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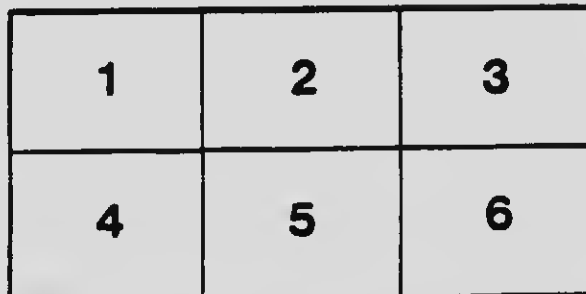
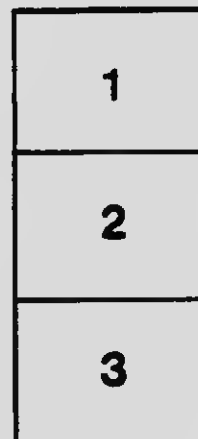
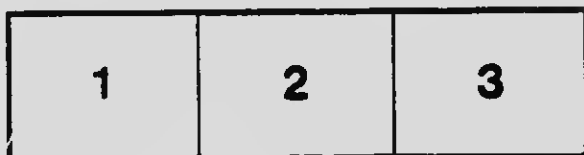
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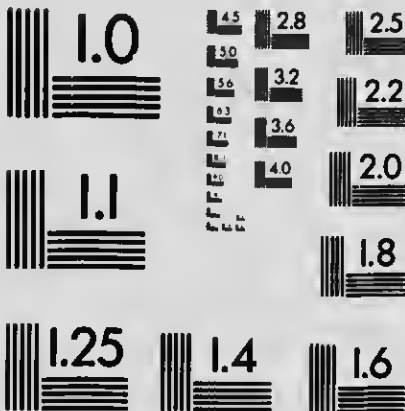
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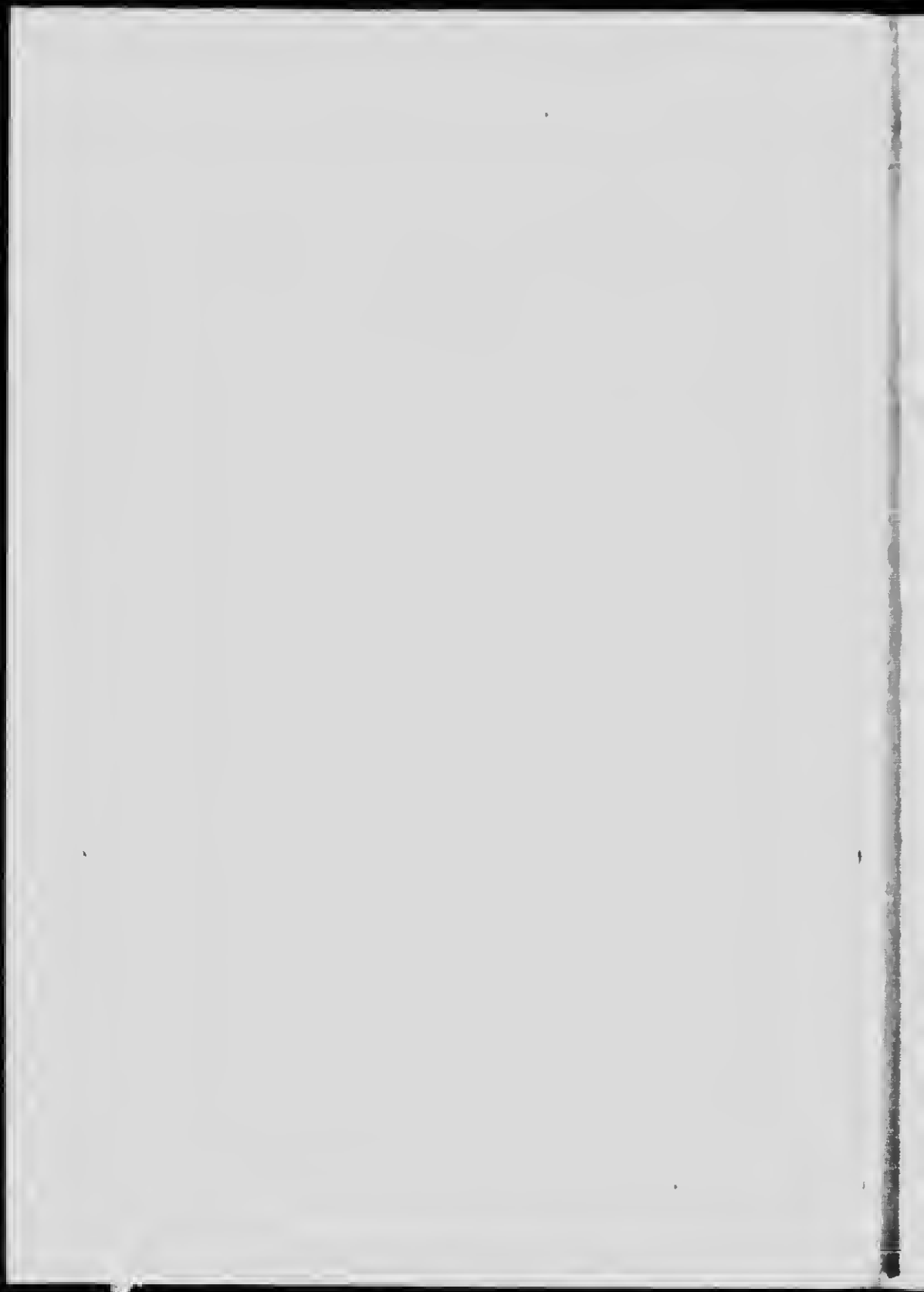
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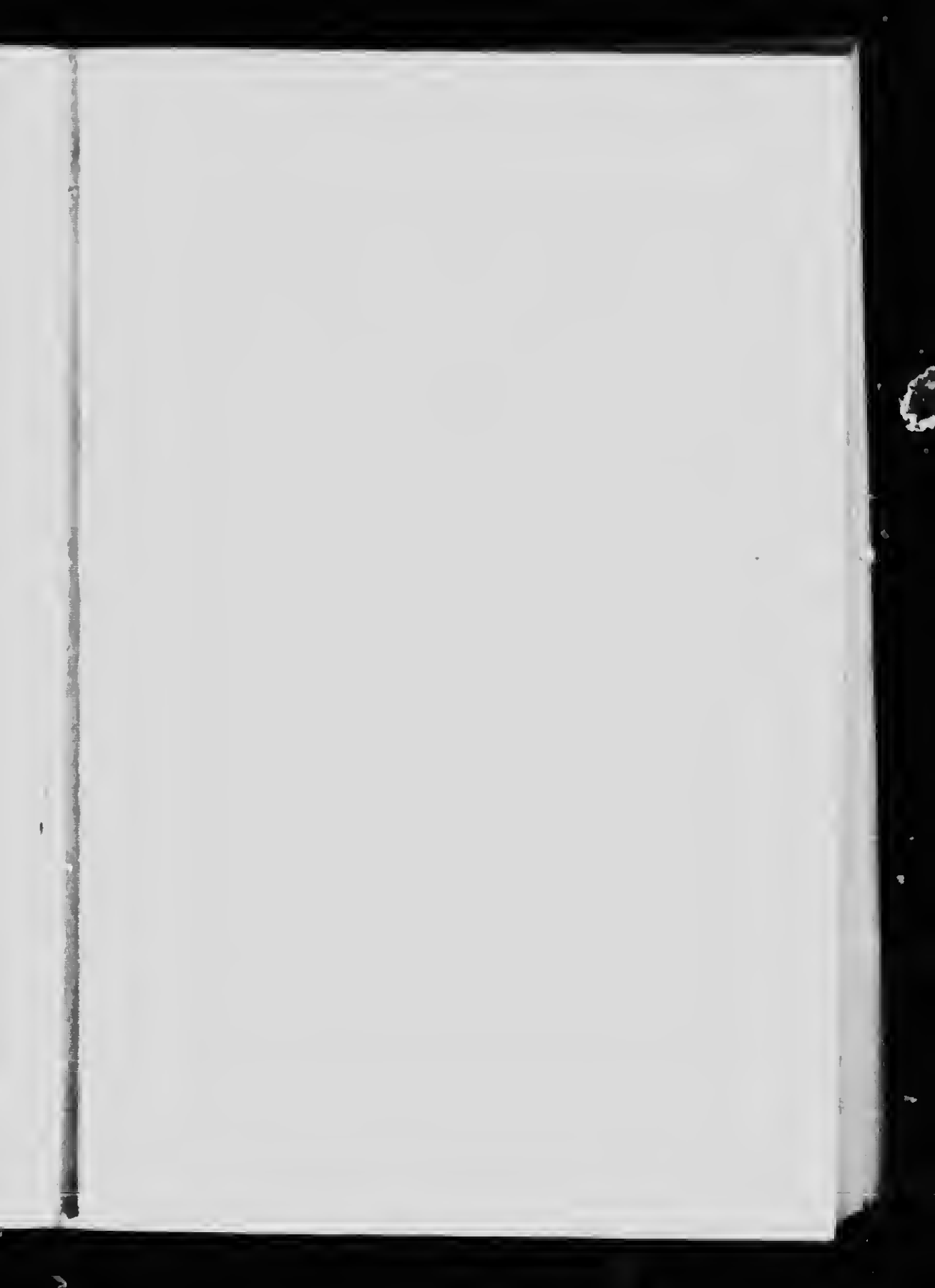
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THE NEW DAWN







She felt rather than saw the shadow on his face

THE NEW DAWN

BY

AGNES C. LAUT

AUTHOR OF "FREEBOOTERS OF THE WILDERNESS,"
"LORDS OF THE NORTH," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
MOFFAT, YARD AND COMPANY

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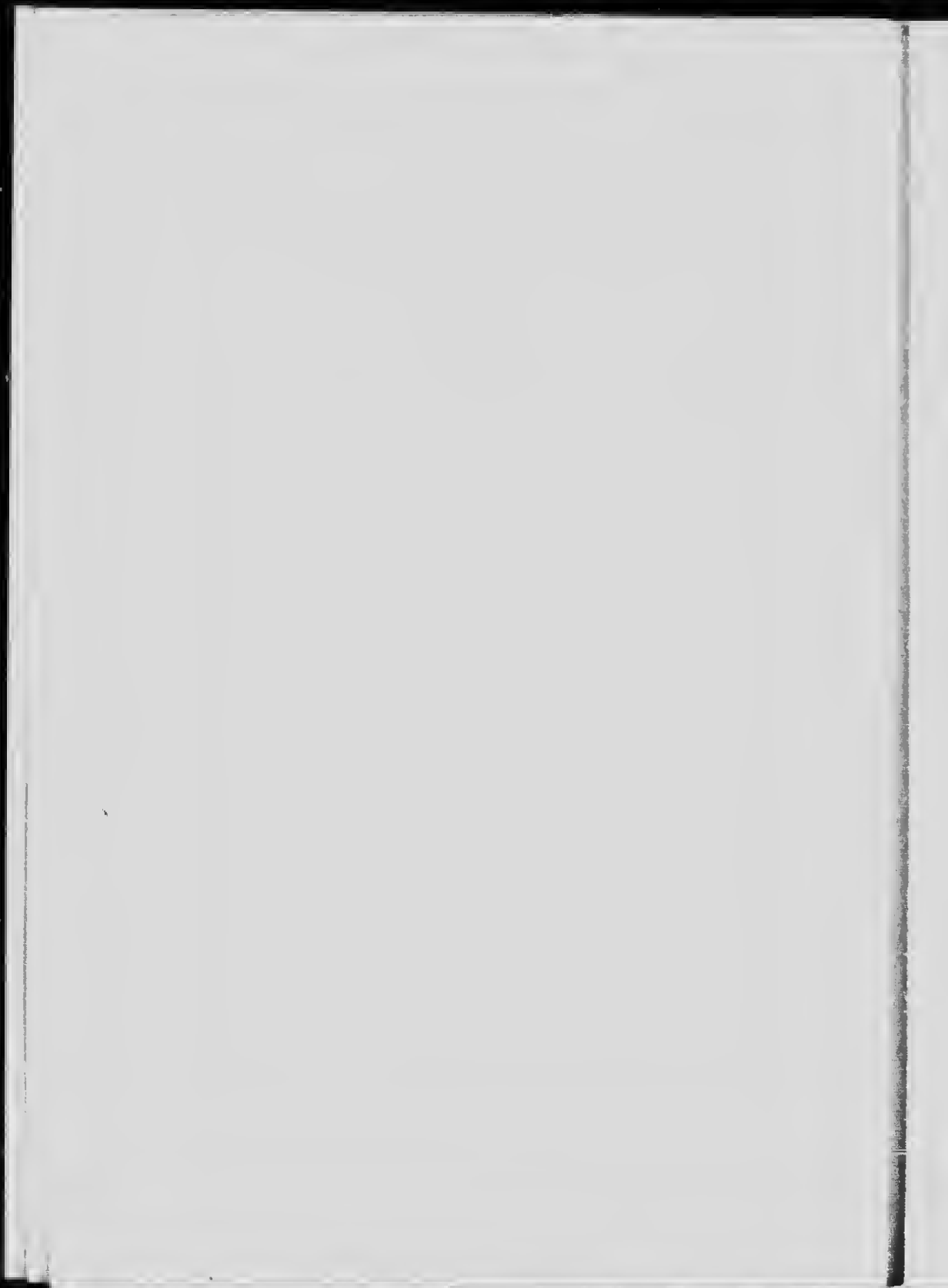
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A woman, with black hair massed at the neck, entered
disdainfully (Outside Cover)

She felt rather than saw the shadow of his face. *Frontispiece*

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THE NEW DAWN

PART I

THE WILL FOR POWER

CHAPTER I

WARD STUDIES THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

THE young fellow studied the face of the great capitalist as he had never before studied any face in his life—youth wresting secrets from age; trying to solve the riddles which youth has not yet had the experience to understand.

The elder man stood erect, hands in pockets, behind the wicket of the ship yards' office. Clerks were paying out checks to the long lines of workmen—seven thousand there were in the lines where the boy stood. In the president's appearance there was nothing remarkable. He was slightly bald, and clean-shaven except for a close-cropped mustache. A hard firmness of jaw and massiveness of shoulder power and chest gave evidence of strength and resolution to battle with tasks—perhaps, of sheer delight in the game of life being complex and difficult and baffling. He reminded the young workman of

a Nubian lion once seen in the park—agile, muscular, alert in brain and brawn, with crushing force hidden away somewhere in his personality. His eyes were cold, unemotional, steady, seeing far ends from which his will would never swerve. Strength strength of body and mind; Will the will to be and do; Purpose like a shining mark or star that was the man, with the quick judgment that leaps to conclusions and the conscience that scruples at nothing Conscience? Why, this man would have no conscience except the consciousness of failure! Ward looked at him, and knew these things as surely as he knew that the president of the company had the cold blue eyes of a woods hunter!

Superficially, the president of the ship yards resembled the general run of prosperous people. He was well groomed, but not so well-dressed as to direct attention to dress. Above all, he was spiritually and physically redundantly healthy—"fit," that was it—fit to survive in any contest under any conditions. The young workman looked back to the great man's eyes—no remorse, no pity, no thought of good or ill, only masterful purpose bent to an unswerving end; but wait if the end did swerve, it would be to enlarge, not to wobble and sidle; and, if the aim receded as this man advanced, he would pursue. The boy knew this in a vague sort of way from his own life. As a little chap living a starving sort of life on the edge of Shanty Town, he remembered that his sole ambition had

been to get a footing—any kind of footing—in the big ship yards. When he had gone home to tell his mother that he was to be messenger boy at a dollar and a half a week he had been so mad with happiness all night that he could not sleep; but, inside of a month, he had set his aim to advance to the place of the boy who helped the blast furnace men. Now, at eighteen, he was second furnace man, earning seventy a month; and it had been forcing itself on him for the last year that he could not save much more on seventy a month than he used to at a dollar and a half a week. Something amiss in the home off the edge of Shanty Town absorbed all his thrift and foresight like an absorbing sponge; but that did not quench his desire to get on. He was furnace man now; but he knew progress would be blocked unless he did one of two things—joined the iron workers' union, or lifted himself to another plane of work. He was using his hands now. Unless he could climb up where he would use both his head and his hands—and that was what he was trying to read in the face of the president As fast and far as the aim receded, this man would pursue it.

Young Ward felt strangely moved. If it had been in a religious meeting instead of in the long lines of the ship yards' workers waiting for their pay, we would say he was undergoing a change of heart, a rebirth. It was half attraction, half fear, wholly admiration, and not a vestige of the jealous resentment which many feel toward those who beat

them in the game of life. Ward was keen to get into the arena to play the game of life with all its odds and handicaps, and never a whimper for one of them!

The long lines kept moving up to the pay wickets. The men kept shuffling out as they exchanged their checks for cash envelopes; and Ward knew exactly where many of those fattest pay envelopes would disgorge themselves before Monday morning. The chasm between the man behind the wicket and the man in front of it was wider than the chasm between Lazarus in Heaven and Dives in Hell. Why the boy asked himself; and again the realization came Given Strength Will Purpose: the result blazed in letters of fire There could be only one result Success

Then, the singsong of the pay clerk calling out Tom Ward six-six-eight—eight He was only a number yet, only one of an infinite number of moiling millions; and the earth was limed with the bones of the dead of such as he. As Ward signed his initials to the pay list he felt his employer eyeing him. It caused a tingle of hope that was ridiculous; for the great man may not have noticed him; still less, suspected that he was planting a seed in the mind of a smudgy hobble-de-hoy in blue overalls, destined to overshadow nations in its growth. The stillest hours may be the greatest hours; for the birth of a new thought dated from that moment.

When he left the office, young Ward did not board the tramcar with the other workers. He wanted to be alone . . . to think! He had a vague consciousness that men, who didn't stand back, alone and aloof, detached from vermin and vampires, from sponges and parasites . . . to think, were sure to become dray horses, oxen yoked to the treadmill of bootless toil—muzzled oxen, too, perhaps, not permitted to snatch at grain trodden from the mill of toil for other men. His thoughts were running he had no idea where, though he knew if he did not succeed in realizing some of them that he would be in a maelstrom of life-long discontent. We think that material things dominate life, how much we earn, how much we spend, what we eat and wear; but here was a grimy youth earning and spending much the same as seven thousand other employees in the ship yards; and what marked him out from the others forever was the new thought born in his soul . . . the resolution to Strength . . . and Will . . . and Power!

Quickly crossing the commons, he struck along the river road through the woods. Neither the flakes of cloud rose-red in the sunset, nor a shimmering haze of spring hanging over the gray-green fields in a veil—caught the eye of young Tom Ward. His thoughts were chaos; and out of chaos are flung new stars. Just above the apple bloom and lilac hedges a star picked through the gray twilight, a diamond point in a veil of mist; but the star rising for Ward unknown to himself shone far down life's

hazy trail beckoning from a rosy glow raved with hope, quivering and pulsing with a new electrifying fire; and its name was Success . . . that much he knew . . . He was going to do the thing called . . . Success; or die game and at it!

The scented blossoms gave a riotous sense of new life . . . joyous life . . . life at the foam . . . as though he had kicked off rags and tatters of a mean sordid existence, as he nightly kicked off his grimed overalls, and leaped, washed and clean and keen to the race tracks of life, where he was going to run to win, whether or no! The spring lights flickering the gray-green fields were not edged so bright a gold as the hopes thrown off by his own thoughts. It was not the tickling; of vanity, of passion at its spring tide in the veins of youth. The ideal he was building in flashes of thought and determination and hope was not an idol with sawdust stuffing made up of ego; he didn't see himself becoming a little tin god set up on the necks of other men, spoonfed with adulation, slathered with flattery. It was zest of the joy of life . . . the race . . . the game . . . the pursuing . . . not the winning! Success didn't consist of getting hold of tangible chunks of something and sitting hatching on it like an old hen till life became addled and rotten Success consisted in this game-thing, this coursing the race track of life . . . this achieving and pursuing a fleet-footed aim higher and farther and wider afield He'd found the secret of life . . . of youth . . . of being . . . of doing!

. . . Once hidden by the woods Ward threw out his chest, tossed down his dinner pail, drew a deep breath of the spring air, and uttered a boyish yell of exultation! . . . Life . . . was good . . . spite of hard knocks in Shanty Town! Life . . . was wine in pulsing joyous veins! Hope, rose-red, edged with gold, suffused itself through the bright future of his dreams . . . Success . . . Success at any price of body or soul, time or work . . . he was going to have this Success Thing . . . if Strength and Will and Purpose would do it!

To be sure, there were handicaps; so there were in all races; but the fleet of foot left handicaps behind! For seven years he had done a man's work with a boy's body, supporting a father whose sole belief was that he should increase the race—not maintain it—and whose belief took form in eight more children than he could support. He had been handicapped by burdens that others had found, handicapped by lack of education, by lack of training except such as the hard and effective knocks of life afforded, by lack of a start where his ancestors had left off. Tom Ward senior having fallen behind in the progress of the race, Tom Ward junior must make up lost ground. He remembered just before the mortgage had been foreclosed on the old farmstead, which his ancestors had won from the Indians and worked for two hundred years—was it the fifth or sixth baby that had been born? . . . he couldn't remember that; but, anyway, the doctor was in his mother's room; and the pale-faced little

girls—the others of the family were all girls—were standing at the foot of the bed; and a little red-faced mite of something human lay muffled in white beside his mother; and the doctor had looked first at the mother's weary face, then at the wan little girls, then at himself, at that time, a sturdy farm boy of ten.

"How is it your eldest boy is such a husky little piker when the others aren't?" asked the doctor, genially.

"Oh, I guess I had hopes and dreams and happy thoughts before Tom came," his mother had answered. He hadn't known, then, what she meant. There came a queer look to the doctor's face. He blew his nose like a piece of pulpit artillery.

"Well, Tom's a throw-back to the good old stock that pioneered these New England hills," the doctor had said.

"Yes, Tom resembles his grandfather," his mother had answered. Then, his father had come in, red-faced, wagging his beard. As a child he had not understood, then; but he realized now. It was his mother's inheritance that his father's blundering had dispersed; and even then all the children knew that the father resented people talking to his mother—hated her superiority. Perhaps, it was the grueling and grilling of that daily sad spectacle in his childhood home that had rooted out of his own nature any jealousy to superiority. Anyway, he was "a throw-back to the good old stock," whatever that was, and had ten times more energy in his little

finger than the rest of the family had in two generations. Then, the mortgage had been foreclosed; and his people joined the procession of the thousands who flocked from farm to factory, exchanging the birth-right of broad acres for the mess of pottage in town tenement. They had never quite come down to tenement life. His earnings as messenger boy had paid the rent of a small house on the edge of Shanty Town, between the woods and the sea.

"We can keep our bodies and souls clean here, at all events," his mother had said wearily as the boy had passed stove pipes and broken crockery and backless chairs and babies down off the farm wagon into the little shabby house.

But to-night, with the rose-red of the sunset aslant through the lilac hedges and the rose-red of his resolution tinting the future with the pure, steady light of one guiding star—his courage took a leap out beyond all handicaps. He understood now what "a throw-back to the good old stock" meant. By the light of the furnace, when he was fireman to the night shift, he had read the ship yards' library voraciously. He also knew now that if some men had not leaped beyond the heritage of their handicaps the human race might yet be slinking through the jungle in pursuit, not of stars, but prey.

Sweat was oozing from his shaggy hair in beads. His temples pounded like hammers. Ward knew the pain of concentrated joy in the hirth-throes of his hopes. Strength . . . Will . . . Purpose! The secret . . . he had it at last! He was going

to "make the race tracks of life hum, by God; and Devil take the hindermost!" He was sick of incompetents, of unfits, of sponges and parasites and no-goods and grumblers at life, whose refrain was self pity, and whose fate that of the swine that went over the precipice into the sea!

Ward sat down on a log with hands linked round one knee and eyes fixed on space . . . There were really two worlds . . . the Ups and the Downs . . . the On-Tops and the Unders . . . the Commanders and the Commanded . . . Why? . . . Then the same thought back like a battle cry . . . Strength . . . Will . . . Purpose . . . The result must be Success; and success meant power, the game, pursuing a fleet-of-foot aim up and out and beyond! . . . Ward jumped to his feet with a second joyous yell.

"Gee-whizz! One of the shovel stiffs from your ship yards, Admiral Westerly; and he's got bats in his belfry," cried the broken falsetto of a youth in adolescence; and Tom Ward crumpled up in hot red-faced confusion; for almost on top of his hiding place galloped five riders—a carrot-headed boy in khaki and silk shirt blouse and scarlet tie leading the way on a pony, followed by the president of the ship yards and a red-faced man in a military suit mounted on high-paced, dock-tailed cobs. A smallish black-eyed boy and a very little girl with shaking curls came cantering behind on Shetland ponies. Even as he dropped from the clouds of his dreams to an earth that he wished would close over him, the young

workman recognized the group at a glance. The little girl was the only child of the ship yards' president, whom the boy had addressed as Admiral Westerly; the other rider, officer of the State Infantry, of whose malodorous life not an operative in the yards was ignorant. The small, black-eyed boy on the Shetland pony was evincing symptoms of snickering when the president spoke:

"A gentleman doesn't say that sort of thing, Hebden! Whsh——"

But the little girl was not paying the least attention to anyone. She was slipping off her pony with eyes intent on a violet bank, when the military man spoke.

"Pretty damp for little feet and bare legs—Westerly."

"Louie," called the president, "go back on your pony this minute! Ground's damp here, and the sea fog coming in——" and he had flung his foot stirrup free to dismount, when Tom Ward junior came out of his embarrassment with a jump, jerked off his cap and, extending his hand, had given the little girl a lift back to her saddle.

"By Jove—that was neat," said the military man to the red-headed youth, whom Ward heard quoting something about "a Don Wan in the rustic."

The president was visibly fingering his vest pocket for a tip.

"Go on with the children, Colonel Dillon," he was saying, "I think this is one of our men."

Ward had put on his cap and turned his back as the colonel rode off with the children.

"I saw you in the ship yards to-night, didn't I?" asked the admiral.

Ward felt the electric thrill go from his spine to his finger tips. The president had brought out a handful of change and was picking out two quarters. Ward turned.

"Yes, sir!"

The president put the two quarters back in his pocket. Ward did not want the tip; but he did not know whether to feel grim or cynical when he saw the coins slip back. The president was rummaging his trousers pockets.

"A dime, I'll bet," thought Ward grimly; and he wanted to laugh at this drop from dream clouds to a dime's worth of mortification; but Admiral West-erly did not proffer more coins. He sat rummaging his trousers pocket with one hand, reining his horse in with the other, looking Ward over with a searching glance that bored into the boy's marrow. Again, that electric tingling ran from the worker's spine to his finger tips. At that moment, so far from being in rose-hued clouds, he felt himself all hands, all feet, all legs; in a word, a huge lumbering gawk reddening the color of a turkey's wattle.

"Which is your department?" asked the president curtly.

"Second furnace man; day shift now; used to be night boy——"

"Never mind 'used-to-be's!' Do you want to get on—to go ahead?"

Ward was so taken aback that he didn't know whether to expect some "be-good-and-you-will-be-happy" advice, some platitudes about working classes saving their money, or a round call-down for intruding on the group of riders to help the little girl.

"I asked you," repeated Admiral Westerly, "do you want to rise?"

Ward was so taken aback that he did not recognize his own voice, nor pick his words.

"More than hell I do," was what he managed to blunder out.

"Never mind the hell; and remove that cap of yours! It doesn't grow there, does it?"

The president was slowly twisting the invisible ends of his close-cropped mustache.

"What I meant, sir," blundered young Ward, "was that I'd give all I own——"

"Which isn't much," interjected the president.

"Just to get my feet on the lowest rung of the ladder."

"Hm," ruminated the president.

"I know I can make good if I can just get my feet on the bottom run of the ladder——"

"Yes, if somebody doesn't stamp on your fingers from above, or pull you down by the legs below, or upset your ladder altogether," ruminated the man on horseback, putting his hand back in his trousers pocket and pulling out a twenty dollar gold piece.

Ward made no reply, because there didn't seem any to make.

"I see you don't let the grass grow under your feet; or your hat."

"What is he driving at?" thought the boy; but he had sense enough or fright enough to hold his tongue.

"Who are these delegate union fellows working up trouble among the riveters and platers?" demanded the great man.

"I don't know," answered Ward. "I have never been able to afford to join the firemen's union, but I guess I'll have to at twenty-one."

"Not a member yet?"

"No, sir," answered Ward.

"Can you find out for me if these agitators are from the foreign yards, and keep your mouth shut about it?"

"I think so; they are to meet secretly in the furnace room to-morrow—Sunday—when the cleaners are supposed to be at work——"

"Don't *think*," emphasized the admiral. "Will you, or will you not?"

And the answer came from Ward like a stone from a catapult—"Will I—Yes, I will!" (Strength . . . Will . . . Purpose . . . Power—the boy was drunk with a wine the great man did not guess.) The president took the gold coin from his palm and handed it between his forefinger and thumb toward the grimy faced workman in oily blue overalls.

"No, sir," said Ward, "not till I've earned my price."

"There may be no price——"

"Except to get my feet on the first rung of the ladder——"

The answer of the president of the ship yards' company was a dig of the spurs that sent his horse on the gallop after the other riders. Ward stood rooted; but as the cob went hurling into the woods the president turned sidewise and glanced back at the figure of the young workman. Ward looked up just at the moment to catch the glance. He felt as if an arrow had ripped into his inner slumbering consciousness. He had been picked out from the mob of other men. It remained for him to make good.

CHAPTER II

WARD ADOPTS A NEW CREED OF LIFE

RIGHT here and now it would be very simple to preach a little sermon on the mistake Tom Ward made at the beginning of his career by choosing Success as his aim instead of Service. When he thought of his fellow workers as "a mob," he was on the edge of a precipice, from which Lucifer and many other Sons of Morning have plunged from a heaven of dreams to the pit of their own fiery discontent. We have all heard the allegory of the man who set out to follow the mountain stream from its spring in the snows down to the sea, and who made the mistake of setting out on the wrong side of the tricklet. The trouble with that pretty parable is you can't always follow the mountain stream trickling from the snows. It loses itself under quaking moss and in swamps. It dips down under a glacier and takes to curving round precipices, where you would break your neck if you followed. Being good is something more than following a silver thread in the sunlight. It is often using good judgment to find the thread when you lose it; and to recognize the thread when you find it; and, generally, life hurries us into action before we have

time or wisdom to take stock of our own motives.

When Ward came out of the daze where the riders had left him standing in the woods, seemingly—I suppose—he walked home. In reality, he trod on the wings of the wind. He did not feel the earth beneath his feet. All fatigue had gone out of his limbs and in its place was a sort of living fire. The world seemed invested in a new glory. He felt as if he had put himself in touch with a hidden spirit of enormous power which dominated and possessed his being, which he could command only by obeying.

Alas for the hopes! They were like a powerful electric current turned into a broken wire, ending in a sputtering and burning; for, as he emerged from the woods, there stood the little house on the edge of Shanty Town, with blinds askew, unpainted and wan, in the midst of an unkempt garden with a falling picket fence. Somehow, this home always had the effect of slackening effort and loosening grip and dashing hopes. It had been quite a house, too, in its day, a seaside pleasure place for some prosperous merchant in days gone by before the ship yards built up a Shanty Town, and the Shanty Town encroached on the sea camp. Ward looked it all over with new eyes. There was an old colonial mansion turned into a tenement. The porter's lodge was now a Polish lodging house. What made the difference between this place now and long ago?

The souls of the people inside the houses; and with new eyes the boy noted as he passed into the yard the top hinge of the gate gone, the pig weed in the vegetable garden, the broken slats in the board walk, a rickety board in the house steps.

"Wha' kep' yo' late?" mumbled a thick voice, sleepily, from a wooden rocker on the veranda.

Ward had always noticed how his father dragged his feet. He had never so sharply noticed how the words dragged in the same inert way.

"I walked!" he answered barely civilly, an unspeakable rage suddenly flaring up in him.

"Wha' d' y' walk for? Why didn't y' take the car? Funny thing if other men can ride and my son has to walk——"

"You're mighty thoughtful about your son, all of a sudden," returned the boy sullenly. He was well aware that if he had ridden his father would have demanded why he had not walked. The man had the habit of looking at life with a snarl. Things went wrong with him because he always went wrong with them. Ward was now looking at his father with new eyes. This head was massive, too, but it was not the massiveness of strength. Where the president's head had suggested a lion in action this man's gave the impression of the sodden stupidity of a cross-grained ox. His square shoulders slouched. His great hands dangled loose. Here was strength, too, but it wasn't the strength of the fit. A great wave of revulsion went over the boy's being.

"How is mother?" he asked.

"Oh, she's done a good day's job, this time! It's a hoy—this time. That makes two boys to seven girls; and that's 'bout what girls are worth in earnin' wages, too! You're gettin' seventy. Would take three and a half girls t' earn that. Boy brings in money from time he's in his teens. Girl never brings in much and is a burden till——"

"Burden?" The boy burst out in a hard laugh that the wooden-headed sire did not in the least understand. Though he had not earned a dollar honestly or dishonestly in ten years, Ward senior was such an authority on earnings and savings and economics in his family's affairs and Shanty Town's affairs and ship yard affairs as never before spouted from an apple barrel in a grocery store. The man rose and gazed dully after the boy. The hoy went to his own room, changed his clothes, and emerged dressed as if to go out. He sat down to the supper table without a word. The other children had gone out. Father and son ate alone. Suddenly, the father noticed something and threw down his knife with an unpleasant sneer.

"What y' putt your white shirt on for?"

Ward didn't answer, but went on with his meal. The elder man's amused look hardened. "Needn't think a boy could fool him." A thin girl of twelve or thereabouts toiled over the stove. She was hot, white, anæmic, and she shuffled her feet like her father. She wore the deadly pallor of an invalided woman and was listless with that most pathetic of all old ages—the old age of the young. The son

finished his meal and sat back. Something newly awakened arose in blind, furious, raging revolt against his surroundings. There was the twisted window-shade that ought to have been rolled. There was the gate with the broken hinge which one nail would have righted. There was the garden path which an hour's work would have cleared of weeds. Young Ward hardly knew whether to laugh at his dreams or at what he saw. Certain it was—one of the two must give place to the other—dreams of success, or proofs of failure.

"I ast'd y' whad y' putt y' white shirt on for?"

"I suppose," answered the boy, "if a hog were taken out of a pig-sty and put in a parlor it would still be a hog."

"Oh, you needn't try t' fool me by talkin' some-thin' else! You mind y'rself and be careful what kind of a trollop y' go trapezin' round streets Saturday night."

Instead of being angry young Ward nearly laughed. He leaned forward with his elbow on the table and his face in his palm. It was becoming comical. If Ward senior had been suspicious before, he was certain now.

"Mary, you bring me that sugar bowl," he roughly ordered the little girl.

The look of amusement faded to hard contempt on the son's face. He folded his arms over the table and leaned forward.

"I guess not," he countermanded quietly. "You leave that lump sugar where it is, Mary! We're

not going to use lump sugar till the bills for the new baby are paid."

The son sat up suddenly very straight. The father threw his knife and fork to his plate open-mouthed. The revolt had come so suddenly his dull head could not take it in. The little alarm clock on the kitchen shelf was ticking the minutes off so furiously that it threatened to jump in the middle of the floor.

"D'j' hear me, Mary?" roared the man. "You fetch me that sugar!" He had taken hold of the table with both hands and had half risen, leaning forward so, open-mouthed. Young Ward rose, set his chair in, and waited.

The little girl's pinched face went white with fright. "There ain't any more sugar," she stammered in what was obviously a scared lie.

"Then, I'll git't, myself——"

"No!" That was all the boy said; but he uttered it so firmly the father paused. Father and son glared across the table. The boy's ambition rebelled against sonship to unworth. He felt a sudden, overwhelming sense of shame that his father had no shame. The man mistook it for weakening.

"We'll see; we'll see," he muttered thickly, making to move.

"Stop right there and now!" ordered the boy with outstretched arm. "Father, will you be good enough to sit down and let me tell you something, plainly, for the first time in your life? No—I'm across your way!" He had planted himself squarely

in front of his father. "Just take in the fact, will you?—that I weight one hundred and sixty-five pounds; and it's every ounce muscle. You weigh two hundred pounds; and it's all fat; and flabby fat, too. It wouldn't help mother if we got into a fight."

The man had raised his arm, but he dropped it.

"Who's talkin' o' fight?" he stormed in a voice meant for the sick room.

"Speak low, and sit down," answered the son. "I have something to tell you."

The burly face dropped angrily behind the table again, but, for the life of him, Tom Ward junior didn't know what to say. He took hold of the back of his chair. What was there to say? The eyes that had sought the secret of success now sought the secret of failure.

"Well?" demanded the man. "Have you got into some mess with a trollop?"

The funny side of it suddenly overwhelmed Ward. He laughed uproariously. "Yes, yes; that's it, dad! It's a Miss Fate, you may have seen working in the offices of the ship yards' company."

"Fate—so that's the huzzyl Office girl all trick't out in millin'ry an' airs, I s'pose! If she's in trouble, why don't you marry her?"

The promise of a juicy revelation from the son had eclipsed all thought of the lump sugar and set the old man licking his chops, eating voraciously and ferociously. "Why don't you marry her?" he repeated.

Ward junior sat down in his chair and slowly lighted a cigarette. "I'm going to marry her if she'll have me," he said with a wry grin, "but I don't exactly know how to explain——"

"Well, you needn't think I want explainin's and explainin's 'bout a mess any son o' mine's got into with a flighty huzzy," returned the father, obviously on the point of bursting with curiosity. "While you're thinkin' up excuses for misdoin's, I'd thank somebody t'help me mend the pump."

"Somebody?" said Ward junior softly. He could not remember a day in his life when his father had not wanted "somebody" to help him to do something. "Did you look for work, to-day?" he asked gently. A sense of pity for the inevitableness of failure had touched the boy.

"No, I didn't! What'd be the use? I ain't goin' t' work like a convict t' have foremen swear at me like a dog! I ain't goin' to join the union; and you know, well as I do, if a man don't join he ain't got a chance at the ship yards. If you didn't do a man's work at a boy's pay you couldn't hold your job! Better confess your own misdoin's. As far as work's concerned—there's nothin' doin'! I tell you—there's nothin' doin'!"

Young Ward droppcd his cigarette in the dregs of the coffee cup.

"Nothing doing?" he repeated. A great wave of bitterness and sadness and grimness had taken the mirth out of him. "There never will be anything doing for a family that lets the grass grow

under its feet"; and he looked down the garden path ragged with weeds.

"Whad's that?" These remarks of his son were obviously going off at a tangent.

"I say if we don't keep our own yard spick-and-span, we can't expect other people to pay good money for putting their yards to rights. I mean the ship yard people want good work for good money; that's all!"

"All?"

The elder man grew slowly purple.

"All?"

It came rumbling through his beard as he pulled himself up in his chair.

"D' y' mean t' say it's *my* fault that I'm out o' work? What d' y' say, sir? Jist say that again!" The beard wagged from the red neck like the dew-lap of an angry bull.

If Ward had been a girl he would probably have retaliated in anger and expended force in hysterics—a performance in which it is quite plain that the thicker head is certain to come out the better; but he rose, chest flung out, shoulders square, and folded his arms. It was bound to come, this reckoning with the cause of failure, and he met the challenge half way. When he spoke it was very quietly.

"I don't blame you more than I do all of us. There is no excuse for a family going on with two or three generations of failure. We've got in a rut—that's it; and we've got to get out! We've been wallowing in the mud—there's something

wrong—it's us; for other folks get on. Why don't we? It's a good deal more sensible to face things, and find out what is wrong, than to keep lying to ourselves and whining about Providence, and saying we've done our best when we haven't! I think——”

One does not need to live very long to find out that it is better to put a knife to one's throat than give utterance to the secret sin that a man has been hiding to himself all his life. Better accuse him of every sin in the decalogue than the one thing that he has concealed and nursed as a pet foible. At the first insinuation that it was not a beneficent will which had visited the family with failure—the man's mind went blank. It was as if a huge responsibility which he had been laying on the shoulders of Deity were swaying in mid-air, about to drop on his own head. It may be supposed that if the mammoth had bestirred himself he need not have become a fossil; but the chances are that the huge pachyderm would have wreaked wrath on the coeval man, acting as a stimulant. One must not judge the father's recoil of rage too severely; for, though the son did not know it, what he had uttered was a principle that the world is yet averse to accepting—namely, that the weak must compel themselves to become strong.

“You—you, who've stopped in the middle o' confessin' to misbehavior with some slattern in the ship yards' office——”

“Cut that out!” interjected the boy. “If you

were not so jumping keen for the unclean, father, you would notice I was making fun about fate and luck and that sort of thing. I'm not reproaching you more than any one of us. I only say—we'd better mend our ways than wallow round in ditch water pretending it's God's fault. God has nothing to do with our poverty and failure. Long as we are stupid as hogs, God Himself couldn't make us succeed if He tried."

It dawned through the father's thick skull at last. He was being defied in his own house. He was being taunted with failure under his own roof. His boy, who had been docile as the sheep dog up to that night—docile or thoughtless—was making fun of his father, defying parental authority, talking lightly of some misdoings with a girl in the office. He seemed to have called his father—a hog.

"You—you," he roared thickly, shuffling round to his son's side of the table, flourishing his arms, "I have a mind to—*thrash* you!"

"Don't you hit me!" said the son speaking quickly; "for if I hit you back—it will—it will—hurt you."

Midway of his rush the enraged old man paused. His face slowly purpled till the veins stood out thickly in his neck and forehead.

"Poor dad," said the son. "I guess you can't help it! It's the way you're built. You'd pretty nearly like to knock me down, only you daren't. I guess you'll take it out kicking the dog and raging at mother and cuffing the kids at family prayers.

Gee, but you've made a happy home, dad!" The boy reached for his hat hanging on a peg of the door.

The old man could scarcely articulate. The words came sputtering thick and apoplectic from the throat: "Go—go—go from this house forever! Never darken these doors again. And—and—" he added magnanimously, "may God forgive your sin toward your father."

The son passed out to the cool twilight without a word, but there had sprung to his face a new look—Manhood Resolute. He had left his youth behind in the ne'er-do-well home. On his squared shoulders rested a new Manhood.

"I wonder has he been drinking the wine I bought for my mother?" he asked himself out in the garden. After all, such disputes were so useless. His father had had no vision. Scales were on his eyes. How could he see? As well take the hog out of the sty and expect it to change in a parlor as the man out of a wallow of failure and expect him to succeed without a change in his own heart!

Though the quarrel was useless he did not turn back to beg an unneeded forgiveness as, perhaps, the stubborn old man secretly hoped. So this was the beginning of the high dreams! . . . He laughed a hard laugh! . . . Better have done with the shiftless, wrong-headed, poverty-cursed past! . . . Let the dead past bury its dead! . . . Who had said that? . . . or was it . . . "Let the dead bury their dead?" . . . No matter who said

it, it was the only motto for a true beginning! . . . He could do better without the home than it could do without him; but then, there was his mother! . . . That gave pause to the reckless resolve . . . A great weight seemed suddenly to come back . . . A chill swept over his enthusiasm. It was the last protest of the old ties against the new creed. Well, then, if he had to be hard, he *must* be hard; that was all!

Strength! . . . Will! . . . Purpose! that was it! . . . The arms of love round one's neck must not drag down like a mill-stone! He still had his week's pay. His mother should have that, though it would be sucked down in the quick-sands of six years' debts. He did not weigh the right or the wrong of what he was about to do. . . . He had brushed right and wrong aside, with love and pity, when he took the new creed of life.

Far beyond the moon-etched fields came the rush of the flowing river drawn by its own destiny to boundless seas. From farther yet came the muffled roar of the city's traffic, of multitudinous voices, of multitudinous feet marking time in a ceaseless march. Long ago, men had marched to battle-fields for laurels. Now, battles were fought on the markets. In the heat of traffic—man pitted against man—victories were won. That was the meaning of the muffled roar. It was a hymn . . . a hymn, to the God of Traffic!

He knew very well, as he stood in the cool of dewy darkness opposite his mother's window, he

knew better than words could express that he had not chosen the easier way. The wooden rocker and his father's creed of a somewhat benevolent, easy-going Providence were the path of least resistance. Why had he chosen the harder way? He was not sure that it would even bring him happiness. He was not thinking of happiness. He had no desire for the adulation that comes licking the feet of Success; and I am bound to add that the boy had no mental vision of steam yachts, and race horses, and wines. Why, then, was he casting off from the old life? Why have the bold spirits of every age set sail for unknown seas that sent back their freightage for the race? Why, but because man would not be man unless he strove for the Eternal Better? What he would do with the Power, when he won it, he did not know. One must first cross the unknown seas. Somehow, the vision of that other man's success, and the sting of his own family's failure, had driven home the truth—*one must go up and on, or down and out; strive, or cease!*

The dewy darkness, the cold, white star-light, the wandering, hushed voices of the voiceless night, spoke to him in their own language. In cutting away from a handicapped past he had thrown himself as bare of equipment as the most primitive man into the arms of Nature, man's primordial mother; and the dew gathered on his fevered forehead like a cooling hand—a hand of blessing.

The collie dog sniffed affectionately at his feet; and through the open window he could hear his

father storming over the quarrel to the invalid mother. Such unctuous phrases as "prayin' for the boy's good," and "power o' prayer for the prodigal," floated out on the night air like the humming of beetles. Then, the little girl came in to the mother's room with the lamp, and the father went out with a loud banging of the door in a sort of dumb oath.

It was the boy's chance. With a touch on the window sill he leaped noiselessly through the window, and sank on his knees at his mother's bed. The little girl who had lied about the lump sugar fled to guard the door. The mother lay spent and wan. Her hair was prematurely white; her brow, lineless, with the light of a marble purity; but mouth and chin were abnormally small with a tremor about the lips, like a child on the verge of tears. He had told himself that her life was past; his to come; therefore, he must not allow her to stand in the way of his resolution; but when he leaned over the closed eyes such a pain gripped him by the throat that he could not speak. Suddenly, he comprehended the Gethsemane of such lives—the weakness that brute strength could crush and trample, as the ox treads field-flower into mire.

"Great God, mother!" he laid his face on the pillow beside her, "how—can I leave—you?"

The woman opened her eyes—gray eyes, full of a life-long wondering at pain. She put out her hand. His big grasp closed like steel over it.

"What happened with your father, Tom?"

Oh, nothing. He isn't specially to blame! He's just the way the years have built him! I couldn't stand it any longer! I'd seen the boss! I'd heard what the men said about the way he got on; and I'd made up my mind to quit swining in ditch-water, the way we've done all these years! Then, I came home, and saw the same old thing; same poverty—same greed—same laziness—same lies slavered over with religion! I couldn't see him gobble the food from the children's mouths, and then play the pious! I can't stand this hog-wash of a life any longer! You've stood it twenty years, and it's only swamped you, and it hasn't done him any good! You haven't pulled him out of the mud; he has only pulled you in! And it's swamping us all! What's the use of sticking to a sinking ship, mother? But I wanted you to have my week's pay; and I'll always send you money." He thrust a crumpled roll of bills into her hand.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"I am going to succeed, mother! I am going to rise! I am going to conquer—conquer—conquer everything that stands in my way! It is must or bust, mother! I'd rather chuck myself into the river than go on wallowing in this ditch-water! This hand-to-mouth, this neck-and-neck race, this debt and waste and swining—I tell you, mother, this life is hell! It has killed you! I am going to quit it! I'm going to get there or knock the spots off the why! I've got to—I've got to—succeed!"

His voice was husky, and his hand trembled over

his mother's. She had closed her eyes. He knew that she was praying. A stab of anguish choked speech. In the silence there was a raging conflict between his resolution and the old ties, ties so strong that they seemed knitted into the fiber of his being. If she had not been lying there so ill, if she had been a different type of woman—coarse and self-satisfied and content in the swine life of failure—he could have gone away light of heart. But there was the father, greasing the family's way to ruin with self-excuse—that meant failure! And here was the mother, who stood for the purest goodness he had ever known; but it was goodness under the feet of greed, too weak to carry the day against the odds of the state with the thick neck—that, too, meant failure! Strength—strength—strength—that was the way to Power! Will and purpose must not flinch!

"Tom!" the eyes opened. What the little woman said now was the supremely bravest thing she had ever done in her life. "It doesn't matter! Don't think of me! It won't last long! I'm only one of an army of women who don't last long. Don't stay dragged down by your love for me——"

"Tom!" called a chattering whisper from the doorway, "do go way! Father's coming! Don't have a scene!"

Through vision blurred he saw the gray eyes look up from the pillow with a light that he carried with him through all his after-life. Then, he was out in the darkness, with a pain wrenching at his throat,

and the cold star-lit dew confusing his sight. Somewhere in the woods he heard or felt the collie running hard. Then, he realized that he had torn away from the home at a run.

"Poor Shep!" He stroked the dog's head. It laid its chin caressingly in the palm of his hand. "Poor Shep! We've cut and run, now, sure! It's a rocky road ahead, and you go back! Bless my soul! I haven't enough to feed a rat let alone a dog! Go, now, go home!" he ordered.

But the collie curled at his feet.

"Go," he stamped. The collie skulked off with backward looks and pauses. "I've done with the past . . . I've done with pity! If I've got to begin hard I'll start now," and he hurled a stick that sent the dog whining.

This, too, was a trifle, like the twisted window shade; but this, too, had its meaning.

Tom Ward had done with all that hampered Success!

Tom Ward had hardened his heart to Success!

Tom Ward would trample all things that lay in the way of his masterful march to Power! He was quite sure that the old way—weakness and goodness, greed and hypocrisy—led to the ditch. Whither the new way led he did not know.

Far ahead, the ship yards' smokestacks sent up a lurid glare like a sign of blood and fire; the sacrifice of the World of Work to the God of Traffic. The roar of the city, the beat of multitudinous feet, the throb of hammered steel, the click and rasp of

ceaseless toil—grew distincter as he ran. In another half mile he would be on the new battlefield of the new age—the market.

Above the stars shone like a blue field seeded with jewels. The night was drugged with the subtle joy of orchard blossoms. But the young man's feet were set on the path to Power. Weakness of spirit in his mother, the avid greed on flesh in his father—had made of his heart a thing of flint. Down by the sea he remembered that he had not even kept street car fare in his pocket.

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CHAPTER III

WHEREIN TOM WARD'S WHITE SHIRT CONTINUES TO
PLAY AN INTERESTING PART IN THE
SCHEMES OF MISS FATE

IF Ward had not been exuberantly healthy he would probably have wasted some energy and a great deal of thought now on the most futile of all human emotions—regret. He might have paralyzed his buoyancy, his rebound, his leap at Life by puny arguments with God's scheme of things. Self-pity might have added to his natural handicap. Back thoughts are a dead weight; and going forward with one's feet backward is a sure way to trip over the stumbling-blocks of Life.

But Ward was exuberantly healthy. Henceforward he never for one moment permitted a back thought to hold or hamper action. His pulse continued to leap; so did his thoughts; and he never ceased running till he found himself at that place in the woods by the sea where the president of the ship yards had found him planning how to grasp Success. His only distinct sensations were a hardening against regret over parting from his mother and a delirium of abandon to a great current of Life called Power. That was why he wandered on through the starlit

woods to the very margin of the sea. The tide was coming lapping in. Warships and ocean vessels came churning up through the night mist to the glittering lines of harbor lights not far from the lurid glare of the ship yard smoke stacks. One great vessel—he took it to be the wonderful new dreadnought—sent the arc of a searchlight cutting the night in a sword of blue fire. Ward saw it shoot out in the dark like a presence, then swing piercingly to right and left, slowly, in a sword of fire till the line of light came mystically over the glassy sea toward himself. Everything seemed to represent the current of a great invisible power. Its gradual silent swing through the dark had a curious effect on his own spirit—it seemed to bathe him in the new life toward which he had set his face—if it crossed his feet and went behind him—“let the dead bury their dead”—he would regard it as an invisible sword between him and his past. It touched the sea in little phosphorescent gleams and set the wave-wash of the steamer trail atremble in electric fire. It lighted up a multitude of idle craft rocking in the darkness. Then, suddenly, he, too, was enveloped in the mystic fire. It had swept far behind into the darkest recesses of the woods—a sword between him and the past; an Exclusion of Purpose to cut everything off but his one aim—Success. While he gazed it had swept over the harbor again, lighting up a myriad of unnoticed craft rocking idly to the tide.

Afterward Ward could not recall how he had spent the rest of the night. He knew he had conned over every word and turn of expression on the part of the admiral, who was president of the ship yards. He remembered about the cap to be removed; the square up-held shoulders, as though the center of gravity of men who succeeded rested higher in the body than of men who failed. Unconsciously he drew himself up. It was as if from the man's attitudes he would learn the secret of the personality behind the physical expression. His foot was reaching for the bottom rung of the ladder—he must not be clumsy footed mentally.

“Who were the delegate union fellows working up trouble among the iron workers?”—that was the first thing to be learned. Then, “were the agitators from the foreign ship yards?” Why should foreign ship yards send agitators to America? Why was this contest for supremacy on the sea a world contest? The question pierced the dark of his ignorance like the searchlight from the ship—it flashed into significance a thousand trivial things which he understood now for the first time. The young fellow gave a low laugh. “By Jupiter, if I get *that* secret I’ve got a search lantern will light to the top of the ladder, with a fire department extension on——” and he threw himself down on the shore, burying his face in his arms as if to shut out the very starlight. The ship yards, then, were in a world fight—for what? For control of the sea; of the carrying trade of the world. What a fool he

had been not to observe these things before. Units of capital were more than banks for workers' pay checks—they were fighters, too, for world power. He lay on the shore dreaming of great ships going up and down the harbors of the world's seas; and, all through his dreams, his purpose to master Life flashed a revealing light like the search arc of the great dreadnought.

When he entered the main big furnace room on Sunday afternoon he could hardly believe that any human being could have been so blind as not to realize what was going on behind these doors with the big sign "Admittance to Employees Only." Many afternoons when he had been cleaning up his own furnace the labor agitators had been about with big handbills printed in red. They had been talking in Italian and Spanish and German to the foreign workmen. To-day he would have given his right arm to know what the foreigners gesticulating in groups were saying to one another. A voluble German was spitting fire-cracker speech through his beard to one group. He also recognized a Spaniard and a Russian as leaders in other groups. A Scotchman was holding forth from a soap-box in words that came out of his mouth tight and hard as stones from a catapult. Ward linked his arm in the elbow of a furnace helper a few years older than himself and drew near this group. The talk was Greek to the boy. It was of "the great Armageddon—the final day of reckoning between labor and capital,

slave and master. In the Great General Strike every man of every nationality, color, and creed would lay down pick and shovel, axe and hammer——”

“What in hell does he mean?” Ward suddenly asked the youth, McGee. He was thinking of his own father who had spent his whole life refusing to toil for others and had ditched his family by so doing. He was wondering whether he were contemplating a masquerade or a sleeping volcano.

The big fellow called McGee was visibly excited.

“You wait and see,” he admonished. “We don’t strike for shorter hours and higher pay any more! We’re striking against a reduction now. We’ll strike for a raise to-morrow——”

“Independent of how much or little you do?” interjected Ward.

“Bet your life,” emphasized McGee, “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof—the earth is labor’s the day we unite to demand it. To-morrow is ours! Feudalism—we have seen. Industrialism—it is to-day. To-morrow—it’s labor’s; and don’t you forget it; and get right in the procession now—we’re demanding eight hours now! It will be four hours to-morrow; and three hours next—till we’re down to a two-hour day at \$4 an hour! Think capital can stand that? That scale of wages will transfer all capital over to labor; and that’s our aim in the great bloodless revolution. I tell you, this syndicalism is the thing! Age of force and war is past! We’re in a new day when capital’s going

to be out of a job! The day every working man on earth throws down his tools and refuses to work for wages and will work only share for share—capital has to capitulate and hand over everything to us——”

“Whether you’ve earned it or not?” asked Ward. McGee punched his hands in his trousers pockets.

“Say, Ward, don’t turn on that josh! Has capital earned *all* it owns? Feudalism, industrialism, capitalism! Those old fellows have had their day! Now it’s ours.”

“Isn’t that fellow over there among the foreign riveters Scotch Calvy?” asked Ward of a big raw-boned man declaiming with the light of a fanatical belief in his eyes—he had transferred the passionate Calvinism of his Scotch up-bringing to as passionate and relentless a syndicalism—as the only salvation for the human race. “I thought,” said Ward, “that he was brought over by the company for special work?”

McGee smiled. “That’s the beauty of this system,” he explained. “We’ve got our secret agents everywhere. That is the joke. The company brings him in to teach our men tricks of the foreign yards. The railroads give him graft on the q. t. to stir up a strike and bedevil ocean traffic; and, by hickory, the fellow double crosses ’em both—comes over as a delegate for the world union of all labor for the big General Strike. Why don’t you join us? Do you more good than all the books you’re everlastingly studying by furnace light half the night!

Listen—hear him pour it into them hot and heavy! Can't dodge that kind of dope! Old day of lot of little kindergarten labor unions is past——”

“Fear? What do we fear?” demanded the Scotch delegate fiercely. “It's your half-way-ups and on-tops who tremble at the thought of civilization toppling down! We *are* down! We are the bottom dregs of life! We're Atlas holding the weight of the world on our bowed shoulders. We don't need to fear. We can't lose anything; and we may gain everything. He that loseth his life shall save it; and he that saveth his life shall lose it! In twenty years we have gained hours shortened by half and wages doubled. In twenty more years we can gain the whole world *if we hold together*. We don't need to fear a fall. Let the present system smash—smash it!—I say! If you are sent to prison we pay you a salary for service to the common good—volunteer for it like men! We can send more men to prison than the prison can feed! We can make civilization so expensive that it will have to hand over all industry to us! Just stand together to a man! I Won't Works—they call us! Of course we are! We won't work till the earth and the fullness thereof is handed over to us. Spain is ours! Why does the king tremble on his throne? Because we've secretly tunneled under his old rotten monarchy. Portugal is ours! Why did their manikin kid king run from his own throne? Ask the men who threw the bomb! There were more bombs in Portugal than ever were thrown! Eng-

land is *almost* ours! (Why does strike follow strike in England fast as capital and monarchy make concessions?) Germany is coming our way soon as we can undermine the army and place one of our men in every battalion. The day U. S. workmen lock hands across the seas with what they call cheap European labor—at the drop of a hat—the world is ours! Work stops till the earth is handed over to us. We've a stronger weapon than shot guns and bombs in the new system. Capital will never risk its hide to stand behind and fire a gun; and, if labor throws down the gun——" the Scotchman laughed a hard, mirthless laugh. "Refuse to work," he shouted. "Spoil tools! Work slowly! Work so you will have to do your work twice! Make employment expensive! We're not fighting for this or that! We are fighting to transfer *all* power, ALL possession, from capital to labor! The General Strike will make the French Revolution look like child's play——"

"It's like this," continued McGee feverishly, and, before Ward realized, McGee was the center of another listening group. Talk was going on in a dozen languages. Ward wandered from group to group and learned more of the inner workings of the ship yards than years of service had taught him. He heard how Admiral Westerly and Colonel Dillon, though outwardly friendly, were struggling against each other for a control of stock in the ship yards' trust. Dillon represented railroads; Westerly naval interests; and the balance of the

stock seemed vested in the estates of two minors—Hebden and Truesdale—boys at school. The admiral kept the boys a great deal at his house; and Ward at a guess wondered if he had seen these boys riding the night before in the woods.

Ward attached himself again to McGee the moment the young labor leader came out of a group.

"Tell me, McGee, how in thunder do you people get all these inside facts?" he asked.

McGee's blue eyes emitted glinty sparks. "See that Swede over there? He had to leave German ship yards because he killed a government spy. See them Poles? They had to skin it from Siberia; and that fellow gibbering Spanish near got court-martialed after Barcelona riots. *How do we know?*" McGee laughed uproariously. "There ain't a ship yard, there ain't a railroad yard, there ain't a factory in Europe or America where we haven't our secret agents. This thing isn't your old trade unionism—*it's world union*," he almost shouted the words, "and we've got our underground wire; and, by hicky, we've got control of the switchboard, too! We can tap any wire in Christendom for news we want."

The two moved carelessly from group to group, McGee giving swift sketches of each leader—men from Barcelona, from Russia, from mines in Pennsylvania and Wales; and they all called themselves Workers of the World; and they were all amazingly young.

Toward six o'clock the most of the workmen be-

gan going home. The furnace men had set the fires going for the night shifts who would come at midnight. The watchman went into the steel plate room, leaving McGee and Ward alone in the furnace chambers. Ward was leaning thoughtfully against one of the brick furnace walls. McGee was kicking off his overalls.

"Why don't you join?" asked McGee.

Ward thought a moment.

"I may," he said.

"Why don't you join *now?*" emphasized McGee.

Ward thrust his hands in his pockets.

"I haven't a darn dime left," he laughed.

McGee scrutinized him. "Been burning daylight? You look as if you hadn't slept for a week. Aw! Cut it all out, Ward! Start fresh! Here's fifty cents. Send in your name to some of the boys to-night."

Ward took the coin and looked at it queerly and thought of a larger coin of a different color which he had refused the night before.

"Are you on duty to-night, McGee? Do you mind if I sleep in here?"

For answer McGee smote him on the back and admonished heartily about "cutting it out"; so that later, when Ward came to the fullness of his power, it was a stand-by for the newspapers how McGee, "the rampant red," had once loaned Ward fifty cents to join the unions.

