the leather cushions, the trim outline of the chauffeur's coat outside the rain-streaked glass, had all suggested pleasantly that she belonged to a world of sheltered comforts and refined pleasures. Even when her brother opened the front-door with his latch-key, and let her into a wide, dim silence, the tragedy of the upper chamber held aloof while the familiar beauty of the house came forward to caress her. She had laid aside her furs with the usual feeling of rest in the grave embrace of the hall, had stood awhile, lingering on the darkly gleaming oak, on the rich shadows of the olive-toned hangings, on the frail high-lights of the many etchings. It was so like him, so grave, so choice, so spacious, and so subdued, that it always steadied her, and it assured her again that all was well with him. Then she had gone up the wide, shining stairs slowly, dreamily—and a nurse in uniform had passed by the stair head.

A peculiar odour of drugs and disinfectants choked her suddenly as she opened the door of his room. She remembered his room as a place of lamplight, and tobacco smoke, and deep chairs, a place where she always came after an evening party, to find him waiting for her, smoking, a book in his hand; but the room was no longer his room, it was suddenly something quite different, a chamber of death, a place where life had ended, and where science had failed, a place of mystery, of triumphant enigma. The gas was turned low, and on the bed was something rigid and terrible.

Her mother's face had put the seal upon the dreadful

reality ; and with the sealing of that seal all her own self-conjured and self-deluding sensations had congealed into the blank, insensible fact of bereavement. Her mother knelt now on the other side of the bed, in a white flannel wrapper. The light of the low gas-jet showed her face, illumined to a transforming radiance.

Barbara's father was dead, and her mother was translated with him to heaven. She gazed at her mother, fascinated. And gazing, she began to traverse the course of her childhood, and to blame her for many things. Her feeling swelled into anger, sullen, self-condemning. She stared across the stiff line of his crossed arms, aghast at the meaning the situation had for her. Her mother had begun to pray half aloud. Between them lay the body. It separated them.

How had it all come about, this estrangement from her mother, this process of deceiving her parents, this consistent plan of disobedience, this complete, isolated life of hers, developing so unknown to them ? Some terrible influence had been at work in that household. Beneath the mild and mellow beauty of its conduct, forces had been battling for power there. It had begun when her mother was converted, or, at least, her consciousness of it had begun then. She had one memory of her mother as she was before the change—the memory of a glowing woman seated before the lights of the dressing-table in a shimmering coral pink gown, a million jewels glimmering in her hair, her eyes, and on her white arms. But after the coming of that thing—"the Conviction of Sin"—there had been no more jewel-mothers. There had been instead a wan, white-faced woman, who spent much time in a closet on her knees, and wept terribly over her sins and the sins of those she loved. She had grown aware of all this gradually ; and gradually she had drawn away from the fiercely wistful, suffering woman ; for she had been afraid. There seemed to be a weird

presence over the house, like a nightmare, and through the nightmare haggard men in black coats came and went, with Bibles in their hands. Finally, one day her mother had sent her down to one of them, down to the library, where the praying people spent so many hours behind closed doors. She always felt that that was the crisis between her mother and herself. She remembered turning quite sick, and hanging over the banisters because her knees were wobbly. And yet there had been no struggle, it had not occurred to her to explain how she felt, and beg to be let off. Even then, she had judged instinctively that her mother was too religious to understand, and as she went slowly downstairs, sliding her weight reluctantly along the balustrade, she had begun to feel very far away, and very, very lonely. She had sat for an hour in silence, while the clergyman laboured to reach and move her stubborn little soul, and she kept saying to herself that she loved, loved, loved the world, and that her mother could never understand now, never. She had been about ten years old then, with sleepy, grey-green eyes, two blonde pig-tails, and a sullen mouth.

After this she had begun to be very naughty: at first just blindly naughty, but soon she had settled into a consistent habit of disobedience. She had reasoned this plan out quite simply. Her mother wanted her to be, above everything else, a Christian, and she was determined to be a beautiful, clever woman; every experience her mother desired for her was to help her to be unworldly; every experience she desired for herself was to help her to know the world; therefore, she need do nothing her mother wanted, if she could avoid it without being found out. If possible, she was to keep her mother in ignorance of her disobedience. It would be easier to follow out one's plan secretly. She must consult no one, must train herself. She had settled into the task seriously.



The great thing was always to avoid a scene. Her distrust of emotionalism and her distaste for such display had amounted to horror, and out of this horror she had evolved a sullen self-control that was completely baffling to her family. She could stand in the middle of the room during a domestic storm, shoulders drooping forward, eyes half-closed in a travesty of superciliousness, perfectly quiet and unrepentant, apparently quite unmoved by her mother's anger, or her mother's tears, or her mother's heart-broken prayer. The truth was that such a display, while it seemed to her reason grotesquely out of proportion to the insignificance of her offence, nevertheless affected her so terribly that she had to set her mouth in ugly defiance to keep from hysteria. Her imagination, that had turned upon herself so early, had revealed to her that she was a passionate person, and she was conscious enough of a tempting throb in her blood, that somehow she knew was not chaste, to desire fiercely the protection of self-control. Her great dread was lest she become, like her mother, the victim of fruitless emotion.

The strangest thing about it all was that she managed to be at the same time her mother's most refractory child and her father's darling daughter. She came to attribute this to the peculiar difference in her parents, and to a certain cosmic arrangement of families that gave fathers the freedom to love their daughters indiscriminately. Sometimes, of late, she had felt, on looking back, that if her father had only noticed the crooked, morbid trend of her childhood, she might have been saved; but for the most part she was grateful that he had loved her so unquestioningly, with such large trustfulness. And as long as he was there beside her she had been careful not to hurt him. It was when she went to a boarding-school that the real trouble began. She only saw him once in three

months, and the steadying influence of his personality was all but gone. If there had been any immediate danger of causing him pain, as there was when she did wild things at home, she would have stopped; but in New York she was so far away she couldn't be as disobedient as she liked, and he would never suffer. And yet—she had hurt him at the last, hurt him terribly. Someone had seen her at a play—a play her mother regarded as the mocking blasphemy of the very devil himself—had seen her there one night with two men, and had written home about it. Her father and mother had come East at once. He had taken her in his arms, and had sobbed over her, and she had thrown herself upon him in an agony, because she had felt it was too late. She had discovered, with something akin to terror, that she cared more for this new life of hers than for him. She couldn't hurt him any more now.

Barbara took off her hat slowly, and laid it on the floor beside her. There was her brother sitting there, too, his lips compressed, his head bent down, his hands placed together, finger-tips on finger-tips. He was suffering. . . . To-morrow they would dress her in black; black was not becoming to her—to-morrow, too, there would be a funeral! She quivered and stretched her arms out desperately across the bed. Why was it that her mother and her brother were sharing an experience that she could not share? She had loved him as well as they—more—more—

Her brother stared at the floor, then at the bed, then at the rain-streaked window, beyond which was the night and the wind. A terrible effort of self-control had obliterated all expression from his face. He had always been harsh with her, intolerant of her friends, condemnatory. He was narrow, a snob; and yet he was dear, somehow, and he wrung her heart. To look at him now so terribly dumb, to know him so clever,

and so obstinate, and so helpless ; to realize that he must suffer terribly, and never understand, and never be able to express his suffering, all this made him infinitely pathetic. And all the time he was miles beyond her, for he was feeling this thing.

He got up and stretched his arms above his head, yawning dreadfully, abstractedly, then moved towards the door. She pulled him down beside her as he passed by the foot of the bed. He eyed her in a frightened, half-angry, half-appealing way.

" I'm going to bed ! " he growled in an undertone.

" Did you love him ? " she asked in a sudden whisper.

For a moment he looked at her in blank surprise, then his face crimsoned suddenly, and twisted, and an inarticulate, outraged agony stood in his eyes.

" Don't be an ass, Sis," he growled, turning from her.

" I loved him, but I loved myself more," she brought out desperately to his back, but he went out without turning. She watched him go, and casting a glance at her mother, who had noticed nothing of this, drifted into a rapture of thought.

No more sneaking after knowledge. She had been finding out on the sly ever since she had read forbidden books at night, standing under the gas-jet in the hall upstairs, barefoot, in her nightgown, ready to fly to bed at the sound of a step on the stairs. The world lay before her, and she was consumed with curiosity, and her father was dead. The rest of her family represented just a blind force, to be resisted as cleverly as possible, and with as little trouble.

What appalled her about her family was that they had no curiosity. Her brother went at life like a goat with its horns down. He would never see. He would miss it ; that something, infinitely precious and wonderful, just there beyond the window. Not one out of a thousand found it, because they were afraid and combative. Her mother was afraid of original

sin. Her brother was afraid of women. Her father, even he—had been afraid of his own mind. To expose oneself—to let it come—to strip oneself to meet life—that was glorious!

And yet—her mother's face! Those terrible lines drawn on it as though with a white-hot pencil. The supreme, unconscious mystery of that face—

The girl knelt, shivering. With a sense of nightmare, she rose from her knees. She had spent some hours by his dead body. Not in mourning, how could she call it mourning? She had spent it in congratulating herself on his death. She must be going mad. Her mother was stroking her father's lifeless hand now, and crooning softly to him, as though he were a sleeping child. Probably she was going mad too. She did not notice her daughter creep out of the room.

In a bedroom at the end of the hall a straight slip of a woman was waiting. She turned to the girl a brave, sorrow-scarred face. Her level blue eyes held an intense tenderness, and she stretched out to the girl two thin arms that trembled with compassion.

"Oh, Bobbie!" she burst out in a fiercely suppressed undertone. "Oh, Bobbie!"

Barbara faced her from a distance.

"Ann! I don't feel one thing—not one thing."

Ann Craig's face quivered. She looked at her sister's child, and her sweet, strong mouth twisted painfully.

"My poor child!" she breathed, tears standing in her clear eyes.

"Mother is sure that he is in heaven," said Barbara, throwing herself on the bed and staring at the ceiling. "So are you, so is Wilhelmina"—and she looked at the maid, who, coming in at this moment, dropped on her knees and began pulling off her mistress's shoes.

Wilhelmina's nose was red and her eyes swollen ; she bent a silent, meek head, wound with smooth, shining braids, above the cold feet, and began rubbing them gently, sniffing the while.

" You are all happy and satisfied about eternity," went on the girl, " and so you can cry peacefully, but I tell you"—and she sat up again, suddenly jerking her feet away from the servant—" I tell you I don't feel peaceful and sad a bit ; I feel perfectly terrible. I feel glad he's gone, and left me a fortune and my freedom ; and I feel like a criminal because I am glad, and I feel like—like—— Oh, what do I feel like ? I don't know ; but it's all perfectly ghastly, and I wish to God the funeral was over. No, Ann, don't touch me—go—go—leave me alone—alone. Oh, I want to be alone."

In that other room a woman's exaltation had given way. Her face was twisted and gouged with weeping.

" Didn't you know that I loved you ?" she was moaning to his dead face. " Didn't you know ?"

## CHAPTER II

### A GAMBLE ON GOD

THE idea of keeping her children at home after their father's death to help dispel the darkness that hung so impenetrably black just beyond the feverish light of the days that were crowded with the funeral arrangements and the settling of the estate, did not present itself seriously to Margaret Witherow. In the boy Gordon's case, indeed, the question was not a question at all. College claimed him, and his mother did not; and he signified his entire agreement with this state of things by one of those remote, awkward caresses that held so much more comfort for her than his sister's seemingly whole-hearted statement that of course she would stay. But if Margaret knew that her daughter's bright profession of willingness to sacrifice her young ambitions to her mother's need were all the brighter because the girl was certain the sacrifice would not be accepted, still, the mother hugged the sweetness of that brave offer to her heart, and found it easier, because of the unwavering eyes that waited for her answer, to send the child away with a smile.

It seemed to her that for the first time she was sacrificing herself to her children. There had been no room for sacrifice while he had been beside her. For one moment on that last morning, after she had signed with them innumerable documents under the careful forefinger of their lawyer, she almost screamed out to them that they must not leave her to that

darkness that was closing in, but she shut her lips and accompanied them to the door, her own erect and beautiful self, though even they, through the flurry of departure, noticed her whiteness. They kissed her timidly, the boy looking away, and the girl searching her face for the assurance she finally got from a smile, and then they bundled out into the motor. When they had gone she stood a moment staring at the closed door, then turned and crept up to her room, feeling her way, and whispering to her sister Ann and to the servant Wilhelmina, as they put her to bed, that the rooms were so big downstairs, and so dark, that she seemed to lose him there.

But the children invaded her darkened chamber and dragged her downstairs again when they came home for the Easter vacation. They caressed, and scolded, and laughed at her, a little brutally, perhaps, because they knew nothing of her Gethsemane; and she did not try to tell them of it, but, turning to them, doted on them recklessly.

It seemed to her that she had never realized, in all her yearning over them, how really nice they were. With a delicious sense of physical weakness she clung to them, feeling that her warfare was accomplished. The peerless sorrow had visited her, and she was free to enjoy what was left her. Nothing else could happen now, there was nothing else to happen.

Through her weakness she had changed. She could no longer spend hours on her knees in prayer, and somehow her mind failed to grasp with its old fervour the distressing spectacle of their worldliness. Even her sense of responsibility for them was gone. She told them that she was their responsibility now, told them this laughing a little, lest they think she was going to allow herself to be a burden to them. And she enjoyed most where she had agonized most. Her son had always been ordinarily fond of her, was

healthy, selfish, and affectionate in his clumsy way, promising well for manhood. It was Barbara who had threatened to escape her, and had been given back when she most needed a daughter; and it was Barbara for whom the mother thanked God at night, after she had called her back to her again and again to caress her in the dark.

And to Ann Craig, who, dumb with sympathy, had for years watched the two whom she loved best in the world hurting one another blindly, it seemed that a miracle had come to pass, and she accepted the fact eagerly, with the desperately cordial gladness with which she welcomed all the happiness of life. Because of her own widowhood she had been able to help Margaret, but now she longed to get home to Craig Valley, and to leave mother and daughter together. If only the child would stay!

Certainly Barbara seemed to have abandoned old horrors with no less completeness than her mother. Every morning at nine o'clock she trailed into the other's room in her dressing-gown, and breakfasted with her on the foot of her bed, looking so entrancing, and eating so voraciously, that Wilhelmina grew every day more pink with delight. And Barbara talked; sometimes of College, sometimes of her brother, oftenest of her Aunt Ann. Ann's attitude toward life, especially Ann's attitude toward God, was peculiar. Its peculiarity delighted Barbara. She attempted to elucidate the matter for her mother one morning between mouthfuls of hot buttered toast and coffee.

"You know Ann's more really truly religious about you than she is about God, or perhaps I mean just the opposite."

"Well, I'm sure I don't know what you mean either way," rejoined Mrs. Witherow from her pillows, half interested, half shocked.

"You're a kind of Divinity to Ann, you know."



"Dear child! Don't talk such nonsense."

"But you are. She has a sense of humour about God, but none about you. She bullies God, but she wouldn't dream of bullying you."

"Bullies God?"

"Yes. She prays something like this: 'Now, God, you've taken my husband, and my mother, and my brothers. You've knocked me down, and when I've scrambled to my feet you've knocked me down again. You've about killed my soul, so now you've just got to make me happy!' Can't you hear her? 'You've got to give me some fun before I die.'"

"My dear child, Ann worships God."

"Maybe she does—in a way—but she worships you *in the way*." Then, dreamily: "The question is, whether she worships you most really, because she has no sense of humour about you; or God, because she *has* a sense of humour about Him."

Barbara fixed her eyes on her mother solemnly, and Margaret laughed.

"You needn't laugh, mummy. It's not nonsense. If you go deeper, you find the idea is, whether or not one can worship a God who is not human enough to be credited with a sense of humour himself. I don't see how you can."

"Well, it sounds like nonsense to me."

"It's really not, though. It's philosophy, good fresh Pragmatism."

"Oh, well, it may be philosophy."

"Oh, mummy, you're incorrigible. All philosophy isn't nonsense."

"Am I? Isn't it?" Mrs Witherow pursed her mouth whimsically. "Pragmatism, what's that?"

"It's common-sense philosophy. I'll send you a book about it."

"It's no use, dearie."

"But I will, just the same."

It was at this point that Gordon came in, very correctly got up in a grey suit, with a black band on his left arm.

"Rats," he said, "let mother alone with that hot-air." He walked up to the bed and put his arm around Margaret's neck. "But look here, I want you to do something; I want you to come to commencement," he hesitated.

She looked up at him, trying to smile.

"And get some nice clothes?" she suggested.

"Yes, hang it—just because you're in mourning's no reason——"

She cut him off nervously. "I will, dear," she said, drawing him downward and kissing him.

Barbara flung at him over the banisters as she went up and he went down:

"You think I'm hard on her, but you're much worse." And, as usual, he did not answer.

And strangely enough the book on Pragmatism arrived simultaneously a month later with a milliner and a pyramid of bandboxes.

Margaret took the book and the letters from Wilhelmina, and seated herself before her dressing-table. The milliner proceeded to open the boxes. Diving into a mass of frothy tissue paper, she lifted out a very small, crisp head-dress of coarse black crape and stiff white tulle. A narrow pleated fold of crape hung down at the back. Mrs. Witherow compressed her lips tightly, and shook her head.

"Ah, but madame, it is very modest and very chic." The milliner placed the stiff creation gently, with an exquisite touch of her white fingers, on madame's head.

Mrs. Witherow looked at the reflection of this modish, aristocratic head of hers, and her eyes suddenly filled with tears, and her mouth twisted in an ugly way.

The milliner, who was very elegantly dressed in black satin, looked away with admirable tact.

"I can't, I can't!" gasped Margaret, before the looking-glass; and the tears rolled down her cheeks, and her face twisted more and more painfully.

Mrs. Craig, who had been sitting by the window on the other side of the pyramid of bandboxes, came over to her sister.

"It's for Gordon, you know," she said.

"Yes, you choose one, Ann, and I'll wear it. One he wouldn't be ashamed of, but not one of those terrible stylish things."

"Perhaps this would suit madame better," murmured the milliner, and Mrs. Witherow dried her eyes and proceeded to look at them all, and at the end of an hour, under the hypnotic influence of that svelt figure in black satin, had selected a widow's bonnet that was no widow's bonnet at all.

That same afternoon Ann found her in her boudoir lying on a sofa, her eyes closed, looking as though carved out of marble. The room had been devised to frame her. The ceiling above her head was painted in the similitude of a cloud-flaked sky. Pale blue tapestries between creamy white panellings made a cool casket for her pearly loveliness. It was the kind of picture her husband had delighted in. Ann gazed at it, wincing under the sense of its irony, for if Margaret were æsthetically in harmony with her surroundings, the harmony ended with the appearance of things.

Mrs. Witherow turned on her sofa with a little moan as her sister entered, and stretched out a beautiful limp hand, then dropped it. She was apparently terrified at her own impotency. Her eyes, framed in a network of fine lines, were childishly appealing.

"I have a letter from Barbara," she said, smiling a rather pathetic, not wholly sweet, smile, a mixture of wistfulness, and helplessness, and sarcasm. "She has sent me a book. She thinks it will open my eyes

to a world that I do not understand." Here she closed her eyes again, as though to shut out the terrifying suggestion of another world in addition to her present one. "She wants me to read it carefully," she went on, with pauses between her words, "with an open mind." "Imagine—— And I can't even read my Bible." She lay silent, her eyes closed.

"What is it?"

"Pragmatic Ethics."

"Oh!"

"What is Pragmatism?" said Margaret. She seemed struggling in an anxious curiosity that scarce wanted to be satisfied. "It's mixed up with all sorts of dreadful things, isn't it? Free love, and atheism, and the study of the nude."

"Not exactly."

"What is it, then?"

Ann crossed her knees, placed an elbow on either arm of her chair, and, interlacing her fingers under her chin, gazed thoughtfully at her sister. A tiny, tender smile touched her lips. Her face was intensely serious, almost tragic, not merely because she felt the situation to be a serious one, but because her face was habitually sad. It seemed to be sad in spite of her. Instead of expressing her, it expressed only the sum of her tragedy. It was as though her features found it impossible to lend themselves to the brave cheerfulness of her will. They were indelibly marred, her complexion dulled, her eyes curtained by discoloured lids. Her mouth alone expressed her youth, and in that frankly tragic face it was a surprisingly happy mouth, the mouth of a singularly sweet child, chaste and innocent.

"It's a religion for those who have no heart. As a religion it's no use, but, then, it's a method of thought too, and as that, it's quite sensible."

"Well, I don't think it's any good to me."

"No, dear one, I'm sure it's no good, at least, not just now."

"But what is it to Barbara, that's what I want to know?"

"Ah, that's something I know as little about as you, though I used to call myself a Pragmatist before I became a Christian. Since then I haven't thought much about it, but I believe Bobbie still compliments me with the title."

"Well—if you are one." Margaret breathed a sigh of relief. She would have liked to have left the matter there, and for a moment it seemed as though she were content, but presently her brow puckered, and her mind harped back upon her first thought.

"Must I read the book?"

"No, dear, certainly not."

"But Barbara wants me to understand, and I want to understand."

"You won't understand that way."

"No, I guess not." Her eyes filled with tears. Her face quivered. Suddenly she sat erect, pulling at the lacy folds of her gown, and breathing hard.

"Barbara says such terrible things in her letters," she brought out desperately.

Ann winced. She wished to listen to this confidence as little as the mother wished to impart it; but there was a kind of feverish demand for relief in the latter's tone that kept her silent.

"She says that she is not exactly out of sympathy with me, because she sees that there is something for me in religion, if there isn't for her. Just listen to this: 'Faith, in the Pragmatist's point of view, is a kind of gambling, a gamble on God.' I tell you, Ann, I don't know what to make of her; I don't know what's got into her. She was so sweet—and now—I haven't the faintest idea what she's talking about. It seems to me the child is mad. 'A gamble on God!'

What on earth is a gamble on God? It's nonsense, it's blasphemy—it's—it's terrifying."

"No, it's not, Margaret, it's just a phrase, a part of their lingo." Ann spoke soothingly, but her sister turned on her frantically.

"Then I don't know what you mean either. I've no brain to follow her or you, but God must hear me, He must save my child!" She fell back on her pillows.

"He will." Ann went on her knees beside the couch, touching the other's forehead tenderly.

A week later she was summoned from her writing-table by the maid Wilhelmina, white and worried. The poor woman was trembling visibly; her voice was lost in a pitiful breathlessness. Ann understood that Mrs. Witherow was in trouble.

She found Margaret standing in the centre of a wildly disordered room, dressed for the street. The bed had not been made, the bedclothes merely thrown back over the foot. On it were two open travelling-bags.

Margaret turned excitedly as Ann entered, opened her lips, and shut them again.

"What is it?" said Ann.

Margaret stared. She swayed slightly.

"It's a gamble on God," she brought out at last, with a weary smile. They gazed at one another.

"Where are you going?" asked Ann again.

"To my child." And then, with a great effort to speak sternly: "I know she is in danger. I feel it."

"What are you going to do?"

"Stop her."

"From what?"

"I don't know."

"No." They measured each other. Their wills clashed. Suddenly Margaret flung out her hands.

"Help me!" she gasped.

"I will go," said Ann, taking her in her arms, and Margaret burst in

Later, when she was in bed again, she explained that she had had another letter. Barbara wanted to take Alice Kavanagh abroad for the summer; she thought the trip might save her a breakdown. They proposed going alone, without a chaperon. There had been no mention of her mother's summer plans, and the tone of her letter had been terribly cold.

"Try and make her see that that won't do—without the chaperon. She will listen to you, Ann dear."

Ann winced.

"I will try," she said grimly.

"Barbara and you understand each other," said Margaret wistfully, turning on her pillows, and when Ann had darkened the room and left her, she murmured to herself: "She has forgotten me."

Wilhelmina, looking in to see if she wanted anything, was unobserved, so she went away again quietly, her large, simple face very sad.

Margaret lay alone in the dimness, staring at the ceiling.

"I don't gamble very well," she murmured to herself.

## CHAPTER III

### CHILDREN OF WISDOM

THE room was surcharged with a hot restlessness. Two personalities clashed in the incongruous details of its cramped furnishings. Lumbering piles of books were banked on the floor against the wall, were strewn under the piano, crowded the mantelpiece. Heavy, impassive heaps of knowledge, lacking somehow the dignity they would have had upon well-ordered shelves, they mustered themselves in dingy, confused battalions to combat the attempted æsthetic effect. Numerous cigar-ends in china saucers, and a large brass spittoon that occupied the hearth, scowled a contempt for the delicate hangings at the windows, for the pre-Raphaelite photographs against the pale grey wall-paper. In turn the incense of smouldering joss-sticks lifted a faint, insinuating protest against the prevalent odour of stale tobacco; and the warm uncertain light of many red candles, failing to effect tranquillity, still cast a mellow blur over the ugly, wearied secret.

It was one of those evenings when the Professor and Mrs. Martin Khun entertained a few of the students, or, to be more correct, when Mrs. Khun entertained, with the aid of sandwiches and coffee, while the Professor was present somewhere in a corner. He sat huddled up in his fat armchair, glimmering dully at the company, and over his head a portrait of himself glimmered from the wall, and a little behind him sat his friend Anthony Ladd, the author of the portrait.



It was remarkable that a man of such pudgy flesh could produce an impression of such power. He was of a small, heavy build, as squat and formless as a tree stump. His wide nose and mouth were punched in and pulled out roughly upon a round countenance, darkly sallow. Grey hair rose like the crest of a wave above the massive bluff of his forehead. Beneath the cliffs of his eyebrows his eyes smouldered distantly; blurred eyes, looking as though water had been poured over their fires. His voice, when he spoke, came in small, flat monotones that were somehow electric. Perhaps it was his extraordinary quiet that produced the effect of a mystery, for he seemed enveloped in a kind of opaque Orientalism. Like the Sphinx of Egypt, or like some bronze Buddha, he crouched immobile, looking into the candle-light. And he seemed capable of sitting there for an endless period, while the sands of unimportant times and seasons swept and sifted round him; but there were no white skies and sands to mass for him an appropriate background—instead, the crowded trivialities of a tiny room threatened to extinguish him. Only his friend Ladd, just as he had brought him to life upon canvas, seemed to touch him with a gleam of glory and romance.

Ladd sat upon the piano-stool, the toes of his shoes hooked about its standard, his head thrown back, and his arms stretched along the keyboard behind him; and there was something in the arrogant carelessness of his pose and in the mocking audacity of his glance that proclaimed him to be just what all the young women in the room wanted to become—a genius. He did not wear a velvet coat and a flowing necktie, his clothes were ordinary ready-made garments, but he carried about with him the artist's atmosphere of glamorous Bohemianism. Moreover, he was crude, unfinished, powerful. There was a nerve-fibre in the thin face and hands, and in the long loose body, that

suggested something splendid. His head, rather uncertainly poised on sloping shoulders, but held tensely, was of a peculiar wild brilliance. His hair, a dark red, rushed back dramatically from a high white forehead. His tawny eyes flashed upon the room with a kind of burning defiance, as though they scorned to dwell upon the mean, unlovely appearance of things; while his mouth, weak and sullen, belied the vision of his eyes, giving to the almost unreal beauty of his head just that touch of ugliness that made him a person.

From his perch upon the piano-stool he conversed with his hostess in a jerky, farcical manner, never once looking at her, but nodding his head half sideways in her direction every now and then. Nor did his hostess look at him. She stood at his elbow, leaning on the piano and gazing at her hands, which she worried incessantly.

One did not like Mrs. Khun any the better for being forced to pity her. She was a plain, angular woman, very voluble and very versatile, with very vigorous accomplishments. She painted, played the piano, conversed vigorously, making up in social expressiveness what her husband lacked. Her voice was harsh, and her children were ill-behaved. One could never remember five minutes after leaving her presence what she looked like, but one carried away from her house an impression of disorder, of discord, of unhappy pretence. One felt that she was continually posing for the part of a beautiful adventuress, and was sorry because she failed so completely to be anything but just colourless and trivial.

Her attitude towards her husband reminded one of a frightened, half-fascinated, half-exasperated insect buzzing about the impregnable head of an elephant. On this particular evening she had given the impression of being as happy as an insect could be, and somehow,

in spite of her spasmodic buzzings and flutterings, there prevailed an atmosphere of dreamy excitement.

The other occupants of the room were about a dozen young women, and upon all of these young women was a certain interesting and unhealthy stamp. They were strewn about in fantastic attitudes of exaggerated ease, and on their countenances were varying degrees of a common exaltation. There was nothing mannish about any of them, though one would at a glance have called them modern and strong-minded. They looked ardent and clever, but their radicalism seemed to express itself, not in a revolt against the limiting graces of their own sex, but in a certain defiant indulgence of their respective tastes which gave to each a startlingly expressive and awkward personality. They lived themselves out in the way they did their hair, in the cut of their clothes, and in the expressions they cultivated upon their foreheads. Their gestures were nervous; dramatic, and self-conscious by turns. Each one of them was acutely conscious, conscious of herself and of all her companions. They eyed each other intently, as though determined to discover something wonderful and new in the comrades they ate and studied and played and slept with day after day. And this extraordinary introspection spread itself over a vast tract of abstract questions, each one of which they managed, by some marvellous bit of imaginative egoism, to link up with some one or all of themselves. They talked ardently and constantly of sex, and marriage, and the national conscience, and the public feeling of school children, and always they talked of these things in relation to their own lives, for all of them were ambitious, and as a group they were going to be a power in the land.

Dr. Khun's pupils were in the habit of prostrating themselves before him. Young, ardent, worshipful, they threw themselves against the bruising silence of

his mind, and fell back, gloriously baffled, deliciously exhausted. He watched them, blinking.

Mrs. Khun leaned over the music-rack and laid a thin, ill-formed hand on Anthony Ladd's shoulder.

"Et donc, mon cher Antoine," she said in a very good accent, with exaggerated coaxing.

Turning towards her abruptly, he burst into a short, excited laugh, and the woman's insignificant features so near to his quivered, and seemed to shrivel into themselves with sudden timidity. He paid her no further attention, but adjusted himself to the piano with a fling of his long limbs. Then he sang.

He plunged from one melody into another. They were Scandinavian songs, grey, tumultuous Norse melodies. One heard sea-gulls screaming, seas breaking, and saw distant fires flaming through the cold and dark. The last was a ballad of wild, windy laughter. There was in it the splash of oars, the shouts of seamen leaping upon an alien beach, the triumphant rape of strange fair women, and all through it loud, windy laughter.

The singer rushed through the music, hurling discords and dissonance right and left, tearing his way through the web of technique, and getting to the heart of the melody somehow, triumphant. His voice opened the tiny confines of the room, and threw the occupants into a world of storms. Something leaped from him, something primitive and inarticulate finding a voice.

He finished with a tremendous chord, and whirled round. The occupants of the room swam in a perfect bath of emotion. A diminutive person was perched on the back of a sofa, her fuzzy head tilted back against the wall, her eyes closed, her irregular, piquant face sharpened in expectant feeling. A thin, Japanese-like creature drooped upon a low stool, her slender head resting languidly against the arm of a chair. Her long almond eyes stared at him with mocking mystery; she

smiled a low, wide smile, a smile of delicate, fantastic affectation. Mrs. Khun held her drab face propped in her hands; her small eyes endeavoured to express the unutterable. One of the candles on the mantelpiece, at the end of itself, spluttered, gasped, and went out. A cool little breeze billowed the window-shade into the room. The Professor looked as though he might be asleep, but presently something happened on his face, something that suggested a smile working far beneath the folds of flesh upon his masque.

"And the German Kaiser," said he, in his small, flat voice, "wouldn't give Rodin the medal, because he was so indecent."

Ladd snorted loud with laughter, his face tilted towards the ceiling, then jerked himself forward suddenly: "Gott im Himmel!"

The Professor rolled slightly in his chair. He seemed about to go on, but he only moistened his lips.

"What is indecency?" said a dark girl from a corner.

"Indecency is nakedness," said the Professor, after a pause. "The chief indecency is the casting of pearls before swine. To uncover something beautiful to a filthy gaze."

"Mein lieber Martin," cried Ladd, jumping to his feet, "what are you talking about? That's what we are all doing all the time. That's what we are here for. That's not indecency; that's religion."

The Professor turned on him heavily. "Jesus Christ on the cross," he said in his small, flat voice, "is the most indecent spectacle of the ages."

There was a slight rustle among the young women, not a murmur of dissent or approval, just a little flurry of interest, the intake of quickened breath, the changing of strained positions; then a cold, sweet voice came from the window recess.

"I think, Professor, that you mean sublime," it

said. There was a kind of pressure behind the words, the betrayal of youth and ardency and passionate heart compressed into their coldness that gave them potency. The silence in the room took on a different tinge.

"Bobbie couldn't let that pass," whispered Trixy Brown, the fuzzy creature on the sofa.

The Professor rolled his eyes slowly toward the window. His short fingers lay spread out on the arms of his chair, but over the immobility his flesh paced an undulation.

"What is sublime to you, Miss Witherow, may be indecent to me."

The suggestion of amusement in his voice gave it a thicker tone.

Barbara Witherow unfolded suddenly from the window-seat and came into the middle of the room, and for the moment that she stood there, looking at the Professor and saying nothing, her friends seemed to be affected in a painful way. They looked away and at each other furtively, as though the sight of her awkward innocence were indeed somehow indecent. Suddenly she became conscious of her exposure, and the acute disgust and pain in her face was dissolved in a more painful blush. She moved quickly toward the door.

There was a movement of protest, of amused horror.

"Bobbie, dear, it was a joke," wailed Trixy from the sofa.

Barbara turned in the doorway, and in the gesture with which she included them all, challenged their embarrassment and her own.

"My dears," she said, "you know that on some subjects I have no sense of humour," and with a quite inconsequent heartiness she smiled and was gone.

Anthony Ladd strode over to Alice Kavanagh, the pale girl with the Japanese head.

"Who is the young King David?" he asked, planting himself before her.

"That's Bobbie." She looked up at him from under extravagant eyelids, extravagantly mysterious and drooping. He found a cigarette-case somewhere about him, and began searching nervously for matches.

"Is she one of you?"

"Yes— No."

"Splendidly fragile creature. Royal head!" He flung out a dramatic arm.

"She's an aristocrat."

"Does that exclude her?" His eyes swept the room intolerantly, presupposing the answer.

"Partly. She is, too, a puritan. Mother—a medieval religieuse—exquisite brittle woman. Father, an inarticulate gentleman of the old school—her idol—died two months ago."

"I see." He ruminated, mouthing his cigarette. "A native forehead. Strong hands. Well-knit body."

"But why King David?"

"Oh!" he wrinkled irritated brows, "young, imaginative, boyish, kingly—what more? 'And of a ruddy countenance, beautiful to look upon.' But not the shepherd. One catches the gleam of royal purple—you force me to babble."

"Well—paint her."

"Perhaps. If one could get that innocent hauteur." He hung over his *vis-à-vis* moodily. "Oh, perhaps." His abstraction shut her out ruthlessly, and she let him slip away, drooping a little more languidly, smiling just a little more introspectively.

Barbara flung herself on the grass in the dense shadow of a pine-tree. Across the campus gleamed the many lights of the library. Beyond, through a deeper starlit distance, was the Professor's house, whence she had fled. Now and then a group of students passed along a path, singing, but no one came near her, only the shrilling crickets, and the warm, moist, pulsating

night and the sweet-smelling earth ; these things were very near. She began to weep spasmodically ; now and then she tore the grass with straining fingers, and turned over on her back with little gasping twists like one in bodily pain. In the dark her face grimaced through streaming tears. " Father," she whispered, and every now and then, " Father."

She clung to the thought that she was weeping for him and because of him. She beat back the thought of the other one who had shaken her. It was the first time she had cried since her father's death, and she welcomed her tears fiercely as a sign that her affection for him was alive. She clutched it to her, this wild spirit of weeping, and made the most of it, fondling it, encouraging it, driving it on. When her sobs died away, she whispered to herself, " Father," and repeated the word, writhing on the wet ground until again a storm shook her. But all the time another spirit, a spirit of exultation, was clamouring for place in her heart.

It seemed to her that she had been there a long time when she realized suddenly that she was lying quite still in the grass, that her clothes were very wet, and that she was not weeping, but thinking, thinking. She sat up in the darkness, making a last weak effort to summon the forces of her weeping back to her, but not a tremor answered in her body. The instrument upon which she had been playing was worn out, and, as always happened when her body refused to respond further, her mind began to work very clearly.

She had come back to college in a comatose state, neither sorrowful nor glad, more dead than alive. Her class-mates had thought her marvellously self-controlled, admirably brave, whereas she had laboured to produce in herself one single pang of grief. She had recognized finally, discouraged over herself, that her father's death had failed to do what she had hoped. She was as deeply buried in the death-world of her own self as ever. Now



she was all at once alive. So be it. Let her exult and be glad. Something was singing within her, something sweet and terrible!

She rose stiffly and gathered up her wet draperies, shivering. A bell rang out from the library, and dark forms streamed down the steps. It was time to go in. She walked towards the dormitory, conscious of nothing save the wild sweet singing in her heart. A miracle had come to pass. Her room-mates were in their little study as she entered. Alice, wrapped in a lavender, cotton-crape kimono, was stirring a pan of cocoa over the Welsbach lamp. An open tin box, a can of condensed milk, and three cups were set out on the table among books and papers. Trixy lay along the window seat on propped elbows, her dainty little heels in the air, reading Nietzsche. They said nothing, scarcely looked at Barbara, as she passed into her bedroom.

Her bedroom measured nine feet by six, and held one hospital bed, one chest of drawers with mirror, one washstand, and one chair. The walls were white-washed, the woodwork was a cheap varnished pine. Over the bed hung a photograph of her father in a black frame. A laundry bag bulged from the door. The wash-basin was half full of soapy water; a dozen or more pairs of shoes lay in a heap on the floor; the dresser was strewn with hair-brushes, hair-pins, bottles, powder-boxes, letters, faded flowers, fountain-pens, and tennis-balls.

Barbara was very excited. She sat down on the bed, and began pulling off her wet stockings with a delicious sense of a world rich and wonderful lying beyond these unimportant details. Wrapping a white silk *négligé* about her, she took up a hand-glass and studied her profile.

"Bobbie," said Alice in the next room, "cocoa's ready."

Barbara dropped the mirror on the dresser, and gave one more look in the glass. Her eyes were mysterious under wild hair. The shape of her head was undoubtedly perfect. She went into the study, slipping lazily in her loose slippers.

Trixy held a pickle poised above her. She was lying on her back now, one foot tucked under her, the other dangling. Nietzsche lay open on the floor beside her.

"Blood, good hot red blood, spilled over every page, that's Nietzsche," she mumbled to the ceiling, her mouth full.

Alice handed Barbara a cup of cocoa, and watched her drink it with a queer, maternal, mocking wistfulness on her pale face.

"Well," she said.

Barbara put down her empty cup, and, getting up, threw an arm around the other's neck and kissed her, saying nothing.

"You kiss with the . . . of a child, Bobbie dear," drawled Trixy.

Silence, except for scratching pens.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GARMENT OF A CHILD

"Away! away!  
'Tis the month of May!"

BARBARA awoke, singing, and stretched deliciously in her little white bed.

"The blossoming boughs of the apple-trees  
Are tossed to the sky in rainbow spray  
To meet the clouds" . . .

She put one foot out of bed.

. . . "and the morning breeze."

She sat on the edge of the bed, curling her toes.

"Then let us away over meadows and hills.  
You can almost see them, the daffodils."

She flung on her kimono, and leaned far out of the window.

"You and I for the long bright day,  
Come, my sweetheart, let us away.  
'Tis the month of May!  
Away! away!"

She held out bare arms to the misty, shimmering world, and breathed deep of the wine of the air, then gathered her hands to her breast, quickly, lovingly, with a little trembling laugh, as though embracing the sweetness of it all. Oh, it was wonderful to be alive, and the May-world was sweet, sweet!

The morning was young and fragrant as a child's

kiss. The sun had not yet drawn away the glistening coverlet of dew from the daisy-starred fields. Upon the sturdy-breasted meadows, the massive grey stone buildings of the college stood, serenely dignified. Across a shining distance, a row of giant pines lifted aged arms to the virgin bosom of the sky.

A bell clanged through the dormitory. Doors banged. Slipped feet flew down the corridor. Water pounded, splashing, gurgling, into bath-tubs. The college was awake.

Barbara did not mind. She gathered up bath-towel, soap, and sponge joyously. She was glad that one was obliged to bathe and brush one's teeth in Heaven. It was particularly nice to think of one's lover while one was brushing one's teeth, or combing one's hair, or doing any little homely, everyday thing; it brought one's Heaven and one's world so blessedly near together. On her way to her bath she found in the study on her desk a slender sheaf of yellow jonquils and a note.

"Dear," said the note, "I am waiting for you at the edge of the golden field that creeps to your window. All the world is golden to-day. Come to me through the surlight—for I love you. That one-eyed, grim-visaged person, the janitor, will take this sweet spring thing to your door. It is so like you that I rebel against his touching it. Your lover."

Barbara smiled mistily. It was a month now since Anthony Ladd had walked to meet her in the "Glen," down behind the college hill, and had taken her in his arms. She touched the flowers with tender wistful fingers; she was very happy.

"Beautiful Bobbie, whither away?" Alice emerged from her room kimonoed, and towelled, and yawning. Her ivory skin shone very pale between the black masses of her hair. She seemed particularly anæmic and listless. Barbara pitied her from the height of her own superb mood.

"I am off for the day with Tony." Her voice exulted openly.

Alice drooped before her, staring half amusedly through languid, enigmatic eyelids.

"Superb child—be careful."

"Of what?"

"He may hurt you."

"He often does, but that doesn't matter."

The other hesitated, seemed about to speak, but instead smiled that slow, brilliant smile of hers. Then, after a pause :

"No—after all—that doesn't matter." She tilted her head to one side, scrutinizing Barbara, delighting in her wistfully.

"Why shouldn't he adore you?" she murmured.

Barbara chuckled, and threw a strong arm across the other's thin shoulder. They slipped down the corridor together. Half an hour later Alice watched her wing her way across the meadow like a bird.

"What wonderful babes they are," she said to herself. "What vitality." She sighed, winding long braids about her head. "The courage to find out——" She left the phrase on another sigh.

Barbara found her lover waiting by the little gate that opened through the hedge under the pines. He wore a light grey suit of cheap foreign cut; his head glowed a glorious red against the green of the woods; he stood in an attitude of painfully awkward, intense expectation. Now and then he jerked up his head and looked toward her, as she came across the golden meadow, then looked down again, or away in the opposite direction hurriedly, as though he could not bear the full sweet sight of her. The effort it cost him to master his emotion compressed his face sternly. His mouth was set sullenly, his eyes gleamed darkly under knitted brows; but when she at last stood before him, laughing with sunny, blinking eyes, his painful self-

consciousness melted suddenly in the radiant, sweet sense of her. He smiled joyously, tenderly; his look dwelt on her gently; he was scarcely conscious of touching her as she gave him both her hands. The sun drifting through the pine-boughs lingered on her hair, and crept along the firm round of her shoulders down among the billowing folds of her thin white dress. The yellow jonquils nodded at her waist. Her eyes trusted him utterly.

"My blessed!" He held her hands against him.

"My lover!" She laughed happily. He released her, and watched her slip through the gate, following her indeed with a lover's eyes.

They had breakfast on the veranda of the College Inn under its red-and-white-striped awning. A black waiter, with a shiny face cleft by a very wide grin, served them with strawberries, and coffee, and rolls, and eggs. Barbara ordered eggs because it was a fifteen-mile drive to Comfort's Farm, and broke his egg into a glass for him because he didn't know how, always having eaten them Continental style, and told him he mustn't stare at her so hard over his coffee cup, and laughed at the way he tucked his napkin into the top button of his coat, and he watched her adoringly. Then they clambered into a nondescript, spidery vehicle, with one hard shiny seat and four yellow wheels, drawn by a long grey spotted animal of many ribs, and started off down the road. The mare settled into a swift ungainly trot, the yellow wheels rattled merrily; the road, swerving through the village, led them on over green fields, between brambled hedges, toward faintly shimmering blue hills. Behind them the roofs and towers of the college appeared between clustering trees. Before them raced a glorious wind that ribboned and waved the high green wheat with flying shadows. Processions of daisies pirouetted by the roadside. Birds darted from wide shiny heights into the fresh

bosomed meadow. All the world danced and raced along with them through the windy sunlight. They were two children swinging in the wide sweet heart of the world.

All the morning they drove, racing down hillsides with a wild rattling of wheels, or sauntering lazily along level, sunny stretches of road, the reins hanging slack over the mare's gaunt back. Sometimes they talked, sometimes they stopped under an arching tree to read a verse from one of the volumes he had in his coat pocket. They called one another love-names with every sentence, and were unconscious of doing it. Often they were swept into the embrace of a great wave of emotion that locked them in one another's arms, and left them each time throbbing to a higher ecstasy. Where the road stepped through a pebbled stream, the old mare stopped to drink. High green hill-fields rose against the blue sky about this little hollow. The wind was still there. They turned to one another silently and kissed. The sunlight swam upon them. The gentle brook gurgled over its pebbles, and the old mare drank in long wheezing draughts. It was a perfectly natural thing to be in love.

Comfort's Farm belonged to Comfort Dean, a little Quaker lady with grey hair parted and drawn smoothly around a pink-checked, weather-beaten face. The farm-house was a grey frame building standing at a cross-roads behind gnarled apple-trees. There were benches under the apple-trees, and two red chair-swings where old ladies sat knitting, gently swaying back and forth. Everything was gentle, and sleepy, and rather stuffy at Comfort's Farm. Sometimes a wearied man strayed there from Wall Street, and tried to enjoy the chicken yard and the barns, and the close bedrooms over the kitchen, and often the college girls drove there to eat ravenously of Comfort's brown bread and fried chicken, and always there were old

ladies swinging and knitting and gossiping under the apple-trees. Comfort was unexpressive and peacefully kind to them all. She came out to greet Barbara with serene indifference, kissing her softly and coolly on both cheeks, and then disappeared into the kitchen, leaving them to sit in the orchard until dinner should be ready. A pale man, with trousers hitched high up under his arms, led away the mare to the barn. Two towheaded boys in blue overalls strolled by, zigzagging lazily from one side of the road to the other, kicking the stones in the dust with their strong bare toes. A dog was chasing birds on the hillside that rose opposite beyond a briar-covered stone wall. Barbara sank into a reverie. Anthony began to sketch an old lady knitting in the dappled shade of a sunny green distance.

She dwelt with exulting wonder upon the miracle of their passion, a miracle that humbled and at the same time exalted her with a glorious sense of her own divinity and of his. It was as eternal spirits that they had met and loved. As mere artist and student, she felt that they would never have known one another at all; the trivialities of their respective worlds, their prejudices and tastes, would have piled between them an unsurmountable barrier. Their temperaments were pitched in the peculiarly different keys that, combined, must have struck a dull discord if a miracle had not attuned them. And because of the very greatness of the miracle, she questioned nothing. She threw herself into his self with a reckless trust.

Having once taken the plunge, she believed that her passion had cleared grandly the barrier of his alarming exterior—her passion or his, it was all one. Not that her infatuation rendered her insensible to his harsh idiosyncrasies. She was more than ever a quivering thing, supersensitive to every cutting crudity of his, shorn and shivering to every harshly laughing wind of his mood; but her suffering was a source of inspiring



excitement to her. Her constantly astonishing experiences of mixed pain and delight gave her glorious opportunity for self-sacrifice. Having abandoned her mind to a belief in his divinity she proceeded with single-eyed fervency to worship every detail of that divinity, and she determined to tolerate in herself only those moods and those ideals which harmonized with his. Each prelude of discord was the signal for a ruthless attack upon herself. When he violated her taste now she followed his example fiercely, like a piano tuner strumming harshly on a rebellious key. She was determined to strip herself of all artificialities of breeding and upbringing that hampered her appreciation of his brilliant unconventionality.

He could have had only a faint idea of what it cost her, but he had made it comparatively easy for her. He had, in so far as he was conscious of her difficulty, been very kind to her mental fragility. He had been the poet lover, the God-youth, rather than the hungrily impassioned artist.

And she, in her turn, having never before been loved by a man who laid serious claim to genius, had only the dimmest idea of what he kept in the background for her youth's sake. If she glimpsed, sometimes, a dizzy abyss of experience beyond the limits of their present ecstasy, she only closed her eyes and clung to him, trusting. It was this trust of hers which humbled and quieted him.

Those who knew him better than she marvelled that he could be so simple with her and so frank; he had never paid them the same compliment. They had been pleased to call him the temperamental sybarite of European studios, and had made much of his hot, foreign charm. He had understood, and had fed them with the choicest of emotional dainties, had driven them up and down the whole gamut of artistically tempered sensation, had played delightfully to their

capricious femininity and now had forgotten them suddenly. Piqued, and amused, and puzzled, they mourned and marvelled by turns to see him succumbing to such a bread-and-butter love-affair. Mrs. Khun shrugged her shoulders mysteriously careless; Trixy stared at him very hard when she met him on his way to Barbara, and said impertinent things that he laughed at with new boyishness; and Alice held aloof, shadow-like, fearing for her adored Bobbie, generously envious, too, and interested in the peculiarity of the affair. They all agreed that it was extraordinary. Over Mrs. Khun's Japanese tea-cups they called it a miracle, wrought by the child's own complete charm, and agreed, too, that she was sufficiently charming to subdue any man for a while. They were willing to lend him to her for a little time, Mrs. Khun's bright little eyes seemed to say, and Trixy declared it a vastly entertaining episode. Only Alice was kindly silent, though she too thought it a passing storm.

If Barbara had agreed with them she would have given way in terror at once; it was nothing less than a belief in the eternity of their relationship that sustained her during these days.

She needed every drop of strength that lay for her in the invigorating draught of this belief. Sometimes she felt like a breathless, thirsty child panting up a steep path. She was determined to climb bravely, but she seemed pathetically hampered for the climbing. All her instincts and habits of thought, and girlish chastities, seemed chains to bind her. Perhaps the most galling chain, that which made it most difficult for her to follow his swift strides, was her maiden modesty. She was not only modest, she had been brought up to regard a woman's modesty as the one absolutely precious thing in her relations with the world. Her father had been a modest man, modest in mind, and taste, and habits, but that was not the kind of modesty

that worried her now. Modesty to her mother had meant a scrupulous care to hide the whole of one's physical nature from the eyes of men; it included a horror of *décolleté* gowns, an abhorrence of the theatre, a dread of the brutal intimacies of boarding-school life; and it had produced in Barbara an incredibly sensitive attitude toward her own body. She had suffered agonies at boarding-school, where one had no privacy, and had held aloof from the careless freedom of her college companions in a seclusion that they thought nun-like. Now the man whom she adored revealed a habit of looking at everyone as a more or less interesting study in anatomy, or as a partial revelation of the all-absorbing fact of physical beauty. It was as impossible for him to cease talking about the texture of people's skins, the curve of their thighs, and the swing of their legs, as to cease looking at her with that devouring gaze that made her hot and weak in the knees. He once had told her that it was a positive crime against art that all these perfect young creatures in college should wear stiff petticoats. He had taken her by both shoulders, and adjured her to promise him that she would never wear starched petticoats. Then at the expression of her face he had laughed, and assured her that he knew all about petticoats. His landlady in Paris had been a *blanchisseuse*. Petticoats were all right billowing on a line, but why in thunder need she or any other lovely person disguise the perfect proportions of their bodies under starched stuffs that hung like loose boards, and positively clattered about their ankles? That was not so bad, she had managed to laugh at that, but when he stopped one day on a walk through the woods, and put a hand on each of her breasts, feeling them tenderly but eagerly through the soft folds of her blouse, she had gone shrinking back from him like a wounded thing, and this time when he laughed at her she had turned

her back to hide a quivering face. But she never blamed him, never resented his ruthlessness; what resentment she felt was directed against herself and her upbringing. He would possess her completely some day. Some day she would be free from this sickening modesty. She justified him to herself fiercely.

Comfort's dinner-gong sounded somewhere around the corner of the kitchen, and the pale man with the hitched-up trousers appeared swinging it in a dogged, patient manner. The old lady under the apple-tree began to roll up her knitting. Comfort's rosy face peered for a moment from the vine-covered back porch, nodding a placid invitation.

"Ach Gott—yetzt frisst mann—and the only thing I have got on paper is the sunlight on the old lady's lace cap." Anthony held his sketch at arm's length, and squinted.

"It is charming, but you have been discovered."

The old lady was indeed bearing down on them. She was holding up her black dress with both hands, and peering at them, gently suspicious, from bright brown eyes. Her silver hair rippled softly under the lace cap. Her little wrinkled lips seemed inclined to smile. She was a sweet, perky old lady.

Anthony rose to his feet as she hesitated near them.

"I have taken a liberty," he said, holding out the sketch.

She seized it in both hands, dropping the folds of her black skirt and her flowered silk work-bag, and bending her head very close to the paper.

"Well, well, you don't say." She chirped softly.

"My old face! who'd a' thought I could be a picture! Well, well." She was very pleased. She smiled delightedly on the two young people, then back at the sketch, holding it a little away and tilting her head to one side.

"My daughter's an artist, too. She paints china.

She'd be so pleased——" Her voice lingered on the word. She looked wistfully at the picture, then handed it back reluctantly.

"I beg of you to keep it," said Anthony, with a fine bow that had not a trace of mockery in its elaborateness.

"Oh, oh! May I really now? Sarah'll be so pleased." Anthony had picked up her bag, and handed it to her now with another bow. She nodded quaintly, graciously.

"You have made an old woman very happy," she said with crisp dainty dignity, as she tripped away.

Anthony turned to Barbara with a frank, bright look.

"Nice little brown bird, isn't she?" he said.

Barbara doted on him, her face faintly flushed with pleasure.

"You are a dear boy, Tony." She hugged the sight of his boyish gallantry to her eagerly.

They went into the dim, low dining-room of the farmhouse, sat at a long white table strewn with small white dishes and large red-glass pitchers of milk, and ate ravenously. The old lady nodded brightly at them from a long distance of tablecloth, and whispered about them to her neighbours. Anthony drank four glasses of milk, handled his knife and fork strangely, and finally left them sprawling on either side of his plate; but Barbara did not care. She beamed upon such trifling offences maternally.

After dinner they climbed the hill across the road, scrambling up under the frontage of a regiment of oak-trees that marched across its back beside a tumble-down stone wall. On top the world was wide, and empty, and wonderful. To the west one had a view of newly-ploughed fields and of the white road winding on and on under flying gold-rimmed clouds. The wind passed over the tree-tops singing. They sat down in the shelter of the wall.

" Tony."

" Dear heart !"

" Here's a present for you. I wrote them this morning because I was so happy." She pulled a crumpled paper from her belt, where the jonquils still clung, broken and faded. He read the verses lying at full length on the grass, his head on his hand. Then he ran his fingers through his brilliant hair, and laughed joyously, and said that they were music, and that she was to sing and sing, and always to sing to him.

" But I shall never sing as you sing, Tony."

" No, thank God. You are to sing as a sweet bird flying among the trees there. You are just a bird, dear heart, or perhaps you are a straight green tree garded with early mists, or perhaps a slender sheaf of golden wheat still frosted with dew. Which are you, beloved? You are the music of the meadows on a cool morning, and you are the beauty of the early morning twilight. You are all of those sweet new Nature things, and you are mine, my unborn child, not yet alive to the world, not yet uncovered to the gaze of crowding men. What a delight it will be to discover you, sweet! What a joy it is to love you, child of my heart!" His eyes dwelt upon her ardently, his voice rose with the swelling tide of his passion.

She was sitting near him in the grass, leaning against the trunk of a tree. Her hair strayed back in windy masses over its bark; her eyes lingered on the far horizon. Beyond the limp folds of her crumpled dress her white feet were crossed comfortably. She was rather tired and rumped. All around them hung a vast solitude. He devoured her with burning eyes. She tried to stem the tide that she felt swelling about them from out of the stillness.

" What a dear wonder you are, Tony! A poet, and a musician, and a painter of portraits! Tell me, are you going to paint my portrait?"

"Some day, perhaps."

"When?"

"When I don't love you." She winced at the humour, but went on bravely:

"Do you never paint people you love?"

"No."

"But you painted that portrait of the Professor, and you are his dear friend."

"Liebes Mütterchen, not that kind of a friend! There's no mist of emotion between Martin and me that could blurr my vision. Besides, I didn't know him much then. That's why I did it so well. It was done several years ago, when he was in love with my wife."

She started piteously. He had not meant it as a stab, had forgotten that he had never told her, but, of course, she would know sometime. It might as well be now. To be sure, he might have done it more gently, but she was taking it well. He stared at her white face, and she turned to him squarely.

"I didn't know you were ever married." Her voice was perfectly steady and quiet. He did not answer the question he found in her level eyes; he was applauding her courage. It was so brave and sweet of her to turn full to him when he hurt her that he was filled with a generous compassion. He wanted to shield her a little longer. It would go hard with her, ardent child that she was.

"Will you always turn to me like that, dear, when I hurt you?"

"Yes."

How charming she was in this seriousness. How frankly she consented to belong to him. He feasted his eyes upon her, all of her, from the curve of her chin to the line of her thin white ankle. He forgot what it was he had said. Her ankle was beautifully moulded. He put his hand under one of her feet, and drew off her

canvas shoe. Through the thin silk of her stocking her toes showed pink and delicately formed. He laid his palm along the curving sole, and folded his long nervous fingers around the small white thing. He had forgotten everything for the moment but this piece of beautiful modelling. Then his face flushed. He kissed her foot.

She drew it under her quickly, and leaned toward him. Something within her was outraged. She felt excited, and sick, and angry. Her just, boyish eyes were inscrutably dark.

"Why do you treat me like a child?"

Her voice was small and quiet. She sat tense and motionless, watching him. He was still holding her shoe in his hand. Her gaze irritated him.

"Very well," he said, not looking at her, "my wife is living in Brooklyn. She is an actress." He snorted a snatch of a laugh, and the world opened before her suddenly, the dizzy abysmal world that she had glimpsed before. She seemed to be sitting on the edge of a precipice, to be looking into a vast depth, where she saw heaped-up masses of half-familiar things struggling in a horrid confusion. She hardly heard the next detached words that he flung at her viciously, but she remembered them afterwards: "She dances before many footlights in pink tights—so I'm told. Her name is her own—so is her life. What have I to do with her particular hell?"

He was so absorbed by this time in the nastiness of his own mental picture that he did not notice her. He was chewing a blade of grass ferociously and hugging his knees, her shoe still clutched in one hand.

"What is your idea in loving me?" she asked coldly, after what seemed to her an eternity of time.

"Good Lord, passions are not fabricated from ideas." He dropped her shoe, exasperated by her simplicity, and, flinging himself on his back, gazed



at the clouds moodily. For a while she sat staring at him, at the luminous crown of his beautiful head, at the sullen droop of his lower lip, then she scrambled to her feet, and slipped her foot into its shoe that lay in the grass. Quietly she turned her back on him and walked away. If he heard her go he thought she was just behind him a little.

Two hours later, after wandering distractedly over the hillside looking for her, it occurred to him to go down to the farm. He was so nervous about her that he even forgot the ridiculousness of his position. The man in the stable told him she had left word that she had gone home. He was chewing tobacco, and didn't so much as lift his eyes from the barn floor as he vouchsafed this information. The mare and the yellow-wheeled gig were hitched up waiting. He sprang into the gig and drove furiously down the road. A cold wet wind was blowing. Dull grey clouds canopied the earth. It was going to rain.

He caught sight of her some six miles on the way, on the top of a little hill where the road walked into the sky. For a moment she hesitated, turning back, her hair and her white dress whipping about her in the wind, then disappeared over the hill. He had a horrid fear that she might have vanished by the time he got there, but she was standing in the brambles by the roadside, and motioned to him to go on. Her dress was draggled and dusty, her face drawn. He leaped over the wheel, and stood in the road facing her.

"Shall I leave the buggy and go back?" he asked awkwardly. Somehow her behaviour did not seem so ridiculous when he saw how white and how weary she was. She made no answer.

"Why did you do this, child?" His voice was peremptory.

"I wanted to think."

"There's no use thinking."

"No—so it seems." Her tones were dry and tired.

"Have you had enough of it?" He tried to seem unconcerned. She tried to smile. A large raindrop splashed into the dust of the road, and then another on his face. He went a step toward her, and in a sudden flash of understanding he perceived what she had been through.

"My poor naked babe," he muttered, going close to her. If she heard she was past wincing now. She was just a wretched woman-child whose garment of innocence had been torn away. He was an artist, and he could have sobbed over the old misery of her eyes.

"Dear heart, don't you believe that I love you?"

She kept him off with an outstretched arm.

"It is not that—I couldn't see ahead—I wanted to see."

"Do you see now?"

"No." For a moment longer she kept him off, turning to look back up the road as though she had lost something there; then she put both hands against his chest, and, laying her head on them, burst into tears. It began to rain hard.

## CHAPTER V

### ANN'S POINT OF VIEW

ALICE KAVANAGH was manicuring her finger-nails, perfect oval finger-nails on long tapering fingers ; she was manicuring them exquisitely. A towel was spread over her knees, and on it were strewn a medley of things—little scissors, and wooden sticks, and steel files, and a chamois nail-polisher. And somehow in a limp dress of faded lavender, with all this confusion of things in her lap and a bowl of steaming soapy water beside her, she was herself utterly exquisite. Languidly intent upon her work, snipping and rubbing and filing at her already lovely finger-tips, she gave the impression of being gently absorbed in a beautiful task. Now and then she tilted her graceful head to one side, closed her hand, palm inward, and scrutinized her work through half-shut eyes. Her face wore a look of dreamy, mysterious amusement.

She dipped her hand into the soapy water, then held it suspended, dripping, and watched the drops form at the ends of her fingers. Wiping the hand carefully, each finger separately, she said aloud, as though continuing an interrupted conversation :

“ Yes, her face was a study.”

Something that looked like a cretonne sofa pillow, but was really her room-mate, curled upon the window-seat with her head out of the window, emitted an interrogatory grunt.

“ Her convictions were being battered down, her

dearest sentimentalisms plastered with the mud of modern cynicism," went on Alice, dipping the other hand into the bowl of hot water, "and she stood it like a Spartan boy. My dear, it was superb; to have your vitals chewed out of you by a wolf is bad enough—but when the wolf is your lover——" She suspended her dripping fingers again in the air meditatively. "And she never winced. It was beautiful. I adored her. I nearly cried."

The cretonne pillow heaved and twisted itself about, revealing a tousled mop of recently shampooed hair.

"She takes it so hard. It's a pity, but what can you expect? If one plays with 'Mad Anthony,' one is hurt."

"Ah—but I don't want her to be hurt," said Alice seriously.

Trixy parted her wet hair with her hands, uncurtaining her face, and stared.

"You speak like a mother, Licia dear." Her tone was slightly sarcastic.

"I feel like one." Alice rolled the manicure things neatly into the towel, and rose languidly.

"You don't love me that way," said Trixy, pouting.

"No, I don't love you that way." She stood a moment in the middle of the room, staring abstractedly.

"It is because she is so new, so sound, so sweet to the taste," she murmured.

Trixy gazed up at her, silenced as she was every now and then by the enigmatic aloofness of the other character.

"But then, little French poodle, I love you in your own way." And Alice brought her eyes down to the quaint, curly head. "Won't that do?" She smiled her wide smile.

"I don't want to be a poodle. I want to be a peacock, or even a giraffe—anything haughty, that can look over other people's heads," grumbled Trixy, rubbing her head with a towel.

"Don't try, dear. Just be a beautiful little poodle, and let me play with you." She paused.

"You see," she went on, "you're not Bobbie. I wear roses on my breast. A red poppy I tuck behind my ear."

"Thank you," muttered Trixy through her hair.

"And—I feel sad when I see the petals of a rose pulled off. It's brutal, you know."

"Well—you always knew he was brutal. Why didn't you stop him?"

"Why didn't I? That's just the question. Because I couldn't, I suppose."

"No," said the poodle. "You were curious to see. It's your insatiable appetite for experimenting on other people. You are consumed with curiosity—but you don't dare try—yourself."

Alice stared at her strangely. She laughed. "Out of the mouths of babes——" Then sighed extravagantly. "You are so much wiser than you look, poodle dear," she said, turning to the door.

A lady in black stood there. She held her small head very high, and looked at the two girls with an alert, intent glance. In her exquisite worn face her eyes gleamed like sapphires.

"Is this Barbara Witherow's room?" she asked in a sweet, formal voice.

"Yes," said Alice, dropping her extravagant manner suddenly; "won't you come in?"

"Thank you. I am Mrs. Craig, Barbara's aunt."

"Oh, we've met before," said Trixy, unfolding from the window seat.

"Have we?" said Mrs. Craig.

"Yes, indeed. You sat on the floor, and drank ginger-ale from a bottle. It was delightfully incongruous." The lady's eyebrows lifted just a shade.

"Ah—I didn't recognize you. You are Trixy." There was an awkward silence.

Mrs. Craig seated herself with dainty, stiff grace. Her eyes travelled lightly over the unwashed coffee-cups on the table to Barbara's bedroom door that stood ajar, revealing a wonderful confusion.

"Is Barbara out?" she asked.

"Yes; playing tennis. She'll be in presently. She has Marty next hour."

"Who is Marty?"

"Professor Khun, the great man here, you know. Bobbie'll take you to the seminary. You'll find it awfully stimulating."

"Will I?" The corners of the fragile lady's mouth lifted a little. Trixy flushed.

"Well, we do," she said, rather sulkily.

Ann let her eyes rest on her for a moment in surprise, then took them away, and picked up a book from the table. Trixy, feeling snubbed, disappeared into her own room. Trixy did not like being snubbed.

Alice Kavanagh had been watching silently. A peculiar look of brilliant interest animated her face.

"What a perfect Henry-James person!" she said to herself, and then: "Oh, lucky, lucky Bobbie," and suddenly her face changed. Something of the loneliness that seized her must have shown in her eyes, for Mrs. Craig smiled to her with deep grave sweetness. The silence continued.

"Tell me about Bobbie," said the sweet real person at last.

Alice started.

"I don't think I can."

"You are her room-mate, aren't you? Your name is Alice Kavanagh, isn't it? and Bobbie wants you to spend the summer in Europe with her. You see, I know about you already. Bobbie is very fond of you."

"Yes—she is." The girl drooped in her chair, her arms stretched out straight, her palms together between her knees. "For her sake, I wish she were not," she

said slowly. Her pale face flushed faintly. There was no affectation in her voice.

"Why?" said the older woman gravely.

"Bobbie is fresh and sweet—very sweet——" She faltered, and lifted her eyes to Mrs. Craig's face. "You can see what I mean—what I am."

"What are you?"

Alice shifted her glance. For a moment she stared at the floor, then lifted her long narrow eyes and looked intently into the worn, brave face before her. She seemed to derive courage there, for she said at last:

"Well—Barbara is sweet and wholesome, but she doesn't want to be. It's rather funny, but she hankers after hollow cheeks and dreamy sunken eyes. She is excessively sentimental, and lately she has begun to 'fiddle harmonics' to that tune. Fiddling suits her no more than tight corsets. And she's appallingly young." The girl hesitated, and a faint blush passed over her long sallow face. "So you see I'm not good for her. You know what she needs."

Ann Craig sat very still. "Yes, I know," she said.

The girl looked up again after a while, a poor ugly, trembling smile twisting her mouth.

"Perhaps it is egotistical to be afraid of spoiling Bobbie. Perhaps, too, it is sentimental to refuse Europe on that ground." She suspended the words wistfully.

"I think it is," said Ann, and then wondered if she were being untrue to Margaret. "Bobbie will help her," she thought irrelevantly, and at that moment Bobbie appeared.

She burst into the room, flinging her tennis racquet and balls through into her bedroom, and seized some books from a desk.

"Why—Ann!"

"Yes, I'm to go with you to be stimulated by Marty —Trixy says so." Ann received a resounding kiss.

"Trix is a goose. Come along, then." Bobbie put a strong arm around the other's shoulders, and swung with her out into the stream of girls that was already hurrying down the corridor.

Ann, scrutinizing, found nothing to frighten her. The child was tanned, and freckled, and happy. Her white linen skirt was streaked with grass stains, her sunny hair tumbled about in disorder.

"What do you study now with that tousled head, Bobbie?"

"Ethics. The problems of the universe," Barbara chuckled. She seemed certainly very healthy and boyish.

They took a path across the campus to the library. Hundreds of white figures dotted the green grass. The bright, sweet, morning air was filled with laughter, snatches of song, and the tapping of many heels on cement walks. At the library steps they met the Professor, and a long, ungainly young man, with a passionate, intelligent face, who were coming from the opposite direction.

"Professor Khun and Mr. Ladd; my aunt, Mrs. Rowland Craig. May I bring her to your class, Professor?" The Professor bowed stiffly from his rather rotund waist. The other lifted a soft grey felt from a glorious crown of red hair, and swung off into the sunshine, flinging his legs and arms about as though he would gladly shake off this mortal coil altogether.

"What an extraordinary young man," said Ann. "He walks like a new colt."

The seminary room was small and low, and panelled in oak, ceiling and walls, and with a polished oak floor, all a shining warmth of wood. The Professor was already seated at one end of the table that nearly filled the room. Around it straggled a ring of students armed with large black note-books and fountain-pens. Ann took a chair a little apart, by the deep-set Gothic



window that opened out on to a vista of newly-green maple-trees. She had a view of the Professor's heavily cleft brow and chin and the stolid square of his shoulders, and of the pale crescent of faces turned to him. There was a colorless drab hue on these faces and a stoop in these shoulders that made her ache. She thanked God that Barbara at least looked rosy, and told herself that his dabbling in modern philosophy could not be doing her child so very much harm after all. Ann was prone to take people and things that she did not know much about not quite seriously. She was tempted to scoff at the Professor. She might even have enjoyed egging these children on to tell her all about their universe if she had not been oppressed by the fact of her mission.

There was something horrible to her in another woman's acting mediator between mother and daughter. It had been her haunting fear that she would have to do this unspeakable thing, and now here she was doing it. College might be a more healthy place than she had supposed, and yet if Barbara had stayed at home with her mother there would have been no more trouble. Something was wrong somewhere.

Mrs. Craig's ideas on education hypothesized a kind of caste system. College was eminently adapted to the class of girl who had to earn her own living, and who for that reason had little opportunity to follow their inflamed fancies on any wild-goose chase. A world of revolutionary ideas was not such a dangerous plaything for a girl who had to turn her mind to the drudgery of bread-and-butter making, but to a spoiled child of luxury like Barbara it was a bomb with a lighted fuse. Ann was more reactionary on this subject than her sister-in-law, because she was better educated.

Mrs. Witherow's decision to let her daughter go to college had been one of those perfectly simple bits of

reasoning which so bewildered her friends. Her mind entertained few ideas and her heart harboured few affections, but the sparse values of her mental experience were terribly vivid as her affections were terribly keen. She saw things in strangely simple relations, and was capable of beholding a course of action in the light of a single idea, and of following that light without reference to anything or anyone by the way. She was invariably sure, too, of another fact—namely, that the light which guided her was divine in its origin. Every course of action in her daily life was linked up to the will of God, and was decided upon after prayer.

Barbara's education had been planned in this fashion, and not without much pain of mind. For her child's refractory brain and morbid self-centredness, the strenuous mental activity of college, with its harsh democratic life, offered itself as a kind of spiritual gymnasium. Having once decided upon the step, she sank her fears in a depth of ignorant trust. For the pitfalls which beset a young mind she trusted God, and she trusted Him the more completely because she knew so little about them. Philosophy and science were closed books to her, biology and the theory of evolution fields of ripe heresy that flourished to destroy the orthodox Bible. Her concession to the age was to put "Flint's Theism" into her daughter's hands, and a little volume called "The Other Side of Evolution," and, having done this, she believed, with occasional intervals of torturing doubt, that the child would be safe.

Ann knew better. She put no faith in "Flint," nor in Sir William Dawson's christian man of science, but she did put faith in a mother's prayers, and if she was inclined sometimes to wish that Margaret could keep apace of her daughter's reading, she comforted herself with the belief that the child must be safe

because her mother spent so many hours pleading for her before the throne of grace. So against the danger which she saw threatening—not the danger of new knowledge, but of rash action or undigested knowledge—she arrayed the hours of a mother's prayer-agony, and in her own mind dared God not to take care of the child. If for no other reason than this she would have felt bound to keep aloof.

The Professor had begun to speak. She was hardly aware of it at first, so dry and toneless his voice, but she soon became conscious of a subtle change in the atmosphere of the boxlike room, and, scrutinizing the faces before her, she groped for the meaning of this strange phenomenon. It seemed as though a ruthless unmasking of the souls of these children were taking place before her very eyes. They quivered there, dragged out from behind the throbbing shells of their bodies, a set of undeveloped, helpless minds, and he played with them. It reminded her of a scientist poking about among formless, uncontrolled organism. He poked them *here*, and they closed about his finger, wriggling fervent; he poked them *there*, and they slipped about whence they had come. They were for all the world like little jellified amœbæ, and they took themselves so seriously—oh, so seriously!

Ann looked from one to another with a gathering feeling of hysteria. She tried to contemplate calmly. Did he know what he was doing? Was he coldly unscrupulous, or was he unconscious of his own terrific magnetism? How could she tell? He was as impassive, as opaque as a jelly-fish himself. He hardly held his eyes open. He dropped his words in the hot tension of the room like cold pebbles in a pool of fire. One could almost hear them sizzle. She tried to look at him from their point of view, from Bobbie's point of view, but she failed utterly; she failed to sense anything but the heavily unpleasant personality of a

sensual man. As this fact pressed in upon her, a certain horror tinged the grotesqueness of it all. There were endless possibilities here for fiasco, for tragi-comedy. The man was a brute ; that he had a brain she conceded unwillingly.

They were discussing the nature of reality. Someone said "reality was that which was relative to the situation." They agreed, after a vigorous protest from Barbara, that there was no objective reality, that if one turned one's back on a tree it ceased to be there "for you." The "for you" seemed the key-note of the discussion.

"If reality was purely subjective, then truth must be so too, and ethics all a matter of the individual's inner world," pressed Barbara, enthusiastically logical.

"Quite so."

"There was no wrong in anything then, if it happened to serve your higher purpose. A dangerous formula!"

"It had the glorious danger of freedom."

"Each man a God unto himself."

It was at this point that the fragile lady in black laughed. At first no one quite knew what it was, that cool, silvery sound, floating somewhere over one's head, playing somehow about one's ears. It was like a shower of chilling, sparkling water. They sat back astonished. The Professor remained immobile, blinking. Perhaps he hunched his shoulders a shade higher about his ears, as though to keep the water from trickling down inside his coat-collar. The slim person in black was by this time seeking refuge in a pocket-handkerchief. She leaned forward, her narrow shoulders heaving. A momentary victory over herself was a signal for another overwhelming flood of mirth. She was convulsed. Finally, she lifted a face swimming in laughter and tears, and made a helpless gesture of apology. As she did so the bell rang.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Ann, how could you?"

"Bobbie! how couldn't I?" Ann threatened to go off again.

They passed through the gate of the college grounds on to a long avenue of maples. On the other side of the avenue was a row of comfortable farm-cottages, with many windows and wide verandas, and little cement paths running from the front steps to the walk. In front of one of these cottages the long red-haired young man was playing marbles with two very solid small boys in red jerseys and tight knickerbockers. A woman in a spotted blue blouse was perched on the low railing of the veranda steps watching them with her head tilted to one side. Some distance down the avenue, under the low boughs of the softly green trees, the Professor was trudging toward them, carrying some heavy books under his arm.

Barbara nodded across at the woman on the steps.

"Do you think us so very absurd, Ann?" she asked.

"Yes—very absurd," said Ann.

\* \* \* \* \*

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SERPENT'S TOOTH

THE summer's experience left Barbara with a stimulating sense of her own maturity and of the maturity of her love-affair. She felt that she was now fully initiated into the mysteries of a great passion, and she took up her work at college, pitying her friends for the emptiness of lives made up of uninspired incidents. For her every simple and trivial act was charged with a deep and burning meaning. She had made a resolve. She was to leave her family at the end of this college year, and go with Anthony to Germany. The sooner she told her mother the better.

He had followed them to Europe, of course: their little party of three—Alice, and the fat, short-sighted chaperone, and herself. He had taken her education in hand, and now was following up the days spent with Rodin and the French Impressionist with a deluge of books. Every two or three days came a package of books from his dealer, or he himself would arrive, and take her to an alcove in the college library and pick out a dozen volumes, giving her the gist of each in a rapid, farcical style that left her breathless. And she devoured them all, after he was gone like a sky-rocket, with a final flare and spurt of sparks before his disappearance, scarcely straining now at passages she once would have swallowed strangling. Even Zola could be taken, and scarce a noticeably bad taste left in one's mouth, if one were intent on the Idea.

That was his gospel, preached to her incessantly. All was beautiful in so far as it was alive with "Idea"; all was moral, all was Godlike that strove to reveal "Idea." William Blake hit the note in his "Proverbs of Hell": "Nothing is unclean but the thought of uncleanness. The thought of uncleanness was, to go farther, merely the ragged edge of the thought of purity. One could not apprehend purity without impurity. One could not paint absolute Beauty. Beauty was hidden in Ugliness. Ugliness was the covering, and therefore the revelation, too, of Beauty. One might almost say, Ugliness was Beauty if it only '*lived the Idea.*' Thus one painted actuality to reveal the obscured Beauty of Idea, hidden within Ugliness."

He had talked somewhat after this fashion in the Salon one day, and she had raised only one timid objection. How were the uninitiated to see? She had to acknowledge that, to her, a certain danseuse disrobing before a mirror was nothing more than a half-undressed woman with an evil smiling face. The answer had been that the uninitiated never did see. Having eyes, they saw not, and having ears, they heard not. The inner truth of Art was for its passionate disciples alone; one could only learn to see by Work and Worship. And somehow, in spite of the ugliness on the walls, his enthusiasm had carried conviction. She wanted to see because he saw, but, more than that, she believed that the vision must be divine because it had made him. After a while she began to think that she saw the print of something at least akin to beauty where she had at first beheld merely a depraved realism. Perhaps it was the contagion of his own luminous interpretation. She was not sure, but she clutched the half-promise of her baptism with eager fingers. In any case, her own limitations made her lover seem the more lordly, while her friends dropped into nothingness beside his splendour. Sometimes in

those fits of depression that seized her now when she was tired she saw them as faintly outlined figures moving beyond the smoky outskirts of that fire-ring that enclosed her. Their voices came from a remote distance, and carried no meaning. They sounded like wanderers hallooing to one another on vague hillsides. Sometimes at night she would lie still on her back in her bare little room and hear one or another calling to her. Alice and Trixy might be chattering all the same in the next room, but the far-away cry of warning was always drowned in the loud whisper of his passion at her ear. Only one figure approached near enough to her wall of flame to appear illumined with any significance—her mother, changed into an almost allegorical figure of ill-omen. Barbara dreamed of her at night, as of a woman going down into hell to look for her child; she thought of her by day as the unreasoning force lifted between her and freedom.

A letter brought events to the crisis she had been expecting, and she answered lucidly, that there might be as little room for misunderstanding as possible. Yes, it was true. She was not only intimate with the artist, Anthony Ladd, she was more intimate with him than with anyone in the world; she was in love with him. He was the one man in the world that she could worship. It might be as well to say frankly that she intended to live her life out with him. She knew that this would give pain, but it was a decision she had come to on her knees. The fact that his wife was living made little difference, as they would not have married in any case. Their ideas were, she knew, diametrically opposed to those on which her mother based social morality. She was by this act and by a hundred previous acts proving that she was in a sense no longer her mother's daughter. She belonged to herself, and she gave herself to her lover.

Even through the heated haze of her brain the words



gleamed coldly astonishing. But they were true, so they must stand. She must be honest at any cost—honest to her lover and herself. It seemed to her that she was making an admirable effort to preserve her own integrity in the midst of shifting quicksands of subterfuge. It would have been easy to have deceived her about the future. She preferred to reveal the situation in its entirety; the dignity of her passion demanded it.

In justice to herself later she remembered that she had mailed the letter with absolutely no gleam of comprehension as to its effect on her family. She seemed to have lost entirely all sense of the other point of view. She realized by a logical process of thought that this would precipitate a rupture, but she had no conception of any great suffering involved to any of them. She was herself incapable of suffering for another. The wells of her sympathies, together with the springs of her natural, daughterly affection, seemed to have been dried up by the heat of her passion. She was a vessel filled to satisfy his thirst; empty for any other.

\* \* \* \* \*

Margaret Witherow lay in bed in a private sanatorium on the shores of a lake. Bed had become to her an incubus that she could not shake off. Her days as well as her nights were choked with pillows, and blankets, and sheets. Pillows walled her in and covered her over, surrounded and clung to her, held her up and weighed her down. Sheets, fresh and clean every morning, soothed and caressed her, warm and wrinkled every afternoon, entangled her feet and irritated those little tingling nerve-endings that covered her body, until her skin was a million pricking pains. The mattress became a thing of hollows and promontories; moreover, it creaked when she turned over. When she passed her finger along the surface of the blanket

the wool set her teeth on edge, and every morning at ten o'clock, after her fourth raw egg, she was fatally impelled to do this. Bed and bedclothes possessed her mind. Over the sheeted bed she saw through the window the lake. Over the bulging corner of her pillow she saw the nurse and the doctor. The only thing she could see with an unobstructed view was the ceiling.

Her daughter's letter was a flash of lightning that shivered this bed to atoms. Only once, as she went through the door after the nurse who was carrying her bag downstairs, did she look back upon that billowing heap of soft and solid linen, and for a second of time long to throw herself down into the deadly comfort of its embrace.

A telegram summoned Barbara to New York, and she boarded the train with an interesting book under her arm and no premonition of tragedy in her mind—only an irksome sense of a disagreeable something drifting across the horizon. Looking back upon that meeting, it seemed to her impossible that she could have been so callous to even the surface play of another's agony. She had been struggling to get away, to free herself from the trammelling clutch of this miserable person who called herself her mother, and was denying her Heaven. She had a dream long afterwards that in her effort to free her feet from those clutching hands she had kicked her mother in the face.

It was evening when she reached the hotel. Wilhelmina sat in the adjoining room sewing, and her mother was in bed. She resented the fact that her mother was in bed. It seemed like taking an unfair advantage; they could not meet on equal terms with her mother in bed.

Her mother seemed prepared for an emotional battle, and the prospect made Barbara feel sick. There were three-cornered blue shadows under the woman's eyes;

her lips were compressed to a bloodless line. She greeted her daughter with a frightened, searching question of the eyes, as though she were scrutinizing the face of a stranger about whom she had heard something hideous and pitiful.

Barbara seated herself on a small chair by the bedside quite quietly, with a sense of perfect self-control. Her mother's first words seemed to her toned to a vast emotional extravagance. She was determined to save the situation from hysteria if she could.

"You have nearly killed me."

She answered nothing. It was absurd to begin that way. Her mother's eyes searched her face, terrified, hopeless. They seemed to find not one trace of softness; they closed with twitching eyelids. Her lips moved in a whispered prayer. Barbara steeled herself to a more complete quiet.

"I am very sorry," she began, in a particularly low conversational tone, as though trying to soothe a child—"I am very sorry we have grown so apart. You must have known that it was inevitable." She seemed to herself admirably kind and calm. "Since father's death"—the cords in the white throat against the pillow twitched convulsively—"I have been changing my beliefs. I don't believe in God any more—that is, in your God—the God of the Bible." She put it quite simply and clearly.

"What do you believe in?" The expression on the white face was intensely disagreeable. Barbara didn't understand what a grimaced effort it was to control the horror and fear that were the result of her words.

For Margaret Witherow there had never been any relief in the realms of philosophy or speculation from the intensity of her spiritual life. She had no experience in abstract thinking. The delight in a process of thought that could toy with vast concepts and leave one's conscience untouched had never existed for her;

she did not even know that it existed for anyone. To her, every thought was an act of spiritual significance partaking either of the nature of worship or of blasphemy. She knew that if she herself had uttered these words they would have been blasphemy, and she was terrified at the ease with which her daughter pronounced them. It proved that the child's mind was in the power of the devil. She asked her next question in a frozen desire to know what the evil spirit would answer.

"I believe in the God in Anthony Ladd; I worship Him."

"Very well"—the voice was icily intense, sharp as the blade of a knife—"let it be understood that if you go to live with this man I disown you—before the world. You have taken your life into your own hands. You must know what you are doing. Understand"—her voice gathered a still more terrible intensity—"I disown you openly."

Barbara had a sickening vision of the future. She leaped away from it to the embracing thought of her lover. If disgrace were the price she was to pay for him, then she would pay it. She was giving up home, family, and friends; she gave them gladly. She tried to smile bravely into the dizzy sickness that possessed her mind. Her relief was in turning upon her mother. She gazed into her eyes silently, earnestly; she summoned a great and beautiful gentleness to her aid that her countenance might convince the other of her own sincerity. The result was not what she had expected. This softening of her mother's face was even harder to deal with— Oh, there was no escape!

The woman in bed seemed to be clinging to her strength with great effort. She leaned forward with a sudden unutterable yearning breaking through the icy agony that had disfigured her face.

"Darling, I never asked you to believe in my God.

I have prayed daily that you might never be like me. God forbid that. Can you not see beyond my mistaken life to the image of Christ? Can you not accept the God of Love? I do not ask you to agree with me; I only ask you to let God's Spirit into your heart." Her voice throbbed out to her child. There was silence.

"I believe in my love," said Barbara stonily, ignoring the hand that trembled towards her over the coverlet.

The mother dropped her face in her hands. "O God!" she gasped aloud—"O God! speak to my child, my poor child!" Barbara felt an icy weight on her chest. This was all such a waste of strength.

"It is no use, mother; I am really not your child any more. I belong to someone else."

The woman began to shudder violently. Her sobs piled one upon another to a terrible volume, and crashed into a shivering laugh. She struggled out of bed, and tottered, laughing and sobbing, to a chair. There she sat, rocking slowly, like one insane. Her head dropped forward on her breast. Her breath came in long whimpering gusts, punctured with toneless laughter.

"You have finished your work—now!" she shrilled in an uncannily thin whimpering tone. "My mind is gone." She sobbed a little, nodding her head repeatedly. "Yes; it is all over now. My mind is gone." She laughed a little again.

Her daughter stood in the middle of the room perfectly still, watching. She was frightened and horror-struck. It was all so ghastly. Why need it have occurred at all? The whole scene held such an insane mood of melodrama. What did one do for hysteria? The woman was motioning speechlessly toward the bureau. She laid her head back against the chair, her eyes closed, breathing with difficulty. Barbara snatched

up a bottle labelled "aromatic spirits of ammonia," and held it to her nostrils.

"Pour a little into a glass with water."

She did so, and helped her to drink it. After this they sat near one another quite still for a long time. Out of an immeasurable depth of silence her mother said brokenly:

"Get undressed—send Wilhelmina."

She went from the room without a word, and did as she was told. When ready for bed, she went back into her mother's room. It was dark except for the light that came through the transom from the hall. Wilhelmina had disappeared. She could discern the line of her mother's body in the bed. She bent down to a drenched face. An arm dragged her close. The voice that came to her through the dark was pleading as a lonely child.

"Lie close to me." She was received under the covers and gathered into a trembling embrace. "There, there," the voice crooned—"there, there." Years afterwards she knew the meaning of that little crooning cry—the cry of a lonely woman bereft of her child.

## CHAPTER VII

### BREAD AND BUTTER AND ROSES

A BEDROOM in an old-fashioned hotel is the ugliest abiding-place in the world, especially if its windows look out on a blank wall. One has to turn on the electric light to dress by in the morning, and this artificial light, when one knows the sun is shining out of doors, gives one an unwholesome crazy feeling. Barbara stood under the light before the dressing-table in her nightgown, and gazed at herself absently. She felt distinctly queer. Her breakfast of grape-fruit, coffee, and rolls remained untouched by her bedside. Her brain was cool, but she had rather a sickish sensation of vacuum between her collar and her belt. It was the kind of hollow feeling that seizes one after an exhausting excitement, and yet she had not thought herself excited the night before. She had crept from her mother's bed to her own some time before dawn, and had lain still watching the grey twilight creep along the ugly hotel wall-paper, thinking. She seemed to be carrying on a desultory argument with an imaginary person. It was an idle argument, but it persisted in a nagging drone. The imaginary person, who was really a formless dummy of no importance, was supposing for the sake of argument that this love-affair was a colossal mistake, was suggesting that possibly a passion that carried in its train such destruction of established landmarks, such pain for innocent people, might be unjustified. The contention was a

stupid one. Barbara explained quite clearly that divinely impassioned actions always carried with them pain and destruction. They were like meteors striking earth in the midst of a crowded, maudlin humanity. That was the way the world had of travelling toward perfection, leaving a wake of wasteful pain behind. Moreover, it was not clear that her mother, the real sufferer, was altogether innocent. She was at least open to the charge of intolerance. It was, perhaps, not her fault that she was so fanatical; still, one could turn the proposition backwards, and wonder if her habit of action was justified, since it carried pain to so many others, especially to herself. Had one any right to inflict such torture on oneself? She had such a frantic conscience! The imaginary person abandoned this basis of discussion after a few more sentimental remarks about the unfathomable love of a mother for her child, to which Barbara listened coldly. She confessed that she couldn't understand a woman who would disown her child, and then cling to her as a drowning soul through half a tear-drenched night. The inconsistency was somewhat terrible. It suggested a complete lack of mental control. The imaginary person, as a last word on this subject, suggested that that was just the way the world travelled toward fulfilment—call it perfection if you like—and that if women ceased loving their children beyond all reason, the world might as well come to an end at once.

The ground of discussion then shifted to the consideration of Anthony Ladd's title to divinity. How was a poor imaginary person to know that this artist was one of the God-men of this all but God-forsaken world? One had a right to ask, because the man made such gigantic claims for himself, and because Barbara herself was giving up her friends and her ideals, and even her memories, to go with him. It



was absurd to suppose that she could take her friends, or her ideals, or her memories with her. Her friends would not be comfortable there—at least, her best friend, Ann Craig, would not. Imagine Ann in a society made up of—of what? She did not know of what, but she did know that the picture of Ann at home among them, whatever they were, was delirious. Nor could her ideals, her dear little ideals of quiet, and order, and beautiful living, exist there. She must rid herself of her classic taste if she was to dwell in his Bohemia. There would be a studio, and curios, and chairs with broken legs, and there would be lager beer, and bad tobacco, and cabbage, and unwashed dishes, and unmade beds. Her having money would make no difference. There would be confusion and slovenliness in their house, and sordidness, too, some day; and there had been once her father's home—she shuddered—and if her mother disowned her—disgrace, too. "So one had a right to ask," whispered the imaginary person, "what was guaranteed her in return for her losses." She began harping on the knowledge of her lover's fineness, but the drone pressed for more telling evidence, and so she nervously pounced upon his feeling for beauty and his gift of laughter. Though his face in repose held not one trace of humour, still, when he laughed the sullen fire of his expression gave way with glorious suddenness. The way in which he could clear the barriers of his self-consciousness at a leap, and plunge with keen naked enjoyment into a joke, was thoroughly charming. It indicated a pure spring of living water at the source of him. And he knew Beauty. It was the same thing as knowing God. Even the imaginary person had nothing to say to that.

It was less easy to satisfy the final question as to her own integrity. The insinuation that she was utterly incapable of playing the heroine in this drama rankled vaguely. Granted that the woman lived who could

deny her world and her inbred conscience, and glory in the freedom of a great elemental passion, the question still hung fire, was she the woman? Stripped of his transforming adoration, what was she? Not a Goddess, certainly; not even a giantess. Just a small person of trivial imaginings. If one were to do this thing, one must do it beautifully. Could she?

Barbara had the sensation of putting her head down, and of diving through a sea of cold water. She came up, washed clean of her imaginings.

Wilhelmina appeared at the door as she was putting on her hat—an extremely picturesque hat of grey velvet that swept out widely from the crown of her light hair. Barbara, contemplating the droop of the smoke-coloured plume, listened with mild irritation to the woman's wistful monotones. "Mrs. Witherow had a headache, but wished to see her daughter before she went out." There was a mild reproach in the German woman's large dark eyes as she helped her young mistress into her grey cloth coat. Barbara lingered before the glass buttoning her gloves. She took a languid pleasure in the reflection of her graceful, perfectly costumed figure. The pallor of her face pleased her; it was in harmony with the mouse-grey of her costume. Little shadows were drawn around the weary droop of her eyelids. She satisfied herself; she was *distinguée*— But Wilhelmina was a disturbing element, still hovering, dumbly miserable, in the background.

Mrs. Witherow's room was darkened. She lay rigid in the gloom, a towel tied tight around her head, and neither moved nor opened her eyes as her daughter entered. Her tense stillness suggested a fierce, throbbing pain of body. Her lips moved without a sound at first, then she managed to say in a small, flat voice that she was going to Craig Manor that afternoon. "She wished Barbara to think over the following pro-

position. On the lowest possible ground of common gratitude Barbara owed her parents something. She felt empowered to speak for her husband, as she had been communing with him in the night. In return for the home and the education the girl had received, it was reasonable for her to give her mother one year of her womanhood. It was plain that she was entering upon womanhood now. If she would postpone her elopement with Anthony Ladd for a year, her mother would have nothing more to say."

Barbara was surprised at the clarity of the other's mind. It was certainly a reasonable proposition. It seemed to her that her mother was in a far more rational mood than she had been during the night. She accepted the change with a feeling of relief, and no conception of the agony it had taken to congeal the woman's nerves into this state of quiet. She said she would talk the matter over with Anthony, whom she was meeting for luncheon. There was nothing more to say. At the door she hesitated. It occurred to her that she might stay and put her mother on the train, but she didn't offer to do so. He was waiting for her. They were to lunch, and then go to the Opera. She had an intense craving for him, and she wanted frantically to get away from that close, dark room. She shut the door gently, and hurried down the corridor.

It was a glorious Saturday. All the extravagantly gay and wealthy world was revelling in the limpid sunshine. Barbara walked up Fifth Avenue basking in the golden luxury that flooded the street. The towering buildings, the endless array of richly-toned show-windows, the glistening serpent of shining hansoms and taxicabs, the glowing panorama of smartly-dressed women and vigorous, well-groomed men, all pleased her. She was glad that she had money and good looks, so that she might claim to be a part of this

gleaming, luxurious world. She glanced at herself now and then in the mirrors of the shops, and watched for the fleeting, well-bred admiration in the eyes of the passers-by. A delightful exhilaration began to displace the lassitude of the early morning. The disturbing shabbiness of that other world awaiting her faded into the background. At a street corner she met a group of her brother's college friends, in town for the day—handsome, laughing giants in extravagant, well-made clothes. They greeted her with flattering enthusiasm, and, turning about, formed an escort up the avenue.

She toyed with them light-headedly, and they agreed afterwards that they had no idea Witherow's sister was such a queen. They accompanied her into the lobby of the restaurant where she was to meet her lover, and when he came forward to claim her they only half concealed an awkward surprise. Their sisters and sweethearts were not in the habit of meeting shabby, foreign-looking chaps at "Sherry's." They hurried away, after confused, embarrassed salutations.

She waited for the thrill that always came with the sight of him. It came, but with it she was conscious of a recurrence of that sickish excitement of the early morning. He looked ill and soiled. His clothes hadn't been pressed for days. He carried the inseparable grey felt crushed in one hand. His boots were dusty. She spoke of an alarm at his pallor as they moved towards the restaurant, whence issued waltz music, the murmur of many voices, and the clink of many dishes.

"Yes—the doctor thinks he's found a hole in one lung, and my bank account is empty." She shivered with a sudden chill.

"Oh, Tony!" She was swept into an overwhelming compassion. Her heart leapt to him in tenderness and worship. She saw only the beauty of his impassioned eyes as he seated himself opposite her. Their table

was at a window, secluded in the midst of a crowd. He leaned his head moodily on his hand.

"The doctor is an ass." He laughed again. "But my banker is not; he is deucedly sensible."

She was at that moment pinning some flame-coloured roses he had just given her against the grey film of her blouse.

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"Because I wanted to keep on sending you books and roses. If you will be that particular shade of grey cloud—why, you must have sunset roses at your breast—that's all."

"But you can't afford it, Tony."

"Gott sei dank! I can always afford to finish a picture."

She contemplated him gravely, crumbling a bit of bread against the white table-cloth. She was thinking that since last night it would be easier to share with him the good things of this world, and she wondered how she could put it to make it easy for him. She trusted his high-mindedness to leave him free to accept from her, but she felt the difficulty of choosing a perfectly tactful way of offering him a large sum of money. He was ordering champagne. Why not? She had accustomed herself long ago to his drinking. She insisted to herself that he did it with an air, that he would never drink too much, and she had insisted to him that he always ordered anything he wanted, as she was paying the bill; she always paid on these holidays. This was an arrangement that appealed to her sense of the fitness of things. It testified to the nobility of their friendship. She gloried in the generosity with which he accepted her little favours, gaining therefrom a sense of equality with him in the economy of their relationship. They must share everything with one another, and it was nice to begin in this practical way to prove their superiority over conven-

tions. It augured an easy adjustment in the future. The fact of his ordering champagne gave her a sense of security as she prepared to lay her new plan before him.

"It'll be all right now, Tony, if you'll agree to my plan. It's a very simple one."

"Yes?"

"I know it's a good deal to ask of you, but then I have a right to demand the impossible, haven't I? Another man might refuse me, but you cannot—because I belong to you——"

"Well."

She hesitated a little. It was her inherent delicacy that made it hard for her—a ridiculous delicacy, certainly—a trait he would not appreciate.

"I would like, Tony—to give you a regular amount—to put a certain income into your hands. It would be paid into your bank quarterly."

She looked at him a little timidly, and went on as though justifying her presumption.

"Of course, everything I have is yours—you know that—but it would be easier for you if you had clear control of a certain amount yourself. Don't you think so?"

"You are adorable!" There was a great relief in his voice. He could have shouted with glee.

"I've been thinking about the amount. How would two thousand a year do?" Her refinement named a sum which seemed to her quite sufficiently, absurdly small. He beamed.

"Any sum will do, dear child! Again you are adorable!"

He glowed with appreciation, and she glowed in return. It seemed to her so fine of him, so great-hearted.

"But won't there be difficulties—your mother—does she keep no track of your expenditure?"

Barbara winced slightly at the implied necessity for subterfuge. It was a relief to be able to answer:

"It is all quite simple now—since last night."

"What do you mean?"

"I broke with her last night."

"Hum! I'm sorry."

She flushed. It was not what she had expected. She tried not to be disappointed, to get his point of view. Was he not ready to claim her before the world? Practically he had done so long ago. Did he not understand how completely and publicly he had appropriated her? He must know. Surely he gloried in the way she gave herself to him. He evidently read her bewilderment in her face.

"It's only that it must be hard for you, dear," he said gently. "I had thought she might become gradually reconciled to me."

"She would never do that." And the thought winged its way through her brain that he had only told her a part truth.

"Ah," he laughed shortly, "I am not a gentleman or a Christian, as she knows the breed."

"Don't, Tony."

"Very well, dear."

He jerked his head back restively. She had a sensation of insecurity, as though she were riding a nervous horse that chafed against the curb.

"Tell me, did she cast you into outer darkness?"

"She said she'd disown me!"

"Gott in Himmel! What a woman!"

"That was last night. This morning she was more reasonable." It was very unpleasant to have one's thoughts reflected so luridly in another's language, but still she had no right to remonstrate. "She makes the proposition that I put off what she calls 'my elopement' for a year, after which she will leave us——"

"To destruction." He glowered, then smiled with one of those swift changes of countenance that made one think of wide, stormy, sun-streaked skies. "We can afford to wait, can we not, dear? One year out of eternity! It's not much to give."

She caught her breath once more, and drank his exaltation as a thirsty child. But he had already launched into a tirade against the all-feminine wife and mother, and she sank back into dumb misery, while he hurled adjectives at her mother that besmeared her with the mire of the farmyard. She thought: "He has never seen her; it is the picture of her that I must have given him!" After a while she could stand it no longer.

"You must remember that, after all, she is my mother." The words died away with a dry click in her throat. It was not so many hours since she had given them the lie. He didn't notice her agitation in his own excitement.

"Child, child! For God's sake, rid yourself of such illusions! It's rank sentimentality. You're no more your mother's daughter than I am. The sooner you recognize her for the unreasoning creature of emotion and sentimentality that she is, the better for your powers of vision." He pulled out his watch suddenly. "We shall be late. Here, waiter!" He paid for their meal with one of her ten-dollar bills. She followed him from the crowded room meekly.

They arrived at the Opera just in time to slip into their seats as the curtain rose. The music was in fair possession of the house before she realized what the piece was. She had not noticed the bill-boards; she had not thought to ask the name of the opera. They went as a matter of course every Saturday that she could get away. Nevertheless, her bruised temper blazed into a sudden rage with him for bringing her there. He might have saved her this torment; he



might have known how she would loathe it. They had talked about the very thing, and he had laughed at her because she had insisted that the whole theme was degrading. Now he had thrust the repulsive sight before her eyes. Oh!—he was cruel.

She cowered low in her seat with a vague intention of hiding behind her programme. She would shut out the leaping sensual message that was being shouted over the footlights. She shut her eyes, feeling hot and nauseated, and tried to think of something cool and quiet and fine, but she was deluged with the hot surging music that screamed and moaned and exulted in her ears. The orchestra seemed possessed. Frantic demons of music laughed hideously in her ears, swooned away in dying cadences, crawled near again with loud, whispered discords of passion. Then through the horrid flood rose a woman's voice, the voice of sex, cooing, laughing, exulting. She opened her eyes. There it was, dancing naked in the midst of them. It fell on its stomach and wriggled across the stage, writhing on its abdomen. She was powerless to tear her eyes away. She stared, and as she stared she was conscious of poison dripping into her soul drop by drop. "Take me away." The thing had stopped writhing, but the music beat on madly. She touched his sleeve with her hand. He didn't notice. He was staring fixedly at the naked thing, his head dropped forward, his arms crossed high on his chest, rigid. In the gloom she could discern rows and rows of heads all turned towards the thing on the stage, all rigid with fascination. She half rose from her seat, and then cowered again as hisses sizzled through the shadow behind her. She was caught; she wanted to scream, but she sat still, and the psychic force of three thousand brains all intent on one ugly thing absorbed her mentality as though it had been a drop of water in a sea of ink; she sipped poison for another hour.

It was from this hour that she dated her own guilt. It seemed to her afterwards that up to this time she had been only young and cruel and blind, with the cruelty and blindness of youth. Even that day on the road from Comfort's Farm she had been all but unconscious of her own dishonesty, because she had been so absorbed in him. But now—she suspected him, was tempted to despise him, and the foundations of her heaven seemed crumbling around her. If she had only let the whole thing crash——

Some time after the ceasing of the music she found herself with him in a hansom, driving through crowded streets. It had been raining, and a million lights danced dizzily in the wet pavement. Crowds of people were streaming from the theatres, pouring along the side-walks—excited, over-stimulated people, carrying on their countenances the mark of unwholesome pleasure. In the dark embrace of the cab he had put his arm about her. It seemed the natural, the unhealthily pleasant thing for him to do. Vividly conscious of his throbbing vitality, she resigned herself, sick and passive, to his appeal, and then another thing happened that seemed, too, both natural and inevitable. He leaned forward suddenly.

"Look! That face—that St. Monica—Madonna by Angelo—there—in a hansom opposite!"

She looked. Her mother was a few yards away, alone in a cab, on her way to the train for Craig Valley. She sat quiet, in a complete isolation. The crowd seethed around her. Her white face gleamed from an immeasurable distance; a gulf separated them. Barbara was suddenly overwhelmed with an unbearable loneliness. She had a wild impulse to fling herself into the street and force her way through the crowd. She laid her hands on the doors of the hansom, fumbling to open them. She thought that she gesticulated wildly; she was not sure that she did not call

out. Her mother did not see them ; her cab turned a corner and was gone.

"Ye Gods! What a face to paint!"

"Yes ; it is my mother." He seemed not to hear. "It is my mother," she reiterated dully. He stared at her, incredulous.

"Your mother?"

"Yes." They sank into separate silences.

\* \* \* \* \*

But when she cried herself to sleep that night, her imagination laid her in his arms, not her mother's. She had chosen him, and he was all she had now—for better or for worse, she told herself.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WITHERING LEAVES

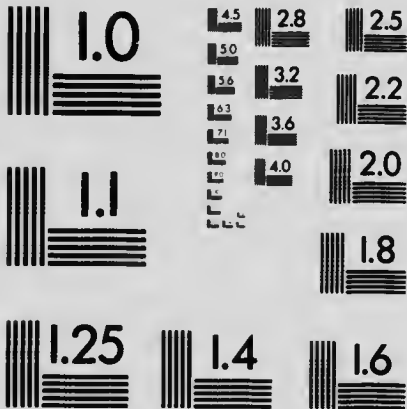
SHE finished her college year in a maze of subterfuge, and chief among the self-imposed abuses of her sincerity was a growing habit of verse-making. One could always pretend to an attitude of adoration when working oneself into an artistic frenzy over a rhyme. She wrote a quantity of introspective verse, a cycle of sonnets, and a number of finely-mooded songs, and incidentally they brought her credit in her English courses. Her Professors began to talk of her talent. But she had a sneaking contempt for such genius, knowing that it fed on the rubbish of her mind. And still she versified, for she hadn't the courage to think in clear prose. She never went back to analyze the suspicion of him that had poisoned her mind, but went on coddling the remnant of her passion.

The immediate adjustment had been easy. He had seemed unconscious of any necessity for a renewing of their relationship, and she had accepted the situation tacitly, because she was too tired and too cowardly to provoke by confession his laughter and his scorn. He had followed her to college soon after, and during the tramp over frozen fields she had been surprised to find how dear he still was to her, how necessary to her existence. And he had been his most charming self, laughing and shouting to the naked winter trees and the frosted hills, throwing his hat into the air and tearing down hillsides, her hand in his, at a joyous



# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



**APPLIED IMAGE Inc**

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

gallop. And she had played a sufficiently harmonious second to his riotous mood, sufficient to blind his unpenetrating gaze. She had been content to dwell upon the glory of his head and his eyes, to sup the pleasant drink of his magnetism, while she wondered at the free paganism of his nature, and forgot that she no longer worshipped his godliness.