A moment later Ward was alone in the furnace room. He searched his pockets frantically for

paper and pencil. Then he rummaged the pockets of McGee's discarded smock and overalls. He found a carpenter's pencil but no paper. By the light of the lantern he leaned over and, on the cuffs of that starched shirt which had opened the controversy with his father, began writing the names of all the labor delegates. The left cuff was rapidly covered with enigmatical initials and catch words. He could not write on the right cuff with his left hand, so he threw open his vest and dotted down more catch words and names on the starched shirt front. Then he recalled that he had to sleep in the furnace room that night. He surveyed the tell-tale cuff and the betraying shirt-front. Reaching over, he picked up McGee's blue smock and put it on and buttoned it tightly to the chin. Then he left the furnace room and, with the fifty cents loaned by the rising young labor leader, bought the first food he had tasted since leaving the home roof. When McGee returned with the night shift at eleven he found young Ward sound asleep on a bench beside the furnace. He looked for the smock; there recognized it on Ward and for a moment contemplated asking for it; but the boy was plainly in a sleep of utter exhaustion. McGee smiled. He thought he had made a convert. Had the sleeve of the smock fallen back from the white cuff Tom Ward's white shirt might have played a different rôle in the little drama of Miss Fate.

CHAPTER IV

WHEREIN TOM WARD GOES ON THE FIRST RUNGS OF THE LADDER

THE heat of the furnaces going full blast wakened Ward soon after midnight. He sat up rubbing his eyes and from force of habit was about to pull off smock and coat when he saw McGee's figure stripped to the waist silhouetted against the red glare of an open furnace door raking live coals back and forward. That brought back memory. He slid behind McGee and went out into the night. There were still some twenty cents left of the fifty loaned by the young labor leader to join the Workers of the World. Ward knew that the admiral lived some twenty miles out from the ship yards on what were known as the Sea Cliffs. No suburban express would run there before eight next morning and Ward was too wise to be seen going to the head offices out at the yards. He decided to see the head of the company out at his house. Tram cars carried him five miles and, where the street railway seemed to end in the dark, he could see through the woods a light in the room of his old home where his mother lay ill. Just for the fraction of a second a longing came over him to go and look in at

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the window; but the dreadnought still lay far out on the harbor and, when the revolving searchlight of the turret came swinging through the dark of the woods, he recalled how that blue sword of fire was to cut him off from all the Past. Strength . . . Will . . . Purpose! There must be no side-stepping of Will, no wabbling of flabby Purpose! "Let the dead bury their dead." His father had always interpreted that verse as "the dead in sin." Young Ward now had another interpretation. Why didn't the Bible speak plainer?—he used to wonder. Now he understood: because, if it spoke with the trump of Gabriel, men who were dead would not understand till they came to life.

Turning, he loped along the shore path like a runner on a race track. The searchlight kept swinging over the glassy water. The harbor craft rocked to the heaving tide, and, when the arc of light struck back seaward, he could see the Cliffs loom against the sky.

It was seven in the morning when Ward came to the porter's lodge of park-like grounds, where a passing laborer had told him the admiral lived. Stone pillars marked the entrance. He was about to go up the driveway when a man came out of the little stone house and demanded what he wanted. The man was dressed in dark mason with a peak cap and black leather leggings. It was not what he asked but the manner of the asking that stung the boy.

"I have come with a special message for the president of the ship yards," he answered, not forgetting to remove his cap.

The fellow eyed him quizzically. "What message?" he asked.

Ward felt the steeled muscles of his forearm twitch. He looked the man straight back in the two eyes without flicking an eyelash.

"Come now, no nonsense; you say what you want or get out of here," added the man insolently.

"You'd better go in and telephone up to the house that I'm here," warned Ward.

"You say what you want or get out," said the man advancing threateningly.

"I've said what I want. I have come with a special message for the president of the ship yards," answered the boy hotly. He was wondering if all life would be like this—obstructionists and block-heads at every gateway up.

"You don't come that over me," answered the man. "Cranks, beggars, and peddlers not allowed on these grounds! If you had any message you could have telephoned it up! You say what the message is or git off the place—d'y' hear me?" ordered the man coming forward.

Tom Ward had had only one meal in thirty-seven hours. Also he had slept less than six hours in two nights. Before the man in livery knew what had happened a ringing swat from the palm of a great hand that seemed to swing on an arm like a steel derrick took him over the head, and a fist

that hit like a hammer came with unforewarned impact under the chin; and the maroon livery tilted back on a parabolic curve that left the driveway——

"You sawdust monkey," Ward was gritting through his teeth. "I don't want to hurt you, but you get out of my way! If I'd give a message meant for the president to such a fool flunky as you I'd be a fakir off the first bat——" and he straightened up to find himself face to face with the admiral, leading a Shetland pony in a basket cart down the driveway. In the pony cart sat the little girl with the curls—behind cantered the two boys Ward had seen in the woods that Saturday night. The little girl was bursting with suppressed laughter. The two boys were openly snickering. The admiral smiled.

"Seems to me, Buskins, you got the worst of that argument," he was saying. "Here, Hebden," to the red-haired boy with the red tie—Ward noticed he was dressed in spotless white riding breeches; the other boy wore flannel shirt and khaki trousers—"Here, Hebden, I'll take your horse back to the stable! You drive with Louie in the pony cart; and don't run him down hill, you know! Go carefully!"

"Oh, Uncle Wes——" grumbled the older boy, "and I wanted to try my own horse this morning."

"Let me, Admiral Westerly," exclaimed the other youth; and he was in the pony cart with his own horse in tow as he spoke. The three children trotted on down the driveway. The liveried man

had withdrawn to the gateway lodge. The admiral stood, riding-crop in hand, looking reflectively after the children.

"Selfish cub," he reflected, "he'll get that trimmed out of him in the foreign schools."

Ward had picked up his cap and stood at attention.

The admiral led the way slowly a pace or two up the driveway to a seat under a great urn-shaped elm in front of an old-fashioned red brick mansion house. He seated himself thoughtfully. His mind seemed still with the children—somewhat distraught the boy thought. Nothing was said for a moment or two. Ward stood waiting, wondering if these beautiful grounds and the old well-kept mansion house were so different from the ramshackle region of abandoned grandeur where his own old home stood, because capital had stolen from labor—as the speakers of the Sunday afternoon meeting had declared; or because the soul inside the man of the mansion house had some advantage over the soul of the man in the house of the weedy garden and broken picket fence.

"Well?" the word was an incisive question.

"You asked me, sir, if the delegates stirring up trouble are from the foreign ship yards? Yes, sir, they are; and some of them are paid by the railroads," and he recited as nearly as he could all he had heard the afternoon before.

"Who told you about the railroads?"

"McGee," answered Ward.

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"Oh, McGee," the admiral had laid down his riding-crop and folded his hands. "McGee is dangerous because he is young, and he believes all he says. You can buy off a leader in it for graft; but you can't buy a McGee."

Ward made no answer. He felt as if his whole future life depended on no false move now.

"Have you the names of the men from the foreign ship yards?"

"Yes, sir."

"Give them to me," Admiral Westerly held out his hand.

Ward went blank; then red.

"They were awful foreign names, sir! If you'd let me spell them out to your stenographer——"

"Give me the list," ordered the admiral peremptorily, with a sharp intersection of the brows.

"I haven't them! That is—I haven't them, yet, sir."

"I thought you said you had——"

Ward could see the suspicion on the president's face.

"Sir, I'm not bargaining to be paid before I deliver my contract——"

"You act like it!" cut in the president.

"But—but——" stumbled the boy, "there was no paper to write on in the furnace room and I didn't want to make them suspicious and I was afraid I'd forget them queer foreign names——"

"Out with it," demanded the president. "What did you do? Hide them in your cap?"

"No, sir," floundered Tom Ward in an agony of awkwardness, "I have them writ all over my shirt," and he threw open his smock and displayed that unfortunate starch shirt which had played such a freakish part with Miss Fate from the first.

The president didn't smile. In fact, he didn't believe. His eyes bored into Ward like a gimlet. Suddenly he seized the boy by the right wrist and, in a sudden twist, brought Ward almost to the knees with a forward jerk. The jerk brought the cuff of the white shirt down out of the blue smock—it was literally peppered, scrawled, charcoaled back and forward in big sprawling hieroglyphics written in a dull carpenter pencil. The president put his eye-glasses up and carefully scrutinized the cuff. Then he looked up at Ward. The boy was trembling. The eyes bored in and out of his soul, of his hopes, of his ambitions, gimlet-wise.

"Where did you sleep last night? Has anyone seen these?"

"No, sir, no one; I slept in a dark corner of the furnace room and took Sam McGee's smock to cover it——"

"Where did you sleep the night before?"

"In the woods."

"You have told no one of this."

"No, sir."

"Why didn't you go home?"

"I ran away from home Saturday night after I seen you, sir."

"Why?"

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"Because the spirit inside our home is no good, sir! I want to rise——"

The president didn't speak for a moment but he relaxed his hard grip so Ward could stand erect again.

"You want to rise——?"

"Yes, sir; that's all the pay I want! I want a chance to rise! If I don't make good you can throw me out to the dogs—all I want is a chance to get my feet on the bottom rung of the ladder to rise——"

"It's a long climb," said the admiral. He had leaned back against the rail of the seat and was shading his eyes with his hand. "It's a long climb, my boy!"

"I know, sir, it is long and hard; but there's a top to it; and it's just as long the other way down; and there's no bottom—it's hell there—I bin there."

"There will be cruel feet trample from above on the hands as you climb——"

"Won't be no worse, sir, than the kicks I'd get at the bottom."

Ward saw the admiral looking at him through the fingers of the hand shading the eyes. The face wore the same troubled expression as when his glance had followed the receding children.

"What do you want me to do for you?" asked Westerly finally. "Remember, we can never pay a dollar more than a man earns for us and is worth to us. If we pay him one, he must earn us two. If

you ask high pay remember you'll have to do harder work to pay for it——”

“I ain't thinking of pay, Admirall! If I can't make myself so you'll want to pay me high you can throw me out! I want to be taken from the furnace room and to be put in the marine engineering department——”

“But, good Lord, boy, you've had no training——”

“That's just it, sir; I want permission to take lectures two hours a day at the technical school.”

The admiral rose from the seat and stood drawing the riding whip through the palm of his left hand. All suspicion had gone from his face. There was a brightness in his eyes—beyond that Ward could read nothing.

“I don't know whether it is a kindness or not,” he reflected, “but you've demanded your price and you shall have it! Go up to the house and tell the butler to show you to the library and give you a piece of paper! Write down all the names as distinctly as you can and lay them face down on the big red table! You will go and hunt up a respectable room for yourself! Learn to keep yourself to yourself! Then buy yourself some decent clothes. If the spirit inside your home is no good you were right to leave it; but keep yourself to yourself and your plans to yourself! Remember that! Put that in your hat! You will absent yourself from the ship yards for a week. Then report at the engineering department. I'll speak to the head of the tech-

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nical school for you—you can attend the lectures. By the way—what *is* your name.”

“Tom Ward,” blurted the boy, hardly able to speak.

“And your salary will be eighteen hundred a year; but, if you fall down, I’ll crucify you—I’ll throw you to the dogs quicker than any other man on the staff.”

Young Ward was about to stammer out that he would never fail but the admiral went off in the direction of the children humming the air from some opera.

CHAPTER V

A DOUBLE CROSS AND A DOUBLE SHUFFLE AND THE PRICE OF POWER

IT was never necessary for the admiral "to crucify" Tom Ward or "to throw him to the dogs" as he had threatened; and neither did young Ward ever crucify his opportunities by swerving from his purpose. The course in the technical school he mastered with ease, because he never heard a lecture without thinking how to apply it in his daily life. To the room he had engaged that morning his chief sent him off to buy clothes and rent an apartment he had now added a second with a bathroom between. The second room he fitted up as a laboratory where he tried out every experiment of the class-room. He had continued his membership with the Workers of the World as well; and, as he grew older, encouraged the foreign leaders to round up in his rooms for beer and cheese after official meetings, but he never took any leading part in their deliberations himself; and of the workers McGee was, perhaps, the only one who suspected Ward of having other interests than the consummation of the Great Social Revolution. Sometimes Ward grew restive if the talkers stayed too long,

and always when they left he plunged at his books or turned on his talking machine and tested out these foreign fellows' pronunciation of Spanish, or French, or German words. Once in the rooms one Sunday night a German socialist addressed in his own tongue a Spanish anarchist. The Spaniard answered in Spanish—it was on a technical point as to bullet-proof armor plating. Ward wheeled and interjected some information in French—told the other two that there were nickel mines up at Sudbury, Canada, as well as in French New Caledonia—the building of war ships could never be stopped by a strike in the Caledonia mines only. McGee, now developed to a huge fellow of iron muscles and bulky, square frame, had been sitting on a tilted-back chair with his chin sunk on his chest. For reasons concerning some disgrace to his sister, McGee had become very morose and sullen of late. When he heard one man speak in German, the other answer in Spanish, and then grasped the fact that Ward had understood both speakers and interjected in French, his chair came down on the floor with a clump. His bushy brows almost met above his eyes, and his jaw dropped.

“What’s the matter?” asked Ward, uncorking a bottle of beer.

For answer McGee jerked his hands out of his pocket and snapped his fingers.

“You may use them to learn foreign gibberish by,” he snarled. “You may use ’em, and string

'em, and ferret out their plans; but I'm damned if you'll use me," he glowered.

Ward poured out the beer and set down the bottle. He, too, had filled out to a robust manhood and stood as powerful as McGee.

"Keep your shirt on, McGee," he said, "and, when you cool down, explain yourself."

"Explain?" McGee snapped his fingers again. "I guess Judas didn't explain when he sold Christ," and he bolted from the room with a loud banging of the door.

Ward's glance went round the group of spectators in a flash. The German socialist had set down his schooner of beer.

"Poor poy," he said, "his sister have gone bad; and he iss beside himself."

All the men looked sorry for McGee and the talk went on about the armor plating. So the years slipped past so fast that Ward never knew they were going—all he knew was that he was climbing as fast as they passed. Did he pause at this period to help half-way-ups; to hoist derelicts; to give a lift to other men's burdens? Candor compels us to set down that he did not. His own family he sent West with his first year's earnings and placed on a large prairie farm; keeping the title to the farm in his own name. On condition they stayed there they could have the use of it always, he said. Once, when Ward had received a promotion to the position of first engineer at a salary of \$5,000 a

year, duly chronicled by the press, which had picked him out as a rising man, his father somehow secured money enough to come East. When young Ward came home one night he found the old man sitting in the apartments, and the hall boys wore a wry smile.

"Why, Tom, my boy, but I'm glad to see y'."

"I'm glad you are glad to see me, father! It's the first time I have ever heard you say a civil word to a child of yours," retorted the son, not sitting down.

If the old man had been a saint undergoing martyrdom for glory he could not have looked more injured.

"My boy," he said, "I'm your father! If anybody has a right to share your good fortune, surely it's your own father."

Ward saw what was coming and did not leave the bars down.

"Right," he repeated dryly. "You are one of the men who claim all the *duties* of children without paying any of the *dues* of a father. You came here to try to live with me——"

The old man got purple with rage but he had ensconced himself solidly in the most comfortable chair of the room.

"I'm needing a little medical attention," he whimpered. "Have y' any speerits about?"

"There are doctors in the West," retorted Ward curtly; "and the kind of spirits I am going to give

you we'll buy right down at the wicket of the Union station——”

He was unlatching the Yale lock of the apartment door.

“You're not agoin' to turn y'r *own* father out?” cried the old man in fright.

“No—I'm not; though I remember not so long ago my father turned me out, though I had supplied every bite he had eaten for seven years. I am not going to turn you out! I am going to take you out; and if you were any other man but my own father I'd have the porter up to kick you out, but I have some respect for myself if I haven't any for you! We'll have our supper at the station. I am going to buy your ticket and give you a hundred dollars and put you on the train! Then I'll send my sisters fifty a month as long as they live; but, if anyone of you ever again crosses the Mississippi to come East I'll cut that allowance off. Come——” he flung open the door.

The old man had grown livid. His lips were trembling. He grasped the arms of the chair frantically, as if to defy force. Ward rung the bell for two porters.

“Call a taxicab and bring along the bags,” he ordered. The old man rose from his chair and followed like a whipped dog. The father whimpered all the way to the station. The son refused to relent. He had seen those whimpers alternated with the braggadocio of the bully delude his mother and drag his family down to the ditch. At the sta-

tion he gave his father a whisky which loosened the old man's lachrymose self-pity and threatened embarrassment. Ward then handed the old man over to two red caps to be put to bed in the pullman. The episode saddened and hardened him for days, but he neither justified nor condemned himself for it. He considered it an essential part of the climb up. He had waited at the station till the train pulled out. As he came out on the street a Salvation Army officer was holding forth to a group.

"I wonder if *that* steam hoists some men up?" he asked a listener.

The officer was reading the account of the devils cast out of the man that sent the swine over the cliff into the sea.

Ward suddenly burst into a laugh as he listened. Then he hurried off.

The years had passed and Ward never once met the admiral who had given him the chance to reach the first rung of the ladder. All drawings and plans were presented to the general manager; but Ward had vaguely learned that the president was breaking under some pressure. Westerly spent much time abroad. Dillon, the railroad man, bulked larger in the directors' conferences. Wages had gone up a notch every year. Profits hadn't; and, except for government battleships, orders had shrunk every year. To Ward's amazement he learned that, apart from coasters and the navy, his nation had less than a dozen ships in international

trade on the high seas. This controversy of ship *versus* railroad; powerful foreign pool *versus* puny domestic marine; wages *versus* profits; capital *versus* labor; the fit *versus* the unfit—fascinated him like a world game of chess. He used to play the chess game over in his mind at night when he was pottering in his laboratory, or listening to the arguments of the World Workers. For their aims he cared less than a feather's weight. What he wanted was to get at the motives, the mainsprings of action, the direction of aim—of all the men on the chessboard. Some day he knew a master hand would grasp and direct all those puppets and he whose brain and hand could swerve the aim would control all the commerce, all the gold, all the power of all the nations of the world. The curious feature was he knew, in his heart of hearts, that only one other man of all these puppets saw the Armageddon coming; and that man was the labor leader who had evinced such violent distrust—McGee; who had given him the fifty cents to join the union long ago.

One day the general manager came hurriedly from a directors' meeting to Ward in the engineering office. Ward was busy over prints of the new torpedo.

"I say, Ward, do you know any of those foreign chaps on whom you could absolutely depend to translate some very important letters to the French and German experts—I mean without any twist of expression that would betray our plans?"

Ward laid down his pencil. "I know them all,"

he said; "but I would not like to trust plans to men who are spies for foreign yards. I could translate them for you or dictate straight in French and German if you like——"

"What? Are you sure of yourself, Ward; technical terms in both French and German?"

"Absolutely sure," answered Ward slowly. "Do you think I've monkeyed with machinery all I'm pickled in oil for nothing? Do you think I've cultivated those ranting fools every Sunday night for eight years for nothing? I've been waiting for this summons," he said.

"Ranting fools, eh?" The words seemed to give the manager assurance. "Come, then, at once," he said. "If you don't fall down on this it means a place on the board."

When Ward entered the directors' room he saw the admiral closely for the first time in these eight years. Westerly sat at the head of a long mahogany table. He had aged greatly but held himself with exaggerated erectness, like a soldier fronting a foe. He was thin, almost attenuated, and his hair had grown snow white. One hand held eyeglasses of tortoise shell frame and black silk guard before his face; the other had a sheaf of documents which he was scanning. Ward noticed that both hands had a slight tremor as of a man nerve-strung. At the other end of the table sat Dillon, grown older, fatter, more rubicund, with a red wattle of grizzled flesh connecting his chin and his neck. The man's life was notoriously evil; and the mottled

face and dulled eyes bore the stamp of it. Even Ward in his hermit life of work had heard tales of it. McGee it was, one Sunday night, who had said: "If men like him was poor they'd be lynched! Law! Faugh!" At the table also sat two youngish men—one about Ward's age, with red hair and red tie; the other black eyed, a mere boy. Ward recognized them as the cousins who held the minors' stock in the ship yards—the boys of the horseback rides long ago in the woods by the sea, and up on the driveway to the Sea Cliff mansion house. Hebden was cracking jokes with the old colonel. Truesdale sat with a bored look, as if wondering why he was present in a business conference at all. The admiral was dictating letters to a typist without looking up. Ward took the typewritten letters and went out to translate them.

"Bring them up to my house to-night at ten," ordered the admiral as Ward receded through the door.

This time he went out to the Sea Cliff mansion house in the company motor car. He laughed to himself as he whisked up the driveway past the porter's lodge. The obstructions in the gateways of progress didn't matter so much, once you had learned how to dispose of them. The butler directed him straight to the library. Apparently he was unannounced, for the admiral sat in a red leather chair before the fireplace with his arm round the shoulder of his daughter, who was on a foot-

rest before the fire. The chandeliers were heavily shaded in red, and the venetian shade of mosaic green on the library table gave only a tempered light. Ward stood in the door for the moment, waiting some sign of recognition. The red flame of the fire played on the face of the girl. She looked to be not more than seventeen; and was in tears.

"I can't marry Mr. Hebden if he doesn't propose to me, papa," she was saying.

"And, by Heavens, you shan't marry that obscene old man if he crushes the shipping interests to an eggshell," vowed the admiral.

Ward stepped back in the hall and asked the butler to announce him. When he reentered the library the daughter had gone. The father still sat before the fire shading his eyes.

"Come in—sit down," he said absently.

"Here are the letters and the translations," said Ward, not accepting the invitation to sit down.

The admiral took them, switched on stronger light above the table, lifted his glasses and looked at Ward. His look rested.

"Where have I seen you?" he asked.

Ward noted with regret how thin the voice had grown.

"I think you saw me in a scrap with your porter eight years ago, sir, when I was trying to bring a message up to you about the labor delegates from the foreign ship yards."

"Ah; are you the lad who wrote all the names

down on your shirt? I have wondered what became of you. Wanted a leg up the ladder of life, or something—didn't you? Well—how have you found it? Did the feet above trample the fingers below——”

“That hasn't bothered me as much as the hands below pulling a fellow's leg,” said Ward.

The admiral put on his glasses, tilted the table shade so that the light fell on the young man's face, and scrutinized him.

“Glad to see you've made good,” he remarked absently. “If one repentant sinner causes rejoicing in Heaven I wonder what kind of hilarious time the angels have when one man of all one helps makes good. Sit down”; and he went carefully over the letters one by one.

“Been abroad?” he asked.

“No, sir.”

“How have you learned a technical speaking knowledge of French and German?”

“Cultivated the foreign delegates you sent me to interview eight years ago.”

“And did you take down all the lessons on your shirt?”

“No; I tried to soak a few on the tip of my tongue and fingers.”

“You've succeeded very well,” commented the admiral.

Thereafter Ward was frequently called up to the Sea Cliff mansion to take dictation in foreign lan-

guages. He often saw the admiral's daughter but never met her. She treated him like household furniture or office fixings. She took him for granted. Ward didn't know whether to be piqued or pleased that she didn't treat him to the supercilious condescension of an upper servant. She simply ignored him; and her airy grace somehow made him horribly conscious of his own deficiencies. He felt all hands and feet in her presence. He felt himself raw, uncouth common stone in the presence of a piece of fine statuary; and yet let us be perfectly fair to the raw product—he never felt the man in him stirred by the woman in her. He admired the statuary, but was as indifferent to it as to a little Venus de Milo plaster cast that stood on the library table, because it did not work into his growing, daring Purpose! That is, this fine piece of feminine statuary did not work into his purpose till one day when he had walked up and was told to wait in a glassed-in porch off the library. He had sat down on a wicker chair and was watching a fountain playing around the ferns when he became aware that others were in the fernery. It was unlike the admiral not to be prompt and on the minute when he had summoned his young assistant. From the time that the butler had let him in at the front door Ward had a curious sense of something impending in the great house. The serving men looked anxious. Ward had a sensation that Admiral Westerly was purposely keeping out of the way. Wind through an open window blew the ferns aside from the central

fountain. Ward caught a glimpse of Dillon's purpling face against the window—the apoplectic colonel held the admiral's young daughter firmly in his arms in an embrace that was a farce at the fatherly and bore close resemblance to the leer of a wanton satyr. He was calling her his “child—his old friend's baby,” and more of the same; but he had kissed her twice upon the lips, and the girl's face was scarlet. Beneath her lidded eyes was a frenzy of fear; yet a greater fear seemed to rob her of resistance.

“Just say the word, my dear, just one word, and your father shall be set free of these hell hounds that are destroying his business——”

The girl had drawn her lips as far away from the mottled old red face as she could reach; but he held her girdled tightly round the waist.

It came to Tom Ward in a flash, in a sort of sixth sense, as it had come to him that night when the searchlight swung round his feet like a sword; as it came again that morning long ago on the driveway, when he saw the admiral's troubled look follow the receding figures of the children; as it had come that first night he came up to the library and heard the father vow she “should not marry that obscene old man though he crushed the ship yards to an eggshell.” Tom Ward's heavy boot—and it was a big one—came down on the vitrified brick of the fountain floor with a clump like the hammer of Thor.

CHAPTER VI

THE REWARD

"As I was saying, admiral," began the colonel. His arms had freed the captive as by magic and the girl had vanished rather than fled—Ward saw her vault through the window into the shrubbery before the old colonel had slowed his ponderosity round to face, not the admiral, but the head engineer of the ship yards.

He gave Ward a piercing look as of an old satyr caught in misdeeds. Ward's face wore a mask. He had elevated that number eleven boot on the edge of the marble fountain and affected to be tying his shoe lace. It was not the pose of a picturesque hero; but it was effective. The old colonel's face lighted up with the glee of a sly young thing of sixty who had not been wanton after all.

"Oh, hullo Ward," he said. "Been wantin' to see you for a long time." He was clap-him-on-the-shoulder, diffusely, profusely affable—oh, a devil of a fellow, all puffed up in his chest, with his wattles reddening and purpling, purpling and reddening as he panted out asthmatic wheezy greeting. "Been wantin' to see you for a long time! I understand you're strong with labor and that kind of thing——"

Ward had tied his shoe and now elaborately turned up his trousers leg before he took the number eleven boot off the marble edge of the fountain. For years after, though Dillon came to eat humbly from Ward's hand like a whipped dog, the old colonel used to tell that story of the big financier's gawky manners—"why, he'd seen him with his own eyes put a dirty boot—a positively dirty boot—on the Venetian fountain——" of such recollections is the history of the great composed. The episode of what the colonel had seen even got into the papers. What Ward had seen was never published for reasons that may be inferred. Ward clumped his foot down, straightened himself—and the colonel never knew just how tense Ward's steel muscles had grown for a second—then he walked across to the open window beside the colonel.

"Yes," he answered, literally forgetting the existence of the admiral's daughter, "I've tried to keep my hand in with the labor situation always. I like to know not what men tell me, but the real motives behind what they tell me——"

The colonel offered young Ward a cigar and looked twice at him.

"Deuced pretty monkey—my friend, the admiral's daughter," he puffed, lighting his own cigar first and offering Ward the remnants of a match.

Ward took the match and threw it out of the window and put the cigar in his pocket.

"The admiral's daughter?" he questioned with-

out changing an eyelash. "I didn't know he had one. I never see her."

The colonel's face lighted again. "Yes; been wanting to see you about this labor situation for a long time! We railroad men are supposed to be hostile to shipping ocean interests—water freights, in fact; but we were not, my boy! Let me tell you there isn't a railroad in the country to-day doesn't own its own steamships——"

"You mean the railroads own all the coastal ships. I know that," answered Ward. "It keeps the freights——" he was going to say "up" but he changed and said, "it keeps water and land freights level——"

"Yes; my boy, on the level, that's why we're just as keenly interested in the welfare of our sailors as our train hands. Now, this seaman's bill providing more comforts for the crews, better wages, better fare—why can't you get together with McGee and push that through Congress? McGee won't deal with me—thinks I have the cloven hoof and that kind of thing—won't listen to a word from me; but, if living conditions were improved on the ships, it wouldn't be so hard to get sailors——"

Ward could have laughed in the old man's face. The bill was designed to make it so difficult to man ships at all that the ship yards had wondered if it were blackmail to compel "a buy off" from them; but they did not suspect it had emanated from the railroads. Ward had warned McGee against it; but McGee had accused Ward of being "a pot-

bellied straddler; of trying to *save* capital by *shaving labor.*" McGee had fallen into the trap headlong. The bill needed only the backing—sincere or insincere—of the ship yards to get a favorable hearing in a Congress distracted by the fact that the country's flag was vanishing from the seas.

"You want me to go down to Washington and lobby for that?" asked Ward.

The colonel blinked. No—that was a bit direct; but couldn't he stir up these crazy fool World Workers, or what did he call 'em, to clamor so loudly for the bill that Congress would tumble to it without any lobbying?

"I'll try," said Ward.

The colonel became apoplectic with gratitude. He put his arms round Ward's husky shoulders. He invited him to his down town apartments on a certain "gay" night.

"Excuse me, Colonel," Ward disengaged himself from the clammy embrace. "We'll have to have it a little plainer, and in contract form, black and white, signed by you. I'll get the men to push behind McGee on that bill on condition—well—in a word—what's my reward? Where do I come in?"

The colonel purpled. "I hold the proxies of scattered stock in the ship yards for the railroads," he said.

"I have known that ever since I was born," answered Ward.

Dillon blinked at the end of his cigar and spunked the ashes off through the open window.

"We can give you swift advancement," he promised.

"Too vague," answered Ward. "I am on a three-year contract now. If I do this it may hurt me with the ship yards and undo eight years' work. I've got to have a contract for something tangible better than I now have—say ten thousand a year for five years. I don't know that I care to tie up for more than five years——"

The colonel blew a hot oath out with his cigar smoke and informed Ward that, by Blank, he wasn't the Standard Oil Company or Steel Trust; they weren't burning dollar bills in fool salaries.

Ward sat down on the edge of the window-sill.

"Colonel Dillon," he said, "let us lay off our masks and quit bluffing! You, as a railroad man, want this legislation to go through before the opening of Panama to put the steamships at a disadvantage against the railroads! In a word, to keep freights up to their present level of all land routes. All right! If this legislation goes through the steamships are hamstrung, boycotted, tied in bow-knots; and you've got the end of the rope tying them! One single minute's saving in the freights of the transcontinentals would pay you the salary I am asking," and he rattled off detailed figures at which the older man gasped.

Dillon smoked three cigars in succession without speaking. "It's such a conditional gamble whether

you can put it through," he said, "let me suggest another arrangement that wouldn't fall on the railroads! I hold the proxies in ship yards' stock for the railroads! Suppose we let you hold that stock as dummy—I'd rather not appear in this, considering my friendship for Westerly and his daughter! If you held those proxies you could easily vote yourself in vice-president—eh?"

They heard the admiral coming slowly and feebly across the fountain floor.

"Have that ready in a contract at your apartment to-morrow night and I'll put the union behind the demand," said Ward.

The admiral nodded to the two men perfunctorily and gave Ward some signed letters to carry back to the ship yards' office. To Dillon he gave such a look as a victim might give to an executioner. Ward's comment as he passed out was that the old man was "not strong enough to handle the hog." The gentleman so designated called from the open window to Ward on the drive way "not to hurry"; he'd "pick him up in the limousine and run him in to town."

Ward proceeded slowly down the driveway, perfectly aware that he had one hand in a railroad scheme; the other in a ship yards' plan. The aim of his life was slowly framing to rivet these two together in the great world trust. Midway down the driveway he paused. On the bench where he had been interviewed by the admiral eight years before sat the admiral's daughter. Her face was still crim-

son. Her eyes questioned him with horrible shame. Ward took off his hat and sat down beside her. The crimson on her cheeks deepened. Plainly, this was the kind of girl who would never know how to defend herself from anything in life—a hot-house product that needed hot-house walls and high temperature. Ward intended in the most impersonal way in the world to have a hot-house some day. What he said had nothing personal in it whatever:

“Do you know exactly how many shares of ship yards Admiral Westerly controls?”

The girl's eyes flashed the most furious anger. So here was another man angling her father's ruin through her.

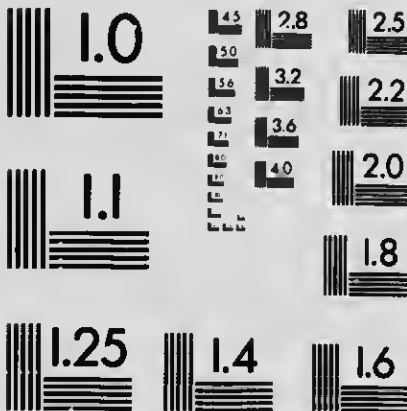
“You had better ask him,” she retorted, rising.

“Sit down,” ordered Ward; “for God's sake don't fly off at a tangent the way women always do and spoil the best plans! For your own sake listen—for your father's! I'm not prying into your father's affairs; but once, long ago, your father did me the only favor any human being has ever done me. He gave me my chance to get my feet on the ladder; and now I'd like to repay him. I saw that hog with you through the ferns. Your father is afraid of him in the company! You were afraid to resist him! I clumped my seventeen boot on your china fountain on purpose to scare him off! By hecky, I wanted to get my clutches in his red jelly neck; but, when you've an aim ahead, never lose your head—use it—use such swine as Dillon; then throw



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them over the cliffs into the sea. Just learn how to protect yourself from them—that's all!"

She was sitting almost as rigid as the marble, looking straight into his soul; and, let it be set down to her credit, or discredit, that she was a little piqued—this was the first man she had ever met whom she could not stir.

"How *can* you repay my father?" she asked. "If you are going to do anything, do it before the directors meet next month; or they will depose him."

"If your father had Dillon's proxies would that give him control by a sure big majority?" he asked, twirling his hat and never seeing her. She noticed that his nails were not manicured properly.

"Would it?" she cried with little ripples in her voice. If Ward had not been gazing afar, listening to the siren of his own ambition, he would have heard those ripples and seen the look; and his soul might have bounded to meet her quest of youth, looking for a great love; but he was twirling his hat and thinking—thinking. "Why, half Dillon's proxies would secure father," she cried.

Tom Ward sat silent a moment—then spoke absently and apart from the subject. "Most women are babbling fools," he said, "and spill the pail soon as the cow is milked; but I reckon as your dad's life depends on it you'll hold your tongue! I want to repay the favor your father did me! If you doubt that then you'll believe that, in repaying the favor he did me, I also want to do myself a bigger favor! You avoid that obscenc old man—take abed sick

or something—just don't see him for a while! You girls think a man like that loves *only* you! Bah! It's only an old dotard's frenzy—he'd hug and slobber that bronze dancer kicking her heels above your fountain if you put a flounce on it! But it's dangerous for a girl as green of life as you are! Look here—don't let us deceive ourselves! You avoid that old goat and let me take care of you! In a month I'll have all Dillon's proxies or give him a tussle with the labor unions! If your father will hitch up with me we'll control the yards; but, look here, don't let us have high-flying nonsense! You have no more interest in me than you have in that block of wood under yon tree. I'm uncouth and rude and raw! I have no more interest in you than in that bronze dancer on top your fountain; but I need fine finishing in my scheme of life! You need protection—hot-house atmosphere and that kind of thing! Well, then——” he was speaking still slower, still more awkwardly, “just to make secure your father will always stand by me if I double-cross Dillon, why don't you—marry me?”

Did ever a swain utter more brutal, blunt, awkward proposal? The girl had listened with wild, amazed, widening eyes.

“I'll leave you free—so help me God—free as your own father would,” he added, with a sudden flush.

They heard the chug of the colonel's limousine coming round the curve of the driveway. Before Tom Ward had got his awkward lover wits gath-

ered together she had bent her beautiful neck, kissed his hand, and sprung into hiding behind the shrubbery; and Ward swung lightly into the front seat of the moving car.

The next day Admiral Westerly and his daughter sailed abroad; and, when the directors' meeting came round, Tom Ward found himself holding not only Dillon's proxies but Westerly's. He was easily and unanimously elected vice-president at a salary of \$25,000 a year; but the rescue came too late for the admiral. He died from a stroke of paralysis at some Mediterranean resort. When Ward heard that Dillon was sailing for the Mediterranean he cabled to the dead man's daughter and secretly took swift passage for Southampton. There he was quietly married to Louise Westerly. I am not quite sure if even at this stage she did not feel herself a puppet in the game. Hebden was on the home-bound steamer and ministered to her self-pity. Why had she taken this rash step before giving him a chance to declare himself? It was not a happy home-coming to the Sea Cliff mansion house; but the years rolled on with Tom Ward's plans; and sometimes he remembered his wife and sometimes he forgot her. As to that seaman's bill—the price of his power—he had spent all his eight years' savings setting the labor unions and the press shouting for it. Then, when the thing took form in Washington, he quietly hung it up in one of the Congressional committees and asphyxiated all demand for

it from press and public. When the growing world of traffic began encroaching on the Sea Cliff, he wrote his wife a blank check to build a new mansion house—which the press described as “a palace”—down in the millionaire square facing the park.

PART II
IN THE FULLNESS OF HIS POWER

CHAPTER VII

WARD'S NEW CREED IN PRIVATE

It was colossal!

The man ran his big hand through the tuft of yellow hair that stood up from the crown of his head in a crest, and feeling his temples beady with sweat began mopping at his forehead. Rising impatiently, he threw open the window sash and leaned out in the cool of the winter night. The stars shone clear as steel over the snow-padded silences of a white park; but the man did not see them.

He was looking to a far future, like the long avenue that ran to the twinkling lights of the city down there below the park. It had always been that way; the light ahead, receding as fast as he pursued; the shadow of his past, behind; the new reaches, the endless distances, opening to the fore, beckoning, baffling, leading on to new battlefields, new conquests. The odd thing of it was—you could not stop going! Life was a road without stop. There was always the grim shadow of yourself be-

hind—of what you *had* done, driving you on with momentum to do more!

The future was not so rose-tinted as it had been thirty years before, when Ward set out from the little, unpainted house behind the woods. The gold edges of hope had turned to the steel grays of conflict. What was hope at nineteen had become a struggle at forty-nine; a struggle, a conquest, a triumph! To succeed you must fight; and once into a fight it is come out, under or on top; and to hold what you have won you must keep fighting! That was why the gold had turned to gray, and Ward's future at forty-nine—while dazzling as a mid-day sun—foreshadowed storm.

He had succeeded beyond the outermost reach of hope! His dream had been to succeed and . . . stop; but, now, he was unable to stop. He could not rest satisfied if he had wished. There were the yelping foreign rivals ready to leap at first sign of weakening. Weakening in him meant gain to them. Peace *had to be* a victory, a continuous victory, a victory reenacted at every step of the way. These market place battles were worse than primitive club. They never stopped. They made life one relentless, ceaseless fight.

It was when planning a defensive campaign against rivals one night that a cipher cable had come to Tom Ward, which read:

"If we combine with foreign steamship pools we can control the commerce of America through carrying trade."

The cable was signed by his European manager. Ward read and reread the message. Then, he began pacing the library. Here, at last, was a chance to conquer all rivals; rival railroad and rival coal mine, by levying tribute on all they shipped. If he missed this opportunity he must keep on fighting—or be beaten off the stock market, and drop out.

That was the way the idea first came. Then, with a meteoric suddenness, out of chaotic thoughts flashed a light . . . the light of a tremendous possibility . . . a chance to stop this cut-throat game of competition in ocean traffic forever! If his own home rivals would only come together in an understanding, what was to hinder controlling the commerce of the world through its carrying trade? Steamship and railroad could levy surer tribute on the commerce of all nations than Roman conqueror ever exacted from shackled captive, or subjected nation. At most, the Roman conqueror never exacted more than a few pennies of tribute from subjugated kingdoms; but the world carriers by water and rail could exact a fifth of all a nation ate or wore, shipped or bought. As his mind ran along the lines of a new century's possibilities, Ward saw himself, not a plutocrat drawing tribute of gold from all men and all nations, but a beneficent Power binding all nations in a gold-riveted peace that must last forever; because he, who controlled the seas, controlled the world. He laughed as he bit on his cigar and thought back all the long, tumultuous, crowded years. Ship yards had led to steel. He

had been the man to induce the ship yards to combine, then to induce steel to buy into ship yards; and steel had led to railroad control; and what use were railroads if foreign ships wholly controlled entrance to world markets? What use reducing tariffs to the American public if the foreign steam ship pools advanced rates to cover every reduction? Please note that at this stage Ward considered himself an altogether beneficent factor in public life!

The idea of combination, or consolidation, had not originated with Ward. Other men had attempted the same thing more or less successfully with oil, and steel, and machinery; but the idea came to him now, because the things of which his wealth consisted—food supplies, coal, railroads, steam ships—tottered on the brink of ruin through combinations abroad.

Let him but grip the markets of the world, he could hold the fighting grounds of earth; and the new century might witness the last, great struggle, the Armageddon, for possession of the whole earth! The more he thought the more alluring the chance seemed! First, the human family had expanded to a clan; then, a tribe; then, a race; then, nations of different races. What next—what but the gradual spread of the few big powers over more and more of the world's surface till there came the last great struggle for possession of earth? And then, *who must win*—he, who held the markets in the palm of his hand?

Ward walked faster and faster, finally throwing

himself in a leather chair with the remark, "Kings can climb up on a shelf! They've had their day. I could buy up half a dozen European kingdoms with my wife's dress allowance. Kings! Kings! What are kings?" He laughed stertorously. Enemies said that he assumed this attitude of contempt only when he had had half a dozen glasses of champagne; but the wine that intoxicated him to-night was the daring of his own world-wide ambitions.

There would be opposition! . . . Ward jingled the coins in his pockets. There always had been opposition from the night he had left the little, unpainted house, and sent the dog howling with the stick Oppositions and howls! As if any man would throw up the sponge for opposition and howls! To be sure, some of the opposition would be more serious than the dog's, but not much. Love that impeded was always more dangerous than unity that challenged. There was the merciless grapple with enemies over that bribery business, when recalcitrant legislators had required encouragement to do as desired; but when the elections came round he had trodden those legislators into a mire of defeat from which there was no resurrection.

Ward bit the end off his cigar. "It had been a great fight," he told himself, as he struck a match, "but you could always depend on the public being fooled before elections, or after elections! It just took a coin put near enough a man's eye to shut the world out! You could depend on the man

with a coin in front being a fool! Yes . . . there would be opposition!" Ward smoked.

The yellow hair standing up in tufts, the prominent temples, the hard-set lips, the square jaw with clean-shaven, massive, double chin—were silhouetted against the back of the old Venetian chair like a face in bronze. There was something about the broad, flung-out chest, the muscular hands, the powerful shoulders, that resembled the statue of a gladiator. It was a face without appeal, without response. It was a calculating face with strength of iron, will of iron, purpose of iron. No shadow of expression suggested a line of approach. This face would smile at flattery as it smiled at hate. It would crush friends readily as foes. If it league itself with others it would be to suck the strength or opposition out—then, fling dead weight aside.

The library table was old mahogany with legs of carved lion's feet. There were fire tints in the green, favrile shade of the study lamp that had cost the inventors more than twelve months' work would have brought Ward thirty years before in the factory. On one wall a tapestry represented the Romans conquering Gaul. Battle scenes by great masters hung on the opposite side. The other walls were packed with books. A bronze Napoleon stood in one corner. Cæsar's bust on the mantel faced the plaster cast of a woman with the laurel crown of victory in her upheld right hand. A tiger rug lay before the fireplace. Though the room indicated luxury, it somehow conveyed the subtle im-

pression of all the arts ministering to a great, fighting, aggressive force; and the force seemed personified in the man sitting intent, with face of bronze outlined against the antique carvings of the high-backed chair.

A slight tap sounded. The heavy door opened. A woman with black hair massed at the neck entered disdainfully. She was of a willowy figure with a sinuous motion that at once piqued and held attention. A neck of the lily-stem order corresponded with a face pale almost to pallor. Thin lips, arched brows, an oval forehead, wearing a light of smouldering rebellion, heavily lashed, brown eyes—all gave the same impression of scornful languor. Where the gliding motion piqued, the poise of the head held aloof all reproach. It was the kind of face that all men noticed. The majority of men looked twice. Men with confidence in self kept on looking. Women were either repelled or attracted strongly, and at once. There was such plain evidence of hidden fires that the face set you guessing at first glance. It was a face that would defy everything, dare everything; but few would risk calling down the lightnings. Mrs. Ward had bitter enemies without the making, and friends without the lifting of her hand.

Ward liked these things in his wife. She seemed to supply what money could not buy, strength could not grasp. He had seen one languid flash of the fire smouldering in her eyes transform an enemy into a life-long friend. If Ward had been attempt-

ing to win over an enemy he would probably have written a check. One lift of the drooping eye-lashes, one glance of quiet scorn for incomprehension, and his wife had conveyed the subtle intimation of a flattery so delicate that it was undetected. She seemed to envelop the people she met with a charm that gave the sense of being exquisitely happy; or else she aroused an instant distrust.

Ward didn't understand, but he liked the stimulus of surprise in his wife. He felt, somehow, that the element of uncertainty in his wife had always held him true. He liked to watch the flitting expressions of her face, disdain—perhaps, disdain of herself, most of all—smouldering rebellion, ardor so elusive it seemed just beyond reach, a whole world of unspent tenderness hedged round by the imperious reserve; but he did not like her to know that he was watching. That brought a gleam of consciousness to the face and spoiled the play of lights. It was the one fault he found in his wife's beauty. Anyway, Tom Ward did not permit himself the diversion of remembering his wife very often, at all.

To-night, he arose, slightly annoyed at the interruption.

"Well!" She sank languidly back in the chair, tapping the grate fender with her slipper. "Do turn on more lights!"

He switched the chandelier into a blaze, pushed one hand in his pocket, and stood fingering ashes from his cigar.

"Well!" There was the faintest lift to the

arched brows, the faintest curl to the thin lips. "Aren't you glad to see me?" She held out her hand to the fire so that the lights shone pink between the fingers.

"What is it?" asked Ward. Why did women always want a man to be saying things that would tickle their sensations?

Mrs. Ward waited just long enough to compel her husband to look at her, which Ward considered a great waste of time. Why did women always chop a conversation up with long enough pauses for a man to dictate half a dozen letters to a stenographer? It was vanity—that was all; just to make men look at them. At the same time he acknowledged that she was worth looking at to-night, and possessing, always. The pallor had given place to two dull, red spots on her cheeks; and heavy shadows lay under the eye-lashes. She was saying nothing. Even her hands became motionless. There was the play of a flame on her face that might one day break out with—Ward didn't know what. Why did women want to make them happy, anyway? He knocked the ashes from his cigar by way of breaking her reverie.

"Have you forgotten," she asked, "that this is the first . . . night home—the first night in the new house?"

"Women think more of houses and things than men, Louie! The house is all right! You've managed finely."

"You know we are to have a reception for a house-warming?"

If the din of a world conflict had not been in Ward's ears he might have heard the tremor, the caress with which the words were uttered; but he had replaced the cigar in his teeth and was smoking with his glance cast up to the ceiling. There was that quick look of scorn which Ward had seen conquer enemies; but his thoughts were far away in a dim grapple with world powers. She knotted her hands behind her head with a sharp tapping of the pointed slipper on the tiles.

"Are those flowers from our place?" asked Ward absently, nodding at a bunch in her corsage, feeling that he ought to say something.

"And have you forgotten that the night of the reception will be an anniversary?" she asked lightly.

"What of?" Ward had begun pacing. "Oh, our marriage! Pshaw! I didn't mean to offend! What are you flushing for? People ought to get rid of feelings in this matter of fact age," he apologized awkwardly. "You know, Louie, when men get settled down to the hum-drum, life can't go on being a honeymoon!" He did not see his wife's hands quiver. He would not have known what he had said to cause it. Wasn't it a fact, marriages *did* become hum-drum? So he blundered on. "If a woman has children, Louie, she hasn't time to keep thinking of her own sensations. I have often thought you would have been happier if you had had children. Here you are, with the finest place

of anyone I know, and, sometimes, I think you don't get much out of it."

Her arched brows lifted. "Well, don't begin a quarrel! I hate what is vulgar." She could always deal those stiletto stabs. "It's a very merry home-coming! It's a record first nighter!"

"What is she driving at?" thought Ward.

"I was making out the list for the reception. Do you wish to go over the names?"

Ward had put on his coat and was gathering up his gloves.

"Names? Same people as usual, I suppose? Invite no one who is not of advantage to you. Cultivate only people who are useful, Louie—that's my rule! If you are going to make a house of refuge out of your drawing-rooms you'll get a pretty conglomeration!" He paused at the door.

"But there might be a difference of opinion about people of advantage," she returned, coming out of her reverie. "For instance, there's your rubicund colonel, who put his wife insane by—we'll call it—cruelty. We'll invite him, with that young Mr. Truesdale, because they are directors——"

"Louie, business—thank God—isn't a ladies' club! Dillon is an influential man. There is no call to stir up rottenness in his private life. Private life is nobody's concern——"

"And what about that young artist, the Miss Connor, who helped us with the art gallery?" asked Mrs. Ward. "We paid her barely a third of what

her panels were worth. Will you consider her a conglomeration?"

"Young girl? All soul, and eyes, and forehead, and that sort of thing? People lost their money? Paints, doesn't she?" demanded Ward, depreciatingly.

"She's a splendid creature," his wife flashed up. "It might help her to obtain orders for portraits if she were seen here! Money—money—money! Self—self—self! Scramble for more! I'm tired to death of the life! I loathe it—I tell you! You think I should be thankful to live like a great ogling doll! I tell you—I loathe the pretense and the falseness! Private life is no concern, isn't it? How would you like *me* to live up to that code? If we can't put out a hand to a deserving young girl——"

"Stop right there, Louie!" He closed the door and came back to the mantel. "Louie, now that you have begun it I want to ask you a question. Are you taking that young girl up for her own sake, or Hebden's?"

"What do you mean?" she hedged, with a smile of contempt.

"Pshaw!" Ward slapped his gloves down on the mantel, and seated himself on the arm of his wife's chair. "You know very well, Louie, that I trust you for all time, anywhere, under any possible conditions! Temptations?—Rot!—There are *no* temptations for a woman in your position with everything to lose! But I don't trust any man alive! Understand?"

I don't trust *any* man alive? Don't deceive yourself! That's what plays the mischief with you women! We men may wink when we don't choose to see; but *we* call a spade a spade! But you women you women who would take to bed at the sound of our spades you tag your emotions up with a lot of high-faluting names, . . . soul, . . . friendship, . . . yearnings, . . . sympathy, . . . kindness, . . . that sort of thing! I declare it's like youngsters pretending fire doesn't burn till they get a blister! . . . Then, there's fine hysterics! The hysterics wouldn't matter! Cold water cures that; . . . but look here, Louie, you take my word . . . cold water doesn't wash out a burn!" He had thrown his arm across the back of the chair and was watching his wife's face through half-closed eyes.

"What a beautiful theory of life," she murmured, toying at her rings. "All friendship; tainted! All kindness—cloaked treachery—"

"Rubbish," burst out Ward. "You women are a bundle of emotions! You like to be loved the way cats like to be stroked! It tickles your vanity. You call it friendship. You like to feel that a word, . . . a look, . . . a touch of your hand, thrills some fellow so life is blank without you; but, the trouble is, . . . the thing is catching! First thing you know, life seems flat without something that other person supplies. You can't fool a man any more than he can fool you, if he plays the same game! You get him so wound up that he's got to find out where

you're at! He draws back, just to see how much you'll dare. Then——" Ward snapped his finger—"away you women go, drawn by the cords of your vanity, . . . sympathy, . . . kindness, . . . friendship, . . . pshaw! Next thing, both fools get themselves compromised—talked about! Then, they arrive at the don't-care stage; and, . . . *that*, . . . as I know men, . . . is pretty close on . . . dangerous!"

His wife gazed in the fire, tapping the brass fender with her slipper.

"I didn't know you could be such a philosopher."

"That's all right," returned Ward, wagging his head, feeling that, while he could not foil her repartee, he could crush her opposition with a brutal frankness. It dawned on him that, when a woman arrived at the don't-care stage, she might be a difficult argument.

"What has all this to do with me?" she asked.

Ward hardly knew whether he wanted to kiss his wife or to crush her. He felt a something that his strength, will, purpose, could not conquer!

"What I want to know is whether you invite that artist girl here for her own sake, or Hebden's?"

Again the long pause without answering that always tantalized Ward. Time was money—and money was power.

"Do you know," she began slowly, "I couldn't tell you which it is that I invite her here for? She is very fond of me—I suppose you will say that tickles my vanity. Well, perhaps I like my vanity tickled

as much as you do your sense of power! Then she is so delightfully fresh, so unspoiled, that she actually has faith in people—you and me, for instance, Tom. I suppose you will say that tickles me somewhere else. Anyway," she lifted her eyelids disdainfully, "what have *you* against young Hebden?"

"Against Hebden? Well, Louie, I'm not fond of killing mosquitoes with a hammer! Let me see: . . . to begin with, he's so small and sleek and wriggling in his ways you can't follow him with the naked eye! Sort of snake-in-the-grass, covering-something-up chap . . . I call him! Always oily and up-and-coming and on the—watch! He's a chap wouldn't say anything out and out against a woman; but he'd give that sickly smile of his and shrug his shoulders and raise his brows and tell a whole book of lies without a word! He'd rob a woman of her character with his mincing ways, while he'd make love to her if she were fool enough to listen. Possibly I see things in him that a woman would not see in time to protect herself from him. I like a man's man—Louie!

"As a matter of fact," continued Ward glumly, "he isn't a man among men."

"So much the better for him, after all you have said."

"Come, Louie, this is serious! Hebden isn't worth a serious thought from anyone! Don't you forget that. He isn't worth a little sneer from you." Suddenly he laid his big head on his wife's shoulder. "Louie, you are a beautiful woman; and you know

it; and you like to hear about it—only, be careful! Do you remember that night when you were a girl, and you and your father rode into the woods, and a big, lubberly fellow helped you to the saddle——”

“You don’t mean to tell me that you were that——”

“Yes, I was,” Ward hurried on, as if to parry one of her little stabs.

Mrs. Ward broke into a merry peal of laughter.

“That’s your character, Louie! You’ve got to have a train of men dangling round with six-for-a-cent compliments. Fellows grease their way to your favor with flattery who are not fit to blacken your boots. We’ve got on pretty well without any high-faluting sentiment—you and I, Louie—but, listen, when a man is not a man among men, I don’t care a chuck whether he’s artistic, or religious, or a superior person, there is something wrong with him—rotten at the core! If you are taking up that girl for Hebden’s sake, don’t you deceive yourself that he is the man to marry a penniless girl after the course he has run for forty years! But, if you are taking her up to draw Hebden here——” Ward paused thoughtfully.

“Go on,” taunted his wife, smiling.

“Being beautiful, you are vain enough to mistake a warning for jealousy,” said Ward; “but, if you draw Hebden here for his own sake——”

The proud head lifted. “What?” she demanded.

“Oh—just that,” he answered, drawing a chrysan-

themum from her corsage and crumpling it to a pulpy mass with one grip of his hand.

He passed out without another word. She heard the door close as he flung from the hall. She sat motionless, white, stonily unbending in her pride, as he in his power. He might break her—bend her, he never could. No regret softened her; no wonder at the reason for the man's rage. Regret had been crushed long ago, as she felt her nature gradually petrifying under his power.

Whose fault was it? How came her lips to utter words that now rushed back like the hiss of snakes? It had been a loveless union. What had love to do with Tom Ward's creed of life? As to that, she had never made even a pretense of deceiving herself. All she knew was something in her hungered. This self-centered existence was a torture. She clasped her hands in a long shudder. The canker-worm of an intense self-pity had begun to gnaw.

The library door opened.

"Mr. Hebden," announced a servant.

"May I come in? I met Ward driving off."

A tall, slender, ruddy-faced man with reddish-gray hair, receding forehead, close-set brown eyes, and a small chin came stepping lightly over the tiger rug. The hand extended was white and dimpled like a woman's, except that the ends of the fingers were stubbed.

"You are in trouble?" He paused midway of the rug. "Surely, my good angel told me! I've been longing to see you all day. What is it?"

"Nothing," she said listlessly, not deigning to see the hand. "I've only lost another illusion—faith in men."

And Mr. Dorval Hebden turned that answer over in his mind. He had caught the barriers down and was not the man to send those barriers up by one false step.

"Shall I go?" he asked. "Am I one of the men; or may I come under the classification of an old friend? I only wanted to talk to you about giving an order for a portrait to that artist protégée of yours, Miss Connor."

He was always so very kind, so very sympathetic, so very comprehending without saying it, was Mr. Dorval Hebden. She did not answer at once. Then she looked up with the slow smile that won her so much love and hate.

"No—stay," she said.

CHAPTER VIII

WARD'S CREED IN PRACTICE

TEN minutes afterward Ward had forgotten all about the little rencontre with his wife. It is the advantage of the active nature that it never has time to curdle. Ward was not the man to let a woman obscure his aims. To be sure, he would hardly treat a woman the way he had the dog. But, then, if a butterfly persists fluttering in your eyes, you must brush it aside, whether you cripple the pretty wings or not. That was Ward's sole philosophy on the relations between men and women. While his wife's highly wrought emotions were still centered in a sort of morbid enjoyment of her own wretchedness, Ward's schemes for world dominion—the struggle that the new century was to witness—were taking more definite shape.

A very small object of tenacious enough grip will throw a train from the track. With Ward it was a question of clearing obstructions. There were rivals a few to be cleared from the way. He touched the tandem thoroughbreds with his whip and the sleigh cut the park driveway in a fashion that bounced the coachman up and down on the

rear seat. The night air was keen. Ward felt the race of buoyant life in his veins. The park road was clear. He gave the glossy bays full rein.

"Let's see what you can do," he said.

The bays shot out long-necked, clean-footed, straight as arrows to the mark. He could feel the sensitive mouths quivering as he tightened rein. It was a poetry of swift motion. They raced for love of the race—fierce, not at tightening rein, but slackening pace, with sheer abandon to the impulse of superabundant life.

"See—their feet scarcely touch ground! That's something like it—it does them good," cried Ward.

"Yes, sir," gasped the coachman, bouncing up and down.

One touch of the whip sent the snow-laden evergreens past in a blur. A dog set up a howl but stopped to scramble from the way.

"That's a good sign," laughed Ward.

"Yes, sir," hiccoughed the coachman, as the sleigh broke silence on a deserted city square.

"The cars," warned the man in a bounce.

A policeman turned to look.

"It's all right," called Ward.

"You're driving too fast," saluted the officer.

"Why don't you catch them?" Ward laughed back.

The thoroughbreds took the bit in their mouths and kept the pace. With a quick twist first to right then to left Ward reined the horses back before a massive twenty-story structure of gray stone. Fling-

ing the lines down he was out before the coachman could grasp the bridles.

"Al'ys some'n up when 'e drives so fierce," observed that functionary.

Above the pillared entrance of the building stood the figure of a colossal man on a stone globe carved in bas-relief. Ward had insisted on having the man carved on top instead of below. To the architect's objection that the design violated tradition Ward had responded, "Never mind tradition! I'll make a new story for the old globe before I finish!"

When a man has not wasted one second for thirty years, and has sold every second of thirty years to the highest bidder for hands and brains, and has not given one second of thirty years to the service of any soul but Self, he can usually show results. Ward could show very tangible results. They were mainly embodied in an organization called "The Great Consolidated." Though the Great Consolidated guided legislation and business on two continents, it was not definitely known just what the Great Consolidated meant. Some said it was "a trust"; but that was disproved by a law suit in which the members of the trust melted into such thin air that they could not be found. Others said it stood for "a secret understanding among gentlemen." If that were so, Thomas Ward was the only gentleman to enjoy the privilege of the secret until such time as the results materialized to dazzle a gaping public. The name arose from the gray stone building which housed the Consolidated Rail-

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roads, the Amalgamated Coal Companies, and the International Steamship Pool. If more credit is due him who climbs from the bottom of the ladder than one who begins half way up, very great credit was due Tom Ward. He had come a long way in these thirty years. It is the first thousand feet that stretch the unused muscles of the mountain climber and give fettle for the rest of the day. So the first fifteen years tested the mettle of Ward. They were years of hard work, and underpay, and night study—not of books, but of things—experiments to improve the machinery on which he worked. Ward used to say that "the first fifteen years were mainly on the perpendicular."

One morning the world awakened to find that the young workman had become president of the ship yards' company. After that Ward's progress was not a climb; it was a march. The newspapers were still drawing inspiration from his life when he astonished the public by combining half a dozen mines and smelters and steamship lines into one company with a capital that turned brains dizzy. That capital stood for all that the smelters ever had done or ever could do, all the equipment they had ever needed or ever could need, and for a great deal more, which was not explained to the public, except as a rare chance for that public to buy stock. The public seized that rare chance with both hands. Ward had no difficulty in promptly converting all his stock into coin. The public helped him. It was eager. He preferred the coin. The ethics of the

thing did not concern the public—all the public cared for was the glaring, enviable fact that the transaction left Ward with millions . . . millions! The public wanted a try at that sort of thing. Tom Ward offered the public that try.

Two doors led from the main hall to Ward's office. One was marked "General Business" and the other "Private Secretary." Both were frosted, with screens of netting inside, so that nothing could be seen from the hallway; but in the frosting of the general office was a scratch no longer than a pen point. Opposite this Ward paused. He could hear voices in a low tone. Passing to the next door he had entered so suddenly that a little, yellow-faced man sprang up nervously. At the exact moment of the president's entrance the secretary had been figuring the profits of their last "deal." Ward passed to the inner office. Obadiah Saunders stroked his black beard thoughtfully, rubbed a thin hand across his arched black brows, and again drew two long fingers through his silky beard. That trick of the hands had given him the sobriquet of "Silky" among the messenger boys of the basement. The desk clerks had another nickname for the secretary from a habit he had of oiling his palms. They called him "Lady Macbeth," which was unjust to Obadiah Saunders. His hands were only expressing an innocent desire to oil the wheels of things. The bu-r-r of an electric bell sounded on Saunders' desk. The secretary responded by stepping softly into the president's office. Ward was in a swing-chair with his

back to the door, both hands punched down his trousers pockets. Obadiah Saunders softly shifted from one foot to the other. Then he drew two long fingers through his silky beard.

"Others put in appearance yet?" demanded Ward.

"Both gentlemen have been in the board room for half an hour." Saunders glanced furtively from the floor and back to the floor.

"How did you find 'em?" Ward wheeled right about.

Saunders oiled the backs of his hands with alternate palms, then glanced from the floor and back to the floor.

"Colonel Dillon may be written down safe—absolutely safe! He will bring the ship yards' companies into an ocean pool."

"Yes, your moderate men always choose the safe side," interrupted Ward.

"When there are millions on the safe side," interjected the secretary.

"Oh, yes; that's the way of your moderates, your safe and easy men. When the shark and sword-fish have had their fight, tuckered out—small fry sail in to steal a meal!"

In his mind the secretary balked at that word "shark." To say the least, it was "not judicious"; and "judicious" sounded the key-note of the secretary's ambidextrous morality.

"Anybody could guess that Dillon would choose the safe side," continued Ward, taking out his cigar

case. "But how about the young fellow, Truesdale, who is just back from Europe to manage affairs of the coal carriers?"

Saunders shifted from one foot to the other, then glanced from the floor and back again. "You can hardly say he resembles Dillon," began the secretary tentatively. "He's not outspoken."

"Close-mouthed proposition, eh?"

"Yes . . . yes," the secretary studied the carpet, "but the sort of mouth to take the bit and . . . and, in fact, . . . bolt!" and Obadiah glanced up from the carpet.

"Sort of chap to bolt and smash, . . . eh? Well, . . . he can have all the smash he wants! Has Dillon been sounding him?"

An oily smile exuded from the secretary's sallow skin.

"Dillon, sir, paints prospects to beat a gold mine!"

"And what does the young chap say?"

"He offers Dillon a cigar."

"He does, does he? Then, . . . he'll do! Show 'em in," ordered the president.

"But there's something else," interposed the secretary. "There is another reason why we should come to an understanding with this young man."

"You mean there may be a strike since we reduced wages?" asked Ward sharply.

"No, sir." Saunders lowered his voice and glanced furtively behind him.

"It's the accident in Shaft 10, when the men were

killed! Kipp, the engineer, warned us of that accident——”

“Haven't you settled all the claimants?”

“All but this Kipp fellow! He's holding out for a higher price! He might make trouble!”

“Well, we don't object to trouble, Saunders! No man need think he'll chase the devil round a stump with me——”

“It isn't that!” The secretary moved a step forward. “When Kipp examined Shaft 10, where the bottom fell out of the mine, he found we had gone a hundred yards into Truesdale's ground. You know his mines supply these foreign colliers. I had suspected all along; but this fellow Kipp—the engineer—knows!”

It was not the fact that the Great Consolidated had encroached on Truesdale's mines that troubled the secretary. It was that Kipp knew. After which announcement Obadiah shifted from one foot to the other, raised his glance, and drooped his glance, and stood a picture of patient grief.

“Confound the fellow,” blurted Ward. “I am not prepared to admit what you say; but we'll fill her up—do you understand? We'll jam Shaft 10 tight to the top! Have that done to-morrow! Show Dillon and Truesdale in!”

CHAPTER IX

MORE OF WARD'S CREED IN PRACTICE

WARD lighted a cigar as the secretary threw open a heavy oak door with a felt dummy to prevent observation. The great man did not rise to welcome his visitors. He was enveloped in wreaths of smoke, through which the half-closed eyes took keen, quick, complete measure of his men. The first was rubicund, rotund, so corpulent that his flesh shook and gave the absurdly small feet a waddling motion. Age had added to the waist-line and taken from the worthy Colonel's hair since first Tom Ward had met him that night long ago, when the ship yards' president and his friends had ridden almost on the top of a ragged youth in blue overalls sitting in the woods by the sea. Whimsically Ward's mind flashed back to that night when he bargained for a place on the first rung of the ladder. He had ascended that ladder and many ladders above that one, and now he was about to essay the last climb to a world ascendancy—to a place of power from which he and his American associates could dominate the commerce of all the nations of the earth. Why had Uncle Sam built the Panama

Canal? Was it to help the commercial needs of the United States on all the Seven Seas? Ward knew that, apart from a few coasters, Uncle Sam would not have a dozen ships of his own to go through the vaunted waterway. Could he but organize in a copper-riveted union all the ship yards and railways and coal supply companies along with two or three weak, independent steamship lines, then, by joining small foreign steamship pools, he would be in a position to give those "big fellows" abroad a twister that would teach them not to jack up rates against American commerce, not to act as bandits of the high seas to prevent the expansion of American shipping. Dillon would fall in, of course—he was ship yards. Also, he represented steel. Both would benefit from the growth of an American marine; but there was the uncertain factor of this young fellow Truesdale, whose mines supplied the foreign colliers in American ports. If Truesdale's little mines and little tubs of coal ships didn't come in—that would give an advantage to the big ship pools abroad. Of course, Truesdale must simply be forced in—that was Ward's verdict. Where had he seen the young fellow before, anyway? What was it about him brought back that night when he had first seen his wife and helped her as a little girl up into the saddle? Could it be possible? Was this the man grown from the boy whom he had seen at the president's house years ago, when two boys were setting off for schooling in Europe?

Through the cigar fumes Ward noted the swarthy

face of a tall young man with a clean-cut brow, alert black eyes, straight nose, and a chiseled sharp chin.

"Clean-limbed youngster; but, . . . too light," was the verdict.

"I've just been explaining, . . . just been explaining . . . the extraordinary position, . . . the extraordinary advantage, . . . I might say, . . . of the situation in, . . . in coal for Panama traffic," wheezed the fat man, sitting down with some difficulty. The stub of a cigar in the corner of the pursed lips, the upturned nose almost submerged between the protruding cheeks, the chin creased and rolling, gave a peculiar porcine profile.

Ward laid his cigar down and looked to Truesdale. That young man justified the secretary's report and remained silent.

"Why, yes," argued the colonel, quite satisfied that the other had agreed in thought, if not in speech, "it's just as I was telling our friend here—our young friend here—chance of a lifetime." That utterance having exhausted a second wind for the Colonel, there was silence.

Ward looked to Truesdale. Truesdale waited. There was the faintest suspicion of sarcasm about the young man's immobile features.

"Gentlemen," Ward's hand crashed to the desk with impatience. He liked to use "safe" men; but, in broad schemes, he preferred brains. He was addressing both men, but he spoke directly to Truesdale. "If one farmer persists in sending his provisions to market by the old, slow wagon road, and

another farmer sends his in the express flyer—it's pretty certain which farmer's provisions will reach the market first; which will bring the highest price "

"That's what," nodded Dillon, winking one little, white eye.

"This is the age when we must either go forward or drop out," continued Ward. "There are too many in the game for us to play dead weight, or act the welcher! We've either to get up and run, and run fast, or get off the track, out of the way. It's that or be run over!"

". . . Or be run over," conned Dillon, shutting both little eyes to view the mental picture better.

"And, if all the farmers combined to own the railroad, it would be better still," argued Ward. "They would get the profits of the freight as well as the profits of the market."

Truesdale smiled. The great financier's reasoning sounded so much like arguments in old German halls, where students drowned socialism in pots of beer, and emitted anarchy in clouds of tobacco smoke. Ward saw the awakening interest and went straight to the mark.

"By the strike in the foreign mines—coal, silver, gold—we can control the output of the world—if *we combine!* We can control the prices of the world—if *we combine!* Railroads and steamships must have coal. We can control the foreign carriers of the world—if *we combine!* Once get your grip on the foreign steamship carriers"—Ward paused to read anticipation in the young man's face—"Eu-

rope cannot grow all she needs. Get the carriers, the transportation, and *you've got possession of the world's trade!* For a hundred years the foreign steamships have buncoed American commerce. We have paid more to have our traffic carried across the Atlantic than all the captured nations of the world ever paid to Rome. We have been the captive nation tied to the golden chariot wheel of Europe. We have paid more to have our traffic carried across the ocean than the gold revenues of Peru sent of old to Spain. Why? Because we have no ships. Because the foreign ships have us buncoed and buffaloed. Why are we always short of gold in America? Because we have to pay our freight bills to foreign nations in gold. What have we built Panama for? Apart from a few coasters, we haven't an American ship to send through the canal. Gentlemen, look at that fact and stop shouting about the achievement of building Panama! We can build a canal, but we can't build a ship. Look at that fact, and chew on it! Tell me a single U. S. ship, independent of the coasters, which are owned by the railroads and barred from the canal, which can enter Panama! Coasters don't expand our commerce to foreign nations one dime's worth. All right—what's the situation? We have a canal, the biggest achievement since the discovery of America, and we practically haven't a ship engaged in foreign trade to use it. Now, the I. W. W.'s have brought about a strike in all foreign coal mines. From private information I judge it is likely to

last a year. Gentlemen, do you see where that gives us the whip-handle? It gives us the advantage over foreign ships for the first time in a hundred years. If our ship yards get together with our coal mines, where are the foreign ships to get coal? The power that controls the fuel and the transportation will draw all the gold of the world to its pocket. By the Lord, all the gold of Europe *has got* to come to you! It's happening now! . . . It's happening now"—he smote the table with his clenched fist—"only the returns are spread among a dozen different companies! What I propose is that we combine now, when the foreign depression gives us the advantage—combine now—and *the trade of the world is in your hands!* Bar fuel, and where are your foreign ships, and your steel mills, and your clothing factories? Control fuel and you control war! I tell you, the world has *got* to have fuel! Get hold of the fuel and you've got the world at your own price! Give us control"—he uttered the words with synchronous strokes of his clenched fist on the desk—"give us control . . . of the fuel . . . and the sea and what are the markets going to do? Tell me that! Supply is going to be as big as demand—and no bigger! They are going to pay our price . . . your price, you understand, without any cut-throat haggling and competition! The foreign strikes give us the whip-handle—*if we combine!*"

"It's a big proposition—it's a big proposition!"

The Colonel goggled both little white eyes and wagged his head.

The young man sat suddenly erect. Ward leaned back to let the incoherent suggestions work. Not what he had said, but what he had left unsaid, startled Truesdale.

"You mean," said the young man, "by combining steamships and coal mines in America, to reach out . . . and make a bid for the markets of Europe?"

"If you like to put it that way," returned Ward cautiously. "The thing *has* happened already with oil, and steel, and machinery! The question is not *whether* the thing is going to take place; the question is, *who is going to do it?* If we don't, some other combination will! The world is America's market. Steamships are the toll-gate to that market. *We've got to capture and hold that market!*"

"Why, man," said Truesdale, leaping up, "it means . . . it means the transfer of gold reserves, of world power, to . . . America!"

"And *we* . . . are America," corrected the head of the Great Consolidated.

"*If we combine,*" interjected the colonel hazily. "Seems to me, Ward, we're sort o' bitin' off more than we can chew . . . more than we can chew! I'm not in these big schemes because of their size," avowed the fat man. "Count me out! I'm looking after number one! All I see in this thing is a chance . . . a chance, as I was telling Truesdale . . . to get our heads together . . . to get our heads together and stop this *infernal* bleeding of the country by foreign freights! Now that foreign trade is crippled, prices for coal and ocean freight are going

to jump . . . nothing to hinder prices going clean out of sight . . . clean out of sight! I'm not in for these sky-rockets myself, you know; but, if we get our heads together, . . . as I was telling Truesdale, . . . we'll have it pretty much our own way, . . . pretty much our own way without this *infernal* bleeding of American commerce to feed foreign ocean freight! Business isn't a charity organization, . . . as I was telling Truesdale, . . . it's founded on economic principles; . . . we're *in* it for what we can get *out* of it; and, with foreign competition knocked out, . . . as I was telling Truesdale, . . . it's horse-sense to put our heads together and take advantage of the situation. . . . As I was telling Truesdale"—the Colonel's little eyes blinked—"if we stand pat, no monkeying, you know, . . . no cutting prices on the sly, . . . no smart tricks in this thing, *we can ask what we like; and get it, by the Lord, too!* I'm not one of your p'litic'l 'conomists! I'm not makin' stump speeches for cheap votes! I'm not out to conquer Europe, . . . and glory, . . . and that sort of thing! It's horse-sense I believe in, hard sense, and hard cash and straight business; and it's common sense to know if we put our heads together we can do better than if I'm underselling you; and you're doing a little rate-cutting on the sly; and so on!" The colonel grew apoplectic, panted, wiped the sweat from his brow. "I'm for horse-sense and business," he reiterated.

The splendor of Ward's daring schemes for world

power, world dominion, took on a different aspect, seen through the imagination of the ogling man with the wheezy voice. Ward had outlined the ambitions of an empire-builder. Dillon put the case in terms of the dollar bill. It had such curious resemblance to the predictions of those old star dreamers in the German universities that Truesdale again heard their prophecies—foreshadowing the greatest conflict of all ages; perhaps a bloodless war, but the bitterest war of all, because it would levy tribute on all nations; tribute of freight rates on food and warmth and clothing, from women and children as well as men, from weaklings as well as fighters, from all the countries of the world! It was sublime in daring, but as pitiless as the campaign of a pagan conqueror; but, then, since when had war or trade taken inventory of pity? Since when had war or trade taken inventory of right? It was like nature—moving along the lines of pitiless laws—to far unseen ends, to, perhaps, a conquest of the world by commerce. Foreign ships were tied up by a strike in the coal mines and few, if any, of the foreign ships used oil; and what better than for America to launch her merchant marine?

He was well aware how this grand scheme for the capture of a world-dominion would work out practically. It meant the ruin of small coal dealers and independent steamships. It meant the levying of tribute on the many for the aggrandizement of the few, just as certainly as a Roman conqueror levied tribute when he conquered a nation. It meant

that the plutocrats were to become the kings. It meant—what else? Truesdale's imagination revolted at the logical leading of his thoughts. What if the people refused to permit that delegation of a world power to a few plutocrats? What if they wrested that power to their own hands? That meant . . . Revolution . . . Socialism . . . the cessation of the Struggle that built character, that made life a race worth running, that stimulated men to be more than animals! . . . In a word, it might mean the inertness of the worn-out oriental . . . the nothingness of the fatalist! . . . Or, suppose the people should permit the big prizes to rest in the hands of the few; what guarantee had the people against plutocrats?

As if reading possible objections, Ward resumed:

"Truesdale, if you were a grocer and sold better goods at so much more reasonable a figure than other grocers that you captured all the trade, and the other grocers failed, would you consider yourself responsible for their ruin?"

"I should not," asserted Truesdale.

"And, if, by working longer than other men, and harder than other men, and better than other men, you became richer than other men, you wouldn't consider that they had any right to resent your success—would you? You wouldn't consider that a man who goes for work with all there is in him, day and night, was no better than a slouch with no thought above his belt?"

"Mr. Ward," answered Truesdale, "what do you

propose to do? How do you propose to do this thing?"

Colonel Dillon mopped his bald head again with an air of satisfaction.

"It's just as I was telling Truesdale—he had only to hear your view and he would agree it's the chance of a life-time, . . . positively, the chance of a life-time!" It was quite plain that Dillon did not in the least grasp the world-policy of Ward. What Dillon saw was the chance to levy tribute on world commerce.

Outside, the telegraph wires netted opposite the office windows hummed and droned an endless chant of human effort compassing the globe. Alexanders and Napoleons had no such weapons as these men planning the campaign of a world-dominion. Human puppets guided by one directing brain had been the best weapons of old-world conquerors. But these campaigners could harness the seas and speed their conquering armies—of money, credit, wealth—along the track of lightnings. Napoleon bought men. Ward was prepared to buy nations, not by a bribe, but by purchase in open field of steamships, railroads, coal. At best, he *would* be prepared when he had crushed or bound to himself a few rivals, of whom Truesdale, with his small mines and coal tugs, was most to be feared, because those mines were close to the sea and independent of Ward's railroads.

The three men drew their chairs to the president's desk. There was a jotting of pencils, a com-

paring of totals, a monotonous tick-tick-tick of the big clock inside, with the humming and droning of the wires outside. The secretary glided in and out with lists of figures, letting slips of paper fall that he might linger to pick them up.

Once Ward threw down the pencil.

"That will realize fifty millions at once on coal for Panama alone; and the advance of fifty cents a ton to finance steamships is so small that the people will never feel it."

"Feel it?" wheezed the old colonel aglow; "who cares whether they feel it? The question is—*will the trade stand it?* Will people take to burning wood?"

"We can usually depend on cold weather for two months," remarked Truesdale sarcastically.

Ward's eyes closed to a slit and he looked at the young man. Dillon threw off his coat and sat forward perspiring visibly.

"Anyway, you can keep the rates up on wood, Ward," he suggested. "You've got the whip with your backwoods railroads . . . keep the wood off the market, Ward, . . . that's it!"

The next time the secretary was called he let a pencil fall.

"As I make it out, it's thirty millions to you, Truesdale," Dillon was saying.

Truesdale was leaning back.

"I suppose it is perfectly legitimate," he said absently.

And then the secretary knew, from the lists that he was requested to bring, that what the newspapers would call "a deal" was being arranged; that a company with a capital of billions was to be floated. The clock ticked on, . . . on, . . . on! The pencils figured and figured. Sweat trickled down the face of the fat man. His little eyes expanded greedily.

"But . . . but . . . will the public bite?" he asked doubtfully. "Will they buy our bonds, then buy the coal at advanced price, then buy the stock to float the ships."

"Dillon," Ward's head went up with a toss, "you talk as if this were a stock-jobbing concern! By combining we are absolutely certain of holding our own against the labor unions as well as foreign rivals. By combining we are free of waste, free of under-cutting. By combining we *compel* the world to depend on us for ships and coal. They buy at *our* price. Do you think investment in as safe a concern as that is going to hang fire? The stock will sell faster than we can apply proceeds!"

"Look here, gentlemen!" Truesdale was walking the floor. "We're shaving wages! We're advancing rates! It seems to me between taxing the public for higher rates and asking them to buy stock for us to capture foreign markets through a billion-dollar steamship combination—it seems to me we may run up against something called the sentiment of the free-born American citizen——"

"Sentiment be——," the colonel's husky remark

merged in an explosive cough. "Business isn't charity."

"Truesdale!" Ward was losing patience. "Let us take that corner store again. You'd sell for the highest price that you could get, and pay the lowest price you could pay—wouldn't you? What's the difference between doing that on a small scale or on a large scale?" Ward threw down the papers. "Well, it is getting late. Think it over, Truesdale! There is no one compelling you to come into this thing unless you want to! Good night, gentlemen!"

When the secretary returned from showing the visitors out Ward had swung round in the revolving chair with his back to the door. The clock ticked on! The telegraph wires hummed their endless chant of haste! The gongs of the passing cars rang fainter and died in distance. Midnight quiet fell over the city. The clock ticked on; and still the man sat thinking!

It was incomprehensible, this hesitancy of Truesdale's. To decide that a course was profitable was to set out on that course forthwith! That had been Ward's rule since he left the old home of incompetency and failure. See a thing . . . do it! The slightest bungling now and the chance of world-dominion might be lost! Ward would take *no* chances!

"Saunders!"

"Sir?"

"Make a memo!—donate ten thousand tons of coal to the hospitals!"

The ferret eyes of the secretary looked up, and then looked down.

"Saunders?"

"Sir?"

"What do you think of that chap Truesdale? Think he will come in?"

Obadiah stroked his beard thoughtfully.

"I can't imagine any young fellow of sense holding out against that offer," he returned.

"Then you are deficient in imagination," retorted Ward. "You are judging that man by yourself! In the first place, he's indifferent to money. He is also indifferent to power. He doesn't lack will! He doesn't lack strength of an obstinate kind; but I doubt if he has purpose! And he is still in the bib-and-tucker stage, when a young fellow is troubled with a conscience! Get him buckled down to practical living, he'll get over that."

Again a long silence, broken only by the ticking of the clock.

"Saunders?"

"Yes, sir?"

"Go to that labor leader, McGee, the ranting red, you know, who is threatening a strike in our coal mines about the cut in wages. Pay whatever is necessary to win Truesdale's men to the union. Understand? If our men strike, his men strike, too! He can't afford to stand back! He's got to be in this fight, for us or against us!"

Saunders wrote a note on a small writing pad.

"Saunders?"

"Sir."

"Go to the B. X. Railroad! They are not only to charge him schedule rate for his shipments inland—they are to hand over to us all the extra they charge *him!* If the B. X. refuse, go to the C. R. . . . understand? Get the two roads fighting for our shipments; and they'll both do it! That will give us a record of his shipments, how much and where! Then send your salesman where his shipments go! Shave his prices! Under cut! Squeeze his salesmen off the field!"

Saunders stood as one petrified.

"And, I say, Saunders, I understand Truesdale holds a hare fourth of the company's stock. The Great Consolidated holds some, but I think we could take some more! The rest is scattered—small investors—women and professional men—old fogies, who think they are in a safe ship because it is old-fashioned and conservative. Take a flyer at that stock! Give the New York floor traders standing orders to pick up on the quiet. Keep hammering till the lambs take fright! Sell short! Sell, you understand, till the stock knocks below your boot pegs! Get that stock moving among the timid investors!" Obadiah received these instructions with a quiet smile. He had given such orders before.

"And, Saunders—about that tunnel? If this Kipp fellow talked there might be a lawsuit? . . . eh . . . Saunders?"

"I—I am afraid——" began the secretary.

"Saunders," interrupted Ward, "we'll sue first! Get that tunnel filled up—come to me for orders!"

The secretary lifted his eyes from the carpet.

"But the Kipp fellow, the engineer?" he stammered.

"Wants more salary, I suppose," added Ward.

"Wants more salary," repeated the secretary, as though he deprecated such criminal tendencies.

"Confoundedly unlucky, that whole business of the accident!"

Obadiah stroked his beard.

"You have settled all the claimants?"

"All."

"Only that engineer?"

"Only that engineer."

"What did his report say about the shaft?"

"That there would be loss of life unless we repaired it."

"And you dismissed him?"

"I dismissed him."

"And reëngaged him at five thousand to keep him quiet?"

"I did."

Ward bounced suddenly round in his chair, facing the secretary.

"He demands more salary? That's it—is it? Can't you send him to Mexico to examine coal lands somewhere . . . where the climate might induce him to remain?"

"We might send him to Jericho, if he'd go." The

secretary lowered his voice. "But he says it's better pay to stay . . . right . . . here!"

The clock ticked five full minutes before the president spoke.

"What do you think he will do?"

"Sell his information about our tunneling into Truesdale's ground."

"I have no doubts that we'd win if it did go to the courts," returned Ward. "It's better to keep him quiet till we've arranged with Truesdale. We'll have to settle him!"

"Yes—we'll have to settle him," agreed the secretary.

"Saunders, it's a funny thing that I have to be bothered with these annoyances?"

Obadiah assented with a dejected hanging of his head.

"Why can't these petty trifles be arranged without bothering me?"

It was a current understanding in the Great Consolidated that Ward gave few orders to his employees; but, if they made mistakes, he gave them ticket of leave and orders in terms that are not usually printed. "He's coming to it by running all around it," thought the secretary.

"Here's a staff of men supposed to have more brains than a hen; and they can't settle a swaggering braggart of an engineer?"

If Thomas Ward had been told that he coerced his men into doing what he himself dared not do—he would have denied it. Obadiah took the cue.

"If the Great Consolidated will give me a free hand I think I can promise to settle the fellow," he said.

"You do, eh? Then settle him! Don't report to me! I leave the affair to you! I hold you responsible! Lose the papers, if there are any; burn them. But tell me nothing—do you understand—absolutely nothing. If you want a check to send him to Peru, draw on the contingency fund."

An oily exudation spread over the secretary's sal-low features.

"I'll take a run down to the mines and see him myself," he said.

And that was all about Kipp, the engineer, who knew that the Great Consolidated had been taking coal from Truesdale's mines through running a slant tunnel into a neighbor's limits.

CHAPTER X

THE CREED AND A GIRL

"So that was the reason you stopped writing? It was hardly fair to a pal, Madeline?"

Truesdale could not have explained why the artist sitting at her easel seemed different from other acquaintances. She was good looking, but not better looking than many a woman of his acquaintance; and she was obviously quite indifferent to all matters of dress. Theoretically, he liked a well-gowned woman of the ornamental kind. He liked what pleased his eye, his sense of proportion, his pride of life. Woman was to be the jewel, the star shining out on the hard realities of men's lives. He had not a high opinion of the motives behind men's lives. He considered all conduct the result of one primal instinct—Self; and self can assume brutal forms in the strenuous battle of modern life and primal passions. That was why Truesdale wanted woman to be a jewel set apart—the prize of existence; not a contestant in the brute struggle, where she must suffer defeat.

All that was—in theory. In reality, Truesdale was sitting in a plain studio at the rear of an art

dealer's store, asking why a girl dressed in a white shirtwaist and black walking skirt, with a red tie and leather belt, had broken off a correspondence on which he had grown to depend more than he liked to acknowledge.

A woman could have told Truesdale that the rarest jewels shine brightest in simplest settings; that, while the dress was plain, it was set to the curves of a figure whose every motion betokened buoyant, free life—fire, not grace; that the red tie brought out the red tints of the hectic skin; and, that the bronze hair with sunlight in each strand did not need the art of the French hair-dresser.

But Truesdale did not analyze things. He *felt* them—felt the unclouded light of the brow, the glad surprise of the eyes, the wondering flashes of comprehension from the large pupils of the gray eyes. It was a changing, lustrous pupil, that seemed to give glimpses of a personality. Self-deception could not exist behind those eyes. They were too clarified. This girl could not even lie to herself, the rarest kind of truth.

Mentally, Truesdale questioned the wisdom of nature forming a mouth the shape of a Cupid's bow, and giving that mouth the short upper lip of a Diana. The effect was a Psyche profile with the coldness of a Puritan. She would be a huntress; not of men—but ideas. Truesdale was quite positive that he did not like women who hunted ideas; yet he could not help thinking if this Psyche profile ever met its ideas in the form of a man it might not be

such a bad thing to be the man—provided, of course, that her ideas did not prove an illusion.

For a week after the conferences in the offices of the Great Consolidated Truesdale was subtly conscious of a change in the attitude of the social and business world toward himself. Business men whose names stood for power came up to be introduced to him. One old broker, who had been a friend of his father, shook hands heartily.

"Congratulate you," he said. "I always told your father that he ought to have done it! Day for individualism is past! This is the age of coöperation, of union! Congratulate you!"

"For what?" demanded Truesdale, slightly surprised.

He had not sent his answer to the proposals of the Great Consolidated. A native caution, drilled by a hard-headed father, aroused Truesdale's suspicions of any process *to get something for nothing; especially a great deal of something for a great deal of nothing.* That prospect of thirty millions by a single sweep of the pen had dazed Truesdale when he talked with Ward. Now, the native caution bade him go slow. A business representing the toil of three generations of Truesdales must not be whistled away for glittering prospects. But the old broker only laughed.

"Can't hoax me, my boy!" The old gentleman patted Truesdale's shoulder. "You are your father over again: close, close!"

And the social world grew still more demonstra-

tive. He could have framed the mirror of his shaving table with the invitations that showered in every morning. And some of the invitations were unframable, waylaying him on the street in the person of the effusive, elderly lady, who had daughters. It was in evading one of these that he had turned to the window in the art dealers' store, and suddenly discovered a picture that brought back a poignant memory of boyhood.

It was a small pastel of a boy and girl treed by a ferocious pig in a forbidden orchard. The boy and the pig he did not recognize; but the girl he would have known among a thousand. It was she who had led him into the escapade; and, when the pig's possessor came, it was not the boy in the picture, but another boy, who received the double portion of a switching. There were the same long braids of bronze hair, the same fearless eyes, the same red and white, hectic skin. It was a perfect likeness as she had been ten years before. Truesdale screwed on his eyeglasses and bent forward to spell out the artist's name. What he read was the name of the culprit, herself—Madeline Connor. Mr. Jack Truesdale spent the rest of that afternoon in the little studio behind the art dealer's store. It was a quiet breathing space after the adulation of the previous week.

"Do you remember," laughed Truesdale, "how mercilessly everybody teased us about that lark?"

"And you used to call me 'red-head'?" she laughed.

"Did I? I don't remember. I used to think your hair was the prettiest thing that I had ever seen when it got tangled up in the sunlight."

The artist laughed outright and laid down her brushes. Truesdale wondered if he had failed to observe mezzo tremors in other voices.

"That brute thrashed you horribly after he had driven off the pig. I had scuttled down the other side of the tree just as he caught you. When he began to beat you I tried to throw stones, but I only succeeded in hitting you. If you had not got away just when you did I think I would have torn him to bits. I can hear the swish of that rawhide yet. I ought to have been put to bed for a week! It was all my fault; and you never told; and you never cried; I booh-hoed all night afterward—I was so sorry!"

"And the rich, ripe smell of the yellow fruit do you remember?" he asked. "The frost tints had crimsoned the edge of the woods; and the light sifted through the trees like gold mist. It was like a . . . gold, sort of Hesperides, with that cross . . . n! That back hill used to glow like heather. I never could see heather when I was in Scotland without a sort of homesick feeling for that old hill. The lights, somehow, never seemed quite so gay when you were not along. I remember going back to that old orchard one day after you had been whisked off with your governess somewhere, and wondering what in the world made the change. It was the dreariest sort of feeling

The sunlight was just the same; but I'll be hanged if the gold hadn't turned blue."

The girl had been sitting with her fingers inter-knotted round her knees; but, at Truesdale's words, she took up her brushes.

"I didn't think you were a dreamer in those days," she said.

"I wasn't! I was just the average beast of a boy fond of apples! But they tasted better when you were along! I don't believe you remember what a little dare-devil you were. You once planned to row me out to the sunset on a plank, because you wanted to see if there were not *real* palaces where the clouds and the sea met. And, my word, what yarns you used to tell us. There was always one story about a light-footed nymph that led the wind a race over the sea to the sunset—that was what made the ripples, her ladyship tripping with troops to paradise. I can see you yet with the big leghorn sun-shade, that one with the poppies, swinging over your back and you, up to your neck in the clover fields picking wild daisies. What a wild-flower you were; but I suppose this"—he nodded at the easel and the paintings—"is the explanation!"

A long silence followed, the artist gazing back to the old orchard, the man watching the sunlight play on her hair. It was at the old tricks. He smiled to recall how he used to resent that bronze hair: the gauzy cobwebs somehow snared his belligerent indifference. Truesdale found himself wondering why she was earning her living. There were things

he wanted to know, and had no right to ask; for he had not heard from her for three years. His eyes glanced over the studio. The cosy nooks with draperies hung in a fluff, the antique jars full of flowers, the old prints, the dainty bits of copper and pottery—all were stamped with her character. He had always thought other studios cluttery—a collection of rag mats with holes in them, broken-nosed china, and old jugs. This one had an air of reserve, of cool, fragrant freedom.

"I shall have that picture taken from the window," remarked Madeline presently. "I should never have painted it if I thought anyone could possibly recognize it. I did not know you were coming back to be a great financier."

"Why can't I buy it?"

"You can have it to make up for that pig man's thrashing, if you like."

"But why can't I buy it," repeated Truesdale.

"I never sell things to friends."

Truesdale puckered his brows. She had been an enigma as a girl. She was more of an enigma as a woman.

"Why do you deny your friends?"

"It's a prejudice that I've had since my father bought some of Colonel Dillon's railroad stock because he was a friend. You know the Great Consolidated wrecked that company—'took it over,' 'reorganized it,' I think the papers called it—and then bought up the remnant bankrupts. It would have been quite right—as the world goes, I suppose—

if the blow had not killed my father. By the time all the bric-à-brac and paintings were sold, I was the only thing left for the auctioneer's hammer; and this is the only way I am marketable. I'm all that was left after the Great Consolidated finished with my father. If I have to spoil good canvas that might make wheat bags, and paints that might improve fences—why——” she laughed lightly, “I make it a rule never to impose on my friends because they are friends.”

“When did this happen?” he asked.

“Three years ago.”

“And that was the reason you stopped writing?”

Madeline Connor turned to her box of tubes for burnt umber.

“Don't you think,” she asked, “that the perfume from those roses is slightly overpowering?”

Truesdale ignored the evasion and raised the window. He felt timid of himself. Incidentally, he noticed that sunlight striking hair slantwise turned bronze strands to gold, and that rose-tinted fingernails resembled pink shells.

“So that was the reason you stopped writing? It was hardly fair to a friend—Madeline?”

“Such a tale of woe to dump on a friend,” she laughed.

“Thank you for telling me all this,” said Truesdale quietly.

He was surprised to hear his voice agitated. You cannot tell what your voice may do till you test it; and such a sense of exhilaration suddenly pervaded

the studio that Truesdale's voice did not stand the test. So little had been said between them that it was absolutely nothing; and yet the old glow of subtle delight that had turned the orchard to gold suddenly transfused the afternoon dullness with a pulsing hope. He watched the slant sunlight flooding the room. The same witchery played on her brow, on her lips, in her eyes, as that afternoon in the orchard. He remembered how the hectic color used to flush and wane in her cheeks with every change of mood. It was glowing and fading there now, in bright spots. Truesdale watched the quick, nervous motions of eyes, hands, face; and framed a new theory of dynamics, did this practical young man; though not for a moment did he acknowledge that new dynamics had entered his own life. Motions expressed the personality that was it, he decided; they were the spelling out of thought in form from which, it may be inferred, that Mr. Jack Truesdale, quite impersonally, of course, tried to reason what sort of a character this artist must have, with her sensitive delicate touch and swift, daring fire.

It baffled him—this new-born fire. What did it mean? What would be the result when her nature became fused in the one great fire of existence? It would be no half and half affair with her. It would be transfiguration; or the flash that reveals darkness And all would depend on the object of her love, on the problematical man. . . . Curiously enough, the thought of the problematical

man brought a sudden stop to Truesdale's speculations.

"Have you ever been with people, Madeline, who gave you the impression that you must have known them . . . well? . . . since time began?"

The question had slipped from him unawares.

Madeline laid the brushes down, looked at the picture with her head to one side, and picked the brushes up again.

"Exactly what do you mean?"

"Exactly? . . . I don't know exactly. It isn't the sort of exactness that can be figured out or put in words. Just a whim that two people couldn't recognize each other as kindred friends; couldn't be so instantaneously drawn together, unless they had known each other somewhere before. The sea draws the river, you know; because the river has been there before. And the sun draws the sea; and it's worth running the whole weary round of existence just to find one's destiny."

"I don't believe I know exactly *what* you mean." She ran her fingers down a brush. "When I am with *some* people, I feel as if they had given me wings to go on with the humdrum . . . as if *nothing* could be humdrum——"

"There *may* be a man," thought Mr. Jack Truesdale.

"But it rather frightens me . . ."

"Then, there is *not* a man," thought Mr. Jack Truesdale.

"There is something terrible in the thought that one can't resist destiny."

"Not if destiny is what you would yourself have chosen," interrupted Truesdale.

"About that picture," interposed the artist. "I'll have the office boy take it to your address."

"It *may* be her art," he thought.

"Yes, about that picture," he said out loud, "as you used yourself for the model of the girl; who—if you don't mind telling me—posed for the boy? And who—if it isn't secret—is your friend, the pig?"

"My friend, the pig, was a gentleman of a tenor voice in a certain stock company that played in a back yard. I'm sorry to say since that picture was painted he has been reincarnated——"

"In sausages," suggested Truesdale. "And—the boy?"

"Is the very best boy I have known for mischief since I knew you, True. I met him first when I was painting in the tenements. He stole food and wouldn't give his name for fear of putting the police on his mother's tracks. Mr. Hebden got him out of gaol; but his mother had disappeared. Mr. Ward took a fancy to one of the pictures of him. Then Mr. Hebden and Mrs. Ward got him a position as messenger for the Great Consolidated. He lives at the cottage with my mother. He is still my best model."

Truesdale's face grew serious.

"Madeline . . . do you go painting in those tenements . . . by yourself?"

"Why not? I am as poor as the poorest; and I am very much interested in the poor since that stock speculation, or peculation, made me poor. I like to study out what makes people poor. Aren't you interested in the great questions of the day?"

"Only in a theoretical sort of way," returned Truesdale stiffly.

It was one of his prejudices to dislike women who interested themselves in "questions." Poverty he relegated to the mercies of Providence and faddish ladies who called at business offices for contributions to elaborate charities.

"I hate theory." There was no mistaking the sincerity of her sentiment. "It seems to me more theories are made to explain wrong than to prevent it. Poverty itself is too cruelly real! I often wonder if there's no getting to the bottom of the hideous wrongs beside data put away in office files. Why is there such poverty? Mine, for instance, was not necessary. Budd, my boy model, should not have been compelled to steal for food. He couldn't get food 'on the square'—as he called it—because the price of meat, and coal, and bread had gone up. And the price had gone up . . . there, I stop! It's like the stock speculation or peculation that ruined my father. Everybody suffers . . . nobody is to blame . . . and it can't be helped! Oh, . . . I hate your theories! I'm glad I'm a woman and don't need to have them to justify me! Somehow, some men get the power to compel others to sell at a sacrifice, to buy at high prices. The

others have no choice they must pay high—or starve! I don't see much difference between that and putting a pistol to a man's head while you pick his pockets! But, of course, I am only a woman! Men would say I am hysterical and emotional—that all this is impersonal! The price of everything goes up—why? If I were a man I should trace that back and back if I had to go to the deluge——”

“Then what would you do?” asked Truesdale with gentle sarcasm. He awakened to the fact that the girl's fire might stand for more than a latent power to love. Her words had an unpleasantly personal ring.

“What would I do when I got back to the deluge?” she repeated slowly, turning deliberately to him. “God knows what I could do! But two things I do know: I would not do nothing; I would not rest supine with folded hands, while the world writhed in the pain of a curable anguish; I would not fatten on the ruin of others as President Ward and Colonel Dillon have been doing! Oh—they are rich—I know they are rich—rich enough to pave the vaults of heaven with gold and buy up half a dozen Europes; but they are rich men whose names make the honest rich blush, and the honest poor curse! The other thing I know is this: the man who shows the world how to bring old truth to bear on new wrongs will be the apostle of a new dawn!”

“Dear! dear! Is it as bad as this?” thought

Truesdale. "This girl is guilty of brains! She actually believes what she believes!"

If the words had been uttered by a woman faddist addicted to "questions," he could have brushed aside the sense of personal responsibility. He might have set her down as one more of the envious shriekers, of the failures, of the shiftless, obstructing success; but she was the living victim of the wrong she denounced; and she was unconscious of that denunciation having any bearing on himself. The intensity of her feelings had set the hectic spots flushing. All the latent fire flashed to the luminous pupils of the gray eyes. Her lips trembled. She bent over a jar of roses as she talked.

"I've thought so much about these things," she said softly.

In his mental world women with the possession of thoughts always shrieked them, so that a heedless world could not but hear; but these thoughts in the tremulous voice stole on one unawares.

"Since my father's death life has brought me so close to things that I have been compelled to think!" She hesitated with a tremor of lips fatal to his stoicism. "I can't shut my eyes to terrible facts any more, the way we women always do when we can! We're cowards, True! We shut our eyes to frightful realities; and say little nice things, bits of poetry about mystery and Providence and resignation! I can't shut my eyes to terrible facts any longer—I'm up against them, True!"

Truesdale did not answer a word. If her lips

would only stop quivering he might have accepted the situation more airily. Leaning across the table he took one of the roses from her hand and put it in his buttonhole.

"I feel like one groping in the dark!"

"Obviously," thought Truesdale.

"But I've come to one conclusion?"

"Have you?" he asked almost roughly. They had fought things out as children. He was not prepared to give her femininity quarter, if she pressed him too closely. "I never come to conclusions any more, Madeline! The more I know of modern life, the less I know what to think. You might as well ask a man to sleep in his babyhood crib as to fit modern business to the Ten Commandments!"

"But that is only a narrow way of looking at it," objected the girl.

Truesdale caught his breath. He was not used to being called narrow.

"My conclusion is very old-fashioned," she went on. "It's just this: no matter what the starting point is, when you've traced things back, it's always to the same cause Some one taking more than his share some one encroaching on some one else's rights wrong sin just old-fashioned cussedness . . . !"

"Oh," said Mr. Jack Truesdale very impersonally.

It was characteristic of a woman to lead up to such a childish conclusion; but he did not laugh. How could he explain that the words "wrong—sin"

had for him no meaning; that they had gone out with the going out of the old century; that all the words entailed had no place in modern thought? To be weak, to be not fit to survive—that was sin, the one and only sin of the new century; and nature wiped the sinner out.

"Oh," smiled Truesdale. "Wrong is rather a narrow term!"

"It depends on the way you use it," continued Madeline. "If it means breaking law, scientific law, health law, national law—seems to me it's a wide term. But what does it matter what you call it? The wrong is in encroaching on the rights of others . . ."

"What rights?" cut in Truesdale tersely.

"Well," laughed Madeline, "I think most of us have been pretty well stuffed by our teachers about the rights of 'Life, . . Liberty, . . and Happiness' mentioned in an old document called the Declaration of Independence."

"Yes," mused Truesdale, "we boys used to get our heads cracked over those old rights." What he was thinking was that the rights had gone out of fashion, fallen before the new commerce like a house of cards. "Life is made up of a good deal more than the teachers tell us," he went on vaguely. "Each fellow must get the facts bumped into his own cosmos by actual living."

"My cosmos is black and blue with bumps," laughed the girl. "Because I am the under dog I

don't admit that the other dog has the right to throttle me."

* * * * *

Afterward, when he was in his own apartments, Truesdale flicked the cigar ashes from the sleeve of his dinner coat and invoked the spaniel "to think hard."

"Have we met a woman with something in her head beside hairpins? And do we like her? I don't think so! And has she met a man with anything more to him than a capital S with two sticks through it . . . in fact, dollars?"

Thereupon Truesdale opened the evening paper, and this is what he read:

The Great Consolidated gained ten points on N. Y. 'Change to-day owing to harmonious arrangements among three of the great companies that have hitherto been rivals.

"My hand is to be forced by a tempting announcement, is it? And Thomas goes a-fishing."

The next item that called his attention modestly announced itself in lettering the size of a lead pencil, and informed the public that Thomas Ward, the great financier, had donated ten thousand tons of coal to the poor and a train-load of western flour to the hospitals.

"In the first place, it's a balloon," said Truesdale. "In the second, it's a fig-leaf for crookedness. In the third, charity is cheaper than justice," and he flung the paper to the floor. It is to be observed there were three Truesdales: one had agreed with

Thomas Ward; another had contradicted Madeline; the third expressed conclusions altogether different to himself.

He mused late, paying no heed to call-bell and telephone. "If *she* were a man she would trace this back to the deluge, doggie! Then what—Sir? She would get wet; wouldn't she? Or she would take refuge in a Noah's ark of lying platitudes. Women are all alike in one respect, my bob-tail friend—eyes on the moon, feet in the gutter!"

Had Truesdale given an account of his thoughts he would have said that he was considering the proposals of the Great Consolidated; but one phantom glided in many forms along the surface of these thoughts. Afterward came a shifting dream of some myth garden with sunlight sifting through orchard aisles in a golden mist. A form that cast no shadow glided near . . . and nearer.

"I knew that you would come," he was saying. Then he wakened dazed from a blinding sense of elusive reality. Daylight poured through the window.

"A dream," he mused; but he dreamed the dream over again wide awake. It stayed with him all the day in a sort of subconscious sense of life promising exquisite happiness.

CHAPTER XI

THE CREED WORKED OUT BY LITTLE MEN AND LESS BRAINS

THE mining village lay in a sleep. Women were indoors and the men underground. At intervals a coal truck shot out of the tunnel mouths against the hillside, slid down the trestled tramway with a noise of buzzing wheels, emptied automatically with a clattering of coal at the bottom, wheeled round the curved track, ran lightly up the parallel trestleway, and whisked back into the yawning blackness of the tunnel mouth. Lest the trucks slipped a cable, or failed to dump the loads out, a man had been stationed half a mile below the hill at the foot of the tramway. That was the only sign of human life about the mines of the Great Consolidated.

The huff . . . huff . . . huff of the little power engine that kept the mine ventilators going, the heavy breathings of the locomotives in the valley, the jolting of cars drawing the coal away, the humming of the flying cables, the rumbling of the trucks—all seemed instinct with a life that was not human, with a blind, driving, relentless Force, a Force

with neither let nor hindrance, neither beginning nor end, a Thing that embodied itself in one huge, grinding Machine!

Overhead, the sky reeked with the amber thaw of a warm sun. The tree-feathered outline of the hill appeared like a network against the sky. Below, swirled the river, swollen with the pent forces of breaking winter, swift and cold and relentless, like the Force of the Machine-Thing. And everywhere the soft haze of gray mists lay, an impalpable veil.

But the two men toiling up the hillside saw neither machinery nor scenery. One was absorbed in coming at a subject by running all round it. The other was busy practicing precepts which years of employment with the Great Consolidated had ingrained in his nature; precepts which were altogether worthy and commendable when the Great Consolidated practiced them, but not so worthy and commendable when practiced against the Great Consolidated; precepts to put the screw on when you have the chance, and get the most from the other party to a contract when you can force his hand. One was Obadiah Saunders, secretary to the Great Consolidated. The other was Kipp, the engineer, who had been dismissed for expressing the honest opinion that Shaft 10 was unsafe, and who had seen his prophecy verified by the killing of twenty men, and who had suddenly discovered that his services were five times more valuable to the company as a dangerous enemy than as a faithful serv-

ant. As Obadiah became more melting, Kipp began to swagger. He could not help it. His triumph from unexplained dismissal to unexplained reinstatement at five times larger salary had been so complete. Though Kipp stood six feet high, his height converged to a very small head. Kipp's brains were in inverse proportion to his length; so Kipp swaggered.

"We were thinking, Kipp," Obadiah was saying softly, "we were thinking of opening some new mines in Peru."

"Y' are eh?" grinned Kipp. Kipp spat tobacco with exact precision at a stone in the road.

"How much would you ask, now, if we needed a man to examine them? Not," added Obadiah quickly, "not that I am able to promise you the place. It's a chance for the man who gets it. Let me see, now There must be a hundred applicants in for the position already."

"Thur are, are thur?" asked Kipp, with another broad grin. Kipp's shambling sweater, and his shambling trousers, and his shambling high boots that swished together as he walked, all wrinkled, too, as if they wanted to laugh like Kipp.

"I could use my influence to recommend you," purred Obadiah, with the soft intonation of a question. "That is—Kipp—I could if you, you didn't ask too high a salary." Obadiah thoughtfully drew his hands through his beard.

"Ain't travelin' at present," spat out Kipp, biting off another chew of tobacco.

Obadiah turned in the climb and examined the landscape below. A big, squarish-built man in blue overalls passed them, touching his hat with surly respect to the secretary, winking over his shoulder to the engineer.

"That's McGee, the I. W. W. delegate, isn't it?" asked Saunders, gently.

"Looks like him," muttered Kipp.

"How is he succeeding with Truesdale's miners? Have any of them come over to your union yet?"

"Haven't heard," retorted Kipp. Also, Kipp waved the hand farthest from the secretary in a scarcely perceptible signal to the labor delegate now disappearing in the tunnel.

Obadiah took out his handkerchief and gently moistened his lips. "Kipp," he said, dropping his voice very low, "let us stop fencing! How *much—do—you want—anyway?*"

Kipp grinned broadly. He couldn't help it. His height converged to a small head and he had been waiting for Obadiah's circling to come to the point by running all round it.

"Guess I could worry 'long with a matter o' ten thousand spot down," volunteered Kipp with a toss to his head, and a hitch to his shoulders, and a rat-tat-too of one boot on the ground.

Obadiah gasped and put all ten fingers in his beard at one clutch.

"This is a steep climb," said the secretary.

"I guess so," agreed Kipp.

"We'll have to settle him—we'll have to settle him," thought the secretary.

"And now, Silky," cogitated Kipp, "how does that phase your dirty phiz? Cheaper to mend rotten timbers next time!"

"Kipp," panted Obadiah, dropping his voice confidentially, "exactly—*how*—did it happen?"

"Just the way I said it would," boasted Kipp.

"We sank that shaft calculating to strike the first tunnel running in from the cliff."

"Yes, I know," nodded Saunders, gazing far down the deserted valley. The Machine-Force had sole possession of the lonely, mist-gray valley. Even the man at the foot of the tramway had disappeared.

"When we reached the level of the river, angle forty-five first hundred feet, then, straight dip, the vein faulted, didn't merge in tunnel ledge at all; ran off at right angle to the river. That's where I found out we had run into the Truesdale mines—were off our limits a hundred yards."

"Yes, I know! Never mind that," murmured the secretary, gazing absently at the far valley.

"Well, sir," Kipp forgot his swagger when he talked of his work, "when you're down there, you're level with the bottom. I suspected an underground stream down there. I advised stronger timbers to keep her solid. It wouldn't have cost two hundred dollars," vowed Kipp, indignantly, "and you've paid two hundred times that hushing up the claimants;

but you don't hush *me*, sir, not after that accident, with our tunnel robbing the Truesdale mines!"

"Too bad—too bad!" murmured Saunders sympathetically, with a deep intersection of thoughtful lines across his white brow.

"About a hundred yards back from the shaft the bottom fell out o' the mine—that's all! There was a cave-in or cave-down, with twenty poor fellows dead under the heap! You've got a lake down there, black as pitch, scuddin' round without any bottom to it, far as I could find."

"Were all the bodies recovered, Kipp?"

"Yes, sir," answered Kipp, grave and stern, "and I'm thinking it's little you'd care if the whole union went into that hole, providin' it didn't affect dividends and your stock jobbin'!"

There was a long silence, Kipp kicking his heels, the secretary knotting and interknotting his hands under his coat tails.

"We wired you, Kipp, to fill that shaft up with rocks! We've had enough loss of life . . ."

"Yes—it comes high—don't it?" muttered Kipp.

"We don't want newspapers spying down there! It was hard work keeping those muddle-heads of coroners off the scent!"

"And you couldn't have done *that* if *I* hadn't kept quiet," added Kipp.

"Have you filled the shaft up?"

"I've got your telegrams here, sir! Timbers and rocks all ready at the edge. Could fill her up in ten

minutes, but I haven't done it; I haven't done it, yet—by Jing!"

"Why not, Kipp?" wheedled Saunders.

Kipp grunted a hoarse laugh. "What d' y' take me for? You've got to settle with me, first!"

"That's what I'm here for, Kipp!"

"Tis—is it? Well, when the company fixes me up I'll fill her so the rip o' Judgment Day can't excavate her!"

"My dear fellow—" they had reached the miners' quarters when the secretary turned with languishing reproach to the engineer—"my dear fellow, what do you take the company for? It's no dime concern to dicker over a few dollars. Make your mind easy on that score, Kipp! You have named the figure. Trust me to write the check!"

"Check be damned!" swore Kipp. "You know right well the company don't write checks for them kind o' services! It pays cash! I gave straight talk on that shaft, and you didn't take it! You've buffaloed the claimants, but you don't buffalo me! I've got two cards up my sleeve, either one o' them worth a good hundred thousand! There are twenty men dead, as ought to be alive to-day! There's a company, I know, as has been robbing from its neighbor's ledge! Now, you can pay the piper for your little dance! You're gettin' off cheap at ten thousand!"

"Well, you needn't shout it, Kipp," said Saunders, as they entered the bunk house.

Kipp stamped.

"I'd like you to know right off that not a single rock, not a single pebble, not a grain o' dirt goes down that shaft till I've—got—the cash—in my pocket!"

"We'll have to settle him! We'll have to settle him!" thought Obadiah.

"Kipp," he said gently, decisively, "if you come to my office to-morrow, I'll pay you the cash!—Now, are you satisfied?"

"I'll tell you when I've got it whether I'm satisfied or not," wagged Kipp. "You're getting off cheap, Mr. Saunders! Every one o' them claimants could get ten thousand in the courts! An' there's something else!"

Obadiah dropped back aghast.

"Yes, sir—there's something else. Some of you gentlemen ought to go down, yourselves, and see that shaft. You ought to report to the directors. I ain't goin' t' have my report go up as blackmail. You ought to go down, yourself, an' report!"

Obadiah stood meditating. If the fellow would only consent to a check, or defer his demands, there would be time to think what should be done with this troublesome engineer. "We'll certainly have to settle him!" thought Saunders. The huff huff of the little power engine far below in the valley, the heavy breathings of the locomotives, the jolting of the cars, the humming of the flying cables, the rumble of the trucks—all seemed instinct with a life that was not human, with a blind, driving, relentless Force, a Force with neither let nor hin-

drance, neither beginning nor end, a Thing that embodied itself in one huge, grinding Machine. Even the man at the foot of the tramway had disappeared.

The idea of this Kipp, this engineer fellow, with but little brains, opposing himself to such a Force—Pshaw! Obadiah smiled with a sickly scorn of the fool.

“Well?” demanded Kipp insolently. “What do you say to your going down yourself?”

A little spark of fire gleamed in the secretary's ferret eyes.

“Certainly! I'll go down—go down, now—with you!”

“There's no hoist running,” warned Kipp. “We'll have to scramble down the ladder, then crawl along from the bottom of the shaft. Electric lights were blown out by the shock. We'll use lanterns. It's all right—it's safe. There's no fire damp!”

“Well, Kipp,” answered Obadiah jovially. “I've climbed dark places before. Get your rig ready.”

Kipp went off laughing for the lanterns and clothing. The triumph was so complete. Kipp knew an opportunity when he saw it! To compel “Silky,” the immaculate, “Lady Macbeth,” the foxy schemer, to go down a slippery, coal-black ladder and walk through dark tunnels with coal water soaking down his back—was a joke, which Kipp was prepared to retail for the rest of his life. Kipp knew an opportunity when he saw it, did Kipp! And just to finish off his victory he would not fetch waterproof

clothes. Oh, Kipp knew an opportunity, he did; and he emitted great guffaws as he ran for the lanterns.

But Obadiah knew an opportunity when he saw it, too. Kipp's back was not turned before Saunders slipped into the telephone office, rang up the foreman of the mines, and sent a soft-toned message to the underground toilers that might have puzzled Kipp.

"It is Mr. Saunders who is speaking—reporters are spying round that dangerous shaft—have a force of a hundred men at the top of Shaft 10—listen distinctly now—at the top of Shaft 10—in precisely half an hour—neither more nor less than half an hour—await my orders there."

At each pause the secretary's soft voice sank to gentle cadences of patience with the man at the other end of the wire. Then, he slipped from the telephone box and was back in the bunk house before Kipp returned.

"If he takes twenty minutes to change his clothes—Lordy!—how long will he take to report on the pool?" thought Kipp, waiting for the dapper secretary to emerge from the bunk house.

Inside, Saunders stood with his watch in his hand. As Kipp lighted the lanterns at the top of Shaft 10, Saunders put his watch aside. From the blurred windows of the bunk house he saw a force of men come from a tunnel far below the cliff.

Oh, Kipp knew an opportunity when he saw it,

did Kipp! It was such a joke that he could hardly keep from laughing.

"Ready, sir?" Kipp dived into the darkness of the shaft, scrambling down, face in, face out, any way, clinging and swinging, he knew the ladder so well he could slide down like a boy on a pole.

"All hope abandon here!" he shouted up jocosely from the swallowing blackness. And how he laughed when he looked up to see Obadiah's figure against the white light of the shaft opening, clambering down cautiously, backing slowly, rung by rung, face to the wall, "for all the world, like a scared baboon," laughed Kipp, swinging down hand over fist, faster than ever.

"Come on, sir! Come on!" shouted Kipp from the depths. "Oh, Lordy—oh, Lordy, will I ever get over this?" he laughed to himself. "I'll wait for you at the pool!" he shouted up. "Just follow along the tunnel!"

His foot touched solid rock. He was at the bottom.

Oh, Lordy, was there ever so fine a joke? The old boy will knock his head off against tie beams, and bark his ankles in good shape. Teach him to reduce wages. He'll know how it feels nine hours a day underground.

Kipp doubled up with laughter. Never mind! Kipp knew a thing or two. He wouldn't let "Silky" tumble into the pool. Kipp knew when to stop. He would wait at the margin of the water—this as he sped through the cold, dark, slippery tunnel at a

run. The glossy rocks jutting through the gloom in massy figures took form like gnomes in the light of his lantern, and retreated in the darkness as he ran. Then came a swish—as of water—Kipp slackened pace to a saunter. He saw the glass of an electric bulb, tried to switch the light on and found that the shock had burnt out the wire.

“Not much oil in my lamp,” ruminated Kipp, “but ‘Silky’s’ got the crack safety of the mine! He’s all right!”

He looked back the tunnel way for sign of Saunders. All was darkness. Kipp set to examining the wall where they had been drifting and cross-cutting.

“He’s takin’ a hell of a time,” remarked Kipp, glancing toward the shaft again, “but he can break his dirty neck ’fore I go back for him.”

The pool circled glassy, oily, treacherous, round and round. Beyond lay a jumbled mass where the rock had caved in. Kipp became suddenly stern. In his little nature was one reverence, one only; reverence for thorough work; and the botched heap across the pool had violated that reverence.

“I wish he’d tumble down and break his cursed, mean, cringing neck!” piously ejaculated Kipp. “If he takes till Judgment, I’m not goin’ back for him. I’ll make them pay up for this slip-shod job.”

He seated himself on a ledge of rock by the water; and Kipp had bitter thoughts. Dead men, white-faced in the dark and mangled of limb, have a reproachful way of stamping themselves on men-

ory. You may bluff judge and jury, my clever gentlemen, but the dead faces will haunt your gloom for many a long day yet! It had been dangerous work for Kipp to lead the rescue crew along the narrow ledge past the sink, but it was worse to dig the bodies out, wrest them limb from limb, from weights no hands could lift! Kipp shuddered as he saw the picture mirrored again in the murky pool.

"By God!" he swore, "I'll make them pay for this!—I'll make them pay!—I'll make them pay—till—they—squirm!"

And, perhaps—who can say?—the puny oath of shallow lips that never mentioned Deity but to swear—was registered and carried out in ways the little, narrow brain could never guess!

Something crashed crashed reverberated boomed through the mine fading in rocketing echoes that left the vitals of the earth quivering.

The pool splashed . . . splashed dully up and fell back trembling!

"Guess they're blasting in that tunnel," thought Kipp, with a leap. "Here's a pretty howdydo! Here's a nice, messy business! Some of that loose rock will be smashin' in on us!"

Snatching up his lantern he ran for the shaft.

But a second crash came, louder, continuous, with a hollow roar, a sweep of choking dust and suffocating air, with a crash! . . . crash! . . . crash!

. . . like a fusillade of artillery! It came from the shaft in the fury and rush of an avalanche!

Kipp's heart stood still! Cold sweat broke from his forehead and palms! The roof of his mouth became hot! He listened with a sensation of bursting pain in his temples, in his chest, in his throat! Another crash—rocketing—roaring—quaking through the earth—another—and another—bounding from rock to rock with a blast of dusty air that choked and blinded Kipp!

"Great God!" he shouted. "There's been a mistake! . . . They're filling up the shaft! They don't know we're down! Saunders will be done for; and they'll blame me—McGee saw me bringing him here! I told McGee the joke I was goin' to play—" and he rushed through the choking dust, shouting, "Mr. Saunders! Mr. Saunders!"

But where was the light of the secretary's lantern? Something crashed down overhead, knocked Kipp's lantern from his hand and smashed the lamp to atoms. The wick fizzled out like a match in water. Kipp bounded back with the scream of a trapped beast, back in the pitchy dark beyond reach of the falling rocks! There was not a sign of Saunders. Kipp was alone.

Then Kipp knew.

It came like the flash of lightning that only illumines the greater darkness.

"Great God! This is murder! . . . this is murder!" he sobbed, staggering backward, wringing his hands. "This is murder! . . . this is murder!"

Then the hoom . . . boom . . . boom of the rocks roused him! He would not stand there helpless while that blackguard filled in this living grave! He would not live on, to die by inches in the dark! He would fight his way up, though cut at every step! . . . He would climb faster than the rocks could fall! . . . He would rise from that grave with the marks of their bloody crime! Better be killed than starved! . . . And he lurled himself with all the agile strength of a beast's last leap for life!

But it was useless. There was not a glimmer of daylight at the top of the shaft. The opening was now filled. The base was solid.

Kipp stumbled off, weak, trembling, sobbing like a child, with mad hopes from tales he had heard of men carving their way through solid prison walls. He felt his pockets; but in changing his clothes he had not brought even a knife. The rescue crew, a dead miner, might have dropped a wrench, or bar. He went groping slowly through the tunnel way, feeling along the oozing damp for iron or pick, saying . . . "Great God! . . . This is murder! . . . This is murder!"

A swish of waters, of waters going slowly, oilily, treacherously, round and round—arrested him! It was the pool! He kneeled forward, beating his hands impotently against the rocks. Then he tried to control himself, pressing his hands to his head. They were saturated with a gush of warm blood. He had been cut by the falling rocks.

Surely, when his wife, when McGee, the labor delegate, missed him, they would think of Shaft 10; but no—he had told them if he did not return from the city for six months not to be alarmed. He would “make the G. C. pay up, if he had to go to Peru.” At that, Kipp fell to the wet rock, weeping. For the only time in his shallow life he prayed—prayed in wild ravings, the tragic cry of the beaten, the crushed, the defeated in life’s struggle, the cry that has no meaning but its own hopeless helplessness!

And who can say that the cry was not registered somewhere in the great balance scales of cause and effect, that weigh so finely, so relentlessly, so regardlessly of time and place and forgetfulness, that a man often suffers at forty for the act springing from the unclean thought planted at twenty? For, after praying—expending his excitement—Kipp became calm and did the bravest thing that he had ever done in all the course of his little-minded, short, shallow life. On the floor his hand had dangled over the edge of the pool. He felt the current . . . sat up . . . threw his hat into the water. Then, he reached out his hands and felt the water-soaked thing come sailing round in the current. It floated past, came round again, below the surface, more water-soaked. Though he reached down to his armpits it did not float round again. It had been carried away by a current. Where? He pulled off his smock, ripped it to strands, tied them together, weighted the end with a stone, and dragged

the pool. The string was sucked, drawn, dragged gradually with irresistible force from his hand . . . and swept away! Kipp sprang up, jerking off boots and socks.