But the battle she waged through the succeeding months with a thousand little devils of self-contempt had left her a wreck physically—not a romantic wreck : just a nervous, ænemic young woman with a tired drag in her voice. She watched her hair grow sick and dank, and her complexion muddy. Her feet seemed loaded with lead. Her face reminded her of a withered plant scorched by a flame, and she was conscious for months of feeding a flame that threatened to die out or to consume her altogether. The latter alternative seeming for some reason the more bearable, she piled fuel on the fire—anything and everything—smiling wryly as she realized that she was burning up her youth treasures. Sometimes in wild moments she had visions of her health and her mentality, and at length her immortal spirit, all consumed to keep this passion ablaze ; but she was only occasionally frenzied, and she would not have admitted that she was unhappy. She still clung to the idea that he was her world. His personality still intoxicated, only each time that she gave herself to his presence she needed a deeper draught of him to still the restless craving, and after each hour of ecstasy she dropped more exhausted.

There was left to her no surplus of vitality with which to enjoy her last college days, so she let her opportunity of being young slip through her fingers, only dimly suspecting that she was losing something. And she let her friends slip, too. She was blind to another's need that she would have sensed with a quick enough sympathy a few months earlier, and

heard, with no idea of its import, that Professor Khun was resigning, and that his wife was leaving him. She heard people talking, too, about how he had gone to pieces, and how dreadful it was to see such a mind crumble down into a muddy pool of self-indulgence. She remembered dimly an old compassion for the ugly, nervous woman, and an old admiration for him. Both had vanished, leaving nothing but a cold distaste for their problem and a stubborn loyalty to her past feelings that kept her from curiosity. She wished to have nothing to do with the situation, and when Anthony suggested that it intimately concerned one of her friends she refused to believe him. Finally, when he mentioned Alice's name, she silenced him frantically, and accepted the bare statement of the fact as the last lurid sentence written across the delirious page of the year.

Coming into their study one day with Anthony's kisses still hot on her face, she found Alice drooping by the open window, her head on her hand. She did not move as Barbara entered, and for awhile they both remained perfectly still, while something lurking in the silence oppressed them. Barbara's first impulse had been one of condemnation. She was conscious now, as she stood looking at her friend, of a sick conflict going on within her, or without her. Forces beyond her control or her understanding seemed pushing and pulling, crushing her between them. To take Alice in her arms and love her, to upbraid her and point out to her the destruction that awaited her, to draw away her own skirts from the touch of the contaminating contact—all these courses of action presented themselves; and she did nothing. She just stood and looked, and at last Alice turned and looked. The look was a complete surprise. Whether she had expected to find there shame, or anger, or bravado, she did not know, but she had not expected this. It was a look



of pity. She felt herself beginning to sink under it. Her altruistic and selfish thoughts crumbled away into a miserable sense of her own impasse. The sick excitement which possessed her so much these days welled up in her, flooding her hotly, leaving her weak and cold. She put her hand on a chair to steady herself, and shaped her lips to say something, but she did not say it, and the pity in her friend's eyes deepened and seemed touched at last with scorn.

The last week of their college term drew to a close in an atmosphere of strained silence. Once or twice she found Alice's eyes dwelling on her with wistful tenderness, but she avoided them. Nothing happened, nothing was explained, nothing was completed. It was all just a dreary suspension of activity, of frayed relationships.

Tony and Ann came to see her graduate. She was oblivious to their uncongeniality, and she consented to go to Craig Valley on condition that he was to come for the month of August. She gave a luncheon for Ann, spent here and there a few restless heated moments alone with him, and, when she had finished her speech on Class Day, fainted away, and was carried off the scene indifferent to everything.

As she lay in the train, white and listless, she thought idly that a thousand girls had scattered that day to their homes—their unfortunate, unadjustable homes. She was glad she was not going home. If there were one place on earth where she could rest it was at Craig Valley. She could see her mother later.

\* \* \* \* \*

Grandfather Craig was at the station to meet them with the pony-cart. Barbara fancied that he kissed her with a touch of asperity, and hoped, as she trundled up the hill, that he was not in a theological mood. Grandfather Craig was a dear old man when he forgot that he was a theologian. He was little and

wiry, with a comical face and a pair of bushy white eyebrows, one of which threatened continually to run up into the tuft of white hair that crowned him. When he tipped his head on one side and cocked this left eyebrow up into the wrinkles of his broad forehead, he looked for all the world like an adorable puppy ; but when he sat in his study behind piles of books, and held one finger in his Bible, and discoursed on " Dispensational Truth," he was terrible. Barbara determined to avoid the study. It was the only part of the house that she did not love.

Craig Manor had commanded the sunny length of Craig Valley since the days of the Revolution, and the landscape of rich, deep bosomed meadows and low, rippling hills had received the old mansion comfortably into its placid embrace. It was a serene, wide-browed white house, with regular, green-shuttered windows that looked calmly out toward the west and smiled at sunset when the rose light touched their leaded panes. The central portion of the house was high and square, with a triangular pediment under the room, supported on four gigantic white columns that rose from the low porch before the door. The door was of ancient oak, with a brass knocker, and a fan of white wood above it. On either side of the porch wings had been built on by well-to-do generations of the Craig family, and beyond these were old-fashioned gardens of hollyhocks, and larkspur, and mignonette. Behind the house was a forest of straight red-trunked pines that branched above the roof. In front the ground fell away under an orchard to the meadow valley where the river wound lazily in wide looped reaches through emerald rushes and pale weeping-willows.

Barbara asked for the little room up under the roof that she used to have as a child. It had a great four-poster bed, with blue dimity curtains, and there were

large daguerreotypes of Grandfather and Grandmother Craig in oval frames on the walls. Outside of the window the tree-tops murmured, and in a dark corner of the hall, at the top of the stair, there was a high bookcase filled with little shabby volumes bound in green cloth, with curly gilt titles and pictures of little girls in pantalettes. As a child she had sat on the top of a ladder opposite the open shelves, reading "The Wide, Wide World," "Dotty Dimple," and "Prudence Pardon." She found the same ladder now, and she sat on the top of it in the gloom and read, and thought about her mother and Ann as little girls in pantalettes with fluted frills. She seemed to herself quite happy, and she wished she could always sit there on that ladder at the top of the stairs; she wished no one would ever come up to find and disturb her.

No one did disturb her for a long time. Sometimes Aunt Sally panted up the stairs from the kitchen with a plate of hot dough-nuts, her round black face glistening with happiness and perspiration; sometimes Sam lingered over his polishing of the long balustrade to talk of the days when she was "jes' a lil squalin' chile"; and once in a while Grandfather Craig, on his way to the attic to unearth some ancient volume, would stop and cock his eyebrow at her from the bottom of the ladder and ask her to come and help him in the garden; but these were not real interruptions. They were just kindly, gentle incidents in the long, quiet days, as were the drives through the country in the squat pony-cart, when the Reverend Ebenezer called at comfortable farm-houses to "pass the time of day" with the farm people. She would sit behind the plump pony at the gate, and watch the petals of apple-blossoms drifting to the ground, and smell the rich, newly-ploughed fields, feeling very tired, but quite happy.

Afterwards it seemed to her that she might have been saved the last chapter of her ignominy if she had been left alone then ; but Anthony's letters began to come from the sea, where he was painting—came to keep her awake at night between the craving for him and the dread of his coming. That she might not have to think out this contest of feelings she took to writing verse again ; and one day, when she was perched on the top of her ladder, Ann appeared below her suddenly with a piece of paper in her hand.

" I found this," she said shortly. She handed up the paper.

" Oh—that !"

" What is it ?" said Ann.

" A scribble—that's all."

" Bobbie, don't—don't scribble things like that !"

Barbara eyed the face below her seriously.

" I have to, Ann."

" Oh, my poor child !" said Ann then ; and Barbara thought of the pity in Alice Kavanagh's eyes, and felt mortified, and turned away to the book-shelves, coldly. So Ann went downstairs again.

Soon after that the house began to fill with guests, and Barbara, appreciating Ann's motive perfectly, smiled to herself with a sense of security from such distractions ; but presently she began to enjoy it ; and then, all at once, she threw herself into the gaiety—that was pleasure certainly, if not joy.

When the first of August arrived, and with it her Anthony, he found her surrounded ; removed from him by a queer, prickly hedge of social negations that he could not see and could not grapple with. He watched her, bewildered, pained, amused, disgusted. He felt like a man trying to embrace a rose-bush that was all thorns. She held for him even a more spicy fragrance, but she was un-get-at-able.

He had taken a rattle-ty-bang trap from the station,

and had arrived dirty and tired from his long trip, to find her sitting on the ground under a tree, playing mumble-de-peg with three sunburned young gods in white flannels. She had come forward to greet him with a pretty pretence of pleasure and a charming display of manner. She was sheathed in a linen riding habit, a wide Mexican hat was tilted over her hair, a stiff white stock encased her throat, and a tiny silver spur clinked on her left boot. Her teeth and her eyes shone in the warm tan glow of her face. His heart leaped to her, and she held out a hand with just the delightful cordiality of a perfect hostess. He listened to her in a dull wonderment while she asked him if he had had a comfortable journey, and behaved like an awkward ass, he knew, when she presented the sunburned gods. Then another "Olympian" had come up the drive on horseback, leading a beautiful pony with a side-saddle. Dismounting, he had turned into a kind of giant jockey, with a large red face, queer, merry hazel eyes with brown spots in them, and a broken nose-bridge. She introduced this last phenomenon as Ann's cousin, Fitz Craig, and had excused herself, as she had promised to try his new polo pony. At this point a certain sharp clarity suddenly displayed his dismayed mistiness. He smiled sardonically, and turned on his heel. He knew he was rude. What earthly difference did it make whether she were polite or he were rude, as long as she had given their friendship the lie? He had no time with her alone that evening, and at eleven o'clock he was left to wander in the garden and stare up at what was perhaps her lighted window, and swear as much as he liked.

And Barbara, when she went up to her little room that night, sat down at her table by the window where the pines murmured, and sat and sat, thinking at last. A great pile of his letters lay at her elbow, and near

them she noticed the scribbled verse Ann had put there some weeks before.

"Dear, be kind.

You may still be kind.

You have kissed my eyes till my eyes are blind,

You have clasped my body and killed my mind,

Yet—be kind.

You may still be kind."

Her fingers closed on it, crumpling it together slowly. She would have been glad now of the heart that had written even that. He had called her a green tree once; her branches were all but bare now. She had not noticed the leaves falling in her heart, but they had been accumulating there, a thick layer of dead leaves.

## CHAPTER IX

### GRANDFATHER CRAIG'S PORTRAIT

"It's not kind."

"It is true."

"It's a caricature."

"I have simply painted a square little man made up of triangles. You know, his face is made up of triangles."

"It's not that; it's the meaning you've put into it. You have given vent to a vicious humour. You needn't have made him such an incarnate exegesis of the Holy Scriptures."

"He preached to me with his forefinger in his Bible all the time he was posing. *Voici ! le résultat.*"

She shifted her ground. "You knew it would hurt Ann."

"Pardon me, I knew nothing of the kind. I wasn't thinking of Mrs. Craig. It just happened."

"It has, in any case, made me unhappy."

"You shouldn't have asked me to do it."

She opened her lips to retort again, and shut them over the ashamed thought that they were squabbling like children. Their intercourse had fallen to this level in a fortnight, an incredibly swift descent. She was ready enough to take the blame upon herself. Her one desire now was that he should save a tattered remnant of the glory with which she had once clothed him, and escape, leaving her to revel alone in her self-loathing. She could afford to lose her self-respect, because she had staked all upon his divinity, not her

own. If her idol emerged from the ashes golden, it was enough to justify the past ; but if he were proved counterfeit, she shuddered to face the clamouring guilt of their intercourse. She wanted to be assured that she had sacrificed to a god, that was all. But his conduct was making that wellnigh impossible. They seemed to be hurrying one another headlong into an abyss of mutual contempt. She longed to strike bottom, to reach the end of this dizzy, downward stumbling ; and yet the possibility of coming up short at last, to a completed loathing of him, terrified her.

She realized that she had been unkind in asking him to Craig Manor. She had wanted him to do the impossible thing, and she had been ready to forgive much, because she had herself put him in the false position that rubbed him raw. But the strain upon her all but worn out affection had been too great. She had blamed herself for noticing his outlandishness, for valuing the mere good-breeding and *savoir-faire* that stamped the others and left him isolated in his *gaucherie* ; but it was not enough that she should abuse herself continually, and she had begun to excuse him to herself with a weary hopelessness, and finally not to excuse him at all. It was a poor self-deception to pretend that his was an inner fineness that scorned a graceful and conventional exterior.

He seemed to have not the first idea of what was expected of a guest : came late to meals, smoked in the drawing-room, entered continually upon wordy contests with any and every one, left his painting paraphernalia all over the house, and drummed the piano ceaselessly on into the night when sane souls were trying to sleep ! and then, when asked to sing, refused to do so with a very bad grace. And she, being ashamed of him and for him, time after time, failed at length to discern through her wounded vanity the very real agony that made him wince angrily at every



touch. She even came to consider that she had been exceedingly tolerant; she had tried to cover him with the charitable curtain of his artist reputation; she had displayed an ostentatious concern for his ill-health (he had a horrid cough); she had gone so far as to apologize to certain of the guests for his eccentricities; and at length she had set him to work to keep him busy. This last had been a blundering move; he had seen through it, and had taken his revenge in his own way. The *dénouement* proved how incapably she had managed the situation. He had displayed the finished study at tea that afternoon. It had been a ghastly hour. In spite of the well-bred efforts of the guests to cover up the awkward dismay that gaped beneath the level of conversation, no one had succeeded in concealing the fact that the display of the portrait had produced a shock, and the artist had for the first time since his arrival in the house been the one member of the party who was at ease. He had stood, one arm along the mantelpiece, regarding them all with a coolness that had been in bad taste, certainly, considering the enormity of his offence. He had seemed actually to take pleasure in their discomfiture, in their stammered insincerities of appreciation. He rose, superbly arrogant, above the barbed glances of their resentment. But if he were immune to their animosity, Barbara was not. She was suffering a mixed torture. It seemed to her that he had betrayed a trust, and deliberately insulted her kin, and at the same time he had forced her to share in his offence. He had put into the concrete just her own intolerant idea of one of her family, and she cringed at the sight. She had watched Ann's sensitive face grow rigid with outraged pride of family, and she had felt that she was as guilty as he, and he as guilty as she. That was just the unbearable thing—that they should be colleagues in the offensive affair. When they were left alone,

she had turned on him with a fierce determination to break from him by forcing him to justify himself. If he couldn't, then——

It was incredible that anyone should have dared destroy the staid self-esteem of such a room with such a shrieking bit of modernism. It was one of those mellow, dignified libraries in which nothing ever has a right to disturb the long-established medley of its fine antiquities. But the atmosphere of its unassailable dignity, of its unimpeachable aristocracy, had been shivered by the insult of an impressionist's art. It was a room to disdain an æsthetic colour scheme, to quietly put aside any attempts at normal artistic effect. With a superb disregard for the canons of interior decorating, it harmonized into itself a blending of colours as fantastic as one of the old-fashioned bouquets of larkspur and gladiolus and comos that stood on the high marble mantel. The curtains at the long windows were of Christmas-green brocade, and were topped by heavy ornate cornices of gilded wood. Here and there, between the g'aming legs of old mahogany chairs and black horse-hair sofas, one caught a glimpse of worn scarlet carpet. There were old family portraits in heavy oval frames on the walls, and beneath these ran a bookcase, some four feet high, the top crowded with curios, the shelves completely filled with well-handled volumes. The wide white marble mantel was surmounted by an enormous gilt-framed mirror, and before the grate was a large white bear-skin, flanked on either side by colonial chairs in tapestried upholstery. Opposite a window stood the portrait, a daring, ultra-modern impression of an ultra-orthodox parson of the old school. It struck a horrid discord from its surroundings.

Barbara sat deep in one of the grandfather chairs, her slippered feet on the brass fender. With her usual instinct for dressing in harmony with her surroundings,

she had on a sprigged green muslin of numberless billowy flounces that might have been fashioned for one of the ladies in the oval frames. She looked certainly as though she belonged to the room. That was what she wanted, to belong to the room, and its traditions, and its charm, and to sever herself once and for all from his world. That this meant severance from him personally was a fact that was growing more and more plain. She did not know whether it carried with it more relief or more of self-condemning regret. In any case she felt that it was inevitable. It was very obtuse of him to persist in linking her to him.

"May I suggest that you are responsible? You know you asked me to do the sketch to keep me out of the way, their way, and your way." He smiled unpleasantly.

"I didn't suppose——"

"No, you didn't suppose I would do it so well. It's deucedly good. The Reverend Ebenezer has done me a good turn. I shall hang him in the Salon."

"What?"

"In the Salon. I presume your family will not care to purchase the horrid libel, and I really cannot afford to throw away such an excellent piece of work." His pretence of insolence was excellent. For a man who was really one raw pain he smiled well.

"You cannot—it would be outrageous. I will buy the picture myself first." She eyed his smile distrustfully. "What is the price?"

He flushed a dark red, and bit his lip convulsively; but she was staring into the fire again. His pretence gone, he was left pitifully exposed, could she but have seen. It was unfortunate that she was blind to the very thing she was looking for—an evidence of his superior nobility. Was it because she did not really want to see it, after all? He found it impossible to answer. He just looked at her, his face working, the

cords in his throat contracting as though his palate were very dry. An unsearchable pain burned in the eyes that devoured her. For the time being he had lost his egotism in a greater entity.

As he looked, the sunset light streamed in upon her through the west window. He flung both arms out along the mantel with a groan. She looked up, a little startled.

"Won't you sell it to me?"

"Good God!" His jaw dropped in sheer amazement. He simply couldn't bring himself to see her as she was now; she had been so dear. Her stupidity appalled him, and yet he refused to blame her for it; she seemed such a child. His rage at the people who surrounded her burst into flame. They were taking him from her, he knew that, but they were killing her soul, too, he thought, and that was worse. He began striding up and down the room, began to lash her with his tongue. If he could only hurt her enough, he thought, he might break through and save her yet. She thought with relief that what she wanted had come at last. Their house was crashing down now. Let it go. She would be free soon. She bowed her head to the deluge with a glad horror.

"You are incorrigible. The kindest way to explain you is that you are possessed. But that doesn't excuse you. Each one of us has his particular devil to fight. What is so despicable about you is that you don't fight. You have given over to him the keeping of your soul, as though it were a clod of mud. None but the devil could have played the Old Harry with your mind, blinded your eyes, and besmirched your soul, as has been done. A month ago you were as sweet as a rose, and now you reek with the sticky, unclean cosmetics of society. You care more for the flattery of half a dozen fatuous fools than for the adoration of one honest mind." He stopped in front

of her glaring, and at last the more obvious nobility of his anger made an impression on her. She was forced to admire him now; and momentarily she sank to a lower depth of self-contempt. Somehow it was not as enjoyable a sensation as she had expected. He continued in a more level, biting tone:

"It is extraordinary, for Heaven knows you've had enough flattery during your little coddled life to render you immune to this much tawdry admiration. Possibly vanity is too respectable a name for your devil. If it's not vanity, it's something far simpler. Yes, you cringe at that. You are a lady; you talk a polite language. I offend your taste." His voice rose again. "Good God, your taste!" He flung from her, then back again fiercely. "What are you but a sister to harlots? I have watched you grow jaded to my sense appeal. Why on earth, when the tide of your passion was running low, didn't you tell me, and rest, honestly, quietly? I am no devouring beast. I would have left you alone. Why didn't you give me a chance? Why? Just because you didn't want to. You'd fiddled too long on your senses to know what natural feeling was. You craved a coarser touch than mine, so you turned to that gentleman jockey, with his beefy face, and his bellowing passion, and his spotty eyes. Phaugh!"

"Stop!" She tried to rise, but he put a hand on each arm of her chair, pinning her to her place. She told herself that this was absurd melodrama. He began again.

"I have watched you, my pretty one—watched you rolling your eyes like a barmaid, flirting with your mouth—your crooked red mouth. You belong to the sentimentalists, and you belong to harlots. A pretty combination, isn't it? And what have you done with me? Kicked me into a corner with the dainty insults of a polite tongue. You—you have apologized for

me . . . to fools." He almost sobbed. "And you were my friend once, the beloved child of my heart." He dropped into the chair opposite, seized with a violent paroxysm of coughing. It was more than she had bargained for. She rose, shaking.

"Your language is hideous." Through his coughs he laughed after her, "language—hideous." She moved toward the door, slinking, frightened, then turned, gathering to her a draggled dignity.

"Now that you have had your say, you had better go and dress." The words sounded a mockery, and the last red glow of sunset touched her, standing in the door, with a taunting beauty. It left him huddled in the gloom of his great chair. He peered at her strangely.

"Dress, for what?"

"The gentleman jockey"—she smiled over the name—"is coming for us with his four-in-hand. We drive to the farm for supper."

"Oh, do we?" His sneer was horrid to look at. "You are welcome to go—I stay at home." He sank lower in his chair.

"Very well." Her voice was ice. As she turned through the door she gave him one hard glance over her shoulder. She could not see his face in the shadow. Probably even if she had she would not have stopped. As she went upstairs the sound of his coughing followed her. She knew he was a sick man, but she did not know that he had started out of his chair after her in the gloom, his arms outstretched, his eyes blinded with tears, and had stumbled over the easel that held the portrait.

\* \* \* \* \*

She wondered, after the horrid delirium of that evening had come and gone, whether she could possibly have fallen so low, if he had not put the poisoned thought into her mind that she was indeed a sensualist.

Thoughts in these days took the form of such subtle temptations. The mere voicing of a sin seemed the inevitable signal for its fulfilment. She was like a rudderless ship, drifting wherever the misty winds of her imagination blew her. There seemed no moral compass by which to steer. Everywhere lay a blank sea of unfathomable, bewildering mistakes.

If Fitzgerald Craig were a jockey, he was certainly a gentleman, and it argued much for his upbringing that he never carried the savour of his stables with him into his drawing-room. He was a charming host, and the little farm-house in which he was content to live, backed as it was by enormous stables, was as luxurious as a bachelor's world-tinted taste could make it. He was a simple, boyish man, in spite of his many millions and his world-wide wanderings, but he had an exacting taste, and in his own huge way an excellent manner. He had an air about him of owning the earth and of carrying the responsibility of ownership lightly. He had, too, an all-embracing, disarming grin and a leonine grace. Everything he did he did well, and he was wise enough not to attempt things "not in his line." His line included a broader area of interest than one might have supposed, to look at his sunburned and sunny physiognomy. It encircled the breeding of horses, the making of money, the collecting of choice pictures, as well as much-coveted "first editions," and the wholesale light-hearted love-making of a sex whom he might have despised if he had not been so inherently optimistic, so gloriously healthy.

His appeal was obvious. Indeed, it would have been more unpleasant if it had not been so colossally, gigantically frank. It was spelt all over him in plain letters; it struck from him loudly; it breathed from him at times hotly.

Barbara felt about as secure with him as with an untamed lion. The slim leash on which she held him

was her refusal to marry him. He admired her tremendously for doing so, because he knew half a hundred women who would have snapped greedily at his millions. His passion for her was thus tinged with a kind of childish reverence, and the fact that he still hoped to make her his mistress kept him on his guard.

He wanted a wife with brains to tell him how to spend, and with beauty to adorn the spending. Barbara had both; moreover, she had a languid charm that intoxicated him. He was violently in love with her. He doted upon her now as she took her seat beside him on the box, a straight white figure, with a white plume streaming across her head. And she, as she sat beside his towering bulk, wondering whether the epithets her lover had hurled at her were not true, after all, felt a poisonous desire to make them true, to let go and sink into the whirling flood of passion that seethed in the man beside her.

Later, she sat through the charming little farm supper—an exaggerated fantasy of a country supper cooked by a French chef and served by an English butler—in a dreary, dizzy maze of thought. She watched the candle-light on her host's rugged, beaming countenance, and she felt like stroking his bushy head, as though he were her big, beautiful Newfoundland. She watched the clean, clear faces of the others, and thought how different they all were from Anthony, with their polished manners, their low laughter, their placid platitudes of wit. And, avoiding Ann's blue eyes—those sane, humorous blue eyes that seemed threatening to laugh her back into the world of reality—she turned her gaze inward upon herself instead, and thought what a leper she was in their midst. She thought, too, of what a life it would mean being mistress of this glorious animal and of his millions, instead of companion to the nerve-racking artist in his smoky Bohemia. Not that either seemed a very



real alternative. She was not looking ahead; there seemed to be no future—just a shifting, bottomless present. She heard them decide to canoe home, and she wandered down the river, the film of her white gown trailing after her a heavy weight of embroidery, and listened with a vague pleasure while the lion-man told her that she was beautiful. She knew that she was beautiful, and she knew that she was unclean. The combination indicated a fatality impending.

The river wound its gleaming silver in and out of a throbbing bosom of shadow. She let her host put her into the last of the little fleet of canoes with a sense of having lived through all this before, and of being a passive spectator now of her own experience. Languidly she trailed her fingers in the white fire of the water. In and out, from silver to purple shadow, they glided, and the willows bowed over them languorously, and the mist of white light filtered through her veins in a slow fire. The song of the crickets sang to her, a shrill, vibrant, pulsing song; the sweet smell of the night melted into her; and the man's passion wrapped her about, closer and closer, a swooning mantle of passion.

Out of a dream she felt the nose of the canoe bump against the shore. The others were already disappearing up the hill through the apple-trees. Lights from the library windows streamed half-way down to them. She rose, with a cold, deadly languor, and dragged her draperies on to the grass, steadied by an iron arm that was held to her in the gloom. He loomed mountainous, and his face beside her gleamed in the moonlight, rough and jagged, and even as she wondered at the unpleasant heat of his laboured breathing, she turned her face to him with an upward, unmistakable movement.

He took her lips as her lover had never taken them. The contact of his wet, twisting mouth was a sudden poison that ate through her sentimentality like vitriol.

She would have torn her lips away on the instant, but he was crushing her to him, and she was a snowflake in the furnace of his embrace. She felt herself melting into nothingness, and as she waited seeming to be vanishing slowly, she saw, as she had never seen before, nature, naked, beautiful and terrible, against whom she was sinning.

How it was she found herself free and facing Anthony Ladd she never knew. She heard the other speak, and must have motioned him to go, for she heard his paddle dip into the water, but she could not have turned to see. She was conscious of holding her hand over her mouth; she could not even take that away. She knew that if she moved she would fall. They stood facing one another for an eternity.

After a long time he turned away from her silently and started toward the house. She stood watching him, helpless; but he did not get very far. He seemed weak; he dragged one foot after the other wearily, and presently he dropped on to a bench within the shadow of a tree. She could scarcely see him, but she heard the tearing sounds of the cough that seized him, and she managed to stumble toward the place a little way. She was seized with an overwhelming compassion for him, that battled to engulf the sickness of her shame. Just beyond the shadows of the branches she stood watching.

He gasped between racking coughs: "Don't stand there looking—like—an angel."

She didn't dare move, but stood listening to the sounds of the cough that was tearing him there in the darkness.

"Don't you hear me—get out—of my sight. Damn you!"

She fell then on her knees and began to crawl toward him into the shadow. When she felt his knee, she touched it timidly with her hand.

"Forgive me," she breathed, after a long time. He did not answer. His coughs ceased gradually, and he was very still, turned from her in the gloom.

"Tony—Tony—I was mad! You called me the name first. I—might—never have—— Tony, forgive me! Save me! You must save me." She waited, but he made no sign. It seemed to her now that he had thrown her off, that her world was at an end. If he would not lift her out of the horrid void of her freedom, there was no telling where she might sink. She turned to him, shuddering.

"Take me again, Tony." His need of her seemed now her one protection from herself. If she could succeed in pretending to need him, she might keep that other Nemesis at bay.

She rose beside him on her knees and pressed her head against his shoulder.

"Dear—let me love you." She gathered all her strength into a similitude of affection. He rose, dragging her with him into the light. His face was distorted with tears. There was something terrible to her in the sight of what seemed to her his humiliation, and she was tempted to despise him anew for suffering through such an one as herself. At the same time she exulted in the weakness that seemed to link him to her again. She feared more than anything now the freedom she had wanted so much.

"Child, child," he groaned hoarsely, "you are breaking my heart!" The words carried to her frightened mind an echo of gladness. She stood before him very still, clinging to the thought that he was hers because she had humiliated him, had tempted him to forget his manhood, clinging to the thought of how he had taken money from her, and of how his life would be ruined now, if he threw her aside. She was thinking of the relief there would be from self-condemnation in one great act of self-sacrifice. These little cruelties

to him, this endless succession of subterfuge, were what had ruined her ; her salvation lay in giving herself to him in payment. She was thinking all this while he searched her face with a terrible intensity of which she was all unconscious, so absorbed was she in her own delusion.

" Oh—give me a chance—again—to love you !"

It seemed to her that her voice rang true. She stretched out a hand, coming close to him ; she looked up into his face—and saw nothing of the meaning there. It was only long afterwards that she realized how immeasurably above her he was at that moment. She did not know that he was waiting for her to save herself from what he saw now was her destruction—her hideously sentimental feeling for him. Blindly she rushed into the trap she had laid for herself.

" I do love you !"

She murmured the lie with all the gathering yearning of her little lonely, lost soul. As she spoke the words through sweet trembling lips he stiffened suddenly, looked at her for a moment with a glance that shut up her eyes like a flash of lightning, and then flung her from him with a curse. She fell sprawling in the wet grass, and heard his steps crash swiftly through the shrubbery.

An indefinite time later she slipped through an open window into the library. Sounds of a late supper came from the dining-room, but there was still a word to be written in his hand across the page of her mind—a mocking word that was to spoil the last of her sentimentalities. Grandfather Craig's portrait grimaced at her strangely in the firelight. Just where the triangular shadow of his upper lip had been a little triangle of canvas was cut away. And a knife had ripped through his eyebrows. She realized sickly that it was impossible for her to admire the man who would do that.

It was all over—now.

## CHAPTER X

### ANOTHER DAY

ANN found her in the morning lying fully dressed on her bed, damp skirts wrapped about icy feet, hair matted on a brow burning with fever. Ann had climbed to the little room under the roof to suggest that she have her breakfast in bed, and to tell her that the artist had departed in the night without saying good-bye to anyone, and leaving most of his things behind him. It had been the last of a succession of discourtesies that had driven her frantic with the repressed desire to rescue the child from his soiling grasp. She had watched Barbara drifting farther and farther away from her; she could not have stood it much longer. The day before she had felt that a conflict between the girl and herself was inevitable, and she had faced it with dread; she had so wanted to be to the child a sane, laughing friend. Now she was glad that she had held back so long. The tragi-comedy was evidently at an end. She breathed a prayer that they might awake to the comedy of it soon.

The room spoke of a restless midnight activity. The lamp still burned a remnant of oil; a heap of letter fragments overflowed the waste-basket; a thick black bundle of charred manuscript lay under the table. From beneath the bed protruded a corner of canvas, the paint upon it still moist. Divining what it was, she pushed it out of sight with her foot, and bent over the unconscious figure, murmuring, "Bobbie, my

Bobbie!" The girl tossed and moaned without opening her eyes. "Oh, oh!" she shuddered once, throwing her arms wide and her head back; "another chance!" She raved off and on for three days.

Her first act of will when she awoke to consciousness was to strangle the wish that she might die.

It took her another week of passive gazing at the sunlight that streamed in at the windows, at the autumn leaves fluttering outside, to gather her scattered brain to the next decision. She would begin to live honestly now.

After this she sank into a blissfully passive acceptance of things. It seemed natural to her that her mother should be sitting by her bedside when she awoke one evening from the blank of a restful sleep. As the days slipped through her room, in at the east window with the morning sun and out at the west with the sunset, everything came to her, touched gently with a lustreless, natural light. She was dimly grateful to her mother and to Ann for not destroying the matter-of-factness of things. She realized vaguely that they might trouble her if they wished, but they alluded to nothing, and inflicted no glances of compassion upon her. They sat near her, one at a time, or over by the window together chatting comfortably. They fed her with chicken-broth and laughed when she spilled it, and tied one of the old child-bibs embroidered with a goose in red cotton around her neck. She lay against her pillows weakly pleased and surprised at their happiness, especially her mother's, and presently she sank the shadow-horror of a memory-mother in the peaceful radiance of this present woman who took her back to the days when she was a very little girl, before the time— She let the dread thought drift away unfinished, and stretched out a hand over the bedspread. Her mother stroked it, crooning a nursery-rhyme.

It was evening. Aunt Sally rolled her ample self in with a lighted lamp, and rolled out again silently. How lovely her mother looked in the shaded lamp-light! It was nice to have a beautiful mother, with shiny waves of hair, who wore long shimmering gowns trimmed with waterfalls of old lace.

"Mother!"

"Yes, dear?"

"You look so nice!"

"Do I?"

"No wonder father thought you a beauty."

The other smiled in silence.

"He fell in love with you at first sight, didn't he?"

"Yes, so he said."

"Tell me about it again."

"Well, I was a school-teacher in New York, but I wasn't a great success as one. You see, I didn't know anything. So it was a mercy all round. I lived in a back room in a flat belonging to some friends of my father's, and I took my meals at a Quaker restaurant near Tenth Street. My salary was four hundred and fifty dollars a year, but I was only there six months."

"And where did he make love to you?"

"In the parlour of the flat. It was full of bric-à-brac, and every chair was covered with a crocheted antimacassar. Your father was too big for any of the chairs. His legs stretched half-way across the room."

"Were you ashamed of it?"

"No; I didn't think about being ashamed. And he seemed to think it all quite natural. He used to kiss Mrs. Smith's hand when he left, as though she were a real 'grande dame,' and she would grow quite pink with delight." Mrs. Witherow drifted into thought. "There was always a smell of cabbage," she said meditatively.

Barbara snuggled under the bedclothes.

When she was better, well enough to sit on the porch

behind the white columns and look down the flaming, autumn-tinted valley, she was conscious of a process going on in her mind, a fitting together of fragments of that near past, that seemed so far now, into a new pattern. It was a kind of jigsaw puzzle, only the pieces fitted themselves into place while she watched, passive. None attracted her to more than a languid glance, not even a wildly tender note from Anthony Ladd, in which he begged to be allowed to come to her in her illness, implored her to tell him that it had all been a delirium, a vanished fever. She let the message lie in the shadow of her brain listlessly for a week, then appealed to Ann for the answer of it. She was conscious of no disloyalty in so doing. He seemed a shade clamouring to her from another world—a world of hot, tumultuous night, and she listened to him quietly, bathed in the cool, honest light of sane day. She and Ann were on the front porch drinking in the autumn sunshine. Ann sat in a low chair, her hands folded in her lap, her blue eyes far away on the hills that quivered a shimmering blue through a limpid distance.

"He seems not to understand that it is finished."

Barbara spoke without unnecessary preamble. Ann did not answer. She signified by a deepening of the tenderness in her face that she understood.

"If I had strength enough to be afraid, I might be afraid of his continuing—to pursue."

"You can end it."

"How?"

"Explain."

"I have no brain."

"Leave his letter unanswered, then."

"It would be unfair. We were too deeply involved. I owe him something."

"You owe him his freedom. Give him his chance."

"Can I do nothing for him?"



" Nothing but leave him alone."

" But if he will not be left ?"

" Run away."

" Ah !" She drew a quivering breath of shame.

" Must I ?"

" You know best, Bobbie."

The dear woman's blue eyes rested on her lovingly, candidly. That was one of the tasks of this new day—to justify the trust of those eyes. A few days later she acquiesced almost with enthusiasm to the plan her mother proposed—that she spend the winter in the Far East, with Ann and Grandfather Craig as companions. It was her mother's sane frankness that clinched her own determination. Mrs. Witherow told her daughter in so many words that she did not think it wise for them to be together that winter. They were neither of them sure of themselves. A winter's separation would give them both balance, tolerance for each other. Barbara kissed her in wonder ; she wondered, too, that she could not feel a more intense affection where she felt such complete gratitude. Her mother seemed, however, to understand. She demanded nothing, but busied herself in getting her ready for her trip.

Before going, Barbara faced one ordeal that proved to be less of a strain than she had dared to hope. She had an interview with Fitz Craig, in which he proved himself a gentleman to whom one could be unreservedly grateful.

He dashed over on horseback in answer to the note that summoned him. He was big, and healthy, and happy. His merry spotted eyes, sobering to concern for her health, were devoid of reproach or of self-consciousness. He seemed to have forgotten the horrid episode that turned her pale now with the cowardly desire to cover her shame with lies. And she might never have gotten through that hour with

him with clear honesty if his simple admiration of her had not come to her rescue. She saw at a glance that he still admired her, and anchored her courage on that fact.

"I am going East for the winter."

"Awfully jolly, I call it. I've a good mind to follow you, but Ann won't hear of it. I could be a first-class 'courier.' Anyhow, I can give you letters to some fine chaps in India."

He left her breathless. "You're very kind!"

"I've knocked around the East a lot, you know. Want some advice? Always wear a cholera-belt, and don't be a teetotaller."

He laughed; she could not help echoing him.

"Though I do know one teetotaller—corking chap. I'll drop him a line—queer fish—lives like a fakir. One chair and a tin wash-basin for furniture, lentils and rice for diet. Knows the natives, and loves 'em, that's the miracle. Sense of humour saves him. Wager you never met anyone like him before."

Barbara acknowledged a curiosity.

"Oh, I'll forewarn him, but mind you don't break his heart. He's all heart, that chap. Nursed me through cholera, and prayed over me like a mother."

She caught a tremor in his voice, and dwelt on the wonder of it.

"What is his name?"

"Colin Traive. I say, do be good to him—I love that man!"

Somehow she couldn't drag herself into the conversation now. They talked an hour longer of India and Traive the Scotchman, who was all humour and all heart—the only humorous mystic Fitz had ever met. It was not until he rose from his place on the steps at her feet that he opened up the opportunity she wanted and dreaded.

"May I write to you?"

"Why?"

He flushed a dark red, and whacked his boot with his whip.

"You must know—I still hope to make you marry me some day."

"You can never do that." He compressed his lips tightly.

"I—I——" she hesitated painfully. "I may have given you reason——"

"To think I had a right? No; I'm not such a fool. I don't bank on that night." He dismissed "that night" with a largeness that left her mute in admiring gratitude. "I bank on my own determination."

"I feel that I owe you something after that night. I was unkind to you, as well as to myself—but I cannot."

She was red and white by turns. She felt it absurd to try and explain how she had sinned. She realized momentarily with a greater clearness how little he appreciated the subtle values of that, to her, endlessly meaningful experience.

"Oh, Fitz"—she flung herself into his own frank lingo—"Fitz, for goodness' sake, don't love me! As long as you love me I shall feel horribly in debt to you."

"Well—I can't help it, you know."

"How can I make it up to you, Fitz?"

"Make up what?" She caught herself on the ragged edge of another sentimentalism, and recoiled.

"I'm talking nonsense. Forgive me."

He turned to her, unexpectedly lucid. "Don't worry about it. You think you were a cad to let me kiss you? Well, if anybody was a cad, it was I, but I tell you I'm mighty glad you gave me that once." He took her hand firmly. "Good-bye. I shall join you with a motor when you get back to the Continent. Ann has given me that much."

She had to be content with that, and as she watched him swing through the pines to the gate she was inclined to laugh at herself.

A week later she and Ann were wrapped in steamer rugs, snugly tucked into their chairs on the deck of an outbound liner. Grandfather Craig was trudging a constitutional around the deck.

"Ann!"

"Bobbie."

"You know, I still believe that he is true—to the truth as he knows it."

No answer.

"Ann, it wasn't his sin; it was mine. I want you to be fair to him."

No answer.

"Ann, I know you can't bear him, but I can't bear that you should condemn him."

"Bobbie, child, it doesn't make one bit of difference to him whether I or you condemn him or not. All he needs is a chance. He will shake free of his thought of you far sooner than you are free of him at this rate."

Barbara winced, and was silent. After a while Grandfather Craig had rounded the deck twice.

"Mother was wonderful. It must have been hard for her."

"Yes," said Ann with fervour.

"Perhaps I may make it up to her some day."

"Never—but you may make it up to your own children."

She smiled at the white denial on the girl's face, then sank back into her chair to breathe a prayer in the childless hunger of her own heart for this little bewildered soul who did not know that her life lay all ahead of her.

And Margaret Witherow, left alone once more, was comforted in her loneliness. Waiting in her room,

waiting and dreaming through the hours of her enforced idleness, while Barbara travelled toward that little destined spot in the heart of India ; Margaret travelled, too, outstripping the news in those delicious letters ; and she was happy, for upon the surface of her heart that she turned upward to God there was engraved by some mysterious and incalculable process the fine and perfect evidence of things unseen.

en-  
that  
aret  
ious  
e of  
was  
cess

## PART II

### CHAPTER I

#### BY THE CALCUTTA MAIL

THE "Up-Calcutta" Mail was late, and the huge cavern of the railway shed yawned over gleaming rails, yawned with steel-clamped jaws over the waiting crowd that was spread along the platform like a brilliant carpet. It was just the usual crowd that gathered there every day, and the same kind of a crowd that gathered every day at every one of a hundred stations up and down the line—a crowd made up of Punjabi villagers in dusty chuddhas, of Parsee merchants in sleek frock-coats, of Afghan horse-dealers in velvet jackets and voluminous trousers, of Sepoys in khaki, and of students in collarless shirts and patent-leather shoes, and, finally, of many shrouded women, strangely graceful bundles of clothing with children, bright, bejewelled, uncovered, and unashamed, clinging to their hidden hands; just the usual crowd—a mass of gorgeous colour, a medley of diverse religions and tongues, a tangle of antagonizing customs, of bitter rivalries, of absurd prejudices and splendid hatreds. Jewels sparkled through a maze of silken garments, long water-pipes revolved slowly from mouth to mouth, naked brown babies climbed hungrily for curtained breasts, a pedlar languidly waved the flies from his vessels of steaming lentils, and a coolie threaded his way swinging in and out among the

squatting groups, balancing a pyramid basket of oranges on his head. Only the children laughed and looked upon one another with bright eyes for the most part the crowd was still, and stared before itself sleepily, seeing nothing.

On the other side of the station, across the bridge and beyond the ticket-office, was a dizzy shimmer of sun and dust, so brilliantly thick that it seemed as though a curtain were dropped close against the wall of the building covering this aperture; and on the wrong side of the curtain appeared a blurred pattern of ragged men, dilapidated landaus, and ancient horses, all mingling together and showing through the thick veil of sunlight in a strange confusion. From somewhere there arose a muffled clamour of engines shunting in the yard, of rumb'ing trucks traversing uneven platforms, of distantly shouting coolies. But in spite of the heat that vibrated visibly outside, the air of the station was chill and heavy with the strong, damp smell of disinfectants; and in spite of the distant clamour within the warm, sleepy crowd there was silence.

The station-master, who emerged listlessly through a flapping screen door on to the platform, seemed to hang uncertainly between the crowd and its strident surroundings. He hung over these squatting human beings drearily, eyeing them with lack-lustre gaze of hopeless condemnation; he pivoted on his heel slowly, taking in the far blurred haze of sunlight and the dull roar of traffic without a change of expression. He was a weary man. His ego had been crushed between two worlds. He was neither an Englishman nor an Indian.

Tall and narrow, with a protruding Adam's apple above the worn collar of his shabby uniform, his shoulders hung forward heavily, and his legs moved with a kind of plodding uncertainty in trousers that were too wide, and bagged at the knees. His moustache

was white, and there were tufts of grey hair in his ears. Dark purple shadows were scooped out of his yellow cheeks under his mournful eyes. He looked like a man who for years had stared at a blank wall that was too close to him to be seen clearly.

As he compared his watch with the station clock his sunken countenance brightened. A square blonde man in a cotton suit that was too small for him and a quilted topi that was too large was hurrying across the bridge. He made his way quickly through the crowd, and laid a sunburned hand that extended with several inches of freckled wrist beyond his shrunken coat-sleeve on the Eurasian's shoulder. He wore a clerical collar, and had evidently been cycling, as his trousers were caught in clamps above his dusty boots.

"How are you?" he asked in a quiet voice. "Mail late, I suppose?" And he grinned cheerfully, with a flash of white teeth.

"Yes; smash-up down Agra side." The station-master spoke in a rough sing-song. He gazed at the other with a rather stupid intensity. "I'm about played out." He mouthed his untrimmed moustache.

The other wiped a red forehead in silence. His intensely blue eyes were kind, but not encouraging. The station-master shuffled his feet heavily.

"Things are in a bad way," he murmured.

"I'm sorry to hear that."

They were joined by a breathless, expansive, somewhat rotund man, who advanced with a beaming countenance. He was laughing in a subdued chuckle that seemed to bubble up irrepressibly from an inner source of mirth. Two little girls in scarlet dresses clung to him on either hand, and behind him appeared a fragile woman, whose large brown eyes looked out from under her white topi with an intense sweetness. She was accompanied by a sturdy boy of ten or twelve, and a comical youngster of five. There was an air



of poverty and of incontestable happiness about them all.

"Where's the baby?" said Traive, shaking hands with the frail woman.

"Asleep, so we thought we'd all come," she said, in a rather high musical voice.

"To make sure of dad's getting here," put in the big boy, with an adoring look at his father and a grown-up patronage in his voice.

"Look here, Menzies," said Traive, "McVicker's wee lad's seedy. Could you spare some milk, do you think?"

"Little chap seedy, is he? Well, just you praise the Lord for it, my man, and send along for milk every morning. The wife 'll find a way."

He looked toward his wife, who nodded and smiled.

"I'll bring it," said the big boy.

The station-master's long yellow throat contracted painfully. He stammered something, staring at them all with dull, wistful eyes, then he pulled out his watch.

"She ought to be in soon," he muttered, moving away.

And in another moment a roar and vibration shook the platform, the crowd scrambled to its feet, it swayed, it rushed, it bumped upon itself, this way and that; the engine whistled, men shouted, women chattered, babies screamed, doors, and windows, and boxes banged; Bedlam suddenly. And out of the train, on to the edge of this frantic, jabbering, swarthy crowd dribbled a line of nonchalant white men, who regarded the seething phenomenon of this mighty rabble with perfect indifference.

A little old man stuck his white head out of a first-class carriage window, cocked an eyebrow at the spectacle before him, and when the train, with a grinding of brakes, had come to a complete standstill, hopped out, followed by a young person with a long

white veil streaming from her topi, while a voice from within said :

" There they are, the whole family. How perfectly lovely !"

And then the Rev. Ebenezer and Mrs. Rowland Craig, and Miss Barbara Witherow, and her maid Wilhelmina, were fallen upon by Mr. Menzies, and Mrs. Menzies, and the four little Menzies. Everybody kissed everybody else more or less, topis were tilted to one side, laughter and little shrieks of cordiality mingled with the kisses.

By some miracle, in the very middle of that seething Orient, on the very edge of that nonchalant Anglo-India, had been created an episode truly American.

A very tall sunburned man, who had stepped out of the carriage adjoining that of the Americans, stood watching them, twisting his short moustache abstractedly. He was English, and he was a soldier—that much was unmistakable. The long, strong hollow of his back, the balance of his waist, the set of his shoulders, and the crisp curve of that blonde moustache proclaimed him to belong to that splendid and invincible monument of prejudice—a crack regiment. So obvious was all this that even Mrs. Craig had unbent to him, and during the two days' journey from Calcutta had received him from her father's hands, and given him tea in their carriage, and allowed him to dine with them in the restaurant car.

All the way from Calcutta he had been receiving a succession of shocks from these delightful and extraordinary American women, but none of them had prepared him for this.

And all the time that Barbara was embracing Mary Menzies and the children she was conscious of those astonished eyes on her back, and she saw them suddenly through those eyes, shabby, and old-fashioned, and indecently naïve, and she felt absurd, and so she

laughed and kissed them all again, with a little sick pain inside of her.

"But where's Colin?" said somebody.

"He was here a minute ago," said Mr. Menzies, struggling with a confusion of bags, and boxes, and cameras, and tiffin-baskets.

"He's gone to help Mrs. Barker over with her orphans," said Mrs. Menzies.

The Englishman approached. He shook hands with Mrs. Craig and turned to Barbara. There was an opaque blankness in his eye and a tremendous gravity in his face that meant he was embarrassed.

"Good-bye, Miss Witherow—good-bye just now. Mrs. Craig's promised to let you come to the Cinderella. I'll drop a ticket in Mrs. Menzies' box to-morrow, if I may."

She gave him her hand, and even as she smiled into his extraordinarily handsome face she saw that face change suddenly, grow more rigid, more red, more terribly compressed, reminding her of her brother somehow. She turned. A queer, luminous man was bearing down on them. His hat was on the back of his head, and on each arm he carried a dingy, squalid, skinny child, brown of skin, but dressed in a straight blue uniform, and an army of brown children, all in straight blue uniforms, trailed after him.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was late in the day when Colin Traive cycled home to his narrow slice of a house in the bazaar, and as he pedalled along the sprawling thoroughfare that led to the native city he realized that his dull feeling of discomfort was due not so much to weariness as to the unaccustomed and painful process of self-scrutiny going on in his brain. He had snatched an hour from his crowded day, and had gone to meet the Americans at the train, partly to help the *padre*, and partly to fulfil an unwelcome obligation laid upon him

by that jovial American tourist-friend, Fitz Craig. He had gone, begrudging to the strangers a minute of his precious time, intending to help convey them to the Mission bungalow, and then retire with a free conscience into his blessed, impregnable bachelordom. And what had happened? He suspended the question in a dismayed vacuum of thought, and turned from the crowded bazaar into his narrow alley. Shopkeepers, squatting to right and left of his lop-sided doorway, saluted, hands to foreheads, gravely courteous; children playing over the open drain shrilled, "Sa' bji S'am." He smiled to them broadly, shouldered his bicycle, and climbed his narrow stair. At the top of the steep, dark flight he asked himself again what had happened, and gazed about his room, grinning, with a pucker in his forehead as though expecting an answer from its uncompromising bareness; but its dingy plaster walls, its narrow strip of cement floor, its sleepy, rickety window, that leered into the afternoon light like a half-open, loose-lidded eye, stared back at him in non-committal ugliness. He noticed for the first time how dingy it was. Saltpetre crept up from the floor, staining the walls; his "niwar-bed," a thing of four wooden legs and straps of tape, sprawled like a huge spider in the corner. His one table and chair stood lamely, sullenly apologetic, by the small, unused fire-place. Through the crooked aperture of the window that bulged out over the alley, forming a crudely carved, wooden balcony, once intended for a veiled Mohammedan woman, came the voice of the bazaar—a clamorous murmur that eddied heavily upward, together with the piercing odour of spiced, steaming food, of heated throngs and crushed flower-garlands, of sweating beasts of burden and sluggish drains.

He lived here alone with his servant Jeremiah, whom he had picked up half dead outside a plague camp, and had nursed back to life. He lived here

partly because it was cheap ; partly because it satisfied in him a vague craving for romance ; partly because it was uncomfortable and satisfied another desire for asceticism ; and partly because it brought him in touch with men he could not have reached otherwise. He never persuaded himself that this last was his only reason, although his conduct persuaded others that this was so.

He stood in the window, looking down on a ceaseless stream of coolies, and donkeys, and buffaloes, and basket-crowned women. He thought : " This is my India, and I belong to it."

Every morning he watched the sunlight drop down between the narrowly flanking houses to flash on brass vessels, to twinkle on a woman's jewellery, to smother a donkey's load of grain with liquid gold ; and every evening he listened for the dull throb of the bell in the near Hindu temple and the call to prayers from that shining distance where the white fingers of a mosque lifted above the ragged line of roofs to a sky of pure, untainted gold. It came now, that ringing monotone—came sailing, serene, and cold, and final, over the low clamour of those crawling alleys where the children of India cowered, and laboured, and laughed—little, pitiful, sordid children of its hard purity : " La illah, illah, allah."

A discreet cough disturbed the still shadow behind him.

" Bring hot water," he said in Hindustani, without turning.

There was a succession of soft sounds, the thud of bare feet moving swiftly out of the room, and presently a bang and clatter in the back apartment. A hoarse voice called in a loud, wailing cadence :

" Hot water is ready, your honour."

Traive followed the voice into his dressing-room, where a strange little man was pouring hot water from

a deep brass bowl into a tin wash-basin. What could be seen of his face between curly black beard and bushy black eyebrows was a rich chestnut colour. He had on a loose shirt, without a collar, and a pair of his master's trousers, and something about his face rather than his form suggested the hunchback, and his bushy hair, together with his protruding white teeth, gave him a ferocious look.

Traive proceeded to take off his coat.

"Give me my evening clothes," he said in the vernacular.

Jeremiah flew to a cupboard.

"Is there any money in the house?" asked the master, preparing to shave.

"No, sahib—ji," said the hoarse voice in an injured tone from the depths of the cupboard. "You gave the last rupee to the sweeper whose son was born in the night."