"If I fail . . . if I fail . . . may God blast them down as they've done me . . . blast them to ten thousand Hells!"

He drew back five paces.

"It's the only chance!"

With a full breath, hands raised and a forward dash, he dived down! There was a plunging splash. Then the pool washed heavily back, with the swirling . . . swirling . . . of the oily black ripples, round and round, in an endless circle.

A little gurgling bubble suckled up and escaped from the oily surface of the silent pool. And that was the last of Kipp.

CHAPTER XII

THE CREED IN THE LITTLE MAN WITH A CONSCIENCE

MIDWAY in the descent, Saunders paused.

There is an old adage to the effect—when in doubt, don't! Unfortunately, it's only applicable when it's not needed; for all that a great deal of deviltry requires is that the powers making for goodness should be quiescent. Perhaps, Saunders paused because he repented of what he had intended to do; but if he had not hesitated the thing could not have happened.

Far down in the black depths of the mine, a little, steel-blue flame flickered, shifted, and receded like a star ray on a misty night. A chill swept up that seemed to numb his moral faculties to a torpor. It was like eternal night . . . eternal silence down there, with only the echo of the Great Machine-Force, toiling, driving, outside in the valley. The fellow was a fly on the cog . . . that was it . . . this engineer fellow was a gnat monkeying with the buzz-saw of the Machine-Powers! Anyway, who took note of the thousands, the millions, the tens of millions of fool creatures like the engineer fellow?

They were born, and ate, and slept, and, sometimes, buzzed a little—so much the worse for them!—and died! What did a little sooner, or a little later, really matter?

A faint, far, muffled call, like the tinkle of a tiny bell in a dome, or a ghost voice, came up the shaft with a taunting laugh—"Come on, sir!"

"The fool," muttered Saunders, chilled and trembling, continuing to clamber painfully down the steep ladder, "he *may* tumble into the pool."

But at the foot of the first ladder was a rock landing, where the shaft went out to a ledge and dropped sheer as a wall. He groped for the edge, banging his lantern unhandily. The rock was slimed with wet. Shaking and breathless, he peered over the rim. The little star flame shone fainter.

"Kipp!" he shouted, hoarsely. His voice came back blanketed, deadened.

He heard *the* drop—drop—drop, cold, dull, measured, of water *trickling* through the rocks. It gave the same *impression* of unseeing, unfeeling, as the Machine-Thing *outside*. What was life, anyway, but a little streak of light girt round by the blind darkness?

"Kipp!" he shouted. "Kipp, you fool!" he hissed over the ledge. Then to himself, "Ward can do his own dirty work!" But, in the moment that he hesitated came visions of the blank checks payable to Kipp in Peru. The little flame below steadied for an instant, then darted off in the darkness. Saunders listened. There was the drip—drip—

drip, and something more. What was it? Like a sigh of wind! Kipp had called. Saunders heard only an ululating whisper, a soft, sibilant laving, the wash as of waters. It was the pool.

"Kipp! Kipp!" shouted the secretary.

A pebble came bouncing from the top of the shaft, a pebble so easily started, so impossible to recall. Some of the gang at the top had stepped too close. The stone bounded from side to side with light skipping echoes till it ricocheted down and struck the prostrate form of the secretary. He sprang up with terror, to scabble up the ladder with knocking knees. As he climbed the thought—what if the gang had begun to fill the shaft? Daylight fell on him like a flood of reality in a nightmare. The strong bass voice of the foreman was asking:

"Was it you, sir? You've had a narrow escape! I knowed you sent for us to heave her full. Mr. Kipp bein' away, if you hadn't given pertic'ler orders about waitin' I'd 'a' filled her up! I didn't know no one was such a fool as—as to go down that dang'rous hole, if you'll excuse my sayin' so—sir!"

"Oh," observed the secretary, staggering to firm ground.

"Mr. Kipp hadn't ought to let you go alone, sir! But Kipp's been hitted against the comp'y since the accident."

"Alone!" gasped Obadiah. "No, I certainly should not have gone—alone! It's used me up."

Air was vile. Do any of you happen to know just *where* Mr. Kipp . . . is?" asked the secretary, visibly chattering and white to the lips.

"Gone to town, sir, about some quarrel with the comp'y! Better go and take a drink, sir! It's a groggy place with memory o' all them dead miners, as I seen 'em last. Wull I give the word to heave her up?"

Saunders looked blank. It was so much easier to set the stone rolling than to stop it half-way.

"Heave her up!" ordered the foreman, not waiting for instructions.

And Saunders smiled a smile with his yellow lips that was not good to see. Then, he hurried to the bunk house to change his clothes. The changing was difficult. His hands shook so that he could scarcely grasp the buttons. He drew a small flask from his pocket and drained it to the dregs. Then, he jerked the miner's suit off somehow. When the sound of falling rocks no longer reached the bunk house, Saunders was saying—"Thank God, I didn't do it! I didn't give the order! I could tell Ward that he suicided; but then, there are the checks for Peru! Thank God, I didn't do it!"

All of which—as Saunders knew—was to silence a voice within that spoke louder than that crashing thud of rocks hurling down Shaft 10. Saunders had always succeeded in deceiving others. That was bad. Then, he began to succeed in hoodwinking himself. That was *worse*. Now, he had deceived himself into believing that he might evade conse-

quences—or in Christian phraseology, hoodwink God. That was *worst*. It was hopeless. It took for granted that the Ruler of the universe was a fool; or that you could depend on chance, which is a contradiction.

When he was at last dressed, a new and horrible uncertainty possessed him. If he kept away, that might create suspicion. . (Suspicion of what—he did not ask. That is where self-excusing is accusing; a sort of supposition that God winks.) And if he went out, a fear gripped him by the throat of something gashed and bruised, climbing from the rocks, clotted with blood. He had not calculated on that form forever running before him in the dark; forever hounding him like a shadow in the light. He shut his eyes. It was still there, a clotted phantom haunting eternity. Would it always be like that? He felt as if something had blotted out heaven, and earth, and sunshine, and life—like a great, heavy cloud, the cloud of his own consciousness. Then, the old lines came to memory: "If I make my bed in Hell. Thou art there." Pshaw! The secretary did not purpose going mad over one fool the more or less; for the liquor was mounting to his bloodless brain, his colorless lips. Then, like certain types of degenerate criminals who can laugh at a lynching and crack jokes over their blackest deeds—he threw his head back and laughed hysterically. A devilish suggestion possessed him that if the echo of that laughter reached Hell it would frighten the Grim Fear there. You see, Obadiah

THE CREED IN THE LITTLE MAN 175

was still disturbed by a conscience, or a sense of self-reproach—call it what you will! If he had not been, he would no more have laughed at Kipp's end than he would have at the destruction of a persistent gnat. It was the sense of self-reproach that made him defiant and hysterical.

He cautiously drew aside the glazed blind of the bunk house. The rocks were heaped above the shaft. A miner was jamming at them with a crow-bar. The heap sagged and sank. Saunders drew a sigh of relief. More rocks went down. Again, the man pried with the crow-bar. This time the pile did not hudge. It was solid. It—whatever "it" meant to the secretary—could never come up, now. He stopped trembling. He walked across to the gang with the jaunty swagger of exaggerated self-possession that always betrays what it hides. That is—he was self-possessed for the fraction of a second. Then, his eye fell on a man in blue overalls, a fellow with shock hair, bushy brows, and eyes capable of either fanaticism or crime. The fellow looked at the secretary curiously, meditatively, insolently. All the wild blood of the tiger surged to the soft-spoken secretary's manner.

"Foreman, *who* is this fellow?"

"I'll answer, boss," cut in the man. "I'm McGee, the I. W. W. man sent by the G. S. to the Truesdale mines to get the men to join our union. Mebbe, you've forgotten, sir? You were with Kipp!"

"Ah—to be sure! Yes—yes!" agreed Obadiah.

It may be supposed that the trapped tiger does not lose its cunning. As Saunders hurried to catch his train he yet took time to call at Kipp's cottage.

"Is Mr. Kipp in?" he languidly asked a sallow woman with her hair in curl papers.

"How d'y' do, Mister Saunders," simpered the curl papers, with the bow and the smirk of a ballet dancer. "Kipp was goin' t' the city to see you to-day?" The curl papers smiled very confidentially.

Being nothing, if not confidential, Obadiah smiled back. "If y' didn't see Kipp, I guess 'e' s' gone to see you . . . to see you, about Peru, you know?" laughed the curl papers.

"Ah, about Peru, Mrs. Kipp, very good," lisped Obadiah with a melting smile as he politely lifted his hat and held it deferentially in his hand. "Did . . . did . . . he say he would object to my giving you *your* share . . . of the money . . . of the salary that is to go to Peru?" inquired Obadiah softly.

"Why, no—'e didn't, Mr. Saunders," smiled the curl papers. Mentally, the curl papers had decided "'e was all right; and 'e'd call'd," she guessed, "to bring the money himself!"

"*Very* good . . . he has gone to the city to see me about the mines in Peru, Mrs. Kipp." (You must know, it was not *what* he said, but the way he said it. Mrs. Kipp afterwards told a friend that "She was tickled all over.") "I'll bring the money out, myself, Misses Kipp . . . and . . . it would be just as well not to create jealousy among the engineers by talking about the little arrangement."

"Oh . . . I guess I catch on, Mr. Saunders," laughed the curl papers, knowingly, volubly.

"I hope I see you *very* well, Mrs. Kipp! You look *remarkably* well, Mrs. Kipp! Dear me, I thought Kipp, the lucky dog, was older! I shall see you again, Mrs. Kipp. I bid you good-day." His voice lingered softly. So did his look.

Mrs. Kipp confided to a friend afterwards that "Kipp could say what *he* liked! *She* didn't care! Men were always jealous; but Mister Saunders *was* a delightful gentleman!"

"Say, McGee, he was sort o' sawed-off short with you," remarked the foreman to the walking delegate. "I thought you were working at Truesdale's mines to get the fellows to join us?"

"So I am; but I came across to fish."

"Ain't it early for fishin'?"

"Not for suckers," said McGee.

"Say, when you're fishin' down there, keep your eyes open for things, clothes, you know! Might git 'em on your hook! We had an accident, you know; less said the better; but there's a current out to the river from this shaft somewheres! So long!"

PART III
POWER MILITANT

CHAPTER XIII

THE CREED THAT THE GREATER POWER WINS

By the time Mr. Jack Truesdale had finished dressing, daylight had dispelled all dreams. He was quite as ready as Ward to ignore all obstacles to fortune. Woman's influence on man's affairs—he soliloquized—was like opium: an enchantment at the beginning, followed by hallucinations and the sleep of profound indifference that awakened to one of two things—flatness, or frenzy. In a word, it was easier to resist a woman's influence away from her. It was like the opium: you did not realize the spell till strength to resist was bewitched.

Thirty million was a large amount, even as fortunes were reckoned at the beginning of the new century; and the prospect appealed to Truesdale as strongly as to Ward. It would not all come to him. There were the other shareholders; but such a dividend would enhance the company's stock so that it could be increased a hundred-fold without the addition of another dollar. The sale of the

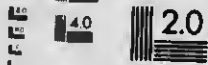
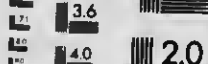
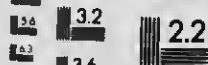
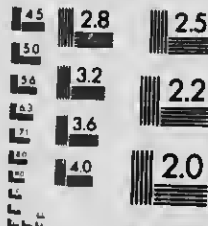
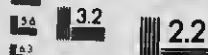
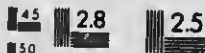
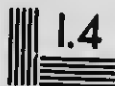
increased stock would mean a great deal more to Mr. Jack Truesdale, personally, than those thirty millions. Ward had justified the increase of stock on the ground of affording the buying public an opportunity to share in the enormous profits. That opportunity hinged on the promoters selling their stock; an odd proceeding—as human nature is constituted—considering that the stock was so very valuable. Ward preferred coin to the beautifully engrossed shares of his company's stock. The increase in the cost of fuel and steamship rates was to be so small that it would scarcely be felt by the public; and, after all, business was business. It was neither charity nor religion.

The public must pay high or go cold; and as Truesdale's comrade of the orchard with the gold mist had said—there was not much difference between that and putting a pistol to a man's head while you picked his pockets. But, then, what was all business, in its last analysis, but the getting of as much as possible for as little as possible? Women, like Madeline, were unfit to deal with complicated questions. They viewed life too emotionally, too personally. They would persist in obtruding questions of a personal nature into things as impersonal as arithmetic. The new century had another foundation of values than the old narrowness. It was the survival of the fit—of the strong—the weeding out of the unfit, the weak. Still, he must not be too hard on Madeline. She could not shut her eyes to facts, because she was up against them; because



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she was the underdog, the other dog had no right to throttle her. Just how he would have felt, if *he* had been the underdog, Truesdale did not consider. He was determined that he—for one—never would become the underdog. Vaguely, in the back of his mind, was the belief that the fear of becoming the underdog was an excellent stimulus to effort: it was the whip lash of individual effort, ambition, success—this pervasive fear of Want: it kept a man from sinking to the nothingism of the oriental. The men not stimulated by this fear deserved to be the underdog, needed the lash of Want to keep them from reverting to the animalism of the jungle.

Truesdale's offices were on the top story of the Rookery Building, near the ocean front. A network of electric wires curved within a hand length of the window by his desk. Day and night, there was the same humming and monotonous sound. What was the burden of its endless monotone, the chant of the wires, rising . . . falling, rising . . . falling, with the rhythmic ebb of a tide? It was like the chorus of a World of Work to a God of Traffic, with the roar of the city encompassing the whole diapason of human effort. Why should One Man . . . one puny man, the feeblener for being alone . . . oppose such a Force? . . . Pshaw! What did women know of the Great World Forces . . . the Machine-Things with the human beings on the wheels?

Truesdale threw back the roller top of his desk with a bang, and wheeled his chair for work; yet

something restrained him sending the acceptance, which President Ward was expecting. The scruples of old methods he had cast aside. It was deeper than scruples. It was the blood of generations; the hard-headed belief that a *great-deal-of-something* taken from others for a *great-deal-of-nothing* is akin to theft; the vague uneasiness of inherited rights that, if *he* attacked the rights of others, *that* might open the way to a revolutionary attack on *his own vested rights*. He explained to himself that the business world was a give-and-take affair. Ward's scheme was a little too much "take" without any "give."

First, he examined the stock reports of his private ticker. Trucsdale's mines had advanced on the prospect of consolidation. Slitting open the largest envelope on his desk he drew out a long stamped document.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "We are not to be allowed to stand apart. The . . . fight . . . is . . . on!"

In response to the touch of the electric button, a thin, gray-whiskered man of precise manners and perfectly fitting clothes entered the office.

"Rawlins! What in thunder is the meaning of this lawsuit? What in thunder have we been taking coal from the Great Consolidated's tunnels for?"

The manager smiled dryly.

"The meaning—do you ask? They are going to hit first! They've blundered into our veins; they are going to protect themselves by suing first." The

manager spoke in a little, attenuated, sandpapered voice like a gramophone—a man with the red-blood ground out by business Machine. Rawlins glanced significantly at the stock ticker. “I fancy the suit will never go to court,” he added. “I fancy it’s for a purpose, Mr. Truesdale.”

“I see,” said Truesdale. “All the stocks took a jump from the rumor of amalgamation. Ours are to be hammered. Then . . . what?”

The gray-whiskered manager sat down, crossed his knees, stroked a crease from a trousers leg.

“What next will depend on what *you* decide, Mr. Truesdale.”

“Suppose I do—well?—nothing! Suppose I do as my forefathers have done before me? Suppose I stand aloof?”

“Can’t do it! Can’t play that game!” cut in the manager, still occupied with the trousers crease. “Can’t stand aloof in this age! If you hang back with a suit pending, your scattered stock is going to drop right down to rock bottom with a bang! The small investor will go panicky. They’ll call *you* the wrecker, not Ward. Are you prepared to buy all the stock that’s offered—keep things from touching rock bottom? If you’re not, Ward will do the buying when things hit bed rock—then—where, do you think, you are? You are in his grip—that’s where you are! You are the deciding voice in this thing, *now!* All the small investors have made *you* their proxy. What are they going to say if your decision brings an attack from Ward? They’re

going to sell and scuttle out; that's what they're going to do. And devil take the hindermost—that's you! You can't stand neutral with Ward. It's like the devil—you've got to fight, or go with him——"

"But what would the proxies say to me if I sold them out to Ward; and they found themselves billion dollar capitalists, with the dollars mostly paper and water?"

"That's no concern of yours, Mr. Truesdale! You make your pile and you crawl out before the smash comes!"

His opinion of those sentiments Truesdale did not express. He was aware that he must choose either war with the likelihood of defeat, or peace at the price of an old-fashioned and out of date consideration called "honor."

"About this suit, Rawlins? You think it'lluff to hammer the stocks down? How do you know they've been poaching on our ground?"

"A person knows a good deal that can't be proved, Mr. Truesdale. When that Kipp fellow, the engineer who was dismissed from the Great Consolidated, came to me for work, he offered to sell information about Ward's mines. The accident happened. Presto! Kipp is reëngaged and—mark," the manager paused, glancing sharply at his chief—"Shaft 10 was filled to the top last week, and Kipp has disappeared; gone to Peru to examine mines there."

"It's a damnably ugly piece of business," he muttered, thoroughly convinced that a *great-deal-of-*

something for a *great-deal-of-nothing* was poor business for one side, no matter what the wires said.

"There is one way out of it, Truel! When I couldn't thrash a boy at school, I made a point of not quarreling with him."

Truesdale heard the wires again.

"We're to beat or be beaten, Rawlins!"

"That's it."

"We were never in a better condition to stand attack, Rawlins! If we don't advance prices, we get the trade——"

"*We?*" interrupted the manager ironically. "There will be no '*we*' by the time Ward finishes with you——"

"But I tell you we are exceptionally strong. There is no sense in the small holders selling——"

"But I tell you they *will* sell if prices sag," averred Rawlins. "If you break with the Great Consolidated, it's a case of the fellow with the most money winning out. There is no rule to forbid a foul in this game! Kipp told me the I. W. W. delegate, McGee, had won over most of your men already. If Ward's miners strike, yours strike in sympathy; so you can't play the game alone while he is shut down! I tell you neither labor nor capital can stand apart now! It's get together on both sides, and fight to the death! Why, for the past week your salesmen have been followed by Ward's everywhere, offering lower prices to cut us out, while the old schedule rules where our men haven't gone! The G. C. can only keep track of our men in one

way. They are getting reports of shipments from the railroads. Ward is getting rebates. He is under-cutting you by what he saves from the railroads. You can't fight that sort of thing! It's a blood-sucking business! While you're floundering round honorably and in the open, your enemy is sucking your blood by what he saves from the railroads. And Ward has a hand in half the railroads—how are you going to stop it, or prove it, or get redress? On the surface, it's all perfectly legal, understand—it is all perfectly legal. By just so much as he ruins you, are his profits the greater! And it's all legal, perfectly legal, understand—on the surface, perfectly legal! If I may offer advice, I'd kow-tow in time, True! In business, you've got to get there, no matter how! You don't stand on ceremony, nor sanctimony either. I'd kow-tow in time; knuckle under gracefully; secure your pile; crawl out!"

"Thank you, Rawlins," replied Truesdale shortly, and the manager left the office.

The blood of the generations, of the vested rights, of the wealth held as a sacred trust not as a tyranny, of the inheritance hard-won and hard-held by three generations—did not course particularly peacefully through Mr. Jack Truesdale's veins for some little time after the manager left the office. "*Kow-tow in time—knuckle under gracefully—secure your pile—and crawl out*"—that was the advice of a life-long servant. Rawlins had voiced the sentiments of a money-getting age; but they

were distinctly the sentiments of a servant, the sentiments of a cringing reptile morality.

"No—by God!" he exclaimed suddenly, with a resounding blow of his clenched fist on the roller-top desk, "I'll—*fight!*"

All the sophistries of high finance were suddenly eclipsed by the primordial instinct which resents with a certain savagery of fury, that possessions hard-won and honestly held should be wrested away by a trick. His creed was the creed of the Strong. That other man must show himself stronger. He believed that the great crime of life was to be weak. He did not purpose being guilty of that crime. To his creed of Strength his sudden resolution had added—Will! The chance of fortune still allured him; but across the brightness of its promise fell a shadow, a shadow of doubt whether the creed of victory to the Strong would prove satisfying *if* he were the vanquished.

A gentle rap sounded from the door.

"Come in!"

The door opened apologetically, and softly closed. A felted tread crossed the carpet. There was a lubricating of palms, like a feline licking of cream, or fur.

"Good morning! Don't let me interrupt," implored the blandishing voice of Obadiah Saunders.

Truesdale wheeled with all the ferocity of the primitive man facing stealth. Obadiah's manner wore a new jauntiness of defiance which betrayed something concealed. He wriggled and smiled

faintly, and wriggled, and the smile died in a wreath among perfumed whiskers. He patted a temple lock into well-licked conformity with the other hairs of his head. He drew his white hand down his flossy beard. He fastened and unfastened the top button of his coat. He pulled his cuff an eighth of an inch farther down his sleeve, severely contemplated the effect, and shoved it back. Conversation was not opening auspiciously. Evidently, this young man would have to "be drawn." And the drawing must be done "judiciously." Obadiah never forgot the keynote of his morality.

Mr. Saunders expressed the mild hope that Mr. Truesdale had not taken offence from the service of the notice about the lawsuit, nodding at the open envelope, and rubbing invisible dust from his coat.

Mr. Truesdale smiled. Not the slightest offence; business was business—an expression which emboldened Obadiah Saunders.

If Mr. Truesdale would come over to the office of the Great Consolidated the little matter could easily be arranged—this with a resigned folding of the confidential secretary's hands.

But Mr. Truesdale struck a match to light a cigar without vouching any reply.

"It was all the fault of that blockhead of an attorney," complained the secretary in aggrieved voice. "The president had forgotten to inform the attorney of—of," Obadiah hemmed and drew his hand through his beard, "of the little arrangement among the three companies."

Truesdale asked Obadiah if he would have a cigar.

"If you will observe the notice you will see that the suit is dated *before* the agreement." The secretary licked his lips.

Truesdale smiled to see that the date lied as unblushingly as the secretary.

Saunders leaned confidentially nearer.

"I have not been authorized to tell you! In fact, it is hardly fair to President Ward for me to tell you but, in passing, I took the liberty of calling to give you a friendly tip."

Truesdale removed his cigar.

"When you have finished running all round it, Saunders, call again and tell me what you have to say."

Mr. Saunders sat back with a jerk.

"Mr. Truesdale, the other companies had practically closed on the understanding you would come in."

"*That* was a misunderstanding." Truesdale prepared to go on opening his letters.

"It's a serious blow to find you have changed your mind," bridled the secretary.

"I haven't! It would be a serious blow to the public if I did!"

"Public? Come! Come! Are you not a part of the public? Your shareholders are an *important* part of the public." Obadiah prided himself on words that had—as he put it—"a sting in their tail."

The young man's hands twitched. He recognized the threat against the stock of his company. The dulcet tones continued pleading.

"Considered judiciously, when you forward your *own* interests, you forward the interests of the public."

It was a trifle; but the secretary observed that the sleeve of Truesdale's coat suddenly exposed an increase of white cuff.

"Do you suppose that we could do all we do for charity, unless we looked after our own interests first?"

"Hm!" said Truesdale.

"Speaking frankly——" continued the confidential man.

"Hm!" smiled Truesdale; "in the history of a somewhat ancient world, charity has always been somewhat cheaper than justice."

"Our companies would value a square statement of your attitude."

"I'd value a frank statement on that mining suit, myself," retorted the other. "You have prospered without me in the past. You are amply able to do so in the future—that is my answer."

"Amplly," softly assented Saunders with a smile, "but, can *you* prosper without us?"

Something feline glinted from the beady eyes, from the quiet, smiling treachery.

"Is that what you came to say?" demanded Truesdale.

"That is what I say, now I am here." Saunders

rose languorously. "By holding back, you are interfering with our plans; and, even for interference, it's customary to render a *quid pro quo*." He paused at the door, expectant of results.

Again, the white cuff of the young man's sleeve shot down.

"Speaking judiciously, Mr. Truesdale——"

"Oh, cut it short, Saunders; but, tell me—if it's judicious—where—is—*Kipp*?"

And Obadiah backed out yellow to the lips, muttering of "Peru."

And for the rest of the day Truesdale went about light heartedly. Once, he took out a memorandum book and wrote from memory some words of a famous lecture that he had heard. The words were these:

"He, for one, will fight, and ever fight, whatever the issue. . . .

"He hears the loud yelp of the Fenis wolf coming ever nearer. . . .

"He sees the powers of ancient darkness gathering stonily imminent. . . .

"On the face of Loki, the smile of triumph. . . .

"No hope but the impending doom; yet undaunted he goes forth, mightier in his mood than the elements that seek to engulf him."

CHAPTER XIV

THE CREED IN A WIFE

FAMILY dinner was a ponderous affair at the Wards'. Ward never confided business to his wife, and business was never absent from his mind. When the first shyness of the big, forceful man who was her husband had worn off, a cynical smile of the humorous relieved Mrs. Ward from futile endeavors to *make* talk; but there is a limit to a sense of the humorous; and Mrs. Ward gave over the experiment of seeing for how many meals in succession her husband and herself could sit down without a single remark. She was afraid to bring youth and light and laughter to enliven their dull lives; for they did not come into his scheme of cultivating only what was of advantage. Once, at the end of such an experiment, she had thrown down her armor of disdain with the somewhat unexpected question:

"Did it ever occur to you, Tom, that meals were for something besides eating?"

"What's that?" returned Ward, setting down his wine glass and pushing some salted almonds across to his wife. He had been absently scanning a telegram. "Meals for something besides eating? No

—it never did; and a deal of good time eating wastes, too.”

Mrs. Ward toyed with her rings, letting the red light of the heavily shaded chandeliers fall at different angles on her engagement ring. It was a pigeon-blood ruby of a bean-size, full of fiery rays that eclipsed the plain wedding band below.

“I wonder,” she said quietly, with a flash of amusement, “I wonder, I really do wonder *why* men like you ever marry.”

Ward crumpled the telegram in his hand and looked across the table to see tears on the heavy lashes of his wife’s averted eyes.

“Pshaw—Louie! What is there to bother about?”

“That is just it, Tom! There is nothing—absolutely nothing! I have drawn a blank!”

If she had said “drawn a blank check,” Ward could have understood; for, in matters of money, blank checks were what his wife enjoyed with the option of filling in any amount. What more could a woman want? He strummed impatiently on the table, studying her face. White as marble in the red light of the chandeliers, framed in the fluff of soft, black hair, with the blue reticulation of veins showing plainly in temples and quivering lips and neck held at the poise of unbreakable pride, and white hands almost diaphanous in the reflection of a near candle—Ward’s wife was a picture, and Ward was a good judge of pictures. He decided that, even if she had what he mentally called “tan-

trums," she was worth them. What he said was altogether different.

"I'm hanged if I know what ails you, Louie! You are a spoiled child, and want fondling, and acting, and matinée heroics! You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen! You have everything money can buy; and there you sit—moping! There are various ways of earning a living. It seems to me you earn a good one very easily. I know women who earn a harder living for less money."

The tears on Mrs. Ward's face vanished in one flash from the lifting eyelids. She laughed softly. Ward thought that his flattery had pleased.

"That's right! Cheer up! It's nothing but doldrums! If you are lonely, have people in! Do anything! But, good gracious, Louie, don't dump down in a heap! You don't see how it spoils your appearance. I want you to be happy, but I haven't time to play the part of a matinée hero to a tragedy queen! Heroics, and broken hearts, and man making a foot-stool of himself—not in my line, Louie! Now—you do anything you like that will make you happy!"

"Thank you," she laughed, rising with a strange light in her dark eyes.

Ward opened the door for her to pass out, and closed it with a sigh of relief. The majestic sweep of her self-conscious scorn was altogether missed by the big man.

"Of *all* things," he ruminated over his cigar, "a

woman's moods. No matter—it's only a piece of acting. Some women would do the play-act business at a funeral." And, forthwith, he reopened the telegram.

With Mrs. Ward the effect was deeper. This was not the part of which she had dreamed when she became the great man's bride. If the truth could be told in very homely comparison, I suspect the part that she intended to play was somewhat similar to the animal tamer of a Nubian lion, only on a very much more sumptuous and dazzling scale. The scale was sumptuous enough, but the lion would not perform. The idea that she had any service to perform, or owed any duty to life other than the one for which she had been bought—never entered her mind.

Mrs. Ward was always looking for effects, and exaggerating them, and fingering their ramifications to every fiber of her being. If she had had a confidante, she would probably have dated a certain hardening process from that quarrel over the dinner table. She thought much to herself of "dead hopes," which she called "ashes of roses." Nevertheless, ashes of roses are hard to distinguish from the dry-rot of vegetable decay caused by a very small worm. The first visible effects were that she openly sought other companionship than her husband's. Society looked askance. Society got in the habit of watching. Then, society talked out loud; but as long as Mrs. Ward kept on the safe side of the borderland, "kept people guessing"—as she de-

scribed it—she lost neither popularity nor notoriety. You can always depend on a saint, and you can always depend on a knave, but there is a piquancy, an element of provoking surprise in watching the indeterminate mortal. You can't help wondering on which side of the line the alternate veerings will finally drop.

Mrs. Ward's latest fad was Madeline Connor. *Who* was she? Society did not know—one form of agnosticism not fashionable unless gilt-edged. *Where* did she come from? From a nondescript studio behind an art dealer's store. Society shook its head. She might be *anybody*—chances against her being *somebody*; chances were—a *nobody*! *What* did she do? Oh, she retouched pictures and painted 'hingamabobs for the dealer to put in his window, you know; and, of course, the dealer gave her the studio rent free. All of which was very meritorious, but, like religion, not a credential. Finally, someone ascertained that Madeline Connor's father had been one of the men ruined by Ward's stock speculations. Then, society knew. That was it. Mrs. Ward was making up for ruin wrought by "high finance"; and Madeline Connor was forgiven for being "taken up" by Mrs. Ward. But there is always a little venom generated by much wagging of tongues, and some said "Mrs. Ward had a deeper game."

All unconscious, Madeline Connor sat at the dinner table of the new Ward mansion. Her intimacy with Mrs. Ward had begun by a chance remark

of Hebden that he had seen what was his ideal of a young girl in a studio behind the art store. Partly to learn what his ideal might be, partly with an amused suspicion that the remark was to pique jealousy, the languid Mrs. Ward, who never as much as lifted a haughty hand to bring the herd to her feet, one afternoon found herself in the studio at the rear of the art store. She had been quite prepared for the milliners' doll type of man-catcher: doll hair, palpably bleached; doll blue eyes that rolled up at you with the blank innocence of eyes on hinges; doll mouth with the softness of the little, clinging, kissable things that wind round men's hearts before the hearts know cables from cobwebs; and, above all, milliners' doll manners, with a lisp and sort of daintiness that is a cut between the duchess airs of a lady's maid and the suppleness of a dancing master; or perhaps, the haughty grand duchess disdain of a waitress in a country hotel. That is what Mrs. Ward expected.

What she saw was the camco-classic type, with fire in the hair, and fire in the frank, straightforward eyes, and fire in the hectic color that flushed and waned to each breath, and fire in the upright, clean-cut aloofness of poise in head and limb. The milliners' doll manners, that were to be a cut between the lady's maid and the dancing master, were of a kind that neither wheedled nor demanded recognition, but received it with absolute unconsciousness. Mrs. Ward's expectations went blank for five full minutes after entering the studio. She

gave a little inarticulate gasp behind her lace handkerchief, but explained that she had called to buy two pictures of a little ragged boy with bare feet, which brought such a flash of pleasure to the gray eyes of the artist that Mrs. Ward felt an uncomfortable sense of smallness.

"Oh, the pictures of Budd? He is my best model."

Some faces radiate a smile without the change of a single feature. Such a smile came over Madeline's face now. Mentally, Mrs. Ward concluded that the girl was careful not to wrinkle her wonderful skin. The next moment Mrs. Ward had that uncomfortable sense of smallness for having harbored the thought. In gliding from picture to picture of the artist's work, she studied the artist.

"Mr. Hebden is a great admirer of your work?" she ventured with a quick glance.

"I don't know him," said the girl.

Mrs. Ward turned the answer over, and felt that sense of shrinkage come again.

"I wonder," she said doubtfully, "which of these pictures it was that he liked?"

"I have never seen—what did you say his name was?"

"Ah," said Mrs. Ward, looking straight into the girl's eyes with no trace of hauteur. Something had first disarmed, then softened, her disdain. "I suppose," she added, very gently, with a curious vibration of dead chords in her nature, "I suppose you care more for your work than anything on

earth? There is so much sunlight, so much clearness, such a sense of buoyant, undistrustful freedom in your work?"

"Yes, I do. I think I care more for my work than anything else—anything but my friends, of course."

Mrs. Ward looked at the girl. In less than five minutes she had learned that one did not need to turn this girl's answers inside out for their meaning. In less than five minutes her surprise had given place to distrust, her distrust to a sense of self-contempt, her self-contempt to that curious vibration of dead chords. When she left the studio, Mrs. Ward shook hands without exactly knowing why.

"I wish so much," she said lingeringly, "that it might be possible for you to hang these pictures in my own sitting room. The light makes such a difference?"

"Why, I can, if you wish."

But, when Mrs. Ward had gone, a feeling of something disingenuous crept over the girl; and she wrote a note of excuse for not going to hang the pictures.

Mrs. Ward fingered the note under the light of a Venetian candle in her own room. The paper exhaled the faint odor of fresh flowers—not sachet. Mrs. Ward reread the note.

"That child—what is it about her? I wonder really *why* she refused? The question is not *who* is she, but *what* is she. I wonder did he say that

to make me jealous? Jealous? What fools men are! What would he do if I deliberately brought them together?" and Mrs. Ward wandered off to a drama of real life, where a woman who had the world at her knees was torn between the emotions of an imaginary duty to a man she did not love, and an imaginary sacrifice of the man who loved her. The rustle of the rose-scented note recalled her. She smiled. "I'm really snubbed—am I? I don't take snubs gracefully. I'll—*conquer!*"

In setting herself to add one more worshiper to her shrine, Mrs. Ward found herself baffled, then interested, and finally, to the intense surprise of her own languid emotions, attracted by one who was the antithesis of herself. Some are as fond of poking fire when they are grown up as in childhood. Fire would not be fire without burns. It was so with Mrs. Ward. The novelty of openly taking for her friend the girl brought to her notice by an attempt to arouse jealousy added zest. It afforded imaginary dreams of an endless variety, in which Mrs. Ward raved and unraveled, and enraveled, motives with emotions till both motives and emotions were mixed.

In fingering over her emotions, she could not have told what induced her to ask Madeline to the dull family dinner. Ward had invited Colonel Dillon, whom she always honored by an indifference that was contempt. She countered by inviting the young artist, of whom her husband was doubtful. But, there was another reason which her self-searching

did not draw out. She wished to display Madeline at the reception. She was quite sure of the artist acquitting herself in the studio, or the suburban cottage where she lived. Simplicity and candor had an ideal setting in those surroundings; but how would they show off at an affair among Paris gowns?

Mrs. Ward had received three shocks to her expectations from Madeline Connor. She received the first that afternoon in the studio. The second came in the delicate rebuff of the note; but that had been overcome; for Madeline not only hung the two pictures in the boudoir, but supervised the hanging of the entire art gallery. The third surprise came when Mrs. Ward found herself fascinated instead of fascinating. The fourth shock was on the night of the family dinner. She had asked herself *how* the girl would come. *How* did not refer to the carriage. Mrs. Ward had sent her own sleigh to the cottage. It referred to dress. By that, Mrs. Ward could gauge prospects for the reception. Mrs. Ward came straight from her own boudoir as Madeline entered the dressing room. The girl had thrown off her cloak and was gowned in a plain white silk of a clinging amplitude, that gave her an almost Grecian appearance. It was without any ornamentation whatever, except a long black sash and some very old lace at throat and hands; but what riveted Mrs. Ward's attention was a necklace of rubies, each larger than her own pigeon-blood; Burma

rubies of a deep, wine tone, rich red, and fiery as sunlight.

Mrs. Ward passed no remarks. Madeline was not the sort to receive milliners' doll compliments. Mrs. Ward took her by the hand and stood back to survey her.

"What?" asked the other, with the hectic spots at play. "Am I too early? If one starts on time the cars are sure to jam you half an hour late. I told your man to drive fast. The frost is so splendid on one's face. It was like a drink of pure . . . water; and the night is full of stars."

"So are your eyes, dear," said Mrs. Ward, kissing her, and, nestling one hand in Madeline's, she led the girl down the broad stairway, proudly justified.

"You must tell me how you like the dining room. I planned the decorations myself," confided Mrs. Ward.

Colonel Dillon received introductions to women with a wheezy compliment and embarrassingly prolonged stare. His stare wandered over Madeline; and, if I must tell what this ornate gentleman with glare fobs and flash studs thought of the artist, his verdict was that "her dress was too night-gowny." He would have preferred more flare to the size, more glare, bigger spots of lighter color, and puffs and frills and ribbons and drapes. That is—his verdict was "too night-gowny" until his eyes goggled over her figure to the rubies. Then he folded his hands across the rotundity of his white waistcoat—

and looked! Introductions to women were curt matters for Ward, but his narrowed eyes glanced at her rubies once and at Madeline Conner twice. He was satisfied. His wife's condescension was being expended where it was worth while, and he at once plunged into a business discussion with the colonel, while Mrs. Ward occupied the attention of her guest.

"Well, tell me how you like my plans? You know, I want really to have your honest opinion—no compliments."

"Let me look!" The girl's glance flitted from the rose-wood table with its glare of cut glass and plate and candlesticks to the china cabinet and racks of rare porcelain. The paneling was in hand-carved woods—dryads and fauns and bacchantes. Instead of the walls meeting the ceiling in a curved fresco, enormous beams of carved oak bounded and spanned the ceiling, cutting it in squares. The squares were ceiled in red cedar. An old-fashioned black gallery, taken from some European castle, ran across one end of the room. Between the pillars were tapestries of an oriental design—languid queens being served with flagons, Cleopatras in barges, goddesses in rose gardens. French windows opened to a conservatory on one side.

"I like it! It isn't the awful junk-shop of bric-à-brac one sees so often! I like it very much! It's so free from flimsy stucco. It is so strong. That gallery must have come from some old drinking

hall where warriors planned to swoop down on races grown soft."

Involuntarily, her eyes rested on the two men at the other end of the table. The old colonel, apoplectic and purple, had leaned across iced oysters to crook a shaking finger in Ward's face.

"What—allow a mere whipper-snapper of a fellow like that, dandy-prat green from school, to stand in the way?" he husked.

"I don't want this strike on, Dillon, until the new stock's off the bat," returned Ward.

"But you've got to clinch his concern—you've got to put him out of the way!"

"That's all right," warned Ward, giving the bell-cose colonel a significant look.

The red face above the rotundity of the white waistcoat slowly revolved till its moist radiance beamed on Mrs. Ward. The little white eyes goggled apoplectically.

"We're laying campaign," he gurgled huskily, "laying campaign, Mrs. Ward—blow a man up with his own petard! To the victor, the spoils . . . as I tell Ward . . . and to the ladies, the victors!"

A gurgling cachination that was meant for a compliment accompanied this announcement. Mrs. Ward's glance rested on her plate, but the warmth of the colonel atoned for frost in his hostess.

"Love your enemies, you know, Mrs. Ward! If they slap one cheek—as I was telling Ward—give

'em 'other! I say—give 'em both cheeks, both hands, both feet—and a boost on the run!"

With which charitable sentiment, accompanied by an ogle and reddening of the wattles, the colonel slowly swiveled his revolving person back in the direction of his host.

There was a slight silence, broken by Mrs. Ward.

"Yes—you are right! Saxon warriors planned raids under that gallery. Times and manners change, but the conqueror plans his conquests just the same. You don't like the tapestries? I watched your face as you looked at them. What is it?"

"It isn't that I don't admire them. They are very beautiful. They simply don't appeal to my fancy. They give me a sense of smothered air, of a garden where exotics become heavy from lack of wind. They are too voluptuous for me, too much like a Turkish harem—all sense, delight, and languor, and soft winds, and rose beds. I like action, beauty of motion. I wish they would get up and do things—those heavy-eyed goddesses. They are like a fondling caress—it palls!"

"Oh!" smiled the other. "Fancy those soft, warm, lazy goddesses sunning in the blast of a north wind?"

Madeline saw the pallor of her companion's forehead become white and the eyelids droop. The words came in a soft whisper, like an asp from the flowers of the tapestried wall. "Madeline—tell me, you, who are so honest and scorn to shut your eyes to things—tell me, just what—what *is* the difference

between those lawless warriors long ago and—that?” She nodded in the direction of her husband. “What *is* the difference between those voluptuous goddesses on the tapestry bought for a price, and—my life? We’re both utterly useless; good for nothing, but sense pleasure sunning ourselves in fair weather!”

Ward was sitting sideways to the table, forgetful of his food, gazing out through the French window to the conservatory with eyes that saw no flowers. Colonel Dillon’s white-lashed eyes were glued to Ward’s face, the short temples, the flat nose, the pursed lips, the creased chin, silhouetted in porcine profile.

“Traders on floor tell me they’ve picked up all the loose holdings,” Dillon was saying. “That pretty nearly gives us the whip handle, as I make it out. Now, bring on the strike! When his stock drops—you’ve got him! By George, Ward, I’d pulverize him so he’d not make dust for a bone yard! If you find out a man’s goin’ t’ hit you, knock him down first. Knock him down again. Unless he’s willing to crawl off to a hole, keep him knocked down! That’s what I say.” The colonel wheezed hard, coughed, became purple, coughed again.

Perhaps, we see the baron raiders of long ago picturesquely because they are at a distance. Perhaps, Saxon warriors boasting in their cups of their harems and their killings might have aroused the same repulsion as Madeline Connor felt listening to

the porcine financier planning a rival's overthrow. Again, the whisper stole on Madeline like an asp from the flowers of the tapestry.

"You see, dear, wives are only a pawn in their game." Disdain was in the thin, curling lips, the arch of the lifted brows, the poise of the head. "We are only goods and chattels, too, bought for a price! Think of the days of chivalry, when men fought for honor and truth's sake without reward—then listen to our modern chivalry. We would crucify Christ if He stood in the way, and donate brokerage fees to the church!"

A stab of pain, followed by a wave of pity, came to Madeline Connor. Our beds are none the softer because we made them ourselves. Madeline Connor did not think of the words. She thought only of the great unhappiness—self-tortured, gnawing, worm-like—that must underlie such words and must ultimately undermine character. She was glad when the dinner was over and Mrs. Ward led the way to the fireplace of the art gallery, leaving the men over their glasses. With no light but the hearth, Mrs. Ward motioned Madeline to an armchair, tossed pillows in a heap on the floor, and threw herself before the fire with her face on her arm across the girl's knee.

No word was said; but the silence was fraught with a meaning deeper than words. Her life was very unhappy, then, this woman's, with all the homage and luxury that money could buy. Her life was loveless, cold, hard, colorless, flat, this woman, who

was the wife of the great financier; and disdain could cover a breaking heart; and coldness, hot revolt; and hardness, gnawing self-torture; and defiance, a rashness that might risk all. Whether that unhappiness were merited or not, it was enough that its shadow fell across this life like an ambushed danger; and Madeline glanced from the fire to see Mrs. Ward's face upturned questioningly.

"Madeline—tell me—tell me honestly—is there such a thing as pure love; or is all love but a lusting for self—disguised, of course, but just a greed of something for self?"

And Madeline Connor felt as if the danger had sprung full-formed, bodily and menacingly, from the shadow of that unhappiness. The hearth logs crashed down; and, when the flame leaped up again, Mrs. Ward still waited.

"Why don't you answer?"

"Because I am sorry you could ever have had any experience to make you ask that; I am sorry you haven't the answer so surely in your own heart that you could never ask the question."

"Perhaps," mused Mrs. Ward, "perhaps I have the answer in my own heart."

There was a long silence, both women gazing in the fire.

"Mrs. Ward," burst out Madeline, "a precipice is none the less a precipice because there are flowers on the edge."

"Are you afraid of me going over?" laughed Mrs. Ward.

"No; but if you were picking flowers near the edge somebody might push you over. You like playing on edges. You haven't enough real interests in life to keep you from having fun on the edges of things."

Mrs. Ward broke into a peal of almost girlish laughter.

"You are delicious," she said. "Do you know that half the women in the world envy me?"

"I don't," retorted the girl bluntly.

Mrs. Ward laughed again and began playing with Madeline's hands. Again that curious instinct of ambushed danger menacing from the shadowy background of unhappiness stirred the girl vaguely. "I wish you would promise me something." She began: "If ever you are in danger, or perplexity——"

But Mrs. Ward broke in with a laugh.

"I am to come and dump all my woes round your neck. Well, I promise."

"But it isn't that in the least. There's a note like a discord—you frighten me the way you talk——"

"Then we'll not talk of it any more. You will come to the reception? I want Mr. Hebden to see you——"

"Is Mr. Hebden married?"

"Now, I know he's been making love to you. No—it's his mother. Dorval is not married; but it isn't the fault of candidates for the position."

"You needn't think he sits for a portrait without my knowing that. More women come the day that he sits for a portrait than all the rest of the week!"

"Oh; is it his *own* portrait? I didn't—I thought it was the copy of a photograph."

"Why did you think that?"

"Why, he said—dear me!—what did he say? I've forgotten all about it!"

Mrs. Ward broke off suddenly and toyed with her rings.

"There is something you should know about Dorval, if—if he hasn't told you?"

There was a caress in the softness of the voice, in the attitude at the girl's feet, in the long silence, in the warmth of the dim gallery. Mrs. Ward was in her element, weaving romantic possibilities, fingering her emotions to the outermost end of each fiber.

"He has told me nothing but the usual stuff such men say to women. You know what such men say to every woman. You know he doesn't mean it."

"Did you tell him he didn't mean it?"

"I asked him why no man since Adam had thought of anything new."

"It must be a new sensation for Dorval Hebden," laughed Mrs. Ward. She toyed with her rings.

"Perhaps it isn't necessary to tell it," she added.

"You might only misjudge my motives."

The girl bolted upright with an abruptness that discounted grace.

"*Why* do you say a thing like that? *Why* do you go wriggling in and out among motives? *Why* should you think that I think that you think—You make me dizzy! It's like a dancing dervish who keeps whirling round himself till your eyes ache

looking! Forgive me! What was it I should know about Mr. Hebden?"

And both laughed.

Again the long silence and the toying with the rings and the play of strange lights about the lips.

"Very well," said Mrs. Ward, wheeling to face the girl. "As I introduced him to you, I'll tell you. He's the great-grandson of a German prince, Madeline, with morganatic selfishness in his veins; and his mother will never see him marry an American girl—that is all!"

"Why do you want Mrs. Hebden to see me?"

The question took Mrs. Ward off guard. She could not very well explain that she wanted to sidestep gossip about herself by publicly showing Hebden and Madeline together at her own reception.

"Anyway," the girl went on, "I don't see *how* that information concerns my relations with Mr. Hebden."

A quick step crossed the gallery. A figure took form in the shadows so unexpectedly that, for a moment, Madeline Connor thought the menacing danger of her vague intuitions had emerged from the dark.

"Who is talking about me there?" demanded Mr. Dorval Hebden himself. "Don't move! Don't let me spoil it!" He came to the fireplace smiling nonchalantly. "You make a picture there, you two—a picture in black and white, with the red glow about like a master canvas! Don't move! May I join you?"

And Mrs. Ward did not fail to note that his glance rested on the white of the picture longer than on the black.

"Come, now, what were you talking about?" reiterated Hebden. "I know that I heard my name?"

"How much more did he hear?" thought Mrs. Ward; but she clinched both hands round her knees and met the challenge.

"I had just asked Madeline whether love were ever anything but a mask for self. What do you think, Mr. Hebden?"

If Mr. Dorval Hebden had said what he thought he would have answered that "a woman could dare too much"; but that challenge in connection with his own name put the caution of his manhood on guard; and, standing back among the shadows, he made no haste to answer.

"And what did Miss Connor say?" safely replied Mr. Dorval Hebden.

"Oh, Madeline has such a low opinion of love, she thinks it should be put under lock and key."

"Ah," said Mr. Dorval Hebden.

He knew that note of recklessness and took his bearings like a craft in shifty currents.

"Mr. Ward has just told me that that boy of ours—your model, Miss Connor—Budd of the rags and bare feet, is becoming a little crackerjack of a worker in the Great Consolidated."

The arched brows lifted. The thin lips curled.

"He sees you are not interested in love, Madeline; but you *are* in little ragged boys; so he takes you at

your weakest point. That's a specialty of Dorval's."

"If she thinks that," thought Madeline, "why does she keep him for her friend?" but the girl was not old enough to answer that question.

CHAPTER XV

THE CREED WORKED OUT BY PLEASURE SEEKERS

MCGEE, the I. W. W. delegate and apostle of the great General Strike, which was to paralyze all industry and compel capital to hand over all industry to labor, was a man whose mind, like his creed, recognized neither race, creed, nor color. Had his ambitions received a different bent earlier he might have become the same type as Ward. There was the same rugged massiveness of body, the hard set jaw of the fighter relying on brute strength, on the argument of overpowering force; but, where Ward's eyes were cold, calculating, unemotional, the labor leader's were big of pupil, glowing with a fanaticism that might lead to heroism or crime. Both men had the same aim—Power; but Ward acted in the belief that he served the race best by serving Self first. McGee believed that he served Self best by serving the masses. Having risen himself, Ward scoffed at class distinctions and considered that any man could rise. Having elected to remain of the masses, McGee had a certain conviction that a poor man was as valuable a member of the community as a rich man. He did not say it in so many words; but beneath the fireworks of all his fulminations was

the deep-rooted, almost childish, belief that all rich people were thieves, or the heirs of thieves, and all poor people, poor through no fault of their own.

The odd thing was that both men aimed at Power in the same way. Ward called it "consolidation," "amalgamation," "domination." McGee called it union—Union—and yet again, Union. If all workers who worked with their hands—McGee took no account of men and women who worked with their heads—if all workers, simultancously all over the world, of every nation and every color, refused to work, there would result the Great General Strike, the Great Social Revolution, and Capital must capitulate bloodlessly. Labor would, at one stroke of the pen, own the accumulated results of generations of toil and savings and thievery. Capital must take off its dinner coat and go to work in shirt sleeves or—go hungry. McGee always laughed when he came to this climax of his reasoning. Ward looked out on life and saw a jubilant battleground for the Strong (the Weak were not fit to survive, anyway; better perish and quit) with countless hosts on both sides commanded by one clear-cut, towering figure—the Victor! McGee looked out on life and saw ragged armies, listless, laggard, straggling, restless with pain of their own misdeeds and their own inheritance, restless with hunger and discontent—if to blame, so much the sadder; if numb, so much the more tragic, like the delirious fever patient, so much the needier for the Christ ministrations of help—Demos, wild-eyed

and riotous, wandering, groping aimlessly to a solution not to be found, from a Hell ages old as very time itself and all the primordial gropings that preceded time.

So stood the two men before the judgment seat of a Far God! Who could tell just where Ward's aims for Self merged in the public good; and where McGee's devotion to the people merged in service for Self? It was the ethics of Hunger pitted against the ethics of Power; and an Unseen Hand—called Destiny or God—moved the little human figures hither and thither.

Ward's singleness of purpose was an exclusion of purpose that shut out all aims but one—Self. McGee's wideness of aim included work and enquiries of an amazing detail, including all men of all colors and all creeds. Within the short time this narrative records he had been a section hand in the Truesdale mines, a tunnel foreman under Kipp the engineer in the Great Consolidated, and a man of no visible occupation in the saloons of the water front in Lower Town. Passing the Great Consolidated offices he doffed his fedora in response to a curt nod from Saunders. Sam McGee bit off a piece of tobacco meditatively. "Guess I give Lady Macbeth a bad taste in his mouth! Guess he'll have worse before I'm done!"

His next acquaintances were two of the variety known as "hoboes," who had not a lazy inch in their body but were chronically tired, and now rested themselves on a street corner where a crowd of peo-

ple usually transferred from car to car. Sam McGee did not doff his hat to these acquaintances. He did not speak. One of the hoboos slouched his hat lower and coughed. McGee cleared his throat. In the crowd he jostled between the men.

"Nickel Plate," remarked McGee.

The hobo coughed again and looked at his boots.

"Right away," ruminated Sam McGee, "and I've got the stuff."

As the tramps shuffled off McGee's inquiring eyes fell on the figure of a small boy in a blue suit with brass buttons. The boy was trying how long he could stand on one leg and whirl the other level with his waist without losing balance.

"Hello, youngster! Hello, Budd McGee," saluted the labor delegate.

"Hello, Uncle Sam!" The small boy lost balance and changed legs. "When did you come back from sturrin' things up in gen'ral?"

"What do you think you know about stirring things up?"

"Lots," vowed the small boy, whirling again.

"How is your mother?"

"I dunno!" The small boy stood still. "Gone for good I guess!"

"Gone—is she?" asked McGee with a wild look in his eyes.

"She said when I got a sit in the G.C. and went to chore at Miss Connor's I'd get on better without her! I guess that's so, ain't it?"

"I guess so," declared Sam McGee. "That's the

blamdest sensible thing she ever did! Why didn't she do it sooner?"

"I dunno," said Budd in a sing-song.

"What's she doing?"

"I dunno!"

"Where did she go?"

"Down t' New York."

"Does she write to you?"

"Um-hum!"

Sam McGee looked at the small urchin with the brass buttons of the Great Consolidated on his blue coat.

"When you grow big, sonny, you've got a score—a long, black score—to settle for her. Look here, Budd——"

"I'm lookin'," which was only metaphorically true; for Bud was spinning.

"How do you like the Great Consolidated?"

"Bully!"

"Do you ever hear of a fellow called Kipp?"

"Bet! Letters come every day to be forwarded to Peru!"

"Do you post those letters, Budd?"

"Naw! I give 'em t' Silky! He sends 'em hisself——"

"Oh, he does, does he?" interrupted the labor delegate. "Look here, Budd! Do you want a skylark out in the country this afternoon when you finish work?"

Budd dropped both feet in a simultaneous jump to the perpendicular.

"D' y' mean it, Uncle Sam? Yes, sircce, bet I do!"

"Well, you go home to Miss Connor and get on old clothes for fishing and I'll take you out to the river! Meet me in the Nickel Plate saloon; and Budd—mind—I'll slit your tongue if it wags! Mum, now!"

"Mum!" reiterated Budd, darting for a car, "Mum-yum-yum!"

And Sam McGee, walking delegate, continued his leisurely course to Lower Town. The two hoboes had watched him with the hoy; then took a shorter way to the same destination by sundry back streets and blind alleys, entering the side door of a saloon with gorgeous bevel mirrors in both windows and colored prints of corset ladies showing a dazzling array of white teeth at each end of the mirrors.

"Didn't know he had a kid?" remarked one hobo.

"Hasn't—it's his sister's!"

"He called the brat—McGee!"

"It's his sister's, all the same——" but the tramps' conjectures regarding Budd's antecedents were silenced by the entrance of Sam McGee himself at the front door.

Though the Nickel Plate imitated modern grandeur with its bevel mirrors and dental ladies and floor of coins and colored caraffes, it wisely conformed to an older and more comfortable order of things. Behind the billiard room was a low-ceilinged restaurant with small tables down the wall at which ardent

reformers could make noise if not money and decapitate millionaires over ten-cent meals.

"There's the stuff! Be virtuous and you'll be happy!" McGee laid a bill on the bar with a nod to the hohoes. "When you're happy come to the back room with me!"

McGee passed to the low-ceilinged room, noting its occupants through the cloud of tobacco smoke.

"Same old crowd!" McGee jingled his trousers pockets as he passed down the aisle seeking a vacant table. "There's Goldsmith smoking his brains to a fog, brilliant but comatose most of the time, defending all rights but the right to work, and going to sleep with anxiety over other people's woes! Hello, Goldsmith—how's anarchy? Are you fellows still hatching plots to hoist us in a heap?"

Goldsmith emerged from tobacco smoke and noisy declamation with a big, broad, shiny, good-natured, whiskered, German smile.

"How's the strike, Sam?"

"Oh, coming on! Coming on! Truesdale's miners are solid for the union. We are just about ready to get all that we ask. We're just waiting to clear up a little mystery that may win the strike for us."

"And then?" demanded the whiskered anarchist thickly, "and then?"

"And then the union goes to capital. The union says: 'We own this or shut your shop!' The union says: 'Now cap., come over to us!' I guess when capital and labor are solid you'll get all you want for

the public. When you're hitched up to get a square half of profit from capital——"

"Bosh," snorted Goldsmith, the comatose brilliancy breaking loose, tumbling his pipe out, "bosh—I say! Are you goin' to hitch up for half the losses, too?"

The Goldsmith group emitted a laugh.

"Say, McGee, you look out o' that window? See those men working on that drain! Watch that fellow in the red shirt! He gets same wages as others, according to the union! You watch him—see? He stands on one foot till it's tired; then he stands on the other. Then he stops digging when the foreman's back is turned. Do you think that lubber is worth the same pay as the other men? That's your union—that's your social millennium! Oh, you'll get over that, McGee! You'll get enough of your smug union! You'll come across to the Reds yet!"

The laugh that greeted this sally was joined by McGee.

"Hold on, Goldsmith! Look out of that window, you fire-eaters! See the fellow sitting on the curb eating his dinner while the other fellows work? That's your anarchy—Goldsmith: idle fellows spout rights and eat the dinner some other fellows earned."

And this laugh was stopped by the hoboos following a waiter with a tray of bottles.

"Any of you men seen Kipp lately?" inquired McGee lightly.

No one answering, the labor delegate sat down

to a table with the two tramps. One was humming a military air with a nose red as a flag; the other had become elaborately gentlemanly and reminiscent of better days.

"Well," began McGee, "have you seen all the gang?"

The gentlemanly hobo said impressively: "We have!"

"And?" demanded McGee.

"Nothin'," nodded the red nose.

"Look here?" McGee lowered his voice. "We don't want you to cough up! Keep it—dough or doughnuts! We don't want it—not a cent! That isn't it. Kipp had a small sum on him when he disappeared. Have you done every joint where a light-headed jack could get himself sandbagged? It's Kipp we want—not the money?"

The gentlemanly tramp had grown impressive in his cups and assured McGee in a voice of pulpit solemnity that they had visited every place "where a gentleman might go."

"Has Kipp been—*done*? I don't ask names! All I want to know is—*is Kipp dead or alive*. It's part of the I. W. W. propaganda to know everything inside a man's hide. I have my own theory; but I have no proof. Understand, the afternoon he disappeared he expected to receive ten thousand!"

"Guns!—Ten thousand!" ejaculated the tipsy hobo with watery eyes.

"There's a boy asks for you, sir," interrupted the waiter.

"All right! I'll be out! You two keep on the push! So long, fellows!"

Once outside McGee buttoned his overcoat to the chin, turned up the collar, pulled down his hat, and struck out in long, fast strides, the little boy running hard to keep pace. Turning to the ocean front, the two boarded a small donkey engine coupled to a single car that shunted between the city and the mines. Budd clambered up on the coal tender. The man sat in the car with his face hidden in the high coat-collar. Outside the city he was aware that the train had been flagged and two people were mounting the rear steps of the car.

"Don't let us go forward! Let us sit here at the back! There is a man in front!"

The voice was a woman's, thrilled, suppressed. Knowing that the car was only used by employees of the Great Consolidated, and being of an inquiring turn of mind, the labor delegate felt an inclination to glance round; but he suspected that a look might hinder conversation, so he buried his face deeper.

There was a long sigh of relief, followed by a low laugh from the man.

"I am mad—I tell you it is perfect madness to go off with you for an afternoon like this!"

Sam McGee pricked up his ears. A woman's voice can have peculiarly musical notes when certain emotions play the strings. If the labor delegate could have stretched his ears he would, but the man's answer was too low to be heard.

"Geel Some woman winding herself up in a snarl," thought the practical McGee; "but the man's laying low! He's one of your safe ones—curse 'em!"

"Yes, I know," there was a pleading—as if against herself—in the woman's voice, "I know we shall be alone—quite alone out by the sea; and you will comfort me! You will tell me life is not all greed and selfishness and treachery—and," she added it almost in a sob—"not all just lust."

"Do I *need* to tell you?"

"He's a slick one," thought McGee. "He carries an accident policy, he does," cogitated McGee. Something in the low, cautious, even tones of the man stabbed McGee's memory. He almost turned. It roused a sleeping sorrow, that voice with the soft, velvet modulations; a dead, smoldering fire that suddenly flamed up in all the fanaticism of the labor leader's fire. It was like the spark that springs a mine.

"If I were not sure of you"—there was no doubt of it now. The woman was pleading. McGee suspected that she was weeping. "If I were not sure that you know my feelings are as pure as the very saints in Heaven—what would you think of me? What could I think of myself?"

Knowing nothing whatever about the feelings of the saints in Heaven and a good deal about emotions among men who will never be canonized as saints in Heaven, Sam McGee, labor leader, put his tongue in his cheek and wagered vulgar, practical odds with

himself that the man needed external stimulus to make *him* as pure as the saints of Heaven.

"Gee! By this time they'll be lookin' in each other's eyes, way a woman looks at a man, way a man looks at a woman," soliloquized Mr. Sam McGee. The device had flashed on him that, if he dropped his railroad ticket to the floor, he might glance back as he stooped for it; but, then, he was as anxious not to be seen as he was to see.

"It has become unendurable," the woman was saying. "Then, the sea always calms me; or else Madeline! You have ordered the horses so we can drive home along the shore? We must drive fast! We must not be late for dinner!"

The mental comments of Sam McGee, labor leader, were entirely irrelevant.