Traive grunted, stuck out his lips, and swished the shaving-brush over them, leaving there a delicious whiteness. Slowly and with distinct enjoyment he smeared his face with this white foam, twirling the brush around this way and that, and scrutinizing the effect in a small cracked mirror that hung over the tin basin; then he took hold of the lobe of his right ear with his right hand, and, holding his razor in his left, proceeded to scrape his cheek.

"Huzoor," said the servant, "there is a button gone. I will take the coat across to our brother the tailor."

"Hum!" grunted Traive, taking a neat patch of foam off his cheek. He grinned slowly as he wiped his razor. He was grinning at the memory of Miss Witherow's nose, of the way it had sniffed into that yellow dhal on the pedlar's tray. Surely he might grin as much as he liked, might enjoy the vision of her to the full, and laugh at the incongruity of a goddess

in this hole of his, so long as he did laugh. After all, it was easy to enjoy the distant fact of her extraordinary and absurd charm, across an unpassable chasm.

They were all absurd, and everything about them was absurd and perfectly delightful. Their luggage!

She had called them "trunks." And one of them, the German maid had said excitedly, must be kept upright. And there were cloaks, and cushions, and kodaks, and tiffin-baskets, and field-glasses, which Miss Witherow had festooned round his neck and piled into his arms; and, finally, there had been a pneumatic mattress that would not collapse, and had come bouncing out of the carriage like a porpoise.

But one would have forgiven them a deal more luggage and another five degrees of cool self-assurance for the way they warmed to Menzies. The frail, aristocratic Mrs. Craig had unbent in great style. What an alarming American trick, of shrilling with delight in public!

And Miss Witherow, entirely unconscious of a group of subalterns eyeing her from a discreet distance, had tripped about, poking her nose into all the pedlars' baskets, defiling the food of the Hindu with the sweetest of smiles.

Her shoes were American—absurd, adorable little white things. Her clothes were American. That fling of her veil across her topi—it branded her at once. But her eyes, and her hair, and the tilt of her head—they were just entrancing.

An absurd, entrancing, daft thing. . . .

And now that dear little lady who was housing them in her big, laughter-echoing bungalow had summoned him to dine with her, and with her aunt, and her grandfather, and her maid. Would the maid be at the table? What would Mary do with the maid? She would be more of a white elephant in that house

than the pneumatic mattress. He had offered to mend the mattress: he would now offer to take the maid sightseeing. They would make a perfectly congruous pair in a Bareilly cart.

"The coat, Huzoor," said the servant, appearing in the door with the garment in one hand and in the other a native lamp—just a flaming wick floating in a saucer.

Traive, taking the coat, scrutinized it ruefully, while his boy held the lamp close.

"It is very shiny," he said, looking hesitatingly into the brown face that gleamed above the uncertain light, and passing his finger along the collar.

"Yes, sahib." Master and man eyed one another, ruminating. There was silence. Traive put on the coat.

"The tailor——" suggested the servant in his hoarse whisper.

"No, no. It's no matter. Just hold the light up while I go down. And if anyone comes, I'll be home by ten, but, whoever it is, he can just go to bed."

He went out, leaving the door open, and the crooked serving-man, with the little lamp held high above his ferocious yet comical head, standing at the top of the narrow stair.



## CHAPTER II

### IN A MISSION BUNGALOW

MRS. ROWLAND CRAIG always said with charming candour that she didn't know how to play with children, hated visiting, and couldn't bear to be uncomfortable at anybody else's expense ; she would never have believed that she could have been so happy in that house. It was overrun with children—her hosts could scarce afford the food their guests consumed—and the days were days of blistering heat, and the nights were an agony of swarming, tormenting sand-flies ; and yet she had never had such a good time in her life. She confessed as much in bewildered reminiscence, and said by way of excuse that where people lived their religion in such a happy, happy way, one couldn't help throwing scruples and cares to the winds. She certainly had had scruples at first, and had really tried to get away, feeling that their party, with its humiliating mountains of luggage, really was too much for Mary Menzies. She had refused to unpack, and had been all ready to start several times, but something had always happened to detain them : there was no accommodation to be had on the train, or Grandfather Craig had a sudden attack of rheumatism, or Barbara had set her heart on visiting the " Mirza of Murdahn, False Prophet of the Punjab," or something. And she, who had managed the party so well and so easily all through Japan and China, and even in the Philippines, where Bobbie had a dozen lovers and a ball

every night, had found herself suddenly helpless, and had been forced to sit back and fold her hands and enjoy herself. She could not even blame or excuse with the thought that she had stayed to see Bobbie through her love-affair, for she had not even sniffed the trace of a romance until the last day. That her gay, world-spoiled Bobbie could sail serenely past half a dozen dashing navy officers and as many picturesque foreigners, and walk up to a queer, ragged man in a dusty, hot spot of India and fall in love with him had never entered her head as a possibility. She would not have believed Bobbie had the sense to care for a man like that. She could explain this phenomenon no more satisfactorily than that of her own enthusiasm over the silent, terse Scotsman and that dear, dear riotous saint, Mary Menzies' husband, and the five wild-headed, freckle-nosed children. She didn't know what one could say about it, unless one just agreed with the blessed man that it was all a part of "His plan." It was natural enough to think that, while one was there, one would fall into the habit in that simple, happy home of accepting everything as a perfectly natural evidence of God's providence. One couldn't help it; the obsessing idea was in the air. Why should one not believe in miracles when miracles were happening all around one, thick as sand-flies, every day? There were a dozen things that proved the man's right to talk of God as his watchful Heavenly Father, and, whatever one's theology, one had to accept facts. What was the interesting thing to Ann Craig about Mission life: it was made up of such wonderful, tangible facts. She loved it.

It was only in retrospect that any of it seemed incredible; it had all been quite intoxicatingly natural at the time, and it was in retrospect, too, when she had come to understand more of the hardships, that she realized just how wonderful it was that her old

school-friend, Mary Menzies, should still be so young. Mary had been discovered, after fifteen years, with the same merry brown eyes, the same crinkly brown hair, the same quick, happy cadence in her rippling voice that she had had at school. And if her winsome face was worn and turned to an ivory whiteness, and if her finger-tips were hardened with the pricking of many needles, and her chest sunken between rounded shoulders—all these things merely added to the brave truth of her girlishness. Ann remembered her as such a delicate thing, such a frail finely-strung instrument, played upon by such quick impulses, giving forth such whimsical, fleeting harmonies that she wondered there was left in her so much of her girlhood's music. It was evident that laughter had saved her. Laughter possessed that household.

Ann was tickled as well as astonished at Mary's attitude toward her family, especially toward her husband. She would not have thought it possible for a woman to get so much pleasure out of her trials. She appeared to be a person who enjoyed her cross, amused at her own posture under it. Her regard for her husband was a kind of humorous, motherly caress, that steadied him, and encouraged him, and adored him. Wondering at the placidity with which the nervous woman accepted her husband's exuberant irresponsibility, his inveterate habit of getting into scrapes, and his casual, happy-go-lucky fashion of disregarding misfortune, Ann came gradually to see that his wife had long ceased worrying, or fretting, or trying to change him, just because she believed in him.

Mary said frankly, with the dimples showing at the corners of her mouth, that he was harder to take care of than all the five put together; they tore their clothes, but he gave his away; they came to meals with black hands and wild hair, but he forgot to come

at all ; they brought the sweeper's children to play on the front veranda, but he put Hindu inquirers in the spare bedroom, and even in his own bed when that bed was out in camp, and there was no other place to keep warm the shivering Nicodemuses who sought him at night. She said, too, that she nearly died whenever they went out into camp and had to lie on the ground, sometimes with her head under the bed to get out of the sun that beat through the tent. And she confessed, laughing, with brimming eyes as of old, that she loved "Shan-o-Shaukat," or, in other words, "The Flesh-Pots of Egypt," as much as ever ; but that she was a person to thrive on "doing without." She made no bones about her husband's quaint and disconcerting type of saintliness, but where others condemned, she only laughed ; she knew so much more about him than any of those well-intentioned friends who disapproved so. She did not blame them for disapproving of his fatality for missing a train, nor for their irritation at the ease with which he rose above the disconcerting circumstance ; but when he came home praising the Lord for having missed it, and told her he had been led of the Spirit to stop with a beggar on the road and impart to him the word of salvation, she was not only not surprised, but she believed him—that is, she believed literally in the Providence that had occasioned his missing the train. That was what seemed so delightful and so wonderful, and, in the last analysis, so natural to Ann. It was such a practical bit of religious logic that she loved her friend for it. And, natural or strange, the fact remained that, with her brood of five, and her irrepressible good man as unpractical, and light-hearted, and indiscreet at fifty as he had been thirty years earlier, Mary was still young.

But Ann did not think it all out at first ; at first she was just overwhelmed and bewildered. She emerged

breathless from the onslaught of the children, and sat down to a midday breakfast of porridge, and curry, and rice—things she couldn't have eaten anywhere else—and listened to Mr. Menzies' talk about a young Hindu woman who had crawled to the house the night before, poisoned by her mother-in-law because she wanted to become a Christian; and about a Pathan giant, recently converted, whose idea of Christian work was to throw all those who refused to be baptized headlong into the river; and she looked out over the bowl of roses on the table into the shimmering, quivering sunshine, where bronze-limbed, white-turbaned men wandered by, making little clouds of golden dust with their flat, shuffling feet, and thought, "This is really India," and felt that she was in a dream. Late that afternoon, when she sat in the wide garden and watched Mary playing hide-and-seek with her children in the thick golden sunlight, and listened to their shouts that mingled with the clanging bells of tumtums careering along the road, she was a mixture of fierce sympathy and of large, ungrudging envy. She thought, "Mary has her husband and her children, and it is absurd of me to be sorry for her;" and yet she was all upset inside with aching desires to give them things and make them comfortable. Looking up at the high weather-beaten walls of the Mission bungalow, it seemed to her she had never seen such a big, bare, pitifully unfurnished house. And the very fact that it achieved somehow an aspect of cheeriness and daintiness, with its green cotton hangings, and its green Kashmir rugs, and its bowls of roses, was the most pitiful thing about it all. It aspired to be a home, in spite of its leagues of whitewashed wall and cavernous heights of ceiling, and it actually arrived at hominess of a breezy, if not of a cosy, kind, just as Mary Menzies had aspired to keep young, and had succeeded in saving to herself a transparent, luminous version of her

girlhood. It seemed to Ann that Mary was pitifully exposed, just as the poverty of her house was exposed, but that was before she had been swept into its hearty, joyous embrace. She found it impossible to pity anyone in that home.

It was at the dinner-table that she began to succumb to the contagion, and she was helped along by a large, quaint person, Colin Traive, who sat beside her, and gave her choice details about the family. Ann had a taste for masculine beauty, of the fine, attenuated, aristocratic type, but she succumbed to this man's ugliness at once. The maturity of meaning in his face baffled one who warmed to his boyishness. What made up this effect of boyishness was his healthy colour, and his extreme blondness, and a certain sturdy innocence in his glance. His eyes twinkled cheerfully behind the fringes of his blond eyelashes. Blond eyebrows couched over them closely, forming about them small, deep shadows; but, in spite of their deep setting, the eyes dominated the face—a fact in itself astonishing, for the face was of an almost grotesquely ample pattern. It reminded her of a great rugged rock in sunlight, having about it the huge gentleness of a nature-thing that has endured all kinds of weather. Ann could remember no face she had ever seen so battered and so young, so deeply lined, and so free from the trace of bitterness. Knowledge and innocence—those two irreconcilable entities—were combined there.

He told her that the Menzies were the happiest family in the Punjab, because they always went everywhere together, and each member of it adored all the rest of it. They began with prayers and tea in the garden at six o'clock, and went praying, and singing, and laughing through the day, until they fell asleep at night in a row of beds on the roof. You could see them any Sunday morning trailing across the fields

to church. The *padre* in front, with Babe on his back, and Jimmy lagging behind to catch beetles; Mrs. Menzies and the twins in between; and Bruce trying to look as though he were by himself. He told her many things calmly under his hostess's nose, explaining how Bruce was twelve, with holes in his stockings, and a growing sense of responsibility for his father; and how Jeanie and Katie were nearly as wild as Bruce, with nearly as many holes in their stockings, and a way of going over hedges like young colts; and of how Jim was a philosopher, went to sit on a chair, thinking harder and harder, until he fell off; and how Babe, though she was just round and rosy, and two years old, had already conceived a desire to be a boy called Sandy. He seemed to know them as well as an own brother, or better, and when they all appeared in the doorway, in red flannel wrappers and red Turkish slippers, he explained quietly, in spite of Mary's laughing dismay, that they were never put to bed like ordinary children, but were buttoned into red flannel dressing-gowns, and allowed to sit in the drawing-room until they toppled over with sleep. So Ann begged for their freedom; they were really too appealing, standing there in a row, a little resentful, a little awe-struck, wholly imploring; and when it was granted, she laughed outright at the way they danced with delight, grabbing first one foot in a hand and then another, and played leap-frog away into the drawing-room; and after that she was just intoxicated with them all.

In the wide dimness of the drawing-room, whose doors were thrown open to the night, the lamps made little warm eddies of light. Mary sat down within the circle of one of these with her sewing, and the children perched themselves on a row of chairs in the background, their round faces showing like bright little moons above their red dressing-gowns. They sat quite still, watching their father with wide, adoring

eyes, as he spied one and then another dark, gleaming face outside, and dragged shy Indian lads into the lamp-lit room, embracing them with tumultuous cordiality. And presently, when Babe toppled over, Mr. Traive picked her up as a matter of course and carried her off to bed—a heavy flannel bag of sleep. And then, one by one, they all disappeared, rolling blissfully away. By this time a number of Indians had gathered, and they all, together with Mr. Menzies and Mr. Traive, sat cross-legged on the floor, and sang "Punjabs Bhujins," rocking back and forth in joyous, wailing rhythms, while a cool breeze waved the curtains into the room, bringing with it a scent of jasmine and orange-blossoms.

And Ann, loving it all—the wide, unconscious happiness of it, the peace of the house, and the content of the inmates—noticed Barbara suddenly as Mr. Traive said good-night. He went off to his house in the bazaar, where he said he had a family of men and goats and a buffalo-cow waiting for him. The girl had followed him to the door while he strapped his trousers about his ankles and lit the lamp of his bicycle, and when she came back to the room she said good-night and disappeared.

Ann, following her into their great bare room, with walls climbing into vast shadow above their heads, and their two beds looming in the gloom, big white boxes of mosquito-netting, found her with head and shoulders in a trunk, and, looking at the uncommunicative curve of her back, curbed her inquisitive tongue. Ann had set herself the task of being a considerate roommate, so she went about getting ready for bed, content for some time to smile to herself and poke an inquisitive, delighted nose out of the window into the strange-smelling darkness; but when they were both in the strange huge bathroom of tin tubs and cement floors, she could contain herself in a tactful silence no longer.



" I think it's just too sweet." She stood on slipped tiptoe, toothbrush poised in air. Water meandered in little pools on the bathroom floor. " Careful Bobbie! It's meant to go through that hole in the wall." Bobbie emptied her wash-basin dexterously toward the hole mentioned, and began brushing her hair. She said nothing. Ann gurgled to her toothbrush, and laughed to herself, skipping airily like a child of ten into the bedroom.

" Bobbie."

" Yes."

" Isn't he too, too lovely?"

" Who?"

" Mr. Menzies."

" Yes, he's a dear; but I like Jimmy best."

" I love them all, and their red flannel nighties, and the servants with their white turbans and brass buttons, and the bowls and bowls of roses. Oh!" Ann drew a deep breath. " Think of living in a land where you can have roses and roses all the year round, even if you're a poor missionary. I'd love to live in India."

" Would you?"

" Yes; and I'd dress my servants in scarlet coats, with lots of brass buttons, and keep an elephant to ride on every day—we're going to to-morrow—and have a cow, too, with horns painted red, and a blue necklace round her neck, so I could send milk to all the sick babies."

" Ann, Ann, you're just a child." Barbara flung her arms about the other's neck, kissed her ear, laughing, and then squeezed her a moment in silence.

" Good-night." Something in her voice made Ann hold her at arm's length to be scrutinized.

" Bobbie! You're not thinking of Anthony again?"

" No."

" Not a bit?"

" Not a tiny thought."

"Homesick?"

"No;" then again, a little too quickly: "No. I'm perfectly happy. There, get to bed. There are mosquitoes." She crawled under her net. As Ann blew out the lamp beside her, she felt a hand groping for hers.

"Ann, don't you feel far away? Not homesick, but queer?"

"No. Why?"

"I don't know." Her voice trailed off, sleepily Ann thought.

But Barbara did not sleep for a long time. She was thinking of an outlandish, humorous man whom she had come upon in the railway-station, with a poor ugly child on each arm, his irregular face beaming from between the two sunken little ones—a man bursting his shabby coat, struggling to burst the ugly disguise of his awkward self. She was wishing fiercely that his sleeves were long enough for his arms, and his collar not three sizes too large, and his hair not cropped close like a convict's, and his boots not such funny-shaped, lumpy things. If he must be outlandish and utterly, absurdly simple, she wished he would be just that and nothing more. He had no right to suggest a tantalizing courtesy, a finely bred aloofness, through his crudity; he had no right to smile at her with such gentle detachment, as though he never thought of stooping to her from that stronghold of his ugliness and his eccentricity.

Was he ugly, with his cropped head and his blue, blue eyes, and his battered white teeth, and his big, expressive features? His features were not bad; they were just tremendous. There was so much of his face, and it was so dreadfully expressive. She wished—  
But what did it matter?

## CHAPTER III

### THE FAKIR PADRE

COLIN TRAIVE sat within the rickety embrasure of his window, waiting. A narrow strip of pale shadow ran along the alley beneath him ; beyond this was a world of brilliant yellow light. It was one of those limpid, liquid sun-days when the sun reigns kindly, possessing the world with supreme gentleness, absorbing the life of the world with soothing serenity. All the odour and colour, all the life of the city, seemed absorbed in that radiant light ; warm multitudes murmured beneath it ; roofs and towers swam in it ; a solitary kite swooned afar off in the shining depth of it. The light dropping upon Traive's eyelids closed them softly. He was very tired. He burned with a kind of weary excitement. The hand that he put to his forehead trembled noticeably. He stretched it out before him and blinked at it, but said nothing to himself about it. It didn't matter ; he had long ago given up bothering about himself. If he had fever, he took quinine ; if he had dysentery, he starved himself. He was under the delusion that he was in splendid health, and he assured his friends honestly that his diet of porridge and tea and *dahl-baht* was ideal. The *dahl-baht* his servant brought from the shop opposite ; the porridge and tea he made himself every morning, sitting cross-legged on the floor, stirring the pot with one hand, and turning the leaves of his Bible with the other. To-day he had made no porridge. There had been no time in

the morning, and he was not hungry now. But his Bible, a worn, frayed book, lay open on his knees. He touched it lovingly.

In the opposite food-shop, two or three large, sleek men in white garments sat about steaming cauldrons, brown hairy shanks folded under them comfortably. A mangy dog sniffed about in the drains below the shop, timidly, meekly starving to death. A baby wailed somewhere, an incessant feeble wail. For the rest, the world slept under the sun.

His Church had long since given up trying to put upon him the ordinary restrictions of its Indian chaplains. He had a persuasive tongue when he was roused, and he had persuaded them to leave him alone; so he was suffered to live and work in his own way, and he became known throughout the Punjab as the "Fakir Padre." Thinking himself the most unnoticed of men, he was a standing topic of conversation in drowsy villages and at elegant dinner-tables. Wonderful tales were told of his pilgrimages on foot from village to village, of his house in the city, with its door open night and day. Mild-eyed old men crouching before silent mosques praised him gravely; dainty English women said to their dinner companions: "What a queer person—fancy—quite picturesque really!" while their companions smiled cynically. And he was unconscious of it all, for he was absorbed.

His parish was undefined. It spread from the native city across the railway bridge, and into those dreary, dusty railway-lines where men and women of every shade of skin from white to black mingle together in the dull, chaffing intercourse of Eurasiandom. And he loved his flock; he had no desire for any other life than the shepherding of them.

He had had no other desire for years; and now something had interrupted the dear, even toil of his life. Three days he had spent with the Americans, and he

was dismayed at this new sense of restlessness, and oppressed by the fear that his neglect might have turned one of those poor derelicts of his adrift again. Last night, when "Old Gore" came slinking home along the edges of the jutting shops, head down, feet kicking together uncertainly, mind possessed with a mad and sullen fury, the result of starvation, he had determined to tear himself free from that longing that was coming between him and his; for "Old Gore" was his, and all the rest of them were his. They came back to him—sooner or later they came; not seldom they came to die. And because they came, he belonged to them. And yet—he had invited the Americans to tea!

It served him jolly well right that such a queer lot had come back on this very day. But—what would come of it? What effect would the Americans have on "the family"?

The sudden appearance of two elegantly dressed ladies and an American clergyman would undoubtedly be disconcerting to the members of his household, when one of those members owned no shoes and had a beard like a forest in winter. But it was not the "Old Pote," ex-professor of Oriental languages at Roberts's College, Constantinople, that he was really troubled about; his was an ancient wilderness, as impervious to the glimmer of civilized beauty as a rocky wilderness to the rays of the sun; nor was it the Indian lad, with his weak, bespectacled eyes and his wavering faith; the glimpse of the two lovely European women might do the boy's inhibited mind a world of good; it was Alfy Burns he feared for. Alfy was such a fool. He had a weakness for the fair sex commensurate with his weakness for the whisky bottle, and he had followed them together to his undoing. What effect would the vision of Miss Barbara Witherow have on that weak organ, his brain? He did not need visions; he needed plain grey stone walls bounding him in, the steady

monotony of uninspiring labour. Traive was troubled. He had received Alfy on the rebound, kicked out of his regiment, had fed and clothed him, and kept him for two months ; had slept beside him every night, the door locked—they had agreed to the lock ; had dogged his footsteps day after day—they had agreed to that too ; had more than once dragged him, kicking like an angry infant, past the lighted doorways of those little hells that yawned and grinned to receive him ; and he had long ago passed beyond his pitying contempt into love for the boy. Why or how he could love him he did not know. He never asked himself why. Certainly it was not for his pale eyes, and his curly hair, and his uncertain knees. If you had asked him, he would probably have said, "By the grace of God," and have been content to wonder with you at the miracle. In any case he had laboured for this soul, this poor little diseased, sin-soaked, immortal soul, and out of the travail of his own soul he loved him. It was only to-day that the boy had come back, master of his test of freedom, to take the place secured for him in a bank. He had been so proud, so pathetically, childishly proud, as he went "to work."

If the Americans only came before the bank's hour for closing, it would be all right. He had despatched a note to the *padre* asking him to bring them early.

Any one of his friends would have known that he expected guests, and guests of a special notability. Any woman-friend, such as Mrs. Menzies, would have laughed till she cried, and then have cried again at his preparations, the room had undergone such a funny, such a pathetically careful change. To begin with, there was a strip of clean matting on the floor ; it had been borrowed from the *durzee* friend's tailor-shop two doors down ; and there were three bent wood chairs, hired from the auction-room for the afternoon. The table had been pulled toward the centre of the

room, and on it was spread a white cloth from the Mission bungalow, and four blue-and-white cups from the same friendly source. He had had a struggle with himself in regard to the cups. He knew they would be recognized, and, while he was far from being ashamed of his indebtedness, he wanted his guests to know how complete his life was, how free, how all-inclusive. He wanted to show them that a crank could be a gentleman and could entertain as one, without help. He had been tempted to buy cups—Japanese ones, painted in cherry-blossoms, eight annas a-piece—but had been saved that foolishness. A brown china teapot and an enamelled ware jug, old and tried companions of his solitude, still dominated the board, though their dignity was marred by a flaunting plate of pink-and-white cakes. There were to be hot scones, too, made by Jeremiah. Over the charpoy in the corner was laid a very brilliant cotton spread of a picturesque design, purchased for one rupee of Nubee Buksh, dealer in curios. It was not one or all of these touches that was so absurdly appealing; it was something young in the way it was done, something comical in the stiff posture of the chairs at the table, in the precise arrangement of the little pink-and-white cakes, in the careful smoothness of the bed's flaming disguise. There was something very exposed in his awkward preparations for the comfort of others, something helpless and vulnerable in his innocent expectancy of their enjoyment.

His expectancy to-day had been too keen. He told himself that his punishment was deserved, for he waited and waited, and they did not come. Finally, after he had dusted the chairs with his handkerchief for the third time, had called in the sweeper to scrub the window-seat and the doors—though that, too, had been done early in the afternoon—and had arranged and rearranged the little library of battered volumes

on the bookshelf, and had then disappeared into his dressing-room to scrub his hands until they were raw, and had come back to stare out of the window, imaging and imagining just how she would look coming down the bazaar, her hair shining, her little white shoes twinkling through the muddy crowds of clumsy feet, he was forced to face the relentless fact that it was five o'clock, and that they were not coming. He told himself, whimsically regarding his five-bob watch, that the Rev. Ebenezer had probably felt the sun, or that Mrs. Craig had fallen off the elephant in her enthusiasm. He promised this absurd self of his that he would go there to-night to ask after them ; he tried to think how sweet she would seem after such a long interval, but he had counted upon having her there in his house, and his disappointment was bitter. He would not have believed of himself that he should feel it so. He was an ass.

He looked fixedly out of his window, and his big face, where all the thoughts of his mind lay exposed to any who might care to read, took into itself a rapt wistfulness. He was so absorbed that he did not see Goreski plodding homeward heavily through the mud on wide, bare feet, swinging his massive, shaggy head from side to side like an animal in a cage ; nor Alfy, who joined the ruffian at the door, laughing boisterously, excitedly, with joy over his day's work. He was not conscious of their presence in the room until they came close behind him, and then he turned to them, with a terribly new sense of the grime that clung to them, claiming them for its own. He had such a sudden vision of their ugliness and pitiableness, and of the horror that yawned under them, that there was just one thing for him to do ; he invited them to tea. He put them into the chairs at the table ; he called for Jeremiah to bring in the scones and the boiling water. Mohammed Rahim came in presently, sleepy and greasy, his shirt hanging out over his volu-



minous trousers, and dropped into the fourth chair, staring vaguely through his blurring spectacles; and Traive made tea, and Alf, poor boy! thought it was all in his own honour.

Traive sat with his back to the window, thinking for the first time in his life what an extraordinary place his house was. He had just filled the Professor's second cup of tea, had watched him bolt his fifth scone, when something made him look around. He rose quickly, pushing back his chair. She was stepping across the drain under his window. He caught sight of the white cloud of her dress, gathered in a drifting wonder of billowy draperies above her ankles, and the wide yellow straw of her hat, with lilacs bobbing on the brim to hide her face; and his heart was behaving like a crazy thing. It threatened to pound through his coat, to leap and tear away, like a puppy crazy with delight at the sight of its mistress.

There was no time to go down to meet them; he would have bumped into them on the narrow stair. He could just stand and go hot and cold, and red and white, and wonder whether "the family" thought him off his head. The sight of their bewilderment steadied him somewhat.

"Gentlemen," he managed to say, "some friends of mine are about to join us. I hope you will help me to welcome them." He regarded the family with kind, encouraging eyes. He grinned, nodding at Alf.

He could never decide whom he had to thank the most for averting the imminent fiasco of that scene. It was Mrs. Craig who entered first, stepping into the dreadful situation airily, gracefully, who took his chair with calm graciousness and a little kind bow to each, and turned her attention to the teapot, as though it were the most natural kind of bachelor's "party." It was the *padre* who swooped down upon Mohammed Rahim, and winged him to perch on the charpoy and

talk about the University sports ; and it was the Rev. Ebenezer Craig who showed his sporting blood, and went at the Professor's shaggy front until he got him started on Semitic languages ; but it was Miss Witherow who flashed upon the blinking eyes of the family like " a angel," as Alfy said afterwards, and who stood the concentrated fire of their consuming, adoring, savage stares without flinching.

The Professor, massive head thrown back from bare, hairy throat, was in the act of emptying his tea-cup into the cleft that somewhere within the forest of his beard marked his mouth, when she appeared, a pale, luminous figure in the shadow of the doorway. Standing there, she gathered to herself all the welcoming gold of the late sun that streamed through the window to greet her, and reflected it in fitful gleams from her hair, and her eyes, and her teeth, from the shimmering white draperies that caressed her figure. She was as softly, richly radiant as a pearl. The Professor put his cup down on the table with both hands, and leaned forward, huge dirty paws spread upon the white cloth, eyebrows glowering over deep-set sodden eyes, fangs chewing his grey moustache, transfixed, a gigantic, grotesque Rodin. The other two, Rahim and Alfy, started to their feet. Someone knocked over a chair.

She looked at them quietly, included them all for a fleeting moment in a glance of greeting, and then sought his face with a wide, cheery smile. And, as his heart leaped to applaud her, his reason went over suddenly to the enemy.

He drifted after that in a haze, through which he saw her transfigured, and transfiguring the unspeakable dinginess of his house. Someone, probably the *padre*, procured extra cups from somewhere. Jeremiah did not quite lose his head, and did bring in a huge black kettle to replenish the teapot. For these and other mercies he was vaguely grateful. Vaguely, too, as he

sat in the window talking to Mrs. Craig, he wondered about Alfy. Alfy seemed so much less important now. His chief importance lay in the fact that he was talking to her. He caught bits of the conversation.

She asked: "You live with Mr. Traive?"

"Mostly." Alfy goes very red; his feet shuffle in an ecstasy of embarrassment.

"And who does the housekeeping?"

"I beg pardon. Oh! 'e does, wot's done."

"I always pity a man who has to keep house. We women think we can do it so much better, you know." A sweet smile to Alfy that nearly knocks him over backwards.

"Loidies wouldn't find much to do 'ere. There's porridge mornings, and every man 'is own plate and spoon. It's come and go as you please, and every man for 'imself, and every man making up 'is own bed on the floor with 'is own bistar."

"You imply an army."

Alfy struggles with the meaning of this, and catches it triumphant.

"Is. 'Eaps sometimes. They just drop in h'angels unawares." He begins to think he is doing very well. Careful! Alfy!

"And where do they come from?"

"Oh, h'everywhere and h'anywhere. Some is out of jobs, some just stopping for a noight, been 'ere when they was low, stop to make 'selams'; some is brought from serais."

"Serais?"

"Oh, I say. Begging your pardon."

"But what is a serai?"

Alfy, under his breath: "Don't know what a serai is. Good Lord!" He is overcome. He shuffles frantically, speechless. Miss Witherow rises, not abruptly, with a kind look to lighten his distress. She floats across the room to the other lady, leaving Alfy abject.

Barbara's investigation of Alfy had led her toward the heart of the mystery. She sought her host with curiosity. She was amused, touched, lighted to appreciation.

He sat there, doubled up in the window, an ungainly heap of muscular limbs, cramped into ill-fitting clothes. His large grotesque profile was silhouetted against the golden evening. He was gesticulating generously, comically. She drew nearer to watch the remarkable play of light and meaning, of broad humour and fine feeling, on the ample ground of his face. The spirit of comedy was racing back and forth, disporting itself gleefully upon his features. She thought, "It is a perfect face for the stage, a marvellous comic mask," and discarded the thought immediately, for the comic mask had deepened suddenly to a daring tenderness. Few men would have dared express such softness; most would have lost the strength that remained to him in his tremulous seriousness. He was free from self-consciousness. He shone.

"Mr. Traive is telling me about his neighbours," said Ann, making room for her on the narrow window-seat. "Don't stop. It's wonderful!"

The man included her in his look. He turned, pointing through the window to the opposite roof.

"You see that man?" A wild, gorgon-headed, naked brown body, smeared with ashes, garlanded with dried berries, clothed with a dingy loin cloth, was squatting on the flat roof opposite, going through strange gesturings in the late flood of light.

"He is a priest, doing Pooja for the man downstairs. My friend Gopi Chand is a hard man. He drives a cruel bargain. He puts out his money to usury, amasses it in heaps." His arms enclosed a heaving space. "He has a conveniently working conscience. It lives on the roof. It has taken up board and residence in the breast of yonder *sanyasi*. Gopi has done

me a service : he has supplied me with an illustration for a sermon."

" Yes, one might listen to sermons written from this window," thought Barbara. " You must find many illustrations without moving to look for them," she said, glowing.

He flashed her a big smile.

" I love the place," he said ; then, after a pause : " I love the people. Sometimes I think they begin to love me, but I have only been here five years, and it takes a lifetime." He slipped into a momentary silence, then shook it off. " The other day that spectacled chap down there, selling kites to those boys, came to my door. He was wild. His turban was awry, his spectacles on top of it ; his eyes blinked ; his hands shook. ' Sahib,' he said to me, ' I am in great trouble. I have been eating shame all the night.' ' What is the trouble, brother ?' ' It is the woman, sahib. She will not listen to my words, nor to the words of the prophet.' ' Then will she listen to me, ' se brother ?' ' Perchance. She has a strange regard for the sahib-log, and you saved her child.' ' What is her offence ?' I asked. He lifted his hands in despair. ' I gave her two rupees with which to buy garments for herself and her child, and she bought a sari and a kurta for the boy of the colour of the sun, of the flame of the sun at noonday. It is not fitting for the woman of my house to be flaming as the sun at noonday.' "

The story-teller begged them to share his enjoyment of the episode, shoulders hunched under his ears, palms outstretched from crooked elbows. His face was furrowed by a hundred rollicking creases, that deepened the crow's feet at the corners of his eyes, folded up his cheeks, ribbed his forehead, raced and sported over the big promontories of his face. His eyebrows lifted above twinkling eyes ; lips widened from crooked shining teeth. Ann was drying her tears in one of

those hilarious laughing fits of hers ; but Barbara was absorbed in a study of the man's face. What was the secret of its unfathomable openness ?

" You say it takes a lifetime ?" she murmured absently after a moment.

" One can give nothing less than one's life."

" Ah—one must love them to do that." She rose a little wearily, conscious of an oppressive distance separating his life and hers. She felt that she was hardly touching the edge of him.

" How does one love them ?" she asked, giving him her candid eyes. He took them into his with an intensely kind calmness that baffled her. His look was too tender for mere interest, more intimate than respect, yet too aloof for friendship, and deeper, too, than friendliness. It was as though he were loving her, just as he loved them. The thought passed into her mind, and distilled a wonder there.

" I cannot tell you," he was saying. She wanted to hold his look a little longer, to fathom its meaning if she could, for she felt it was a precious thing ; so she said :

" They are just a slimy, unlovable, scarce human humanity to me." She exaggerated her lack of sympathy consciously.

" One doesn't love people for their beauty," he said. " Admiration comes that way, and infatuation perhaps, but what one feels out here is different ; it's a kind of compassion caught fire."

She thought, as she went down his rickety stairway, that if he would love her, she would be saved. His words, too, sang through her brain—" Compassion caught fire"—but how ?

After they had gone, he realized that Alfie had gone too. His former dread for the boy, sharpened by a stabbing conscience, drove him through the bazaar, to search with a horrid fear of what he might find ; and

at every poisonous laugh of denial that met his queries, a momentary relief, was added heaviness to the accumulated weight on his heart. At length, when the night had rolled in upon the bazaar, with its murky flood of shadows, its hot sea of lights, he found a woman who had seen the boy, the foreign woman who lived down the railway-side. She leaned over her balcony to say that she'd sent him about his business. Her hard, bloated face seemed to express a kind of feeling.

"He iss so much young," she said in her coarse broken English. "He go that-a-way." She pointed toward the blazing square of the station.

McVicker had seen him heading for the railway bridge, pale as a ghost, and looking as though pursued by one.

It was dark on the bridge. A cloudy sky capped it smotheringly. Engines roared and pounded below in a throbbing depth, spitting fire, their headlights illuminating writhing distances of rails. A narrow shadow bulged along the post, crusted the railing. It proved to be Alf, pointed chin and arms, that clung to the rail, thin white face showing strained and insane in the gloom, eyes staring madly outward, downward.

"Steady there." As he spoke, Traive flung an arm across the narrow shoulders. The other started violently, turned, stared like one dragged out of a nightmare or from the obsessing vision of a deeper abyss, then flung himself on to the other's chest, shuddering, sobbing.

"I was trying to get—away," he gulped, shaking as though with cold. "There was 'ell in front and 'ell be'ind, and I'd seen a' angel."

Colin Traive laughed. His arms hugged the convulsed frame.

## CHAPTER IV

### AN ANTICHRIST IN THE JUNGLE

THE Mirza of Murdhan, Regenerator of the Faith, Prophet of the Punjab, and Incarnate Spirit of the Hebrew Christ, had never figured in a love-story before—was, indeed, hardly fitted for such a rôle, though he had set on foot more than one romance peculiarly his own—as, for instance, when he prophesied the death of a certain faithless follower, and then caused a cobra to appear miraculously in the poor man's water-pot. He was, like his village of Murdhan, steeped in an odorous Orientalism. His ancient, unwashed robe, his red beard, his bloodshot, opium-glazed eyes, completed a personality that was scarce coloured to the taste of the dainty romancer. And yet a capricious fate had chosen him in all his impenetrable fanaticism to be the focus of a certain romantic meaning ; had allowed him to be a young man's excuse for taking a certain lovely product of Western civilization into the sunburned jungle of North India, that he might lay before her his dreams of a life in that deeply sleeping world of sunny timelessness ; that he might conjure up the aged spell of this India to work a miracle and claim her for her own, as it had claimed him long ago. Surely the Murdhani would have crumbled away into the dust of self-disillusionment, and become as one of the eddies of dust on the roadside, a mere whirling vagueness in the hot atmosphere of his India, if he had known.



It was said that the Mirza's followers were numbered among the hundreds of thousands, but it is certain that his filthy village, rising like a wart from the blistered palm of the plain, had never before been graced by the presence of a white woman. The Mirza's own women—they say he had seven wives, though he was sent of God to correct error in the faiths of Mohammedans, and Hindus, and Christians—the Mirza's own women were kept in strict "Jurdah," and those of his followers. There was not one to be seen in all the meanderings of those noisome allies, only some sweeper-women who peeked through low doorways as the strangers passed. And how were the crowd of men who received the sahib-log from America in the Mirza's reception-room to know, though they did speak English, and some were graduates of the Mission College, that this was a romance, and that this fair "Miss Sahib" had come with her grandfather and the two *padres* whom they all knew so well, just because she was being swept along into the heart of a miracle—a miracle as real as it was alien to those miracles that made the fame of their leader.

The Mirza's reception-room or library—a bright, new wooden building, recently erected beside an aged manure pile—was well stocked with books in many tongues; the quizzical little Reverend was astonished to find there many volumes that made up his own theological library, and some that he had long coveted. The Mirza's hangers-on were gathered to the number of more than a hundred, and six were delegated to act as interpreters; for the Mirza professed not to know English, in spite of the crying testimony of his library, and the argument between His Holiness and the American theologian was waged vigorously for more than two hours. And every one of the followers of the Prophet agreed that the Mirza had the best of it; for did not the American *padre* base his faith in the Nazarene on

the resurrection of Lazarus? And did not His Holiness point out clearly that in that case Moses was a greater man than this Jesus? For he had created life in a dead thing where life had never before existed, while Jesus had merely restored its former power of life to a human body. Oh yes, the followers of the Mirza were greatly pleased with their leader, who sat in their midst on a chair facing the sahib-log, leaning on his long staff, half shutting his eyes, and nodding his red-bearded, turbaned head placidly, while he proved that he was a prophet because years before, when he had been living in obscurity, he had prophesied that men would come from the ends of the earth to see him, and now they had come. There was nothing to say to that, nor to many of his remarks, carefully interpreted for the benefit of the rumped little gentleman who blew his nose so many times, and seemed so uncomfortable on his chair. Indeed, the followers of the Murdhani took in much that day for the edification of their faith, but they missed altogether the real meaning of the situation, the alarmingly potent meaning that was growing there in that hot, crowded room, in that smelly, fly-swarmed village—that had been growing all the way across the sunburned fields, and that would go on growing all the way back, even though the sun was hot and the seats of the high, rattling tumtum very narrow and very hard, and the gait of the one speckled horse more and more feebly spasmodic, like a make-believe horse with the machine running down inside.

And the beaming *padre* and the little old man with the comical eyebrows were wisely blind, and rode in a tumtum far behind in a dusty distance, and the *padre* was led to stop often to impart the Word of God to wayfaring pedestrians. And so, while the speckled beast crumbled to a mere crawling bag of bones, and the driver swayed asleep upon his seat, these two were alone under the cloudless sky of India. There in the

wide, peaceful solitude of Punjab fields, with here and there a far village lifting a broken, crumpled back above the shimmering horizon, and now and then the far, lazy creak of a Persian wheel-well droning from a grove of peepul-trees where bullocks plodded and a woman's garment gleamed scarlet like a bird through the trees; there, where everything was far away and buried in a great stillness, in the heart of that sun-steeped, eternal quiet that is the real heart of India, they came very near to one another.

They rode a long time in the rattling tumtum, face to face on the high, ungainly thing, without speaking. Now and then they looked at one another, and then away again through half-shut eyelids into the sun-steeped silence. Her dress was white, a blinding white in the sunlight, and a white veil was tied under her chin, so that her face under the green-lined brim of her topi was in the shadow. It was flushed, and the mass of her hair on either side of her face was damp, and covered the little close-set lobes of her ears. She sat with one knee crossed over the other, and now and then, with the jolting of the tumtum, her white shoe bumped against his shin.

To Barbara it was all incredible—a painfully sweet and absurd and, in the last analysis, an impossible muddle. Romance? She loved romance. To think of herself as the heroine of many love episodes, as the central figure of numberless dramatic situations, as ultimately queening it in a wide, luxurious domain—that was delightful. But this! This outlandish situation, with its riotous *padres*, who went along the road singing to the heavens and calling every passer-by "Brother," and embracing the blind beggars in the ditch; with its dingy, mysterious antichrist and its smelly villages, and its unexciting hero—it was all too incongruous with her idea of herself. It was all so uncomfortable, and dusty, and hot, and ridiculous—

they were both streaming with perspiration—and yet it was so sweet, somehow, and the world was so deep asleep, and the sun wrapped one about in such an impenetrable haze, and one's former worlds shimmered so far away—so unreal.

But she couldn't—no, she couldn't!

Look at the man! How unbecoming he would be to her! It would be like wearing one of Wilhelmina's hats.

So she called upon his shapeless clothes, his grotesque head, and his freckled hands, to help her escape from himself. She wanted him to love her, and lift her out of herself, and let her go—that was all.

But instead of that he was talking to her about his life, and his work, and his dreams, as though she already had a right to read the innermost secrets of his heart. And as he talked, the wonder grew within her that a man should be so innocent and so unashamed of himself. Everyone she had ever known had been ashamed—ashamed of revealing themselves. Anthony fought against it, but his very frenzy of self-expression gave him away. Everyone she knew was a creature of posturings and disguises. All their clothes were fancy costumes; all their gestures were to suit the part; all their smiles were summoned by that stage-manager, vanity. Her brother tapping his boot with his riding-whip, Anthony lighting a cigarette, Captain Malvern twirling his moustache—these were figures. Where were the men? Inside their clothes, beneath their mannerisms, away behind their conversation. But this man was right there.

"They only need to be loved," he was saying.

"Who?"

"The Scotch engine-drivers, and their women who take to drink, and their children who hang about the bazaar, and the Eurasian women who hate those of their children who are a shade darker than the rest."

He paused, enveloping her in a look of deep wistfulness that choked her. "If one could have there—a home!" he said, in a very low tone, with a terrible uncovered yearning in his voice.

His face was flushed to crimson with the heat; deep lines, accentuated by the dust, were drawn out from his eyes and around the corners of his mouth; his cotton coat wrinkled from the armpits up over his big shoulders; the edge of his sleeve was frayed; and he held her, and she struggled to get away. The naked beauty of his mind made her cringe more miserably than she would have cringed at the sight of something indecent.

"Oh—to be buried in a place like that!" she exclaimed wretchedly, and bit her lip.

"One must be buried somewhere."

"But so far away."

"From what?"

"Oh, I don't know. From the opera and theatre, and pictures and yachting." She piled up her words feverishly.

"Cultivated tastes," he murmured, looking straight at her.

She met his gaze steadily. "Very well—if you like."

His expression deepened strangely. The tumtum gave a lurch, then rattled on. "I am sorry," he said.

She was very unhappy, and yet she loved being there with him on that hideous vehicle.

"Do you really love it?" she asked after a while.

"Love what?"

"Being buried."

"Yes," he said obstinately.

She shuddered. "He would never give in," she thought irrelevantly.

But he understood her self-torture better than she

thought he did, and, though he talked to her quietly of his dreams, assuming sympathy, he made no attempt to capture her. If he had an astonishing simplicity, it was the simplicity of a man who is sure of himself. If he was humble, it was in the freedom of a perfectly justified self-respect; and if it seemed incredible to his humility that she should care for him even enough to suffer, it did not clash with his sense of the fitness of things. He had as complete a faith in the power of a mutual love to make all inequalities equal as he had faith in her capacity for seeing beyond his poverty and the ungainliness of his person. He knew that he was what she had never been accustomed to, but such obvious differences as wealth and grandeur of person mattered to him very little. If his faith in her and the power of his love for her had to fling a wide banner to cover a real problem, it was over their difference in point of view on spiritual things. It was her self-exaggerated scepticism that made him catch his breath; but he could trust that, too, to the great Alchemist.

Love to him was a simple thing, as simple as the fact of God and Eternity. He had come to the knowledge of his love for her on his knees that morning very early, before it was light. And in the cold grey-ness of the station where they had all spent the night—she in the ladies' waiting-room, he, unknown to her, outside her door, like a dog, watching—he had faced a complete hopelessness, and had determined to enjoy the same. It seemed to him then, during that early twilight, that he might love her with a fuller freedom because he knew so well that she was never to be his. He might give her the abandoned passion of one who asked nothing in return, and she would be the richer for his offering. He revered his love for her, deemed it a thing of worth, for he knew it to be the sound core of his soul, pure and sweet; and he paid her

the tribute of believing that she would recognize its purity. And he had determined to some day offer his gift, just because he had no right to withhold it ; it was hers. He wanted, too, to give her the chance to prove in the way she received it how noble she was.

He had taken a whole world on faith when he had decided to let himself love her, and he was enjoying his madness ; but, on the other hand, something in him demanded that he put her to the test, and as the day wore on he realized that he had brought her there to the dry, dusty heart of his beloved Punjab just to show her in a new guise to that persistent Scotch self of his. He was glad that he had done so. She had justified all his hopes ; had not only looked exquisitely adorable in the midst of the Mirza's rabble, but had been quiet and intelligent in contrast to her grandfather's nervousness. He had rejoiced in her all that day, and he had let himself drift into the dreaming thought that perhaps a miracle would, after all, come to pass. Why or how he had come to dwell on the possibility of her loving him he did not know, unless it was the way she gave him the full sweetness of her face and the sympathy of her eyes. Even if he had known the meaning of coquetry, it would not have entered his brain to demean her with the suspicion of it ; and she had been very kind. So when the tumtum dumped them out at the station after their long isolation together, he helped her crumpled person down on to the steps with a wide thrill of ownership, an experience he would not have dreamed of as a possibility that morning. And he watched the weariness of her bright face, and the disordered masses of her hair, and the muddy, battered wreck of her little white shoes, with a new and intoxicating joy of tenderness racing through his brain. But he held his peace, being a wise man, and delivered the dear remnants of her crushed daintiness to Mrs. Craig's arms that night

without a word, and lifted his clumsy topi from his big blond head, and went away to his bazaar.

Only he had laid his life before her that day, and she had looked at it kindly.

\* \* \* \* \*

A gentleman had called, said Wilhelmina, and Barbara found Captain Malvern's card. Fiercely, she tore it into tiny bits.



## CHAPTER V

### A CHRIST IN THE BAZAAR

"GRANDFATHER CRAIG," said Miss Witherow, "is a dear when he is not in the pulpit."

They were walking in the native city. He had brought her to poke about through its odorous, picturesque windings, because it was a keen joy to him to have her there. It was his world, and in the dim, murmuring seclusion of its shadowed alley-ways—in its sunsteeped courtyards—in the midst of its wild, unobservant throngs—she seemed to belong to him in a peculiar way. Perhaps he hoped, too, that, if he could initiate her into its mysteries, she might come to feel its appeal as he did. And if his dream never came true, he was at least laying up for himself many pictures of her straight white figure moving here in this rainbowed city—pictures for him to dwell on when she was gone. He would come here often to this corner, would follow the invisible footprints of her little white feet, and buy vegetables from the old chap who crouched there behind his pyramid of green things; and think of her as she was standing now, with that shaft of sunlight slanting down to her between high roofs, and this wretched woman in the dust before her, with her infant's head showing between the folds of her dingy "sari."

The woman, who had been prevailed upon to sell her silver toe-rings off her toes, tucked the price of them away within her shabby draperies fearfully, and shuffled

around the corner, drawing an end of cloth across her face. Barbara brought her eyes back to the rings she was jingling absently in her hand, and shuddered.

"I don't want them, after all." She stared at her companion miserably for a moment. "I don't see how you stand it," she murmured. She made a gesture including the dusty crowd.

"I don't stand it."

She begged the question raised by this answer.

"Ah, well—we were talking of Grandfather Craig. You know, I couldn't bear the way he talked to that reeking Mirza."

Traive chuckled. "The Mirza had him on toast. Your grandfather doesn't really base his faith on those miracles any more than we do."

She winced at the assuming "we," but let it pass, for she was nerving herself to a contest. It would be hard to make clear to him just how impossibly at variance their views were; he persisted so in taking her sympathy for granted.

"I don't mind him as much when he loses his head as when he keeps it," she said, poking her nose into a fruit stall.

They turned into a deserted street that ran a narrow earthen length between bare, purple-shadowed walls, and ended suddenly at a far distance in a little golden square. Two saffron women-figures in the golden distance were filling brass water-pots at a well. A goat nibbled at the sparse leaves of a tree that sprang from a shrine behind them. She stopped, engrossed in the picture.

"There are two Orients," he began. "There is the misery always; sometimes there is beauty."

He hoped she would leave a subject that was painful to them both; but she would not.

"I hate to see my little white-haired granddad turned into a heady theologian."

He assented reluctantly. "His theology is a wee bit cold."

"Cold! It's deadly. It reduces all the lovely, living things of life into shiny, steely bits of a monstrous machine." She laughed at her own excited wordiness, but her face kept its intensity. "How can a man be such a terror of a theologian and such a duck of a grandfather?" She turned to him what he felt was a countenance of exaggerated seriousness. The unreality of it troubled him.

"Probably he puts a lot of love into being the one, and none into being the other." He felt as though he were humouring a somewhat spoiled child. He was hoping each minute that she would turn back into her spontaneously happy self.

"I suppose that's it." She stared up the street pensively. "As my grandfather he lets me pull his little white topknot, but as my spiritual adviser he relegates me to perdition. I am an adorable child; but when he remembers my heretical mind, I am one of the damned."

"You are hard on him."

"Am I? A year or two ago, when I was in the throes of what was to me a very real mental agony, he gave me the comfort of saying that I could choose between two alternatives. Either there was a God, and a hell for all heathen who didn't believe on Him, or there was no God. I thought that hard. Naturally I chose the latter."

He was silent, distressed by the bitterness in her voice. She watched his face wretchedly, dreading the expression that she deliberately summoned there, and went on:

"He can tell you all about the future of the universe in terrible, definite language that leaves you not one little hole to wriggle through to blissful uncertainty. He divides eternity up into little dizzy terms of years

—dispensations, he calls them, smacking his lips on the word. And he knows all about the Beast—the Beast in Revelations, you know. He is awfully fond of the Beast.”

She stopped, humiliated by the subtle deepening of the gentleness in his face, his only sign of the way she was hurting him. They turned into the open, thronged bazaar.

Do you see the mark on that man's forehead?” he asked after a while.

“Yes.”

“That's the mark of the Beast.”

She demurred. “That's not what I meant.”

“Are you quite sure?”

She was puzzled. He mused upon her face, searching for the way to speak to her, feeling instinctively that she was lifting an artificial barrier between them, succumbing to an intellectual difficulty that was no difficulty; but he did not know that she was doing it deliberately.

“Have you never been to Benares?”

“Ah!” She paused on his meaning. It called up a vision of herself drowned one day not long ago in the unspeakable misery of that city of beast-worship.

“Yes—but—that is different—the beast of this poor world's living sin. I can believe in him.”

“It is all the same. Only the Rev. Doctor Craig uses a language that doesn't appeal to you.”

He was thinking that somehow her own language did not ring true. He could not think that she herself was mentally insincere; he thought she was just a child playing with meanings too big for her. She turned to him excitedly.

“No, no! It is more than a difference of lingo. It's a vital cleavage. I hate his whole attitude toward the world, and the attitude of the vast majority of the Church that he stands for. I was brought up in it

and on it, and I hate it. I have come to hate theology and the Church, and even the title 'Christian'; and the God that has been held up to me to worship has seemed at times a Beast, veritably." She rapped out her words feverishly. "Oh, why can't men be honest and brave—brave enough to live and love and follow the light of their own integrity, without hiding from themselves behind the stuffy masks of a makeshift theology? Why can't they leave God and all his 'ologies' alone? Oh, I am glad not to call myself a Christian!"

She was stabbing him, and he wanted to comfort her, but he had nothing to say.

"My father died an unbeliever." Her voice broke on the strained note of her forced excitement. "He was a nobleman." She added quietly: "I worshipped him."

He knew that, at least, this was real, and something heavy as lead sank like a plummet into the deep waters of his mind.

He led her in silence through the thickening haze of gold that was spreading over the bazaar. Men streamed through the evening light, phantoms murmuring through a golden haze of dust and heat. It seemed to him that the world had grown suddenly unreal. He plodded on, blindly peering into his bewildering pain for the meaning of it all. The girl-woman beside him floated far away in an unreal distance of her own. He felt that she had withdrawn where he could not follow, and he did not understand. It was not what she had said, but the way she had said it. She seemed not to want him to follow her.

He stopped in front of an open door, and turned to her in a kind of hulking timidity. One hand crept up to cover his ear, fingers running through his hair; the other wavered to a welcoming gesture. His face implored her to be honest with him and with herself.

But she did not understand the meaning of his distress; she thought him ashamed of the place.

"I have brought you here, not understanding how you felt," he said slowly. "It's the Bazaar Chapel, the Mission Chapel. There is preaching here every night. Your grandfather has consented to speak this evening. We were to meet him and the *padre* here, but I will take you home if you like, and come back."

She flushed at the gravely timid courtesy of his tone; she could not bear to see him feeling this way.

"I will stay. You are very kind."

He led the way into the bare, plastered hall. Kerosene lamps flared over rough wooden benches. At the end of the room was a platform, behind which was a text, printed in large black letters on the white-washed wall. Her grandfather and Mr. Menzies were already there—under the black letters. She nodded to them, and slipped into a seat near the door.

"Do not be surprised if the audience vanishes before your eyes half a dozen times," he said, and left her there, seeming to forget her existence.

She was alone. Nothing about her touched even the edge of her isolation. She realized that only his companionship had the power to put her in touch with this world. It held no meaning for her of its own.

Men began to slouch through the door, hollow-chested, stooping youths, with weak, sophisticated faces, most of them, and large, shining, meaningless eyes. They dived into their seats sideways, like crabs, seating themselves with much noise, much awkward flinging about of loose-jointed limbs. They eyed her distantly over nervous shoulders, and laughed to one another sheepishly. Their clothes were a strange mixture of Western and Eastern fashions. Some wore coats buttoned to the throat over folded

muslin shirts, socks coming halfway up bare calves. Others wore long-tailed shirts without collars, the tails hanging loose behind and before. All seemed to share in an unwashed greasiness and an uncontrolled restlessness. There was a continual scraping of chairs and shuffling of feet. She was sorry for her grandfather.

He stood to speak on the Doctrine of the Atonement. His voice rose and fell flatly upon restless, turbaned heads. His language was the language of cultured Americanism. Barbara beheld a cold, alien pile of Gothic architecture rising behind him. He seemed unconscious that he was cut off completely from his audience by his lifeless churchism. He used many theological terms and expressions, such as "The verbal inspiration of the Scriptures," and "The mysterious significance of this divinely revealed truth." He sailed along happily on the wind of his never-failing theological enjoyment, and just as he was getting to the carefully sharpened point of his discourse, his audience disappeared. With one wild backward scrape of chairs, as though moved by one mysteriously united impulse, the whole rabble poured like a clattering torrent of pebbles out into the sea whence it had drifted. Barbara burst out laughing. She felt hysterically sorry for her grandfather.

"Oh, the blessed, spontaneous heathen!" she whispered to herself.

Traive rose as the Reverend Doctor drew his peroration to a pathetically disjointed conclusion, and announced to a few cowardly stragglers left in the front row that they would sing No. 316 in the hymn-book. He gave the announcement twice in a very loud voice, and two men passing outside stopped, looked, and came slinking in. By the time the hymn was nearing its end another audience had gathered, the twin of the first. Barbara felt identified with them

and their predecessors suddenly. They were capable of doing just what she had wanted to do so many times. She gazed upon their slouching backs, upon the long lank tails of their turbans and the wide brown flaps of their ears, and thought how futile it all was. There was the East streaming by outside, a hot, muddy, unstemmable flood; here was the West represented by a handful of honest but mistaken fools, who stood on the shore throwing pebbles into the flood to purify it, and shouting feeble shoutings through the great rumbling murmur of its onward flowing. It was absurdly futile. She could have no sympathy—nothing but a pitying appreciation of the waste in such a life-work. Her impression clinched the argument she had been carrying on within herself all day.

She had found her entrenchments dangerously weak. All those reasons why it was impossible for her to receive this man into her life, that had seemed to stretch along the dusty road from Murdhan like mile-stones, an endless gleaming procession of objections—all these had vanished somehow when she searched for them in her mind afterwards, and she had been forced back upon her sole remaining line of defence, her religious antagonism. She must make the difference between their religious experience very clear to herself and to him. She would throw up between them an impassable barrier of spiritual uncongeniality. She knew that if there was one fortification that his love could not scale, it was this. She paid him the compliment of believing that spiritual values were to him the most real values of life, and that he would not desire her to live with him if he knew she was incapable of sharing his spirit-life.

She noticed in the midst of a deep self-absorption that he was speaking, and somehow holding his audience. A little while before she had wanted to



look away from the spectacle of his distressing humility ; now she was astonished at the compelling dignity of his presence. His clothes were as shabby as ever, but he obliterated them. He shone. She realized that he often shone, but now his face held a deeper illumining, and his whole person was unfolded to a complete unconscious power. His voice came to her, clear, resonant, sane. She did not hear what he was saying, so absorbed was she in the way he said it. He told an anecdote, flinging the gauntlet of healthy humour into their unhealthy midst. They rippled to an appreciative snicker. Then he widened his arms, and took them into his confidence, and talked to them like a brother ; and his face beamed, and his eyes loved the rabble before him with an honest, unmistakable love. When he bowed his head in Benediction, she realized that he had been speaking fully ten minutes, and that a few had gone out and a few had come in, but that the bulk of his audience had remained. His plain, unimpressive language had been understood ; but she felt that somehow his love for them, if not understood, had reached and touched them somewhere, and that this was more. They shuffled out quietly. One or two lingered, and he stood under a kerosene lamp talking to them as though he had not another interest in the world. As she watched the play of his features under the harsh, glaring light, her heart went out to him on a sudden uncontrollable wave of sympathy. What did it matter how futile his work, if he could look at an anæmic, greasy Indian youth like that.

When he joined her, they went out together silently. Night had fallen on the bazaar, and a thousand lights had leaped to meet it, licking the thick darkness with hot, thirsty tongues of flame. Between the flanking lines of shops, with their flaring lights, passed a stream of men. Above the shops on either side of

the thoroughfare a regiment of prostitutes sat looking down upon the throng, enthroned in high lurid windows, guarding the bazaar.

They were making for a carriage that loomed somewhere in the distance, a black hulk at anchor in a sea of figures, when someone touched him on the arm—a tight, frightened clutch, so different from the jostlings and pushings of other passers-by that he stopped. A voice said :

“ Don't stop, sahib, but keep hold of me.”

Barbara, who was walking very close on his other side, caught sight of a strained, dark face, eyes gleaming excitedly through spectacles, and recognized Mohammed Rahim of the tea-party. She felt a pressure that urged her onward at a quickened pace. They sped through the crowd, darting into the shadowed holes between sliding figures, as though pursued by someone. They were. A huge form loomed behind the boy. It stretched out an arm that descended heavily on the thin shoulder. Rahim kept his hold of Traive. They forged ahead. Barbara felt rather than saw the strange trio that accompanied her. They were walking so fast that she could not turn to look. Every now and then she feared that the crowd must sweep between and cut her off from them, but a steady hand rested under her elbow. Traive's face was turned to the boy. She caught the words in the Indian's excited half-whisper.

“ I must go with you. They are trying to keep me.”

“ Who ?”

“ The Mohammedans. They are gathered, a great crowd.”

“ You are kidnapping this boy,” came the angry voice of the great figure just behind them.

“ As long as you keep your hold, I keep mine,” Traive flung over his shoulder.

"Stop! I will let go."

They stopped, an eddy in a streaming flood. They were near the carriage. Its lights showed steadily against the opaque shadow of some trees. The air was thick and hot, hard to breathe. No one had let go. They were all linked together, the giant Moslem at one end, Barbara at the other.

"What do you want with him?" demanded the Moslem.

"He came to me. He is my friend."

"You are enticing him into Christianity. He does not know his own mind."

"Let him decide."

"We agree. Let him decide. If he wishes to go with you after hearing the argument of the Moulvis, he may go. I give my word of honour."

The Indian drew himself up to a magnificent height. The Scotchman's face, set and white in the hot, uncertain light of the bazaar, suggested that a drama was on foot of which she glimpsed but the faintest meaning.

"We are gathered in the sheep-market just there—come!"

The Mohammedan stretched out an arm under the huge folds of his shawl. Over the ragged shadow of some shrubbery could be dimly discerned a great concourse of men, heads showing black and white dots under the thick vault of a sky that was pierced by a few stars. Behind the natural theatre of the marketplace loomed a menacing blackness, the turreted city-wall. Behind the little group flared the fiery length of the bazaar.

"Come!" said the Mohammedan again; and the boy cried hoarsely:

"You must come! You must save me! I want Christ!"

Colin Traive turned to her. "May I put you in the

carriage? You will be safe. Mr. Menzies will be along any moment."

He was already struggling with the door of the battered vehicle. Barbara stepped silently into its smelly blackness. He pounded down the window, shut the door with a bang, and was gone. His figure and that of his companions were lost in the crowd almost immediately.

She hung close to the open window of the carriage. A continual procession of unnoticed figures passed her. To the left she could discern the hard face of a prostitute lolling in a near window; to the right, mysterious depthless shadow, an imagined sea of heads, the line of the city-wall against the sky.

She had no idea how long she sat there in that close black pocket. She had lost for the time being all sense of self; she seemed just an atom in a great on-rushing flood. It seemed to her that for a moment she had been included in the clashing onrush of two great psychic forces that had now thrown her aside in a dark pool, where she could still feel the currents eddying and whirling by. She was conscious of psychic phenomena that oppressed her brain, looming over her in near anger, battling there, just beyond the night shadow. She was conscious, too, of being lifted into a terribly clear atmosphere of thought, whence she could discern a great concourse of minds, the world of Islam, gathered to battle with a single man for the possession of a poor, terrified human soul. Her friend had left her at the summoning of higher powers than she knew of. He had left her without a word of explanation or a qualm of hesitation; and she knew he loved her. She had a vision of the Christ who had summoned him, who stood beside him now in the midst of that great alien array of men. She sank into a state of mind that she might have called prayer, if she had given it a name.

The scraping of the door-handle roused her to hear an accompanying murmur of many voices. It was like the waves of the sea, breaking on the little silent shore of her isolation. A near note clove the undertone. It was Traive giving quick orders to the driver. The door was flung open. Two figures leaped in. The carriage careened through a crowd. Clamour pursued them. Was it a menacing clamour, or just the clanging life of the bazaar pursuing its own ceaseless course?

The atmosphere in the carriage was strung taut to an intense emotion. No one spoke till they arrived at the Mission bungalow.

\* \* \* \* \*

It seemed to her very late in the night when she left the tossing comfortlessness of her bed, to fling on a dressing-gown and go out on the roof. She and Ann had been moved to a roof bedroom on account of the heat, and through the open door she could discern silvered tree-tops and a flood of moonlight on the white roof. The long hours of her wakefulness had left her still wrought to a painful pitch of mental excitement. She had dwelt on the drama of that hour in the bazaar until she was sick with the effort to fathom its meaning. And she was forced to acknowledge that there was no formula to complete the equation that did not contain the "inexplicable" of mysticism. Colin Traive had told her while he snatched some supper, and Mr. Menzies took care of the Indian lad—told her in a flat, ungarnished way—what had happened. The Mohammedans had proceeded to argue against Christ. They had chosen clever speakers. They proved lucidly that Mohammed was a greater man than Christ, because he had lived a complete life, had married, had had sons born to him, had ruled an empire, had lived to a ripe age; while Jesus had lived a secluded, narrow fragment of a life, entering

into none of the experiences of manhood. The boy Rahim had hung drooping in their midst. He, Traive, had stood by, desperate. There was nothing to do or say, so he just dropped his head on his chest and prayed. While he was praying he felt the boy pressing to him. "I come with you," he had said, and as they passed unmolested through the crowd had added: "When I saw you praying, I knew I had to go with you."

Barbara had poured out his coffee, listening in silence. She had been unable to summon a vestige of scepticism in the face of his bare sense of the spirit fact that Christ had won. She was unable now to offer any other explanation of the situation. He had left then with the boy, to take the midnight train. It was explained to her that it was necessary for the lad's safety to secrete him away. There had been cases of kidnapping and attempted poisoning by fanatic, enraged relations of new converts, and all this wild melodramatic background had been taken for granted in such a dry, matter-of-fact way that she had accepted it, too, as a part of the reality. The evening's experience had plunged her into a maelstrom of strange values that a week ago she would have laughed to scorn as religious phantasms.

She slipped out on to the roof with a strange feeling of lost identity. The man who had dropped her into the midst of all this was gone away—would not be back for two days. She realized with sudden sickness that in two days they would be leaving for Bombay and Egypt.

Moonlight bathed the world. Heavy perfumes swam through the shimmering silver of the night air. The far distant thud of a tomtom, and the cadenced wail of mourning, and the barking of dogs, proclaimed the Orient city crouching there beneath the moon.

Her eyes swept the wide, white space of the roof

hungrily. If he did not come back before they left, she might miss her chance of Heaven. Her heart, throbbing in waves of miserableness, stopped suddenly. A man was kneeling at the other end of the roof on the moonlit floor. His head was thrown far back to the open sky ; his hands were clasped behind him. It was Mr. Menzies, praying.

She crept back into her room. Her watch showed her it was three o'clock. Slowly she kneeled down and buried her face.

There remained three inexplicable things : darkness, and futility, and faith.

## CHAPTER VI

### A LITTLE GREEN MEASURING-WORM

ON that last day the house shivered with noiseless echoes of laughter, and tears, and suspense. People smiled into each other's eyes, and then looked away again quickly. Children stood in doorways, the toe of one boot rubbing up and down the back of the other stocking, staring, wondering, drawing their own conclusions. Even the servants rolled the whites of their eyes mysteriously.

Barbara found Mr. Menzies in the centre of the drawing-room on the floor under a heap of children—children sprouting all over him, as she used to say afterwards; children in his hair, and around his neck, and crawling out of his pockets. Katie still remembers the lilac dress she wore with a frothy thing at the throat, and Jimmy says that he remembers diamonds in her eyes; but, then, Jimmy remembers things that happened before he was born, and he was only five then, and in kilts. He sat quite still, leaning against his father's waistcoat, and staring at Barbara, who flopped down on the floor beside them all, and picked up Babe in her arms. Bruce was wild to go out and play cricket before it got too hot, and said: "Father, that's enough: two hymns, six verses each." But Mr. Menzies said they hadn't counted their blessings yet, and began to sing again; and Barbara sang, too, wiping her eyes and sniffing into Babe's curls. After he had prayed she said she hoped they'd pray a little



prayer for her when she was way over in America, and they were all having worship in a lovely, jolly heap on the floor. She hugged Babe very tight, and Jimmy says he knew she was miserable, because she stared right through him, and didn't seem to think of getting up off the floor, though Ismail did come to say breakfast was ready.

They all knew that she was aching inside, and that the ache had something to do with Colin, who didn't come, and didn't come. So they ached, too, and followed her around like little dumb puppies, stroking her hand and snuggling up against her dress, and staring at her. They didn't know that she had explained to Colin two days before just why she could never marry him; but they found her crying in front of her open trunk, with piles of lacy things and ribbons strewn all around, and they thought it must be a very bad ache to make her cry when she had so many beautiful, beautiful things. She tied a pink sash around Katie, and a blue one around Janie, and gave them all lots of things, saying she hadn't room for them with all her new curios; and Jimmy saw her wrapping up an old Hindustani Bible he knew was Colin's, and packing it away in a silk handkerchief. At tiffin she kept looking at the clock and didn't eat anything, and didn't seem to hear when someone spoke to her; and after tiffin Jimmy found her sitting curled up in the window, talking to Mrs. Craig, laughing and crying, and pulling the string of the window-shade the way one does when one has the fidgets. She didn't notice him at all, but went right on talking.

She said: "Ann, I don't know what to do. I'm perfectly miserable." And Mrs. Craig said, "Why, Bobbie!" in that sweet, sweet voice of hers, just as though she were surprised, and didn't understand all the time; and then Barbara said again: "I don't know what's the matter with me. I'm so afraid he

won't come, and won't ask me to marry him, I don't know what to do ; and I'm so afraid he will that I don't know what to do ; and, anyway, there's nothing I can do but just be a hopeless silly." And then she laughed and wiped her eyes ; and just then he drove in the gate in a Bareilly cart. Jimmy says she grew quite white, and Katie and Janie say she grew all pink and shiny about the eyes.

He was very dusty and very tired—all one colour with dust and fatigue, except for his eyes ; in the dead drab of his face, set in little deep shadows, they shone strangely. She had risen, and was standing in the centre of the room ; and he stood opposite her, his eyes fixed on her face, one hand smoothing his short, stiff hair timidly. There was something timid and something sublimely unconscious in his manner ; and still with his eyes fixed on her in this desperate timidity, he asked her if she would go for a drive. She looked this way and that, twisted her fingers together, and finally said :

" If you'll take Jimmy."

He laughed then as though he were very pleased, and picked Jimmy up like a sack of meal and ran down the steps with him, and none of the other children said a word as she followed. They stood in a row on the front steps, and saw him help her into the cart after he'd put Jimmy up beside the driver, and watched them rattle away through the gate and along outside the hedge until they couldn't even see the dust of the cart any more.

The twins sat down on the steps with Babe between them, and Bruce faced them, straddle-legged, hands in his pockets.

" Oh—Moses !" he growled. " She's no good for him. She's too la-di-da, she is."

The twins grew very pink. " You don't know anything about it, so there !" said Katie.

" Oh, don't I, though! You'd ought to 've seen her at McVickers' yesterday!"

" Well? Mrs. McVickers 's enough to make anybody feel queer."

" Any girl may be, but mother wasn't fussed a bit, and I've seen Colin there lots o' times."

" What does he do?"

" Prays, of course."

" Oh!"

" That's all you can do with that sort. It's no use trying to talk to her about the kids, the way mother does. She just looks at you kind of as though she were asleep having a bad dream. But when Colin kneels down and says, ' Dear Father, this child needs you,' she begins to blub."

Bruce tugged at his trousers. He had been tricked into a display of softness. His sisters stared at him wonderingly, and he kicked a flower-pot down the steps.

" But she"—and he designated Barbara with a withering gesture towards the road—" she just sat there like a bump on a log, and looked desperate, and when they came away, she said to ma: ' It's terrible! Just like that—' It's terrible!'"

" What did mother say?"

" Oh, something about there being a lot more as bad, and about its being a *padre's* wife's business. She got awfully red then, and ma kind of smiled, but they didn't either of them seem to like it much. Oh, I knew all right! I'd been with the milk and stayed to play with the kids. I saw what she was thinkin'."

" Well, what was she thinkin'?"

" She was thinkin', she'd die if she had the job."

" Well, she wouldn't." Janie tossed her hair out of her eyes. " It'll be easy enough for her. That's not what's worrying me." She hugged her knees, rocking. " What'll Colin do with a lot o' money? That's what I'm thinking about."

"I just wish I had the chance," said Bruce, slouching off.

Katie and Janie gazed into the dusty garden. Babe drowsed between them, wiggling her toes.

"Mrs. McVickers is so queer," said Katie earnestly.

"Her face is just like paste, and her mouth loose like Babe when she's asleep, and she looks at you, and then forgets what you've said, and then suddenly remembers again."

"And she always has that man's coat half on——"

They gazed at one another. On their fresh young faces was a look of responsibility, of worry. Babe grunted sleepily.

In the drawing-room Mrs. Menzies was sewing. Her cheeks were very pink. A little smile came and went on her mouth, and a dimple appeared and disappeared in her cheek. "Poor child!" she murmured, threading her needle, and her brown eyes took into themselves a wistful look that deepened to something almost stern. "If she hurts Colin——" she murmured again in another tone.

The sound of a pen scratching paper in the next room stopped presently, and Mrs. Craig appeared in the doorway. She held a half-written letter in her hand.

"Is Mr. Traive from Edinburgh?" she asked.

"Yes, but he was born in the South Sea Islands, and brought up all over the world."

"I just wondered," said Ann. "I was writing."

"Are you saying anything?"

"I don't know what to say."

"One can't tell what she is going to be," said Mary irrelevantly.

"I think," said Ann slowly, "that I should like her to have him just for that reason."

"You think only of her," said Mary quickly.

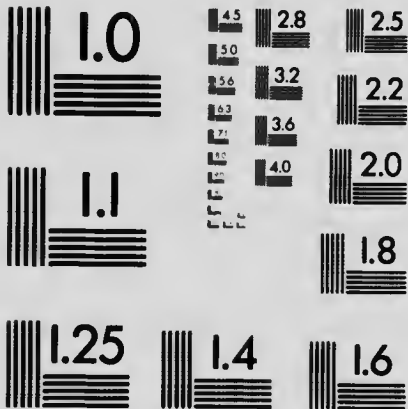
"He can take care of himself," said Ann.

\* \* \* \* \*



**MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART**

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



**APPLIED IMAGE Inc**

1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, New York 14609 USA  
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone  
(716) 298 - 5989 - Fax

They drove on and on in silence, and Barbara felt very unhappy. She was overwhelmed with a great feeling of tenderness for him, but his nearness did not thrill her in the least, and she waited for him to set her afire. She did not understand how she could be in love with the man's spirit, when his personality left her cold. And she watched the road slipping by under the step of the tonga, until she became quite dizzy, and as the miles slipped by she had a terrible feeling that she was losing something precious. All this time his eyes were fixed on her face with a kind of protective yearning, and something reserved in that look made her wonder sickly whether, after all, he merely compassionated her.

She became conscious of the fact that he was far more self-possessed than she. His placid concentration was absolutely non-committal. By the time they reached the river she had made up her mind to force him to commit himself.

They stood on the bridge, looking down at the river, without a word. The river was low and muddy, with wide plains of mud bordering it on either side. There was no current in the stream, and no colour in the distant line of dusty trees beyond either bank. The man beside her seemed as wide, and open, and unreadable as the landscape.

"If we have nothing to say to each other, we may as well go back." She lifted her head coolly and looked at him. Receiving no answer, she turned and walked toward the cart. She was choking and angry.

Under that calm exterior of his was a state of panic. Her words had created wild turmoil beneath that cheap, thin coat. "What right have I to tell her?" he thought desperately.

"Do you think you are quite fair?" he heard her say, and at that his mind went upside down, for though he had been brought up all over the world, he was

very Scotch in some ways. She saw his jaw drop with amazement. Then his eyes shot funny blue twinkles. She told herself exultantly that she was brazen and horrid, but she knew—she knew.

And he, looking at her, with her mouth set so funnily, wanted to take her in his arms right there, behind the "gari-wala," with all the villagers passing on the road, and tell her she was the most adorable bit of womankind that ever took fate in her own little hands. But he didn't.

He could not quite believe that she knew what she was saying. He had a sudden vision of what a terrible readjustment it would mean, and he was very sorry for her. Stopping the cart in front of a cemetery, he took her in between the dripping greenery of its ferns and palms. They walked down the length of the path between the graves, and when they came to the end she turned to him with a comical, wistful face, and said :

"Well, we can't go any farther."

He nearly chuckled at that. Her sang-froid astonished and amused him ; but, looking at her as she stood there facing him, so self-possessed, so sweet, so altogether lovely, his heart failed him at the thought of the tremendous trial he had to offer her ; and she waited for him to say it.

He felt his strength ebbing from him, and he hooked his arm around a tree for support, and said :

"Will you stay?"

It was too much. If he had poured out an expression of his love for her, she would have listened, excited, and pained, and pleased. But he omitted all that, took it all for granted, and struck straight at the fact beneath. The sudden vision of what it would mean frightened her now. She wanted to take everything back and run away ; and so, after all her manœuvring, she said miserably :



"Stay? Oh no! I don't know whether I love you or not."

His face changed subtly. There was no shifting of expression, only a faint, still deepening of the tenderness already there—a delicate transformation of his face that she came to know long after to be a sign that she had hurt him.

But presently he smiled, and in his white face the smile did not look brave or sad—did not seem to be an effort of any kind, and its pure humorousness tantalized her. She had the feeling of being discovered in a bit of trickery. He understood her, and she wanted to hide; so she began:

"I could come out next winter to find out."

"No. You cannot keep me waiting for an answer so long. You must make up your mind." He searched her face again, and seemed tempted once more to smile, but the real bewilderment there checked him. He led the way back to the cart in silence.

When they reached home they both looked queer, but it was she who looked sad.

Jimmy followed her into her room, and found her crying hard into her wash-basin. He said: "That's three." And she said: "Three what?" And he said: "Three weeps to-day."

They were all pretty near "weeps," too, when she hugged them for good-bye; and Jimmy climbed up on to the carriage step after she and Colin were inside, and went head first through the window to hug her again, and had to be pulled out by the heels. She and Colin went off to the train alone an hour early, and just after they'd gone came the dust storm.

Neither of them ever told what happened in the dust storm, or where they were when it came, but they turned up at the station in time to meet the Rev. Ebenezer, and Mrs. Craig, and Wilhelmina, and the luggage. Colin did not busy himself about the luggage.

He stood aside, looking dreadfully white and quiet. When the train moved off, he waited with his hat lifted a long time, staring after it until you could not see the lights down the track any more; then he turned and walked away.

Mrs. Menzies and Jimmy found him the next morning lying on his "niwar" bed in a burning fever. The "Old Pole" crouched, huge and shaggy, over the porridge-bowl, and Mohanmed Rahim reclined in the window, smoking. Flies swarmed everywhere. The air that rolled languidly in from the bazaar was stifling. Colin smiled at her command to come home with her. Mary Menzies wrung her hands and stamped her foot, but he said he couldn't leave his family, and smiled again. At this Gore raised his colossal shoulders from above the boiling pot. He emitted one grunt; he took one step, and, picking Colin up from the bed, disappeared with him through the doorway.

He was meek enough after that, for his fever was high. He allowed himself to be put to bed, and lay tossing all day silently. There was something terrible to Mrs. Menzies about that silent frenzy. When at last a telegram arrived from Bombay, he took it, suddenly very still, read it, then laughed, then burst into tears and buried his face in the pillows. No letter had come, and everyone knew Barbara had gone away without promising to come back. The children talked about it, playing cricket one day, and Bruce said she was just afraid to "'fess up," and "he wouldn't care if he were a man"; but Jimmy marched into the house, straight into Colin's room, and sat on the foot of Colin's bed, thinking. He sat there thinking and thinking until Colin asked him what he was thinking about; then he said:

"'Bout her."

"What do you think?"

And Jimmy said, as solemn as a judge, and just as if he knew all about it :

"I think she's just like me. She thinks and thinks until—until—she falls off."

Colin told Mrs. Menzies just the other day about it, and said he had known Jimmy was a genius from that hour. It cured his fever, he said, and made him quite sane ; and then, just then, when he was laughing and rolling Jimmy on his tummy on the bed, somebody brought in the letter. This is the letter. It was written in pencil, and he has traced over every word in ink so it will not blurr :

"DEAR MAN,

"I do love you, and I will marry you. How you can love me after the way I behaved in the carriage, when that dust storm was whirling, and swirling, and crashing round us, and you were so quiet there in the thick black dark, and I sat in my corner and cried like a fool because I didn't dare face it—the dreadfully new Heaven you offer me—how you can love me, I don't know. I'm glad I don't have to.

"I think it was your refusing to kiss me there in the terrible intimacy of that breathless blackness, and then your refusing to come to me here when I telegraphed, that showed me how wonderfully safe life would be with you. I've known a great many men—I wish now I hadn't known them so well ; it cheapens me for you in my own eyes somehow—but I never knew one before who had your kind of self-control. You might have frightened my wretched femininity, have driven me away—hopelessly away, then—if you'd let go. You know what I mean. But oh, my dear man-soul, even in that vibrant, storm-charged passion of blackness your personality hung aloof in a quietness that humbled me and made me worship you and made me sure.

" You have a right to ask why I didn't tell you then that I loved you. How I wish I had! You would have kissed me then. Now it will be months before we meet.

" It was a kind of cowardly honesty. Oh, it seems to me that I have so many things to confess; that I am coming to you just a tattered bundle of nicely-darned rags, and not a whole, sweet woman at all! Here I am in my first letter to you explaining it's because I've been so worn out by abuse of my feelings that I couldn't trust myself to my own real love for you. I can't tell my real feelings from false ones until I have tested each one in a slow crucible of thought. It is pitiful, contemptible, but it is true. I miss the opportunity of rising to meet the glorious moment on wide steady wings of feeling because I remember so vividly my old frantic soarings and beating about a hot-house ecstasy. I try to be honest, to think each situation through now as best I can; it's the only means of navigation I have, but it's terribly tedious and tortuous. Some time I will tell you the whole; just now I tell you enough to show you how I need you.

" I had to have leisure to think this through, and I've had it at last. I thank you for not humouring me and my telegram. You are masterful beneath all your gentleness. I laughed at my own predicament when you refused to come. You would have laughed, too, at my manœuvres to obtain quiet and a chance for sane thinking. We sail to-morrow, and Wilhelmina snores gentle German snores in my room, so I sit in the bathroom on the floor. It is 2 a.m., and the floor is cold, but I am very happy—happy because already I belong to you, and can tell you these things without scratching out the word 'bathroom.'

" I am happy because I must and shall marry you. I know that it is right and inevitable for me to give

myself to you, and I believe I shall keep that knowledge burning steadily through all the doubts that are bound to assail. Dear, I warn you : I shall have doubts and terrors, and I shall probably make you very unhappy before it's all over ; but I beg of you to trust what I say now, for I say it on my knees—I love you.

" Sometimes my spiritual progress reminds me of a little green inch worm I once watched, hunching himself along a leaf. He measured his little green length on the leaf, and then pulled his bottom-end up to a level with his top, and from there measured again. His gait was a mixture of wriggles, and hunches, and stretchings forward. I am just like that : I am always having visions of what I might be. I am always reaching to my limit, and then humping myself along after my reach. My life is one strenuous wriggle to keep up with what I demand of myself. Dear, I beg you to be patient with my wriggling ; you have given me a new vision. I fling myself at full length upon the path of learning to love you. I shall get there humping through the dust somehow.

" I have laid bare my mind to you, and you are kind, and I worship you with all the poor worship-faculty that is in me. I feel confident for the future, because I know that it is your spirit I cling to ; and even if my emotion seems very, very thin, I still know that I am yours by virtue of the perfect trust I have in you.

" I thought so many times, when I was there in that funny dear home, of how lovely it would be to have such tenderness as yours wrapping me around for life. Now I would pray for tenderness, too, that I may give you a home.

" Until then I am your

" WOMAN-CHILD."

## CHAPTER VII

### ABOUT A POLE, AND A PEARL, AND A PAIR OF GREEN SHOES

BARBARA'S letters were not calculated to cool and soothe a lover who sweltered in a Punjab summer four thousand miles away from her. Each week saw him waiting for mail day, only less feverish in mind than he was in body, looking forward with an excruciating mixture of anticipation and dread to the arrival of that bulky envelope. He never had the dimmest glimmering of what to expect from its contents, and he had not yet learned the trick of sudden adjustment to each of her whimsical moods. Every Sunday morning at five o'clock he cycled to the post-office, and waited in the cool shadow of that huge hall while a sleepy "babu" brought out his mail, staring at him with vapid wonder over large bone-rimmed spectacles; and always the "babu" seemed to say, "There is no other sahib I have ever seen just like you," while his soiled fingers fumbled slowly through the written confessions, and hopes, and promises of a multitude of aliens, and at last extracted that particular heavy blue envelope; and always he said: "Two annas charge for overweight." And every Sunday morning at half-past five he cycled home with that little packet of thrills and fears, and caresses, and stabbings but toned under his cotton coat.

With him perceptions and ideas had to be assimilated slowly; and each time that he was called upon to whirl

right-about face he suffered the keen discomfort of a rusty-jointed mind forced to unaccustomed agility. This happened each week. If one letter sent his fancy soaring through azure heights in worship of her spirit's generous vitality, and set his whole worn body tingling with the aching memory of her loveliness, the next dashed him to a horrid depth of amazement and futile sympathy over the obsessing miasma of her egoism. He was called upon again and again to suffer with her through pages of frantic self-searching. He would sit in his little burning cell above the white heat of the bazaar, and wipe the streams of perspiration from his forehead and watch other streams that rolled down over his ears to splash on the paper, and labour to decipher her writing, while the thermometer crept from ninety-five to a hundred, and she told him of how she feared she could never enter into his life fully, of how alien to her was his mystic sense of God, and of how she sometimes felt she should end it all now, before she broke his heart with a nearer view of her atheism. He always winced at that word, and his brain would struggle sickly to justify her cruelty; and he would be on the point of tearing the letter into fragments, when he would look around his sizzling room and think of her youth, and be seized with a passion of remorse for his impatience. How could he expect her to face life with him, and be happy and quiet in the prospect? It was a sufficient evidence of her nobility that she was willing to struggle to him, though she did wriggle and hump like that poor little green measuring-worm. He would smile, and put the sheets of her letter in the saturated pocket of his coat, and go out into the dreadful city streets that moaned and raved with fever, and cholera, and plague. He would muddle through another week somehow, dosing himself with twenty grains of quinine a day, and allowing himself half an hour to lie awake and

think of her at night on his roof-top. Sometimes, if he lost a precious night's sleep through dreaming of her, and felt fever on him the next day, and lost his temper with some poor wretch, or fell off his bicycle in the dizzy heat, he would beat his head against the dead wall of his affection for her, that would not give way, no matter how much his brain pounded on the realization that she was ruining his peace of mind, coming between him and his men, and disturbing his life of worship; and by the end of the week he would face another mail day with teeth set behind white lips, and would open a fat envelope that flung upon him a flood of laughing caresses, of sparkling tendernesses, of ridiculous and adorable whimsicalities. Where he was nerved to high tragedy, he would find her calling him "her blessed Boy Blue," and hear her laughing over their home that was to be in that "haweli" near the Kashmiri Gate, where she could watch the naked babies rolling in the ditch, and see the donkeys, and buffaloes, and camels lumbering through the gateway. Or she would drop some bombshell of information about herself into his unprepared mind with the calmness of a queen throwing diamonds to a beggar, as she did when she casually remarked the size of her income, and said she was looking forward to his help in doing good with her patrimony. "A couple of million!" He had never dreamed of such a sum, and now among the difficulties of her making loomed others that no one but capricious fate was responsible for, and foremost among them his horror of being rich. Oh, he had loved his poverty; he had gloried in its freedom. His imagination, overcome with terror and laughter at the idea of himself as a millionaire, crawled to the edge of that domain of wealth, and lay there panting, and gulping, and shivering.

He never could decide which caused him the most violent whirlings of adjustment—her irresistible love



passages, or her unbearable, self-accusatory searchings of heart, or her calm introduction of a world that would now be his, whether he would or no. He only knew that his life in those days was like unto the whirling of a top, and he wondered that he had kept his sanity at all.

It was extraordinary even to him, in his rare moments of self-consciousness, to realize how very real she remained in spite of the insistent, incontestible actualities of the cholera epidemic, and the heat, and the blue, red, and yellow lightnings that stung his eyes when he closed them. There she was as he pedalled through the bazaar, with the sun blazing down upon the inadequate thickness of his huge topi, picking her way through the languid, sultry throng; and there she was in the deserted church, where he preached to a handful of patient, sweltering Eurasians; and there she was, most vividly of all, sitting in his rickety window above the steaming thoroughfare. So vivid was his image of her that he began to be appalled at what he had done; and he wrote to her frantically one night that he would give it up, his blessed poverty—his "charpoi," and his bowl of lentils, and his rooftop—and would set himself to finding her a bungalow in the civil lines near to the gardens.

It was soon after this that he drew all the money he had out of the bank, and paid for a third-class passage home. That took half. With the remainder in his pocket he could buy a very good pearl, one that he had discovered in a little shop behind the Jummo Bazaar; and through all the confusion of his ghastly weariness, of the pain behind his eyes, of the strain of five funeral services to be said on the morrow over five cholera victims, he had a thrill of joy. It was like a spring of cool water in a blazing wilderness. He would take her something beautiful.

But that night, when he reached home, he found

Goreski rolling on his "charpoi," a volcanic mass of fever and despair. Jeremiah was sprinkling water over the floor out of a saucepan; a single light flickered on the table, and around it the air was thick with insects.

Traive stood a moment looking down at the terrible burning of the old man on the bed. The despair of a last battle seemed written on the gaunt, gigantic face.

"You must go home," he said at last. "I will take you."

There was a momentary stillness over the great rugged limbs, and then a torrent of foreign words rushed from between the heavily bearded lips, piled themselves up an unintelligible crescendo, and rattled off into jabbering nothingness. Traive turned away and met the gaze of Jeremiah. Under the bright accusing eyes of this little man he flushed, and passed his hand awkwardly up over his hair.

"Sahib," said Jeremiah, in a hoarse whisper, "is it a true word that you have spoken?"

His master nodded. And at that the bronze features of the dwarf-like creature became strangely distorted, and with a loud wail he fell on his face at the other's feet.

The cries of mourners came through the open window. A rat scuttled noisily across the floor.

\* \* \* \* \*

Barbara, travelling languidly through Europe, her mental state, as Ann put it, a series of ballooning emotions puffed out by the wind of her sentimental fancy, to be punctured weekly by the same tender humour of her lover's letters, received the letter about Gore at Rome, and read it with one of those floods of tenderness that washed her free of doubts and miseries.

The letter said:

"I have had a great disappointment. I had planned to buy you a pearl, that you might have had set in a

ring some time. I was so glad that my bank account could manage it, for you are like a pearl. You were that day when you shone in the doorway in front of "Old Gore." Well, this is about him. You remember him—Goreski, the Professor of Oriental languages? He's been here since you left, just crumbling away like a great weather-beaten old ship, and I couldn't come to you and leave Gore to go to pieces and be sucked into the sea and be drowned out here. I'm bringing him home with me. So I can't give you the pearl. It is hard, but I shall bring you instead that pair of little green shoes you saw and liked in the bazaar."

Perhaps if Mrs. Witherow had not taken the wind out of her daughter's sails with one of those startling, unexpected decisions of hers, when she announced on the very day of her arrival from America that she thought Barbara should undoubtedly be married at once, perhaps under the stimulus of opposition, she might have gone steadily on after this; but Mrs. Witherow's attitude rather spoiled it. The calm way in which her mother accepted everything, and proposed to send her off to the ends of the earth with a man she herself had never seen, left Barbara in a rather ludicrous bewilderment. She had known that his being a Christian would weigh heavily in his favour, but she had made up her mind to a winter of self-sacrifice at home, and it seemed to her ironical that, when she was just beginning to want to be with her, her mother should so gladly give her up. It spoiled her plan of wiping out some of the sense of guilt that had begun to weigh on her. It seemed to her, too, that fate was conspiring to land her in all too much of a hurry within the bonds of the married state, and she had a half-rebellious dislike of doing just the thing that she knew her mother and Ann, and even Grandfather Craig, approved of her doing.

In the midst of this fit of sulks she received a letter from him, saying that he was about to sail, and that it was useless now to attempt to turn him back at Port Said. The implication pricked her vanity, and she sent a letter to meet him there, saying that she would marry him at the end of the fortnight that was to be his meagre holiday.

Now that she had burned her bridges, it was necessary to summon all her forces to carry her through the strain of the final suspense, the more so that the image of Anthony Ladd, not improbably in the same city as herself, was beginning to tap spectrally at the attic windows of her brain. To rout this image—and its presence seemed to her a ghastly evidence of unfaithfulness to Colin—it was necessary to plunge oneself deep in adoring contemplation of the latter, and so it was that, after all her honest warfare with herself, she was tripped up by deluding herself into the imagined possession of a heart throbbing to meet its owner. Instead of walking quietly to meet him, confident of the man she knew she could trust, she swam to meet the lord of her imagination in a fevered storm of feelings. She panted to a dizzy height. Her fall was mutilating.

She watched his train pounding into the Gare de Lyons, and saw him get out of a *troisième classe*, her heart a wild, beating bird in a cage of suspense. He gleamed at a distance terribly white and thin, and seemed shrunk to half his former size under the grotesque shell of his archaic overcoat. Somehow she floated to him through the crowd; and then, when he lifted his hat and stretched out both hands to her, beaming all over his sickly, tired face, even as she was stabbed with sympathy, she succumbed to a sickening sense of disillusionment. And as she gave him both her hands, she thought to herself: "Can I ever make him look presentable?"

And her mother sailed up behind her serenely, and kissed him in welcome. Her head whirled at the sight. It was all so deliriously strange. Her eyes refused to recognize him as the same man she had left in India. It seemed as though her mother had gone mad to be embracing such a wild, anæmic, foreign sort of person.

"Goreski didn't come, after all," he announced, as they got into the carriage; but she scarcely heard him.

Then they drove to the hotel, and were left alone in the little drawing-room of their suite; and he took off his coat and stood revealed in his thread-bare serge suit—and her hysteria turned upon her suddenly, threatening to choke her with condemnation. And then he took her in his arms. She had waited four months for that kiss, and had dreamed at night of the first intoxicating thrill of his lips, had dwelt often on the wonder of having to postpone her ecstasy so long; and now he kissed her, and she felt nothing. She felt not even physical repulsion; she was just there, an insensible, crying thought. And he kissed her, thinking he kissed a woman who loved him.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A PATH CLIMBING UPWARD

BREAKFAST loomed ahead with the menace of catastrophe. There would be her mother's serenity, and Ann's penetration, and Grandfather Craig's quizzical enjoyment, and Colin's adoration. Could she——?'

They had evidently been there some time when she entered the dining-room, and over a pleasant confusion of china and glass, and rolls and butter, and eggshells, Colin was telling them a story. The Rev. Ebenezer had pushed his chair back, and was sitting with his knees crossed, a hand sandwiched between them, and his head cocked at an appreciative angle. Mrs. Craig was leaning forward, her elbows on the table, her eyes dancing. Mrs. Witherow's hand, holding a cup was arrested midway between her plate and her mouth. A distinguished-looking couple at a neighbouring table were gazing at their backs with surreptitious enjoyment. Beyond the open windows of the wide room, with its little white-clothed tables and its long black-coated waiters, the sun shone, and birds twittered, and voices called, and feet tapped, and wheels rattled along, accompanied by crisp, clicking hoofs. There was a scent in the air of fresh coffee, and sweet butter and bread, and warm sunlight. Barbara felt as though someone were caressing her fears gently.

She approached them, smiling. He was on his feet in an instant; at the same time her mother put down her cup, Grandfather Craig bobbed out of his chair,

and Ann gathered up her gloves suddenly ; it was all spoiled. Grandfather Craig's mouth twitched vigorously ; it expanded, contracted, and expanded again ; his nose wrinkled, his eyebrow jumped, he turned and trudged toward the door. Her mother smiled, too, with a kind of radiant indulgence, and left them. The unison in it was paralyzing. Barbara threw a despairing look at Ann, and Ann, who was preparing to follow suit, hesitated, and sat down again.

" You must have some hot coffee, Bobbie," she said, and beckoned to a waiter.

Barbara drew a breath of relief ; she made a great effort, and, looking Colin in the face, smiled. His answering expression blinded her. " If only he and the others expected nothing of me, instead of everything !" she thought, feeling miserable and nervous.

But Ann was engaging him, and there was again a respite in which to regard him furtively. He looked just as pitiful and just as queer as she had expected. There was something brilliant and something forlorn about him, something picturesque and threadbare that made him almost theatrical, with his bushy blond hair, and his large mobile face, and his vivid blue eyes. He was so thin that his clothes hung upon him, loosely misshapen. His collar and cuffs were immaculate, but the bone button fastening his collar showed above his necktie. Now and then his eyes travelled to her face with a deep, dumb look that increased her misery tenfold.

Ann seemed not to notice anything peculiar about him ; Ann glowed with appreciation ; Ann was charmed with his wit ; but, then, Ann did not have to marry him. If only one did not have to be alone with him ! If only one did not have to decide now ! If only one had a little time to grow accustomed ! She buttered a second roll doggedly, fastening her eyes on her hands. There was something suspicious about Ann's

cordiality ; perhaps it was meant as a prop for her to lean on. She wanted no props ; she must see the thing through alone with him ; but at the warning scrape of Ann's chair her courage left her suddenly. If Ann went now, what in the world could she do ? But he was getting up himself, and was saying something about a hair-cut. She let him go with a smile surmised somehow.

" Isn't he just fascinating ?" said Ann, as he disappeared.

Barbara gazed at her desperately. The impulse to demand sympathy died within her.

" He seems—strange," she murmured lamely, and rose from the table.

" Where are you going ?"

" Just across to Madame Royale's."

" Oh !"

" To order my wedding-dress."

" Oh !" said Ann again.

Barbara looked at her a moment, opened her mouth to speak, shut it painfully, then went out.

She manœuvred feverishly to avoid being left alone with him that day ; and the family, assuming that the two lovers, at last united, were starving for each other's solitary companionship, manœuvred contrariwise. Their conspiratorial signallings to one another, their bland mode of self-effacement, assumed the guise of a cruelty. Even Ann refused to help her farther in her dilemma. And beneath her dread of being face to face with him alone was another dread—that he would divine what she was avoiding. It was with a thrill of maternal unselfishness in the midst of her petty subterfuges that she set herself to concealing from him her nerve-racked sense of his strangeness.

That evening after dinner she faced the inevitable. Coffee was served in her mother's drawing-room, and as she stirred her cup and looked from one to another



with fleeting, furtive glances she realized that she was in a state of nerves bordering on hysteria. They would go in another moment, and his arms and his lips were waiting for her. Grandfather Craig at that instant put down his cup with a little clatter of china. She started to her feet, and stood facing them vaguely. She saw a mild, unsuspecting curiosity in their eyes, and, turning, stepped through one of the long windows on to the balcony outside. The balcony was high above the street; it seemed suspended midway between the stars and the flashing lights of carriages and motors that glided by far below. She heard Colin excusing himself to her mother, and, leaning her arms on the stone balustrade, she waited, looking down the magic length of the Champs Élysées. He was standing behind her in the window now. Silence in the drawing-room: the family had gone; their isolation was complete. She waited with her back to him.

After a while she realized that what she had been waiting for so apprehensively had not happened. He was beside her, leaning on the balustrade, like herself, and, like herself, looking down and waiting.

And in a moment she knew that he would wait as long as she cared to keep him waiting.

"You are very good," she said at last.

He turned his face to her, and she saw there that his self-repression was even greater than she had imagined, because it was unenlightened; and she put behind her the instant temptation to enlighten him. To keep her agonized doubts to herself, and refuse herself the luxury of his sympathy, that was something she could do for him.

She sank into a chair in the light of the window. "Let us talk," she said quietly. He faced her, standing against the railing. His instinctive response to her mood touched her. She felt a great tenderness for him.

It was by means of these little half-realized struggles that she emerged from the cold dousing of her disillusionment. Obstinate she clung to her knowledge of his worth, and if her obstinacy lacked joyousness, it brought to her something that she needed more—self-respect.

He began to lead her out of herself slowly. She realized it, though he did not, and she was glad. That was what she wanted—to owe him her freedom; but she realized, too, almost with resentment, that circumstances were very, very kind. The little world of their foreign sojourn accepted him at once, delighted with the new sensation of his personality. It seemed to find his fantastic quaintness pleasing, even fascinating, and her family loved him. Ann was frank in repeated enthusiasm from that first morning when she had glowed upon him. Barbara confessed to herself, reluctantly, that the older woman's sprightliness had carried her through the ordeal of that first breakfast. Her mother had subsequently confessed to a momentary dismay in the station that her fastidious daughter should have chosen such a fantastic creature, but she had promptly fallen in love with what seemed to her his perfectly simple religious faith and his tender courtliness toward herself, and had received him, during half an hour's conversation, to be her own dear, dependable son. Barbara marvelled at the way her mother had mounted serenely over barriers that had caused her such pitiable stumbling. Then Fitz Craig had arrived in his touring car, a jovial Titan rumbling a tune of riotous enthusiasm for the whole romance, and declaring that, if he couldn't have her, old Traive was the very man—cunning, quiet beggar! Barbara did not like to acknowledge now much all this had helped, but she was forced to be grateful for props she would have liked to scorn.

She began to lose her painful sense of the situation and its multifarious difficulties. If she had an occasional hour of intense disappointment, because the rapture of passion was denied her, she had many days of unclouded comfort. It was on one of these days that they were seated at a little table, covered with a red and white tablecloth, having tea on a terrace somewhere in Switzerland. Below them in another meadowed somewhere was a chalet, and in the chalet her mother and Ann and Grandfather Craig and Fitz, who had whirled them there in his motor. It was a happy chalet, and Barbara's face confessed to the contagion of happiness.

"I'm so glad you have a face"—she spoke aloud—"a face to sit opposite to at breakfast." She scrutinized him, head tilted to one side, eyes half closed. His expression spread itself out before her with wide frankness, a beaming adoration.

"Oh, Boy Blue," her voice caressed him, laughing, "how do you dare open up so much as that, right here on this mountain, and a dozen chairs and tables and a few thousand feet of distance staring at you."

"There's only you," he said.

She patted his red, freckled hand, with its nervous strong fingers.

"I want to talk to you about my money." His face met hers quietly. "I have to make my will, you know." He quivered at that, though scarce perceptibly.

"Yes." He suspended the word in a silence that implored her to keep away from that hurting subject.

"I want to know what to put in it," she said.

"What have you planned, dear?" He was considerate, uninterested. He could not bear to dwell on the necessity for a will.

She blushed painfully. How could she tell him that her relations had stormed through half a dozen letters,

accusing her lover of being after her money, and how could she suggest that she wanted him to clear away all such suspicions by accepting nothing? He saved her the necessity of hurting him.

"You know, Bonnie"—he spoke with intense effort—"if you should die, I would just go away into India, and—and—never come back." He tried to smile; then, with the pain of that possibility behind him, he went on in a steadier tone: "I ask you to please leave me nothing in your will."

She did not realize what his understanding meant of past suffering, but she perceived his present pain, and she went on with the unfolding of her plan gently, desiring not to hurt him, grateful for this fineness of his that had cleared the way.

"I will do as you wish, but I would like to leave you an annuity." She paused. If she had known all that was behind his simple dignity, she might not have asked this of him. "Because—because if there are children, it will be easier for their father to be independent; and if you had children, you couldn't always live in the jungle."

"No." He smiled at the lucidity of her imagination. He had not even thought of this possibility. "Very well, dear."

"About ten thousand dollars a year?"

He assented absently, the amount was so immaterial. He was dwelling on a marvellous possibility, and she guessed his thoughts in one of those flashes of sympathetic intuition that seemed to him quite wonderful, and responded to him with one of those moments of rare simplicity that were really wonderful in her, though it seemed to him just a perfectly natural evidence of her womanliness.

"You know, dear man," she said, laughing with pure sweetness into his eyes—"you know you will want a whole brood." And she was so possessed by

the contagion of his own healthy, innocent joy that she was scarce conscious of a subtle insincerity in the remark.

It was at the end of this, the happiest of their days, that she found a letter from Anthony Ladd awaiting her in the chalet where they were living together—she and her mother, and Ann and Grandfather Craig, and Fitz and Colin! He had kept mercifully away, but now he came, cruelly himself.

He wrote in rasping bitterness; he supposed she did not know that he was lying with one lung in a sanatorium, just over the ridge behind her; he had seen her name in a newspaper register of foreign guests; he hadn't had a visitor for a month. If she weren't too sentimentally afraid of her past affection for him, she might walk over and stimulate his failing sight with a glimpse of her pernicious beauty. He had a sick man's craving for irritating stimulants.

He crashed into the quiet sunshine of her mood like a thunderbolt, carrying with him heavy, tumultuous clouds of feeling that capped the sky of her mind smotheringly. She started alone at daybreak, rushing to his summons like a wild, hypnotized thing. She took the first mile climbing feverishly, panting for breath, gazing back now and then down the valley of what already seemed a remote impossibility, then forging ahead toward emotional heights she had visioned in the night. One flash of his old lightning had set fire to the dry underbrush of her dead imagination. She did not think; she was possessed by a wild, intoxicating vision of renewed life; she had been dead; she was alive again. Her proof? Passion burned within her, and passion was life. She was running from a suddenly intolerable state of passionless love to plunge into a loveless passion. Her choice was unreasoning, madly determined.

She stopped at the fifth mile to rest, awakening

suddenly to the brilliance of the morning. Gleaming mountain peaks encircled her. Bells sounded from shimmering slopes of meadow to break a breathless stillness. She was terribly alone ; a presence that she had come to depend on was gone from her. She was very tired ; a mind that she had begun to rest in was lost to her. Her own mind fluttered feebly as a bird in a breathless void.