He was saying: "Gee! She'd better not jump from the frying-pan into the fire! Who the deuce are they? They must be high mucky-mucks, or they couldn't have flagged the train! Madeline—who's Madeline? And he's to drive fast is he? Um-hum!"

"Look at that little boy on the tender, Dorval! I do believe it is!"

"By Jove!" The man laughed.

"Let us go out by the back of the car! If he should tell Madeline?"

"Pshaw! He wouldn't know you through that veil!"

"Oho," thought Mr. Sam McGee. The angry memory had flashed to flame.

When the train pulled into the mining station McGee hung back, looking from the window at the trap with liveried coachman and glossy pair. A turn, a trick, a sinuousity, a shadow of motion to the slim figure of the heavily veiled woman blew McGee's caution to the winds. He bolted for the front door of the car and met the couple on a narrow plank leading to the carriage. The woman wore a sable coat to her feet; a heavy veil hid her features. Her, McGee let pass; but the man he confronted squarely, a tall man in a steamer coat with a steamer cap drawn over his eyes. There flashed to the labor leader's face the fire of a concentrated hate, revenge—violent, homicidal—a loathing that casts off the restraints of civilization like wisps of straw binding a primitive giant; but the steamer coat was so intent following the sable cloak that McGee passed unnoticed.

"Budd, hoy—look! Look at that man! Look at him, Sonny!" McGee caught the child by the arm with a grip of iron that bruised the child's flesh. "Look—look—look so you'll know him again if you see him in hell!"

The coachman had been sent back by the train and the trap went rattling down the river road to the sea.

"And it's for them—it's for them—it's for the like o' them that the workmen sweats and give their blood—and—and their women's souls!"

The grip on the boy's arm slackened.

"Sonny, what's Miss Connor's first name?"

"Madeline," gulped Budd, "and you needn't think my arm's a pump handle!"

Sam McGee threw back his head and laughed—and laughed.

"I don't see nothin' funny! I don't call this much of a lark," mumbled the boy, fondling his sore arm.

"Come on, Budd—we'll fish! Funnier fish get into your net than you'd think for, youngster! It's nothing, boy; nothing, 'cept that the chickens are coming home to roost! God's running the old show yet, Budd! The chickens are coming home to roost! God's doing business at the old stand!" With which enigmatical speech Sam McGee, labor leader, laughed again, as if Demos himself had opened his mouth to roar and literally could not stop.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CREED AND THE LABOR LEADER

"HELLO, McGee, what are you doing out here again?" called the foreman of the mine on the run for his train.

"Oh, fishin' suckers," answered McGee, turning along the river path below the cliffs.

"Ain't that a lie, Uncle Sam?" asked Budd, breaking into a trot to keep up.

"I guess we'll catch some suckers, all right; but it *is* a lie, just the same!"

Budd hitched his brace straps up.

"What d' y' tell a lie for?"

"It was necessary," laughed the labor leader.

"Say," Budd broke from a trot to a run in order to peer in his uncle's face, "Miss Connor says it ain't *ever* necessary to tell lies?"

"It isn't for her—she don't need 'em, Budd!"

"Eh? Say that again," demanded Budd, an invitation which Sam McGee, labor leader, did not meet halfway.

"Say, Uncle Sam," panted Budd, "if it's necessary for you and ain't for her, how's a fellow to know? Which kite would you hitch your tail to, if you wuz me?"

But the answer to that question was deferred by the labor leader coming to a sudden halt below the tunnel mouths of the hillside.

"Shaft 10 angle forty-five straight dip east a hundred yards that's about here," cogitated McGee, gazing first at the hill, then at the river swirling black, oily, treacherous round a shadowy cove that cut into the base of the cliff. He left the path, scrambled down the bank, shoved an old punt out on the shore ice, bade Budd take the oars and, with one push of the pole, was out on the water.

"Let her swing loose, Budd! See what she'll do!"

"Funny fishing tackle you've got, Uncle Sam," observed the boy, kicking a huge grappling iron fastened to coils of rope in the bottom of the punt.

The old craft rocked uneasily as the hoy balanced his oars. It swirled to the oily circling of the current, glided unsteadily closer and closer to the hill, till, with a quick sucking of the keel, the prow bounced forward and shot out in mid-river.

"Row her hack, Budd," ordered the man, leaning over the stern on his knees.

"Gee!" gasped Budd. "How she bucks, Uncle Sam! She won't—go!"

The boy strained with all his might on both oars.

"Steer her for the middle of the cove! It's calm there! I'll bet things sink and settle there!" And McGee began working his pole astern till the old

punt rocked into the center of the bayou, bobbed once or twice, then rested at ease. "Keep her so—steady—steady, Budd!"

The man had lifted the grappling hook and hurled it with all his force into the swirling current.

"Now—row—row slow!"

"Say——"

"Row—I tell you! Or I'll throw you to the bottom," ordered McGee; and Budd's face went white as the patches of snow on the hillside. "And hold your tongue! If it wags, I'll finish you, Budd! They've sent Kipp to examine mines in Peru—have they? We'll see! I'll give them a contract for coal in a hotter place than Peru before I'm done! How would you like to be thrown to the bottom of a mine with your brains knocked out by rocks and then have some other man draw your pay, saying you had gone to Peru? That's what Silky will do for you if you tell, my boy! He'll cut your throat in your sleep and pitch you to the bottom of the shaft where the rats will eat you—if you tell! Heh? How will you like that? Think you'll keep quiet?"

The boy tried to answer, but his teeth were chattering and he was lubricating his eyes with one coat sleeve.

"You needn't be scared," the man consoled him. "You're safe so long as you don't tell; but if you tell—down—you—go! We'll get Kipp's body; then we'll see who owns the earth, Tom Ward or me!"

Budd's jaw chattered and shook with fright. His

arms grew suddenly weak. The old punt circled round and round the glossy calm of the cove, the labor leader, stern and silent, paying out the rope . . . dragging . . . dragging the heavy grappling hook over the soft clay at bottom.

The sun went down cradled in cloud banks of crimson over the far-heaving sea. The river rolled past the dark of the sheltered cove, molten with scales of light, a tremulous, quicksilvered flood; and a night wind swept up the valley, mournful and restless as the sleepless waves. Why was man, like the restless wind, a disturber of the calm and security provided by God?

McGee, the labor leader, did not speak. Once he turned and, seeing Budd shivering, tossed his own overcoat across to the boy. Here and there lights began twinkling from the miners' bunk houses through the dark of the hillside in hairy beams that sent long spars of trembling shafts across the muffled river. The waters rose and fell with little laps and lisp and splashes against the keel of the punt; and the lonely wind sounded a thin, querulous treble of complaint. Frightened clouds stole stealthily across a downy sky, hiding the cusp of a wan moon. There was something pallid, something like death in the lonely stillness of the night, with shadows gathering round the wimpled hills and all the painted glory of the western sea fading to the cold, glossy, rippling darkness. The night was starless with lights springing to life on the dim hillside in a glow of warmth.

Perhaps other boys like Budd were up there in the miners' cottages eating hot suppers in shiney kitchens, with busy mothers and big, gruff fathers. What were the struggles of the two Great Blind Forces—Capital and Labor, each with shadowy tools working in the dark—to Budd, the carefree boy? Budd lacked the imagination of ambition. At that moment he was whimpering and wishing himself up in the humble shelter of the bunk houses.

Suddenly a blue glare cut the dark like a gigantic sword of fork lightning. A shrill scream set the hills echoing; and a coal harge whistled round an elbow of the river with a monotonous lift and fall . . . lift and fall of her wheel-rod. The searchlight of the prow fell on the labor leader, bare-headed, eager, water-soaked, with sleeves rolled to elbows, leaning over the side of the punt . . . winding in . . . winding in . . . the line.

"It's like God them searchlights," he muttered, kneeling at gaze as the barge huffed past. "You may monkey along . . . monkey along in the murk . . . the dark hiding y' and all y' do! 'Cause it's dark y' tink God don't see? But somebody turns on the searchlight: . . . it gits to be known: . . . it gits to be known; . . . and ye might as well be a worm squirmin' on the end of a stick above fire! That light's God's sword; and . . . you're . . . in . . . for—hell!"

But the searchlight had fallen on more than the fanatic with his mystic dreams. The boy at the oars uttered a piercing shriek of sheer terror. Some-

thing had bumped the keel of the punt, turned over heavily, and an upright arm struck stiffly against the oarlocks. A cold hand, hard, swollen, clotted with clay, touched the boy's face.

Budd tumbled back senseless. The labor leader seized the dead hand and, when it slipped clammily from his grip, he grasped the wrist.

CHAPTER XVII

AFTERWARDS

If we could completely dis sever the past from the present, and the present from the future, life would be a much simpler affair; self-satisfaction, a safer investment. A good deal can be done to separate causes from their effects and acts from those results commonly known as retribution, by change of residence. The American forger prefers Europe to his native land; but, unluckily, the bad judgment that made forgery possible, the deception that was constantly playing a double part to the world, the suspicion on the look-out for detection—somehow knits into the fiber of the character. These go to Europe and make resolutions and weave a new life after

Some such thoughts vaguely troubled Mr. Dorval Hebden the night after the drive along the sea road. He had let himself in with his latch-key, still dressed in the steamer overcoat and jaunting cap. His valet shuffled sleepily into the billiard-room and set a tray with hot water and decanter before his master.

"Is my mother home yet?"

"No, sir."

Hebden stirred the hot water.

"Anything more, sir?"

"No—you may go!"

He had been startled to see from a buffet mirror that his usually ruddy face looked ashy.

"This is absurd—sheer school-boy nonsense!"

He stirred ferociously at the glass. But, whether absurd or not, it was plain—even to himself, who did not wish to see—that Mr. Dorval Hebden was shaken from his wonted calm. Two glasses failed to restore the color to his face, which had become drawn and hard. His light, lusterless brown eyes gleamed redly.

"It's perfectly absurd!"

Hebden turned from the reflection of his face to sink in a deep armchair. He slowly drew a cigarette from its case and, with exaggerated deliberation, struck a match.

"It *would* be a dev'lish comic hobble, if she meant it," he told himself, emitting a curling wreath of smoke from his smiling lips.

"Pure as the very saints in Heaven?" A curl of smoke went wreathing high in mid-air. "I presume it's a Paradise . . . of the Persian brand?" Another curl of smoke. "Do women think that men are fools?" Having thus apostrophized more smoke-wreaths, the hard lines about the mouth elongated into a smile. The smile widened to a laugh—soft, cynical, taunting. "My word, she made me swear enough oaths to found a new priesthood."

"Does *she* do that to draw me on? . . . Cool off! . . . See what she will do? . . . She can't

draw back without humiliation? . . . She has avowed too much! . . . Yes, by Jove, she *really* cares! . . . But she'd dare a good deal! She'd dare a good deal too much! . . . That's the deuce with a woman who believes in herself, or pretends to! It's a game at which *two* might burn their fingers."

And to Mr. Dorval Hebden came a memory that banished laughter, like a nectarized poison, at once intoxicating and dangerous. Either the drink was mounting to drowsy dreams, or the drive by the sea had furnished food of an ambrosial sort; for memories absorbed him in a concentrated consciousness from which he had no will to rouse. Again he was out by the sea, uttering vows that he had no right to make; tempting avowal that he had no right to hear; and the memories troubled him. . . . He had said so much more than he had meant to say; not more than he meant in the saying. . . . He did not remember how it had come about; but he knew that the surprise, the unexpectedness of his own conduct, had thrilled and carried him off his feet quite as much as it could possibly have affected her.

They had driven for miles in silence; . . . the sun pouring floods of pure gold across the rippling waters till the rose-blush of sun-set faded to wan flakes of color among wisps of clouds. The horn of a cold moon shone in the shimmering expanse of the sea; and a chill, as of death, swept up the valley on a lonely night wind.

"Ashes of roses," she had said, with one wave of her hand toward the fading sea. Her voice had

stolen on him soft and enveloping as light. Then their eyes had met, one fleeting, swift glance, and, somehow, the air-threads, the thistle-down, the gossamer of meaningless words had merged into a net, that was about them both irresistibly. Hebden had broken out with vows he had never meant to utter she with protests that acknowledged what they denied.

Then the silence had been freighted with meaning that surprised Hebden. He had had no idea that *any* woman could carry him beyond the limits of caution and prudence and safety in that way. If *her* voice, *her* look, *her* personality had not intoxicated him *he* would not have expressed that folly about life henceforth being a blank. Evidently, the matches, not the combustibles, are at fault when powder goes up in an explosion. "No, . . . no," she had protested when he uttered that nonsense about life going out in blackness; . . . and what was it he had answered? . . . Actually, he had been so excited that he could not recall; only, he was quite sure that it was something that gave her a sort of claim, that threw down all barriers on his part, that removed all pretense of mere friendship. He had been a fool. . . . That was the plain truth. The sting of remorse was in the *imprudence* of what he had said, not the dishonor, not the danger to her.

Then a strange thing had happened.

They had lingered for dinner out at the Sea Bright Châlet. He had not observed the fact at the time,

but now recalled with relief, there had luckily been no other guests at the villa. Driving home in silence they had heard the night wind sweep the sea with mournful cadences. A solitary land bird wheeled its flight homeward. Once, where the road ran close to the sea, they saw a dead gull washed to the sand with a broken wing.

"Poor bird," she had said, with a shiver.

He trembled to think what madness he might have uttered. . . . The witchery of her beauty, of her trust, of her unhappiness, of her folly, of her closeness, was upon him. . . . In another moment he would have put himself outside the pale of Mrs. Ward's acquaintance by proposing some school-boy melodrama; but, just as the horses were crossing the bridge beyond the mines, there arose on the night air the shrill whistle of the river barge, which set the pair plunging. Then a scream, a terrified scream, like the voice of a lost soul, cut the darkness. At the very moment Hebdens's blood chilled to ice. It was as if murder, crime, irremediable wrong, found voice in that piercing scream, haunting the night. . . . Hebdens had never dreamed of anything like it. . . . Why did it haunt him? . . . What did it recall? . . . It was like a curse emerging from the gloom of a dead past to pursue a man's soul with the furies! . . . He could not rid himself of the sound . . . the long, piercing, haunting scream! . . . Who was it? . . . The horses bolted. . . . Hebdens came to himself with both reins wound round and round his hands, himself pulled to a

standing posture braced back with all his strength, his companion sitting stony with fear, the horses at a gallop pounding through the sea-fog that came drifting landward knife-thick.

And the horses kept that pace all the way to the city.

It was absurd, of course; but, as the steel-shod hoofs flashed through the fog, Hebden could not rid his mind from the impression of a woman down there in the mire who had uttered that scream. Sometimes the form resembled her of the long ago, on the closed incident, on which Hebden had shut the door with a hardened heart, when he went to Europe, out of sight, out of memory. Then, again, the figure of the flying mist was the woman by his side; down . . . down . . . down with streaming, upturned, pleading eyes, and the brand of infamy on her face; . . . down . . . in the mire . . . under the feet . . . of villainy!

They had not spoken again; and, when he reined the quivering horses in at her home, he was trembling and spent as they

"How alarmed you are," she said, as she touched his hand to spring out.

"Yes," he returned curtly.

"So was I," she confessed. "If there had been an accident, it would have been horrible. Oh, we were both mad—perfectly mad!"

"Good-night," he had answered shortly.

And now, sitting in the billiard-room, the same hallucination had come back; the scream from the

dark; . . . the wild stampede through the mist, for all the world like his own rush to Europe away from the consequences of his acts; . . . the curious impression of a woman's face down . . . down in the mire, with streaming, upturned eyes pleading for the hope that was to go out in darkness; . . . Her, of the closed incident, long ago; . . . her, of the present; . . . yes, and there was to be another, away . . . far ahead . . . in a hazy future . . . One, . . . pure, innocent, trusting . . . worthy to be his wife! It was like past . . . present . . . future: the closed incident; . . . the present folly; . . . the Forward Hope! The mistake was in thinking that he could dis sever those three—past . . . present . . . future!

So absorbed in thought was Hebden that he did not notice an elderly woman with a great mass of white hair above her forehead in puffs holding a gold lorgnette before her eyes and wearing an ermine opera cloak, quietly entering the billiard-room. The poise of the chin was aggressive, the tight-set lips hard with decision, the cast of the full eyes arrogant. She was looking at him through the lorgnette. He had covered his face with one hand. The cigarette was out. Her brows contracted to a sharp intersection above the ridge of the nose.

She noticed that he was not in evening clothes. He still wore the steamer coat. She drew her head so far back that she seemed to be looking down—a trick of Mrs. Hebden's eyes that struck terror to the timid.

"Dorval?"

"Yes, my dear mother?"

He led her to a chair as if she had been a queen.

"You did not come to the theatre?"

"No, mother."

"You have not been out to dinner?"

"No—I had a snack out at the Sea Bright Châlet! I had the pair out for a spin—such a fine winter day, you know?"

The mother said nothing; that is, she lowered her lorgnette, which was saying a great deal.

"I've arranged two cruises, Dorval."

Silence.

"We go South next week! In spring the cruise for the Mediterranean is arranged."

"Lady Helen will join us, Dorval. She is own first cousin by your father's side."

"Oh," said Hebden irritably. He had been hearing of own first cousins and ancestors all his life.

"You must not let any entanglements interfere with your permanent arrangements, Dorval."

He leaned over the back of her chair, stroking her hair affectionately.

"My fond, scheming, ambitious mother!"

"These are *your* plans, Dorval?"

"Plans for me," he corrected gently.

Silence. She turned to him.

"You were not *alone* at the Sea Bright? Be careful, son! It is not—it is not—anyone connected with the past?"

"Mother," he interrupted harshly, with a sense

that he was being sorely used by any reference to the past. "I thought we were to regard *that* incident as closed!"

Her cloak fell back. The well-formed shoulders heaved a sigh of relief.

"Dorval, son, *who* was with you at the Sea Bright?"

Hebden reflected; then realized that frankness is sometimes the best deception.

"It was Mrs. Ward, mother! *Now* are you satisfied, you jealous mother?"

She laughed, shaking the creamy, white, bare shoulders.

"Dear me! What a fright you gave me! Satisfied . . . ? . . . Quite! Married women are quite safe; only—son——"

"Rubbish," he interrupted, kissing her.

CHAPTER XVIII

ONE WAY TO RECOVER A CONSCIENCE

IT would have puzzled Hebden to explain what induced him to sit for a portrait by Madeline Connor. Perhaps the most of motives would be as puzzling if subjected to the crucible of candor. He told himself that it was to help a deserving artist, and took some credit for this kindness. That is, he told himself, when certain vague emotions might have clamored loud enough to sound like self-reproach; or might have come clearly enough to the surface of his conscience to present ugly outlines; like the sea-serpent oozing at bottom most of the time, but coming up often enough to establish the legend of its existence.

It was the old question of the dual nature: one self, credited with virtue, kept in front as the true stature of the man; the other, hidden even from his own thoughts, condoned, and, as it were, domesticated. Hebden had begun, the way life begins with all: with what he *was* and what he *intended to become*; and he always judged himself by his intentions. When he looked back on his life he sometimes felt like a man coming suddenly on a mirror; he was shocked at an ugly face. That Past was of

his making; but how came it to wear such ugly features? Hebden would forget the ugly face in his eagerness to create excuses. Other men would have done the same. He had suffered sufficiently for atonement. He had not meant that certain consequences should flow from what he had done. How was he to know that a girl would go to the devil because—; he always stopped there; but he was not to blame. And then, like the ink of the devil-fish clouding clearest waters, the venom of the snake protecting itself with its own poison, came clouds of witnesses—suspicion of other people's honor, goodness, virtue. The whole world would have done the same as he had in the same circumstances; therefore, a good part of the world had done the same, only succeeded in concealment. Therefore, he was as good as, if not better than, other men. The process of reasoning by age-old repetition. There is no limit in lust or folly.

If Hebden could have lifted himself up in a series of frog-leaps, he might have attained his high purposes. He could carry out occasional aspirations by leaps. It was on the steady pull of the long stretch that he failed. To him, life was to be an experiment on the best ways of obtaining the most happiness; but he did not reckon on it being as impossible to mend the wrecked life as the smashed crucible. To him, experience was to *be* the *only* guide. He forgot that experience may be a rear-end light, casting shadows on a path to ruin. He did not give people credit for goodness, for self-

sacrifice, for honor; because—consistent hedonist that he was—he held the firm belief that people who chose goodness, self-sacrifice, honor, derived more pleasure from that kind of life than from the opposite. With him, virtue was what would be safest in the long run; goodness, what would be pleasantest. It did not enter Hebden's mind that, perhaps, the pleasantness in the long run might depend on the goodness. He considered that his own missteps had been *mistakes*, not *wrongs*; bad experiments, not bad character; weakness, not malice; the stings of the jelly-fish, not the recrudescence of the brute.

But, however jocose our self-excuse may be, nature is a grimmer satirist. You may prove you were not to blame, because you did not know there was a precipice; but, all the same, if you go over the edge there is a smash. You may prove you were not to blame; but, while you prattle, nature is writing her laws in blood flowing from your own blunders. *You* may have suffered. That does not prove you will not suffer more and eat the fruits of your own deeds, and find the eating bitter.

Hebden had not lived for forty years without facing naked truth occasionally. There had been moments of scalding self-contempt. Sometimes he felt like a man stripped and weaponless, confronting a giant the giant of reality his Past! Again, it was as if a man had been hurled out a dust speck on a raging chaos of storm winds: what did his clatter of creeds and excuses matter

in a war of worlds, of principalities and powers, of spirit and flesh? That feeling had first come when she of the closed incident threw herself on the floor at his feet with streaming eyes and white lips, telling him that her mother had killed herself. For a second Hebden had felt as if a world of darkness had crushed down on him; as if pleasantness might get entangled with crime; as if the unreckoned consequences of acts might become the furies coursing at one's heels through an eternity. He remembered how his mother had come in, finding him bowed and blanched; how she had whisked him off to Europe; how the Incident was properly relegated to that large class commonly known as Closed.

He had first seen Madeline entering the art studio. The unusual combination of a hectic flush, tokening death, and motions full of fiery verve, drew his idle glance back. Hebden was not used to looking twice at women without the object of his glances becoming conscious of the fact. The girl was gazing past him without seeing him; and he knew it. Also, he became aware of color, and form, and motion that pleased his sense of the artistic.

He had gone to the studio to select a picture and became cognizant of the additional fact that a voice with little breaks and tremors, like ripples of pure gold, can add charm to the artistic. The girl was unmistakably well-born. *Who* was she; and *why* was she earning her living?

It was at this point that the upper nature, which appreciated color and form impersonally, blended

vaguely with a lower. That wasn't the way Hebden thought about it: he was aware, in a sort of subconscious way, that it was not *safe* to become personally interested in people who earned their living, especially when the earner was encased in a Psyche mold, with an upper lip of the Diana cast. It recurred to him whimsically, with an almost supercilious scorn of himself, that the brief talk in the studio had called uppermost—like the resurrection of a dead possibility—the memory of a better manhood, what he had intended . . . and somehow missed.

In one of their interchanges of confidence he had asked Mrs. Ward *why* some women had it in their power to make a fellow feel that he might be a better sort. The long lashes had lifted, the lustrous eyes flashed an imperious question. Hebden had not meant to be understood in that way. He did not happen to be offering incense at the altar of vanity when he asked that question; so he blurted out a great deal more than he meant: saying that he had seen a girl who embodied his ideal of womanhood. Again the languid lift of the arched brows. It was quite apparent that Mrs. Ward could scarcely believe that he had not referred to herself.

Hebden smiled with curious self-gratulation to see the delicate flush of piqued surprise steal under the pallid skin. At that moment man's confidence and woman's vanity challenged. Mrs. Ward met the challenge by inviting Madeline Connor to the house and introducing Hebden. Hebden no longer felt so certain that Mrs. Ward had been piqued. He

countered by sitting for a portrait by the young artist.

The sittings had not been a particular success. His ideals, as clothed in his own imagination and as clothed in flesh on a camp stool studying his features as impersonally as if he had been a man of wood—proved antagonistic. Hebden's attitude to women was never impersonal. It was distinctly the attitude of a man to a woman; and he had begun with Madeline as he did with all women—by an attempt to break down the impersonal.

"It is rather droll," he said, "to be sitting here for a picture by you, when I am looking at a finer picture than could be painted."

Madeline had gone on painting—"not turned a hair," as Hebden expressed it to himself with supercilious amusement.

"It's a question with me which picture I'm here for?"

There was no response save the oozing of burnt umber squeezed from a paint tube.

"The girl distinctly lacks femininity! She is not lovable," thought Hebden. "Ten years from now she will be one of the stale proprieties! Peach with its bloom taken off by work!"

At the same time he noticed that her fingers tapered delicately at the tips. While she did not smile to exhibit a play of teeth, the teeth were pearl and small when a glint of white appeared between the parted lips. "In a word," thought Hebden, "she

lacks soul, sex, womanliness, graciousness, the seductive charm of appeal!"

"It may not be good art," he drawled, "but I always prefer outdoors to pictures of outdoors; and," he added, absently, "if a woman is worth looking at *in* a picture, to me she is worth a good deal more outside the picture."

The artist laid down her brush and turned.

"Oho," thought Hebden, "touched!"

He expected at least a flash of appreciation from her eyes.

"Do you know," said the girl, "you'll have to forgive me! I've missed what you've been saying! I can't catch the expression of your forehead! The play of shadows, . . ." she studied him as she paused.

The expression of Mr. Dorval Hebden's forehead at that moment was elusive. Its complexion was red. He left the studio with the impression that "the girl was disagreeable, work-tainted, bread-and-buttery, common, epicene! It was a dickens of a hobble that he had begun the sittings; but he would have to go through with it." He was disposed to score a laugh against himself.

At the second sitting Hebden had engaged in a species of fire rockets, sending up all his airiest badinage by way of dazzling this very common-place, irresponsive soul, that had somehow been born in a Psyche mold. And he won the coveted flash of appreciation—an entirely personal flash of undisguised merriment that opened Hebden's eyes

to the fact that "the minx might be laughing in her sleeve." He distinctly disliked this girl, and at once took his revenge by a delicately narrated account of a sensational scandal. A banker had absconded with the funds of the bank and the wife of a bank director. It was adroitly told. Hebden was an adept.

The artist laid her brush down and turned to the man with eyes that asked as plainly as eyes could speak—"Why?" Mr. Dorval Hebden could tack to a veering wind.

"Don't you think that is a desperately sad case?" he asked. "Seems to me that kind of woman is the modern Circe—turns men to" he paused, searching her face, "to fools," he added. "The fellow would never have embezzled if it had not been for her?"

"I wasn't thinking of the man," retorted the girl quickly, ". . . . I was thinking of the woman! There must have been something horrible terrible in her love for him! It's horrible when a woman . . . or a man either, casts away the one thing of existence! . . . their love! . . . The result is always the same—bread to dogs, pearls to swine, a jewel in a swine's snout. . . ." Madeline began talking of something else.

* * * * *

"What do you think of that young artist of yours?" he had asked of Mrs. Ward that night.

Knowing that Mr. Dorval Hebden had been experiencing new sensations, knowing, too, that it

would raise her in his estimation to praise another woman, Mrs. Ward lauded Madeline Connor to the skies.

"What do *you* think of her?" she countered.

Hebden ran his fingers over the keyboard of the piano, evoking a melody of luscious notes.

"Pure as frost sting in it," he murmured. "A soul asleep! form divine lacking the fire divine! . . . dreams of sky palaces, whose earthly youth will pass unrealized! . . . a queen without a crown, . . . because . . . because she will not dare!"

And he broke into passionate, powerful, full-toned singing of the Arab love-song:

"From the desert I come to thee,
On a stallion shod with fire;
And the winds are left behind
In the speed of my desire.
Under thy window I stand,
And the midnight hears my cry:
I love thee, I love but thee,
With a love that shall not die
Till the sun grows cold,
And the stars are old,
And the leaves of the Judgment
Book unfold!"

The notes quivered into an ecstasy; and when he turned to Mrs. Ward her lips were as pallid as her forehead.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, Budd McGee, the ragged boy, who was Madeline Connor's model, found himself in gaol for theft. Madeline appealed to Mrs. Ward. Mrs. Ward appealed to Hebden; and Hebden—in his own words—"bailed the brat out!" Thereafter the sittings for the portrait passed more pleasantly. Madeline expressed her gratitude and Hebden called Budd his "mascot." Hebden no longer looked for what did not exist; and Madeline no longer parried guard.

"Do you know, you are unlike any other woman in all the world; but you give work altogether too high a place in life, Miss Connor?" he idly remarked one day.

"I place it first."

"It isn't *first!*" He wanted her to ask *what* was first; but, as she didn't, he added, "Don't you think love should be given first rank?"

Madeline Connor thoughtfully balanced a paintbrush on her forefinger.

"I've thought of that! Of course, love *is* first; . . . as an inspiration; . . . as a dream! But, how are you to give love form, to prove it, to make your ideal real, your dream a fact . . . unless you put it into plain, everyday living . . . into your work? No use heaving a volcano of sighs, Mr. Hebden," she laughed. "Anyone can do that! The most sentimental people I have ever known have been the most selfish, the cruelest to the persons loved! . . . What's the use of words? . . . Word love is . . . cheap! Did you ever think how the way

to almost every wrong is paved either by words of love or religion? Lovers' words were all used up by forgers long ago. Anybody can roll up the whites of their eyes at the moon! It takes work—something done—to prove love! . . . Passive love always reminds me of a stagnant pool. . . . It grows swampy unless it does something—carves a way through rocks to the sea, for instance," she finished flushing.

"Ho-ho," thought Hebden, "so that is the way the wind lies! The form divine with the fire all ready for—the conflagration!" At the same time, it amused him to find it possible to be talking of love so impersonally with a woman.

"Do you not set any store in the avowal of love by words?" he asked. He had a firm and proved conviction that all women that he had known could never hear an avowal of love too often.

The artist took refuge behind the easel.

"If I were prevented," he went on, "prevented telling one whom I loved the great truth of her life and mine, I should feel terribly wronged!"

"That need not prevent you living the fact!"

"But it might prevent me from knowing whether she loved me——"

"But no," laughed Madeline, "you couldn't either of you possibly conceal it from the other!"

Going out that day he had shaken his head disapprovingly, saying "Work! Work!" As he turned down the stairs of the studio he raised his hat laughing: "The rose should be regal, above toil! Con-

sider the lilies of the field: they toil not, neither do they spin!"

"Consider the ant, thou sluggard," she laughed back.

"Confound her! She's sweet in spite of herself," he mused.

"Is there something to that man after all? Have I been fair to him?" Madeline asked herself.

To argue sincerity is to accuse it. Sincerity held in doubt is like chemicals in solution—of diluted quality, incalculable quantity; only to be determined by the test.

As Hebden thought over the girl he became piqued. What right had she to be so indifferent? She played the part of a comrade quite as if she had a right to it. But that morning after his drive along the sea he recollected with a pleasurable anticipation that this was the day of his sitting for the portrait. It was with regret that he remembered this was the last sitting. The scene of last night could never have been enacted—he thought—with one like Madeline Connor. Why was it some women turned men into blockheads; others gave a sense of uplift? How had that girl called up all one might have been and transmuted it into what one *might* some day become! It occurred to Hebden that, if his mother had not such absurdly grand schemes of a match for him, a woman like Madeline—in a higher station of life, of course—might make a good thing out of a man's life; not to men-

tion considerations that made possession of her a very good thing for the man.

He was very silent at that last sitting. He was a little frightened at the pass to which things had drifted the night before. Frightened at himself; for he was honest enough to know that he could not always depend on stopping where he wanted. In that respect Mr. Dorval Hebden was wise in his generation; for it meant that he knew the weakness within likelier to defeat than the influence without. Madeline Connor, too, was silent, painting in swift, deft strokes; a touch here of more world-wear for the brow; a shading about the mouth for something that was neither mirth nor thought—Madeline did not know what it was, her experience did not afford her data for tabulating and translating that look. She only knew she must put it in, a weakness and something more; a smile that was scarcely familiarity, yet like it—and she put it in to have the portrait like the man. It was the same with the weak, slightly heavy, receding, hard-set chin.

"There," she said, "it's all but finished! I'll do the rest from memory!"

She rose, dusting off her hands and putting the brushes to soak. Hebden scarcely looked at the picture.

"Do you know," he said bluntly, "you have had a curiously contradictory effect on me? I came here feeling a hang-dog of a fellow! Though you

haven't said one word, you've made me feel better!"

He had so far grown in knowledge of Madeline Connor that he no longer studied the effects of his words on her face. He could be quite sure that the effects would come out in speech.

"You've always given me the feeling," he went on, "of a north wind—pure as frost—rather twisty-twirly the way you hit a fellow, disagreeable as frost, sometimes, too, but like a breath of pure cold air! We've been silent to-day; but it has drawn us nearer than much talk. Did you ever realize, Madeline, that a weak woman can do a fellow more harm than a wicked one? A pliant woman is just about as reliable as a rope of sand when a fellow wants a life love. Do you know what I mean?"

"I'm not sure but I do," answered Madeline. She had a curious sensation that, while he seemed to be voicing her own thoughts, each argument was a false closing in on her inner guard, fencing for a weakness; yet the suspicion was so unjustifiable.

He began a furious search under camp stools, easels and art magazines for his gloves.

"They say it is a sign of friendship when people can be together without talking," said Madeline.

"Then I hope this may be the beginning of a long friendship with us," promptly responded Hebdon, looking into her eyes without the slightest expectation of the meaning glances that he so often read.

"She could make a new man of me," he thought,

with a sudden rush of light to the lusterless brown eyes. Going down the stairs he paused to look back. She was standing in the sunlight critically studying his own portrait, the strands of her hair shot with sun tints, the hectic color flushing and waning, the eyes pure, steady, true, gazing into the face of the painting as if they would draw out its inmost thoughts.

Hebden smiled softly to himself and went stepping down the stairs, *débonair*, nonchalant, satisfied; forgetful of the Past; amused at the Present; pleased, well pleased, with the promise of the Future.

* * * * *

Madeline sat thinking . . . thinking! The light sifted through the crimson lamp shade of the little cottage sitting-room in a warm glow. The faces of the old family portraits stood out from the shadows of the wall watchfully; and still Madeline sat in the red light at the little rosewood table, thinking! A small medallion set with jewels lay in the palm of her hand; and open letters littered the table. Letters about work: notes from women who paid a thousand dollars for a gown and offered fifty dollars for a portrait with the proviso "that, if it did not suit, it would be returned"; requests from charity for a loan of old prints and miniatures, with assurances that the exhibition would be an advertisement that would repay *any* artist. These letters Madeline ignored. They came periodically and in quantities. Then, there was Mrs. Hebden's letter—

stiff, formal, guardedly polite, written in the third person, begging Miss Connor to accept a check as a token of appreciation for the portrait of Mr. Hebden. The price of the picture had already been paid to the art dealer. The woman in Madeline rose in rebellion against the tone of this other woman's letter; but a toiler needs money; so she answered stiffly, formally, guardedly polite, accepting the gift.

But none of these letters kept her pondering. She held another in her right hand, while the medallion lay in her left. Then, she caught sight of her face, red and white by turns in the pier glass, and back came the words—"A rose regal above toil" Why did this man seem to throw her thoughts in on herself? Were there some men who would do that to such an extent they would destroy a woman's perspective, turn her into the vampire egotist? She looked at the jeweled miniature. It was a Cupid with bandaged eyes, bent bow, and flesh pink as a shell. The sunlight about him was quivering with shafts. An artist sees beauty with eyes that caress; and Madeline's look lingered over the jeweled medallion.

"I wonder," she asked falteringly, "have—I been—unjust?"

And, if the little Cupid winked under the bandage across his eyes, Madeline did not know. The alter ego that speaks loudest afterward did not lift up its voice and tell her she was becoming more than interested, where she did not trust. Perhaps it was

because she was more than interested that she did not trust. Something stirred the slumber of her life. Was it the man's appeal, his need to be helped? Madeline could not tell. She shrank from drawing aside the drapery of her reserve. It was a curious letter, not downright, not outright.

"I hardly dare acknowledge how much I build on what you said about it being impossible for either to conceal from the other what each feels. You place so little store by words, and so much by work, won't you accept this as a token of the inexpressible?"

"They say it is not bad as a piece of work, suggests so much; but of that you are a better judge than I. I picked it up in Rome, and send it to suggest—well—much.

"D. H."

She read and reread the words and felt like one trying to follow the threads of a maze. "How much I build," "what each feels," "a token of the inexpressible." These phrases might mean so much; and yet they expressed nothing. If she refused to accept the gift, would not that imply too much? If she accepted, what would be inferred? And so Madeline sat thinking, in a tangle not of her own making, in an ambush that might conceal pain or delight.

"When in doubt, don't," she mused. "I'll not answer at all. I'll thank him when I see him at Mrs. Ward's reception."

CHAPTER XIX

TO STRENGTH AND WILL—ADD PURPOSE

MR. SAUNDERS' health did not improve under the strain of the Great Consolidated's widening ventures. The new capital of the company had been floated for figures that extended to the billions. Just to count up to the figure that was to be the enlarged capital of the Great Consolidated for the capture of the world's trade would have taken an accountant the better part of a week.

Things that "float" must, of course, have more gas than ballast, more water than cargo; but not being a philosophizing animal the public did not care *how* Tom Ward "floated" his new company. What the public cared for was the widely noised and noisily proclaimed fact that, just before the increase of the Great Consolidated's capital, the company had declared an enormous dividend. That the dividend was enormous owing to an increase in the price of coal and ocean freight rates did not come to the notice of the public.

A few struggling newspapers printed some sensational facts about the increase of poverty being in striking proportion to the increase of wealth; but, Mr. Saunders paid a visit to the editors of these

sheets. He may have paid more than a visit, for the struggling newspapers became forthwith prosperous, went on their way rejoicing, and, being themselves happy, ceased to take a pessimistic view of Ward's finance. They extolled his methods as likely to levy tribute on the gold of foreign nations for the benefit of the American workingman by capturing the carrying trade of the ocean. That was it. It was a good argument, and pleased everybody.

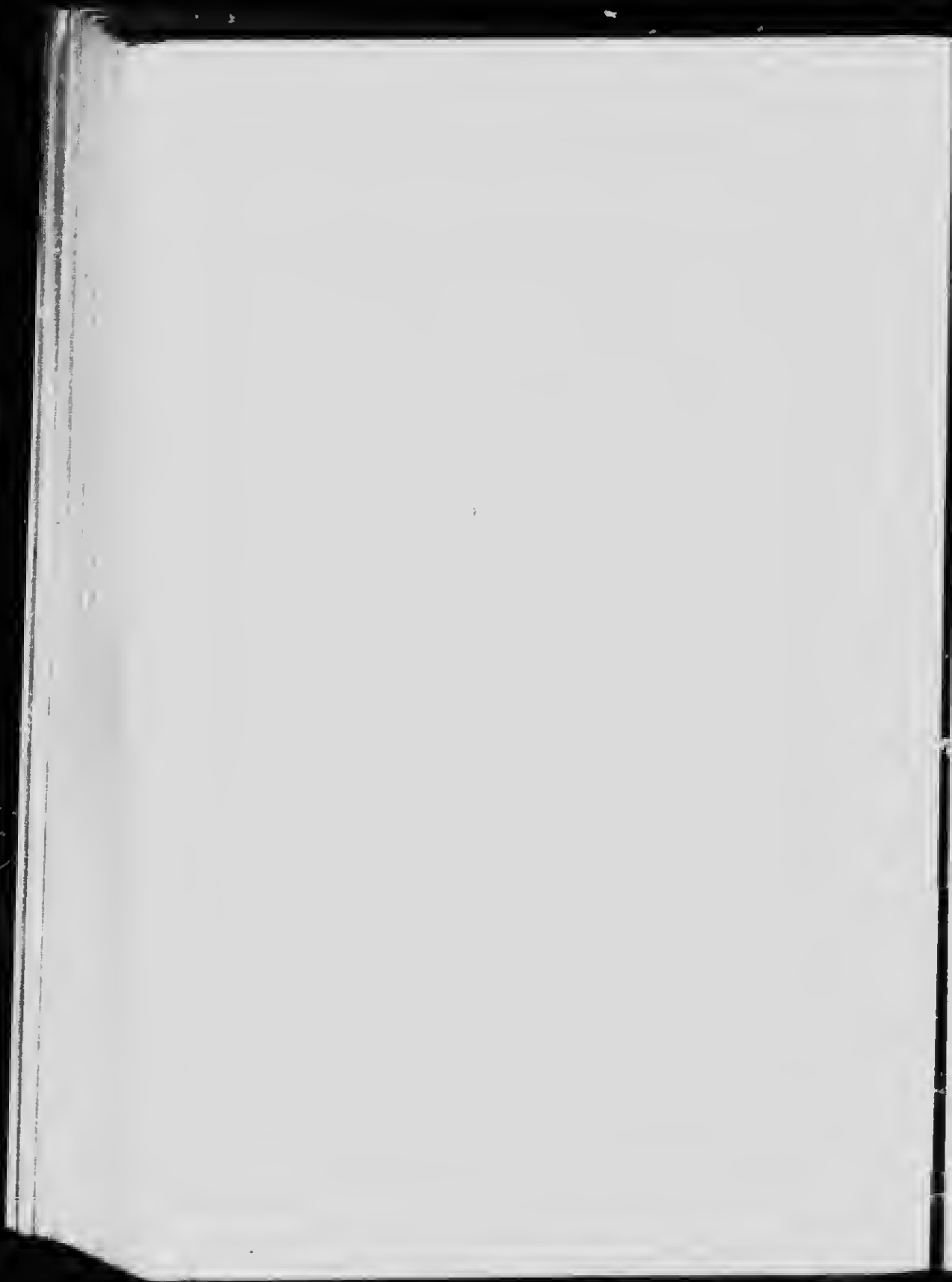
Yet, the secretary's health was in inverse ratio to the prosperity of the company. If a door banged, Saunders jumped, whitened to the lips, lost his breath. When a footfall sounded, Saunders glanced furtively round with the look of a weasel. He had developed the most absurd fear of being alone. A blackness, thick, impenetrable, hard, tight as an iron cap, seemed to grip his head. The thoughts raced . . . raced . . . raced through the blackness; always in the form of a shadow, a vague shadow coursing at his heels, shapeless, gashed, blood-holtered, a fury invisible, fleet as wind, winged with torture.

Sometimes, he would see himself a double personality; the white-faced, black-bearded, stooping man, running like a deer before hounds from the shadow behind; a laughing demon of mockery sitting apart, hooting, jeering, taunting that other fool down there, fleeing from his own shadow.

At other times the darkness rolled up, a huge, black, irresistible, tidal wave, washing out memory, present interests, future hope, leaving in place only



And then in a flash came the odd sensation that she was
being watched



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fear . . . haunting fear! In the darkness there pierced the back of his brain a stab like the teeth of a vampire fastened there to suck life out. He used to take morbid notice of the suicides recorded in the daily paper, and to imagine that he understood their motive: the Hell of the future could not be worse than the Hell of the present.

At other times, Saunders laughed hilariously and cynically at everything. He had found that a visit to the saloon across the way drove the darkness away for the interval between drinks. At night he tested the different drugs—*tested*, mind you; he was only *testing* the effects of drugs. For an hour after the drink and the drugs he felt fit for life, with a positive certainty that every man had the same untold secrets about his life as he, Saunders, had; but he found that he must double doses each week to obtain the same results, and the heavier the doses he took the surer he was all the world had become secretly rotten.

Though he had developed such an absurd fear of being alone, he was in agony among people. They banged doors, hummed, trod heavily, twiddled their thumbs, made remarks, and looked at him. When he realized what the doubling of the doses might do he had tried to forget himself among people—church workers, club friends, his family; but his manner was something too urbane, for a shoulder-clapping clerical had accosted him with a nerve-shattering thump on the shoulder:

"Mr. Saunders! Mr. Saunders! You are be-

coming so jocose we hardly know you! What is the matter?"

Matter? What right had that blockhead of a parson to think *anything* was the matter?

And down in the Board of Trade he had overheard a young broker saying: "You look out for Saunders! He's a bit too urbane these days! Something wrong!"

But, it remained for his wife to deal the worst home stab. She had put her arms round his neck and asked outright: "What—*is*—wrong?"

Wrong? What right had the simpleton to think *anything* was wrong? What was the matter with people, anyway? He hated her with a sudden cruelty for her innocence, for her questioning, for her tenderness, for her nearness. That night, when he had made up with his wife over the dinner table, he had been filled with such tender pity for himself—such tender, overwhelming self-pity—that he had withdrawn to his own room to weep like a woman, pretending all the while he was ill. The next morning, when he thought of the excuses that he had given his wife, he went down the street with a smile wreathed in his beard, and a flower in his button hole.

He had reached the office early, for his sleep had been bad, even with drugs. A gnawing had worked at the base of his brain till daylight, and when he rose every separate nerve in the palms of his hands was jumping; every object—window, mirror, rocker, the garden outside—jumping too, rimmed with red,

invested in a reddish mist. A cold plunge in the swimming tank dispelled these night fumes, and Obadiah went down to his offices smiling scornfully at the pat assumption of the world in general that things were right. Budd, the office boy, had already swept the room, and was humming with happiness.

"Don't grate your duster over the felt of that screen," gritted the secretary to the boy.

Budd laid the morning paper on Mr. Saunders' desk. Obadiah lubricated his palms with a great show of glee, righted his button-hole flower, and licked his lips.

"And how do you find yourself this fine morning, my boy?" said he.

"I dunno," mumbled Budd sulkily, tipping the content of the waste-paper basket into a bag. "He ain't readin' that paper no more'n I am," soliloquized the boy. "That paper's upside down!"

It did not matter whether the paper were upside down or right side up, for Saunders had come to the stage where he *could* read a line twice without knowing a word. He told himself it was the drug. Budd continued dusting sulkily, with sickening memories of a scene out at the mines with Sam McGee, the labor delegate. The secretary heaved a sigh that was far from merry, and turned the paper right side up.

Suddenly, a low gasp broke from the secretary's desk, and Budd glanced through the half-closed door to see the man sink forward over the paper with red-rimmed, staring eyes, and bloodless, muttering

lips from which no word escaped. The boy seized one of the papers in the outer office and scanned the headings. There was the war . . . That was not it! . . . There was news of the impending strike . . . Nor was that it! . . . Ah . . . here! **Body of Unknown Man Found by Labor Leader McGee—Inquest Postponed for a Week!**

Barely had Budd thrown the paper down when the secretary glided from his desk to the safety vault, opened the combination noiselessly with trembling fingers, pulled out a file of type-written reports, and tore one sheet to atoms.

"Here, boy—look alive! Hold on, here! Put these other scraps in your bag! I have them burnt by the furnace man, to-day—you know—right now! Go—and don't make a noise!"

"Yes, siree," mumbled Budd, scuddling through the hall to the basement stairs. "Yum—yum—yum!"

Sitting in the half dark of the furnace room on a coal scuttle was—not the fireman—but Sam McGee, labor delegate, picking his teeth with his jack-knife.

"It's—all—tored—up!" regretted Budd. "It ain't plain like you wanted, but I guess you can patch them little bits," and he turned the bagful out on the floor.

Sam McGee, labor delegate, carefully sorted the waste paper, picking out certain scraps. "This is the one we want, sonny! It's signed 'Kipp,' too! I guess we've got all we want, now! The inquest

can go on, and so can the strike! Don't forget to waken the fireman from his booze in time for work, after I go, Budd! We don't want him dismissed! Here, chuck the rest in the fire! Now, run back, and keep your eyes open and your mouth shut!"

"Did you burn those scraps?" demanded Saunders, irritably, as Budd reentered the office.

"I didn't burn 'em, but I put 'em in the fire," replied the boy, with his eyes very wide, indeed.

"Don't stand there . . . loitering—you little devil, you!" ordered the secretary. "Stop drawing your feet across the carpet! Go to your work!"

Budd's jaws opened wide as well as his eyes. He did not understand that laudable precept—when you are in the wrong, hit first!

"Budd—come here!"

As Budd went trotting into the secretary's room the amiable Mr. Saunders wheeled in his chair with eyes snapping.

"One report is missing from the vault! Don't tell me—now—don't tell me you didn't take it?"

"Gee whiz!"

Budd opened and shut his mouth twice. He had promised Miss Connor not to use certain words. He missed them, now.

"Don't look at me in that tone of voice!" snarled Obadiah, snapping his fingers. "You know you took that report! You know you mislaid it by mistake! Don't tell me you didn't!"

Budd did not attempt to say that. He answered in slow, deliberate, petrified fashion.

"Mister Saunders! You great big!—downright!—sneakin'!—fib—story-telling—liar—that you are! You took *that* report, yourself, and tore it up! You know you did! I saw you! And it was about—th—th—th—" he stammered, "that Mister Kipp!"

The words came shaking out of him like marbles from a bag; for with one tigerish pounce the secretary sprang across the floor, clutched his long, thin, crooked, yellow fingers round the boy's throat as if to choke the name back, and shook till the child sputtered.

"Take y'r greasy nails out o' my neck, or I'll—p—p—pick y'r eyes out!" shrilled the urchin.

"O—o—oh!" gritted the confidential man in a voice that resembled the hiss of steam from a kettle, "o—o—oh!—you little . . . you little . . . I've a min' to . . . shake every tooth down your throat!"

But Budd had learned a gutter trick or two that prevented the confidential gentleman from carrying out those amiable intentions. With one squirm the boy drew his right leg back and planted a kick with firm impact and great precision squarely on the secretary's stomach. With another squirm he butted head foremost into the soft vesture of the same collapsed organ. The man doubled forward like a folding camp stool, with both arms round his waist, both eyes red-rimmed and snapping. Budd fell back, prancing like a fighting chicken.

"Think you'll do me the way you murdered Mr. Kipp!" he screamed, forgetful that while his eyes were to be open his mouth was to be shut. "Think

you'll pitch me down a hole alive the way you
threw Mister Kipp!" Bantam-like he pranced
round and round the secretary's revolving person.
"Jist you try y'r dirty tricks on a littler boy than
me!" And then, in the key of all the fighting cat-
calls he had ever heard, Budd perked his mouth
and emitted: "Mcow—weow—wcow—you old
Tom-cat!—Meow—wcow—weow!" And he bolted
for the basement stairs.

"Pshaw, Budd! . . . He's scared o' you," said
the labor delegate, putting a little parcel wrapped
round with a handkerchief into his breast pocket.
"He's scared o' you! That's what he is! Go on
back to your work, kiddie! Keep him scared!
We'll give him hydroph'y, kiddie—that's what, my
boy!"

* * * *

There, then, there it was at last, the haunting
fear; the clotted shadow invested in reddest mist
had come clambering up through the stones
at last at last! A boy, a gutter boy, had
shrieked it at the top of his voice taunted
. . . jeered screamed it at him Saun-
ders! The secretary sank to his chair, numb. Every
nerve in the palms of his hands began stinging to
life like needles. The room swam, danced, stag-
gered like a maniac through a reddish mist. The
morning light, which but a moment before had
flooded the room in a sunburst, grew dark
dark red . . . glowing like angry fire. The iron

cap tightened tightened till he thought his brain would burn with anguish. Clammy sweat oozed from his forehead. He sat clasping and unclasping the long, thin, crook't, yellow fingers.

"I'll see . . . I'll go and see Mrs. Kipp about that fool engineer's pay!"

It is to be observed that never at any moment, never for the fraction of any moment, did Mr. Obadiah Saunders blame self. He was the victim of circumstances. That was it. Saunders' morality of the judicious ambidexterity credited self with all the good that he did; God and circumstances with all the evil. His remorse was fear, not regret. Drawing out a little white tube resembling camphor flakes from an inner pocket, he put it to his lips, bit off a flake, and begin chewing voraciously. Thereafter, Mr. Saunders felt better. Budd slunk about the office like a puppy dog spoiling for a fight.

* * * *

There was nothing of the felted, feline tread to the heavy footstep of Sam McGee, labor leader. The step of the big, dominant, dogged delegate rang out loud and sharp, true and sure, as the hammer of Thor. It was a footstep marching straight to the goal, not wriggling round. It might crush with the sheer cruelty of power. It would never crush with the cruelty of cunning, like the snake that winds a victim helpless. And, to-day, the ponderous footstep lifted with the elastic buoyancy of an assured hope.

Sam McGee at last had firm hold of the ham-

mer of power that was to smash, serunch, pulverize, beat into dust all the plans of capital *against* labor. Capital was no longer to be *against* labor. His hammer was to weld these two forees—capital and labor—in *one* homogeneous, relentless, resistless, onward-moving Power! Sam McGee was going to *compel* capital to amalgamate with labor on equal shares, equal profits, equal privileges.

Like a lion awakening, Demos—the mob—was to arise to arise from the long night of the centuries' darkness, the centuries' slavery and serfdom to arise and chase back the Skeleton Spectre of a Poverty, eruel and grim as death! From Cave-Men, fear-haunted, running through the jungles, the people, the ignorant, half-brute people, had slowly risen from slavery to serfdom, from serfdom to freedom, from freedom to political power! And, now, McGee dreamed of Demos marching majestically on . . . equal shares; equal profits; equal privileges! No more Skeleton Speetre of Want looking out from the shadows, envious-eyed, on the Feast! . . . No more anxious fright tossing restlessly on sleepless pillows! . . . No more fear of want . . . dragging men down to the brute greed of dishonesty women to the lewdness of sin! In the earth was food food enough, and more than enough, for all children of men! Why, then, did men and women barter souls for gold? What answer the labor delegate, with his fanatical eyes, gave to this wild questioning we know.

Once, when an anæmic and somewhat emotional little man, who thought himself a reformer, when he was only a bubble on the tide, asked the president of the Great Consolidated that question, the big man bounced round his revolving chair in a fashion that set the little man's heart thumping.

"Want to know?" demanded Ward, rolling his cigar along his teeth, "want to know *why* there are so many failures and slugs oozing on the underside of the board? Well, I'll tell you! Lazy lubbers won't get a move on and won't lift a leg to climb out of the ditch! That's why; and I've been there! I know what I am talking about!" and Ward glanced at the intruder, who meekly muttered out something about Ward having such strength that *he* was hardly a fair criterion for the Weak. "Strong? . . . Weak?" snorted Ward. "*Why* are they Weak? Tell me that! . . . Because they don't *try* to be strong! What do you think makes strength? It is struggling fighting; gaining an inch; fighting for two; gaining two; fighting for four Good-day to you; and the like of you I have no time to waste! Porter, show this fellow out! If he comes again, throw him out!"

McGee slapped the document which he had patched together down in the Nickel Plate saloon, and told himself that he had a hammer he was going to use for "*all it was worth!*"

The elevator cage of the Rookery Building where Truesdale had his offices, was at the top floor when

McGee entered the hall. The labor leader would not wait. He went bounding up the stairs, flight after flight, four steps at a time, till he burst in breathlessly on a clerk sitting inside the railing of the outer office.

"Boss in, sonny?"

"What's your business?" demanded the clerk, who guarded the wicket, presenting a writing pad for McGee's name.

"Ah—you midget!" gruffly laughed the big labor leader. "Guess you'll know my business soon enough!" Stepping over the railing at one stride he marched unannounced into Truesdale's office, where he shut the door with a resounding bang.

"I'm McGee, the I. W. W. delegate," he blurted out; but, when Truesdale turned quickly and pushed forward a chair for his visitor, McGee found himself taking off his hat.

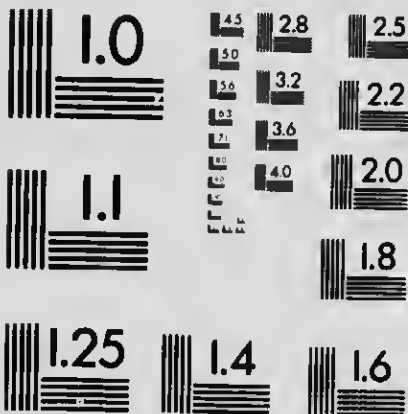
"I'm glad to know you! From what I've heard out at our mines I think I ought to know you *without* an introduction," remarked Truesdale pleasantly. Somehow, the manner of his saying it disarmed McGee. "I'm mighty glad to have a good talk with you. You are the most disinterested labor organizer I have ever met. You are free of graft, and that's more than most of us can say. You recognize all unions, all colors, all creeds—and that is at least a Christ ideal."

"Why don't you come over and join us?" burst out McGee, sitting down and spreading out his feet, and lighting a cigar.



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Truesdale shook his head. "Tell me," he said, "are you really I Won't Works; or are you the Industrial Union of the World—the federation of all labor?"

"We're both," promptly answered McGee. "We are I Won't Works unless you fellows with the plunk hand us over all industry. We don't blow you up with dynamite. That is foolish. It gives you the law against us. We just fold our hands and do nothing, as you rich people do; and, when we induce all the workers of the world to fold their hands as you rich people do, who is going to do the job for you fellows? That's the Great General Strike we are working for—the great world revolution! You bet we are I Won't Works! Also, we are the Industrial Workers of the World."

"And that is why you insist on union—why you have induced all my men to join the union—because *our* men, who would work apart from you, might be the Judas Iscariot selling the salvation of labor for a purse of silver?"

"Yes, sir," answered McGee.

"I have no objection to that!" said Truesdale.

"But the point, sir, is—we're about to declare a strike in the G. C. mines over that cut in wages!"

"I'm sure I have no objection to that, either! There was no reduction in our wages!"

McGee laughed. "Oh, that's all right—long as there's no trouble in your mines and there is in Ward's, you've got the whip! But, the point is, sir—before we order on the strike with Ward's miners

we want you," McGee rapped sharply with his knuckles on Truesdale's desk, "we want you—in consideration of the fact there is to be *no* strike in your mines—we want you—to *recognize* our union! We have to have as great a solidarity of labor as there is capital. We pay our men who go to gaol the same as you do. They are servants of the common good. We must have your men in our union!"

There it was again, like the ringing of a tocsin, a cry to arms, the old battle rally, the Armageddon of life—a *man could not stand aloof!* Of the great, blind forces marshaling darkly for death grapple, a man must choose sides—choose sides, or be crushed between!

"I *do* recognize your union," answered Truesdale, vaguely. "I have no objection to every man in the mines joining it!"

"That ain't the point, sir—as you know very well! Before ordering on the strike in the Great Consolidated we want a *guarantee* from you that you won't hire any but union men! That you are one of us! And, by God, I know from your face you are! What's the use o' pretending to favor our union if you can fire all our men and hire scabs? That makes you independent of us?"

The necessity to choose sides, choose at once, leaped out on Truesdale. A fight against the Consolidated was bad enough. A strike in his mines along with the fight—meant ruin; and, for what? The sake of a principle.

He scrawled his pen absently across the blotting sheet on his desk A tricky man might have tricked his way out by false promises to both sides. He heard the ceaseless rush of the wires, unseeing, unswerving, impersonal . . . Force! A live dog was better than a dead man . . . if he went down under the general smash what good would *that* do the principle? What *was* the principle, anyway, he asked himself, half cynically? How nakedly free of all side issues life could shake a principle! . . . Well . . . let us see! . . . He had refused to be coerced into joining the Great Consolidated because *a-great-deal-of-something-for-a-great-deal-of-nothing* was bad business; was, in fact, an interference with the Sacred Right to Property; in a word, was theft! *That was principle, the first!* Then, he had held aloof from this union business because any man's Right to Work was as sacred as the Right to Life! *That was principle, the second!*

The labor leader's eyes grew larger, darker, as he watched Truesdale. He had not expected opposition in this quarter. Never mind, in that document under his coat he had the hammer that would smash, scrunch, pulverize opposition! Like Ward, McGee stood inmutably for Force!

The wires at the window went humming with their multitudinous voices of power—the power of blind, impersonal Force! The ships of the ocean front rocked with the cargoes of ten thousand ports! The muffled roar of the street came up like a chant from the World of Work to the God of

Traffic! What were principles to this *blind God?* It was impersonal without right, without wrong without heart, without soul a give-and-take gamester a demon of struggle in which the Weak went under the iron hoof of the Strong, of the Great Blond Beast! Why should he one man stand out against the onward-sweeping movements of the age? And, yet, the instincts of the hard-headed old ancestors, those property owners of three generations, those vested-righters to the marrow of their bones the instincts would not down that the sacred right to property, the sacred right to work, were the foundation pillars of existence.

"Well?" demanded McGee, loudly. "We want you to guarantee *not* to hire non-union men!"

"You shall never get that guarantee from me," quietly answered Truesdale. "I stand for individual liberty to labor and capital."

The two men might have heard their watches tick.

"You see, McGee," explained Truesdale more conciliatory, "I *am* with you up to a certain point! Beyond that, I refuse to be dragooned! You believe in union; so do I! You've got to protect yourselves from injustice, and unfair laws, and legal trickery, and greed! But the minute you present a scale of wages to me which compels me to pay a blockhead and thumbless loafer the same wages as a good man, who doesn't need watching and hap-

pens to be doing the same work—that moment, I say, you are interfering with *my* rights to my own property! That is tyranny! And, the minute you tell me I must deny any man work who wants to work, because he is not a member of your union, I say you are interfering with that man's freedom and life!"

There was a heavy, embarrassed silence. Again, Truesdale heard the wires droning their ceaseless chant. McGee smiled. He was so sure that he held what would change the tune of the argument. Like Ward, McGee's belief was the argument of Force.

"I ain't going to argue with you, Mr. Truesdale," he said. "It's too late in the day to argue against unions! They're here to stay; but, Mr. Truesdale—" he leaned forward, lowering his voice and drawing a large envelope from his breast pocket—"supposin' I tell you I have in that there envelope a statement signed by Kipp, the engineer, saying the Consolidated had tunneled a hundred yards into *your* mines—what do you say to swapping horses, sir? I give you the envelope: you recognize our union! Know what will happen? That suit against you will be quashed; Tom Ward hit hard between the eyes; your stock, which has been sinking to the heels of y'r boots, is goin' to jump up quick! Your mines go on while Ward's lock up—you get the trade—see?"

McGee smiled broadly, and extended the envelope.