There were ten miles more to do. What would she find at the end ? Would Anthony repudiate her, despise her for succumbing to him ? She could imagine his turning her out and sending her back, a whipped child. Or would he take her ? She shuddered back from a vague abyss of imaginings, and took up her alpenstock languidly. After struggling upward for another mile or so she stopped again, and ate some sandwiches that she had put in her pocket the evening before, preparing in a feverish anticipation for the morrow's pi'grimage. The thought occurred, as she munched the bread and ham, that she had been in a tearing storm of feeling when she sliced this ham, and now she was just dead tired. She was not in condition for mountain climbing. Her feet were very sore. She must get on before they became worse. The sandwiches helped her through three more miles. She was at the top now, and could afford to rest, for it was only eight o'clock. She went into the little inn that hung over the cliff, and ordered "Kaffee Simple." She sat on the terrace where she could command a view of both valleys. The sun was warm. She drowsed. Someone said : " Yes, she is lost. Her feet are sore, but her head is bleeding, don't you see ? She's probably crazy." She looked up. There was no one there but a round, apple-cheeked boy in a white apron, bringing her coffee on a tray across the empty, sunny terrace.

He dimpled to her, charmingly cherubic, and ca"

her "Gnädiges Fräulein," with a timidly adoring glance. She asked herself, in the middle of pouring out the coffee, what she was doing, and drank a cup-full before attempting to answer the question. The strong, hot drink seemed to clear her brain. Her behaviour appeared to her suddenly as insane, then as outrageous, then as pitiable. She was overwhelmed with shame. The apple-cheeked cherub, fingering his apron at a slanting distance, prevented her weeping into the dishes. She beckoned to him and paid her bill, smiling at the irony of his adoring gaze. What a deformed imbecility she concealed under her charming exterior! She stood at the edge of the terrace, looking a long time down into the distance, then started slowly back along the road she had come, limping a little on sore feet. About a mile from the inn she met Colin coming up.

She stopped, staring, then stumbled forward, and, stretching out both hands, clung to his shoulders.

He held her, waiting.

"How did you know?"

"The concierge pointed out your road. I thought I had a right to follow at a distance."

He led her to a seat under a pine a little down the slope from the road. She could not help limping.

"My precious!" he murmured, trembling over her pain.

"A tight shoe——?"

He knelt before her on the grass, and unfastened it carefully—a ridiculous little white shoe. She had a sudden cleaving stab of memory, and flung herself forward, covering her feet with her hands.

"Oh, don't—don't kneel—to me—to my feet;" then, at the sight of him, drawing away and slowly crimsoning: "It's not that. I can't bear that you—— Oh, I must tell you everything."

He sat down facing her, in his favourite posture, cross-legged.

"Very well—if you must." He gazed at her with a healthy calm that nearly spoiled it all. Sunlight dappled him with gold through pine branches. She closed her eyes to gain strength from her inner dreariness.

"I had a touch of old madness." Her voice was cold, unrelenting. She summoned a mood that would spare neither of them. She had no thought now of keeping her ignominy buried from him mercifully. If she had little hope of ridding herself of her poison by pouring it upon him—if she realized that she was surrendering after a hard-won victory, she was too overwrought to repudiate the cowardice. Her sense of guilt was a mountain-pile of frantic sensations that she must heave off from her chest, to get space for breathing; so she went on, confident of his power to control what she could not:

"I had a letter last night from a man I used to love, to think I loved. I thought during the night, waking to it in horrible hours of excitement, that I loved him still. I am not sure that I do not. I am not sure of anything except of your integrity, and is that enough for us both?"

She waited for him to speak, knowing that he would not. She went on:

"I have wanted to love you because I worshipped you." She winced, and probed relentlessly into this detail of torture. "I can't even use that expression with freedom, because I used to say I worshipped him, and believed it too. He surrounds my life now, choking me with memories at every step. When I lie in your arms, I think in a cold, lucid way of how I used to burn under his caresses. When you call me love-names I listen quietly, and remember that I used to thrill and feel deliciously weak at the same word



from him. I cannot shake him off—and yet I despised him when I left him—I despised him, and I loathed myself, and I loathed our love most of all, because I had been cruelly deceived. No, I cannot say that. I was not deceived. I blinded myself deliberately, and told myself that he was a god, because his temptings enamoured me, and told myself that I worshipped him with my whole soul because his love intoxicated me with a new vision of self, and told myself that our passion was divine because it burned so consumingly. But I knew all the time that I was lying. I do not think he knew. He is different ; I do not know. How can I say what he felt ? But I believe his sin was against my youth, not against his own soul, as mine was.” She paused, staring at him with straining eyes, tense lips ; she did not see his face.

“ When the end came it left me a wreck, a bundle of dead, emotional driftwood. I had all but broken my mother’s heart, had all but ruined my own life, and, for all I knew, had damned my own soul, and I had nothing left—not even a battered vitality to hold a drop of remorse. I was packed off abroad like an invalid. I met you, and recognized you as a man I could have loved if I had had any love to give. I use the word, but I don’t know what I mean by it ; perhaps you do.” Her tension was breaking now, her voice—a toneless, limping voice—pitifully uncertain.

“ Perhaps I sinned against you in making you take me to your heart, but I did so long to be there—I thought there would be rest there ; I reckoned without the devil in my own.

She seemed waiting for strength to go on ; at last she turned to him.

“ I started this morning to go to the man I speak of. He had summoned me.” She handed him the letter, watched him read it, his face hovering over it with a refusal of expression, and said :

"He may be honest ; I do not know. All I know is that I was not. I did not start to him out of a cool compassion. I was on fire, the old poison running in my veins. What your love"—her voice broke—"your tenderness had failed to do, the sneering touch of his bitterness did in a moment. I was throbbingly alive. Oh, it is horrible!" She buried her face in her hands.

"Why did you come back?"

"I don't know. Suddenly I wanted you. No—all through, even last night, I wanted you, but still I ran away. It's all dreadfully mixed up."

She was looking at him now, desperately serious, and at the sight of her ardent face, above her rumped girlishness, he smiled suddenly, broadly. Her morbid exaltation left her then.

"You cannot marry a rag doll with the sawdust run out of her," she brought out in a different tone.

With one movement he enveloped her.

"You funny, funny thing!" he cried. "I love you. I love you. I love you."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE JOURNEY

THE Royal Mail, outward bound, was cleaving her way south through gleaming, phosphorescent seas under skies of velvet black. Stars swam in the vast, soft warmth of night, languidly, with a melting brilliance, as though waiting to swoon from their places and drop hissing into the sea. A damp thick heat clung close about the light that issued from sweltering companions, to be smothered suddenly in the surrounding shadow. The vessel throbbed in sweating effort. She moved, a tiny spark of light and life, in the muffling immensity of the opaque dark.

Barbara Traive lay in her steamer chair on the forward deck, to catch the cooling breeze. Her husband stood against the railing beside her, his blond head and white shirt bosom cutting dim-edged patches of pearl-greyness out of the thick shadow. Dimly discerned figures moved by, voices babbled languidly, the light of a cigar showed here and there in a moving darkness. And something about those figures, and those voices, and those little burning cigar-ends, suggested a fatigued and futile and infinitesimally small protest.

"Colin."

"Yes?"

"What are you thinking about?"

He did not answer at once, and she moved her head restlessly against the canvas back of her chair. A girl

behind her gave a little gurgling laugh in answer to the vigorous flow of a man's voice, then a squeal of appreciation, then an "A-h!" of astonishment.

"I used to be like that," thought Barbara, "and now I can't even make my husband talk to me."

"I was thinking," said Colin, sitting down near her and touching her hand, "that you must have a pony and trap, and hot water laid on in your bathroom."

"That will be nice," she murmured. "He has no idea of how I feel," she wailed to herself desperately.

He had not. The care of a wife seemed to him a dear responsibility, not a bewildering problem. If he was appalled at any aspect of the future, it was just that he felt himself a miserable substitute for that world from which he had taken her. He glimpsed no treacherous subtleties in their relationship—merely a sacred intimacy, very sweet, very wonderful, and very plain.

And while he trusted to the safe beauty of their married life to make all things plain, she quivered before what seemed to her its multitudinous pitfalls.

\* \* \* \* \*

The dawn breaking on the first morning of her weddedness reluctantly, through sulky rifted clouds of opaque greyness, as though loath to bring to light the agonized reproach of her white face, had found her waiting by the open window, eyes straining outward over the sullen waters of the lake that margined their hotel embankment. She saw herself now, as then, beneath the cold surface of those waters, staring upward from a drowned depth, and she wondered dully if all women suffered the horror of drowning with this hideous, irrevocable plunge; and she pressed her hands to her temples, contemplating the disfigurement of her girlhood, submerged. The sun had rimmed sluggish clouds with thick saffron, touched wavelets with brassy gold, and exposed the drawn misery of her face. It had been an unbelievable morrow to the sweet sun-

shine of that yesterday. For their wedding, numbering scarce a dozen guests, had been a simple, happy affair.

Even her brother, who had arrived the night before, had seemed in his compressed way satisfied. Ann and Fitz between them had created a spirit of intoxicating hilarity at the wedding breakfast. Her mother had sailed through the ordeal like a bird, had bidden her good-bye with scarce a tremor in the intense sweetness of her voice, so sure was she of her daughter's choice; and Barbara, kissing her, had realized that the separating circumstance of her marriage had at last united her to her mother in a longed-for sympathy. She had left them all gladly, running to meet the promise of a new life, already aglow with a rich sense of dignity that was his gift to her. Looking back, she marvelled at the radiant poise that had rendered her so immune to the subtly troubling distrust that Alice Kavanagh had brought with her into that joyous little circle of her friends. Alice had come in answer to a note that sought her out from a romantic address in the Quartier Latin, and she had failed, for all her weary lassitude, to mar the bridal mood of the gathering. Barbara wondered now at the indifference she had felt and shown toward her friend. She had sought to know nothing of the other's life, had sat up with her far into the night, watching her apologetic smoking of many cigarettes pityingly, and answering the ill-concealed, languid apprehension of her questions with cool lucidity. Alice had spoken of the superb temerity of the step she was taking, and Barbara had laughed at her, really amused at the other's lack of understanding. She had been very clear as to why she was marrying Colin Traive, had sailed away serenely from the innuendos of the tale her friend had told of Trixy's marriage to a wealthy widower who doused his head in "Bay-Rhum" and affected checkered waistcoats, and, from the quiet vantage-ground of her trust in her lover

had been tolerant with what she considered to be the other's well-meant, if morbid, impertinence. An unexpectedly passionate embrace at parting had failed to disturb her to more than a fleeting curiosity concerning the meaning of her friend's mood, such was her absorption in the blessed meaning of her own momentous experience.

It seemed to her now that she had been like one of those brilliant birds of paradise, swaying on the bough of her virgin fairness, singing a song of full-throated happiness in the savage moment that tore her plumage from her and threw her to the ground, a bleeding, mutilated thing.

"And what are you thinking about?" said Colin.

She started painfully, and leaned forward, looking down between the bars of the ship's railing to where the water swirled, silver and gold, against the ship.

"Nothing," she said; and the image of that room, with its lamplit privacy, its soft and suffocating isolation, that had been as impervious to the beatings of her spirit for freedom as though they had been the walls of a padded cell, rose before her. Again, that wild sense of irrevocable loss overwhelmed her. They were as isolated now as then, alone together for ever. It was intolerable.

Not a woman on the ship had spoken to her.

"Nothing," she said again, with a yawn, and her thoughts raced on.

She had crept back to him across the floor as the sun streamed into the room, and had crouched by the bed where he was sleeping. Somehow the fact that he was heavy and ugly in sleep had not troubled her. As she knelt looking at his slightly open mouth and tousled head she had been conscious of just one thought—that he must and would help her. She held the thought now in a firmer grip. Of only one thing was she afraid now—his habitual timidity.

She remembered gladly that morning hour they spent together by the window. He had wrapped a quilt around her shivering body, and had carried the whole bundle of her to a big chair in the sunny window, had chafed her icy feet with his hands, and had knelt beside her, arms hugging her great mantle. She had felt then that he understood; she knew now that he had truly, although it had been hard for her to understand his attitude during the days that followed.

She rose from her chair and stood beside him, still looking down at the curling phosphorescent edge of the silky sea. His eyes searched her face in the darkness. They stood there a long time, and gradually she became aware that neither had any idea of what was going on in the other's mind. If he would only put it into words! It? What? Oh, anything that would bring him close and real, and make him potent. But he said nothing, and there was this immense, opaque dark around them. She moved toward the companion way.

There were a number of people in the music-room, who looked at her curiously as she went below, followed by her young, adoring husband. "They are wondering," she thought fiercely.

It was very hot in the cabin. From within its tiny space one could hear the sea heaving against the ship, and the electric fans whirring in other cabins, and feel the throbbing of the engine. Their clothes swung in huge, bulging masses from the few hooks. Their toilet things crowded the tiny shelf above the wash-basin; books, and cushions, and shoes were piled on the floor.

"How strange it is," she said to herself, "that three months ago I'd never seen this man, and now his tooth-brush and mine are in the same glass."

"Oh!" she gasped, throwing her arms around his neck. "I expected thrills and thrills, and instead, there's this."

The floor of the cabin heaved upward, and his dressing-gown, swinging out from the wall, wrapped itself about his head. And then, holding her in that heaving confusion, he did say it—the thing that made him potent after all.

“Like everyone else,” he said, with one of those sudden, complete surrenders to his sense of humour, “we’ve been sold.”



## CHAPTER X

### LITTLE BATTLINGS IN EXILE

It was Sunday morning. Barbara stood under the vine-festooned porch of her bungalow and watched her husband pedal away into the sun, down the white drive of their parched garden, through the gate, and along the road where his topi appeared for a moment above the hedge. Every leaf of the hedge, every plant in the garden, was coated with thick white dust. And at one o'clock he would come in at the gate, bending low over his bicycle, pedalling wearily, blinking through narrowed eyes into the sun. She turned languidly back into the drawing-room, dropped into a low chair, and fixed her eyes on the Kashmir rug at her feet. And something about her, in the droop of her head and the pallor of her face, suggested that her freshness, too, like that of the plants in the garden, had been covered over with a coating of dry dust.

From where she sat she could look through a window across a strip of yellow grass to her husband's study door. It was a queer little door, small and low and heavy-browed with the leafage of a sturdy creeper. Two steps led up to it, and at one side in the grass stood a green iron garden bench. The bench was empty. It occurred to her that the bench was almost never empty.

Her gaze travelled back from the little screen door to her own drawing-room. It was a charming room, a triumph over climbing plaster walls and wastes of

cement floor. The bright medley of parrots and flowers in the chintz hangings, and the bright gold picture frames that framed a few vivid water-colours, and the bright letterings on the rich bindings of many books packed in shelves that lined the walls, and the large fantastic patterns of the bright rugs—all these bright things showed pleasingly in the large shadowy room. Bowls of roses and dull brass jars of ferns showed in the dimness, mirrored in gleaming tables. Down a wide spaciousness a piano stood open, piled with music. Long windows led out on to a veranda massed with palms, and beyond this green coolness the sunlight glimmered kindly.

She had taken pleasure in making the room, but it did not satisfy her now. Walking over to the piano, she wrote her name in the dust there.

She had failed to adjust herself to the world that claimed him. His world was strange, and ragged, and needy. It straggled up to that study door of his, to cast its burdens there, and it demanded of his wife a particular kind of conduct, and when she failed to take upon herself that course of conduct, it had eyed her askance, had shrunk away from her. Perhaps it would slink away from him, too, and then—. She was to him worse than useless. The railway quarter was an abomination to her. The people! The women! She could do nothing for them. When she drove into their dusty compounds and sat in their dark, filthy rooms it made her sick. She was sick of it all and sick of herself.

And so she had turned from it, after one or two miserable efforts.

There was Alfy Burns, and the Minchin children, and McVicker's wife—all ending in humiliation. Why? She had begun by being very kind to Alfy because her husband had suggested that she might save the lad; but his pale, adoring face had become an ex-

cruciating irritation, and his worshipping attitude a nagging reproach. She had just let him drop, that was all; and her husband had said nothing, but she did not dare ask him now what had become of Alf. The Minchin children, four of them, had been rescued from drunken parents. Colin had found them breakfasting on native sweets in a house stripped of furniture, their parents snoring side by side in a drunken stupor. He had brought them home to her, a scraggly twin on each arm, to be cared for until he could make permanent arrangements. They had not had their clothes off for a month. With no bedding to cover them at night, how could they take off their clothes? They looked as though they had rickets. One had a great sore behind her ear, her hair matted into it. All their heads were crawling with vermin. She had put them into one of her dainty bedrooms, and the room had reeked with the odour of their poor, neglected little selves in less than an hour. Realizing the necessity for hot baths, she had cowered before it, while Wilhelmina had gone stolidly ahead, had scrubbed all four, and had put them into clean night clothes. All she herself had done was to buy the clothes and hang sickly in the doorway, watching Wilhelmina rub "blue ointment" on to their heads. They had been hers for a week. It had been sickening to find one's self unable to mother them. Then they had been carried away in tears to the Orphanage. They had been to her just pitiful, anæmic, unattractive scraps of humanity, but as she watched them leaning back towards her from the "gari," their poor, pinched faces swollen with tears, she had realized suddenly how much more they might have been.

And Mrs. McVicker? She had not even told him of her failure with Mrs. McVicker. And he said nothing. He never said anything. There was always the difficulty of his silence.

But he had done more than his share. Indeed, if he had not made such generous concessions she would not have felt so contemptible. He had not even mentioned living in the railway quarter, but had saddled himself with a large bungalow in the Civil Lines, had consented to join the Gymkhana, had bought for her ponies and traps, and had even begun to ride himself, taking lessons from the "Tommy" at the Volunteer School.

Her only cause for complaint lay in the puzzling fact that he did draw the line in his concessions, and drew it at a point that piqued her with the suspicion that after all she did not understand him. He separated his social identity from hers in a subtle way that suggested a perfect willingness for her to shine before the world, commensurate with his own unwillingness to attempt any such thing. It was a kind of generosity that tantalized her with the suggestion of much held in reserve. He would take care of her house and her servants and her horses, would share them with her gladly, enjoying her enjoyment of them, would drive with her to a garden-party in her carriage, fittingly costumed even to the details of white gloves, but he would never appropriate any of these luxuries for his own use. He still pedalled to work through the wide-spreading station on his bicycle, and the sight of him coming home in this fashion, hot and dusty, invariably suggested to her that he tolerated this luxury of hers only as a temporary makeshift, that he was waiting for her to outgrow it, that his old life of simple service was still close to his heart. She knew that, reasonably, she could not blame him, but when he sank into a huddled silence beside some stupid woman at some other stupid woman's dinner-table she did blame him in the midst of her own frothy display of her fascinations; and when he came in wearily at tea-time to find her pouring tea to half a dozen bachelors it was

not enough that he should sit in a corner and grin, genially silent at the men who had the good sense to admire his wife. She wanted him to shine, and he would not shine. Finally, in the midst of her preposterous exactions, she would realize suddenly that his generosity, if not a complete selflessness, evidenced a largeness of sacrifice that made her own failing effort to adjust to the world he gave her seem pitifully weak.

The iron bench was empty no longer. A thin, reddish man in white duck trousers and a battered topi was sitting there staring at his feet. She remembered seeing him before in the same posture. Her eyes surveyed his worthlessness coldly. A child appeared presently around the corner of the house, a child with a dark face, a red dress, and a white pinafore—one of the McVicker children. She pressed her face against the screen door, tugged nervously at the knob, and turned with a despairing gesture to the man on the bench. Barbara did not move. The child went away, and the man continued to stare at his boots. A servant came in with the home mail. She received it listlessly, and began opening her letters, thinking that if the eternal droning of the Persian well in the garden and the eternal blazing of the Punjab sun would only stop for one hour she might regain her sanity. She read Trixy's letter, maudlin over the doings of her three months' son, redolent of buxom housewifery, vulgarly despairing of Alice and "her really distressingly abnormal affair with Professor Khun," and pressed her hands over her burning eyeballs, wondering whether she were really there in India, married, in exile! She contemplated crazily the sunlight that seethed over the garden, the perfume that swam to her sickeningly from the jasmine vines that climbed up the pillars of the porch, and while she was wondering dully what it all meant—Trixy married to a fat widower, fast becoming a rotund matron, Alice linked to a rem-

nant of a once powerful brain, herself wedded to a man she did not understand, a man who was dumb—a tonga rattled loudly at the gate.

With the first glimpse of the old lady who popped out of the back of the vehicle, she placed her in the railway station with an army of blue orphans, and she said to herself that this old soul had just that peculiarly outrageous shabbiness, just that insane sprightliness, that proved her a missionary. She regarded the archaic gown of rusty black, the wrinkle face, and lank wisps of hair under the man's "sola topi" with sour pleasure, also the red sausage of bedding done up in a bundle with a rope and the carpet bag that made up the visitor's luggage. Running out on to the veranda, she suffered both hands to be pumped violently up and down, smiling an enthusiastic welcome into the quaint creature's face.

"So you are Mrs. Traive?" the newcomer remarked, head tilted at an exaggerated angle, lips pursed, beady eyes dancing over her from head to foot, and presently added: "Humph!" and then again: "I am Mrs. Barker of the Orphan Asylum."

"Your husband is one of my boys; won't you ask me to come in?" The vigorous old lady was not altogether pleased at her reception, was evidently disappointed not to find her hostess a more extraordinary person, and as Barbara ran to give orders about her room she shrilled after her: "I've come two hundred miles out of my way just to see you and your house. Ain't that a compliment?"

Two minutes later she was discovered standing by the window fingering the curtains.

"Well, I declare, your walls ain't covered with satin at all."

"I beg your pardon?"

"They said you'd covered your walls with satin and had real lace curtains."

"No ; it's just chintz."

"Humph!" The old lady plumped into a chair, wiped her forehead, where a red band marked the pressure of her topi, and gazed about the quiet daintiness of the room, chin tilted upward, eyes half closed. "Humph! You've got a lot of books. I have a beautiful house, too. The Asylum cost a lakh." She lowered her chin, as though, having exhausted the disappointing possibilities of the room, she would now compare the young creature before her with what she had heard.

"And how do you like India? Not much like your home, is it? We was awful surprised that you really came, and there was one young lady nearly went to pieces over the news."

Barbara had a delirious vision of herself, discussed and reassured in a hundred stations. She tried to fortify herself with the thought that these people really loved her husband. Her visitor went on smacking her little shrivelled lips over the tasty innuendos of her conversation.

"You know we had another plan for your husband, but the Lord knows what's best for us all, and I s'pose it wouldn't do for two such Saints to marry, anyhow. Elizabeth is a Saint of Saints."

"Is she so good?" Barbara did not want to know more about this other woman, was scarce conscious of asking the question. Her mind was racing back and forth on a terrible choking storm of laughter and angry tears.

"Good? She's a real Saint, I tell you. She gives away almost all her pay, and won't go to the hills in the hot season, and is just wearing herself out in service for the Lord. She's not long for this world." Hands crossed here sanctimoniously on the dusty black dress.

"Oh, I hope that's not true," Barbara managed to

murmur, and turned with wild relief to the caller who interrupted to save her.

It was Major Malvern (a Major now), and the mere coincidence of his arriving with Mrs. Barber seemed an ill omen. Barbara introduced him to the old lady, and somehow the contrast of his superb carelessness with the little woman's shabby pomposity produced in her an uneasy excitement.

She thought to herself: "I might have married a man like that. I might have married him if I'd tried. It would have been different."

He bowed ceremoniously over the plump brown hand and asked his hostess to ride with him that afternoon. She heard herself arranging to go with him under the poor old soul's astonished nose, and it seemed to her very funny then and very delightful.

She had really not intended to shock or hurt anyone. For the moment she had forgotten that it was the Sabbath day, or rather what the Sabbath day was to these people. She had just leaped lightly aside from the horrid puddle of self-condemnation where she had been floundering, and had walked into the quiet flattery of a gentleman's gallant smile. It was not until her husband came home to tiffin that she realized she had done something outrageous.

He brought Mr. Menzies with him and a little man whom he introduced as "dear Brother Good." Something happened within her when she saw this little man, something like the slipping back of a bolt that had been locked on her heart. He stood quite still under the porch, not exactly in hesitation nor in timidity, but in a peaceful and gentle expectancy, holding his large dusty topi in his hand, and looking up into her face. His clothes were dull and shapeless, and his body seemed shrunken away within them, and he lifted to her a weather-beaten, ancient face out of which looked a pair of wonderful child's eyes. He



looked at her for a long moment, and then he smiled, and all his face was laid in wrinkles, and his eyes shone. It was as though his smile said, "How good God is to have made you so lovely!" and still his smile deepened and widened his large mouth and creased the dry parchment skin around his innocent, shining eyes, until they were all smiling as broadly as he, and then he said in a gentle voice:

"The Father is very good to have brought me here."

But still persisted that uneasy excitement that was connected with Major Malvern.

And later in the afternoon, when she slipped into the drawing-room, gowned in her riding habit, she found them on the floor, praying, the three men. No one looked up; they did not notice her. She sat mute and miserable in a corner, listening to their prayer and watching them as from a great distance, her husband and the *padre* and "dear Brother Good."

It was the sight of Mr. Good that crushed her. He sat huddled together on the floor, perfectly still, and big tears dropped from his face one by one on to the rug. She heard the tiny soundless sound for some moments without knowing what it was, and then, looking up from the miserable contemplation of her riding boot, she saw a man's tears falling. And the sight appalled her. It appalled her because she could not deny it. It was something so unconscious and so real that it silenced the world in her heart gently and finally.

It was true then, and she had been wrong all along. It was only sin that was the matter with her. And Brother Good, without knowing it, was suffering for her, and her mother suffered, and her husband suffered, and so, of course, Christ had suffered just like that.

For one moment the sufferings of Christ for the sins of the world were to her absolutely real. All that

she had learned as a child, all the words that were meaningless and the phrases that were mockery, all her mother's prayers, and her grandfather's sermons, and her husband's labours, and all Anthony's scepticism, all her own artistic longings, all of Rodin's sculpturings, all the music she had ever heard, and all the beauty she had ever seen, and all the ugliness, were merged suddenly into one antithesis—sin and suffering.

But to give in, and let those tears drop into her own heart—never!

She slipped out into the hall at the sound of a horse's hoofs, with a sense of choking, with an effort to smile controlledly at this figure in white riding breeches astride his horse.

She did smile.

"I cannot ride with you, Major Malvern," she heard herself say. "I cannot even ask you in to tea." Her voice was final.

The man was a sahib. He lifted his hat. She need have said no more, but she said absurdly:

"My husband is having a meeting in the drawing-room."

"Ah," murmured the gentleman on the horse blankly.

"Some other day—I beg you to excuse me now." She turned from him. He trotted down the drive.

Her husband was in the hall when she came in. She passed him with a look that begged his forgiveness from a far distance of self-reproach, and went to her room.

## CHAPTER XI

### DEFEAT

"COLIN!"

No answer, only a kind of abstracted motion of the head that he was bending over his desk.

"Will you please tell the coachman where to go? I am going to see Mrs. McVicker."

A silence, during which his hand hovered nervously over the strewn papers. She waited, wondering painfully why it was that he did not leap to attend her. At last he said, without turning:

"It is too late. She was taken to the Insane Asylum yesterday."

"Oh—oh——!" But even then, in spite of the distressed intensity of her outcry, he did not turn.

For a moment or two she stood behind him staring at his back, while her face grew rigid with the confused pains of her varied feelings.

And his silence was to her incomprehensible.

He said nothing, because he did not understand. Feeling that he had no right to reproach her when she was to him an enigma, his yearning over her battled within him against his blaming of her, and the battle went on in silence. He could not bear to hurt her unnecessarily with the harshness of misunderstanding reproach, and he was sure that time, and time alone, would reveal her to him. It was, too, instinctive with him to cover his hurt under a gentle and impenetrable silence. Conscious, most vividly, of his own constant

effort to be a considerate husband, he failed to perceive that his conduct assumed the attitude least calculated to soothe her, having, as she did have, a feverish desire for outspokenness.

He did not understand, because his own adjustment six years before had been just a straightforward battle with certain very bald and ugly facts of the East, the most insidious of his temptations having been the tendency to neglect his daily devotional life. Looking back on that time, he always felt that if he had loosened his grip of spiritual realities the intangible and potent monsters of a vicious imagination would have claimed him. He would have told you that it was an hour spent daily on his knees in the early morning that kept his mind free from the poisoning effect of loathesomely suggestive sights that one must see in India. He knew too well the power of the Oriental vice-creature for enslaving one's imagination, and had seen too many men drift into her languid embrace to minimize the dreadful reality of her appeal. Every white man, he felt sure, was bound to face the same enemy when he came to the East, and he supposed that women had to go through a struggle of their own, but he had never been in the habit of studying women. Now he brought a very simple man's point of view to bear on his wife's problem, and he was disappointed in her. It seemed to him that she was not fighting very hard. He did not suspect, because her efforts to be the companion of his activities were so spasmodic and so feeble, that she was overpowered by a sense of uselessness. If he had been in her place, such a feeling would have been the signal for a dogged attempt at changing himself. His humiliating sense of failure had so often brought him to his knees that her moods of restless gaiety and discouraged self-abuse seemed to him to evidence scarcely sincere prickings of conscience. The subtlety of the temptation that paralyzed her would have

seemed to him, had he glimpsed it, an unreality. He might have put it aside as such, impatiently, but he did not even suspect its existence. He invariably rounded up with the thought that she was just lonely, and that all he could do was to love her.

The last was true. It was her safeguard at this time, though she did not appreciate it, that he did not understand her, and, knowing that he did not, was content to love her and to learn by a constant devotion. He learned through his disappointment, but he was far more disappointed than she knew. He had had dreams which she had glimpsed once, but had almost forgotten. His home was not the place he had longed for. It was an establishment, a setting for his charming wife, and as such he took a certain pleasure in it ; but it did not rest him, nor satisfy that longing that had been born of his protracted loneliness. Still, he believed that some day it would be all he had dreamed, and he blamed himself more than his wife for its present insufficiency. He tried to explain her restlessness on the ground of his own selfishness and stupidity. He felt that he was not enough of a man for her, his brain not brilliant enough to stimulate and engross her, his personality not noble enough to inspire the worship that alone would satisfy her with the sense of being possessed. Perceiving in her something of the hero-worshipper, he beheld himself to be no hero. That phase of her unhappiness that he had not understood before their marriage he understood now. He saw himself a poor clown-figure to companion her queenliness, and did not wonder that it offended her taste for a classic fitness in things. He had travelled so far into her world of values, but he had travelled very slowly ; and it was just when she was beginning to see in his homeliness the lineaments of grandeur that he was coming to realize the keenness of that old suffering of hers. He sensed her problem only after

she had discarded this particular hair-shirt, worn out of all usefulness as a means of self-mortification. Still, it did help him to forgive and compassionate her feverishness, and if at times he was the victim of a dread foreboding, and had a vision of a toiling way they must go, he faced its aching miles frankly. It never occurred to him that they would not travel the struggling length together.

Mrs. McVicker was not mentioned between them again. He had asked her, when they had first opened their house, to go to see her sometimes, to take her flowers from the garden, or something nice to eat, or a story-book to read—just occasionally to be kind to the alien woman in her struggle; and somehow she had never gone. The nervous apprehension of a trouble too terrible for her to deal with had made her put it off from week to week, until now the woman's battle for sanity was over, and her case confided to the Catholic Sisters in the Asylum. She wished desperately that he would reproach her, upbraid her, help her by his anger and his reiterated belief in her; but he did not, and she grew afraid of his silence. Once when she was on her way to the McVickers' house she saw him turning in at the gate on his bicycle, and she drove past, and kicked the things she had brought for the children under the seat, where they stayed; and some weeks after, when he found them there, she said she'd forgotten what she had meant to do with them. It seemed to her that he was oblivious of the desperate undercurrent in her life. But he was watching her more closely than she knew, and one day when she came in late for lunch, looking as white as a handkerchief, and walking unsteadily, he caught her in his arms suddenly and carried her to her bed, and pulled off her shoes, and rubbed her icy feet, and covered her tired face with his passionate lips. It was after this that he took her out to see the Menzies family in their camp.

They found the camp a confusion of half-pitched tents, screaming camels, shouting coolies, and shapeless pyramids of furniture. Mr. Menzies was presiding over the dusty whirlwind, smiling through streams of perspiration, shouting jovially through clouds of dust. Mrs. Menzies sat apart under a tree, surrounded by sunburnt fields, nursing her new baby. The children were playing cricket at a happy distance. And presently the only disengaged member of the party, introduced to Barbara as "our dear Miss Sahib, Elizabeth Wood," suggested they go over to the Famine Relief Works beyond the village, and leave the *padre* to get things settled.

Elizabeth Wood was a tall, gentle woman of perhaps thirty-five, perhaps much less. Her face was colourless and tired. The grey shadows under her eyes faded imperceptibly into the drab of her cheeks. Her teeth were rather bad, and her hair just soft and toneless, and carelessly coiled under her pith hat, but her eyes were fine, and there was something noble about the poise of her head. She was perfectly calm amid the confusion, and waved good-bye to Mrs. Menzies with a happy matter-of-factness that suggested that she was quite at home there in that tumultuous blaze. Leading the way around the dry, brown outskirts of the village and past heaps of cow-dung, she talked in a jerky, humorous style to Colin about their experiences in this and that village, and of how much easier it was to discover stomachaches than heartaches, and how much more welcome a dose of quinine was than a pocket Gospel. When they reached the main road where the famine victims were at work her face lighted to an unbelievable radiance; she walked through the long lines of emaciated, half-naked men and women, pouring smiles on every side, addressing one and then another in easy Punjabi, stopping now and then to lay a kind hand on some poor woman's shoulder. The labourers

were employed carrying baskets of earth on their heads from the fields to the road. They wound back and forth, long listless lines of brown shrunken bodies. Beneath the strip of trees that bordered the road with shade was a fringe of children, large-headed, pot-bellied, spindle-legged children, sitting or lying weakly on the ground while their mothers laboured. They looked at the strangers with heavy, sore-lidded eyes. One could count their ribs from a distance. Elizabeth Wood picked one of them up in her arms. It looked to Barbara more like a worm than a child, and she turned away, feeling sick. All through the rest of the day she thought of the tall, strong, tired girl holding that naked, deformed baby in her arms.

The camp was in order when they returned—three small tents under as many great peepul-trees. Before one of the tents Mrs. Menzies was dispensing medicine to a crowd of villagers. Colin entered the crowd eagerly, and began to crack jokes in the vernacular, to the great delight of the patients. Miss Wood disappeared, with a Bible under her arm and an Indian girl in attendance, toward the village. The *padre* was nowhere to be seen, the children, too, had gone somewhere. Barbara walked across to the tent that had been set aside for herself and her husband. It was just large enough to hold their two camp beds and a wash-stand. She threw herself on one of the beds. From where she lay she could see the line of some mud roofs at the far edge of the long brown field. A little path lay across the field, and presently a very miserable dog of whitish colour came loping along the path, and disappeared around the tent. That was all there was to be seen, and she lay a long time thinking, until at last she fell asleep.

It was evening when she awoke, and someone had put a lamp on the wash-stand. In the warm light the sides of yellow canvas seemed closer than ever ; beyond



the tent flap was deepening twilight. She wondered miserably where Colin could be, and began to do up her hair. Vague sounds of animals crunching, and footsteps passing in the grass, and dogs barking in the far village, came through the walls of the tent as she washed. She felt very lonely and unhappy, and when she was ready sat on the bed waiting for what seemed to her an interminable time. But Colin did not come, and at last she stole out into the mild, sweet evening, and followed the sound of voices. In the front of the dining-room tent she found them all sitting together with their Bibles open and talking happily together. She noticed with a pang that her husband's face was the most beaming of them all.

It was Jimmy's birthday, and when dinner was announced he led them all into the tent where there was a birthday cake. The cake was a very little one, hardly big enough to hold six coloured candles, but the children could scarcely take their eyes off its magnificence to close them for "the blessing." Mrs. Menzies had put the new baby to sleep in the back of the tent, so they all sat down together with the cake blazing a really big blaze in their midst, and painting grotesque shadows of themselves against the slanting sides of the tent. They sang "Mera Isa" and some other "Bhujins" very softly, so as not to wake the baby, and then each child blew out a candle very reluctantly, and Jimmy cut the cake.

It was a lovely picture to Colin, with the tent-flap wide open to the mild evening and the camels that were to carry the camp onward the next day crouching outside, and the evening star hanging low over bronze fields in a pale yellow sky. Seeing tears in his wife's eyes when they said good-night to their host, he was glad. And he tucked her into her little camp bed that night with a special tenderness and a new happiness, thinking that these dear friends had brought

peace to her restless mind, hoping a dim, half-articulated hope that some day they, too, might have just such a simple home.

It was shortly before dawn that he awoke to see her sitting by the open door of their tent, wrapped in a dressing-gown, her figure silhouetted against the deep, shining sky. The light of a waning half-moon hanging languidly over the village roofs revealed her face, streaming.

"My darling!"

"I felt sick. I wanted the air." She turned from him to control the twisting of her face. Her voice suggested endless possibilities of suffering. He knelt beside her, his vague forebodings compressed suddenly to a suffocating pain. A dog barked somewhere out over the fields. They could hear the camels crunching near by in the shadow of some trees.

"Oh—I can't stand it. It's too heart-breaking. I hate it."

"Hate what?" he asked sternly.

She shifted her ground, terrified at the sound of his voice.

"I couldn't live this way."

"No one has asked you to."

"But you want to. I know it. I can see it. But I can't. I'm not made like these—Saints." Her sobbing was uncontrollable now, her surrender to it all, abject. He held her close, the sternness fading from his face.

"Never mind how you are made. You're made for me."

"No, I'm not. I've tried. I lied to you about those things in the carriage. They were for the McVicker children. I went to the Asylum, too—and it nearly killed me. I never want to go again."

"Oh, Bobbie, Bobbie dear!"

"I don't know what you think of me. You never say anything. Your silence is terrible, and I can't

make you speak." He groaned, and she clutched him tighter.

"Sometimes I have thought you very cruel—but I know you are not. I know you are kind—if I could only get to understand you, but I am too tired now. I want to go home."

"But, Bonnie, we are going to-morrow—I mean to-day—after breakfast." He could not bring himself to take in her meaning.

"That's not what I mean. I want to go home to America, to Craig Valley—somewhere. I must get away."

He said nothing. He was thinking with terrible rapidity of a thousand things, trying desperately to see how he might save her to himself.

Her tears were dry now, and her body quiet against him. Suddenly she sat up, and in her voice was a fierce longing that swallowed up all the sentimentality of her first outburst.

"I need you, but I do not have you. I need the world, and I am shut away from the world. I need beauty, and there is no beauty here. You are my husband, but I do not know you. This is your world, but it does not know me. There may be beauty here, but it is not the beauty I can see. I want beautiful pictures and music, and beautiful skies and hills and seas; I want it so much that I cannot bear this any more."

She stood before him in the half-light.

"And I want you," he said dully.

"No, you don't!" she broke in fiercely. "You don't know me and I don't know you."

And suddenly the insaneness of her words sounded to him terribly true. For a moment she seemed to have outstripped him, and seized in her madness on the one essential and super-reasonable truth of it all. He cowered before her.

But her frenzy dissolved again suddenly, and her new note of plaintiveness sent him whirling dizzily back into the everyday meaning of things.

"You might have married her."

"Who?"

"Elizabeth Wood."

"But I never loved her." He almost laughed. He was immensely relieved, and he stretched out his arms. But she was still to elude him. She was plaintive and childish, but not all childish, and she held him off.

"I want you to let me go," she said quietly.

"You may go." He was frightened by her complexity, but he remembered that the simplest treatment always worked best with her.

"I want you to give me my freedom."

"I cannot do that."

"Why?" Her mind caught at the suggestion of a selfishness she might turn back upon him, and she cried to herself at the same time: "Oh, how contemptible you are!" Still she thought she was fighting for their mutual freedom. She meant to restore him to himself. That purpose was not altogether ignoble, surely? "Why?" she repeated.

"It is not mine to give."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, my darling, can't you see? If you can't see, then I can't tell you."

No, she could not see, or she did not want to. It was all the same. She was thrown back on to the first dangerously simple formula.

"Will you let me go?"

"Yes." And something died within him then. She had achieved her purpose. Only the meaning of it all was far clearer to him than to her. He felt as cold, as paralyzed as a dead man, beneath the blasting sense of their mutual defeat.

A fortnight later she sailed from Bombay, and, as

she had foreseen, he closed the house and went back to his room in the bazaar ; but it was not the same to him, for he was not the same. The truth came to him on his roof-top one night while he sat thinking of the ship that was carrying her away from him, and for one moment he flared into anger at the devastation she had wrought.

He lifted his arms to the sky, his face working terribly.

“ Oh, God—show—the way !”

And he measured his length on the roof.

ck  
to  
im  
he  
one  
ad  
  
ng

## PART III

### CHAPTER I

#### A CITY AFFORDING NO HABITATION

PARIS smiled through a million lights ; smiled lightly, alluring to a hundred pleasures ; smiled indulgently, to soothe one's bruised self-respect ; smiled mysteriously, promising the renewal of old, intoxicating relationships ; and Barbara Traive, stepping into a taxicab before the Gare de Lyon, smiled too, and shut the door on the loneliness of her heart. She was conscious of a feverish anticipation as the cab slipped into the glittering, eddying throng, and realized suddenly how great a part certain memories and certain persistent longings had played in the little drama of her humiliation. With her head turned away from the reproachful silence of Wilhelmina, who sat beside her mute and miserable, she treated herself to the absorbing panorama of blazing shop-windows, fitfully gleaming faces, and flaunting bill-boards. She told herself that she was the slave of a sophisticated taste, and that she had come all the way from India to gratify it. That she had actually followed such a mad caprice to its fulfilment seemed to her an evidence of moral courage. She had forgotten already, submerged in the life of these gleaming, laughing thoroughfares, that she had left India under the impression that she was committing an act of self-sacrifice. It seemed to her now, as she beheld this city, witnessing with such

dainty self-assurance to a wealth of long-accumulated culture, that she had been too long the victim of an unnecessary exile, that she had been foolish to struggle against the cravings of her own nature. Her unhappiness with her husband had been due to the meagreness of their intellectual and social life. She had been deprived of the pleasure necessary to her existence, and was now just a restless desire pursuing the promise of that pleasure ; and the whim that was driving her fixed, naturally enough, on the person of her old lover, Anthony Ladd, as the focus of her anticipations.

Her expectations were vague, but potent. Indeed, if they had been less fanciful, she might have repudiated them as unworthy of herself. As it was, their tinge of guiltiness was of so delicate and subdued a shade that they seemed only unworthy of an ideal creature, her husband's wife ; and as such they belonged to too great a company to be treated in themselves seriously. The dull sense of untrueness to a husband that she respected did not strangle her desire, merely settled at the bottom of the mixed draught of her excitement a sediment of unhappiness. This substratum of heaviness added to the spiciness of the drink.

The choice of an hotel had been important as involving the proper setting for her mood of delicate self-indulgence. She had rejected the Ritz reluctantly, to settle in a quieter house just off the Place Vendome, It had been a subtle sense of insecurity, the instinct to be careful in choosing her environment, not to offend that strict taste of hers by an incongruity between herself and her surroundings, that forbade the larger palace ; she could not afford to jar the compass of her sensibility. As she dined alone in the subdued elegance of the hotel restaurant she was glad of her self-restraint. She had dressed for dinner with scrupulous care, and had a delicious

sense of being perfectly gowned, a completely harmonious figure in the dim sumptuousness of her surroundings. She rose from her little table, lighted by a rose-shaded candle in a heavy silver candlestick, luxuriating in the sensations produced by a perfect meal and in the knowledge that she had been a softly gleaming picture seated there. She trailed her shimmering draperies over the thick carpets of the corridor, sank into the soothing embrace of silken cushions, and sipped her coffee, telling herself that she was in her proper environment at last. If she had a sense of personal isolation as lightly laughing groups of women with attendant courtiers passed her, the sense was rather pleasurable. She did not care to belong to these glittering, bejewelled women. They seemed to her unenviable Philistines, not half so much in tune with Paris as she herself. She had ventured to wind a rope of long unworn pearls around her throat, but she rejected the temptation of a cigarette. She wished to do nothing that her husband would have disliked. She had even a passing desire that he were there to dote upon her beauty.

The outer world allured. She sent word upstairs to the faithful Wilhelmina to dress for the street and bring her evening cloak. Glancing over the bulletin of the theatres, her head swam with the multifarious promise of pleasure that was offered. She had been starving for these things. Amid such embarrassments of riches she knew not what to choose. The same subtle warning to a mild indulgence influenced her to settle on an hour's music at the Concert Touchè.

The selection proved, after all, to have been a daring one, for it tempted the long-suffering patience of a crowd of memories that thronged behind the wall of her æsthetic enjoyment. She had been here many times; once, long ago, with her father, occasionally during that thrilling summer with her artist lover,



and once with her husband just before their wedding. She had to skirt the deep memory of those saner, quieter hours carefully, and rush into the shallower whirlpool of thought. The music helped her, rocking her restless mind to the wild, fierce-leashed rhythm of a modern "tone-poem." It was a congruous climax in the feverish excitement of her mood to encounter there at the end of that fine riot of harmony the figure of her anticipation.

She experienced one moment's sense of complete, satisfying climax. The climax past, she found herself stranded suddenly on a dreary level of merciless thought. It was as though the glaring actuality of his presence had put out all the pleasant, dim lights of her imagined pleasure in him. She saw him there, and realized suddenly that he meant nothing to her, that through all the storm of his past appeal he never had meant anything compared to the meaning that lay for her in the quiet of her husband's self.

She had recognized the picturesque glory of his head on the instant, though it had taken her a moment to adjust to the strangeness of the face he turned toward her, a face disguised to her memory by the handsome cloak of a close-clipped bronze beard. He was smoking a finicky little cigar and talking carelessly to a young woman beside him, who showed the white curve of a round cheek under the droop of a wide, shabby black hat. As Barbara observed him, waiting for him to respond to her gaze, she realized that he had fulfilled himself. His personality had gained the completeness that it had lacked formerly, and somehow, even through the blurring haze of the smoky music-hall, the complete man was a less pleasing figure than the unfinished one; certainly less interesting than she had imagined he would be. His personality seemed not so much to have grown bigger and more powerful as to have grown more lucid.

He now looked obviously what he was. There was no magnetic suggestiveness about him, no startling crudity or incongruity to pique one's curiosity. His vandyke beard, hiding the sullenness of his mouth and the weakness of his chin, reduced his face to an ordinary handsomeness. He had adopted the flowing necktie whose appropriateness had seemed so delightful in foreshadow; it was all too consistent in actual existence. Finally, the lightning charm that had been his in those other days would never have suffered her to pick him to pieces so coolly.

She attributed only a bare half of the phenomenon to the change in herself. By the time he met her gaze and melted into a suffused, uncertain glow of recognition, she was so much mistress of herself as to wonder whether the glow were not the most startling evidence of his acquired *savoir-faire*.

He greeted her with scarce a trace of awkwardness, with a careful echo of his old boldness.

"You are fulfilling your young promise." The words were a jarring companion to her own adverse verdict of him.

He regarded her steadily. The audacity of his glance had lost the fire of his youth, had settled into a somewhat dull and moody egoism. She felt that she was being studied as a possible subject for a picture. He took his eyes from her, discontentedly she thought, and, sweeping his glance around the room, proceeded to make conversation. As she continued to regard him, listening with acute ears to his talk, that was heavily loaded with the lingo of the artist profession, with catch-words and technical phrases, even technical gestures that removed him from her mockingly, she became increasingly conscious of a disappointment in the taste of his personality that was, after all, very little of a shock to her. He tasted flat. He was stamped with the stamp of his surroundings, and he

seemed not to know it, or not to mind. He seemed satisfied to appear a very small person in a very large chorus.

She rose with a feeling of weariness, suspecting that he thought her a barbarian for leaving before the symphony. Somehow the possibility of his condemning her taste pleased her. She was glad to elude him in the security of a mutual displeasure.

"You go?"

"Yes. I only arrived from Marseilles this evening. I am very tired."

He accompanied her down the stairs to the brilliant thronged street, Wilhelmina following like a shadow. She was glad of the shadow. It proved her own solidity. For the world was beginning to swim round her. She thought she detected a sneer under his moustache as she signified that her *voiture* from the hotel was waiting.

She heard herself murmuring the name of her hotel.

"Ah, you are gracious!" There was a tinge of sarcasm in the French intonation; at least, she could not be sure there was not. She felt her cheeks burning. Could he, then, still humiliate her? He was scrutinizing her coolly.

"In two more years I should like to see you again, madam."

She laughed. "In two more years I may be dead," she said fatuously, "but to-morrow I shall be at home."

The sudden frown with which he condemned her remark was more like his old self than anything she had noticed about him. He bowed rather awkwardly, and strode back into the hall. She had an extraordinary superstitious feeling as she drove back to her hotel that she had tempted Providence by her absurd lightness. She almost wished that to-morrow would see it all over, this dizzy, heated life of hers.

She was conscious of Wilhelmina seated beside her, solid, substantially good, uncompromisingly real.

She asked herself that night, lying in the huge darkness of her canopied bed, what she intended to do. She seemed to herself the victim of an absurdly feeble intention. She had come away from India without a plan; her purpose in coming, she told herself, had been to relieve her husband of an encumbrance, and the intensity of her purpose had seemed to free her from the necessity of having any other idea. This bit of reasoning was, however, no sooner articulate than it turned on her in the dark an aspect of teasing absurdity. She tossed on her pillows, threw herself to the other side of the great bed, and faced another statement of the case. A few hours before she had been convinced that she had come here to satisfy an erratic taste, had even thought that she was satisfying it; now, confronted with a repetition of luxurious, idle days, she felt a shuddering loathing. One's taste for such delicacies seemed to be satiated easily. She passed an all but sleepless night, beating back the persistent mockery of a hope shattered on the blank front of her old lover's dummy, beating back the more dreadful menace of an overwhelming longing for her husband.

In the morning she set out to find Alice Kavanagh behind that queer little address in the Latin Quarter, urged by a vague desire to escape from surroundings that had promised so much the night before, led by a remnant of a hope that she might find a resting-place in her friend's world. But her instinct warned her, even as she entered the tall, narrow house in the tall, narrow street and began to climb the tall, narrow stairs, that she was an alien here.

The room that she entered had a languid, æsthetic warmth. Its great height of ceiling and sparse, harmonious furnishings gave it an unpretentious spacious-

ness. Crimson brocaded hangings, dimly toned and limp with age, darned exquisitely and frayed at the bottom, dropped from high window frames to margin almost bare breadths of dull wall. Old chairs, upholstered in faded, blurred tapestries, standing in quaint, reposeful isolation on mirroring spaces of polished floor, between worn bits of fine old rugs; a battered piano littered with music, much fingered, badly used; and one or two remarkably fine oils in crude frames, made up a subtly pleasing, rather mournful atmosphere of mingled richness and meagreness. A very delicately artistic taste seemed to have grown tired there, and to have relapsed into a still, tasteful carelessness.

Beyond the watery sunlight of the narrow windows could be seen a crowded line of shops topped by other narrow, shuttered windows. Barbara gazed at these uninteresting features of landscape without seeing them. She had turned from the perusal of her friend's face unhappily. She did not want to dwell on its strange aloofness. It seemed to her not only strange, but very sad. She felt that she had really loved this girl, but that the opportunity for proving her affection had slipped from her now for always.

But if she was loath to discover the secret of her friend's face, Alice was scrutinizing her with an almost cruel keenness. Barbara turned to face her unwillingly.

"What do you see?" she asked after a while.

"Ah, what doesn't one see!" the other sighed restlessly, with vaguely gesturing hands—exquisite ringless hands. "But you are more lovely than ever, beautiful Bobbie, and as long as you are lovely one cannot complain."

Barbara bit her lip, and the other's long, tired eyes narrowed suddenly.

"Don't tell me that you are unhappy—anything but

that! It would be too dreadful, too terribly incongruous. You surely are not guilty of such poor taste—you who are made for happiness. Ah, no, it is impossible. You are still glorious, and young, and strong. My dear, you tempt me to envy you. It is the first time that I have known the sensation for months—years. One grows so indifferent to oneself, here in this Quartier Latin." Her voice trailed off into a little vibrant silence, then flew forward on another note.

"Ah, Bobbie! *ma chérie!* I am glad after all that you have come. You recall memories I would not lose—I had almost lost." There was a surprising earnestness in her voice. Barbara could not remember ever having heard there such a frank sincerity. She locked the secret of her own humiliating disappointment behind a new sympathy for her friend, settled herself comfortably in her somewhat unbending, spindly chair, and pretended to the prosaic desire for a long sociable chat. She said with equal earnestness:

"I wish I had not been away so long."