"Do you mean me to take it?" asked Truesdale, unmoved and unmoving.

"Say the word—-an' it's yours!" declared McGee, lighting a cigar with a hand that trembled.

"Then, McGee—I say the word! If you think labor and capital can lock arms to exploit the public—higher wages, higher prices—you are mistaken! You take the American public for a bigger fool than it is if you think it will dance to two tunes and pay the piper for both! McGee, I say the word—I will *not* promise *not* to employ non-union men! And, the next time you try to win by trickery, try elsewhere!"

McGee jerked back rigid, as if he had been hit by a bullet. He rose, buttoning the envelope in his coat, a figure of towering wrath. Three sharp raps of the clenched knuckles struck Truesdale's desk.

"Then, understand, sir—take notice—the strike is on!"

*

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So the strike was on; and the fight was on; and the suit was on, put at the foot of a list of two thousand other pending suits in order to depress the stock market; and the stock was down; and customers captured by rivals selling lower than the cost of production in one town where Truesdale's salesmen went, twice as high as the cost of production in another town where Truesdale's salesmen did not go—a trick made possible by the railroads granting special rates for Ward's mines and rebates to Ward for all coal hauled from the Truesdale

mines. *And it was all perfectly legal; that is, it was done so that it could not be proved illegal.*

Truesdale did little work for the rest of the afternoon. He thrust his hands deep in his pockets, paced the floor, then sent for his manager and his lawyer. The manager with the gray whiskers and the gray suit and sand-papered voice wore an 'I-told-you-so' air. To him Truesdale gave orders to go down to New York by the midnight train and protect the company's stock on the Stock Exchange next day, at any cost, by buying all that was offered.

"Can—can we afford—is that feasible?" asked the manager cautiously.

A man who owns only a fourth of his company's stock must plainly have a bank at his back to buy up the other three-quarters.

"It is feasible for one day—Rawlins! An avalanche is not going to hit the floor to-morrow! Steady her up for one day! Then, call a emergency meeting of the directors for to-morrow afternoon here! This thing is going beyond us!"

"I thought so," muttered Rawlins.

To the lawyer Truesdale issued instructions that a countersuit be filed against Ward for tunneling off his limits, and a suit be prepared against the railroads for granting rebates. Any one conversant with the law will readily understand that each of these suits was good for two years' delay and, for several fortunes to those harpies fattening off the law's delay. When the lawyer went away to

look up how McGee's evidence could best be forced from him, by summons or injunction, Truesdale rang up some of the directors and spoke with them over the telephone.

What was that? Yes they had heard of the break with the G. C.! What did it mean? And what the deuce was the matter in New York with the stocks? Who was doing the selling? What gang did those floor traders represent, anyway? Wasn't it a case of pure jollying brokers playing a smart game buying and selling twisting sales back and forward to each other when the stock was not in hand? Of course, it was contrary to rules; and, why didn't Truesdale put up a trick to catch them? Why not give orders for other traders to buy up all that was offered? That would cinch the trick! They would have to find the stock they had sold short, or howl! . . . Well let 'em howl! . . . Yes, of course, they approved of what Truesdale had decided: that was the company's policy—to be conservative: a man who held as much stock as *he* did wasn't going to do the fool thing!

That was the gist of the telephone talks. Truesdale, pacing the length of his office, wondered whether they would call it "a fool thing" for him to be monkeying with what Ward had designated as "conscience"; what he himself called "principles." Well to-morrow the directors' meeting would clarify things.

He heard the clerks banging their ledgers shut, closing desk tops, locking the vault with a swing of the ponderous door; and the last footsteps died faintly in the hall. A thousand harbor lights twinkled through the gray mist of the ocean front. The wires kept up their ceaseless chant . . . the rush . . . rush rush of Force, invisible, impersonal, unseeing, unswerving; but, then, as Truesdale recollected, listening, it was a *human* hand at the end of the wires that set the invisible Force going, that checked it, that harnessed the unseen, unseeing Power. A human brain—a thing above and beyond that controlled Brute-Force—the God in Man! He took out his watch. It was time for the home walk that had grown to be the brightest part of the day for him. She would be leaving her studio now, for the cottage up the hill in the suburbs. Ten minutes later Truesdale was crossing the snowy area of a city square on the lookout for a very erect figure that walked with a spring, brisk and light.

"Ah . . . here we are! You were ahead of me, to-night," he said, swinging in time with her quick, buoyant step.

"We seem to meet here," said Madeline.

"Yes—it is much better for you to walk than ride in those stuffy trams! I wish you would let me fetch the trap round for you! We could spin out along the sea before dinner. A whiff of sea air would do you good. I always take a run about

before rounding up for dinner. Suppose we take a canter out by the park to-night?"

"Canter?" Madeline laughed, but suddenly sobered as she looked in his face for an answer. "Why, True—what is it? Your face is white. You look ill. There are the strangest lines—there is the oddest look . . ."

"Come!" he said. "I'm tuckered out with business—that is all!"

They walked for half a mile without speaking, when Truesdale turned to her abruptly.

"Take my arm," he said. "I want to talk!"

"Look—look down at the city! The lights twinkle like fire mist!"

"Yes, you always give me the feeling; that life is a thing too beautiful to be real, Madeline; but, do you know, it is a mighty dark proposition, sometimes, too! It isn't all art, and goodness, and beauty—not by a long . . . long . . . shot! There doesn't seem much a fellow can do at times but hang on to what he knows is right with his teeth, and keep butting through the dark! And, I declare, when I find myself acknowledging this is hard, I could kick myself! You know, I like the struggle as part of the game! No isles of bliss with idleness for me."

"Nor honeyed pleasures all day long," she laughed.

"No," he added savagely, "I want life to be a fight . . . a fight . . ."

"And a victory," she said.

"For right," he added. "And that's just it! I'm hanged if I like to see the right knuckled under," and he laughed, but in the virile note was a tremble, and her clasp unconsciously tightened on his arm.

"You know," he went on, "you are my standard bearer?"

"I?" repeated Madeline.

"You make the fight both easier and harder! You make a fellow buckle up without his knowing, so that the fight's a bit of fun in the day's work! Somehow, he doesn't care a cuss for anything but the right when he's with you! You are sort of a lifting kick to a man going out in the arena of a football fight! It's easy when he's with you, but when he sets out to *do* the business, to put right into terms of the dollar bill, you know, it's a harder proposition."

"But why?"

"Because, by doing it he might lose you!"

"No—never!"

The words were out before she knew.

Truesdale stood still, looking down at the city lights.

"Do—you—mean—that?" he asked, sharply.

She took her hand from his arm. A sense half shame, half fright at her own plunge, gripped Madeline's throat. She felt a lot of pulses there that she had never known to exist, and power of speech seemed floundering in the depths of a new confusion. Then, it came to her that her own consciousness might impart deeper intent to the words

that had slipped her guard than he could realize.

"I mean," she endeavored to explain, "I mean that *no* man would ever lose my friendship because he did what was right!"

"Oh?" answered Truesdale, thoughtfully. "That wasn't exactly what I meant—what I had hoped—well—no matter! I'll tell you some day what I had hoped if you will 'let me, and,'" he added, "if I crawl out in pieces that can be mended! Take my arm! I haven't finished talking!"

And, with a consistency that was not obvious, he walked for a block without speaking. How much of rapture is pain, how much ecstasy so close akin to anguish that a hair's breadth may not divide the two! When she had withdrawn her hand, vexed at her own impetuosity, a chill came over her that numbed life. When he had said that "friendship" was *not* what he meant, life rushed back in floods of rapture and of fear; and, when she replaced her hand on his arm, she was so happy that happiness seemed to eclipse life itself. She walked in a dream. Her feet did not touch earth. Her heart was beating so that she could not speak. She saw neither the long, tree-lined avenue nor the twinkling mist alight with frosty gleam. She saw only a brightness, the brightness of an undreamed joy descending upon herself in a glory that translated life. It had come so unexpectedly, the great realization, that she could not—would not have dared to—admit what it was, what it meant! Before, not an hour ago, they had been comrades;

his voice, his hand, his approach, his companionship, like others.

Not a week ago had another man stood in her presence telling her that she had influenced him; and, had she not hung over his ambiguous letter, moved at once with deep interest, deep distrust? Had not a something within her pleaded for that other man? But now—there was *no* other man; there was no pleading. There was neither trust nor distrust. It was there, imperious, existent, all-existent, enveloping her life—giving her new life, new being, new hope, new heart-beats! She wanted to be home, to be alone, to be in the sacred stillness of her own room to think to pray in a prayer that could have no words! What had caused the difference? Was it the man's self-revealings that had touched her? Other men had revealed self and had not interested her. Did he know? . . . Did he realize? . . . Had he touched anyone else like this? . . . Could it be possible that she had been to him what he had become to her? She remembered how, not a month ago, she had told him that destiny—the drawing of river to sea, and sea to sun—had *frightened* her; and he had answered that it was only the resistance of her independence. She must hide . . . hide this new thing till she was sure till she was sure! But he was talking.

"I used to think, you know, when we passed crosses and statues in Brittany that Christ's day was

done: they were only the sign posts of a traveled road."

"And now?"

"Christ's day is not begun! Speaking of Him as a teacher of men, Madeline, I thought we had developed so that the race was ready for a new system—broader, bigger."

"And now?"

He laughed harshly. "We're back to the Nebuchadnezzar stage again; beasts of the field, holding his own by brute strength the Great Blond Beast code of existence. We haven't begun we haven't begun the fighting of right for its own sake without reward! Fancy fellows crusading today without collateral securities on the booty to come!"

Madeline was mystified. Was he bitter over impending loss? She, who had first spurred him, could not answer. It was like the old escapade of the orchard. She had led him into it; but, he stood up alone to the consequences. She vaguely felt the man's faculties in dark conflict with dim forces of which her woman's life gave her no clew. How trifling, how paltry her art seemed beside this living, palpitating life-and-death struggle of men every day! And how strongly they faced the conflict of which women knew nothing! Scarred, perhaps, and not without blame, they emerged from the battle; but now, instead of censuring, Madeline felt that she could be stauncher for every scar! She could love him for his failures.

Then, his hand had gripped across hers on his arm, and the words were coming from him, tense, smothered, blunt, in naked truth.

"Madeline, if you should fail me . . . if you should fail me, and turn out a woman who played with love like Mrs. Ward, it would smash me! I should feel as if my life had been built an inverted pyramid—founded on the wrong end! I should topple back bang to the broad foundations of primordial, brute instincts—Self! When I am with you it seems as if everything everything business, nationality, prosperity . . . must be founded on right, won't build up solidly unless it is founded on right; and on the apex of my pyramid I place all such women as you stand for . . . truth, honor, purity, love! But, good God, if you should fail me as I see women fail men every day, and play with love the way the beast-cat plays with a tortured rat if you should make of love a light thing"

He did not finish. He walked on faster. Madeline was trembling. That word, which she had not dared to utter, he had named, repeated, taken for granted, consecrated as an unspoken covenant on which hung his eternal destiny. She had not dreamed of love coming to her in this guise, splendid, terrible, jealous of its own faultlessness, of its own stainlessness, of its own worth—jealous of perfection as a god—a thing that might lead a man's soul up to Heaven, or fling it down to Hell! She had not dreamed of it having consequences that were like a

propulsion to all the best in womanhood, or all the worst. She had not thought of it as the doorway through which human beings pass to a Better or a Worse, to the Beast Code or the Spirit Code, irrevocably and forever!

"Forgive me," he was saying. "I know you can never fail me! If I fail it will be my own fault! If my pyramid turns upside down it will be because of myself!"

They did not speak again till they were almost at the cottage. He had said: "I'll see you at Mrs. Ward's reception?"

"Yes," she had answered, half angered, half awed.

"I wonder if you know what you women do for us men?" He held open the gate.

"We might know—that is, we might know—if—if you told us," she answered. Why was her voice pleading? What was it pleading for? What did she long to hear him say that set all the chords of her being vibrating with a music that was not of earth?

"Suppose, by doing what is right, a fellow gets himself ruined, smashed—loses the love that inspired his life?" he questioned.

The floods of fear, of almost terror, of rapture, of delirious ecstasy were again sweeping over her. She did not pause to think. She did not know the words she was saying. She hardly recognized her own voice whispering with husky breaks: "I can only judge for myself, True; but, if I were a woman

in such a case, I should care . . . oh, I should love yes, love . . . the man who dared to do right, who dared to risk losing all I should" her voice choked, "I should love him to the very brink of Hell, and down into Hell, though the *whole* world fell on top of him! He would have my love my devotion always always!"

True did not look at the slim figure visibly trembling on the other side of the gate. He stood with his hat in his hand, watching the lights twinkling through the mist, but she saw that his hand shook, and her eyes fell as before a fear. His answer came from smothered depths.

"Then I'll be Strong; for *you* have given me Purpose!"

The last word rang out like iron on steel.

When she looked up he had gone.

Upstairs, in the sacred stillness of her own room, with the white light from the snow checkering the floor in panes of silver, Madeline sank on her knees at the couch with her face in the pillow, to think to think; and her thoughts were a wordless prayer, a hymn, a rapture! She could not think. She could only . . . feel!

She raised her face to the sky of the deep night distances streaming in silver through the window.

"Oh, God—this is the best—the best—the very best—of all," she said in a sob.

* * *

Downstairs, Budd McGee sat in the kitchen at a

side table "doin' lessons." He was writing in a copybook with red ink and a red pen. The pen handle was across his mouth, between his teeth; and the red ink reached from each end of his mouth across each cheek to each ear; for Budd was so topful of hate, and indignation, and boyish rage, that he splashed over in red ink on his face and his copybook. Miss Connor had told him that he must not swear, "a nice way to tie a fellow up." Slowly, Budd took the pen handle from his teeth, and slowly, with a deal of sweat and grunting, wrote in large capitals with red ink and curlycues, and exclamation marks enough to punctuate a modern novel:

Mister—Saunders—is—not—well!

Mister—Saunders—is—not—well!

Mister—Saunders—is—not—well!

CHAPTER XX

THE CREED ON EXHIBITION

YOU may condemn a man's methods with bell, book and candle, but if the methods materialize in a steam yacht, and a private car, and an art gallery, with one house in his home city, a second at Newport, a third in the South, a fourth on the Mediterranean, a fifth in Paris and a sixth in London—all equipped in a style to excite the envy of princes—there is a likelihood of the world taking your condemnation for envy.

Your cautious gentleman might shake his head at Tom Ward's "high finance," and utter dark hints about "sky-rockets fizzling out," and "stock that was mostly water and gas," and wealth that ran into the billions being "the Paper Age sort"; but when the high finance, and sky-rockets, and aqua-gaseous papier-mâché wealth materialized in Mrs. Tom Ward's reception, your cautious gentleman kept quiet and accepted the invitation.

The reception was what the society papers called "the affair of that year"; and it was certainly an affair to them, for the entire staff of reporters spent a week beforehand writing descriptions of the gowns that were to be worn, and the entire staff of editors

suffered nervous prostration from the number of telephone messages from guests ordering their names to be kept out of the papers, and lesser guests asking their names not to be omitted. Next to the keeper of the gates of Paradise those society reporters could record varieties of human nature.

By half-past ten o'clock the whole length of the driveway through the park to the Ward mansion was such a press of carriages that, in order to gain admittance to the places reserved for them, the reporters were obliged to leave their hansoms and foot it in patent leather across the snow.

Of course, grand dames of the ascendant declared up to the very night of the reception that *they* would *not* go, but when the night came round so did they; if not humbly, at least gracefully sandwiched between the newly-rich and the not-so-newly-rich, quite confident in their own minds that their presence leavened the lump; and, at an hour of exaggerated lateness.

To Ward the affair was undisguisedly a nuisance; necessary, but a nuisance. Having once entered into it with his wife he determined it should be done on the proper scale. Musicians of world-fame were brought on a special train from New York. A previous train the same day carried the rarest flowers that could be bought in three cities, for the decoration of the house and the supper tables. A train, slightly later than the musicians', bore foreign guests from Washington, among whom was a prince

come to America to woo the nation into a European alliance.

That prince was afterwards heard to say that he saw evidence at Ward's reception of greater wealth than the annual incomes of half a dozen European kingdoms. He had not believed that democracy—equal opportunities for every man—could produce such private magnificence. It was a greater power—he had not said "menace"—than the standing armies of Europe. He could not believe that individual liberty would bring about such national opulence. The question he asked was: would the opulence destroy its creator—the liberty?

Mrs. Ward received her guests below the arch that led from the drawing rooms to the art gallery. Unbending and strong as a pillar stood Ward by her side. American beauty roses, interspersed with a species of rare, early-blooming, gorgeous gloxinia, banked both sides of the arch. Gowned in a costume that had been a field-day to the society reporters—a gold-shot, pinkish-black, gauze-spangled thing, hand-painted in the flaring draperies of the skirt, and specially woven in French silk mills—her face marble white, with the dark eyes lustrous as stars, the languor animated by a wonderful brilliancy, Mrs. Ward herself looked like some splendid exotic bought and brought at wealth's command to stand between the native roses and the tropical, velvety, deep-lipped gloxinia; a tribute to the towering power in the person of her husband.

Her jewels were the sensation of the prince's

retinue. Because he had been seated next to an American hat the width of an umbrella at a luncheon in Washington, the foreigner had been inclined to smile at the almost childish love of display; but, it was not display that he saw in Mrs. Ward's jewels. Those jewels had been the subject of dispute between Ward and his wife. Knowing her somewhat colorless style he had suggested that she wear the diamond corsage and the diamond necklace with the square emerald pendant; but women are wiser in such things. Mrs. Ward knew that other emeralds and diamonds might come from New York and Washington; but, there was one thing that New York and Washington could not buy, one thing of which there was no duplicate—the rope of black pearls.

I remember seeing it some months before Ward bought it for his wife. At that time an old collector had spent sixty-five years and four hundred thousand dollars gathering the black pearls from all parts of the world of a perfect match, sand-peggle in size, and of dull, flinty luster. On his death they were bought by an Amsterdam dealer in precious stones, who added to them his own collection, making a rope of two coils round the neck and a drop as far as the waist. Ward bought the completed rope for the anniversary wedding gift to his wife. Jewels that have required half a century for their gathering and half a million for their purchase were not likely to have duplicates in New

York and Washington. Mrs. Ward wore the rope of black pearls.

"You could visit the courts of Russia or Persia without seeing anything equal to them," one of the prince's attendants was heard remarking.

Tom Ward had yet another surprise for what he called "those foreign fellows." It is—I think—pretty generally known to the goldsmith craftsmen that there are only three perfect and complete sets of gold dining plate in the world. Two are possessed by the rulers of the two strongest empires in the world. The third was seen by the prince when he sat down to the midnight supper of the Ward reception. Nor did he fail to observe that the wines were of the same date as he had tasted at a royal dinner in England. Ward had bidden highest for them when the royal cellars were auctioned to the public. The prince paid no empty compliment to his hostess. He realized this was not an American of the umbrella-hat type. His eyes rested on the conservatory. There were exotics from Africa, from South America, from Persia. He glanced over the dining room. There were tapestries from France, and Italy, and China—old tapestries of priceless workmanship and lost dyes. He scanned the art gallery. There were paintings by the best artists of Russia, and France, and Italy, and Spain, and England, and Holland. Then, the prince's eye came back to Mrs. Ward, chiseled in feature as a princess, highly keyed, over-cultivated, pampered, artificial, imperious as a queen, with the

easy, spontaneous gayety of her American womanhood. Of all Ward's possessions she was the costliest, the rarest. What the prince said pleased Ward more than the highest-flown compliment.

"And this"—his eye wandering from conservatory to art gallery—"and this"—with a long pause, "this—is America—the youngest of the nations! Your conquests levy tribute on every one of us across the sea! Your bloodless victories have done it! It is a new phenomenon! We must invent a new diplomacy—we must send our sons to carry off your daughters! That is the only redress!"

Ward, fireproof to flattery, could not resist that insidious homage. It was good to be alive. Life was a merry game when one succeeded: the wine of battle, a fiery tincture to the blood when one conquered. And, Ward had conquered that very day. The papers were full of it, though the most of the guests had not had time to read the details, and the details themselves were still obscure. The rooms of the reception were full of it, too. Wherever men grouped questions went and came at random. Among the aigrettes, and diamond tiaras, and jeweled hair-ornaments, nodding like the clover-tops of a wind-blown field, shiny heads—bare as a billiard ball, men's voices, like bass to the tinkling treble of the women's laughter, uttered such enigmatical statements as these:

"Who began it, anyway? I'd have done the same in Ward's place. My brokers were on the floor

when it happened, and it was as quick as—*that!*” with a snap of the fingers.

Then from a wheezy, dissipated gentleman with a protuberant, white waistcoat:

“I tell you—other parties started it! Sort o’ thought they’d jolly Ward up, that sort o’ thing!” A wheezing cough. “Ward gave ‘em all the jolly-ing they’ll want for some time—I can tell you!” with a reddening of nose, and ears, and chin.

Then from the veteran broker who had congratulated Truesdale so heartily:

“Look here, Dillon! What are you talking about so innocently? You are in this game with Ward, yourself; so is Truesdale! What the devil are you up to with your razzle-dazzles?”

Then from a clean-shaved youth with a monocle, who would have mortgaged soul and salary for an invitation to one of Mrs. Ward’s receptions:

“Don’t be too sure it *was* a smash! You can never tell which side the smash is on till the checks are cashed!”

Nevertheless, the opinion in this group was that the smash had not been on Ward’s side, though one anæmic gentleman with an eye for dramatic effects—he was a tenor—suggested that it “would be like Mr. Ward to show that iron nerve, even if he had been smashed.”

Among so many guests were the omnipresent types: the grand dames, who will confer a favor on Heaven if they condescend to go there; the cork-screwing, socially ambitious women, gimleting a way

to favor to help husbands who were brokers, or lawyers, or doctors; the bird-witted youths, who considered receptions salvation; and the fat-brained gentlemen who detested functions and only came to see the prince; women who dressed on the principle that it is better to be talked *against* than *not* talked about, better to pique than to be ignored; girls who numbered more flirtations and conquests than years; and gangrenous-hearted folk whose pleasure was to find fault.

And among the guests was Madeline Connor, sitting against a bank of white lilies in the art gallery, unconscious of the fact that the white of the lilies set off the red of her cheeks, and that the sparkling of the electric chandelier above was not so bright as her own eyes. She was being entertained by a grand old gentleman of the good old school, with a taste for fine wines and fine manners, a type of the gay bachelors—ageless as century plants—who paid court royally to your mother, and played the beau to your eldest sisters, each in succession, and will yet act the same gallant rôle to your grandchildren. Blessed old derelicts! Stop-gaps to a thousand dull silences! Consolation to the timid wall-flowers! Princes of diners-out! Courtiers of exhaustless homage to the gray-haired beauties of the past, and beaux to five generations—what could the hostess do without you?

He had captured Madeline the moment she had emerged from the cloak room to salute her hostess. When she suggested that they ensconce themselves

under the chandelier he gave her a questioning look.

"Not too bright?" he asked, biting the stubby ends of his close-cropped, gray mustache.

"Why so?" answered Madeline. "The light is behind us, and the lilies will screen us from the crush!"

The old gentleman caressed his thin, gray hair.

"Beautiful women ought *not* to be screened," he protested. "But you have no reason to fear the light"; and, at the same time, he observed that she had two slight wrinkles on her neck which spelled out ten years of age each. Then she was more than twenty and not yet twenty-five. That was the age he liked best, so he placed the rattan chair for her and stood doing homage.

"We artists know those tricks," warned Madeline, with a mocking gesture over her neck.

"Heh, if that's true, we old fellows must wear high chokers."

Then the music blared out from the hall landing.

"Wonderfully beautiful woman, Mrs. Ward," nodding his head to the arch. "I hear you are great friends, you two?"

"Yes, and we are so different. Yet, I believe we like each other the better for that. I have often wondered what brought her to me in the studio? That is where it began, you know?"

The old gentleman smiled queerly. He liked a pair of gray eyes to look up at him in that way, and wondered whom the eyes were seeking beyond

his shoulder, but being of the old school did not turn.

"Smash?" exclaimed a man's voice behind the flower bank. "I'd like to know what you *call* a smash? There is no *doubt* about it being a smash! Perfect—r-r-rot, that talk of Ward on the wrong side! Why, the gang went nearly crazy when they found they were caught; and that fool labor leader."

"What I wonder," the old gentleman returned, "is what drew *you* to her? She is the orchid style of woman, hot-house plant, over-atmosphered, taken generations of culture to bring her out, proud and gorgeous and splendid, and all that, you know! We are proud to know her; but I can't help fearing what *might* happen if the orchid got out of its atmosphere. Now, you, you know, you are a sort of mountain flower. I have seen those Alpine meadows in all kinds of weather, fresh and brilliant and unfrosted after a snow as before! But, Mrs. Ward," he drawled on the word, "well—I am not *dead* sure that this overheated, artificial atmosphere doesn't wilt a woman in the long run."

A famous player was shaking out all sorts of notes from the art gallery piano, notes like the clear gush of a mountain stream, followed by a more languorous, mellow, dreamy melody—the mountain stream when it reached the wheat lowlands; and the old gentleman stood at attention.

"There," he said as the sound died to silence and the hand clapping ceased and the buzz began, "that's what I mean! Mrs. Ward is like that last

bar or two of music. You are a chillier latitude. The attraction between you *is* odd."

It was a woman's voice behind the flowers, a voice with a lispng purr; ". . . . when he is *so* clever" a soft deprecating laugh "not to see what is going on . . . men are blind," another soft, sneering, cynical, good-natured laugh.

The answer in a high boyish falsetto:

"You mean Mrs. W.? Now, I know you do. She *is* going a pace! There will be another kind of smash soon Eh? Oh, Pshaw! That's saying too much! . . . There's not a word of truth in *that!* She asks the girl here for her own sake. They're friends Eh? Pshaw! It's just a lot of feminine jealousy!"

Then, the music, rising, falling, swelling, filling the room with a throbbing rhythm; and the old gallant's voice, soft, modulated, droning:

"You and Mrs. Ward are like the Duchess of D—— and Princess V., last time I was abroad! Big garden party, festival, you know, for one of the queen's pet charities, radium hospital, you know; big thing; half a dozen royalties behind it; tickets two guineas apiece, seats extra! Well, the duchess took a course at the baths to reduce her avoirdupois, another course to rub out these things"—indicating crows' feet under his own eyes—"another course for—I'm hanged what! But she arrived—whew!" He raised his hands deprecatingly, raised his brows, raised his shoulders. "That was a costume—I give you my word; a regular creation; cobwebs and

gauze, you know, and a rainbow shower of diamonds! Next day I was at tiffin with the ambassador's wife. Society papers were raving about the Duchess of D——! Says Mrs. Ambassador:

"What woman do *you* think was the belle, last evening?"

"Princess of V——," said I.

"So do I," she said, "and I'll wager this cup of tea that you can't tell me what she wore!"

"Done!" said I. "You lose! The princess wore . . . a white dress thing with a big red rose; and, I'm hanged if she wore a single other thing but a big, white, panama hat with another red rose! You know, the newspapers had cried the duchess up, but the princess had the honors!" And he laughed softly, leaving Madeline to infer what connection the story had with Mrs. Ward and herself.

"Hm!" thought he, running his eye lightly over Madeline's slim, white figure with no ornament save the rubies, "she hasn't heard a word! She is looking for someone! I'll have to get him!"

Out loud, he said, "Miss Connor, *who* is the lucky dog?" but the music saved Madeline from answering that question.

Where Madeline's thoughts were, one may guess. I suppose very worldly-wise young women will smile at her awe over such a commonplace as a love affair; will think her a great simpleton for praying half through the star-lit night that her life might be nobler for the great love that had come to it. To her the soul was like the glass prism that she

used down in her studio to break the light into its seven colors: if clear, so much the brighter the reflected light; if dim, so much duller came the sunlight through the glass.

I suppose very worldly-wise young women would have had Madeline spend half the night before a mirror, attitudinizing, testing which pose of the lips displayed her teeth best and brought out the prettiest dimples, trying whether the brightness of her eyes shone best with the head forward and the eyes looking up—just a rim, a tiny rim of white below the iris—or with the head back and the eyes darting shafts sideways. I suppose no worldly-wise young woman ever did these things. I suppose, according to the lady paragraphists who write whole sheets of newspapers and magazines, pouring out floods, billows, oceans enough of advice to drown the entire sense of the feminine world that Madeline should have devised pretty flirtatious tricks to lash Truesdale into a more explicit declaration, to pique, to tease him just ever so little with jealousy, to see *how* he would "take it."

I suppose no worldly-wise young women invited to a grand reception ever spent two hours at a manicure's having their nails polished, and two more hours having lines massaged out and color kneaded in, and two more hours having a wonderful structure of hair built between the nape of the neck and the crown of the head, and whole weeks of hours at the dressmaker's having themselves tucked and padded and squeezed from nature's lines of grace

into the figures designed for fashion plates. And, I suppose, because Madeline did none of these things, appearing at the reception in a gown worn half a dozen times before—the white, with no ornament save the rubies' red against the ivory of her own white skin—that she ought to have had a very woeful time, indeed.

To be sure, the paragraphists missed her, but the old gallant with a record of five generations to his credit claimed her from the first, and Hebden with a still active record next sought her to the open discomfort of the tongues clattering too loudly about himself and Mrs. Ward; and, an officer of the prince's retinue led her to the supper tables—which was one of the things that Mrs. Ward sometimes arranged to the amazement of people who regarded her as altogether selfish.

Of course, she believed that no one—no one in all the world—had ever known such love as now filled her life. And, of course, we smile: we have heard *that* before. But, there were times when the enthusiasm—the rapture, the nearness, the overwhelming consciousness of his presence—gave place to a very human rage; a burning resentment that she had given herself to such an abandon of love. No matter how she might crush down and subordinate this all-absorbing thing, in spite of Work, in spite of Art, and, in spite of Argument—it was there! Madeline did not call this feeling jealousy, any more than Truesdale had called his fear jealousy. Her independence would not acknowledge

why her eyes wandered so restlessly over the gaily dressed throngs; *why* her slippered foot tapped the waxed floor so impatiently. A judge and jury could not have convinced her that she was looking for any particular person. She would have said she was restless.

As the guests drifted through the rooms she did not notice a single detail of dress, who wore the primrose pearls, and who the yahger diamonds. All she saw was a melody of color, form, motion—seeing as an artist sees—figures flitting about with the grace of garden things; faces of every variety in garden flowers, velvet as pansies, bright as carnations, pure as lilies; gauzy, diaphanous forms, appearing, disappearing, hovering like bubbles in the sunlight; color—color—color like star rays in the purple of a summer night. Seeing as an artist sees, life was a garden, gaudily tinted and wind-tossed; but, behind the bank of flowers, new voices were buzzing with the endless story of the old gentleman droning of a voyage across the Atlantic.

“Has anyone seen the Hebdens?”

“The Hebdens?—no! They are *always* late—conspicuously late—part of their *répertoire!*”

“Yes—they *are* here! I saw them a moment ago. Who is that with the emeralds?”

“I should think Mrs. Ward’s husband——” then the strumming of violins.

“Mrs. Ward’s husband? Yes—that’s all socially!” This is a deprecating whisper.

“See—that is the soprano from Paris. Her fig-

ure reminds me of the coats of mail we saw in the tower——”

“Hu-sh-sh! She’s going to sing!”

“Even socially, I should think Mr. Ward *would* object——”

“Sh—I say! She *is* going to sing! There come the Hebdens.”

“And, you know,” the old gentleman was saying, “the vessel began to toss—to toss in the most beastly—the most distu’bing—the most inconsiderate way.”

But the voices behind the bank of lilies: “You say her name is Connor? Show her to me! They say Mr. Hebden is really caught this time.”

Then, the endless Atlantic story: “Twas more than flesh could stand! Colonel says to me: ‘Cap’n’s got to stop this infernal boat!’ ‘Pon my word, he did—right in mid-ocean!’”

Then, from the screen of lilies: “You don’t tell me! And, *that* is how Mrs. Ward came to take her up? I call it rather smart”

To Madeline it was as if a chill had blown over the garden.

Then, the falsetto, boyish-man tones: “Pshaw—all fudge! The girl is pretty! If Mrs. Ward chooses to like her what’s the sense of dragging Hebden in and setting gossip by the ears? Hebden takes his fun where he finds it!”

Then, the drone of the pompous story teller: “Colonel roars, ‘Stop this steamer and let me out!’”

"I do blame Mrs. Ward! If the married women dangle after him——"

"I call it a shame! The girl will lose her reputation—that's all!"

But, the old gentleman had pricked up his ears: "What the deuce are those women chattering about? Souls are damned for lack of a little silence! Bless my soul—what's society coming to when a lot of gossips hatch their cocatrice eggs under a hostess' roof?"

"Let us walk round the gallery," suggested Madeline.

It was as if a poisonous breath had blurred the fairness of the garden. She heard the sing-song of her companion's voice. Then, they were held by the crush.

"Look, *there* is the girl! And see the rubies!"

Then, another voice, low, modulated, full with arrogance: "Who—is that young person?" with a slur on the indeterminate designation; and Madeline found herself face to face with a woman of rolling, gray hair and puffy eyes, gazing through a gold lorgnette. Then the music; then the scramble for chairs; and someone smote the old gentleman on the shoulder.

"Ha! I've found you at last! Here is the program that Mrs. Ward sent for you, Miss Connor. Come, I have reserved a place for you—the cosiest nook, not too near the music!" and Mr. Dorval Hebden stepped from a cluster of palms.

"Bless my soul! What's this? Have I been

playing proxy for you, Heb, you scoundrel?" and the old cavalier toddled off laughing.

"Wonder how Mrs. Ward likes *that?*" the waspish voice behind the lilies was asking, as Madeline sank to a seat under the palms.

She barely had time to say "Thanks so very much for the medallion" before the soprano in the next room began.

"Ah!" said Hebden, searching her face. "It is I who must thank you for accepting in the spirit I wished. You have understood? I hardly dared to hope for that."

Which was not what Madeline Connor meant at all, but, as the soprano was very famous for a very famous temper, a deep hush fell. With the waspish words still stinging, Madeline shut her eyes to listen. It was a pensive air, a piece of music, for once, set more to the burden of the song than the display of the singer, breathing the hopeless tragedy of broken love. Madeline held her breath. Her heart was pulsing in throbs to the trills and runs of the pure, clear, wonderfully passionate voice. A mist seemed suddenly to invest life—the mist of the orchard long ago. The enthusiasm—the rapture, the nearness, the overwhelming conscience of his presence, of his love—swept over her like the hands of a master-player touching tremulous chords. From her forehead, from the flushing and waning of the color in her cheeks, from the tremor of her lips—shone a light. Hebden saw her gloved hands lock

in a shudder, and Mr. Dorval Hebden was not the man to miss those signs.

The singing died to a breath of silence. There was quietness, then hand clapping, and bows, and more hand clapping; and the soprano sang a skit-tish little encore that put the room in a hum. The light-heartedness was infectious. Madeline glanced carelessly up to meet a pair of proud, frowning eyes, staring through a gold lorgnette. Mrs. Hebden's displeasure was so ill-concealed that observers were smiling. The mischievous spirit of the music stimulated the girl. She would punish the insolence; and, she spoke to Hebden in a voice that set him uttering all sorts of inanities meaning anything, nothing; words in snatches; less than words; accentuated with a glance—nothings which he would never have dared if the music had not been sounding those staccato notes. The hum became a buzz. Clubmen jostled past with an amused look at Hebden. "He's caught in earnest this time"; and, "girl is doing perfectly right"; and, "serves proud old lady right!" Then the orchestra began strumming. It was then that Mrs. Ward came for Madeline with the officer from the prince's retinue.

"I knew she could not bear seeing them together *much* longer," said the waspish voice.

* * * * *

It was after the supper. Madeline was sitting in the archway with the officer. Some one leaned over her shoulder. The baritone had just uttered the first notes, and the buzz subsided to whispers.

"Madeline?"

It was Hebden in full view of art gallery and drawing-room; and the foreigner rose to yield his place. She gave a visible start. It was the name. She had not meant to go so far. She did not know that Hebden had read the love on her face for himself and caught at the sign as a drowning man a straw to save him from the swift course of folly with Another. A disgust of herself came over Madeline. She despised the part that she had acted under his mother's arrogant gaze. For the first time in her life she had played the actress. She had thought of the gay life as a natural, not a stage, garden with paper flowers and tinsel gold and dummy souls acting artificial parts. But Hebden's experience with other women misled him.

"Madeline," he said, "I'm going away! I want to say something to you before I go! My mother has decided quite arbitrarily to go South."

Back came the rankling whispers . . . the vague innuendos that said so little and might mean so much, . . . and such a sudden anger rushed over her that her gloves, which she had carried loosely since the supper, fell from supine hands. Again Hebden misunderstood.

"What is it?" he asked. "You are trembling."

"I think I'll go," she said, rising.

"It's that cursed work," he answered, offering his arm.

To himself he was saying: "Is it possible? I should not have told her so abruptly. I did not

dream she could care so much. Why does she prevent me telling her? Has Mrs. Ward" but at the foot of the stair they two met Mrs. Ward, Madeline's eyes lustrous, Hebden flushed with triumph.

"Going . . . so . . . soon?" asked Mrs. Ward; but something caught her quick eye; and, linking her arm through Madeline's, she led the girl to the cloak-room.

"Madeline, *what*—has—happened?"

"I happened?" repeated Madeline, vaguely heart-sick.

"Yes—tell me—you owe it to me. . . ."

"Louie," interrupted the girl, with an uncontrollable desire to laugh cynically, "please don't fuss! I'm unstrung. Your Mr. Hebden *stiffers* me! I want to throw open the door and rush into a fresh wind whenever he is near. I feel as King Arthur did when dying—for God's sake, a little more air! Do go back to those people; and explain to him I am ill. I don't want to offend him, after all he has done for Budd."

For just a moment the two friends gazed in each other's eyes. Then Mrs. Ward kissed the girl.

"I wonder," she said, as she opened the cloak-room door, "I wonder *why* Mr. Truesdale did not come?"

"So do I," answered Madeline coldly; but her face had turned to the maid with the cloaks.

As she drove away she could not help feeling the memory of Hebden a shadow. The gossip rankled.

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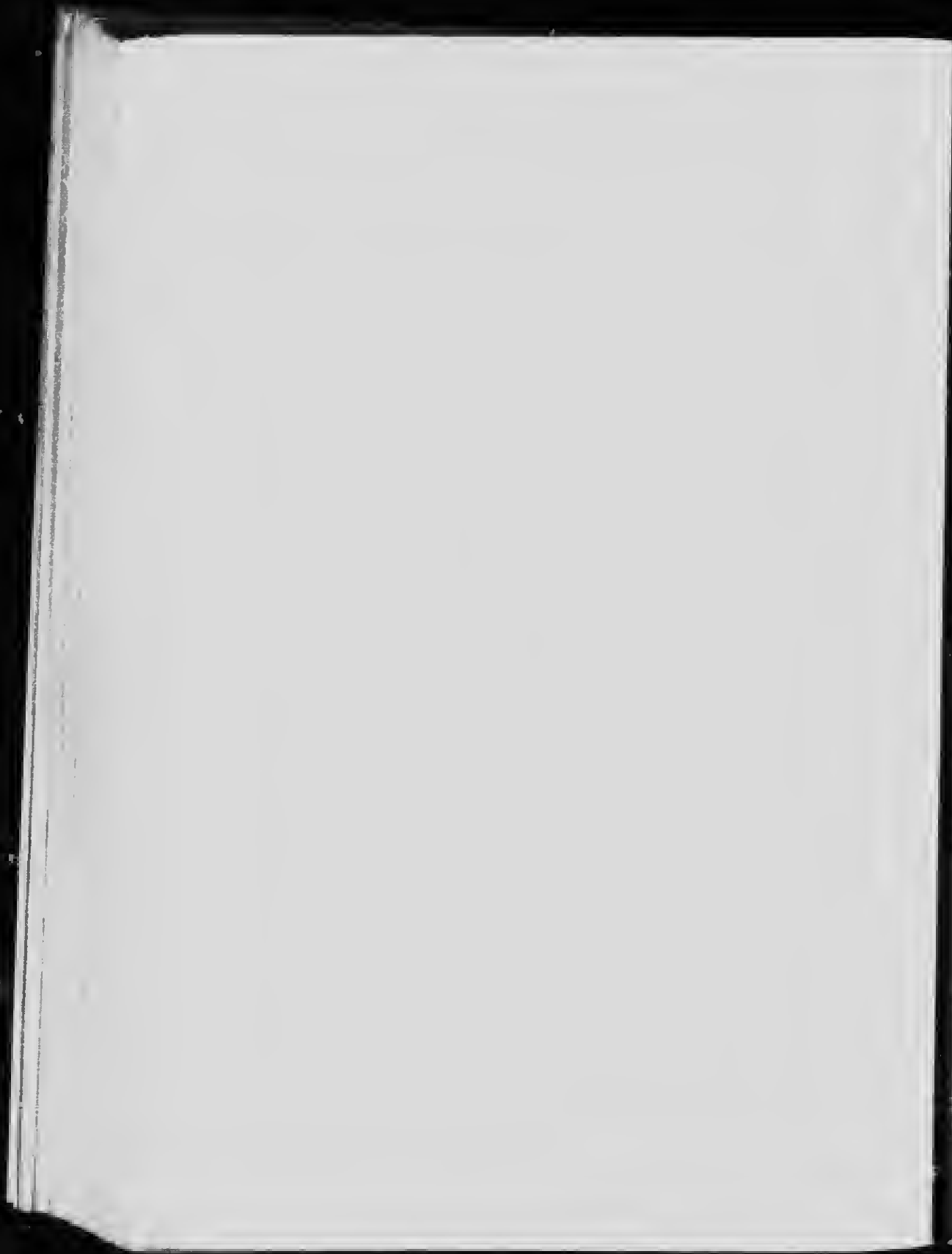
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"So she pointed"



THE CREED ON EXHIBITION 311

It came to her that life's hard way must always be trodden alone; that the *via dolorosa* is never illumined; that, when we face our Calvary, the best-beloved, the *alder-liefest*, of eternal destiny are hidden by the enshrouding darkness. It was not till long afterward that she wondered whether that dark intuition of impending disaster were the emptiness of her yearnings then or the echo of a cry from the field of defeat.

Plainly, the world of work was the world for her. And the next morning the Hebdens went South.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CREED IN ACTION

IF you can imagine the wrath of Jove, when a thunderbolt miscarried; or of the Norse god Thor, when the hammer hit his thumb, you will have some idea of the emotions convulsing the soul of Sam McGee, labor delegate, when he left Truesdale's office. The heroism or crime that always slumbered in his eyes suddenly blazed through dilated pupils. His dream of Demos, the people, the outlawed, the dispossessed, the disinherited proletariat, the timeless serfs of that eternally bifurcated democracy—rich and poor—marching majestically in ordered ranks to bloodless victory to the peace that was to be a triumph—suffered sudden check. Demos was no longer in ordered rank, but a scattered horde, plundering, predatory, mad with the gnawings of hunger, wild-eyed with the revenge that is a raw kind of justice.

Like Ward, McGee had immutable reliance on—Force; but it was Force without ballast, without law—Force gone mad. The big labor leader flung himself into the office of the Great Consolidated with such a whirl of slammed doors and explosive intent that every individual clerk on the high desk

stools jumped as if on springs. There was to be no nonsense *this* time. McGee had the hammer: he was going to strike.

* * * * *

President Ward sat in the revolving chair of his inner room, with his back to the felted door leading to the general offices. He was not thinking of his wife's grand reception to be held the next night; nor did he hear the click—click—click of the little ticker in the corner reeling off the tape record of the New York stocks, of the world's far-spiced commerce. His cigar was rolling from corner to corner of his mouth, tattered and mangled from over-much chewing; and the ash-end was cold.

Ward's eyes were fastened to a big map of the world hanging under the clock. Little red lines ran across the map from New York to Chicago, from Chicago to St. Paul, from St. Paul to Seattle, from Baltimore to St. Louis, from St. Louis to San Francisco. Ward's mind was busy stretching out more red lines across the Seven Seas of the world—like the arteries that carry life-blood—from Paris across Russia, from Peking across Manchuria, from New Orleans down Panama way through Brazil. He was just stretching the lines through Africa to the great interior, where "some lecturing, globe-trotting chap had said human beings were thicker to the mile than sand on the seashore," when there was a soft click.

A push, the felt door opened softly, closed softly,

and a tread as noiseless as a cat's came stepping softly across the carpet.

When a man has conquered a continent with two parallel iron rails called a railroad, and forged the links of that iron zone with new cities whose existence his railroad has created; when he has crossed the swamps that all engineers said could not be crossed, link by link, loop by loop, thirteen trestles to the mile, mile after mile, like a twisted chain—forward here, back there, to get footing for a bridge, round to that moraine of rocks for the other foot of the bridge, forward, back again, but always—*on*; when he has spanned the mountains which all men said could not be spanned, going clean through the rock-bed of what stood in the way, twenty tunnels to the mile, climbing what he could not tunnel, five feet climb for every hundred feet grade, looping what he could not climb, ten snow-sheds to the mile, with the avalanches thundering overhead and the mountain gorges roaring below; when he has dropped into the quiet waters of the Pacific the pebble that he picked up back on the shores of the Atlantic; when he has done all these things in the flesh and is mentally doing more—conquering new worlds—he does not like small objects to obtrude on his big projects.

“Mister—Ward?” It was a soft whisper, half lisp, half hiss. Mr. Saunders, as we know, was not well; and from very good reasons now leaned forward with both hands on the president's desk, his

head sunk on his chest, his chest sunk from concavity of manhood.

"McGee, the labor delegate, is outside. He has ordered a strike in the Truesdale mines. He is determined to see you."

"Well, didn't you pay him for what he did in the Truesdale mines?" Ward's cigar rolled ail the way across his mouth.

"I paid him beforehand; but the fellow is determined—determined. Says that cut of ten per cent. in wages has to be reconsidered within forty-eight hours or he'll order a strike in *our* mines——"

"Pooh," interrupted Ward, not turning his head and rolling the cigar back to the other side of his mouth.

Obadiah caught his breath: a clammy sweat oozed over his white forehead.

"But," he whispered, "McGee says he has evidence of crookedness about tunneling into Truesdale's mines—in fact, hints at blackmail! He says we've got to meet the union within forty-eight hours or he orders on a strike and throws the evidence into court!"

Ward came face-round with a bounce.

"Tell him to order on the strike," he said, "*and—the courts—be—dam—ned!*"

Obadiah ran like a hare.

The felted door opened again and Budd McGee, gorgeous in gold braid and buttons, marched in, clicked his heels, stood erect, and doffed his cap.

"Mr. Saunders says to tell you Mister Rawlins

left for New York on the express flyer," and Budd clicked his heels, turned round, put on his cap, and marched out.

Ward flung his cigar in the grate. His eyes half closed. He rose, walked over to the stock-ticker and ran the thin tape through his fingers. Then he rang up the telephone, not the one on his desk, but the one in a private box at a corner of his office, asking for connection with the New York branch of the Great Consolidated. When he went into the telephone box he shut the door. When he came out his hand was full of little slips of yellow paper on which he had jotted certain figures. He stood before the grate studying these slips, one by one, carefully, slowly, mentally masticating every figure. Then he lighted a match and slowly, one by one, holding the slips in his hand till the flame almost singed his fingers, burned each piece of paper. Ward touched the electric button on his desk. Again the felted door opened and again the felted tread crossed the floor.

"Look here, Saunders, I've been figuring a flyer at the Truesdale mines."

Mr. Saunders looked decidedly relieved. The bent chest straightened perceptibly.

"And that inside stock hasn't all come out," added Ward; which, being interpreted, meant that Ward's juggling with the stock of a rival company had not frightened so many of the Truesdale stockholders into selling as Ward had planned.

"And we've got to *force* it out," declared Ward

emphatically. "We've got the price hammered to forty-eight! We've *got* to have this thing settled before the strike is on! One fight at a time! We've got to have the Truesdale mines off the bat! Two days' warning—did McGee say? Well—we'll be ready for him! As things are now we *may* have more stock than Truesdale; we *may* have enough to vote *him* out and force them to come in; but he *may* have more stock than we have! I don't like the look of Rawlins going off in such a hurry. The only thing to do is to *force* some of those fellows who are holding hack to come out! Now, we'll let the gang go on: don't want it known *who* is behind that gang: so we'll keep on with the room traders; and they'll *whack* the bottom out of Truesdale's mines to-morrow! In half an hour I'll have a special train for you! You're to go on the floor yourself to-morrow! You'll find your orders there! Now, remember, no matter whether you find yourself up against *our* gang or not—you're to follow those orders; and, Saunders?"

Saunders turned at the door.

"Don't rupture your conscience pretending to be pious! It's business! *Those orders are . . . to—the—letter.*"

* * * * *

Who does not know a gray day in New York? Fog-drift, woolly and blurred, blankets the narrow gorge of the high-lined streets. Here and there, tier on tier, like steps from roof to roof, to mid-heaven, huge massed masonry—broken, jagged,

towering, shapeless—butts through the mist-like mountain ramparts. East and west, in a rush that fills the quivering streets with the whirling sigh of a wind, bellow the hurrying locomotives. From the far, muffled distance comes the roar of traffic, mingled with the faint shriekings of the fog whistles, where the ferries plow cautiously through the haze.

Rawlins left his hotel on upper Fifth Avenue, crossed a block west to Broadway and boarded a subway car. Presently, as Trinity clock pointed the hour of eleven, Rawlins left the car and turned down that narrow cañon, that hemmed-in river of activity known as Wall Street. The swing, the movement, the tremendous current of onward rushing life, caught him like a maëlstrom as he hurried down the narrow way.

In his own mind he was morally certain that he understood the relation of the Truesdale mines to the Great Consolidated. Truesdale owned in a solid block one-fourth of his company's stock. Ward, through some manipulation of the market, had gained possession of another fourth. As long as the general shareholders endorsed Truesdale—gave him their proxies for the election of officers—he was strong enough to oppose the Great Consolidated; but among a hody of scattered shareholders—women, professional men, brokers and bankers who juggled with marketable stocks for the margins, whether the price went up or down—were always some who could be frightened into selling at low

prices, or tempted into selling by high ones. That was the danger to Truesdale: the small holders might scuttle on a panicky market and Ward's gang of floor traders could snap up the offers.

Rawlins was fairly sure, too, of exactly what Ward had been doing. The announcement of the lawsuit, the threat of a labor strike, the refusal to join the Great Consolidated, had caused the first decline in Truesdale's mines. Backed by Ward a gang of floor traders—free lances, the better to conceal Ward's hand—had made a set on the Truesdale mines, daily selling small blocks at lower and lower prices. Whether they owned the stock so sold did not affect the pressure to push down the Truesdale mines stock. They might either be "selling short"—contracting to deliver what they would later buy at a lower price; or "matching orders"—B making sales to C for which there was a private understanding there should be no delivery, a proceeding contrary to rules, but impossible to detect.

In the words of the perspicuous press: "the bears had piled on to help Ward sell"; meaning that Ward had subtly conveyed the impression that he considered Truesdale Mines such a poor investment he was marketing his lines through independent brokers: this was "to get rid of the stuff before the slump became known." That was the way knowing fellows, so full of market tips they let a few out at every person whom they met, explained "the bears' activity in the Truesdale Mines." It was such very

"poor stuff" Ward wanted "to feed his out to the market before the market caught on."

So much for street talk, curbstone tips, the news reports. But Rawlins knew if a genuine buyer, independent of "the gang" appeared on the market the bears must stampede before the bulls, or show their hand. In the language of the floor: "the shorts must run for cover," actually deliver the stock they had sold by either buying it on the open market—which would force up the sagging price, or by borrowing it from actual holders at a cost of twenty or thirty dollars a day for each hundred shares borrowed.

Plainly the only thing to stop the drop in Truesdale Mines was for "the bull to get the bear on his horns." That was Rawlins' view. He had spent the night talking it over with the New York broker who usually represented Truesdale on the floor; and now, taking advantage of Truesdale's possession of a seat on the Exchange, Rawlins himself appeared. It will be noticed that Rawlins' aim was "to support the market," force the price up by buying all the stock offered; while Ward's aim was to *compel* the independent shareholders to sell, to compel them by the manipulation of which secret orders were to be given Saunders.

Just outside the Exchange, fronting Broad Street, Rawlins paused. Massive stone structures, ten, fifteen, twenty stories high, towered to the gray sky on all sides. On one building the tiny form of a workman on scaffolding eighteen tiers above the street

swung against the wall to every gust of wind. Against the gray cloud the man was a midget; a floating speck, tossed by the whirl of blind forces that reared their terrible monuments here in the street, towers of Babel defying the Powers of the Heavens, a confusion of tongues, a roaring of multitudinous voices, a trampling of multitudinous feet, . . . a thundering as of a mighty tide, . . . a human tide, . . . through the dark, hollow caverns of an Eternal Sea. And here, in the midst of the roaring tide, the multitudinous voices, the thundering diapason of the World of Work, stood the calm-faced temple with the Grecian pillars and fretted carvings—the Temple of Traffic, the New York Stock Exchange.

Inside it was one of the gray days too, the stillness before storm, when men's nerves turn the raw edge up and faces look ashen. Nothing was doing; and nothing is a very expensive business for brokers, who have heavy dues. Traders lounged round the posts of the floor, where stocks were marked and little tickers reeled off endless miles, endless sing-song of tape; but the traders did no trading. Numbers flashed in vain against the indicator board. Dealers were present; but they were not dealing. They strolled listlessly from post to post, or sat on the circular benches round the posts chattering, comparing opinions, reading papers, perhaps "figuring a deal." Even the presiding chairman leaned forward against the rostrum railing above the floor, face on hand, brooding, half asleep.

There were the stridulating calls, the harsh counter-calls of many tongues; the monotonous rush . . . rush rush . . . with a boom of the wires; the sharp buz . . . z . . . z of the telephones; the rumble and crash and roar, like the impact of a wave from the tidal traffic beating the walls outside; the lightfooted running of swift, gray-coated messengers flitting from telephone booths to posts, from posts to booths with a skating slide over the tiled floor as they fetched up to avoid collision with someone else; the unceasing snowfall of scrappy paper fluttering to the floor; the beat . . . beat, tramp tramp of countless feet . . . here, there . . . everywhere . . . criss-crossing in an endless maze; but—there was no trading!

As yet it was as if the air were surcharged with electricity that would presently explode a mine. The traders were nervous, restless, fidgety. They *felt* the market just as you may feel electricity without seeing it. There was suppressed expectation with expressed alertness. Something was going to happen. What was it? No one could tell.

"Money is tight," said one.

"Something going to—snap!"

"Heard about the war?"

"Yes: that was playing the deuce over in Paris!"

"Balkan War? . . . Nonsense; Not that at all! Too much 'faith cure' business in the money pool to try and 'boost' public confidence into buying! Pah! That way of 'boosting' up the market al-

ways ended in a hust! . . . That was right . . . sure . . . seen it lots of times!"

This from a little clean-shaven, jumping broker with a German accent and coal-black hair and a hooked nose and black, dancing eyes, like points of glowing light, who kept bouncing from the groups round one post to the groups round another post, shouting out "Truesdale Mines . . . forty-seven, seven-eighths . . . eights . . . eights . . . eights!" the words drowning in a chaos of raving voices, the little trader clawing . . . clawing . . . clawing the air with up-flung arms till coat sleeve slipped back to shirt elbow; . . . jumping . . . jumping . . . jumping . . . clear off the floor at each word—but no one at the Truesdale Mine post took his offer. Neither Truesdale Mines nor anything else was moving; and the little, jumping broker had to content himself with slipping up behind another trader of enormous girth and lifting the fat man's feet with one rush and a hug.

"Meester Rawlins," this as Truesdale's number posted on the blackboard and Truesdale's manager came on the floor. "Hullo, Meester Rawlins! Glad to see you! Whad's up?"

"Great Consolidated is only thing *up* that I see," returned the gray-whiskered manager dryly, passing across the floor to a group of older men, the European exchange brokers, who stood by themselves.

The little broker suspended his jumping to study the receding back of Truesdale's manager. Then,

bouncing back to his post, he began humming, "Oh—om—look—at—the—gall—er—ee?"

"How do you feel, Shortie?" called another trader.

"Bearish," chaffed the little foreigner, beginning to bounce again and claw the air, shouting, in a chaos of raving yells that absorbed half his words, Truesdale Min"

"Price ought to bear some remote relation to value," one of the older men was saying as Rawlins appeared.

"Yes . . . that's what I mean to say . . . smash! It's bound to come . . . and this fake manipulation find itself . . ."

"Gouging," interrupted another.

" . . . will find himself up *against* American common sense," sarcastically nodded another.

"That's Ward, every time! Markets his own stock first . . . breaks the pool to show his faith in it; but, if I know the American public, . . ."

"What's up with Truesdale Mines, Rawlins?" some one asked.

"*Down*," sententiously responded the manager, with eyes looking from an ambush of brows as expressive of thoughts as two gray pebbles.

"Eh? . . wh'd . . he . . . say?" bounced out the ubiquitous little jumper.

"Search . . . *me*," returned another of the young traders. "Something is going to happen!"

Suddenly, like the bursting of a water dam, a roar went up from the floor, and a thousand yelling

traders stampeded in a blind rush for the entrance. A cotton operator, who had bought a seat on the exchange and for the first time came on the floor, had just crossed the threshold. Instantaneously pent nerves found vent like exploding steam. A huge bale of cotton, done up hay fashion, dumped itself in the middle of the floor; and, in less time than it had taken the operator to cross the entrance, he was bundled through the bale to his neck, festooned with cotton combings like the wig of a Santa Claus, and hustled over the floor—round—round—round a central post in a futile chase after his hat, which was being furiously foot-balled by ten opposing details of "bulls" and "bears." The "bulls" put "the bears" to rout. The hat went down in the mêlée of scattered cotton; and the solemn, synchronous, metallic, striking of Trinity chimes sent the cotton operator off the floor with his tie under one ear, his coat the worse for cotton, and his mood as uproarious as the noisiest.

* * * * *

It was after luncheon that the surcharged expectations seemed to concentrate in gathering groups of traders round the Truesdale Mines post. Gray-coated messenger boys dashed hither and thither, round groups, through groups, into groups, and back again to the telephone booths. Excited brokers shouted "boy" "boy," and sent other messengers scudding with cipher orders on slips of paper. Imperceptibly, the visitors' gallery had filled, and men were leaning eagerly over the balcony

fascinated by the confused, perpetually-moving medley of raving men tearing at each other on the floor. The railroad brokers ceased calling "C. P., . ." . . . "N. P.," . . . "B. & O.," with sharp, momentary reference to their slips of paper. Other brokers, as well as the foreign exchange traders, had gathered expectantly round the Truesdale Mine post. The gray-haired chairman, from his eery look-out on the wall, had wakened up and also leaned forward intent on the gathering faces below.

The Exchange was no longer a temple where a nation paid its worship to the God of Traffic. The floor had become a battleground, confused, shifting, driven, with the hum swelling to a roar; the roar rolling, reëchoing, reverberating from tiled floor to high roof, from wall to wall, out from the calm, columned front to the choked gorges, and cañons, and jammed river-ways of commerce, where the hurrying Street paused . . . paused to listen! It was as if two enormous tidal waves of Power met in shock, in recoil, in quivering fury of renewed assault, and assault yet again, many-throated, pitiless, wolfish with a sort of desperate greed! A thousand men leaped upon the circling group round Truesdale Mines post, whooping . . . shouting . . . gesticulating, with the roar of an inarticulate fury, upflinging a sea of arms! In the center of the group, jumping . . . jumping . . . jumping, clear from his feet to bring him level with the shoulders of the other traders, one hand thrown up, palm out, throwing . . . throwing . . . throwing, as if to hurl the offered

stock in the faces of the bidders, shouting shouting shouting in a raving chaos, was the little trader with the black eyes and the German accent.

"He's a bear! He's jumping on the Truesdale stock! Watch him whack 'im down!" one of the gallery said; and if the "gang" hostile to Truesdale were playing a game, "matching orders," "faking sales," "jollyng prices down," they were playing it enthusiastically. Half the floor was deceived and joined the raid. Nothing could withstand the avalanche. Truesdale Mines went down down down! It was a safe game: the traders could buy up at a *lower* price what they were now selling at a *low* price. When the little German offered Truesdale Mines a thousand throats yelled themselves hoarse offering and bidding lower . . . lower! And, when he out-offered them lower . . . lower the buyers pounced on him with such a rush that he was carried off his feet clear across the floor to an adjoining post. A nod a word a crook of the finger, and Truesdale Mines had changed hands at a lowering figure; and the little foreigner was at it again; jump jump head back eyes snapping right arm flinging defiance at the buyers' heads with stentorian yells.

The "bears" were having it all their own way.

Alert as a tiger ready to leap, the gray eyes beneath the gray ambush of brows as expressionless as pebbles, Rawlins waited till the grating yell

bounced over the heads of the vociferating, pushing, clamoring bedlam, “. . . . forty-five, and an eighth . . . eighth . . . eighth,” with a jump to each word! In one tigerish bound the gray-haired manager was in the center of the fray, scattering the wolves! His arms shot out straight as a bullet to the mark; and, like a rifle crack, rang out the word “Sold!” The next moment Rawlins himself was the center of the group, arm upthrown, fingers clutched, one finger for each eighth, palm turned in, signifying that he was buying, and the whole room flinging rushing hurling upon him with the fanged ferocity of snapping wolves! He would buy, would he? He would “boost” the market up? Would he? He would protect Truesdale Mines by taking all that was offered? The “gang” uttered a whoop a yell a stentorian, ringing hullo . . . and were on him, open-mouthed. Hats went off in the bedlam. Coats were almost torn from men’s shoulders, little men thrown from their feet, the surging group slithering sliding, with a rush back and a lunge forward, a roar, a crash, a rumbling, resonant detonation that reverberated from floor to roof, and shook the street; while traders all but hurled each other out of the crush tramping stamping breathless, to pounce with their offers on the gray-haired manager in the center!

The newspapers afterwards said that Truesdale Mines jumped from forty-five to a hundred in half an hour. The truth is—the jump was to one hun-

dred and fifty. Men who had bought at fifty trebled money in a breath; lost their presence of mind; lost the sense of earth under their feet; bought again, sending the price with a rush to two hundred; sold again; and bought again till, in the language of the floor, "the biggest fool made the biggest money because he plunged worst." It was plain that battle royal was on between two factions. Rumors flew in a whirlwind. Now it was Ward fighting Truesdale; now it was Truesdale fighting some foreign manipulator who was opposed to Ward; now it was Truesdale and Ward united against some big banking interest. As the reader knows, the battle was Truesdale against Ward; but what convulsed the floor was the plain fact that, whoever held stock in the Truesdale Mines could make a fortune by bidding the two factions against each other. Men saw the chance to possess a fortune by accident, and tumbled, trampled, stampeded one another to seize that chance in the person of Rawlins buying all that was offered.

Then two things happened that always happen in such battles.

Always, where one "gang" is "hammering" prices down, are free lances, who take their cue from the others without reason and gamble on chance, "selling short," hoping to buy low. When the price jumped these traders "ran for cover," bidding furiously . . . up . . . up . . . up, to get the stock they had contracted to deliver. . . . They *must* have it at a loss . . . at any price; or go bank-

rupt, begging for the buyers' mercy; and they bid in yells, desperate, determined, wolves trapped . . . "shorts squeezed" . . . better bid at what would be a small loss than a total loss . . . and up . . . up . . . up they bid against Rawlins; but always Rawlins, with the gray-pebble-eyes cool and shining, overtopped their bid one point . . . two . . . ten . . . twenty at a jump! Truesdale Mines touched five hundred! The brokers "short" must announce suspension or, to meet their sales, borrow stock at a charge that meant ruin.

Such a rise had been known only twice before on the Exchange during ten years. For weeks the newspapers were full of stories about fortunes made and lost in an hour; bank clerks who had chanced to hold a few shares of Truesdale Mines and sold for a fortune; bank clerks who tried to do likewise with other stocks and other people's money, and went to penitentiary; actresses who had received presents of Truesdale Mines at forty-eight and sold at four hundred and forty-eight; brokers who announced their failures for a week afterward with the fizzle of detonating firecrackers; and, especially, of one Canadian premier, who had spent his life and his fortune on politics only to be discarded by his party and who unluckily was in mid-ocean on the day when the sale of his thousand Truesdale shares might have netted him half a million.

A quiet smile creased the face of the gray-whiskered manager, jotting the last transaction on his writing pad. He was sure . . . so sure . . . that

the manipulators, "the bluffers" were caught; . . . that they had no shares to deliver; . . . that they could not buy Truesdale Mines at any price; that they were crushed . . . "done for, in their own trap." They must go bankrupt or settle on Truesdale's terms. The smile creased again, and the pebbly eyes gleamed. The next time they tried "to whack" Truesdale Mines down they would think twice! Rawlins felt sure that he had Ward by the throat. He had bought more stock than all Ward held.

There was a breathing space. That is, messengers dashed over the floor as if pursued. Men shouted like maniacs. Onlookers wiped the sweat from their faces.

Then the second thing happened.

Messages had been sent spinning by wire and note and hand to every human being known to own *one* share of Truesdale Mines. And now answers came back from holders, who but an hour before had thought themselves ruined by the low prices, ordering traders to sell . . . sell; and every offer was borne down with the wild rush, the whoop, the yell, the stamping and trampling, the hurling of the solid impact of a thousand men, fighting to bid for the stock that meant fortune or ruin! And always, with the tigerish leap, Rawlins was among the wolves, foremost, highest, victorious in his bidding! There were no "bears" now! The "bears" had been gored to the death on the horns of the "bulls." There were no "lambs" now! The little

speculators had scampered off bleating, frightened! There were only the wolves being scattered by the one little, tigerish, gray-whiskered man with the sand-papered voice and the pebble eyes and the ambush brows. Rawlins wiped the sweat from *his* brow as he jotted down that last bid. They were only a few shares—probably some clerk's or actress—but they had cost a thousand each.

It was at this stage that Mr. Saunders walked to the floor Ha! He had come to the rescue! . . . Ward's block of Truesdale Mines hurled at the floor would avalanche any price to the bottomless pit! The "gang" flung themselves on Saunders with rebelling hurrahs that shook the building, that reverberated to the roof, that roared out to the quivering, listening Street! Obadiah paused, glanced at the clock pointing near closing time, and affected a mild, supercilious scorn.

"Fools—*much they* know Tom Ward," he was thinking.

He halted, raised his head and his hand, and shouted an offer of "sell!"

Five-hundred bellowed their bid; but still he held back. A thousand and one . . . a thousand and ten eleven hundred! The small bidders dropped away. It was Rawlins, low-voiced, cool, gray eyes expressionless, who threw up his arms a nod; and again he quietly jotted down "the deal" on his pad. This happened three times with the same result, except that the other bidders

dropped out of the game. It was Rawlins *vs.* Saunders.

Evidently there was no more Truesdale Mines stock "to come out." Rawlins had drained Saunders and sat quietly down under the post. Saunders separated himself from "the gang" who had vociferously demanded in language more picturesque than polite "what in blank he meant by boosting the price up" on them? The secretary thrust his hands in his pockets and walked meditatively up and down the floor beneath the gallery, with occasional pensive glances at the faces of the visitors. There are several ways of being self-conscious. One way is an excessive affectation—with a yawn thrown in—of indifference: that was Saunders' way. Small traders walked unsteadily away from Truesdale Mines post, trying to hide their losses. Boys scurried yelling across the room. Paper scraps showered down in a snowfall. Room traders had scattered to the different posts, when a messenger rushed sliding to Rawlins with a telegram. There was a pricking up of flagged interest. Only Saunders affected to see nothing, with a wreathing glow that was almost a sneer creeping over the wan, world-weary features. Men glanced sharply to Truesdale Mines. Had Rawlins yet another move in the game?

"Seems to me you have things *all* your own way, Mr. Rawlins? You can squeeze those fellows pretty tight? The stock's all in your hands!"

"I hope so," mildly answered the sand-papered voice, as Rawlins broke the telegram.

If the truth were told, every nerve, every fiber, every muscle was tense, trembling, clate with pride, with victory? He had saved the firm! He had beaten Ward at his own game in an open field. When "the gang"—which meant Ward—came to settle, they would have to beg terms with Truesdale for the stock which they had sold and could not deliver! The smile creased again; and Rawlins read the telegram. Just at that moment Saunders halted in his parade, and—furtively, sidewise as a weasel perforce *must* look—glanced at Truesdale Mines post.

This was the telegram, not even in cipher.

Directors failed to meet. All have scuttled and sold on rising price. Be careful at what figure you try to squeeze sellers. Ward holds stock for gang.

T.

Rawlins blinked. Always cautious, timorous, a terrible fear gripped at his heart. Had Truesdale's directors, who had "scuttled" and sold on the rising price, sold to Ward? He read the telegram again. He could not grasp it. The strain, the terrible strain, that had keyed up heart and mind, nerves and flesh, seemed suddenly to snap! He felt himself tremble . . . turn cold! Then Ward *might* have the stock to deliver. Truesdale's directors had been found as the price went up and, tempted by the dazzling fortune—had sold out! Truesdale

now owned all his company's stock—but at what price? A price that would multiply Ward's gains on "the deal" by a hundredfold, a price that would bankrupt Truesdale when he paid for the game.

Over the room fell a mist, a gathering darkness. The rumble, the roar, the crash, the multitudinous voices, the multitudinous feet, the march, the trample, the thunder of traffic . . . faded . . . blurred . . . grew faint, rolled away like a folding scroll. The roar, somehow, grew fainter, farer, like an echo of reality. Rawlins looked toward the chairman. There was *no* chairman; only a glazed darkness; with motes of white paper fluttering . . . fluttering down!

Suddenly over the the pandemonium of traffic fell a hush . . . a silence . . . a fear; . . . widening, spreading, rippling from group to group, as if the cold hand of an Invisible Terror noiselessly touched each man! A woman in the gallery had uttered a low cry, pointing with petrified gaze where Rawlins sat!

He had straightened out rigid, stiff, and was slipping from the bench to the tiled floor. The chairman rose, bending over the railing. He did not need to strike his gavel. Messenger boys, as if by magic, stood motionless; and a circle of startled faces had surrounded an open space about the Truesdale Mine post. Then some of the men turned their faces quickly away with a blur across what they saw. First one, then another, then *all* heads, uncovered in

utter silence. The little foreign trader bent down with lips that had turned blue whispering:

"Great Gott dis man. is dead!"

* * * * *

There was the measured march of floor porters: and a ladder, on which had been thrown an overcoat, cut through a gap in the silent circle. There was a measured marching, and the body had been carried out with another coat over the face.

Then the bedlam, the crash, the rumble, the roar of resonant traffic broke bounds once more.

The little foreign broker stooped to pick up a telegram that had fallen from the dead hand. He read it and tore it up; but, as the gavel struck the gong sharp to the minute of closing, he remarked to Saunders passing out:

"You worked that mighty well! Truesdale's caught, all right. He's caught tight! We've got his scalp!"

* * * * *

News of the battle reached Ward as he was dressing for his wife's reception.

CHAPTER XXII

THE MOMENTUM THAT PUSHES US FORWARD

IF this record were concerned with a complete record of Truesdale's life, not a few grave facts might be set down of how he met the blow that struck his fortune down in the Stock Exchange when Rawlins died fighting at the Truesdale mine post.

When undeserved evil strikes like a bolt from the blue one of four things may happen: A man may fight and conquer, entering into that best of all peace, the peace that is a victory; or, he may fight and fail, crushed to the melancholy belief that destiny is malevolent; or, he may flee in servile fear, entrusting his faith to lying platitudes, like the ostrich that shuts his eyes and thinks to hide by thrusting her head in sand—a sort of God's will be done resignation to the devil; or, he may reason that, since evil triumphs, evil is safest, and so go over bodily to the enemy. When this is done by a man we call it turpitude; by a woman, defilement.

The first thing Truesdale did was to settle with "the squeezed shorts," the free lance brokers unconnected with Ward, who had contracted to deliver stock which could not be bought at any price. A few of these went voluntarily into bankruptcy

in order to begin again with a clean sheet; but the majority compromised with Truesdale. This saved him paying the exorbitant price Rawlins had bid for their stock; saved the banks that had backed these brokers from failure; and established credit for Truesdale at these banks. With this credit and the security given on his mines, he was able to pay Ward the price which Rawlins had bid when Saunders had tried to break the market. Ward made a fortune out of what the papers called "the deal"; and Truesdale Mines were encumbered with debt; but, except for a few odd shares of stock, such as those of the Canadian premier who had been in mid-ocean when the battle took place, Truesdale now owned all the shares of his mines. By selling his yacht and horses, mortgaging the Rookery where his offices were, and giving up his apartments at the Metropole he was able to meet the interest of his heavy borrowings and continue to enjoy the expensive privilege of a seat on the Stock Exchange. This was the fact that troubled Ward. He had hoped Truesdale was off the field. The bears may pull the bull down; but, if the bull gains breathing space for wounds to heal, he may charge again with lowered horns.

Truesdale's next move was with the labor unions. He had learned his lesson. The world of events is the final test. The ultimatum of fact revises theory in letters of blood. In this struggle *no* man could stand apart. Each must choose sides. Truesdale chose sides. He sent for McGee; they compromised.

Truesdale signed the union scale of wages, which at once averted the strike. McGee met the recognition by not insisting on the exclusion of non-union men. And he worked like a demon. He passed weeks at the mines without coming to the city; and weeks in New York without a run home; and months without seeing Madeline Connor. At first, he had written letter after letter to her declaring his love. These letters he destroyed unsent in a fury of self-contempt. He would not seek sympathy. He would win first and then know the peace that is victory, or die trying to win. He would not bow supine before the Strong Power. He would become stronger than that Strong Power. Though he was not a sympathy-seeker—the most sapping of all vampires—there is a suspicion that Mr. Jack Truesdale plumbed the bottom of some very black depths; for it was at this period that he confided two items to his note-book. The first was this:

If there is no justice *here*, how can we expect any *hereafter*? If we don't find a live God in reality here, what chance for a live God in reality hereafter?

The second was this:

It's the blast of the north wind makes the pine grow straight. It's got to take tighter grip, find deeper roots, or—snap!

All this sounds very simple—plain sailing on a summer sea, a paved road of easy up-grades. It did

not work out so. He could laugh afterward; he could not then. After he had paid his fare from the mines down to New York frequently the balance of cash on hand would not have bought a newspaper. One night he had been delayed so long with his broker that he missed his home train. By extraordinary effort they had gathered enough money to pay the money due next day. Truesdale had left the checks with the broker; it occurred to him, as he watched the rear car of the missed train receding, that he would have to solve the question of spending the night in town. He could have borrowed or gone to a hotel on credit; but small borrowings and small unpaid hotel bills are bad signs—worse than big borrowings and big debts—when suspicious creditors are watching a doubtful debtor with lynx eyes. His watch he had already sold; and he had neither maiden aunts nor married cousins in New York. As he turned from the Grand Central Station he recollected that he had not change enough for street car fare. Truesdale passed the night "looking for a man" in the waiting-room of the station. At least that is what one of the porters told a sleuth detective who had been tracking him for hostile brokers.

Other nights he spent walking slowly through the dim, half-lighted East Side, where men and women flit bat-like through the dusk with ribald song and harlot mirth from flashy saloons. Here he learned how "the other half lives." Once, down Cherry Hill way, two footpads presented them-

selves at a dark corner without credentials. If he had had a pocketbook to defend he might have struck out with both fists; but the humor of the situation was piquant and he laughingly held up both hands. With an oath the footpad mumbled out that he "guessed" Truesdale was "not the party they'd bin layin' for!" Truesdale said "he guessed not." The footpad said "biz was bad." Truesdale said he "had found business very bad"; and the two went off muttering that "it was enough to discourage men earn' an honest livin'."

It was before the first quarter's interest fell due that Truesdale was hardest pressed. He had worked all day in New York and now remembered that he had forgotten all three meals and that his meals the day before had consisted of a glass of beer with some crackers. It is at this stage that so many strugglers in the metropolitan battlefield lose their grip on life. They exchange the beer for whiskey, despair for the hallucinations of a stimulating drug.

He was taking a short-cut from Wall Street to one of the East Side ferries when he looked up and noticed the sign of a free lodging house to which he had yearly sent a check. The next moment Truesdale was inside shaking hands with the matron, who led him to a little private table reserved for patrons visiting the house, and who all the while poured out a voluble stream of welcome: she was so glad to see Mr. Truesdale; his check had been such a help; they hoped he would continue his contribu-

tions; wouldn't he stay a night and have a meal, just to see how things were conducted? He said he would. In going the rounds he felt a shock of petrification run from his hair to his feet when an arm struck his shoulder and a bluff voice exclaimed:

"Hullo, Truesdale! I didn't know *you* patronized this sort of thing?"

Truesdale found himself face to face with a noted Wall Street plunger.

"Same to you," he retorted tersely.

The plunger looked at Truesdale; Truesdale looked at the plunger. Then both men roared with laughter.

"Shake," said the plunger, extending his right hand.

"It's like this," he explained, walking to the end of the corridor with Truesdale: "Matron, God bless the dear old soul, always been wanting me to come and see what they do with our money. My wife's up at 59th Street: keeps the social end going, you know, dinners, suppers, dresses, that kind of thing: thinks if she doesn't appear it would affect my brokerage business. She's right, too—it would. If clients knew I had been skinned, they'd stampede. People don't bother my wife with bills; but it's getting so *darned* hot up at the 59th Street hotel for me I want to keep out of sight till we get our deal through. I owe 'em too much for them to squeal till they get some of it; but I'm not at home just now," and the plunger laughed.

Six months later the plunger had paid his debts

and sailed for Europe with his wife. In the morning the matron hoped Mr. Truesdale had found everything satisfactory. Mr. Truesdale mentally hoped that the Angel of Records took note of the matron's unseeing eyes.

* * * * *

But to Madeline Connor this sudden reserve carried numbing blight. *Why* did he not write? *Why* had he not come to see her? *Why* had he led her on by seeming to take their mutual love as a foundation for conduct and then—stepped back? *Why* did he let her humble herself by an avowal of love and not meet that avowal halfway? She had read the accounts of the Stock Exchange battle. Some of the unsubsidized organs had grown religious and declared that men like Ward and Truesdale, who deranged the commerce of the country, were traitors to the public weal and should be punished. Some of the papers said that "Truesdale had Ward's scalp"; some that "Ward had Truesdale's scalp"; and Truesdale himself had dropped out of sight.

Then the dual nature came up in Madeline Connor: one nature, full of love, devotion, faith, hope, honor, fighting another: jealous, suspicious, resentful, hard, angry, cynical, capable of vindictive hate. There were times when her love of him fought against her hate of him; when she felt as if she could *not* endure the suspense, the agony of not knowing whether he were worthy or unworthy of her love; when she felt as if she could cast her

maidenliness to the winds, seek him, go to him, demand explanation and proof of the truth. The wound was not that he had failed her—she told herself. It was that he seemed to fall below her estimate of him. But her common sense steadied her. If she had been a fool before love came, she would probably have become a greater fool now, and thrust Self across the directness of the man's Purpose; but the common sense that had guided calm weather now piloted storm. Being in an agony of doubt she did nothing—nothing but what women may always do—suffer in silence; and in the silence those famous words used to come back: "The wound thou doest me I can forgive; but the wound thou doest thyself—never!"

The break with Truesdale drew her closer to Mrs. Ward. Her little journey in the gay world had disgusted her with tinsel. Hereafter she would seek individuals, not masses of individuals. Best of all, she would seek the art to which she had set *her* life's Purpose. The little journey in the gay world also had its effect on the art dealer, who loaned her the studio. He thought in terms of the dollar bill and had but one ambition—the patronage of what he called "swells." With a desire to use Madeline Connor to attract trade he requested her to move her studio to the front or public part of the shop. Madeline at once gave up the studio completely. It was her first experience of womanhood being used as a trade quality. She felt as if she had been mauled by coarse thumbs, as if her ideals were be-

ing caged, trapped, degraded to a trade; as if her art were beating helpless wings against iron bars of necessity. At worst, she could always pawn the rubies. Meanwhile she thought of accepting an offer to go to New York; and she passed much time with Mrs. Ward.

When mid-winter gayety lulled into Lent they began to read together. That is, they lounged with "Paolo," or "Cyrano," or "Sonnets from the Portuguese," or "Omar," upside down on their laps. Later, when a peripatetic lady lecturer, who knew less about philosophy than attudinizing her own fine figure, but with a few catchwords—"esoteric," "subjective," "mentality," "law of mental attraction"—gave an address on mental science, Madeline and Mrs. Ward took to reading misty authors of the German thought-shops. If the truth must be told, the leaves in most of the books were not cut. Yet they had a curious effect, those books. One evening, when they had lumbered through a heavy argument to the effect that the Christian rule of conduct was more a guide than an iron law, "categorical imperative for the guidance of the immature," the book called it—Mrs. Ward threw down the volume with an impatient gesture.

"I have *always* thought *that*," she exclaimed restlessly.

"I don't see what difference it makes," said the girl. "If you don't follow some guide you go to smash over a ledge; and if you don't obey laws you get hurt!"

"Just this difference," interposed Mrs. Ward, with her face alight, "that, if you found a *better* guide than the old one, you would be perfectly justified in following it."

"And what better guide has the world found, Lou?"

"Love," answered Mrs. Ward triumphantly.

What it was the girl could not have told, but her instincts felt the presence of an alien influence. She answered something about "love being the fulfilment of law, the fruit of the blossom"; but her voice was a far echo beating vainly against the tumult of her companion's warring emotions. They left the books lying where the gardener turned the hose on them and walked arm in arm to the other end of the conservatory.

"Madeline, what do you think of my husband's creed? Should one bow to it, or resist it, or flee from it—or what?"

"I don't know what it is," said Madeline simply.

"Supreme—Selfishness! The Triumph of the Strong! The Great Blond Beast!" The words came with a venom of loathing.

They passed under an arch to the vinery before Madeline spoke.

"*Why* did you marry him?" she asked.

"*Why*?" The animation changed to supercilious scorn. "Yes—why? Why do mothers marry daughters to rich men every day? Why? For an establishment. It's one way of earning a living; But it is a hard way, not an easy one. I thought it

meant horses, jewels, trips, houses; and so it has," she added bitterly. "I have my bargain: that is the ghastly hatefulness of it. I can almost fancy that I hear the devil's laugh. I have my bargain; and it's worse than empty."

They lingered before a rose that climbed the arch leading to the vinery. The girl picked a white blossom and would have put it on her companion's lace front; but Mrs. Ward gently pushed the flower back.

"Not for me," she said. "Put it on yourself! I tell you I loathe this life! I tell you I hate it! I tell you I can't stand it much longer! You don't understand. You don't know what it means to have sold yourself, for to-day and to-morrow and eternity," her voice became unsteady.

They did not speak again till they were in the art gallery, sitting, as usual, Madeline in the chair, Mrs. Ward among the cushions on the floor with her face resting on the girl's knee.

"Lou, you frighten me sometimes! You have done it again to-day! You give me the feeling of something terrible impending. A little while ago you said that love might supersede duty. Now you say that you can't stand your life much longer. Do you know what all that *might* mean?"

Mrs. Ward sat up with her hand over her eyes. A flush mantled slowly, darkening from her neck to her hair, burning in deep spots on her cheeks.

"I can guess," she said ironically, mockery playing

about the curling, thin lips, the drooping cast of the proud eyes.

"How do you know this may not lead you to worse unhappiness?" asked Madeline Connor unabashed. "You did not think that you would ever rebel against this life when you married for money. How do you know that the blind forces may not use your discontent to lead you over a precipice?"

The sunlight came sifting through the colored glass of the gallery roof, red-shafted, an aureole around the woman's face. Madeline thought that destiny in the person of a man might readily risk the precipice for such a face. What was its charm? A perfection of feature? Other women had that: so had fashion plates. Pride, melting into gentleness; gentleness, charged with fire; beauty hovering on the brink of vague danger; love, unspent, crushed, if crushed, the more fragrant; love, if roused, that might dare the very destinies; perhaps, too, though Madeline Connor was not experienced enough to know this—the strange, perennial charm that bewitched Greek heroes of old, the charm of the soul, when lights play with shadows, when weakness wars with right, aspiration with impulse.

"You are very beautiful," the girl half whispered. "How can anyone help loving you?"

"It isn't that," retorted the woman passionately. "He does love me; but it's in the wrong way." Then Mrs. Ward looked up with a quick smile. "You draw out the best that is in me." Then, harking back to the old self pity, "How do I know that

I may not go over the precipice?" she repeated absently. "The truth is—*I do—not—care!* There—don't look so shocked! Nothing could be worse than this life! I have something to suggest. Tom says there is a wonderfully early spring out in the Rockies. He is going out in our car to some meeting or thingamabobs in San Francisco late in May. He says while he is at the meeting we may have the car to run up through the Rockies, if we like. Don't go off to old New York in the lovely spring. Come with me—do come! I shall get into mischief if you don't! I shan't have anyone to preach me dear, gentle, severe, cold, north-wind, Puritan sermons! *Do—come.*"

* * * * *

So Tom Ward's private car sped across the checkerboard, patched farms of the East; across the Middle West, beginning to chalk off her prairies into the little fields; on—on—to the Far West of the heaving, fenceless, endless, rolling prairies, with the wild rose clutching the tie-banks of the railroad and the railroad dwarfed to the proportion of a link-worm crawling through immensity. Somewhere west of the Mississippi Ward left his wife and Madeline—his train fading in a smoke-wreath over the southern sky-line, where cars and engine dropped like a ship over the edge of the sea; *their* train tearing with the speed of furics on—on, north and west, pursuing a flat trail of track that looped and dipped and wormed its way through cuts till it, too, dropped over the rolling sky.

Madeline, like many easterners, had expected to find the prairie as flat as sand, ugly as mud, and monotonous as a washed slate. What she saw was an ocean of billowing green, bending and rippling to the wind like waves to the run of invisible feet, with here and there a lonely-eyed immigrant, looking out from his tented wagon-top, lonely-eyed but alight with hope. The girl felt as if she had been flung out an atom in infinity. There was room—room; room for hope, for endeavor, for success, without the trampling of one struggler under the feet of another. Her pulses throbbed to the glory of the boundless world flashing in panorama past the car windows. Mrs. Ward sat back like one in a dream, unseeing, untouched, self-centered.

For two days the train followed the prairie, palpitating with a veiled mist of light all day, quivering under the sheeted lightning at play in a primrose flame among the heaped cloud-banks of the faintly lighted west all night. The third day Madeline put on a hat "with screw-nails"—as she told Mrs. Ward—and entered the mountains sitting on the cow-catcher of the engine. The ubiquitous tourist was already at Banff. String bands were strumming, globe-trotters talking, lone fishermen solemnly posted on parade below the white fret of the falls, and middle-aged folk with time to think about themselves limping breathless and rheumatic up and down from the baths. Madeline took out her paints for a picture of the white-tipped, purple-folded amphitheater that opens through a gap just beyond

the falls; but Mrs. Ward was restless. She wanted to go where there were fewer people, she said; and the car was shunted up to the Lake in the Clouds.

One noonday they had wandered along the bridle path behind Mount Temple, looking over the saddle-back between two peaks into that wonderful gorge known as Paradise Valley. Up from the gorge, sheer as the drop of a stone, came a noiseless sigh, a sigh as of silence, the echo of a roaring torrent, milky with the silt of a thousand glaciers, in the deep shadows like a silver thread across a moss bank—the moss a forest of pines.

"This is too good for paints," cried the girl. "I am going to photograph it mentally so I can compare it with Heaven some day," and she seated herself on the ledge of rock that projects over the gorge in a block of masonry beyond the vertical wall.

As the sun struck the snowy helmet of Mount Temple a thousand rivulets leaped to life and began their mad race from ledge to ledge, thin, silver, wind-blown waterfalls that set the valley echoing with a pattering as of fluttering leaves. The silent heights became vocal in the sunshine with the grandest of all music, the voice of many waters calling to each other, faint and far, like the echoes of wandering souls. Here and there the sun's heat loosened a rock from the icy edge of a green glacier on the upper tiers of the precipice; and down it crashed, bounding with increasing impetus, clattering with

rocketing echoes, smaller, fainter, till it was out of sight in the depths, out of hearing in the distance.

"I don't understand why you like it." Mrs. Ward drew back from the edge with a shudder. "It's like another world—it's so cold, pitiless!"

"Look!" cried the girl, raising her hand. "Look at the clouds with the silver wings; and the sunlight scales off that rock like sparks from steel."

"But that is just it," interrupted the other, impetuously. "There is such a dreadful hard fierceness in this sort of beauty! You feel as if—as if somehow—oh—I don't know how to say it—human nature were impotent against physical might."

She fell silent, finding a place for herself on a lower slab of rock. The mists slashed slant-wise across the sun, filling the valley with shadows, with a somber hushing of the waters.

"It depresses me!" Mrs. Ward laid her arm across the girl's knee.

"Why?"

The rush—rush—rush of the torrent came up faint as a sigh. The sough of the wind among the tossing pines might have been an inarticulate cry. Mrs. Ward shivered.

"Listen," she began in a tremulous whisper. "You made me promise if ever . . ." she bit her lip irresolutely, then hurried on impulsively . . . "Don't stop me! I must tell it! You once asked me *how* I could keep from going over the precipice, *how* I could stop in time. I thought if I came away out here with you I might forget, I might get away

from it; but I tell you—it is useless! Take your arm away from me! Do not touch me!" A shudder ran over her. "I have no right to tell you this; but, Madeline—it is *not*—my husband; and—if—love—be—wrong, I have *not* stopped in time!" Her gloved hand clenched. Her eyes were dry, tearless, fevered, gazing fixedly down in the darkened gorge.

The mist drifted from the sun, but the girl saw no glory of light. Again the waters leaped to life in thousand-toned laughter. She did not hear it. She did not see them. She saw only a soul struggling in a whirlpool.

"What is it—Madeline? Your face has turned so white."

The girl's arm tightened round the other's shoulders as if to ward off a blow.

"I think," she answered slowly, "that we are too near this precipice."

CHAPTER XXIII

BY-PRODUCTS NOT INCLUDED IN LEDGERS

THE superstructure of Madeline Connor's life tottered. She had believed so firmly that the best emotions could never lead to as great woe as the worst; that life founded on the spirit was invulnerable, unassailable, impervious to the things that sap foundations of sand. She had ignored—or, rather, had not had experience to understand—that of the three crosses on Calvary, the bitterest was the one borne for love's sake.

The subject of Mrs. Ward's avowal was scarcely mentioned again between them. Madeline recalled the gossip of the reception and knew to whom Mrs. Ward must have referred. It was as if a blight had swept over existence; as if serpents reared ugly, treacherous heads; as if satyr faces leered darkly in the shadows that are always concomitants of light—leered at the poetry of youth; as if love might be a mirage of distorted vision luring where thirst is slaked in death.

She recalled the art, the music, the literature they had enjoyed together; the day-dreaming among the Easter lilies of the conservatory; the rambles by

the sea, when the glory of life seemed to paint itself in flame. Were these all a mirage and this other dragging over the edge of the precipice—the *one* reality? Was the glory of life, after all, reducible to as blind a thing as the laws rolling worlds through space, as the affinities uniting elements, as the attractions drawing positive and negative electricity together in a new form of never-ceasing, destructive, unheeding Force? Of course, the girl had read the catch-phrases of the times, which interline all modern thought, about nature being careful of the species, heedless of the individual; careful that the race goes on, indifferent to a victim more or less. But it is one thing to subscribe to a theory that has become fashionable, another thing to have the theory practiced too near for disinterested observation. The girl felt suddenly cold.

"You are shivering," remarked Mrs. Ward.

"Let us go down!"

Picking a last cluster of waxy flowers from the spongy moss at the edge of the ice, they set off for the Châlet. The way led from heather uplands to Alpine meadows flaming with flowers, and from the lonely larches down under festoons of hanging moss, into the heavy shade of the pines and spruces. Here a gleam of sunshine through the green; there a waterfall, silver against the rock, with a peculiar echoing tinkle; then on, down the zigzag trail with occasional rifts in forest and mountain showing the far glimmer of scarred ice, criss-crossed on the face of a distant precipice.

The girl led the way. She could not talk. Her thoughts were chaos; and chaos takes time to resolve into clear outlines. To be sure, she need not have cared. She could have shut her soul up in a cloister existence and shut the facts of life out; but she was not sufficiently unctuous. She was learning that *ideals* are mawkish stuff till they meet the shock of the *reals* and triumph. She was learning, too, the most important lesson of a woman's life—to face facts and conquer.

It was dark when they reached the hearth of the Châlet. A surveyor was telling some globe-trotters gathered round the roaring fire of Construction Days, when an army of workmen and adventurers invaded the mountains to build the railroad, and the flood-tide of spring thaw used to throw up as many as forty dead after a Sunday brawl. The impression of Saxon warriors came to Madeline as it had that night when Ward and Dillon sat in the dining-room laying their plans. Those old, barbaric fighters had been invaders of mountains, raiders of lowlands, conquerors of new lands. They had gone forth in bands of hundreds—brigands calling their winnings "plunder." The modern conqueror numbered his hosts in hundreds of thousands, invaded mountains, too, sought new conquests and called his winnings "profit."

After supper Madeline and Mrs. Ward joined the little democracy round the fire. Suddenly the girl rose and left the group. She went upstairs to the dusk of her own room, kneeling at the window

with her head bowed on the sill. She did not see the white wall of Mount Victoria ghostly in the starlight, with the new moon hanging like a silver sickle above its snow meadows. She did not hear the far crash, like booming artillery, break the night stillness where an avalanche etched fresh grooves down the vertical face of the white wall. The rushing of the mountain torrent raving down from the snow fields died to a hush, a sibilant murmur, a lonely beat—beat—beat, as of muffled drums. A slight wind fanned the lake in front of the Chalet to a rippling mirror, the snowy wall of Mount Victoria reflected in the far end, the shadowy precipices of both sides a trembling replica along the shores. She saw nothing of the night's hushed beauty; nothing but a vision of two faces swirling past in deep waters.

She raised her face to the starlight in an agony of questionings as old as time, as multifarious as life, as unanswerable as the riddle of the sphinx. What was life? Was it hunger and sleep, sleep and hunger, till the last long sleep? Was it a life of prey; if civilized, so much the crueler; if refined so much the craftier? What was love—this thing that swept one over a precipice, led another to the heights; that was neither joy nor pain, but an ecstasy of both? It was no longer a speculation—this question of love. It was there, a reality, above her own life, above her friend's.

"Madeline?"

Mrs. Ward had glided in unheard. She slipped to her knees beside the girl.

"Let us forget," she said tenderly. "Dear child, let us dream while we may! Let us dream till we *must* awake! What could women do if they did not dream a little?" The heavy-lashed lids opened wide. "Let us dream that love is tender, not cruel; that happiness lasts; that vows are never broken; that love's trust is never violated! Let us dream that we are most like God when we love most; for who loves most, most is forgiven! . . . It is good for women to dream; to dream; to trust till trust is betrayed ; crucified; trampled under foot; defiled; cast out with the outcast things! You don't seem to know how humorous all this is, dear child! Laugh! Laugh! Don't weep! It's an old old story; . . . the way of the world, dear! Let us dream! Let us dream! When the wakening comes, we shall have had our dream."

The girl did not answer. She could not. Her voice shook. Her eyes blurred to the sight of all else but the vision of two faces sweeping past in the dark. "I am a croaker," said the woman gently. "I have filled your mind with gloomy thoughts! Forget them, child! Go to sleep; . . . and dream!

The door between the two rooms closed. Mrs. Ward had gone.

It is one of the peculiar virtues of mountain life that you may go to bed with wakeful thoughts, if you but climb hard enough the mountains will put you to sleep. Madeline slept the dead sleep of a wearied body and a hope-sick heart. Toward morning she wakened herself sobbing feverishly, tearlessly in her sleep, with an odd sensation of some one in the dark leaning over her. She sprang up and threw open the window shade. It was a hallucination. There was no one; and when she looked out a blaze of wine-colored sunlight had turned the white wall of Mount Victoria to a city of jasper with the crisping, emerald waters reflecting templed peaks, wind-flung clouds, and a sheen of snows.

A little noiseless fluttering through the forest, a pattering of pine needles, a sudden radiance of gold-shot mist in the gorge, a quivering over the polished surface of the emerald lake; and it was day.

Madeline noticed that the door between the two rooms, which had been closed when she went to sleep, now stood open. Did she dream or had she seen a white form slipping ghostily through the gloom? But when she looked into the other room Mrs. Ward lay asleep.

PART IV
POWER TRIUMPHANT

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CREED RECKONS WITH DEMOS

SAM MCGEE, lahor delegate, trod air. His head was in a cloud of dreams. Demos, the down-trodden; Demos, the haltered gin-horse on the treadmill of bootless labor; Demos, the dumb slave, beast of burden, blind toiler in the dark of countless centuries in the divided democracy of rich and poor, was arising, throwing off his yoke, finding voice, opening his eyes to emancipated manhood! No more anxious fright tossing on sleepless pillows! No more hungry-mouthed want coursing wolf-like through the shadows on the heels of maidenhood, hounding virtue into vice! McGee was winning the battle. That was the point. He had won over the Truesdale Mines and was gradually besieging the Great Consolidated into surrender. McGee's appearance in the Nickel Plate saloon was the instant signal for clinking glasses and stamping of feet, and cries of "a speech." Then McGee would remove the felt hat and, through the clouds of

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smoke, beg his followers "to stand for the sacred rights of the workingman"; "to sacrifice the present for the ultimate fact of victory; to keep eyes afront on the great fact of the Revolution, when every worker would throw down pick and shovel and enter into his divine heritage."

"Sacred rights! Pah!" Goldsmith, the Socialist, brought his pipe down with such a click that he broke the stem. "What I tell you, McGee, is this—the *ultimate fact is the dollar bill!* You think you bring the death of that fool fellow Kipp up in the courts? Your courts be damned. The ultimate fact, there, is the dollar bill, too! You think you link labor with capital, while you hoth pick the pockets of the public? Pah! The public may be fool one time. The public may be fool two times. The public may be fool three times; but, by and by, it say—'Here, you two fools, you've had your share. Think you're going to get a cinch on earth and air? Here, everybody—come in and help yourselves. De carth is full of coal. Take it! There's food, and plenty. Git out o' the way you fellows, labor and capital: the people are hungry. Come in, people—eat! That's socialism.'"

Goldsmith drank a glass of beer. McGee laughed. The Socialist wiped the beer from his beard, and rambled on:

"Feudalism, serf and lord, you fight that? Pah! It is a money feudalism we have, captains of industry with their slaves! It is the money feudalism we have! The man with big enough money can

tweak the Pope's nose; and patronize God Almighty; and bluff the church; and bribe the courts; and murder a wife or two if he has a mind, or put one wife in the asylum and another in his house; and tax the people till they sweat blood, tax 'em in higher prices for meat, in higher prices for bread, in higher prices for coal, tax 'em, I tell you, till the man on a salary can no more save money than the Jew on the rack of a robber-baron! If he has big enough money the whole world will sing him a hallelujah chorus, and dance to the Devil! 'Tis the money feudalism we have! Your charity is rotten with it! Your charity is cheaper than justice! Your courts are rotten with it: if it doesn't buy the judge, it buys delay! Your press is rotten with it: make money by a steal, make the steal big enough; and the paper that would flay you for taking a loaf of bread will praise you for a financier! Your morals are rotten with it! I know a little criminal of the black-cat stripe who shot his own brother, and poisoned a witness who saw him do it; then bought all the lawyers in the town and played the habeas corpus racket till he tired out public opinion; so got off free! 'Tis the money feudalism we have! Your morals are rotten with it; and your churches dead!"

The big German smote the table with his fist. McGee no longer laughed.

"Granted it is the moncy feudalism we have," he said, "how are you going to wrest liberty from it the way the serfs wrested liberty from the barons?"

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How but by compelling a division of the profits eh? That means higher wages to the workman! You think the courts will fool me about the death of Kipp? We'll see! If I had brought a charge of murder against the Great Consolidated, who would have listened to me? Do you think I could have made the public prosecutor act? Do you think the press would have been paid to touch it with tongs? No, sir I know what I am doing! If we had sprung that sort of a charge we'd just be where those fellows were who tried to get a verdict in Chicago when the whiskey ring put dynamite under the independent's cellar! Did you ever hear of that case? ever read of it in the paper? No why? Hush money! There'll be no hush money for Kipp, by God! I'll spring it on 'em before they know it! We'll join Truesdale in the defense of this civil suit about tunneling off his ground! When the evidence comes in about the tunnel we spring the facts about Kipp! Then, our civil suit becomes a criminal one, see? Justice will have a murder to deal with see?"

Goldsmith looked long through his dim spectacles straight into McGee's eager face. The dreamer was looking at the fighter.

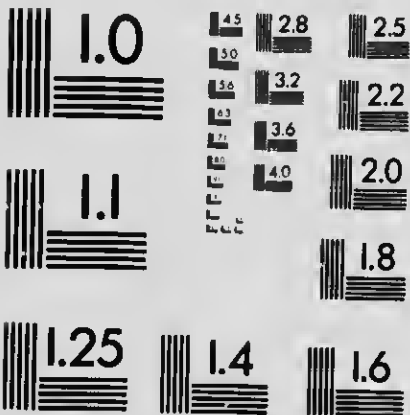
"I understand," answered the German, slowly, "dat de ultimate fac' in dis countree iz—iz—de—dollar bill!"

* * * *



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Nevertheless, when the time came for Ward's suit against Truesdale in the matter of tunneling into Great Consolidated ground, Goldsmit's and all his coterie helped to pack the crowded court room. It is unnecessary to state how this case was postponed, relegated to the long delayed among the advertising columns of the newspapers under the heading "*lis pendens*." Once, it was a witness missing. Again, it was a witness ill. Then, President Ward was away. Then, the counsel for the prosecution required more time to prepare the evidence. Then, the counsel for the Great Consolidated unfortunately fell ill. Then, the discovery of Kipp's body, "come to death by means unknown"—was the verdict at the inquest—had necessitated a complete re-preparation of the evidence.

I think if Mr. Jack Truesdale could have been found about this time, a gentleman of soft voice, and soft tread, and silky beard, might have been commissioned to offer a settlement of the case out of court; but, Mr. Jack Truesdale had disappeared in a resort known only to one man; he, a crippled plunger of Wall Street. Mr. Jack Truesdale had reasons for wishing this case to go on. So had McGee. So had the striking miners. So had *not* Obadiah Saunders. The confidential secretary devised reasons for six months' more delay. That let public interest simmer down. Then, the opposing counsel had another sparring match for the delay of the trial. Public interest became fatigued. What was it all about, anyway? The man in the street

quit reading about it. Thus can the law be delayed to the confounding of justice so that more than two thousand cases wait for longer than two years in every leading city of a country of liberty.

Then came a rumor. Nobody knew who set it going, nobody but McGee. The striking miners no longer kept to their homes. They gathered in knots of loud talking men on the street. They hissed Ward as he passed. They grouped in front of Truesdale's old Rookery Building, and cheered the deserted offices. They stoned "the seabs"—foreign miners—who came up in flat cars from New York to take the place of the strikers; and when the militia was ordered out it was not hard to see that the volunteers were only too willing to be hustled by the rioters. Then the rumor ran like fire: "Ward was finking"; "Ward's suit against the Truesdale mines had been bluff"; "Ward was seared to face the music"; "Ward had begun the suit and daren't go on"; "it was stock-jobbing—speculation—peculation—a steal!" The rioters paraded the streets by torch light, singing.

Back in the offices of the Great Consolidated, Obadiah heard the singing, and had an ague. The papers said nothing of the rumor and reported the riots jocosely. Great Consolidated dropped ten points on 'Change. Tom Ward's securities began to show symptoms of flagging. Nobody bought. Everybody wanted to sell. Then, the master hand of Tom Ward played its trump card. The law's delay vanished like mist. "*Great Consol. vs. Trues-*

dale Mines" jumped clear beyond the two thousand other delayed cases, and the trial opened.

"It will bring Truesdale out of hiding, anyhow," Ward said to Saunders. Saunders had an ague and turned the complexion of butter.

"Was—was—it judicious?" he stammered, and he went home with the roof of his mouth peculiarly dry, his lips feverish, the base of his brain gnawing as if the vampire thing had again fastened its teeth there.

The court house stood apart from the main city, a gray stone structure with a statue of blinded justice—the face of a woman with bandaged eyes—above the door. Goldsmith and McGee entered together. The Socialist paused under the bandaged face.

"See," he said, pointing up to the stone figure, "that strumpet pretends not to see pity! It's truth she fears, the hypocrite! She's afraid to look at her own work—innocence under the heel of guilt! Pah! Your womanish mercy that outrages innocence and pampers guilt! You'll feminize the manhood out of America yet! Judgment, it is the greater mercy! You'll split your democracy with your loose laws!"

The court was thronged. Men stood in the aisles. Goldsmith took his place at the back of the room. McGee pressed on through the crowds to the benches behind the witness boxes. Ward was to one side talking to Dillon. Mr. Saunders bent low over some papers. Truesdale had just entered a door behind the judge and a buzz rippled over

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the court room. Some hitch had occurred in proceedings and the judge had leaned across to confer with a court official in blue coat with brass buttons. Saunders bent a little lower over his papers. They were elaborate drawings of the mines by the engineer of the Great Consolidated, with reports on the different workings; but Saunders was not thinking of these reports. At the back of his head was a gnawing, as if a trapped rat were working up through stones to the top of a shaft. At the same time he had the most curious, pious feeling of gratitude that God was pitiful. What would we do without reliance on Deity's mercy to cover up our smug hypocrisies? Saunders was still in that crude state of belief when a man tries to persuade himself that he has only to say "come," and God comes; "do," and God does; "undo," and God undoes. God was a very convenient belief for Saunders just then. He was so very anxious, was Saunders, that that tunnel trial should not uncover anything about Kipp, who "had come to his death by means unknown." Saunders bent lower over the papers. Once, when a gruff workman, leaning over McGee's shoulder, whispered, "Goin' to bring your corpse on?" the confidential man felt needles of ice run down inside his spine. Out of the blackness of his terror something seemed to emerge from a shaft.

There was evidence by the engineer of the Truesdale mines, and the engineer of the Great Consolidated; wonderful evidence as diametrically opposed as the facts of history recorded by different his-

torians. There were drawings submitted more complicated than a puzzle. Down in the audience, McGee's followers nodded their heads and bade each other, "Wait! It's coming!"

It was an hour before the adjournment of the court for the day when McGee took the witness stand. Necks craned among the audience and the whispers suddenly fell to a profound silence. Both Ward and Truesdale leaned forward attentively. McGee testified that he was a labor delegate, first employed by the union to secure the cooperation of the Truesdale miners. Here, it was observed that the witness looked scornfully in the direction of Mr. Saunders. Workmen in the aisles nudged.

Yes, in response to a question, he had also worked in the Great Consolidated mines under Kipp, the dead engineer. Yes, he was perfectly familiar with the internal workings of both mines.

Would he recognize these drawings as accurate representations of the Great Consolidated workings?

Most emphatically, he would not.

Why not?

Here, the counsel for the Great Consolidated objected that the opinion of a novice was not to be taken as evidence on a subject that required the knowledge of an expert. McGee turned directly to the audience and smiled broadly, but after sparring and cross-sparring by the lawyers—sufficient to confuse the issue in the minds of the most of the hearers—the labor delegate succeeded in saying that

he would not recognize these drawings as accurate representations of the Great Consolidated working for two reasons: First, they did not conform to what he, himself, knew; second, they did not conform to the official report of Kipp, the dead engineer of the Great Consolidated.

A sudden hush fell over the court room. Again, the counsel for the Great Consolidated sprang up with the objection that the report of a dead man, who had been dismissed from the company's services, ought not to be admitted as evidence; and, again, the counsel for the Truesdale mines countered by saying that it could be shown this dead engineer, whose death had been so *mysteriously* hushed, had been dismissed and reëngaged for reasons concerned with the suit in question; and, again, McGee turned directly to the audience, smiling broadly.

Tom Ward's eyes were not on McGee, but on Saunders; and Saunders' face wore the imperturbable look of frosted glass. He was sitting erect now, caressing his beard, gazing into space.

Did the witness mean to assert that he pretended to remember—this with an insinuating scepticism—the highly technical, intricate details of the engineer's official report?

No; the witness did not pretend to trust his memory. Here, McGee paused, as if mustering facts to be crammed in his answer before he could be stopped. But, as he had met Mr. Kipp walking with the secretary of the Great Consolidated just before Mr. Saunders had ordered Shaft 10 filled

up; and, as that was the last time Mr. Kipp was seen; and, as he (McGee) always considered the disappearance of Kipp a little queer when the Great Consolidated continued paying Mrs. Kipp the engineer's salary——”

“Confine yourself to the answer of the question,” thundered the judge.

McGee flushed angrily. This time he did not turn to the audience. Taking a grip of the broken recital, he went on doggedly: “And, as he had kept hunting for Kipp's body where he thought it might be found, though the company gave out Kipp had gone to Peru, and, as he found the body just outside the shaft that had been filled up so mighty quick, and as he couldn't trust his memory for the report, he had made a point of obtaining Kipp's report about that tunnel; and—*there it was*, drawing a crumpled sheet of paper all pasted with torn scraps from his breast pocket and laying it down.

If a pistol shot had been aimed at Obadiah Saunders, and ricochetting across had hit President Ward in full view of the audience, the effect could not have been more surprising. Silence, heavy, palpitating, deadly, fell on the court room for just a second. Then the hush exploded in a buzz. Tom Ward had involuntarily started forward. The judge was putting on his pince-nez, and the vacancy on which Saunders' glazed look was fastened suddenly filled with a blackness, a blackness with something formless clambering up, hand over hand, through the dark, the fury of a nameless vengeance

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unshunnable as death. The only movement of the secretary was to thrust both hands in his trousers pockets, looking up at one of the windows as if he felt a draught of cold.

The next moment the opposing counsel were at it with a fusillade of dog Latin and legal terms that obscured everything for the auditors; and McGee heard his character torn in such shreds that he did not know it. Then the court adjourned.

* * * *

Mrs. Kipp was all agog. The curl papers had bloomed like apple buds into a wonderful array of frizzled blossoms all round the sulphur-colored face. There was a love-lock on her low forehead, and two little curls just in front of her ears, and a whole border of frizzled curls all round the margin of her neck, where a big imitation tortoise shell comb held up the hack hair.

Mrs. Kipp had gone in curl papers day and night for a week before the trial, each curl screwed so tight that it pulled the skin back till the sea-green eyes were almond in shape. She had not had time to buy mourning costumes for the inquest over poor Kipp's body, but she made up for that neglect by gorgeous preparations for the lawsuit, *Great Consol. vs. Truesdale Mines*. To be sure, widow's weeds had gone slightly out of fashion, but then, as Mrs. Kipp told the foreman's wife out at the mining village, "the widow's bonnet and white border, and long veil was *so* distangay, she was goin' to wear 'em!" And, as for sleeves—you should

have seen her sleeves. She told the foreman's wife they were bell sleeves, and the new engineer's wife they were bishop sleeves, and every neighbor who came in to see "the goin's on for the lawsuit," agreed that they were "stunnin' sleeves." Certainly, what with tucks, shirring, and pleats, and flares, they were wonderful sleeves; and, then, as one of Mrs. Kipp's beaux said, "her little white hand had such a dev'lish pretty way of flirting at you just where it emerged from the sleeve." If Mrs. Kipp "turned on her flirtatious look" along with the flipping of her hands "you were done for."

Then, Mrs. Kipp affected the Grecian bend at her waist: that is, she leaned very far forward with her chin and very far in at her waist. It required practice, particularly for sitting down, but Mrs. Kipp took plenty of practice in front of the mirror. The fit of her long, black dress with the floppy train and flaring skirt was a *perfect* Grecian bend. If to all this you add the facts that Mrs. Kipp walked with a lithe spring to each step, and a little saucy toss to her head, and a little flirtatious, self-conscious darting of the most killing glances from her eyes—you will realize that Mrs. Kipp could be distinctly dangerous. As the foreman's admiring wife had said, "Mrs. K. was raving handsome in her mourning."

Just behind the judge's chair in the court room was a door leading to a sort of private ante room. Here sat Mrs. Kipp the last day of the trial, waiting to be called. If the truth must be told she was

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beginning to feel nervous at waiting so long. Her veil *would go askew*; and twenty times she remarked to the foreman's wife, who was with her, "Eh, *how do I look? Oh poor little me goin' through all this! Jist t' think of the yawnin' cavern o' sorrow in my heart over poor Kipp! And is my hat on straight? You don't know what it is to be loved as poor Kipp loved me! Is the back hairpin right? Jist to think a year ago poor Kipp was ravin' jealous of every man that looked at me! I'll jist walk into that court room like this," strutting across the floor as she spoke. "My laws, think of Mister Saunders comin' to the station for us with a motor! Land sakes, if Kipp wuz alive, he'd be so jealous! Poor little me! You don't know what I stood from that man!"*

"Don't luk as if ye didn't care, Mrs. K.," advised the foreman's wife.

But the injunction fell heedless on Mrs. Kipp.

"Lands, did ye see him, though?" she asked.

"Did you see Mister Saunders? He winked at me; and patted my . . . hands!"

The door opened softly

Mr. Saunders had entered sadly, offering his arm

"My dea. Mrs. Kipp, try to bear up! It will ail be over in a minute," he whispered as he led her to the court room.

Oh! It was glorious! Mrs. Kipp saw herself the queen of a five-act drama with the eyes of the whole

world fastened on her beauty. She swept to the court room with a spring to her step and a toss to her head that was meant for pride, and a pathetic enough droop about her eyes to make the gods of laughter weep. Then, just for a second, she forgot herself. It was only a second. The gaze of many faces, the vague stir, the masculine burr of voices—frightened her. Someone handed her a book; and she was kissing the book, forgetting to be graceful. Then, a voice was asking in tones of deep respect:

“. . . . your late lamented husband felt bitter to the company, Mrs. Kipp?”

“Yes, sir!” Mrs. Kipp remembered to draw out her pocket handkerchief—the Irish linen one, hemstitched with real lace—and wipe away a suspicion of tears.

“Can you tell what his grudge was against the company?”

“Yes, sir; he wanted more salary!”

“More salary? Was he not getting five thousand a year, Mrs. Kipp?”

“Yes, sir! I al’ys told him he was gettin’ more’n ’e waz worth, but ’e thought ’e could make ’em pay him ten thousand!”

Mrs. Kipp acknowledged this with the air of a grievance against Kipp.

At the back of the court room, Goldsmith gazed through his spectacles, shaking his head. McGee’s jaw slowly dropped. He looked as if that hammer of power which he thought to wield so well had somehow rebounded and knocked him on the head.

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The woman, this one woman, this creature in the tuckers and switch and flopping veil—he had provided against everything, everything but this Jezebel! But, Mrs. Kipp, all unconscious, was going on with her testimony.

"Yes, sir! He said 'e didn't care whether it waz true or not! He waz goin' t' send in reports what would raise the 'air 'n their mental roofs: that waz what 'e said, the exact words! I waz agin it from the first! I said the com'any had treated 'im fair, and 'e ought to play square, but 'e said Mister Saunders could go down the nire by hisself, and 'e hoped the poor gen'leman might break his neck! Kipp wouldn't go down with him; said 'e waz goin' t' th' city; and that the com'any waz goin' t' send 'im to Peru; and I wazn't t' be alarmed: the com'any'd pay me the salary jist the same!"

"Do you mean to say that your husband was trying to *compel* the company to pay him more by sending in *false* reports?" interjected the judge, bending forward.

"Yes, sir," murmured Mrs. Kipp behind her real lace handkerchief.

Obadiah Saunders looked prayerfully up from his feet to the ceiling. He caressed his beard. McGee suddenly gripped the railing in front of him as if he could have torn the woman to pieces.

". . . . then, you think your husband must have fallen in the river as he was coming out that night to tell you about his appointment in Peru?" the lawyer was asking.

"Yes, sir!" Mrs. Kipp applied the handkerchief to a lachrymose effusion.

It is not the part of this narrative to follow elucidations of learned counsel for the Great Consolidated, showing that the report of as unreliable and bibulous a witness as Kipp was not to be taken as trustworthy evidence; nor the appeal by the learned counsel for the Truesdale mines for a stay of proceedings until an impartial commission could examine the workings of both mines. Suffice it to say, the commission was appointed, and it would be a good thing if we could induce fate to relegate our sins to a commission, too: we might be fairly certain of doing as we pleased afterwards.

The suit *Great Consol. vs. Truesdale Mines* was dropped, which meant that Truesdale had won, but no verdict was given against the Great Consolidated. The striking miners who had hoped for a verdict that might weaken Ward, filed from the court room sullen, grumbling, resentful against that vague thing Justice.

"What did your corpse amount to, anyway?" one of the men roughly demanded of McGee.

McGee could not answer.

A light woman with sulphur skin, mincing eyes, and tripping walk, a light woman who would have sacrificed the souls of all workmen for one triumph to her vanity—had come athwart the rights of Demos, had tossed her saucy head and flipped her hands at the stern thing called Justice.

"The jade," McGee ground through his

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teeth, as he joined Goldsmith at the door, "she made 'em think he'd suicided or fallen in drunk——"

"Ah my fren'," soliloquized the big, bearded dreamer, "'tis not the woman. She have much too much of blame from you! *It is de dollar bill dot is de ultimate fact!*"

McGee threw back his head with an angry laugh.

"By God, I'm not done yet," he said.

In that moment he had made up his mind that if he could not have justice legally he would take it illegally. The Socialist looked queerly over the rim of his spectacles. Then he slipped his arm through McGee's. From that moment McGee became "a ramping red." The courts had made the convert. Ward's creed had now to reckon with Demos.

CHAPTER XXV

UNMOORED

HOUNDS behind and precipice ahead, the deer risks broken shanks in one wild leap. So with life. The way behind closes. One way alone opens to the fore, and desperation plunges—though what is called “reckless” when it ends in a smash is counted “brave” when it escapes whole-limbed.

The art dealer's design to use Madeline Connor's social connection to draw custom—shut one door. An offer to go to New York opened another. Perhaps, too, she was pushed to the resolution by a haunting fear for Mrs. Ward. The spoliation of a life is not a laughable spectacle, except to ghouls; and wounded love, like the wounded animal, can but drag its pains away to hide in the dark of a gradual forgetfulness.

You would have stopped Mrs. Ward if *you* had been Madeline Connor? So have wives thought to stop husbands, and husbands thought to stop wives; and broken their own hearts trying. So have children bowed under the crushing weight of an inheritance they could not redress. Unpleasant facts—*you* say? Pray shut both ears that you may not hear the cry. One sleeps sounder pillowed on plati-

tudes, poetizing, sentimentalizing with shut ears; for the cry is a harsh one. Smug faith is a more comfortable thing if it tucks its head under its wing that it may not see the Grim Giants. It is easier to believe that all things are as they ought to be when we refuse to look at things as they ought not to be.

The glimpse under the surface of Mrs. Ward's life filled Madeline with a kind of numb, love coldness. She could no more still the throbbing of the great influence that had come to her own life than stop her heart beats; but she resolutely shut the doors of memory on loss. Love had seemed to open the portals of Heaven. She resolutely shut the portals. She was afraid. A presence as of hope or of blight seemed to hang over her life. What would Mr. Jack Truesdale have thought if he had known that Madeline Connor was thankful he had dropped out of her life?

New York was suffering from one of its frequent fits of spasmodic goodness. That is—it had been discovered for the thousandth time that the "grafters"—politicians, magistrates, police—received toll for squeezing taxpayers, oppressing the poor, shielding vice. The discovery was stale, but news was scarce. Artists and reporters flocked to the East Side. Babies were portrayed dying from lack of ice, while city rulers drew profits from the ice trust. Draggled humanity was drawn struggling in cesspools of iniquity, while respectability stood on the margin pushing the swimmers back till toll was paid.

An art editor who had seen Madeline's pictures of ragged children now sent for her. It was her first experience of the great unchurched world, and she found very good hearts beating under unclerical vestments. If this were a record of Madeline, instead of Ward, it would be interesting to know how Perkins, the art editor, sprang a proposal, when—as the boy who carried the proofs back to the printers, said—"Perkins popped, but the pop pried."

Simms, the city editor, who was good fellow to everyone from the mayor to the king of China Town, was always coming to Madeline with some rag-tag of humanity whom she could help better than he. It was an unchurched world—where Madeline found herself—but it was a world where the right hand does good turns without telling the left, or without any turning up of the whites of pious eyes to the Angel of Records for a good mark. There were no professions of goodness in this world, but some very fine examples. Instead of talking, people did things, and the highest praise ever given was the terse comment—"that's all right," or "it'll do!"

Before, with an unconscious aloofness, she had witnessed the seething torrent of life from the sheltered haven of her own home. Now, she felt herself an infinitesimal speck on the buxeting billows of a human tide. Before, she might know or not know. What conflicted with a young girl's ideals might be thrust aside. Now, good and evil, all the intermediate interminglings, were too close to be

ignored, but she did not singe the wings of idealism in the fires of experience, or get a dissecting wound under the delusion of studying the anatomy of sin.

Growth means growing pains. The way becomes plain through the bruises, feet suffer when they wander. The way opens when it is hewn open by human hands. In a word, Madeline's convictions became personal when the virtuous fit of the press gave place to a war fever. Orders for sketches fell off in the dull season of sweltering mid-summer. The inevitable apprenticeship had come. It was as if the big city which engulfs so much effort were putting her to the test. If she were worthy, she would come out the stronger; if worthless—then, part of the jetsam and flotsam of the city's wrecks.

At most, she could always pawn the rubies. She had lived on one meal a day for a week, and turned over a solitary fifty cent piece a great many times before she thought of the pawn shops. One evening, coming home from a private hospital—the city editor had sent flowers in Madeline's name to someone whose thanks he did not want: poor Simms had been thanked almost into breach of promise suits—Madeline passed a low-roofed shop in Sixth Avenue which displayed the signs of a hanker with the goods of a jeweler. Inside, a gentleman with a hooked nose and faded-green coat accommodated the public with cash for deposits of personal belongings.

To-night the window caught Madeline's eye. There were garnets marked "rubies," and glass

clusters labeled "diamonds." The sham rubies reminded her of real ones with an irony that gave Madeline the feeling of a weight on her chest. A young girl slipped furtively from the door. Some love token or heirloom had been left behind. What next might be bartered to stave off penury? Madeline discovered that the verdigris smell of a pawn shop has the same effect on courage as frost on mercury.

And then, in a flash, came the odd sensation that she was being watched. Wheeling haughtily with a sudden rush of blood to her face, Madeline set off sharply for her apartments between Sixth and Fifth Avenue near Central Park. She was angry, and ashamed of herself for being angry. Such little things unnerve when the larder is lean. She had often looked at the odd display in the corner window without any sense of shame. She had even gone in to examine the workmanship of old-fashioned jewelry.

A feeling that she was being followed stole over her with a stealthy shrinkage of self-respect. Then, in a moment, she was furious. Erect as a lance she almost stopped walking. The footsteps behind quickened. A slender woman, slightly stooped, quietly dressed, with a mass of reddish, lack-luster, oily-looking hair, passed. Madeline glanced back. There was no one. Had she been mistaken? But in the glimmer of lights beginning to twinkle the woman paused in the shadow of the house where

Madeline had lodgings. As Madeline turned to the door the woman moved forward.