"Is it so long?" She had a feeling then that Alice was frightened at the simple acceptance of her own momentary frankness, was trying now to elude the penetrating sympathy she had drawn upon herself. She had withdrawn her own gaze—had slipped somehow into the cool, excluding embrace of the room—and the impulse that impelled Barbara to pursue was not one of pure compassion; it assumed even the guise of a cruelty. She felt that it would be kinder to let her friend's palpitating spirit escape, but she was gasping for the assuring touch of a known, personal reality in a shifting panorama of unreal scenes, and if her friend eluded her, she would be stranded indeed. She leaned forward, throwing about the other a mantle of intensely glowing affection.

"Alice, you are not happy. Can I do nothing? Is

an old friendship of no use now?" She saw the thin figure before her quiver, and felt guilty of a horrible display of coarse breeding.

Alice gave the impression of an animal trapped. She sat in a high-backed chair, her arms crossed tightly, a hand round either elbow of her tight black sleeves. She had on a perfectly plain, shabby velveteen dress that made her uncannily thin. Her long eyes fastened upon an opposite picture, a flaring sunset behind wind-lashed trees, at intervals looking swiftly from side to side. Presently she smiled her very slow, wide smile, showing her broad, glistening, regular teeth—a sad, reminiscent smile, with an inward meaning, but no outward message.

"No, you can do nothing," she murmured, her voice half chanting the words. "You are too young and, pardon me, too wholesome. You are as wholesome as a glass of rich milk, but I cannot swallow you, and you are—you are—shall I say so?—of the world. Your gown is the last word of elegant fashion, and it becomes you. You are hopelessly good-looking, crushingly rich."

"I am the wife of a poor chaplain."

"Ah, for the moment I had forgotten." The brilliant slanting eyes dwelt on her an instant, then flew away again. She seemed startled at the suddenly-suggested fact, but too weary to investigate it. Barbara had almost given her up, when she turned, put her hands suddenly on the arms of her chair, and leaned forward, throwing her head back with a gesture that cast aside all artificial reserve and left her terribly exposed. Only her burning slits of eyes seemed unwilling to unveil themselves. Her light, vibrant voice leaped into a high wave of short, excited cadences. The singing whirr of her words, like the sound of a taut wire in vibration, suggested a terrible tension of suffering.

"There, there, I shall not play with you, my Bobbie. Play and deceive you with tricks? No—no—why should I? And would you like to know all about me? Well, you shall. It is not what you are that makes our friendship impossible, it is what I am. Do you not see what I am? I am a part of his disintegration, that is all. What do I mean? I mean that I am a cigarette fiend, that I have a taste for absinthe, and a weary distaste for my own person, that when the larder is empty—I pose for the nude." Her face quivered, the tension of her voice threatened to break, throbbed convulsingly. "I have no memory of what one calls modesty. I do not mind—why should I? I have a perfect body, and it brings in food, without which one cannot go on. That is all; but when I found that he didn't care, that he hadn't the smallest objection to that, then I knew how small we were." She put her two hands around her throat as though to loosen a pressure at the base of her brain.

"I did something deliberately, coldly, when the desire was all but gone, which I might have done once, grandly. Did you know that I worshipped your terrible naturalness over your lover Anthony Ladd? It seemed to me, if I had your vitality and your chance, that I would reach Heaven; but I was always afraid—afraid of my thin, tainted blood. You cannot understand. Your aunt, Mrs. Craig, she understood somehow. She is so clear and so true. She might have helped me then." She paused a moment, then went on more slowly, with a lagging bitterness. "If I were a woman six feet high, if ours were a giant passion, then your world would glorify us. Someone would put us in a George Meredith novel, and laud us for being true to our natures. But we are small. I am small. He is smaller. Our affection now is smallest. It is a sickly, abnormal child that I wish



were dead." She shivered, though with cold. "I have watched the disintegration of his personality—you cannot deny that it was a personality—and the sight has made me old. I had a magnificent brain, that massive self—a prophetic imagination. It is now a horrid bundle of appetites"—her voice dropped—"appetites that must be fed." He seemed fascinated for a moment by a spectacle conjured up by her words, then she straightened the bow of her thin back with a jerk that threw her head back painfully. "You wonder why I stay? I stay because I live with a portrait of him as he was. He is not so ugly to me as he would be to any other, and I have a wish to conceal his ugliness from a world that once admired. A strange life-work? Yes. A mistake, a sin, perhaps, if I could do anything else. But I can't. If I cared for anything else I would not stay. I have no desire to go anywhere."

She looked at Barbara a long moment in silence, then said simply:

"If you ever have a child, think of me. I could have loved my child." She passed her two exquisite forefingers along closed eyelids. If there were tears there, they did not fall. When she looked up again, her eyes were of a burning dryness, and her soul, that had stared so nakedly from her face, was withdrawn behind a delicate, impenetrable mask.

"It is enough, *chérie*. Now you will go." She smiled. "I ask you to go, and not return." Then, as Barbara opened her lips to remonstrate, "No, it is impossible"; and hurriedly she repeated: "I ask you to go."

Barbara perceived from her nervousness that the Professor was expected. She moved to the door, and, turning there with an instinctive gesture, was surprised to feel her arms enfold a shaking frame. But it was only for a moment, and her friend, slipping from her,

smiled unapproachably as always, her slow, wide smile.

She stood at the head of the narrow stair as Barbara went down, and leaned over the balustrade to say, in her old extravagant manner :

"There is a portrait in the Salon—or a picture, rather—by your Antoine. Do not fail to see it. I could almost wish to hear your verdict ; but no—adieu."

Barbara did not look at the long, faded green shutters of her friend's rooms as she stepped into her motor. It carried her in throbbing zigzags through the narrow, crowded streets, and she knew in a throbbing brain that there was no foothold for her here.

## CHAPTER II

### A PORTRAIT OF ONESELF

IF she had not stopped on her way back to the hotel to view Anthony's picture in the Salon, she would not have received him that afternoon, but the thing was so lovely that it demanded tribute. She had driven up the Champs Élysées, scarce noticing that the horse-chestnuts were in bud, only vaguely conscious of a spring sweetness in the air, her mind given over to thinking of her husband. Just how and why her interview with Alice should have freed her from sentimental misinterpretations of the past, and revealed to her the present in a clearer perspective, she did not understand ; but she welcomed this new lucidity of thought with gratitude, and gave herself to making the most of it. The figure of her husband occupied the centre of a stage that had been cleared suddenly of distracting debris, debris that she had thought valuable properties of her mental scenery. The puppets, whom her imagination had transformed into heroes and heroines of her fictitious drama, had of a sudden strutted from the scene, waving her comical adieus, and leaving her to face the one man alone. She saw that she had been busily piling between herself and him a host of make-believe obstacles, her fantastic ideas of herself, and her world, and her fate. She was, after all, no more of a romantic character than he, and she seemed to have missed the chance of knowing the homely man who was worth her while for the sake of a pictu-

resque figure who meant nothing to her at all but the temptation to insincerity. Turning her attention to him, with new interest, she discovered that he was anything but a definite image to her mind. His actual self assumed an astonishing vagueness. It was easy to imagine him beside her strolling through these galleries ; it was impossible to imagine what he would think of the pictures surrounding them. He had never been in the habit of thinking what she supposed he would think. She remembered that he had not liked " Jean Baptiste " of Rodin, but had stood a very long time before " Le Baiser." He had pretended to so little artistic sense that she had been inclined to accept his own dismissing verdict of his taste ; but she remembered now instances of refined perception that had made her idea of him seem at moments singularly obtuse. Her whole attitude toward him appeared to her now just that—obtuse. Her punishment was that, craving his companionship, she found him eluding her altogether. Would he, or would he not, find any meaning in these impressionists ? Would his intolerance of this ugliness blind him to its strength ? He hated ugliness, despised the jaded taste that played with its images. Was his intolerance a thing to deplore or to admire ? What would he make of this Paris, of Anthony, and, finally, of Alice and her problem ? He had a fierce intolerance for what he called sin, commensurate with his compassion for sinners. It occurred to her that he was the only man she knew who could compassionate sinners without a trace of self-righteousness in his recognition of their weakness. Few men dared to loathe vice and love its victim. Would he presume to call Alice the victim of a certain viciousness ? would he loathe her life ? or would he see in it something abnormally beautiful ? She did not know.

She had come on Anthony's picture in the midst of these questionings, and her first thought had been :

"He would see the beauty of this, I know." Standing before it a long time, she was at last compelled to recognize a fineness in the heart of its author that she remembered worshipping once, that she had long since forgotten. She acknowledged the artist's nobility at first unwillingly, for it witnessed again to her own coarseness of perception, her distorting interpretation of their past; but she paid tribute to the work with glad generosity; and she was glad, too, to have an opportunity of tending him her appreciation as a pleasant way of shaking hands at parting. She would see him that afternoon. It was, after all, better to separate from the idea of friendship with an outspoken admiration for him than with the malicious disappointment she had felt in him the night before.

Certainly the impression he made on this second meeting, as he came rapidly into her little drawing-room and flung himself into a chair, was more pleasant than the first, perhaps because she expected nothing now, perhaps because she viewed him in the kind light of his beautiful achievement. If it were the latter consideration that biased her in his favour, it was at least as fair as the antagonism which had spread from a disappointed selfishness to clothe him miserably to her first recognition. Probably she never could behold him with perfectly dispassionate eyes, and doubtless this coolly glowing admiration was as fair to him as any of her attitudes could be. In any case, she was able now to slip over the somewhat garish eccentricities of his personality into a quiet appreciation of his mind, and she felt ashamed of having been caught so many times in the brambles and thorns of his manner. She was ashamed, too, that it had always been the most obvious, stridently picturesque aspect of him that had been most clearly visible to her. Even her former worship of the lover he had been seemed to have been singularly indiscriminating. She had treated him to

the same obtuseness to which she had treated her husband, had missed knowing this man too.

She contemplated him now, and wondered whether it was due in whole, or in part, to the coolness of her mental temper that she perceived in him a new nobility, or whether she had really grown within the last two years to a freer appreciation and a clearer insight into men. The idea occurred to her that it was her recently deepened appreciation of her husband that helped to open her eyes to this man's worth, and the idea seemed strange. She was conscious of an absorbing under-current of thought that carried her far away from him even as she gave herself to appreciating.

From the happy security of this almost absent-minded appreciation she met his eyes frankly, and was surprised to find his gaze less candid than she felt her own to be. He suggested a restlessness that had been totally absent the previous evening. Slipping far down in his chair, legs stretched to an astonishing length beneath the tea-table, head wedged between hunched shoulders, eyes staring at her from under slightly knitted brows, he seemed not to attend to the easy preliminaries of her conversation. His eyes suggested that she puzzled him, the frown-line between his brows, that he had not expected her to be a puzzle. Something in the flush of his cheeks and nervous clasp of his long hands suggested, further, a kind of reluctant excitement. She was scarce conscious of deliberately ignoring the subtle vibrancy of his mood, and glanced at the long mirror opposite with the thought that she was being studied for a portrait. She preferred to think that his intensity was purely artistic, choosing to forget that with him nothing could ever be purely one thing or the other. She chose to say to herself that his taste was less exquisite than one might have supposed. The charming figure of herself seemed to her a poor subject for a man who could do what he

had done. The film of her grey gown curled upward smokily from the long eddy of her train to wreath about her knees and her waist and fade away over the whiteness of her arms and throat. She had tucked a cluster of yellow roses in her corsage, and had gathered her hair into a compact shining mass at the back of her head. It was successful, but obviously an achieved success; a scarce poetic blending of elegant fashion and sensitive taste; a picture little calculated to stimulate the virile spirit of a man. She brought her eyes back to his harsh scrutiny and abandoned her tone of rippling conversation. He seemed to be condemning the change in her and paying a begrudged compliment to the potency of the new charm. She wondered whether he were claiming a part in the working out of the change, and resented the proprietorship of his glance, though it searched no farther than the shell of her. She thought: "He cannot be falling a victim to this femininity of mine, that would be too preposterous." She said:

"It was good of you to come, absurd of me to ask you."

He lifted sudden, interrogatory eyebrows. She eyed him furtively, head bent over the tea-things, adding:

"Absurd, when I knew we had nothing to say to one another."

"One can always enjoy a *tête-à-tête* with a beautiful woman."

"But one cannot talk platitudes over yawning memories." She had weighed the words before speaking them.

"That is true." He sat up abruptly, put down his tea-cup with a clatter, and dashed his glance from side to side. She bit her lip. Was he afraid she was going to attempt a reminiscence? She spoke soothingly.

"Last night I wondered why I had asked you to come. I thought of being excused as the most graceful way of exit from an absurd situation, but this noon I changed my mind."

"The change was kind." There was a startling bitterness, a mixture of sarcasm and suppressed emotion, in his voice. She ignored the stinging confusion of connotations, and continued coldly :

"After paying a visit to the Salon I changed my mind."

His hands gripped his chair nervously ; he was staring at her again. She wanted to express to him just the cool, lucid appreciation that she felt he would accept at its correct worth. But his concentrated gaze disconcerted her.

"I went to see your picture." She faltered lamely, fumbled for a graceful phrase, and threw herself upon his mercy with a touch of her young abandon. "It is altogether lovely. I have to thank you for giving me sight of such a face."

His gaze narrowed quizzically. The sudden amusement in his face embarrassed her. She felt herself blushing absurdly. She had no idea of what he was thinking, but his sardonic reception of her naïve enthusiasm was hurting. She tried to cover a retreat.

"It is a beautiful piece of work—an exquisite bit of symbolism. I offer an unqualified praise to your genius."

"And make no claim to ownership?"

"Ownership?" She echoed the word stupidly, thinking that he was certainly not a graceful person in a *tête-à-tête*. One would have supposed him better trained by this time to the receiving of compliments.

"Surely!" he ejaculated, then flung up amazed hands to bring them down with a thud and grip his chair again—"Surely you are not blind?"

"Blind?"



"Blind—oblivious—obtuse—without sight." He piled up his words, grotesquely grimacing. "Ignorant of the fact that you were gazing at a portrait of yourself?"

She had no idea how long it was that he peered at her before her return stare of utter astonishment convinced him; but at last he threw back his head and burst into a loud laugh. She watched him blankly.

His announcement had felled her.

"I am at your mercy," she murmured after a while, prostrate under a heap of images that thronged from the astounding revelation. When she had wedged her way through their confusion to a clear space from which she could view one or two with some quiet, she spoke again.

"I should be happy to recognize it as such, but it is, after all, not my portrait." She braced her spirit on the spoken words, and said aloud, but to herself: "It is an idea, as I said before, a beautiful bit of symbolism."

He seemed exceedingly interested in the phenomenon of her labouring adjustment. He said nothing, but stared at her in continued excitement. She was scarce conscious of his presence. The articulating of this one fact, that she had no claim to the face he had painted, had given her a clue to another. If he had drawn such inspiration from her face, had been enabled to paint from its model an utterly lovely idea of youth, then her debt to him and the past was paid fully, and she was gloriously free. It was no wonder that he had been free of her long before. He would consider a year or two of passion and the subsequent shattering of images little enough to pay for a perfect art product. If she had only known before, she need never have been haunted by the desire to make up to him what she had cost him.

"I am glad to have served you," she said, wondering how much of her meaning he would understand, wondering, but not caring particularly. It mattered little what he thought or said now. His achievement meant much to her, but he had no share in the meaning. She wanted him to go away and leave her to ponder it alone.

But he seemed unwilling to go, seemed bewildered and piqued to a sudden curiosity by the discovery of a new vista opening up where he had thought all was familiar ground. She suggested by a show of boredom, tapping a foot nervously on the carpet, that he was to pretend to no share in the experience he had afforded her, but he seemed lost to any delicate signs of dismissal.

"Your blindness and your perception are astonishing." He leaned toward her. She dropped displeased eyes, frowning a little. The frown was a mistake, it paid him too intimate an attention.

"You resent my bluntness? You used to like it. Do you remember? It was your tonic. I never dreamed you would thrive so on brutality."

She gazed at him, astonished. Did the man think he had created her as well as her portrait? He was smiling over her, around her, up and down her.

"I used to dream what you would be, but I hardly knew." His preposterous presumption was lost to her suddenly in the reality of his admiration. She felt sorry for him, and willing that he should never know how little he had to do with her as she was. After all, he had done her a great service too, and she could forgive his presuming upon it. Only they must part without further parleying. That way lay absurdity.

"My friend," she said lightly, rising from her chair, "let us acknowledge our mutual indebtedness." She paused. For a moment he devoured her with his eyes.

She shivered slightly, then held out her hand, dropping into her old boyish tone.

"Anthony," she said, "Anthony, it's no use." And releasing her hand, he searched vaguely for his hat and cane—an absurd little cane—and a soft felt hat. She handed them to him. He turned in the doorway.

"The man, your husband, I should like to know him," he said. He could surprise her after all.

She watched him close the door, and stood a moment, mutely wondering. Then her loneliness swept over her in a flood.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ANTICIPATION

A METALLIC sea, ribbed with emerald green where scudding clouds clove asunder to let down shafts of sunlight, rolled sullenly to a horizon that was shattered by the white caps of an angry foreground. The shore-bluff, carpeted to its edge with close green turf, climbed struggling skyward. Sea-gulls swooped screaming from windy heights to disappear uncannily over the blank cliff, and go on screaming out of sight, above the pounding breakers far below. To the right, as one took the writhing ascent, the roof of a thatched cottage lifted a huddled head above the wind-swept downs ; for the rest, widely undulating lands, cold and hard, and a deserted road crawling inland.

Behind her, in a widely-crooked arm of the shore, was the village and the hotel from which she had come. With one's back to these, one walked in a vast, grey-green solitude of land, and sea, and sky.

Paris had smiled coldly on her loneliness, and had abandoned her to a sense of feeble detachment. She had listened to one opera, and had heard puppets screeching on a stage, had driven once through the Bois to sip tea at Armonville, pursued by the impish images of powder and paint, of waxed moustaches and rosy finger-nails ; and had left the city hurriedly, driven away by a nauseating distaste for the things she had thought she craved. Strangling a feverish desire to sail for India, she had wandered northward

aimlessly, choosing this place because she had been told that it was very lovely here at Easter time, and it was nearing Easter now. She found it the loneliest place in the world. But she did not blame the place for that, she knew that she carried her loneliness with her. It enfolded her heavily as a wet garment, and she hardly wished to shake it off, fearing a more chilly nakedness. She told herself that this was the kind of dreary solitude that one could enjoy, and she tried to lend herself to the wild coldness of its beauty; but it had just enough similarity to her home to make the process as painful as pouring salt into a wound. Her youth had been spent in a smoke-capped, windy city, whose grimy streets margined a treacherous water, where children were lulled to sleep by the boom of waves on a sea-wall that kept the vindictive flood from eating away the foundations of their homes; and she had grown up behind rattling windows with a delicious fear of the angry storm-thing that threatened the dear cosiness of her nursery. She remembered often at night flattening an excited little nose against windows streaked with rain, to peer with a wild sense of dread romance out into the dark, where one caught a glimpse now and then of a figure struggling by against the wind, and of spray dashing high into the air; and she had grown to love the wind, and the rain, and the mystery of storms. Fondling her memories, she realized that the lack of these things had helped to shrivel up her soul in that dry, dusty India, and she wondered that anyone could be so free from the spell of old and new environment as to keep young and sweet in an alien land.

She had a feeling of wonderment at the existence of her own identity. Here, in this place that reminded her of the precious, wild grey days of her childhood, only to chill her memories with its foreign breath; where no one knew her or spoke to her, and even the sea-gulls

screamed strangely, as no sea-gulls ever screamed at home—surely a little more pressure of isolation would send her headlong into a dismaying uncertainty of self. And yet it was marvellous the way that evanescent thing, personality, clung to one through the most kaleidoscopic changes of environment. Life had been for the past two years one dizzy journey; from America a flight to the Far East; Japan, China, India, viewed breathlessly, and a swoop upon Paris, to wing off again to India with a husband; and now the great void of distance crossed alone, and the coast of France rising before one, cold, relentlessly alien. To awake in the morning to a sudden strangeness in one's surroundings, so mysterious that one had to rub one's eyes to the uncanny adjustment, had become a habit. One skipped lightly from world to world, spurning the explored globe with a careless, flying foot. Such casual journeyings across continents and seas gave one at times an exhilarating sense of the superman; jubilant master of distance and time, and the mighty barrier laws of Nature; but in other more frequent hours it reduced one to a miserable speck of loneliness. To-day she was the speck.

Looking upward from that tiny atom on the earth's surface that was herself to the forces shaping her life, she beheld herself an insect, crawling and jumping irrationally this way and that, and waving infinitesimal wings, a creature of futile flutterings in a vast, indifferent universe. She beheld her freedom as the most dangerous tool in her life-equipment. The freedom to come and go, following the sightless fantasies of one's puny brain, the power to set aside the blessed limits of binding circumstance, the tempting potency of an ample purse; this had been her undoing. She thought of tiny, pumpkin-coloured cottages, glimpsed from the speeding windows of a train that spanned the plains of Western America in a few paltry hours, of

little toiling lives chained there to a plough, and a cabbage patch and a kitchen stove; and thought of them with envy. Those worn, wisp-haired women, standing in shallow doorways to wave aprons at the passing train, worked, and lived, and died with a humble task fulfilled for all eternity, while she followed the scattering quest of a phantom self-knowledge. What little work completed would testify to the honest labour of her life?

With such thoughts for company, Barbara leaned against the pouring stream of the wind, conscious of her body's feeble resistance to the onslaught. She felt absurdly weak. Her feet ploughed heavily as through deep water. Rounding a bend of the bluff, she scarce saved herself from falling backward under the pressure on her chest. Her breath came in sickening gasps, then choked her with an overwhelming nausea. She sank on the hard turf near the edge of the cliff, submerged under a hot wave of deadly sickness, eyes closed, face turned to the wind for the breath of life. And it was there, out of a throbbing horror of wind thumping on her ear-drums, and sickness strangling her heart beats, that she opened her eyes to stare out over a running, swollen sea, and know suddenly the meaning of a crushing discovery. For one instant the annunciation gleamed before her, touched with sublimity, then faded dizzily into a terror of bodily weakness. She had always gloried so in the perfection of her sound and glowing body!

It was a pitiful hour—an hour to dwell upon in memory with shame; and all through the piling up of its hurting minutes, that came pelting, little bruising hailstones of revelation, she was conscious of another self, standing serenely aloof, and calling to her that there was comfort for her and glory in this hour, if she would only rise to meet the storm. But she could not rise. She cowered there in that hollow of the hill above the sea, her back rounded to the wind that went

shrieking over her head, and she cowered too, before the shrieking secret that the heavens had let loose upon her.

She thought: "I am to bear a child, and my body is to be torn with pain, perhaps mutilated, perhaps sucked of its life-blood."

She saw herself running crazily over the cliff, and had to put her hands over her face to shut out that and other dizzying images.

She knew nothing about pain. It had for her all the breathless, sweating terror of an anticipated, unfathomed reality. Searching for data in her past experience, she could think of no pain that she had ever suffered more serious than a toothache, but her mind leaped hungrily upon all she had ever heard or read of the agonies of childbirth. It was not much, but it was enough to add to her fear a mixture of fevered imaginings. Women had talked before her with dreadful, vague suggestiveness. She remembered, when quite a child, tingling with terror and disgust at their callous enjoyment of a subject they dared not touch upon frankly. Her mother had never told her anything of these mysteries. Books usually mentioned the fact with deadly simplicity, as though it were too awful a thing to dwell upon. She could think of only two that had approached the subject with any frankness—a story of Tolstoi's and the Bible. The passage in the Russian novel had seemed to her cold and unconvincing at the time of reading, and it failed to stimulate her thought now, but certain verses from the Bible sang in her mind with a majestic simplicity that would have comforted her in a less frantic mood. Her brain caught now on isolated phrases, pillars of majestic meaning, and swung about them hurtlingly: "The whole universe groaneth and travaileth in pain." "As a woman in travail sorroweth because her hour is come." "And Mary



was great with child." She remembered dwelling on these and other verses with a child's morbid interest in the far-distant grandeurs and terrors of "grown-up" life. Words had always had a fascination for her, and these words—child-bed, womb, travail—had haunted her miniature mind with sinister suggestiveness. She whispered them now, trying to steady herself on the new import they had for her, but their majesty eluded her, and went down the screaming wind, mocking her with empty horror. At the age of fourteen she had determined that she would never marry, because she could never face the ordeal of bearing children. She said to herself that she was no more of a woman now than she had been then ; yet more of a coward. Trying to goad herself to a pretence of bravery, she fell to a lower prostration.

She had a sense of looking wildly about for escape, and of being gripped in an inexorable vice, when suddenly she laughed at her own absurd innocence. Her ears caught the little cool words of freedom eagerly. She listened to a small, placid voice that spoke of a quiet release from her torment, and hugged its promise, laughing with a horrid revulsion of feeling. Why not ? The French were adepts at such things—her husband would never know. During later months, when the pulse of her child beat within her, claiming its right to live, she looked back on that moment of temptation with the deeper horror that viewed a contemplated crime ; but at the time it was no shrinking from a crime that saved her, it was merely the sense of her own cowardice. The idea of destroying her child did not occur to her. Had anyone loomed on her wilderness of thought to point out with denouncing finger the wickedness of such a step, she would have laughed at the melodramatic pose of conscience. Her child did not exist for her, so she could not hurt her child. Nothing existed for her but the certainty of

an unspeakable ordeal ; and the fear of seeming to herself through life a pitiful coward, and a coward who had missed knowing the meaning of life, saved her. Perhaps this last consideration—the unwillingness to be cheated out of an experience—was the most potent of all. It was not a noble victory, but it was not defeat.

Struggling to her feet, she dragged uncertain limbs back to the hotel, hoping to shut out her horror with the wind ; but in the warm, fire-lit seclusion of her room she fell a prey to smaller, more humiliating dreads ; was discovered to herself, a wretched creature who cringed at the prospect of being a spectacle for curious eyes. She had never lived with a woman awaiting confinement, and could think only of women seen on the street in a state of physical weakness and deformity that betrayed them. They paraded before her memory, marvellously calm of demeanour, and she looked at them askance, as she had always done, feeling no sympathy, just a shivering distaste for the unpleasantness of their appearance. She had often resented their venturing into the street, had wondered why they did not hide. One could at least do that—hide somewhere. Better a rigid seclusion than the daily torment of prying, unsympathetic eyes such as her own had been.

She glanced at a pile of garments on the bed, and saw herself scheming to conceal her secret with pitiful artifices of dress. Women of her race could not hide ! One could not withdraw into the wilderness with one's secret ; one had to put oneself in the hands of a doctor and stay under his watchful eye. One had to make oneself look as inconspicuous as possible, and, for the rest, assume indifference. And modern fashions left little room for the shielding of trembling intimacies. One was decked out in plumage to fascinate and allure the eye, to tease and suggest with transparent veilings

and daring mouldings of drapery the contour of that hidden idol, a feminine body. So much for the insidious pleasure to be derived from the half-revealed charm—if one were strong, and graceful, and lithe of limb, the exposure was merely degrading ; but if one were weak and heavy-laden, then it was cruel—unspeakably cruel.

After all, the East was far kinder to its children. The " saris " of Indian women were fashioned to shield them. And with the thought of India, her mind flew back to the picture of Mary Menzies, nursing her babe under a tree in the middle of a wide brown plain, with her back turned to the line of mild-eyed, curious village women. Mary's child had been born under the close, hot hood of a tent, and now she nursed him under the sky. Such women were heroines with whom she could claim no kinship.

She thought : " Hundreds of barren women long and pray for children ; it is a vicious caprice of Nature that has chosen me from among so many hungry-hearted ones." Nature seemed, indeed, to be taking a complete revenge.

She began to pace the room, interlacing and pulling at her fingers wretchedly. A little smile, white and bitter, curled her lips. But above the little disagreeable smile, her eyes began to hold an expression of wonder, as of intense absorption in something great and mysterious, an expression of exalted and fervent curiosity. For her intellect the situation held a horrid irony, for her soul the promise of an altogether new experience.

She and her college friends had fostered in themselves a kind of contempt for the claims of Nature and the elemental simplicities of life, and even now she had a feeling of contempt for herself. She despised herself for drifting so blindly into the accepted and conventional and unthinking business of womankind. They had been fond of discussing how the race was to

be kept alive with the least possible sacrifice of delicate organisms such as their own. Tacitly and with pursed lips they had condemned in those of their kind the blind passion of motherhood, the continuous bearing of children that sapped one's mind and coarsened one's beauty. At the prime of life to bear one child, or perhaps two, having insured for it the most promising inheritance and environment possible, such a careful arrangement of affairs was worth while to a woman of intellect, was an interesting factor in her own development, and of this they approved; but for a woman of brain to succumb to the uncontrolled workings of the man-making machine, this was pitiable! What was to become of one's precious youth, of one's incomparably precious individuality? One emerged from the machine so hopelessly changed! There was Trixy, fairly encased in folds of fat motherhood. Great heavens! To grow stout, to be interested in baby-clothes, and bottles, and teeth, and perambulators! To be a wholesome female, when one wanted to be an intellectual *exquisite*!

And yet, above the miserable confusion of her self-contempt, and fear, and loathing, she looked into the future with excitement, almost with expectation.

Spreading her palms against the cold window-pane, she pressed her hot forehead there. The sun was sinking behind thick clouds that gaped like wounds to let through a blood-red light. She turned from the scene, shuddering, and dropped on to the couch before the little fluttering fire, stretching her hands to the flame. She was very tired. The wind was rising with the night and rattling the windows. How far away she was from everyone—from her husband!

Her husband! A thought suddenly lightened her misery: the thought of her husband, crowned with fatherhood.

"My poor Colin!" she cried softly, and then, as

she turned to bury her head in the cushions : " It will be yours. I am glad it will be yours !"

Wilhelmina, coming in a little later with a lamp, found her mistress asleep, and the fire all but gone out.

" Armes kind. Ach du armes kind !" she murmured, covering the curled-up form with a shawl, and as she waddled to replenish the fire : " Haben wir aber, beide Heimweh." And she dropped a tear into the coal-scuttle.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE REALIZATION

COLIN wrote that he would join her at the end of June. She had two months in which to get ready for him. Letters came from her mother urging her to come home, and Ann offered to cross to her ; but she decided to stay where she was alone. The place was coming to have a feeling of reserved friendliness. It left her alone, but did not exclude her from its mood of gentle torpor. It was gracefully sleepy, as only a French village could be, and tactfully unapproachable. She desired nothing more from her surroundings than she received here—a respected and protected solitude.

A cottage was discovered a little way over the hill, out of sight of the hotel and its babbling visitors, in a nook of the downs, with a sheltered garden to the south, looking primly down to the straggling village street ; and with a view from upper windows of the sea and ships passing. The cottage belonged to a widow-woman—Swiss-French, to Wilhelmina's rosy joy—who was glad to let her rooms to such a gentle lady. Barbara made herself cosy there with draperies, and a piano, and a few comforts from Paris, and settled into a peaceful monotony that was relieved by nothing more strident than the murmuring voices of Wilhelmina and the widow talking their placid, guttural mixture of French and German, as they knitted on the settle by the doorway. And their quaint, pattering colloquialisms were soothing to her, soothing as the patter

of raindrops on a roof, during the long solitary hours when she met her problem face to face, and laboured with it for a friendly intimacy.

She had almost forgotten why she had left India ; her motives seemed to her now confused and insincere, but she did not linger over them, she had other things to think about. It was a long labour, the making ready for her husband : she could not bear to face him with the shadow of a fearful and joyless secret in her heart.

Her struggle was not over in one hour nor in two. It went on and on through the creeping procession of hours that wound its way through each memory-crowded day. It began early, with the first suffocating awakening to a wretched morning sickness that wrenched her frame, and left her with bloodshot eyes and throbbing head. It broke in upon her at any unguarded hour of the day, with a dizzying wave of nausea that blurred the page of her book, and set her head swimming to a torturing revival of too familiar horrors, or it gripped her with a sudden giving way of the knees when she climbed the bluff for a wider view of the sea, to paralyze her with the thought that she would not live through her ordeal. It swept upon her suddenly, too, in the middle of the village street, with the image-thronged sight of a mother nursing her child at a window, and it grappled with her at night, when she lay tossing in gasping discomfort of body. It was at night in the dark, when she was weak and wild with sleeplessness, that it nearly vanquished her.

But the days passed, flung behind her each one with a grateful consciousness of being saved from going down that time ; and slowly, imperceptibly, she became accustomed to this thing that was pressing like a weight on her chest ; and as her gusty sickness left her to a quieter weakness, she grew sensible of the fact that this was her child who was causing her so much suffer-

ing. She became slowly conscious, too, of a new sensing of life, a strange, calm attitude toward herself, and her ailments, and the possible attitudes of her friends—a feeling of peerless worth that promised to free her altogether from caring what the world might say or think of her. She was puzzled to find a name or a cause for this new grave feeling, until one day she saw a woman in the village who had it written on her face, and then she realized that it was the sense of motherhood. With a sudden rush of sympathy for the woman, who was poor, and worn, and ungainly, she went home to her cottage, to find Wilhelmina knitting alone at an upper window, and crept to her, and laid her head in the wide lap, and sobbed out her secret with a great longing for companionship.

After this Wilhelmina taught her to knit and to crochet wonderful woolly things of intricate patterns. And often they would call in the widow of an evening when they worked by the lamp in the little sitting-room, and listen to her stories of her ten children: how this one had been born in a sailing vessel, and that one in the Madeiras, and another, all unexpectedly, in a hut on a lonely shore where her husband had gone to fish. The widow-woman would talk on and on, quite delighting in these memories, and smiling with bright dark eyes when Barbara asked her if she had never been afraid, saying, with a shrug of her shoulders, that perhaps she had been a little frightened sometimes, but it was all over so soon, and beside, it was life, and one must accept life. Barbara began to like that idea of just accepting life.

It was at this time that she began to write again. She was so glad to find that she could write that she scarce noticed what a pure, refreshing spring it was that fed her brain, how unlike to those fevered, versifying fits of her girlhood. She wrote without thinking of her mood, loving what she wrote for its own sake, and



connecting her work somehow in her mind with the growing sense of her child's preciousness; and then, one night something happened, and after that she entered into the beginning of her joy.

It was toward the end of her waiting time—her husband was already on his way to her—on a night when it was raining, and the wind was crooning softly about the eaves of her gabled bedroom. Wilhelmina had taken away the light to her room, where it gleamed through the crack of the door. She could see the light, and could hear the rain outside on the roof; but neither seemed to enter into the still darkness of her chamber, and she lay in her great quaint bed, thinking quietly of her husband, wrapt in a soft, silent peacefulness, when she felt something. She lay very still in the dark, waiting; and after a while it came again, that tiny fluttering lift and fall of life. No sound—no movement anywhere; just a new pulse beating in a hushed world. It was the most pitifully helpless, innocent thing she had ever known.

So she lay there, with the rain pattering on the roof, and the far, measured murmur of the sea flowing to her open windows through the night, and she felt a new tide of tenderness welling up in her heart to welcome her babe. It was not a great, joyous tide, just a little current of joy and tenderness; but she knew that it would grow deep and full, and as she felt tears wetting her face she was glad.

She could meet her husband now.

## CHAPTER V

### ONE OF SCHUMANN'S SONGS

COLIN came, bringing with him a train of anecdotes, a whole river of contagious, reminiscent chuckles, and a quaintly tendered evidence of his regard. He was thin and travel-wearied, but very happy to see her, with a new bright tenderness that startled her by its reserve. He took her in his arms and stroked her hair, and called her his "dear bonnie bairn," but he seemed to expect nothing in return. She had been ready to throw herself into his embrace with a sincere, flooding welcome of renewed vows, but the perfectly simple finality of his attitude dried up the words in her throat.

He was not stiff, nor in any way self-conscious. His pleasure at seeing her was obviously genuine, his delight to once more have the opportunity of devoting himself to her equally so. He greeted Wilhelmina with warm, humorous commendation for her care of his wife, addressed the widow in vigorous, rolling French, and showed an interest in all the points of the cottage, keeping close to his wife as she led him through its dainty rooms, and lingering on her face with joy in its loveliness. But there was something about him that baffled her.

She led the way into the garden, and seated herself on the little settle by the door, motioning him to sit beside her, with a vague, hurting bewilderment. He seemed beamingly unconscious of any ulterior

meaning in the simple happiness of their reunion, and placed in her hands a large, luminous, unset pearl, then glimmered and twinkled with quiet amusement over her surprise.

The offering added to her confused sense of his devotion and his reserve, but his own comical expression drew her out of her troubling wonderment. She looked at him with a reflection of his humour, suspecting a hidden quixotism of some kind behind the simple chivalry of the gift. It occurred to her that he would not enjoy her presents bought with her money.

"Colin"—she fixed him with laughing eyes—"confess. I suspect something's up. What is it?" She was glad to lose her sense of strangeness in the present boyish awkwardness of his demeanour.

"It's a lark."

"A lark?"

"Yes. I came fourth class, just for a lark." He seemed to anticipate her displeasure. His eyes expressed a droll terror.

"And the first-class passage money bought the pearl?"

He nodded sheepishly.

"Oh, Boy Blue, what shall I do with you?" She gazed helplessly at the weary ruggedness of his face. No wonder his coat hung on him like a half-empty sack, and his hand trembled as it touched her hair. She thought, "If he loves me so much, why——" But she could not express her question to herself. He proceeded to answer the reproaching dismay of her eyes.

"It's been no end of a good time. You know, Bonnie, these chaps you meet first-class are awful rotters—a stupid lot; but fourth class, there you find the real thing and all kinds of it."

"I should think you might."

He pursued his tale with unruffled delight in it.

"You see, I came *Messageries*, because the French

have first, second, third, and fourth class, and fourth class without food. I didn't take the lowest, please note." He scrutinized her ruefully. "Third class is just plain steerage, a decent bed in them, two solid meals a day—coffee and haricot stew, and that sort of thing. Fourth class is deck-room, up behind the funnels and sailors' food, a half liquid, half solid stew in a pail with a hunk of bread—not at all bad—and fourth class without food is just without the food, that's all."

"Oh—and right in the middle of the monsoon, and of course you were seasick."

She wound her hands around his arm in a flight of wretched imagination.

"Only three days," he rejoined cheerfully; "and it was lucky for Jones. He got my food."

"Who is Jones, may I ask?"

"Jones?" He heaved a deep breath of tumultuous enjoyment. "I wish you knew Jones. You would appreciate him. He's a person, is Jones. There were three of us fourth class; a gentleman chap in the Egyptian education service loomed upon our deck in a swagger top-coat with a walking stick—I'm not sure but an eyeglass too; had come across Assyria to the Persian Gulf, and found himself caught in Bombay without enough money for his ticket to Suez, so instead of making trouble and borrowing money, he just took what he could pay for—proud, aristocratic beggar. Well, there he was, and myself, and Jones."

"Jones is a Welshman—a sea Captain. He had a ticket fourth class without food, and he came on board roaring drunk, and his sole piece of luggage was a bottle of whisky. Every five minutes, while we were still in Bombay harbour, he'd leap to his feet and shout, in a tremendous voice: 'Ahoy there, is this Marseilles?'"

Colin blew his nose, and groaned with the paining mirth of his enjoyment.



# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



1.0



4.5



2.8



2.5

5.0

5.6



3.2



2.2

6.3

7.1



3.6



2.0

8.0

9.0

10.0

11.2

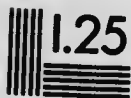
12.5



1.1



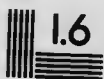
1.8



1.25



1.4



1.6



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

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

" Jones and I and the educational chap had a tent up back of the smoke-stack, and it began to blow, and the Egyptian chap and I were both dead to the world for three days, and so, of course, Jones had a fine time on our food. Then we came to, and we were starved, and Jones had no money, and no supplies, and the appetite of a buffalo. He's six foot by three, with a red beard."

" What did you do ?"

" I took around a petition among the steerage passengers, and we got the Captain to give him an allowance of bread and black coffee, and with shares of our rations he got along as far as Port Said ; then at Port Said I laid in a supply of biscuits, and jam, and salt pork, and so on."

" What's become of him ?"

" I left him on the train for London, his ticket paid for, his pockets empty. My dear, my very dear, you ought to have seen us crossing this continent. I was the only man in the steerage who knew any French, and I had a retinue as far as from here to those trees. There was a Parsee family, and three Punjabi students bound for Edinburgh, and a Danish missionary with his wife, and goodness knows how many others ; and, of course, the irrepressible Jones. I tell you, he was wild—absolutely wild—in the train. At every station he'd leap out of the carriage, grab a bottle of wine out of one of those tray-carts they wheel round the platforms covered with ham sandwiches and drinks, and he'd have half of it down his gullet before I could stop him. Oh, oh ! Poor Jones !" Colin wiped his eyes, and his wife nestled against his shoulder that was settling into quiet after heavings of laughter. She was amused and entertained, and she enjoyed his enjoyment ; but now that his tale was finished, it left her with a sudden vivid realization of that other world that he loved, that she had left.

"And you really enjoyed it," she murmured; and I have my pearl—the pearl. It is *the* pearl, isn't it?"

"Yes, my queen."

They sank into a silence. Evening had mantled the rolling meadows with purple shadow. The village street, that wound away beyond a battalion of tall poplars, as yet showed no lights, just a shadowed whiteness between high gabled houses. A cow, driven lackadaisically by a baggy boy in a dull blue smock, plodded down the hill, a bell tinkling kindly beneath her swaying head. Far away the sea murmured.

She was thinking of how immaterial it all was—the changing scenes of one's life, when one had a companion, like this man, to assure one by the sanity of his presence of the eternal verities. She felt that if they could always be together, she could live serene in a world of reality that depended not at all upon the moods of environment. She wondered how she could have left him of her own mad choice, and with that thought she glimpsed suddenly the meaning of this difference that she felt in him. His reserve appeared as the inevitable covering of a wound. She had almost forgotten that she had made him suffer. She realized now that he must have suffered much to have regained health and happiness of mind at the cost of his mystic belief in the perfectness of their union. She saw that he had been brought by the slow pain of her wilfulness to understand that he had expected too much of her, and to his simple mind this would mean that he had been at fault more than she, would mean, too, a slow and painful adjustment in his attitude.

That his affection for her had survived seemed now a miracle. She had had too blind a faith in his affection, and the knowledge that she had given him just cause to turn from her, disappointed in her as well as in their life, made her catch her breath with a sudden pain. She saw the perfect honesty of his



devotion that unconsciously withheld something precious in that it did not demand the utmost from her. And she saw, too, that it would be a long time before he allowed himself to abandon this free aloofness for a renewed joy of perfect trust in their married oneness. She thought, "The child will help"; and then she felt jealous of the child. She would rather have won him back to his home in her alone. But the child was there, and she must tell him now. Of late, she had looked forward so to telling him. Her joy seemed gone somehow, leaving to her only an empty gratefulness that she was to make him richer with a gift.

She rose from beside him lingeringly, not only reluctant, but timid. She felt shy of this mystery, and of sharing it with him. Why was she afraid? It had been a part of her creed that one could dare to put anything into words if one were sure of what one meant by the saying. She had meant by that "anything" any unpleasant thing; she had not thought of the difficulty of voicing utterly wonderful and pure mysteries.

"Shall I sing to you, Colin?"

"Yes, dear, do." He seemed loath to leave the fragrant gloaming and the settle under the clambering rose-vine. He was tired, and it rested him to be there in that prim, quaint French twilight.

"You can hear me from here," she said, feeling for his weariness, and moved slowly toward the house, knowing his eyes were on her; but she could summon no elasticity to her feet. She even leaned against the lintel of the door as she took the step up.

"Bonnie, you are not well!" His voice was concerned, frightened. She turned to him a smiling face that betrayed nothing, not even the effort it cost her.

"I am quite well—just a little tired."

"My precious!" The word was sweet to her ears. She clung to it, and realized how much at sea she was

about him. He gave her his arm up the stair to the little parlour.

Wilhelmina had lighted the lamps, leaving the window-shades up and the windows wide, knowing the taste of her mistress. From the dim, cheerful confines of the room one could see far out over the water to the winking light of a lighthouse on a rocky promontory. A four-masted schooner was going down the breast of the sea to a glowing horizon.

"What a lovely wee nest you have made;" he suffered himself to be put into a chair by the window, and settled into it with pure enjoyment. She moved to the piano, thinking tremulously: "It is a shame to disturb him."

She sang in German. Her voice was unsteady. It seemed to her the candles on the piano must show a distressing play of feature, to betray her; but when she turned around he was looking out over the sea.

"Thank you, dear," he said absently, bringing his eyes back to her, all unsuspecting.

"Do you like the song?"

"Yes."

"Did you understand the words?"

"I don't know. I didn't listen to them particularly; I thought your voice sounded a little tired."

Her heart was throbbing painfully. Why, oh, why was it so hard? He would understand. He always had understood, and it would make him happy.

"Colin." She faltered, staring at him beseechingly. But she could not muster the plain English to tell him. Words scraped on a dry palate, and refused to issue forth. She turned from him desperately.

"I will sing it again." Her voice sounded to her so harsh and strained that it seemed incredible he should suspect nothing. "Listen to the words," she managed to add.

"What is it?"

"Just one of Schumann's songs—from the 'Frauen Liebe und Leben.'"

She dropped into the opening chords and sang again. She was nearly at the end when she could go no farther. She bowed her head on her arms over the music.

"Barbara." He spoke her name very slowly, and she felt his hands on her shoulders, lifting and turning her to him. He held her there facing him, searching her with wondering, waiting eyes.

"... is true." She buried her face. He held her quietly—too quietly, she thought. "What had she expected of him?" she asked herself.

After a while, when he had drawn the couch to the window and laid her there, arranging her cushions for her caressingly, and had seated himself on the floor beside her, where he could touch her hand, they talked a little.

He said she must be with her mother, and that he would take her to America; that he had planned to go back to India in August, but that his place was with her now. She studied the rugged lines of his face, turned to the window from her, and wondered dully whether he had meant to take her back in August or to go alone. She could not tell what was in his mind. His quiet adjustment to the sudden turn in his affairs was a complete enigma. "I would like to have my baby at Craig Manor," she said simply. He turned to her a face quivering at her words, but his remark belied the intensity of the feeling there.

"Will it be very hard for you?" he asked. His question seemed to her almost absurdly innocent and ignorant. What a boy he was!

"It always is, agony of body," she murmured, with an intentionally thin pretext of indifference.

"My poor darling." He stroked her hand. That was all. The idea did not seem to appal him as she had expected—yes, had hoped—it would. She had looked forward to a long refreshing draught of his deep, anguished sympathy, and she saw, almost with horror, that he was smiling already to himself.

"To think of having a wee bundle all one's own!" he said, with a quaint delight in his eyes.

"You will be very happy?" It was half a question—her last attempt to bring him to what she had expected of him.

"Yes, very happy." The words were genuine, but his joy did not match the ecstasy she had imagined for him any more than his sharing of her agonied anticipation.

She was subdued and bewildered by his placid reception of the news; she had a feverish desire to force him to enter into her anticipation with her. It seemed unfair that she should bear it all alone. She caught the thought, saw herself slipping back into an old slough of selfishness, and locked her lips over the record of her long struggle, and of that first terrible hour of revelation. But the clamp upon her speech locked, too, the precious secret of that last blessed hour that had brought her to him in happiness. She seemed compelled to shut him out from her life when she most needed him, and she wondered if they were to be separated by this experience that she had believed would bring them together.

She felt that she did not at all understand this simple man. Now that he was more dear to her than he had ever been he was most unapproachable.

But she was tired of trying to understand, and she felt that it was no use. She had a peculiar sense of impotency and fatality in the present and the future. She saw them both borne on by unswerving, relentless forces that must inevitably separate or unite them,

she knew not which. For the present let her accept him as he was, and enjoy the comfort of his presence. She summoned her will, concentrating all her faculties into a brightness of demeanour, and was startled by the ease with which he lent himself to her uncertainly poised mood. Their little supper was just a charmingly intimate *tête-à-tête* between two comrades.

It was after she was asleep that he let his pounding thoughts plunge into his heart, and it was then that they drove him out into the great starry night. He found his way to the sea, and climbed the bluff, and walked a long, long way, thinking of her. And it was only then, as he ground the miles under his feet, that the flooding meaning of his love of her, and his joy in her, and his apprehension for her, came over him. He was so slow to adjust to new ideas. He had not half understood what it was that she had told him. He had always expected that they would have children as a matter of course, and the promised fulfilment of his habitual expectation had not startled him into a flame of ecstasy because the fact was hardly more vivid to his imagination now than it always had been. He had had no illuminating vision when she told him, and no hurting sense of her ordeal to come. He simply could not, and did not, anticipate experience.

His first articulate thought had been, "This will keep me a long time from my work," and his second: "We are not ready and not fit to have children." He had felt dully that he was reacting selfishly to her appeal for sympathy, but he had had strangely little sympathy to give. He had even blamed her for having the child, knowing himself more reasonably to blame. Finally, his sensations of surprise and pain had resolved themselves into fear for her, and a determination to help her; but it was only the growingly pitiful evidence of her physical weakness that had started for him the slow, burning realization that she was going down

into the valley of pain in order to bless him with a child of her womb. A child of his own was a dear blessing, certainly, but a child of her body—the thought sent his mind on its knees to her. It was the soul of her child, not of his, nor of theirs, that cried to him to be loved and welcomed ; cried so nearly in the night wind that it lived for him suddenly, translating him into something akin to that ecstasy she had dreamed of for him ; and it was the sense of her danger that caught his ecstasy in a shroud, and shook him, and brought him home broken for her.

Perhaps she would have understood less than ever if she had followed him on his long tramp that night ; but she was asleep when he came in, and he never told her, so she never knew. Neither did he ever know of her hour there by that same sea. Their understanding was to come by a different way.

## CHAPTER VI

### EVENING AT CRAIG MANOR

It is good for us that in this ceaselessly progressing world of ours there are some places that fall asleep, some little corners, sweet and wholesome, endowed with peace and a good conscience, that are content just to be, and to let the world become what it will. Such was Craig Valley, lying lazily, dreamily, deliciously, between its gentle hills, and such was Craig Manor, standing serene and comfortable at the bend of the river. Once upon a time Craig Valley had been threatened with a railroad and an hotel, and formerly, too, there had been signs of progress ; the village street had been known to change from year to year by the addition of a shop, or a pump, or a street lamp ; but these dangers and changes were of the past now, and nothing changed any more, for nothing happened.

Even Craig Manor no longer changed with the passing years. Time had been when its owners used it hardly, wore its carpets threadbare, tore up its lawn with riotously prancing ponies, smashed its gate-posts with careering "tally-ho's" ; but now in the quiet that reigned over Craig Valley, the Manor House was suffered to sleep, enjoying its memories, while birds built nests year after year in the eaves, and vines crept a little farther along the roof, and raindrops deepened the stain along the rain-pipe just a little, and no one noticed. The great mirror over the marble mantel in the library mirrored the same room that it had

mirrored for generations ; the faded crimson of the carpet was no more faded, the worn bindings of the books no more worn, the tarnished gold of the window cornices no more tarnished than they had been when Ann Craig came home to them as a bride. There was the same air of unimpeachable dignity, of exquisite, untainted reserve about the place that there had always been ; the ladies and gentlemen in their oval frames looked down into the room with the same gentle aloofness, the same mute pride, and Ann herself, who had grown to be one of them so naturally and so gradually, seemed now, like all the rest of it, to have reached the age when one is eternally young.

On an afternoon in October, she sat before the library fire with an unopened book in her lap, her frail, black figure resting lightly in the depth of a colonial arm-chair. Her eyes were fixed on the gorgeous, autumnal landscape that swam beyond the long windows, a little smile lifted the sweet corners of her mouth.

Through the window she could see a bit of the drive, and presently along this drive came a fat white pony, and a low pony-cart, with the Rev. Ebenezer Craig driving, carefully. The white pony was only a little fatter than he had been last year, that was all ; the little grandfather looked just the same. They trundled by the window and disappeared. A pleasant stillness reigned through the house. Now and then some falling leaves were blown against the window-pane, and the trees on the hills bowed to the puff of wind, then lifted their golden heads joyously again.

Ann Craig seldom allowed herself an hour of solitude, never the luxury of complete relaxation but she had mastered the art of alert repose. Her expression held the wide-awake thoughtfulness of one who never let herself slip away from the comfortably actual present into the dangerously actual past. The look in her eyes



was sad, the smile on her mouth was happy ; she was drinking at two springs. It was always so with her now ; memory held ever ready for her a draught of sorrow, the present seldom failed to allay her thirst for happiness. And this particular present was one to sip deliciously. The deep-bosomed summer had brought home to her her Bobbie and that quaint man, Bobbie's husband. They had taken up their abode with her, and Margaret Witherow had joined them there, with a new light in her eyes, and Craig Manor had folded them all into its wide embrace. For herself and Margaret, the quiet weeks had been a succession of heart-refreshing revelations concerning their child. They had never hoped for such a Barbara in all the intense yearning of their prayers for her. They hugged the sight of her, and laughed and wiped their eyes over her. They were just two absurd old women, doting on their child. It was lovely to be a doting mother-heart, and to share Bobbie in a happy freedom with Margaret.

Now the summer had gone, driven from the hills in a glorious battle with the bannered hosts of autumn, and in the midst of this crystal world, where forests of gold and scarlet swam above the pale blue mists of the valley, and the air was wine, and the mood of each day was a song, they waited for the birth of Barbara's child. And to each one this time of waiting meant a different thing, but the one to whom it meant most of all seemed the least concerned. Instead of being wistful or querulous, or depressed or exalted she was absurd—utterly absurd.

There was a confusion of sounds outside. The front door opened, a nipping whiff of frosty air came from the shining "outdoors" ; voices laughed ; the door banged to heavily, and Barbara came in leaning on her husband's arm. She carried an armful of wine-red leaves ; a wide hat flopped about her face ; her

skirt was torn in one place, stained with earth stains in another. Her eyes sparkled in the brown glow of her face.

"Oh—oh—how I puff! Every hillock is a mountain."

Colin grinned, rubbing fragments of dead leaves and earth stains from the knees of his trousers, while she dropped into a chair panting, laughing, patting herself encouragingly on the chest, then turned, and began fishing in his bulging pockets.

"Apples! May I roast them in front of the fire, Ann?" She breathed in short, laughing gasps. "I made Colin climb for them, and while he was up there Sam came along from the chicken-yard, and I said: 'Just you wait, Sam, till my baby comes, and then I'll chase chickens and climb trees too.' He had a hen by the legs and he dropped it, and I thought I'd never see anything of the whites of his eyes again. His shocked propriety was pitiful. I screamed, a helpless heap, with laughter, and Colin had to come down in a hurry to pick me up off the ground."

"Bobbie!"

"Was it dreadful? Why can't I talk about my baby? Why, everybody"—and her voice drawled—"everybody for miles around knows I'm going to have a baby, and what's the harm? They stop grandfather's pony-cart, and hang over their front-gates, and say, 'Wall, now, Rev. Ebenezer, heow's the young leddy?' and they point a thumb down the road—at me. I know they do. So why can't I talk about it?" She took her hatpins placidly out of her hat, and let her husband lift it from her hair, looking up at him brightly. "Do you think it's indelicate, Colin?"

"I think you're an awfu' woman."

She settled comfortably into her chair, put her feet on a footstool he placed for her, and reached for a flowered silk work-bag on the table near her.

"Mother's waiting for you in the grape arbour, and I could tell by the war-light in her eyes that she had something very particular to say to you; leave me with Ann. We'll have a nice domestic chat."

He turned in the doorway as he obeyed.

"Isn't she lovely?" he said, glimmering at Ann as he disappeared.

Barbara leaned to poke the spluttering side of an apple.

"You know, Ann," she said, looking around the room, "this is a perfect place to have a baby in."

"Is it?"

"Yes, and I'm so happy." She laid a caressing hand on the other's knee. "Aren't you, and aren't we all?"

"Yes, we are. It's just lovely."

"That's what I want it to be."

Ann looked at her, marvelling. She was so bewitchingly and absurdly young, and there was such a peaceful, maternal happiness on her face, and her hair was so tousled, and her dress so draggled—Ann burst out laughing.

"I know what you're laughing at." Barbara stitched busily on a diminutive white flannel garment. "I laugh at it every day myself. It's the transformation."

"The transformation," said Ann, "is too absurd. Anyone would think you had had a dozen already."

"I have—I've lived over it so many times that it seems an old story. That was at first. Now I don't live over anything, I'm just happy."

"What marriage has done for you, child!" murmured Ann.

"Yes," assented Barbara thoughtfully. "But it's not just marriage, and not just having a baby. Everybody has babies, that's nothing." She hesitated, needle in air, eyeing Ann's repeated hilarity a little disconcerted. "You don't see what I mean, Arn."

"No, I don't."

"Well, wait a minute. I can't quite explain, but I really have an idea that I'm driving at."

"Well, never mind the idea. The fact of your happiness is enough for me."

"Oh, Ann, listen. What I mean is that it's no use just blindly following out the plan of Nature. Nature's no teacher. The mere act of giving birth to a baby is no more refining, illuminating, than the mere fact of marriage. It's as like as not to stifle you in materialism. Don't laugh. What you must have if you're going to get anything out of life is a control of Nature. Nature understood, her ways illumined by intellect, that's the thing. One's nature understood, consecrated."

"How you talk, Bobbie! I thought you'd stopped cultivating ideas."

"You never will confess to a weakness for them."

"For ideas? No. I hate them." Barbara laughed—she knew Ann. She laughed with a throb of sympathy for the delicate, brilliant mind that battled with so many agonies of loneliness and ill-health, that it had no strength and no taste left for the pleasures it might know so well. Ann's abstinence from the delights of speculation seemed to her pathetic, somehow.

"Never mind. It's nearly tea-time," she said soothingly, with an undertone of laughter at her own maturity of attitude, "and the apples are luscious." She fell on her knees by the fire, poking the sizzling Baldwins lovingly.

"Bobbie, dear, what are you doing?" It was her mother's voice in the doorway. Mrs. Witherow's eyes pierced the gathering twilight fearfully, and discerned her daughter, a huddled figure on the floor. Her voice was fraught with motherly dread for her child, her surprising, unsuspecting child. She swept forward

anxiously, to meet a face laughing impishly in the uncertain glow.

"Why, mother, having a baby surely can't prohibit my roasting apples?"

"My precious daughter, you are incorrigible. Pick her up, Colin. She really mustn't."

Barbara grasped her husband's two hands and scrambled to her feet. She hung over her mother's chair.

"There, there," she gurgled. "You're a poor, frightened mother thing. I'll be good. Let's have tea." And Mrs. Witherow, speechless, gazed dismayed, adoring, amused.

Sam usually bore in the tea-tray as though heading a regiment on the march, but to-day his knees were less springy, his progress toward the table before the fire uncertain. He had entered just in time to see the young "missus" scrambling to her feet, and his eyes were still rolling in his head at the memory of her in the orchard on the ground, looking for all the world as she used to look ten years ago. He had confided to his ample wife in the kitchen, eying his necktie in the mirror over the sink, while she pulled the pan of hot biscuits out of the oven, that "Fo de Lawd, he never did see such a young missus as Miss Barbara. She don't talk about de Almighty prov'dence ob Jehovah's giben her ob a chile, as if she was gwine to have an extra fine piece o' co'n pone fo' her suppa." He had hung chuckling over the spicy pyramid of gingerbread, polishing the teapot frantically the while. His countenance, on entering the drawing-room, had assumed a terrible solemnity, indicative of a bewildering struggle going on between a shocked propriety and a valiant loyalty. He stood behind Ann's chair, rolling his eyes frantically here and there over the tops of heads, avoiding desperately the gaze of the young mistress, in terror lest she upset his butler's dignity

with some new, outrageous echo of her long-legged, mischievous childhood ; but Barbara spared him. She turned to her grandfather, who entered vaguely, a huge volume under his arm, his eyes glassy with the weight of abstract thought, his white hair grotesquely rumpled.

"Grandfather, why don't you put down that book and do something useful?"

"Eh, what, my dear?" Grandfather Craig was growing a little deaf. It was the one pitiful thing about his sturdy, keen old age.

"I say, why not do something useful—a piece of knitting or crocheting, like the rest of us."

"Knitting? Yes, I used to knit in the war time, when I was Chaplain. I remember—socks." He scratched his head, his eyebrows danced reminiscently.

"Yes, socks," said Barbara; "that's the very thing, socks for the baby." She gave him a winning smile.

"Baby? What baby? Whose got a baby? Is the house far? Ann, I must have the pony-cart out at once if it's a baby. I thought it was mumps." He rose excitedly from the chair Colin had given him.

"Oh, grandfather, I mean my baby!"

"Your baby, my dear?" He eyed her, astonished.

"Yes, the one that's coming, you know."

He folded up into his chair suddenly, and, whipping open his book, dived behind it. "The children of this generation," he was heard to murmur.

Ann and Margaret were laughing helplessly. Colin was unconcernedly buttering the last biscuit. Sam had vanished from his post.

"Give it to me, Colin, there's a dear, you've had enough." His wife held out her plate.

"Bonnie—your appetite!"

"Never mind. I eat for two. This makes my fourth, two for me, two for the heir."

"My dear, what shall I do with you and your conversation? Look at your poor mother."

"I can't help it. I can't truly." She rumbled his hair. "And, anyway, what does it matter? We're all family."

But after tea, when Colin was reading aloud by the red lamp, something in broad Scotch that made her mother and Ann wipe their eyes, when knitting-needles were glinting in the firelight, and Grandfather Craig was nodding in his chair, Barbara slipped away. She wanted to be alone for a little while with her precious thoughts. The gaiety with which she regaled her family was not assumed—at least its source was genuine—but she had abandoned herself to playfulness in order to help them all over the strain of her waiting time, a strain that she saw bore heavily on her mother; and if she was conscious always of a deeper feeling in her heart while she amused them, it was a deep happiness, and she only hid that inner mood away because she knew it might be easily mistaken for fear, it was so tremulous, so near the well of her tears.

She mounted the long, low stair slowly, clinging to the gleaming mahogany balustrade, thinking of how many times she had slipped down that railing on top of her brother; one was pitched forward headlong at the bottom. She imagined another child there now, and a row of heads bobbing over the white, spindled railing in the upstairs hall, and she laughed, catching herself in the act of welcoming a whole, riotous, shouting brood to her arms. It was very quiet in the hall—no sound except the ticking of the grandfather clock on the landing of the stair, and the soft thud of a log falling into the ashes of the smouldering fire. She was glad there was a clock on the stair, and a fire glowing on brass and irons below her. Pausing for breath on the landing by the clock, she looked down into the shining, polished floor. Her eyes lingered lovingly over the plain, wide walls, and the great door with the

fan-window above it. Through the hushed stillness she could hear her husband's voice behind the heavy *portières* of the library, and for a moment she felt as she used to feel when her mother had left her in bed, settled for the night, and she had been seized with a wild, unreasoning longing to run down and kiss her and her father just once more, a fierce, pounding longing that drew her flying downstairs, barefooted, to fling her arms around her father's neck, and then go back happily to sleep. She remembered the feeling so well—she had it now. They were so dear, there by the fire. It might be a long time before she came downstairs again, but she went on up the stairs, and if she had a premonition of the nearness of her hour, it was not a new or a dreadful thing to her. During the first months she remembered looking forward with terror, now she waited quietly. If she had any emotion in regard to the approaching event, it was a kind of eager, thrilling curiosity.

Twilight was in possession of her room, a cool, shadowed twilight that poured in a darkly luminous flood through wide windows. Out-of-doors the world was settling into night beneath a still glowing sky. A little soft, dark cloud, hung in a throbbing, golden emptiness above the sombre mass of the hill, where the tops of trees were etched crisply against the gold. Barbara sat down by the window, staring out over the shadowed foreground. The world seemed to her very beautiful.

She had not come away from the family to think about herself, her changed self was not particularly interesting to her—was merely the product of extremely interesting forces. She seemed to have had strangely little to do with the shaping of that experience. Her part in this subtle drama of Nature had been that of the interested onlooker. She beheld a huge gentle power working with her. The child had grown within



her, and the courage to bear, and the tenderness to welcome the unborn had grown too. The world had changed with the beating of this life wrapped within her life. The process had been quite different from anything she had ever imagined in the way of mental or spiritual development. There had been no striving to rid oneself of old weaknesses. Little prejudices and affectations had slipped away unnoticed. She had been freed of old horrors as gently as a child is freed from brambles by steady parent hands.

Her husband found her by the window in the gloaming, "watching for the stork," she said, as she gathered him to her breast, and stared over his head into the deepening night. They were silent a little.

"I have had a lovely talk with your mother," he said, after a while. "She is so happy about you, and she gives me all the credit."

"For what?"

"Well, for your sense of humour."

For a moment she ran her fingers over his thick hair meditatively.

"Do you know, I used to think her just blind and weak-minded, and I believe she knew all the time—knew me, I mean. I wonder what it is that makes mothers and daughters so cruel to one another? Am I going to be the same with mine?"

Downstairs two women in black sat watching the deepening glow of the fire. They said nothing, but rose after a while, and went side by side up the stairs. At the top they paused a moment and looked into each other's eyes. Their souls that they had never hidden from one another were hidden less than ever now, and they looked each upon the scarred face of the other with gladness and understanding.

"It may be to-night," said Margaret at last.

"Yes," breathed Ann, and their lips met in the mute fervour of a common prayer.

## CHAPTER VII

### MORNING

"HAS the babe come?"

"Yes, beloved, a boy."

She saw her husband's face for a moment, and then closed her eyes in a great restfulness that was more delicious than sleep. She perceived that her body was lying near her somewhere like a limp cloth that has been twisted dry and thrown aside. Her mind swam in a wonderful serenity. She thought: "I have borne a son to him."

After a while she opened her eyes again to watch a luminous pearl-greyness beyond the window. It flushed to a sudden glory, that swam into her being with the knowledge of life—her life—given back to her.

"What is that?"

"The sun rising."

She asked how long it had been since the beginning of her pain.

"Six hours."

"Only six hours," she repeated, wondering. Then she asked him to thank the doctor, and tell him she was grateful for the anæsthetic. The chloroform had been a wonderful thing; she felt as though she had had a long sleep.

A little later she turned her head to the door wistfully, and they brought her baby and laid him in her arms.

Her husband bowed his head at the sight of her face. He had thought that he knew her face.

"Colin, he is your son."

"Yes, dear."

After a while: "Take him; I want to see him in your arms."

He held out his arms awkwardly, hands crooked upward. The nurse laid the pink bundle on them. His hands folded about it from beneath the soft, woolly shawl-thing. He stood helpless. She smiled.

"You look so funny and frightened."

"How in the world to put it down?"

"Him, not it, dear."

"He terrifies me. I may be crushing him." He surrendered the bundle to the nurse with a sigh of relief.

"You're such a funny new father." She touched his face with her weak fingers.

"And you?"

"Why, I've been a mother all my life." Then she fell asleep.

Afterwards, in those utterly quiet days when she had nothing to do but to lie on her pillows and let her strength come back to her, when the world left them alone in the inexpressible peace of her seclusion, and the only interruptions were the periodic visits of the pink bundle, they talked of her travail as the illuminating experience of their marriage. He would look at her lying there with a shining braid of hair over either shoulder, and her white face still bearing the scars of her pain, smiling above the film of her snowy gown, and tell her that she looked just a wee girl of ten, and that he could never let her go through it again; and she would smile at him, mistily, through tears that were very near the frail surface of her quiet, and say that she had loved it all, and that they must have a big, happy family some day—not too soon, but some day.

She asked him if the nurse and doctor had minded his being in the room, and he said "No," that the doctor hadn't turned up until so late that he and the nurse had done it all themselves. The doctor had been awfully sick at that, of course; but his motor had broken down, and he, Colin, was glad—glad. He had stayed to the end then, for he wanted to be there when his wife opened her eyes. He said they had done the impossible thing.

\* \* \* \* \*

To the man, the most wonderful thing about that terrible night was that she had turned to him from the depths of her agony. He worshipped her for bridging what he would have supposed an impassable chasm. He had been helpless to bridge it himself. His impotency in the face of her pain had appalled him. He knew that no gigantic effort toward realization of what she was going through would have served to admit him into her suffering, and yet he blamed himself for not entering into it. He was mortified that he could watch the terrible scars of her agony leaping to the surface of her body, and feel so little. The vision he had had of her pain had blinded and numbed him. If it had not been for her control of herself and him, he felt that he would have missed the whole meaning of that hour. But she had kept him close to her. From her great weakness she had stretched out her hand to him, and, clinging to him for strength, had drawn him apart into a spirit-reality to which her courage had lifted them both.

To Barbara, the absolute finality of pain had been a joy. The brute that attacked her had been a friend. She found in this terrible actuality of pain a sword to set her free from old chaining miseries.

It had been such a totally unparalleled experience, so removed from the habitual self-torture which had

heretofore been her only acquaintance with suffering, that she had welcomed it, honestly glorying in the openness of its attack. She had never been a complete person in any of those sickly battlings with herself, never before had known what it was to be a unit of gathered energies, to fight an uncompromising enemy. The onslaught of this pain had been the signal for the summoning of all her forces ; she had met it with a concentrated will, and she felt that she had won.

It was not that she had saved her body anguish : she had let that thing of flesh go, had thrown it gladly to those dogs of pain that sprang to devour it. She had seen her pain as a wild beast, that crept upon her to worry and tear her flesh, that slunk away in strange moments of suspense to spring upon her again ; and through that horrid mangling of her frame, her one instinct had been to shield her head from the horrid tearing of those claws ; and she had kept her head free. She had watched the mutilating anguish of her limbs. It was as though the sight and the sight alone had brought to her the sense of physical pain. She had stood aside in a clear space with her husband, and, watching his face, she had known all the way through those hours of lightning what it was that was going on. She had said, from twisting lips but with steady mind, that this was the birth of their child ; and had assured him that the writhing of her body was just her body, that the pain was just pain, and it didn't matter. Doubtless she had said many things that she did not remember ; she had wanted so much to make clear to him how it was.

So she always blessed that pain. She had won from it a unity of self, a new integrity, and she felt, too, that she had won a place in the great sisterhood of women. She thought : " Marriage to each is a unique thing ; childbirth is the universal experience of womanhood."

It was only long afterwards, when she had helped other women through those deep waters, that she realized the uniqueness of even this experience of hers. It was after she had seen other women go under the drowning flood of their agony and come out of it with a sense of nothing more than relief at the horror passed, that she realized what her husband had done for her in staying at her side. She felt that she might have kept her courage without him, but she knew that she could never have seen any meaning in that cruelty of labour if she had not had him there.

It was only afterwards, too, that she realized something had gone out of her then, with the bearing of her child. She had won from it a new self ; she never lost the sense of that ; but she had thought it all gain and all glory ; she had not realized that she had paid something more than six hours of pain. Gradually, however, with the slow return of her strength, she came to know that there was something gone from her that would never come back. She called it courage at first, because she found she could not face life with her old dauntless indifference to circumstance. Circumstance had never figured as a serious menace in her life before the coming of her child : she found herself a quivering thing of fright before it now. Later, when she had gained another, deeper courage, she called it " youth," that something that had gone from her ; but it seemed a little thing after all, and the giving it a name did not matter.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE WAY OF FEAR

IT was the prospect of her husband's returning to India without her that revealed to her the new fearfulness of her heart. She lay very weak and still on her pillows, and surveyed the pitiful spectacle of this timid, teary, helpless woman with amazement. Trying to nerve herself to laughter at the spectacle, she succeeded only in smiling through tears. She could remember the time when she never wept, was never frightened, when separation was an empty word, and a woman's heartbreak something to read about. She had been so strong once. Now she was so weak that she cried all the time. Her strength seemed to be coming back to her so slowly, just dripping into her veins drop by drop, so imperceptibly that she wondered if she would ever be strong again. Still, the thought of exchanging this weakness for that state of nerveless youth, with all its elasticity and glorious self-confidence, made her smile. She could have loved her weakness if she had not had to face his going away. And she was glad of her utter dependence on him: it was a new deliciousness in her sense of life; it made him splendid, it made him her lord; but he was going, and it was terribly hard for him to go when she clung to him this way, and she felt that she must make an effort to face life without his presence.

She lay listening to the hours that passed through her room, each one carrying her nearer the time of his

departure, and asked herself what she had done before she had had a husband. The only answer was that she had never been a woman before, and never had had a child. Her mother said one day, when she was sniffing an apology for her abject state :

"Why, dear, dear child, you've had a baby." She wondered if all women were like this after they'd had babies. It comforted her to think so. And it comforted her more to think that not all women had to face the same ordeal in their weakness, that perhaps, after all, there was some excuse for her.

In any case, she could not help the weak and foolish tremulousness that brought the tears to her eyes whenever Colin came to her room after a walk with her grandfather, or when he left her to go down to the family in that far-away world of dining-rooms and libraries, or when he said "Good-night," and went to his bed just a few feet away in the shadowed chamber. Again and again she would pull him down to his knees beside her with her feeble, nerveless hands, and, clinging to him, would laugh, and say she was so ashamed of spilling these tears all the time, and whisper tremulously on a rising sob that she just loved him, that was all, and then dissolve into more tears. She would tell him that she used to be the most independent young blue-stocking in the world, and that now she was just a miserable, helpless feminine thing, that could not live without him, and would he please not despise her abject abandonment. And she would look up and find him smiling down upon her broadly, and when asked if he was not sorry for her, he would say no, that he was just happy to have her care so much, and she would laugh too, and say it was only her happiness in him that brought the heartbreak, and then cry again.

Letters had come urging his return. There had been a cholera epidemic in the railway quarters. His



substitute had been invalided home. His people needed him. Oh, the case was clear! She saw it with a terrible vision of those dreary, sodden men who summoned him, and even if it had not been so clear, she would never have questioned the fact that he must go. She could not keep him beside her in idleness. It might be two months, they said, before she could travel with the child, and he had already been five months away. She knew that he ached over the time spent away. She was glad that he was bound to his work, for she had gleaned some idea of the unrest she had distilled in his mind during those fevered months of her dwelling with him in India, and she longed for him to go back. He must have the chance of justifying himself and her. She would follow as soon as she could, to take up her part of the work. One must work in the world, if one were to live. A life of idleness was the thing she most dreaded for him now. She knew that no worshipping affection could stand the test of that living-unto-self. So they agreed that, now the danger for her was past, he should go. Her mother and Ann said nothing. She was grateful to them for sparing her.

She was satisfied that it was the right thing for him to do, but on their last evening together it was almost more than she could bear. It was a cold, windy evening of early November. She lay in a sobbing torrent of stillness. With every gusty shriek of the wind she seemed to behold him on the sea, going from her through the storm. Her one desire was not to let him glimpse the panic of her soul.

They brought her baby to her, and she wondered, as she took him to her breast, that he should absorb her heart so little with all his dear preciousness.

Her husband had been reading to her. He laid down his book and turned away to the window and the storm. The sight of her with the babe at her

breast tore him. He asked himself if he was following a torturing, mistaken sense of honour. His mind hung aching over the vision of her frailty as she lay there in that fire-lit room. The storm raged. She was so utterly helpless. He ground his agony under. He could not stay. He had a battle to wage in that other land.

She awoke him in the night in a state of panic that she could not hide. He found her face in the dark, twisting under streaming tears, and took the tears from her eyelids with his lips, and held her to him while her breast rose and fell, shuddering with shivered sobbings.

She said, struggling to choke her tears into words, that she had tried to keep her fears hidden, but she could not, she was so weak. She seemed to have no courage. He held her closer. There was nothing for him to say.

"That other pain was nothing," she whispered, after a while, on a long fall of quivering breath.

"My brave wife!" She shook her head in his arms. The wind whistling around the house was just the frightened echo of her mind.

"I would be brave. Oh, I would, Colin, if I could; but I never knew what it was to love life before." She paused to hear the storm. "Life seems so precarious now." She was trying to understand, and let him understand, the meaning of this new terror that had attacked her in the vital place of her love for him.

"It frightens me to love you so much. Now I have a child, and have you, in this wonderful new way, I feel so small, so powerless to hold you. I am so afraid."

"Afraid?"

"Afraid that Fate—that God will take you away."

"Can't you trust Him, my own?"

"How do I know what His plan is, if He has a plan? If only I had the comfort of a known immor-

tality. Eternity means nothing to me. Heaven is a mockery. I only know that I must lose your blue-eyed, blessed sunny self, some day." She kissed his face feverishly.

And it was the dull reproach of his helplessness to comfort her that was his pain. He had laid hold of one fact, that they were together now for ever, and because he could only be possessed of one idea at a time, the eternal present shut him in with its wonderful gladness, and the future separation was a blank. Only the knowledge of her fear and his powerlessness to comfort her stabbed him, and he could only hold her until at last she slept, and keep on holding her through the dying storm until the grey draggled dawn crept along the walls of the room to tell him that he could hold her no longer.

They brought his breakfast with hers ; it was her mother's thought, she knew, and she tried to eat with him, and he tried to eat with her ; but Aunt Sally's fragrant coffee and flaky muffins went away all but untouched. He was to go immediately.

At the last she asked him to pray with her in his arms, and when he was at the door, she cried to him, "Colin !" and he came back to hold her to him once again. Then she watched him through the door, and brought a smile from somewhere to meet the last look of his eyes.

The door closed. She heard his footsteps on the stairs going down, then voices in the hall. The front-door slammed with a bang. Wheels grated down the drive. She looked around the room vaguely. One of his collars lay in the corner on the floor. She turned on her face in the bed. When they brought her baby to comfort her she gathered the tiny, soft body to her, wondering whether she was an unnatural mother to feel such anguish in the breast that she gave to her child.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was five o'clock in the morning, and Barbara sat with her son in her arms waiting for the dawn. The trained nurse had been gone a week now, leaving her with the terrible, the overwhelming, responsibility of her child. She had been up most of the night with him, and her back ached, and her face felt tight with weariness; but it was not the physical strain that frightened her. It was something that she did not understand—a new agony of motherhood. She had faced it for many days now. Hanging over her child's bed at night she had felt it clutching her. She would jump out of bed sometimes, dreaming that he was crying, and find him sleeping quite quietly, and hover over him in the dim night-light of the room, listening for his faint, unspeakably faint, breathing, aching with indefinable terror. He was such a tiny thing, in such a big world, and she was all that stood between him and it. She felt it crushing her. She wondered now whether it would have been so if his father had been there. Colin would have given her strength. How?

The babe slept. She laid him in his bed. Suddenly she fell on her knees beside him and prayed.

But she did not pray willingly. Her praying seemed to her just another humiliating evidence of her weakness.

She prayed, and she scoffed at herself for praying. It had always seemed to her a peculiar excellency of intellect that had freed her from the craving for communion with the Divine Being. People who prayed had no imagination, she was wont to say. Her mother's agonies of intercession on behalf of her wayward children had always seemed to her the cries of a woman who, for lack of mental vigour, could not cope with the problems of life. She thought she perceived prayer to be the pitiful refuge of a trembling motherhood, and she shrank from going to her mother

for sympathy, or to Ann. She knew so well what they would say.

After her marriage something had happened to her. She had begun to have suspicious desires for a more satisfying spiritual depth in herself. She seemed, by comparison with her husband, a creature of absurdly fragmentary ideas, of petty ambitions, clumsily winged hopes, and she had failed to adjust to the life he opened to her. The whole secret of her pragmatic thought was to have been its adjustableness, its workableness, but it had not worked. The round of her thoughts, possessed within the crowded confines of this everyday world, had seemed to narrow upon her until the suffocating values that jostled one another in her little scheme of things sickened and confused her. If she was to grow, or even to keep her sanity, she must have a wider realm in which to live, wider and freer than this delicately poeticized opportunism of hers. Her imagination had begun to clamour for more room—more room, all of eternity and a boundless heaven to soar in; and she had found herself unable to satisfy it.

Now, kneeling beside her child, she became the victim of a thousand hurting doubts. She could not pray, and yet she must. What else was there to do? Through the chill of the grey morning she felt a sinister presence, an inexorable pressure; the cold and expressionless and infinitely vast universe seemed to hang over her child.

The baby stirred in his bed and murmured. His voice was small, and plaintive, and utterly confiding. He trusted the universe. His instinct told him that he was safe. All that he had to do was to lift his tiny voice, and the expressionless and infinitely vast universe would care for him. So he slept again, deliciously.

His mother dragged herself to her feet wearily. It was still very early, the light in the room was still

grey, the gas still burnt in the hall. If only Wilhelmina would come and take the child to her room for an hour, so that she might sleep. She stole out into the hall and stood listening. At first she heard nothing save the ticking of the clock on the stairs, but presently she grew conscious of her mother's voice, rising and falling in low, intense cadences. Stepping across to her door, which stood slightly ajar, she listened.

"Oh, God, be gentle with her!" said the voice. "She is so young. Oh, Heavenly Father, be merciful to my child; she knows so little of the travail of the soul, and she is so young. Because she is my own, the one whom you gave to me—my child—I beseech you to spare her yet a little, until she be stronger. She has so far to go, Father, and she is afraid, and she is lonely. Oh, God, be gentle with her—with my child!"

The voice dropped to a whisper; Barbara crept into the room. In the half-light she distinguished her mother on the floor, her arms across the rumped bed, her head thrown back, and her eyes closed. A fringe of pearly whiteness outlined the window-shades that were pulled down. One of them flapped into the draught of the widened door. There seemed something empty and comfortless about the room, and something terribly isolated about the woman by the bed. Her husband was dead, and her children were gone, and she was forsaken of life. And suddenly to Barbara there was a meaning in the figure of this woman and in her prayer, and she forgot that this was her mother, whom she had never obeyed and never understood, whom she had been supposed to obey, and love, and reverence. All the conditions she had never consented to, but that had unfulfilled, stood between them, fell away now, and she beheld a woman there like herself, in fear for her child. She crept to her side, and touched her arm.

"How did you know?" she whispered.

Margaret opened her eyes, and looked into her daughter's face.

"How did you?" she said.

For a moment they looked deep into one another, then Barbara lifted her arms in a gesture of abandonment, and with a smile dropped on her knees.

"God," she said solemnly, "I give up."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE DEATH OF ONE'S CHILD

*December 10.*—Dear, you ask if your son has any teeth yet, or shows signs of walking? Do you know that he is only twenty inches long, and that the most he can do with his legs is to wave them above his head? I think him the handsomest man in the world, but I can imagine, without bitterness, a society that would find him just a funny atom, and even bulk him together with a dozen others, like those hospital babies my nurse used to tell me about who were ticketed, and laid head to feet, thirty, in a kind of mammoth clothes-basket, and trundled down the ward to be doled out to their respective mothers. Even those mothers used to know if there was a mistake, and in spite of the uniform blue flannel nighties that wrapped the infants. We are all alike, mothers of godlings.

But the babe is not well. He cries so much. How one's ears quiver to one's baby's cry. It seems to me I could hear him anywhere if he cried. Ann always lets me run from the table at that sound. It goes through me like a knife, though I tell myself that babies must cry half an hour a day for the good of their lungs.

The other night, when I left the family abruptly in the middle of soup, I flew upstairs to find him alone, screaming, in his wee pink bassinette. The new nurse had departed to the kitchen to gossip with some admirer. I could so lightly have killed her. I really



felt my fingers on her throat, or twisting in her pretty hair. So one becomes aware of the instinct to guard and avenge one's young. What fierce creatures we are! She was really quite ashamed, but I cannot feel secure any more—would have asked Ann to let me have my meals upstairs if Wilhelmina had not come to the rescue to say she would sit in the sewing-room with the door open to the nursery. Dear soul, she is so inarticulate, and clumsy, and adoring with the babe. She takes him nearly as seriously as I do, and turns quite white when he has one of his paroxysms of screaming. You would be amused to behold the apparitions that loom at my door in the dead of night when I am walking the floor, and the son and heir is having colic. Mother comes first with a white shawl around her, as well as wrapper and slippers, fully prepared to send me to bed, and is no sooner despatched than Ann appears, to sit sociably on the bed and eat an apple; and sooner or later Wilhelmina comes too, and once, when his cries were beyond all imagining, grandfather's slippers pattered to the door, to patter away again at the sound of Ann's reproving voice. So you see he has all the household at his feet. Aunt Sally waddles daily from the kitchen just to gaze upon him.

I should be very happy if he didn't cry so. Tell me, if you can, why it nearly suffocates me to have him cry. Is it just because he is my baby?

*January.*—They say I cannot nurse my child any more. He has gained nothing in the last two weeks, and he gnaws his fingers and cries with hunger, and his mother cannot satisfy him. I know it is all true.

But how can I let him go from my breast? He is so wholly mine when I have him there. So real to me—so wonderfully a part of me. He is not just a baby then, but a whole world of wonderful dreams. It is

when I have him at my breast that he grows a man like his father, and makes me a proud woman.

And he has taken away so much pain with the tugging of his little lips. He has been so kind to his mother since you went away. He is mine, mine! How can I give him up?

*December 20.*—Dear, they suggest a wet-nurse. I shriek to my heart, and cover my ears at the sound. A strange woman with my babe at her breast is a sight to blind me—I cannot.

I have held out too long. He is sick, and I have taken him from my breast.

The woman is here. She is a Dane, large, and brawny, and red. Has come from the mills. Her child was illegitimate, and it died. The whole thing is a horror to me. I sit in a corner like a stone when she has him, ready to snatch him away. She gleams at me with cold, pale eyes over his little body. I know she does not love him. How can he get food from such a source? How little Nature cares for our sensibilities!

*January 1.*—The Dane, Mrs. Hansen, says she will not stay any more. We had a horrid hour. She said, while she was nursing him (I seldom see her otherwise): "I do not like to nurse your baby." Her eyes flashed cold fires. I said nothing, cowered miserably in my corner. Presently she said again, as though she thought I had not heard: "I do not like to nurse your baby. You are a child, a weak thing. I could crush you that way in one hand. It makes me mad to see you." She was breathing hard. Her bony face was flushed and terrible, and the babe lay in her arms all the time. I had to grip the chair to keep from tearing him from her. I mumbled that I was very sorry.

"Pooh! You sorry? You hate me. I can see. You sit and watch me with your green eyes—jealous. You hate me because I am strong, and my breasts

have milk. I know." The child was asleep by this time, and I took him, standing to face her. She rose, her blouse opened on her great, ample white bosom. She is very fair—terribly fair where she is not sunburned. She glared at me like an animal, and stretched her arms over her head, dropping them like logs of wood to her side, a gesture of intolerable disgust. There was something superb about her. I felt shrivelled to nothing. Her eyes shrivelled me. She just loomed over me, and spat on us.

"Well, I hate you, and I hate your child. You are soft, soft; you have no right to him." She seemed trying to say that I was no kind of a woman to be the mother of a man—and I felt the fierce irony that had taken her child. I almost agreed with her for the moment, so convincing was her animal power. I said:

"I am sorry for you. Go."

"Don't dare pity me," she said at the door. "I shall have other sons." She is gone.

*January 8.*—The doctor has procured another. This time she is Italian and fat, with great hanging breasts like Indian women—the mother of ten, and still picturesque, with a stupid, overpowering maternity about her to turn one sick. She fondles the babe, and talks to him in broken English—calls him her "leetle Signor," her "leetle white goat." She smells of garlic, reeks of the room where she has borne her ten children.

I've had an hour of wild weeping in my mother's arms. She tells me that she had to go through the same thing, and that she nearly died, used to cry and cry. Such are the penalties we flowers of civilization have to pay for our frail white bodies. I could almost desire to be an Italian, or a Slav, or any coarse female.

I have so little perspective about it all. After all, he is ours—yours and mine—and will be ours in mind and spirit, and it is a little thing to give his tiny frame food

for the blood of life. A little thing—but I am jealous, jealous.

*January 15.*—How can I tell you? It is all so terrible. The Italian woman proved to be diseased. Symptoms only began appear after she had come here. I fear I have driven away the doctor. I was terribly angry, am not sure yet that he is not to blame. I said dreadful things, I hardly know what. I am so sorry now, but I was frantic, frantic. Can you understand? I had had to let my child go from me to a poisoned thing, a woman of filthy blood!

Now I am a'one—to find a way, a food, that will satisfy him. There is quiet at last; I hope for the best. Only he is very weak. He never screams now as he used to do, just whimpers and cheeps like a weak little bird. I hold him in my arms, and am frightened; he is so little, and so light, and so still. I hold him in my arms, and pray for his little life, and think, "He is your husband's son." Sometimes, if I seem to forget that, my beloved, you must forgive me. He is very dear to me as your son. Only when one is in terror it is the instinct for "one's own" that rises choking, to subdue all other feelings. It is just a woman whom you love. I know you understand. But if I struggle for my child's life alone, I pray for it with you—and I often give myself to the quiet of your arms at night for rest and strength with which to meet the day. Through it all I am yours.

*January 20.*—It is very grey, and cold, and still to-day, and the babe is so weak that he just lies on my knees with his hands spread open, and scarcely seems to breathe. Did you know that it was only sick babies who held their palms open? Healthy babies always meet the world with doubled-up fists. And my baby's hands are limp, open rose-petals, scarce as big as the petal of a rose, and nearly as transparent.

I sit with him by the fire, and watch it snowing

outside, and try to think of you in India with sunshine and flowers around you. If I had stayed in India it would have been so different. He would have been able to be out of doors, and perhaps if I had had you beside me I might have been stronger, and have kept my milk rich. Sometimes I think it is all just my punishment for those humiliating days when I would not give in to you and God. I could beat my hands and my head against this room at the thought that I might have saved my child to health and a happy babyhood, but it is no use now. It just snows and snows, great, big, dull, soft snowflakes. It seems to be snowing in my heart—just that way, cold, soft, noiseless drops of fear. Perhaps when one's tears drop down into one's heart they turn to snow

It is all so silent. The earth wears such a thick shroud. The sky seems to have fallen on the earth; it is so near and opaquely grey. I feel that if I tried to call you through this thick silence you would never hear. I feel so alone. You are so far away.

Your child, too, is so still and weak. Can you hear him breathe? I can scarcely hear it. I wonder if he lives for you.

*January 25.*—I have made them leave him alone with me for the night.

It is about midnight. The fire has almost gone out. I suppose it must be cold—I don't know. There is just the light of the night-lamp that burns on the table. It shines softly on his face—kind little lamp.

He lies so still and white and sweet. He seems so comfy in his little bed, and I guess he is; for, you know, he died at twilight yesterday.

My child is dead.

I write the words to try and see what they mean. What do they mean? I don't know. He just lies there quite still, and doesn't cry any more.

I remember; he is your son, and I was to bring him

to you—but that is so long ago, and he has died for me so many times that I had forgotten you trusted me to bring him. You see, he cried so that I almost wanted him to die, for I knew he would be comfy as soon as he had gone from me. It was as plain as if he had told me I wasn't the right mother. He seemed to be reminding me when he cried of the time when I first knew he was coming, and of how I fought him away. It was as though I had torn his hand from my heart then, and it wasn't enough for me to grow kind afterwards. Even at the end of the waiting time I didn't love him so very much. I loved you so much more, you know. He seemed to be reproaching me, and I was so sorry that I was almost glad when he decided to go back.

But I remember, he is your child, and I was to bring him to you. I wonder if you will know me without him, or will you say, "Where is my wife? She was to have come with my child." I rave. Forgive me. I have been so many nights without sleep. I had to go on my knees to the doctor to bring him back. There were convulsions towards the end. Oh, to forget that sight! It is branded on my eyeballs. It has scorched them, so that there are no tears; just a terrible pain. I cannot shut it away. That little body—in agony.

But he is quiet now.

He is dead; did I tell you? That is what I am writing to tell you.

*January 26.*—We put him in the ground to-day. The family graveyard on the hill was all covered with snow, and the iron railing, too, that goes around it, and most of the gravestones. There were brown grasses sticking up through the snow, shivering. It was so cold all around that the new earth, where they had opened the ground, seemed almost warm until I stepped quite close as they lowered him in.

It began to snow again while grandfather stood and read from the Bible and prayed. His white head was just the colour of the snow. I wished it had rained instead, because I thought I might have been able to cry to comfort him a little way down there, if it had rained. And no green things will ever grow on his grave if it doesn't rain, and if no one cries. I forgot—Ann cried, and so did mother, and Aunt Sally too, and Wilhelmina—they all cried, so perhaps it's all right without any tears from me. I hope he will not know that neither his father nor his mother helped to warm him with their tears. For he has a father and a mother, you know—I am his mother, and his father is away.

Oh, my beloved, save me!

*Februa* —They say I have been ill a long time. I must lie in bed. I don't remember going out to him that night with a shawl to cover him, though it seems to me I did hear him calling to me that he was very cold; and I seem to remember the trees in the wind, and so I must have gone.

I am still very weak, and my head swims when I try to remember how it all was; but I think I know quite clearly now that our child is gone from us, and that I must get well to come to you. I am not allowed to write any more to-day.

It will be March before I can start to come to you, and April before I reach India, but I ask you to let me come all the way. I want to come to you in India. I cannot explain; I seem to have lost all my old faculty for analysis. I must come all the way; that is all. I would start to-morrow.

Mother is so sorry for me. She just longs to know that I am with you, never says a word of her own need of me. I asked her to come to India for the winter, but she says she is getting too old for such long journeys.

She wants us to be alone together ; that's all I know. She says we have been together so little, and that is true. It scarce seems as though we had been married at all. It might seem as though I were a bride if it were not for—for— Ah, beloved, you know what I would say.

*March 1.*—I went out to the little grave this morning for the first time since we buried his little body there. He lies beside "Comfort Craig, Saint of the Lord," who died in 1821, "full of years and peace." I am so glad for Comfort Craig. Aren't you ?

There were no green things on the hill, but the air was quite soft and sweet, and the earth smelt kind.

I sat by him a long time (on a rug ; I am very careful). I sat and looked down the valley and over the hills, where the buds on the trees are beginning to show a hazy red in the blue distance. The river was all shining between warm brown reeds, and a flock of birds flew by northward. There was spring in the air, and it was all so sweet that I seemed to feel my little baby cuddling in my arms to let me know that it was all right, and so I cried and cried quite happily. I just let them pour down. Tears are such happy things. I hope they will make some little green things grow.

I forgot to mention that though there were no green things growing, there were lovely spring flowers there—daffodils, primroses and violets—all frail, dainty things. It seems Fitz sent them almost every day from his greenhouses all the time I was ill.

It seems so strange to leave him buried there and travel away—such a long way. I'm glad it is spring, and that the year will be gentle with his grave, but I am most glad to know that he is not really under the ground. When I was sick he used to come to me and tell me he was so happy now ; I used to feel his little hands on my face, and almost feel his body against



my breast. They were not just fancies. His spirit really came to me—kind, immortal spirit of my child.

*March 7.*—I leave in a week now. I am coming to you, and I am very well—surprisingly well. My heart, dear one, is not broken for my child. It is with you. I come to you with joy.

I was putting away the babe's clothes in a camphor chest when Ann came to help me. I was sitting on the floor, fingering one of his little flannel shirts.

"You're not taking them with you, Bobbie, are you?" she asked.

"No, dear." Her blue, blue eyes filled.

"You know, Ann," I said, sitting on the floor among his little things—"you know, you said once long ago, when I was wild and such a trial to you, that I had had none of the experiences of life, and must wait to understand some things." She nodded, and I went on, not meaning to hurt her, poor brave woman-soul: "Well, I've had them all now, except—" And then I stopped. She knew what I meant, and she said it through agonied lips as I rose to my feet:

"Except widowhood." I've never seen her face so exposed to the instant ravaging of her sorrow. I just looked, helpless.

"May you never know that, Bobbie, Bobbie dear!" she cried, her features all one quivering flame of love; and we rocked together, sobbing.

## CHAPTER X

### A JOURNEY'S END

COLIN TRAIVE'S child had never lived for him; the bitterest of his sorrows was that he could enter so little into his wife's experience of bereavement. He remembered a pink bundle that he had held in his arms, remembered something of a delicious thrill he had had in the feel of it, and more of the comic dismay at his own awkwardness; but it seemed to him that those moments of awed pride in the tiny precious thing scarce had given him a claim to fatherhood. That would have come with the years, if he had proved himself worthy: now he was her husband, and was absorbed in her, with an ache of lingering regret that he could have missed sharing her agony added to his intense tenderness.

He shared it only through the excruciating efforts of his lumbering fancy; and in the reluctant response of his heart to such pale images as he could summon, he wished fiercely for something of her power for visualizing the unseen. This she could not give him, he knew, seeming to himself a man of singularly dull sensibilities, and yet she helped him as she had done in that other hour. Trying to conjure up for himself the mind of a father bereaved of his son, he failed, but he remembered the surpassing sweetness of her face when she first saw her baby, and he came very near to the sense of fatherhood at the recollection of that. It had been the inrush of her joy, flooding from her to

him, that had quickened him then, and it was a reflected glow of her sorrow that warmed and melted him now in his cold remoteness. He saw her with the babe at her breast, and he saw her now with empty arms ; that was all. Perhaps it was enough. If there was to be a more intense sharing of grief, it must be she who spanned this wider, weary chasm of separation, as it had been she who had carried him with her across that other torrent of pain.

He trusted her to do this, and yet he travelled to Bombay to meet her in fear. The fear struggled with his unutterably joyous longing. He saw her coming to him, still subdued by her grief, and he was afraid that his absorbing hunger for her presence, his unconcealable delight in her nearness, would seem to her unnatural. He was full to overflowing with the joy of having her again, and he felt he could not compress his gladness into a sad sympathy. Such tumultuous happiness at such a time must outrage her sensibilities. He beheld himself failing miserably to meet the intense reminiscence of her mood, and did not know that he was nerving himself to meet one of her former selves that was dead now.

The unaccustomed effort of these imaginings and the strain of the imminent meeting precipitated him on the dock at Bombay in a state of panic. He stood very still in the brilliant, ragged, jostling crowd, and tried to think of how alien and cruel it would all be to her, coming from that land of silent grey skies and mantling snows—the land where she had left her child. About him swelled and jabbered a vociferous Orient, a motley, seething throng. Slick Parsees in the hard, shining black hats of their sect and long, shining black coats pushed by him gesticulating with armfuls of flower-garlands ; coolies chattered, and quarrelled, and sprawled amongst piles of luggage ; Englishmen in white leaned nonchalantly on their canes smoking stoic

cigarettes; behind them all the jewelled city lifted its ornate towers above hot red streets and languid palms to a shining sky. Everywhere through the rich, colour-drenched sunlight swam the opiate odour of India. He strained his eyes across the last shining strip of water that was slipping under her ship, dizzy with the clamour in his ears and the pounding in his heart, scarce certain because of the mad throbbing behind his eyes that it was her figure there, straight and white, behind the ship's railing. He was just a man then, shaken and blinded by the sight of his beloved.

And when she stepped ashore, they were just a husband and a wife finding one another in a whirling, shouting crowd, and it mattered little to that tumbling, unnoticing world that he took her in his arms there, with the tears streaming down on her glad radiant face, and her thin body shaking like a leaf against his coat—like a leaf that has been blown up against the strong trunk of a tree, and clings there, fluttering.

She said, when they had found a way somehow to her luggage, that she had come second class, not fourth without food, and that she had had such a good time. He found her things, and she sat on a box and dangled her feet just the way she used to do, and told him about a sick baby in second class, whose mother flirted with somebody on deck, and left him in the cabin all day, and how the baby had grown to know her, and had kept her from being seasick, or homesick, or lonely. "She had thought there might be something like that to do, so that was the reason she had taken a second class passage. There always were sick babies, and tired mothers, and shabby missionary families. There had been all of these and more, and she had had a good time. He would have laughed to see her washing out the baby's clothes, and tying them to the railing to dry."

He said nothing ; he couldn't. She had taken him completely by surprise, after all his effort to adjust his mind in anticipation, and now his brain was whirling to the glad triumph of his heart. It was only after they had boarded the train and were rushing north to their home that he brought himself quietly to examine her and discover how it was that she was so much the same and so changed. She looked well and strong, though very thin and very young. He found that for some reason the most surprising thing of all—he did not know why he had imagined that she would look old. She sat on the seat with one white foot tucked under her, and both her hands hugging her knee, and looked at him from the same level young eyes, and laughed her love to him in her old, caressing, boyish chuckle. She was as exquisite a woman-thing as she had been on that first day when she stepped out of the train into his heart ; she was the same sparkling creature of gleaming hair and eyes and teeth as she had been in her imperious, whimsical girlhood, and she talked the same nonsense—told him that he was a sight to behold, that she thought he must be suffering from malnutrition, and that she was going to take care of him now. There was a little break in the laughing sweetness of her voice here, and she leaned over to trace his features with a gentle forefinger, and she said he had as much of a face as ever, and then flung her arms around his neck, and laughed and cried into his coat, and said he was just her old, blessed Boy Blue.

He took her and held her in his arms, so that he could look right down on her face, and it was then that he began to see how it was changed. Her countenance had worn lean and fine, with features more clearly chiselled, cheeks slightly hollowed, eyes deeper in more delicately modelled shadows, and at the corners of her eyes, where the downward sweeping brows stopped at those little indentations above her cheekbones, there

were faint lines, and at the corners of her mouth, too, and across the whiteness of her forehead. They were scarce visible lines, but they told him something of her that he longed to know, and they seemed to him dear, precious things. They recalled her face as it had been after that scarring battle with pain, when they had been so close to one another, and he thanked them for the throbbing sense of her past agony that they gave him now.

She suffered him to kiss her brokenly, and patted his poor, big, suffering face, but she seemed to desire no effort at reminiscence, seemed perfectly happy to be with him and to love him. So after awhile they talked quietly of many things that had happened while they were separated.

He told her that Abdul Rahim had recanted, had gone to the Mosque, and said the Kuluma had been received back into the Mohammedan faith, that he had come to the old place in the bazaar, and had confessed that he had not believed the words of the Kuluma as he said them, but that it had been the only way of getting his wife, the girl that had been promised to him in babyhood. The boy was a wreck now, and his chances ruined in the Punjab, for he was despised by both Mohammedans and Christians. It had been a blow to them all. And he told her that the Mirzah had died of cholera, and that there was bitter strife among his followers for leadership; the whole sect would probably go to pieces. The Menzies were all well, Jimmy, in trousers, fairly demented to welcome her with an offering of choice birds' eggs and butterflies. He had developed a taste for natural history that threatened to submerge the family under reptiles, and insects, and birdlings. And she told him that Grandfather Craig was editing a new Catechism, a dreadful book, that her mother had promised to come out for the winter after next, and that she had not found it

hard to leave, except for the little grave. Then she told him quietly about the child, and of how much he, their son, had done for his mother to open her eyes and melt her heart. She said, too, that there were frail white crocuses peeping above the ground the day she went to say good-bye, and that Ann would plant flowers there—child-flowers, forget-me-nots, and pink marguerites, and that feathery thing called “baby’s breath.” She was so controlled as she told him about it that he scarce understood all that lay behind the new quiet of her matured womanhood, scarce could think of her as a bereaved mother until he saw her take Mary Menzies’ baby in her arms. Then he knew.

Mary was there with all her brood to meet the train. They swarmed upon her, while McVicker, the station-master, hung in the background, his hat lifted from his head, and a sheepish, hungry smile on his sallow face. And the brilliant, dark-skinned throg crouched along the platform, stoically staring, and beyond the mouth of the shed was a curtain of dusty sunlight upon which appeared the blurred image of battered vehicles and ancient horses.

Colin swept them along, with a train of luggage-laden coolies, over the bridge and down to the street.

“We will leave you now,” said Mary, “to go home alone.” And Mr. Menzies perched the baby on his shoulder, and the twins gave her each one more delicious kiss, and Jimmy looked at his toes, and Bruce shied a stone at a donkey.

“Come,” said Colin, with suppressed nervousness in his voice; and they drove away into the sun.

He studied her intently, and suddenly he was seized with panic. He had been so eager to bring her home, had laboured so joyously to put the house in order for her, and now the new fire-place in the drawing-room, and the new chintz curtains in her bedroom, and the new pony in the stable, seemed to him pitiful and

forlorn attempts to overcome the invincible fact of their exile. He had a wild desire to turn back, to board the train straight away and go home with her for ever. It was terrible for her to have to begin it all again.

"Bonnie!" he said desperately—"Bonnie, shall I take you away home? Tell me—I will."

She turned to him with a look of cool, sweet surprise, and at the intense earnestness of his face she laughed. Then, turning, she looked ahead down the long, sun-flecked road where a bullock-cart was lurching under arching trees, and a woman in a scarlet skirt was swinging by with a baby on her hip.

"I am home," she said quietly.

The carriage turned in at the gate. Two malis squatting in the garden with trowels in their hands looked up and salaamed gravely. There was the sound of a well creaking, and in the air the scent of heat and dust and flowering vines.

"No," she said, as they drew up at the front-door, "I want to go in this way."

Across a narrow strip of grass his stately door stood open, heavy-browed with purple bougainvillea, and beside it was the green iron bench, empty.

"Suppose," she said, sitting down on the bench, "that I was a pilgrim and a stranger—suppose that I was a derelict, what would you do?"

"I would take you in."

There was a silence, during which the droning of the well went on somewhere in the garden, and a blue jay dipped over the hedge.

"Well," she said, "I am all those," and she gave him her hand, and he led her in.

But what he had dreaded for her came almost at once. They had just sat down to breakfast when they heard the sound of wheels, and a tikka-garri, piled with strange luggage, careered into the porch.



Colin stopped in the act of buttering her piece of toast; he groaned; they stared at one another in dismay.

"There's the red sausage of bedding," said Barbara.

"Well, I declare! I thought you'd come last week, and I just stopped for the night on my way up-country." Mrs. Barker swept in upon them. "This here gari-wala says he wants two rupees," she went on. "'Tain't correct, is it, Mr. Traive?"

Then something seemed to strike her in the faces of the two. She grew slowly very red, and her bright little eyes glanced here and there helplessly. "Oh," she said—"oh—I'm afraid——"

Barbara jumped up from her chair and threw her arms around the poor old neck.

"Dear Mrs. Barker, it's all right. We've just come, but we can make you comfortable in two minutes."

"Well," said the old lady, brightening again, "I'll just go and see about my own things," and she bounced out of the room.

Barbara turned to her husband, who was gazing at her with a beatific smile on his face and tears in his eyes.

"Let's enjoy it," she said, going with him out into the porch.

f  
n

.  
s,  
-  
s  
.

f  
e  
e

er

e,

ll  
d

t  
is

o