Her face was in the light. The two met with a quick, measuring glance, the glance of distrust that becomes almost a second nature in the city. What was it in this woman—a something more, a something less, than other women? Altogether a poor creature, Madeline thought; mean in bearing and clothes, with black rings under her eyes, the sharp lines of strained vision on her forehead, the sallow complexion of ill-eating, ill-breathing, ill-thinking, the drawn mouth of a consumptive; possibly a seamstress of failing health with no remnant of better days but the wonderful mass of reddish hair. The light of a vague, caressing familiarity, half-timid, half-hold—came to the faded eyes like the flicker of a dying candle. The woman did not belong to the begging class. There was nothing of the importunate whine about her. Her look fell before the girl. Madeline's hand was on the door when she was astounded to hear her own name.

"You are Miss Connor?"

It was all timidity, now, and pleading, the familiar light gone from the eyes, the rims red, the intonation with a rustling breath as from fogged lungs, the hands in ill-fitting gloves picking nervously at the fringe of the dress sash. The woman spoke pantingly.

"You are Miss Connor? The bell boy told me as you went out, and I followed." She coughed distressfully. "I want to see you . . ."

"What do you wish?" asked Madeline, coldly.

She had a sardonic desire to laugh. There was exactly the fifty cent piece in her purse. She felt horribly near the squalid penury of this mean-spirited woman with the wasted frame and supplicating, worm-like air; and yet pity for the wrecks of life restrained her from brushing past.

"I ought not to intrude, Miss Connor, after all that you have done," the woman went on with filling eyes and quivering underlip. "I have no right to speak to you when I know what I am. You have helped little Budd so much that I wanted to tell you why I seemed to run away and desert him. I am his mother, Miss Connor?"

Both the woman's hands clenched suddenly. She drew into herself as if wrenched with pain.

"After you got him a position in the Great Consolidated, and and took him into your home a poor, little, ragged boy, arrested for stealing I thought if I disappeared if I went away where nobody knew me, Miss Connor Budd would be better off without without," her voice sank to a whisper, ". . . without the reproach of his mother. I thought he might rise if if I were not there." She had caught at the wall for support. Madeline moved a step and her arm was round the woman. "I thought," she stammered, looking up with a rush of blinding tears, "I thought before I died I'd like to see the Miss Connor that helped Budd."

"Oh," gasped Madeline, with the break in her voice like the wimpling of a country brook over stones.

She had noticed that the woman was not much past thirty years of age, but the face was furrowed with the bitterness of fifty. A photograph brooch of Budd's curly head dispelled lingering doubts in Madeline's mind.

"I suppose you came to ask how Budd is doing—famously! He writes to me every week. He sent me your address, but when I went to the place they told me you had moved—that you were sewing somewhere—I think! You must be tired working when you have that cough. Won't you come in and tell me about yourself? Perhaps we could find someone who would help you to go to the country till you are well. You know it was Mr. Hebden helped me to get the position for Budd. But come in; and you will tell me all."

Madeline disengaged herself and stooped to find the latch-key in her purse.

"Who who did you say helped Budd?"

The woman had drawn her head erect like a serpent ready to spring. Her voice had become hard, strident, bold. A smoldering fury rushed to her eyes, drying the tears like a red iron. Mutely, un-speaking, with the hands raised as if to strike, and all the womanhood of her face frozen to a glazed hate, her lips formed and repeated the words, "Hebden Hebden?" Then, just for a second, a

gleam—as of triumph, as of revenge, as of reckless screaming, shameless mockery—rose serpentively, furtively, from hidden, turbid depths, to the surface of the faded eyes. The woman seemed no longer a woman but a fury white with the passion of a burning vengeance. Then the physical weakness of the woman overthrew the fury, and she was coughing again, harsh, wrenching coughs, with a metal ring and a swelling of the veins in the forehead.

“Now come!” Madeline drew up, and with a push held open the door.

The woman did not move. She stood breathing in hollow rasps, gazing blankly at the girl. Suddenly her frame curved forward as if to strike or to kneel! Then, before Madeline Connor realized, her hand was seized, kissed passionately, with a stifled sob—and the woman was gone. A broken-winged thing that had fluttered into the light, had fluttered broken-winged back to the dark.

CHAPTER XXVI

OLD FRIENDS IN STRANGE PLACES

A NUMBNESS of horror which she could not conquer came over Madeline Connor. She seemed to have been in the presence of some ghostly pantomime which she could not fathom. It is so much easier to draw one's skirts aside for the fallen, that Madeline might have brushed the memory of the woman aside, if her own fortunes had not been so low. Where could she, herself, go, if her art failed? And, she was but one of thousands, of millions, of women supporting themselves on slender means in the big, heartless city. Homes for worthy women? Of course, there were homes; but Madeline knew from many an errand performed for the city editor that such homes are filled to overflowing with a long waiting list—of women who are saving hotel bills and have no right to be there. There is never a shortage of wrecks and derelicts.

As she entered the cage of the lift the hall porter handed her a note. She recognized the handwriting, and it threw her in a tremble. Such men seem always on hand to take a woman at her weakest moment. It read:

My Precious: Why have you never answered my letters all these many months? It is too vital to us both to indulge in pretence. I refuse to disbelieve the evidence you so freely gave, you meant I should have when you accepted my love-token. What is it, dearest? Have spiteful tongues been at work? A jealous woman may have reasons for spite. Did you receive my letters, or were they intercepted? Mrs. Ward has given me your address, and the Wards and mother and myself shall be in New York on the way North to-morrow.

My life is bound in yours. You can do with me what you will. You can make a new man of me. I have not been what I ought; but you can teach me to redeem lost years. It has not been all my fault. I have been tempted. I am only a man, but never before did I meet anyone whose love might be a redemption instead of a curse. You know, dearest, if gold is mixed with alloy, the *whole* is no longer *pure* gold. So it has been with my life. I have looked for love. I have met folly and passion; and my whole life has been lowered. Only *now* have I met the pure gold. Give my love leave to speak. For God's sake, do not turn me back, Madeline! I love you: you love me. Life is so short. Let us gather the golden hours. Put your hand in mine and lead me back to that happiness which I have lost.

I have thought of you so often all this weary summer with the Wards. Anyway, she appreciates you. There is that to her credit. I shall come for my answer, Madeline.

Whatever that answer,

I am,

Devotedly yours,

DORVAL HEBDEN.

Madeline never knew how she reached her rooms from the elevator cage. She sank to a rocker—stunned. Some men seem born to take a woman at her weakest point, to come to her at the weakest moment. Here was an easy way out of her diffi-

culties. We judge ourselves by our highest moments. Our lives are often determined by the lowest. Odd how these tests leap out from ambush on us all when we are least able to meet them. And, odder still, how these crucial moments are decided, not by the present, but the past, by the habits formed, the foibles, the vanities, the weaknesses, the trends of thought.

After rereading the note, when she came to the slur on Mrs. Ward at the end, she tore the paper to tatters and stamped it under her feet. Then from her fury emerged the one clear thought—The Wards would be in New York the next day. That meant dresses, and gloves, and summer blouses with costly lace, and cab fare, and the hundred other trifles that only a woman knows.

In a word, it meant money. The rubies would have to go.

Again, Madeline's feet carried her to that part of Sixth Avenue where the sign of a banker is displayed below the window of a jeweler. It was in the morning. This time she did not stand gazing at the trinkets behind the glass. She did not hesitate. She boldly opened the door, which jingled a bell; and a frouzy woman with coils of greasy black hair came waddling out behind the glass show cases.

"Goot day! Vat gan I doo for you, Miss?"

One glance had told the woman that Madeline was new to pawn shops.

Madeline took out a purse. The woman observed that the purse was thin. Madeline picked out a de-

tached red stone and laid it on a patch of dusty velvet above the show case. The pulse that sometimes throbbed in her throat became so active that she could not utter a word. The woman licked her lips, wiped her fingers on an ample stomach, picked up the sparkling gem between two stubby fingertips.

"Vot iss itt?" she asked thickly, smudging the thing with her moist hands. "Glass—heh—Miss?" She gave Madeline a curious look. She was wondering if the stone were genuine *why* Madeline had not taken it to the expensive stores on Fifth Avenue and Broadway. Either the girl was very fresh, or—here, the woman looked at Madeline quietly.

"How much do you give for that?" asked Madeline quietly.

"Yacub! Yacub—come dis vay," called the woman.

Jacob emerged in shirt sleeves from a curtain behind the counter.

"How mush for dot?" demanded the wife.

Then the man looked at Madeline, too, instead of the stone.

"Heh?" he said, turning the gem over and over, then looking at it through a pocket lens. "Glass—heh?" said Jacob.

The woman stuck her arms akimbo, and tilted one elbow into Jacob's ribs. Madeline did not speak. She felt disgusted with herself for being there. Jacob spat on the ruby and polished it on his shirt sleeve.

For glass it emitted remarkably fiery sparks.

"Vant moneys—heh?" Jacob looked up sideways at Madeline. The woman tilted again, bumping her elbows two or three times into Jacob's ribs.

"How much is that worth?" reiterated Madeline Connor.

The woman pouted out her lips. Jacob shrugged his shoulders, winked at the ruby with one eye, then the other.

"Heh?" he ventured meditatively. "Two dollar—maybe," opening and closing his palm, and smiling as he spoke.

Madeline put out her hand for it.

"Vait!" said the woman.

"Give it to me!" ordered Madeline sharply.

The tone surprised Jacob. He dropped the stone to the velvet mat.

"Vait, Miss—you vait," he said.

Madeline picked the ruby up and brushed the smudged finger marks off. The man and woman were whispering.

"Vere you git dot?" demanded the woman, impudently.

She probably did not mean to express more suspicion than she usually evinced toward the people patronizing her shop, but Madeline was so plainly new to such bargaining and the stone was of such unusual value that the air of tacit accusation only prepared for a minimizing of price.

Madeline hardly grasped the insinuation. Then, it came in a flash: the woman thought her a thief,

one of the sharpers who rifle rich houses. It was as if the Powers that Prey on Poverty, the Yelping Furies of Vice that pursue the Heels of Want—suddenly gripped her by the throat and threw her self-respect into the gutter. She had closed the purse on the stone and turned to the door when the woman called:

“Vait—stop her, Yacob!—Offer her ten—Yacob!”

The door bell jingled. Madeline was out on the street with a smothery feeling of stoppage about the heart and a hysterical desire to laugh. Plainly, someone else must sell those rubies for her. Before she knew where she was going the car had carried her to Twenty-third Street, and she had walked across where Broadway and Fifth Avenue intersect. There was the usual eleven o'clock jam of vehicles and people and cars. A horse reared, shoving another carriage to the curb. The window of the cab was open. Sitting inside, the man's face black with anger, the woman's pale with discontent—were the Hebden and Mrs. Ward. Madeline caught but one glimpse of Mrs. Hebden's white hair; and the carriage was whisked past.

With the smell of the pawn shops in her nostrils, chagrin swept over her in waves. It was as if the poverty that had been tracking her stealthily now leaped out to shame her in the open. She had distinctly intended to go and ask the city editor's advice about those rubies, but she found herself in the Fifth Avenue stage bound homeward

with a heaviness of heart that she told herself was altogether absurd.

If she had not been so absorbed in herself she might have seen a young man threading through the crowds of Twenty-third Street, hailing the stage driver with the mute curses of a clenched fist when the 'bus runbled off without him, and at once jumping into a hansom to follow. It seemed her fate to be interrupted that morning, for barely had she entered the apartment when the porter was saying: "That's her, mam, if you want to see Miss Connor!"

"A lady an' gen'leman just been here in a kerriage to see y', Miss Connor, and this here lady bin waitin' more'n an hour."

The person so designated might have been a washerwoman or lodging-house keeper of the East End. She accosted Madeline in a voice meant for the people across the street.

"Are ye the Miss O'Connor what Mrs. McGee come to see last noight? Sure, the poor thing 's bin goin' on, out of her hed iver since! Kapes goin' on about the gin'leman's picture what's under her pillow, and the Miss O'Connor that she wint to see! I set up wid her las' noight, mum; but she kapes goin' on about yez! Sure an' I'm thinkin' wid the cough, an' the banshee callin' all las' noight, an' the gibberin' way she talks—she's not long fer this earth, mum! Bein' a Christian woman, I come fer to see yez about her! Wud ye come to her,

sure she moight die more quiet like and dacent, mum!"

"Where do you live?" asked Madeline.

"'Tis King Street, mum, and no place fer the loikes o' you; though me lodgers are all hard-work-in' honest folks! But sure, poor thing, it's koind o' sort o' pitiful fer her to be lyin', dyin' there alone! Sure, it's koind o' queer, mum—she don't wear no ring, and nobody niver comes to see her but the bhoys wid the sewin' from the shops! She's bin all alone, payin' her rint roight reg'lar as the week come round, but Lord love you—how kin she sew wid the death whistle in ivery breath?"

The woman rambled on garrulously while Madeline turned over in her mind the risk of responding to the appeal unaccompanied by some friend. Vice follows close on the heels of want. What if she had been watched again at the pawn shop, and the woman's emotion of the night before had been a piece of acting? Priceless rubies offered in a cheap pawn shop might have set sleuths on her trail. It is a choice we all have to make, whether to risk danger for a doubtful good or let the struggler sink and save our skins.

A hansom clattered to the curb. Someone had run hurriedly into the hall, and Truesdale stood, hat in hand, beside Madeline and the woman.

"So I have caught you at last! That blankety 'bus went on, though I waved like a windmill! What is it? Someone ill wants you to go to them? Where—King Street? Oh—better let me go with

you, Madeline. There may be pigs in the orchard. Here, I have a hansom outside. You get in and we'll bowl right down. Yes," to the explanations of the woman, "I know that region. What did you say the number was? Mrs. McGee, third floor back—odd, that's the name of your protégé, Budd, the orchard boy. It's the name of my mascot, too, McGee, the labor man who turned the tide for me at the lawsuit the other day. Come; but you should have something to eat. You are as white as a sheet. I saw you at a distance in Sixth Avenue and have been on your trail hot foot. Never mind, I'll bring you a lunch basket when you reach your patient."

They were in the hansom and the horse was clippopping down Fifth Avenue for King Street before Madeline remembered that Truesdale was to be dropped out of her life, that the portals of a vision, a hope, a rapture, were to be kept shut, that she was henceforth to be as a stone to love and all that concerned love. Then, with a panic, she wondered if he had seen her at the pawn shop. He had said "Sixth Avenue." Then she realized that his self-possession would hardly have been so complete if he had not known that self-possession must cover the embarrassment of two. But what was he saying, and what was she answering, in spite of all those brave resolutions?

"Do you remember that last walk we had together, the winter night before several thousand tons of something fell on top of me in the Stock Exchange?"

"Remember?" That was all Madeline could say. How could he ask if she remembered the confession of love which he had drawn out and met with six months of silence?

"Jove, I felt so brave when I left you that night, Madeline, I thought I could fight anything. I felt like the old knights who used to ride out carving raseals to minee meat!" He laughed with a boyish tremor. "Well, the Stock Exchange knocked all that poetry out of me, I can tell you. You must have thought me a very jackanapes of conceit and confidence, the way I talked that night. Anyway, I couldn't bear to come to you with the story of failure after all you'd said to me! I thought that, if I couldn't crawl out from under the avalanche that hit me that day, I'd never have the face to look you in the eyes—you, who are so fearless of consequences in your goodness! Then, when I won that lawsuit, I thought I might come and report progress, but they told me you had gone to New York."

The hansom was delayed by a jam of crosstown vehicles at Thirty-first Street, and Truesdale hoped the procession would last. In Madeline's mind waged a struggle. She had been proving—proving so definitely to herself that he was unworthy of her love; that his silence had been dishonorable; that nothing could possibly excuse his conduct. It was so much easier to vanquish love when he was not there, but if he were all she had thought, all that her love had hoped, if he were *more* than she had hoped, worthier than her love had dared to dream?

If he were all she had dreamed of him—could she vanquish love if she wanted to? Her hands locked tightly in her lap. She looked away. Perhaps he misunderstood, for he began impetuously. He knew they had only a few more minutes together.

"Madeline, if the banks had not advanced me money it would have been a complete smash-up. I could never have got on my feet again."

Seized with a fear that he had seen her at the pawn shop, Madeline turned her head to hide the flush.

"New York is hard enough for a man, Madeline. Many is the night when I had not one dime to rub against another that I've walked up and down these God-forsaken places we're going to now."

"Was it as hard for you as that?" asked Madeline, not trusting herself to look.

"What does it matter how hard?" laughed Truesdale. "A man can rough-and-tumble! A woman can't!"

The flush began to flood her face again. "He saw me at the pawn shop," she thought.

"Madeline," he continued eagerly, "let me do for you what the banks did for me! Let me help you! I mean if ever you need it, you know," he added blunderingly. "It would be the greatest pleasure of my life—let me!" he pleaded.

Madeline looked away. She could scarcely trust her voice.

"You, who are so scornful of sympathy," she said, "you offering me—help?"

"But don't you see it is different with a woman?"

She did not answer for a moment. When she spoke her voice was thrilled with unexpressed meaning.

"I scorn sympathy-seekers just as much as you do! I don't want the kind of help the banks gave you, but I have some stones, jewels, I want to sell, and I don't seem to know how. I wonder if you could find where such things are sold?"

"What are they?"

"Rubies."

"Oh!" Truesdale knew those rubies, and he knew that Madeline would not willingly part with them. "Why, of course, I can sell some rubies for you," he added quickly. "I know a fellow who is a perfect ruby crank. We'll charge him a ripping price. Can you wait for a week? I have to go back to the mines this afternoon. Will you send them up or shall I come back for them?"

"There is the stone I wanted to sell." Madeline handed the jewel from her purse.

Truesdale recognized the stone as part of the necklace.

"I think we may get a fair price for that," he said quizzically, putting the stone in his pocket.

As the carriage turned down King Street, where the tenements grew gradually poorer, he turned to Madeline.

"Do you know anything about this McGee woman?"

"Only that she is Budd's mother."

Truesdale thought for a moment.

"I think I have heard sad stories among the miners about her," he said. "She was young, and she mistook—well you know She mistook the light in the wayside pool for the sky, you know, till the muddy waters were stirred up—and I am afraid she lost her—her faith in things," he added vaguely.

A sudden love-coldness swept over Madeline.

"It is cruel," she broke out petulantly. "How is one to know the tinsel from the gold?"

"I thought," answered Truesdale slowly, "that I had found true metal, that I had found the highest love when I found you, Madeline. I know that I have found what gives the lie to baseness in you, if only if only I prove true metal, myself, when life tests *me*"

She heard the throb in his voice. Her whole being, all that was strongest, all that was weakest, drew to him. She gave him her eyes in one quick glance. She could no more have hindered what that glance revealed than have stopped her life. His hand had closed over hers in a quick, tense grasp.

"God bless you! . . . Now I go back to the fight stronger If I win I may hope to win the best of all no matter" what was it he had said? Madeline could never recall

when the carriage stopped, how she mounted the tenement stairs to the third floor back and rapped on the door of a dark hallway with the echo of his voice, "Take care of yourself! . . . I must leave you! . . . The train in an hour, but I'll have the lunch sent up, and the carriage will wait."

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CHAPTER XXVII

MADELINE MEETS THE GRIM SHADOW

THE lodgers on the third floor were moving silently, speaking in whispers. Children stood at the open doors of the other rooms staring at the closed door of the little room on the southwest corner. The charity doctor had gone into that room and come out again, closing the door noiselessly.

Inside, Madeline sat on the edge of a little, white-iron bed, waiting, fanning a face the color of the pillows. Somehow the furrows of bitterness had left the face. It wore the calm of an almost girlish peace, or dreamless sleep. In the slant rays of the summer sun the reddish-gold hair looked like a nimbus, a crown. The woman lay with her face a little to one side toward the window, which had been raised. Madeline had bunched up the pillows so that the afternoon wind crossed the bed, but the woman had not opened her eyes, only the labored breathing had become easier. The charity doctor had looked over the foot of the bed, shaking his head. A matter of time was what the look expressed.

"Will you remain with her?"

That was all he had asked. Charity doctors learn to ask few questions. She had nodded an affirmative, and he had gone out; so the morning slipped to afternoon, and the afternoon to sunset, with pools of yellow light quivering on the east wall.

Behind the door was a sewing machine, where a life had been sewed out for the sweat shops and bargain hunters. A cutting table littered with paper dress-patterns filled the rest of the space not occupied by the bed. The room was like a little cage, with the window open for the captive to escape.

One hand lay motionless on the coverlet. The other arm was coiled under the mass of hair, the fingers clasped across the front of a little photograph locket. Toward sunset, two red spots began to burn in the white cheeks. Madeline had sponged hands and face, but the woman had not awakened from her lethargic sleep. Only when Madeline had begun fanning, the sleeper's lips moved.

"Budd ought to know—he ought to know about his father!"

It was barely a whisper, and consciousness lapsed.

The roar of the city hushed to the palpitating of a great power asleep, and Madeline watched the sun sink through the yellow summer haze till the light struck athwart the window. When she looked to the bed the woman's eyes were wide open, filled with tears.

"Do you suppose," she whispered slowly, "do you suppose that"

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God thinks that I was the one in the wrong?"

And Madeline, who remembered what One, who revealed God, had declared about the sinners going into the Kingdom before the righteous—could only clasp her palm over the wasted hand.

"I thought God was dead all these years till last night," murmured the woman. "I thought God *must* be dead or He would never have let it all happen! I thought God was dead till I saw *you* last night."

Madeline no longer saw the face on the pillow. The room had gone in a blur. But the sunlight had fallen on the woman, and her mind wandered. The rush of the elevated railroad echoed from the distance like a sigh.

"Listen" she whispered all a'ert. "Listen the wind in the wheat! He will come! He will come! He will never desert me! If I do not tell he will never fail me! He let it die; sent the nurse away; let it die! Just think let the little one die of hunger! Oh it was cruel! Oh God how I prayed! How I prayed! I threw myself at his feet! I kissed his hands his hands that had carried me jewels and flowers! I begged him to kill me; not to cast me off; not to throw me down to Hell; but he said it was my fault my fault? my fault that I had not stabbed

him to the heart? He said he had me in his power; if I told I would be hanged!" A shudder ran over the wasted frame. She drew herself up from the pillow. "Is murder *only* murder when it's known? And oh how I loved him! I would have died rather than harm one hair of his head; and he he laughed when it died; said I was in his power! Look it's the harvest moon! It's the wind in the wheat! He brought me the sword cane when he came from Japan see over there! He brought me the locket! They are Budd's! You'll give them to Budd some day? What have I been saying? Did I tell a name? Where was God?"

A fit of coughing stopped speech. Madeline had put a glass of water to the fevered lips. Setting the tumbler down she had wound one arm round the woman when there was a faint whisper. "Pray pray for me" and Madeline, who had almost forgotten, in her own despair, how to pray, found herself on her knees uttering a cry as old as time, a cry that gave the lie to her own doubts, ". . . . oh Christ by the agony of the Cross, by Thy crucified love receive this, *my* sister into Thy rest, Thy peace."

There her voice broke. The locket fell noisily from the woman's hand to the floor. She had sunk back to the pillow; and when Madeline stooped to pick up the locket the world went black, for the pool of light on the wall had faded, the face on the

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pillow was dead, and the face in the locket not Budd, the ragged boy, but Mr. Dorval Hebden.

She never knew how she left the tenement, how she happened to be holding sword cane and locket in her hands, how the hansom seemed to be clipping up Fifth Avenue in the summer dark. She knew nothing, saw nothing but a dead face massed with a glory of reddish-gold hair, a face with the calm of an almost girlish peace, the beauty of a child in dreamless sleep, the long, sweet rest of endless quiet. She saw only the dead woman's face on the pillow, the living man's face in the locket that had fallen from the dead hand. All the shams, all the excuses, all the hypocrisies, all the platitudes with which we poetize wrong, compromise evil, gild crime—fell away like fluttering vestments of rotten clothing from the skeleton of a naked horror; and Madeline Connor was face to face with the Grim Shadow of woman's life.

She felt a strange and terrible fever in the palms of her hands, in the throb of the blood beating at her temples, in the pulsing of her throat like the grip of a giant clutch. All the strength, all the courage, all the fury of all her ancestors who had fought their way up, generation after generation, from savagery to humanhood—rushed into her blood, her nerves, her muscles, her brain, in a fluid of flame. The quiescent principles of her girlhood suddenly leaped into a living Power, tigerish, militant, relentless—a fighting goodness, a goodness

that realized as though the fiat had been flamed in letters of fire *that goodness must be strong.*

How bitterly she remembered those drawings of the tenement vices, of humanity struggling in the cesspool, while smug respectability pushed helplessness back in the mire and itself paraded the world in a white vest! How little she had thought that the hand of the cesspool could reach up into her own life, that the iniquities of the underworld could poison the lives of the upper! It came to her like a flash *why* the pagans despised pity, and subordinated pity always to justice. There was no pity in her heart for the face in the locket, but a boundless fury at outraged justice over the face on the pillow. There was something primordial, elemental, uncrushable, deathless—like the power drawing the cataract willing to be shattered over the precipice so that it but reach the sea—in the sudden transmutation of her quiescent idealism into a tigerish reality.

The stopping of the hansom, the driver's protest about having been paid, the porter's queer look at the sword cane in her hand, the elevator boy's verbose explanations about a friend having asked for the key to her apartments and gone upstairs to wait—were a dream. She did not pause to wonder at the fact of her apartment door being unlocked, or at the light burning dimly under the red shade of the studio. Afterwards, she recalled that a faint odor of perfume had floated through the rooms. She passed swiftly to the inner sitting room, switch-

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ing on the electric light as she entered. A figure, sitting bowed in the deep alcove of an open window, sprang from the curtains.

"Madeline—at last—thank Heaven! I did not hear you come in: those trucks make such a rattling! You must forgive my boldness, but I could not go till I saw you! I tipped the porter to give me your key—told him I was your brother," and Mr. Dorval Hebden stood before her *débonair* and buoyant under the full blaze of the electric chandelier.

"You!" she said.

Involuntarily, she had drawn back, gathering the folds of her skirt behind in the hand holding the sword cane.

"Yes . . . Madeline it is I! Why have you never answered all my letters?"

"Letters?" she repeated in a low, tense voice.

"Ah you did not get them? I suspected my poor fond mother had a hand in this! Why do you draw back?" he asked, advancing anxiously.

"Yes—why? Isn't it strange?" she repeated woodenly.

"Have I been too bold coming here this way, Madeline? Great God, Madeline, you will not allow the little mean conventionalities to come between us now? . . . What do these looks mean? Have spiteful tongues spoken against me? I tell you, Madeline you are too pure to know the traps for men; I tell you it's an easy

thing for a woman who has trapped a man, who has pursued him with unblushing shame, who has played on his chivalry to her womanhood, on his sympathy, on his friendship . . . it is easy for *her* to lay the blame on *him* and traduce his name! I . . . have not deceived you! I have not even tried to deceive you! I have not been what I ought, but you can make a good man of me! I have sinned . . . ! I do not steal into your life with a lie! I have done what I ought not, but what's done is done, and only you . . . you alone, of all women . . . can help me to live a new life, to leave the wasted foolish past!"

He had grown pale with his passion. She saw him steady himself against the back of a chair. His voice was smothered, agitated, tremulous, and his eyes burning. Madeline Connor did not speak. She had recoiled till she was standing in the dim outer room. No color flushed and waned as of old in her cheeks. She was white to the lips, with eyes that blazed a blackness, all her strength, all her will, all her courage, all her unbending pride—held high in the unconscious poise of chin and neck, in the imperious flash of the eyes no longer gray but dilated to a blackness of fire.

How splendid she looked in her disdain, in her haughty beauty flashed a fire, in her insolent rebellion against the pleadings of his passion! He had not expected her to take it this way! Other conquests had melted to his will. Her pride only

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piqued his passion. It was like conquering an empress, taming an eagle!

"If you could but know how I have yearned for you," he said, "how I have thought of you these weary months! No star-lit night ever shone, but my love went out to you but I yearned for you with such a longing . . . oh I think my love must have whispered to you in the night! You must have felt my love about you in a flame! Dearest how have I offended? Do you know, Madeline, I have not even *wished* to pray till I grew to know what pure love was till I knew what a good woman could be to a man! When I have thought of all my past, and the darkness of it, and all my present, and the ^{of our} ~~folly~~ of it—Madeline, you have made my life seem ^{length} ~~of our~~ a wasted life back to God—"

"Do," she broke out passionately, "do but whitewash your crimes with a little religion, with a little hypocrisy, with a little affectation of melodramatic repentance—and I think I can learn to loathe you even more! Have you seen that before?" she asked in a low voice, holding out the locket.

He had paused—stunned; then, started up, white and trembling, as if she had struck him.

"Yes, *bianca* stammer blame the woman! You were young Great God! . . . you were young a young thing of thirty-four ^{mental} ~~guilt~~ ^{visions} ~~visions~~ summers; and this girl this

country girl too weak, too ignorant to defend herself whom you took by the throat and cast down to Hell, *she* was a Delilah, a siren, a temptress that sheared her young Samson of his virgin strength, his virgin name! Hypocrite! Does a lewder thing, a more despicable, craven thing . . . than you walk the earth outside of Hell?"

He had covered his face with his arms.

"Child!" he stammered out, "you do not understand——"

"You did not murder it?" she said, with a bitter laugh. "No! That would have been unsafe; That would have been too manly, too outright! You might have been arrested! You might have had to face your act, to have some unpleasant circumstances! But you ordered the nurse away and let it starve! And, when your victim . . . oh you chose your victim well, when she cast herself at your feet you you laughed! Don't you see what a brilliant splendid manly feat it was . . . to murder a new-born child so cleverly that the law could not catch you, and then . . . to laugh? To bind a poor, simple country girl to you in crime to threaten to have her hanged if she tried to break from your vile ties, and then, to laugh! . . . Great God the ^{gh} ^{wa} ^{ys} that feed on their own flesh could not less fer pr"

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"Madeline, for God's sake stop!" he pleaded. "Have you no pity?" He was pacing the floor and a thin whiteness of foam lined his lips. "Pity!" Her laughter rang aloud. "What pity had you for her you trampled into the gutter? What pity had you for the child you murdered so basely? What pity had you for the woman; into whose life you stole like a thief because you chanced to know that she was unhappy with her husband? whose life you wrecked for a season's pastime; whose wretchedness you sucked as a vampire sucks blood? Pity!" She laughed again. "Who said *pity?* What is *pity?* Pity? No! Let us leer, . . . and lie, . . . and laugh, . . . and boast of our crimes over poor fools with neither wit, nor strength, nor courage to strike down to nethermost Hell such as you! Let us laugh and boast, and point the finger of scorn! . . . Let us boast of crimes for which a lynched negro would blush! . . . There goes a woman to Hell! Our work! Ha-ha! . . . Laugh! A man's work! Hypocrite," she said, "a beast of prey could not do so vile a thing! It takes a man!"

He had paused pacing in blind distraction. Now he turned with a threatening look. Civilization had fallen from them both like a rag. They were beyond it, outside the pale of convention, in a conflict elemental. The recrudescence of his past of generations of pasts reaching back had

crushed down his momentary aspirations. Behind him was his own down-drawing life the life of his ancestors the life of a type that slowly receded into a past, when men were things of prey. Before him were vague hopes of a Better! Linking that past to the hopes was the thread of the present, which snapped under the onset of her accusations like a cobweb holding a craft from the vortex of a maelstrom, plunging his manhood back in all the turbid brutalities of primordial man. His manhood sloughed off the courtesies of the ages like a vestment.

"Madeline," he interrupted sharply, "you forget that manhood has its penalties as well as its courtesies! You forget that outraged manhood may be compelled to defend itself, even against one whom it would die to defend! You are taking advantage of your sex! If you were a man I should compel you to retract those words! By Heaven," he cried, wheeling, "you shall take them back! They are a vile calumny! You have forfeited the chivalry that strength owes a woman——"

"Strength?" she laughed. "Chivalry? Did you say chivalry?"

"You shrew," he muttered, with a sudden menace of his hands, "have you no fear?"

"None," she laughed.

"Is your rage so blind that you do not realize your position?" he demanded.

"So very blind," she mocked, neither swerving nor moving her eyes from his.

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"Two can laugh," he retorted bitterly. "Suppose . . . I don't say I'll do it, . . . but suppose I were as unfair as you," . . . a serpent light gleamed in the lusterless brown eyes, "what . . . excuse . . . would you give . . . the owner of this apartment house . . . for my being . . . here . . . at this hour . . . alone?"

Again that vision of a pleading face down in the mire under the horses' hoofs! One touch of his imagination had already transformed this woman who was to save him from destruction into one whom he would destroy. She should pay a life-penalty for that spurning of his repentance, for that humiliation of his manhood. She had laughed at pity . . . the only pity he had stooped to beg in all his life. He would send the echo of that laughter down the rest of her life in a burning regret that no tears could wipe out.

She had drawn back with contracted brows as he spoke.

Hal That was like a woman! To strip aside courtesy and then cry out when the defense of courtesy was stripped from her!

The folds of her skirt fell limply from the hand holding the sword cane.

"Ah," he taunted softly, "two can play at the game of slander! All I ask is that you sit down quietly and let me explain how——"

He never finished. He had unmasked when he uttered the threat. She was unwomaned, unsexed, unrestrained from the moment he had spoken.

There was the splintering of the bamboo sword case. The sheath flew across the floor in broken bits and Dorval Hebden stumbled backward with both hands to his face, a flash of limber steel glittering in circles across his eyes.

"That I should stoop to soil my hand striking a thing . . . so vile . . . as you! Choose your victim wiser next time! . . . If you rise on your feet," she whispered, bending over him, "if you rise upon your feet in my presence, I swear I will murder you! You threaten *my* name? And is blackmail worse than murder and worse crime that I should fear so slight a thing? Before God," she said, "if you lay so much as one hand on the outermost hem of my garments, if you utter so much as one breath across my name, I shall kill you!"

She threw open the hall door.

"Go," she pointed.

In the hall the porter saw a man dashing down the stairs to avoid the elevator. A handkerchief was across his face. He ran as one distraught, reeling against the railing and rushing out into the street, not seeing where he went. The porter followed in time to see a man sink back in a cab, cursing and sobbing—then the driver whipped off like mad.

Madeline locked the door of her studio. A man's hat lay on the desk. She seized it and hurled the thing through the open window as far as she could throw. Then she sank down in a horror of shame.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AFTERWARDS

WHAT were her thoughts all that long night in the great city, alone with the Grim Shadows? Did she think at all, or only lie dumbly prostrate before the hard riddle? Love nailed to the cross, making its grave with the outcasts; vices regnant; the wronged under the feet of the wronger; piety shutting its eyes, shutting its ears, drawing skirts aside from unhallowed hands; respectability bulwarking crime; justice asleep!

If man were but an intellectual brute why did a queasy conscience give the lie to his creed of the Great Blonde Beast? Animals were red in tooth without a qualm. *Why* did man try to hide, to justify, to argufy his crime? The humanized dog might be taught shame of its bird-killing, its sheepcot ravages, its thefts. The animalized man could not rid himself of shame. . . . Why? And, strangely enough, it was that unanswered question that held Madeline Connor like an anchor back from the shoreless seas of the vague fatalism that so often engulfs.

Another thought held her to the sane wholesomeness of life. It was Truesdale. Hebden had

vowed love, invoked religion, actually believed in himself up to the moment when a stroke of steel enlightened his sight. Truesdale had said little of love and less of religion; but had lived both and held the faster when all went down under the smash of the actual test. Wherever there is a man to stand up against the Nebuehadnezzar creed of existence there will also be a woman; and that lost paradise of which Hebden poetized and unto which he would have stolen may be realized.

At daybreak Madeline rose from the sofa with an ill-defined dread of meeting Mrs. Ward. She could neither have told nor left untold what had passed. Life ebbed too low in her veins, she was too thoroughly shattered in body and mind for any concealment; but Mrs. Ward did not come. Had Hebden been at work with a mincing smile, a shrug, a faint, deprecating gesture; drawing a herring across the trail of his own guilt? Clouding the waters with unclean suggestions, as the cuttlefish clouds the sea. to escape in its own slime?

Genuine suffering hides from sight like a burn from air; and Madeline could no more have written to Truesdale and told the extremity of her need than an eagle could have transformed itself to a reptile. The eagle may drop dead—it will not crawl; it may be the victim of parasites—it will not become a parasite. The transfer of bric-à-brac, bronzes, and books to a Thirty-fourth Street junk shop netted sufficient returns to pay another month's rent. By accepting a cheaper kind of work she was

able to meet her other expenses; but this necessitated doing more of the cheaper work to make what she had formerly received for a single drawing. I have often wondered if Mrs. Ward had thought more of Madeline and less of self at this time whether it would not have averted her own punishment; but love can be selfish; and selfishness wields its own rod.

After sending the dead woman's body home to McGee, the labor leader, in the northern city, Madeline turned to her work like a drunkard to his cup—for forgetfulness. Night came, not with sleep, but weird dream fugues, tranced, gloomy, mystic, so that she hardly knew whether she had passed the night sleeping or waking. Now she was on the edge of the precipice with the mists closing about her, so that she could not take one step forward or back; and the precipice was life.

Now it was the figure of a running man on the edge of the precipice; and the man was humanity, naked, bleeding, with the darkening mountains looking down impassive, stonily, spirits of evil mocking the puny creature disturbing the iron silences with his cries. And ever, as he ran, ran the wolves at his heels—Lust and Hunger, Poverty and Vice—driving over the precipice to the blackness of Eternal Night. When this dream came it palsied her power for work; for another month's rent was due and no word had come from Truesdale.

Once she dreamed she was back in the days of

prosperity, before Ward's stock jobbing had pauperized and killed her father. The graveled walks ran through lawns as smooth as velvet. The light sifted through the park in shafts; and her mother came down the path leading a little girl with red curls; but the child was crying. Madeline awakened sobbing.

To all this could be only one end. It came one morning when she had somehow succeeded in dressing and hauling herself downstairs to the dining table, when her coffee cup slopped round in her hand like a beam sea. Madeline could not lift it to her lips. A great medical specialist lived in the downstairs front rooms of the apartment house. Madeline went to see him.

"How in the name of thunder have you been tuckering yourself out?" he asked jocosely. "What have you been doing?"

"Work," confessed Madeline meekly.

"And worry—eh?" added the doctor gently. And what did she do; and why did she work; and was it ambition or necessity; oh, it was both love of work and need of money, was it?—a bad combination; and where did she live; and why couldn't she go home; and was there no one to relieve her—give her a breathing spell—so to speak? And many more questions, which Madeline answered. Somehow, this great doctor gave her that impression of the untold goodness beating under unchurched vestments. The doctor stroked his bald spot, and studied her through his glasses.

"If you stop work the home comes to a stop?
Is that it?"

Madeline said it was and asked him please not to prescribe sympathy, or that would finish her. The doctor stroked his bald spot some more and laughed. Madeline laughed too; but she wished he were not so kind looking. She did not feel that a softening would help her pluck. What the doctor said does not look well apart from the manner of his saying it; but it was a crude statement to the effect "that women bit off more than they could chew in the way of grit."

"Look here," he added, "I have a mind to break the record by telling you the truth."

The artist smiled feebly, feeling all the while as if a pit were yawning beneath her feet.

"Well, then, here it is—out with it," he said. "You are not the kind of a woman to want coddling, and flattery, and bread pills! You don't think it interesting to play for sympathy by being the invalid; and I'm hanged if lots of the pampered women who come to me to be flattered and patted and wept over couldn't be cured for good and all by going into the laundry and doing a good week's washing! But, my dear young woman, if you want to know the truth about yourself—something will snap for good and all unless you stop! The watch won't run any more unless you give it time for repairs!"

"I suspected as much from a sudden piety in the region of my knees," she said ironically.

"If you rest, if you crawl off into a hole, or go off to the wilds and play the savage ten thousand miles away from worry and work and too much thinking, nature won't fail you! If I were a woman," he broke out, "I'd be a dairy-maid before I would be sucked under by this maelstrom! It's this damnable pride and ambition and high pressure and foolish, dilettante daintiness—instead of just resting in the eternal order of things—that is playing the mischief with modern life! An office man earns the salary of a workman; and the office man's wife wants to live the lazy life of a queen!"

To all of which Madeline agreed; but what was the use of knowing what ought to be done when it was impossible? That was the dead wall, the *impasse*, the negation of her faith in the order of things.

"I can give you something to wind you up; but the snap will be all the more disastrous when it comes! Don't mistake—ours is the suicide age! We attempt so much that we attain nothing but leave to quit! If you were my daughter I'd pack you off to a backwoods village a week away from telegrams and paints and letters!" And he gave her the prescription.

The medicine she took in quantities that would have surprised the doctor; but she could not work. Besides, she saw how poor this forced work became. If she stopped working she might as well stop living. If she went on working—what? The final snap; so she ceased to pray. She ceased to hope.

God seemed so far removed from all human interests that her faith could not reach Him. She feared to hear from Truesdale about the rubies; for she knew if she died that they must go for her mother's support. Would Ward have scoffed and called it emotional nonsense if he had been told that his stock jobbing was robbing a woman of her life? How many others had been brought to penury as she had been? Ward's high finance was too complex for a woman's judgment. It was not too complex for her ruin.

On the table opposite her bed lay a birthday book with scriptural texts on one page, blanks on the opposite page for daily comment. The blank page was headed in print: "Texts—Tried and Proven." Madeline tried and tested many of the texts. The proofs did not work out the way she expected. Yet the curious thing was, while the old truths did not work out as she expected, they assumed a deeper meaning; and the deeper meaning worked out so strongly that she could not get away from the truths. One may only guess to what her comments referred. Some seemed to cry out to Mrs. Ward; others to be about the dead woman; others, again, to register a change so subtle in her own beliefs that she did not recognize the evolving of her own conclusions.

Those who do not find the human soul as interesting a document as the record of love vows and stock speculations would do well to skip the com-

ments penned on the blank pages of the birthday book. Here are some of them:

We cannot break law. The law breaks us.

Unless we hitch our efforts to the movements of law God Himself cannot answer prayer.

"When I was a child I spake as a child"
 "The bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself on the coverings narrower than he can wrap himself in" I wonder did Paul and Isaiah, too, find the creeds too narrow to fit facts? They didn't shut their eyes, give up the facts, and talk twaddle about resignation to the Devil. Neither do I.

Is law in its essence love?

If one keeps drawing on faith without realization there comes bankruptcy.

The ultimatum of all faith, all love, all hope, all creed is—fact.

Wrath of God: violation of law. That is at least rational.

Knowledge comes through pain.

Though God sees the sparrow fall He does not stop its death.

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Innocence is *not* its own protection. Angels do *not* guard innocence. That is poetic; but it is a lie.

Shall we say "God's will be done" to evil? Is God's will, then, evil? Shall we say "God's will be done" and—fight the evil? Isn't *that* God's will?

Goodness must be a fighter; or go out of commission and give a new creed the chance. Goodness must conquer or—quit!

There is no mistaking plain facts. Shall I hide my eyes from pain, from sorrow, from wrong? Shall I give a palliative to the Devil, saying "God's will be done" to what I see; or, shall I—fight?

Pathfinders to God learn the way, not through creeds, not through prayers, but by bruised feet.

Suppose you die? Well, then, die! That is the least of sorrow. Better die than not try; better die than be conquered!

Having broken myself on the wheel of law, why should I blaspheme the wheel?

Circumstances are the rock; law the bonds binding man to it; necessity the vulture eating his vitals.

Christ, too, had to choose between the easy way and life or the hard way and death. He chose to die rather than submit; and He conquered. If a Christ dared to speak the truth to-day would He not be hooted and crucified just the same?

If you steal small, it is crime. If you steal big, it is a credit. If you murder a woman openly, quickly, mercifully, it is a crime. If you murder her secretly, slowly, cruelly, in the name of love, it is—a joke. The fiends of Hell must have much laughter.

For as long as time lasts I send my thoughts across the darkening dark to you! As an all-containing space carries electric waves to outermost bounds of infinity, so an all-containing deity, power, entity, which I call God and you call Force, carries this thought from me to you! As long as time lasts you shall never escape the mute pleadings! If there be any hope in Heaven or Hell; if, sometimes in the still night, hope streams through the starlight with memories of a peaceful past and joyful innocence; if sometimes in laughter come remorse and self-loathing; if sometimes you wonder *why* "the light that never was on land or sea" has gone for you from laughing summers; if sometimes a memory comes of a peace too deep for words; if God is not a joke and purity a dream of sleeping serpents; if sometimes the baying of the wild beasts quiets so that you hear once more the silent voice, then know that I call on you in the name of Christ

to arise and follow the light! To cast the past forever behind! To slough off the skin of the serpent for the wings of an eagle purity! To rejoice in the race of the swift and the strong to the highest goal!

What is love?—A fire! What are we?—The burning! If pure, the fire becomes a light; if impure—fury, smoke, destruction, ashes.

Shelterless for the tempted is the homeless city! On all sides, at all times, in all places, are the jeweled hands tempting, tempting, tempting! What does the church for the unchurched?—Bids them stand outside till the saved take possession of the seats paid for: then sends missionaries to pluck the unsaved from the gutter.

The dream of the dead will disturb the sleep of the slayer. Does the dream of murdered innocence disturb those asleep in Zion?

All the toilers need is rest, rest, a little hope, a little love. Who is there to say "Come in and rest"? None to give the cup of cold water for love's sake in the name of Christ. Pause, you busy women who would emancipate the world, and think of that!

If I must die, O God, let me die bravely! If I am not strong enough to battle for right, and truth, and purity, let me die—trying, fighting! Save me from self-pity; from the love that is not love; from

the goodness that is compromise; from the purity that is white-wash; from the resignation that is weakness; from the piety that is an insurance policy against fear; from the righteousness that only masks servile fear of the Devil! Let me not hide my eyes from the truth! Let me not know fear of aught but my own cowardice! Let me die brave, rather than live a coward! Let me not draw my skirts aside from unhallowed blood! Let me die brave, or live strong! Save me from the reptile virtues that cringe, that crawl, that dodge truth and shirk difficulty! . . . "by well-doing seeking for glory, honor, immortality eternal life!"

If woman, stripped of womanhood, be but reptile; and man, stripped of manhood, be but beast: better madness and death than dust.

Teach me to laugh at death; and be
Strong! Teach Spirit to be Stronger than the Great
Blond Beast!

* * * *

A week after she saw the doctor came Truesdale's letter. It was almost telegraphic in brevity:

Enclosed find check for ruby. Chap I told you of paid gladly. Trust I did not let it go too cheap. Delay caused by chap having to wait for the money—he asked for time. Don't forget.

I am,

Yours to command,

J. T.

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P. S.—Think you should take a holiday. Can sell all those jewels to that ruby crank if you say so.

J. T.

Madeline looked at the check. It was five hundred for the smallest of the rubies. She looked again, dazed, unsteadily. She fingered it. Then she began to laugh softly, her eyes wells of glad tears.

"Thank God," she was saying, "oh, thank God! It isn't the money; but, oh, thank God, love is is really love!"

She slept that night without medicine or dreams, but all the while, sleeping or waking, a floating consciousness suffused her existence like a light of transfiguration, a consciousness that love *was* love, that God was not an attenuated joke, that truth and purity and goodness were as real and strong and faithful as Death itself.

Two days afterwards, "the boys" in the newspaper rooms were saying, "there seemed a kind of gone-ness about the office." Madeline had taken the train for a backwoods, habitant village on the St. Lawrence.

CHAPTER XXIX

WHEN LABOR ADOPTS THE BRUTE CREED

THE ethics of Hunger *versus* the ethics of Power —when these two become pitted against each other it is not surprising that Hunger becomes excited first. The stimulus is at the pit of the stomach. Anxious Fright has no time to choose fine words. Power can afford to be cool. There is no gnawing of Hunger, of Fear, of Desperation.

The record of two or three old-world democracies should have taught observers by this time that Demos is apt to take short cuts to justice when he is roused by hunger or outrage; that Demos is even foolish enough to prefer a despotism, whose justice is swift and sure, to a democracy whose justice is at the mercy of a blackguard sharper of the lawyer species or a light woman carrying the corruption of bribery in one hand, flesh in the other. These struggles between patrician and plebeian, rich and poor, were called revolutions in ancient days, and invariably led to the downfall of democracy and the upbuilding of a despotism. We, of to-day, call such struggles "problems," "questions of capital and labor." Questions they undoubtedly are, with an

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eternal interrogation mark that points forever unanswered like a finger of doom; but in the year of our Lord, the Prince of Peace, nineteen hundred and twelve, in the country of Life, Liberty and Happiness, miscarriages of justice—the blackguard of the lawyer species, the scarlet woman with the dual bribe—no longer lead to revolution, but to a much more terrible, wild-eyed, mad-beast Thing—Lawlessness!

It was in vain that McGee expostulated himself hoarse—like the pacifying editors and clergymen who think to thunder Lawlessness down by attacking the result instead of the cause! In vain he declared to his followers that they were leaders in the progress of the ages, fighting a battle that would go down to posterity like a beacon light; that they must sacrifice their present ills to future good; that the only way to cease paying tribute on bread, and meat, and clothes, and fuel was to demand possession of all industries; that one false step now, one act of violence, might call out the militia and lose all fought for during the idle summer months; that Life—Liberty—Happiness were as glorious a cause to fight for to-day with the modern weapon of the Great General Strike as a century ago with sword and musket! In vain he told them that wives and daughters, sons and fathers, food and home, were sacrificed in that old-time struggle for Liberty; that “we must not lose what our fathers had won—rights to Life—Liberty—Happiness!” One of his speeches was interrupted by the yell:

"Where's Kipp's corpse?" followed by a fierce roar of jeering laughter.

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander! If killing's no murder for Kipp, it ain't for Ward"; and the straw effigy of the financier was burned in front of the Great Consolidated offices. McGee had only succeeded in scattering the malcontents before a squadron of mounted police rode across the city square.

The primary appetites are always riotous; especially hunger; and many of the unmarried miners were already living on what they could shoot or fish, the strike funds going to the families. When the suit against Truesdale was settled by compromise out of court, the men felt themselves vaguely aggrieved. The advantage of probing the investigation of Kipp's death had been lost, and now, with Mrs. Kipp's evidence on record, the public prosecutor refused to act. If the Truesdale mines had been shut down, too, the public would have been so short of fuel that general indignation would have compelled Ward to come to some understanding with his men—a commission, arbitration, legislation—anything rather than a sacrifice of the public to a One-Man-Power; but the Truesdale mines were working, and the public were comfortably indifferent to the great conflict between capital and labor. Every day was exhausting the strength of the strikers. Every day was strengthening Ward's hand. The men knew it. McGee knew it.

He knew more, what he scarcely dared to ac-

knowledge. No one voiced it, but McGee saw the looks of suspicion when groups of his followers gathered to talk. They no longer confided in him. When he joined the groups they stopped talking. One night when he had been conferring with the miners about appealing to other unions for support, a man interrupted with the querulous demand: "And how long will that take? Are we to die of hunger when there is food for the taking? It's all right for you to talk, McGee—talk's cheap! You're *fixed!*" There the man stopped, for a fire smote from the big leader's eyes.

Then the union thought that he had sold himself to Truesdale—that was it! Afterwards, McGee went privately to the man and offered him "by way of a loan," a ten dollar bill. For a moment the fellow looked dazed. Then he burst into a laugh.

"Remove that damphool," he said. "Your charity is cheaper than justice," and he threw McGee's money into the gutter.

And, on top of all this gradually dulling failure, came a blow that crushed McGee to earth with a shame that he could neither fight nor face—the body of his dead sister. He buried her out in the family plot in the corner of the wheat field, where the mother, who had suicided, lay. There were no pallbearers, only the boy, Budd, and McGee, who carried the coffin in their arms from the wagon to the grave.

"Who was it, Uncle Sam?" asked the boy, white-faced, as they filled the grave.

McGee did not answer. He lifted the last sods with his hands and placed them on the knob.

Then he sat down in the gray autumn twilight with his face between his knees. Again, it seemed twenty years ago. He was a harvester out in the wheat fields; she, a little girl with red curls, carrying oatmeal water out to the workers in the sun. A young boy rode past on horseback. They said he was the son of the great lady who had bought a country place on the adjoining farm. Then it was fifteen years later. He had become head of the house, and the little girl with the red curls had returned from the Methodist Young Ladies' Academy with the love-light in her eye, and the day-blush in her cheeks, and bits of poetry full of all sorts of crazy yearnings at her tongue tip, and the prettiest, daintiest tricks with her hands when she played the Sunday hymns in the evening on the parlor organ. He could hear her voice yet—singing—singing like some spring-time bird too full of happiness for silence. Then all was blackness, a stalking darkness, with the light burning over the farm fields like the black lights that must burn in Hell. A servant woman was running across the fields, gasping out that his mother had suicided, and Sally—something dreadful had happened—Sally had gone.

There was no thought, no recollection, no sequence after that. Farm and stock had gone under

the hammer, the money to lawyers' pockets for the redress of wrongs which the laws protect. So, McGee had flung himself into the labor movement with a sincerity and fury that were brute-like in directness. "No use dashing one's head against the solid walls of iniquity and injustice that time had built up! No use mumbling helpless prayers to the demons that seemed to have got the upper hand!"

They were crafty, those demons; so would he be crafty! They were strong; he would be stronger! He would fight the Great Blond Beast with its own weapons of force and craft! But, spite of himself, McGee still retained elements of character alien to the brute creed of the-greater-strength; for he always restrained his followers from acts of violence. And now that power over his followers was slipping from his hands—why? Because he did not go the *full length* of his creed. He held his followers within the limits of law. Did Ward do that? Did the man who had wrecked his home life do that? Law? McGee laughed huskily.

Sitting at his sister's grave he saw little in life that night but—the stalking darkness of Nameless Wrongs. They seemed to take form in one colossal, living figure, red-eyed, maniacal, bloodthirsty, brooking neither law nor argument; sweeping the picayune sharks of court and church aside as a wakening giant might scrunch the vampires that had fastened on him in his sleep; striking straight home for truth, and honor, and purity, and honesty as a warrior-Christ might strike—a Christ-militant, not

the Christ-maudlin that the dishwater creeds of a blood-guilty, degenerate, compromising, creed-mongering Christianity had set up in the place of that true Christ! Prince of Peace, He had been called; but did the maudlin do-nothings forget that this Prince of Peace was also the Prince who brought the Sword—a Prince of Peace; but a Peace that was Victory, not surrender, not defeat, not cringing fear!

“What is it, Uncle Sam? Can I help you?” asked the boy, trembling, awkwardly unable to express his sympathy.

“Help—me?” flouted the man, laughing bitterly. “God—no! No living soul on this hell-spawned earth can help another! No soul can give another light unless the eyes are opened! Help?—Lord—no! You’ve only got to help yourself in this Hell of a life, git strong—git strong, I say—d’ye hear?—git strong—strong enough to batter the gates o’ Hell down; or else cut your throat at the beginning of the game! Come on! The horses are waitin’! It’s a good thing to be a horse, sonny! You don’t need to think,” and they drove into the city without another word.

Budd took the horses to the livery man, explaining that he had to go back to the offices for some special meeting of the directors that night. McGee went straight to the Nickel Plate. He did not think of it till afterwards that there were no other men at the tables in the little restaurant, and that the waiter had muttered out something about “trouble

uptown" and "the regiment boys!" An evening paper lay at his table. Idly, he glanced over the contents. Then, on the fourth page, where news was tucked into obscurity beside the editorials, he read what was a wind fanning the fire of his smoldering fanaticism.

There was a half column—for this was a sedate, and proper, and circumspect journal, indeed, designed for family reading—retailing the lynching of a negro in the South for resisting arrest and stabbing a constable.

This was not what angered McGee. Below was a ten-line account—what the newspapers call "a stick"—of a lawyer's acquittal in the same state for a murder done in broad daylight under the shadow of the court house. That was all the newspaper stated. The correspondents had been well paid. "Self-defense," like charity, covers a multitude of sins; but McGee knew—as all who labor among the poor are constantly finding strange facts—that "self-defense," in this case, covered not the murder done in broad daylight, but two other murders, one of a child, one of a woman—of so dark a character that the relatives, who were of the ruling and richest class in that Southern state, had preferred to hide the shame rather than press for punishment. The acquitted murderer had been defended by every leading lawyer in his state, one a representative of his state in Washington, another a party boss, another a type of that class of domesti-

cally good men who can create sympathy for a client. The judge had been bought, the jury coerced.

The stalking darkness of Nameless Wrongs, red-eyed, maniacal, bloodthirsty, brooking neither law nor argument; sweeping the sharks of court and church aside like a wakening giant scrunching vampires; striking straight home for truth, and honor, and purity, and honesty—took fire in McGee, took fire in the darkest of all blind furies—Mob Violence! He had only to give the word and he could win back his followers, and—then, his reckoning stopped, as all mob reckoning stops!

Next to the items about the negro and the murderer was an editorial the length of one's arm; for that was the length of the sheet, hysterically condemning lynching. "What was decency, civilization, Christianity, coming to?" the editorial asked in a climax of indignation, "when mob violence was becoming the prevailing court of justice in the foremost nation of the world?" Not a word was said about the triple murder, the bought judge, the corrupt jury, the lawmakers of the nation conspiring to defeat justice.

"Blasted—dishwater!" muttered McGee, slinging the newspaper under the table.

"Good evening, McGee! I was out when you came to see me, so I thought it only fair that I should come to see you," and Truesdale touched the labor leader on the shoulder.

McGee sprang half out of his chair, then sank back.

"Y'r too late," he answered savagely. "I thought of trying another shy at the courts about that poor dead fool, but—but—I've decided on another tack! The courts be damned, and sleep sound for all I care! I have other plans!"

What those plans were McGee was not disposed to reveal, as Truesdale sat down opposite, studying the man's elate, angry face.

"Look here, McGee, you've fought a good fight! You'll win in the long run; if not now, later! Don't you go making mince meat and hash of your plans by some fool act! The minute you begin violence you've got to expect violence, too, lots of it, in return; and you've got to be strong to win that kind of game!"

"And aren't we?" interrupted McGee, with a lame attempt at a laugh.

"I've heard strange rumors to-day about blowing up mines! Don't you put your hand to any fool thing of that kind! Don't you imagine that any power on earth—labor or capital—can play the game of oppression at this late day! The masses have a ballot in one hand, a gun in the other. The moment you waken the masses up to the fact somebody is monkeying with the courts——"

"Courts!" flouted McGee, "courts with lying witnesses, bribed juries, and bought judges, and rotten laws!"

"Change the laws, then," interrupted Truesdale sharply. "The masses make the laws, and you lead

the masses. Stop them selling themselves at less than the price of a hog at the polls!"

McGee uttered a loud, harsh, taunting laugh.

"By God—I do lead 'em! But if our representatives sell us in the Congress, and the Senate, and the courts, I propose to give them a dose that will help them to respect freedom!"

"Bombs, and that sort of fool nonsense?" demanded Truesdale.

"What, then?" fleered the other. "If courts and congresses don't guarantee freedom, are we to bow our necks to the yoke and thank God?"

How the words happened to recur to Truesdale he could not have told. He had not heard them since he left college.

His memory wavered with the uncertainty of an echo. "I think I've heard it said, or told somewhere, written or sung in bygone ages," he said absently, "that *righteousness exalteth a nation.*"

McGee had only time to bellow a contemptuous guffaw, with muttered advice about "changing the bottle," when a din, a shout, a stamping of feet, arose from the street, and Goldsmith, the fog-dreamer of socialism, rushed into the restaurant with his eyes agog and his hat flying.

"Sam, where have you been? There's Hell going on at the Great Consolidated. The militia's ordered out!"

"Militia!" McGee leaped to his feet.

"Hold on," implored the German. "Come into this inner room."

LABOR AND THE BRUTE CREED 439

"But I tell you the men must disperse—there'll be bloodshed, man—let me go, Goldsmith!"

"Gott in Himmel—are you a girl to faint if there is *blood*? Come in here with me, I say! I've got a plan! You're playing a losing game, 'but you can score now—they're laying for your life, you fool," and he dragged McGee bodily to an inner room.

A moment later the labor leader broke from the restaurant, hatless, white to the lips, overturning tables and chairs.

The law had befooled him; justice cast him defenseless to the outer dark; and now the hammering heartbeats, the riotous flesh, the flaming brain, the wronged soul of manhood were animated only by one terrible, wild-eyed, mad-beast Thing, maniacal, bloodthirsty, blind, brooking no hindrance, sweeping like a hurricane of fire, red-handed, destructive, pitiless, crazed with an indignation that was a murderous hate—the Spirit of the Mob!

The Great Blond Beast may be majestic when he marches in ordered rank to the music of the ages. The creed is the same when the beast goes mad. The only difference is that all the wild dogs muzzled in the cellars of human nature are unleashed at once.

CHAPTER XXX

WARD REVISES HIS CREED

CRAFT dead on the pavement with its brains dashed out—in the person of Mr. Obadiah Saunders; Mob Law self-destroyed—in the person of the labor delegate; the deceiver punished with his own weapon, eating the fruits of his own deeds—in the person of Mr. Dorval Hebden, what more should be told in this record than that the virtuous people lived happy ever afterwards?

The happy ending is easier than a record of egotism slipping into self-pity, self-pity to recklessness, recklessness to folly, and folly—blind as the proverbial fool—into a dark something which we may poetize, and sentimentalize, and gild, and glaze till the naked ugliness is hidden like leper sores under fine vestments. Nevertheless, the leper sores have been known to creep up to the face, where they wrote their defilement. Beauty dallying on the edge of folly, beauty flying to the Gretra Green of the modern divorce court, beauty playing the part of the tragedy queen in a fool's paradise; and then—just at the psychological moment, just when the moth's wings were all but in flame, just when the acrobatic lady poising her slipper-tocs, however daintily, on

the fine edge between right and wrong, loses her balance with a giddy veer to the nether side, just when the tragedy queen of melodrama risks one step too far for the fine taste of the audience, rushes on the scene heroic lover rescuing beauty from folly. Rings down the curtain amid hand-claps! That is the conventional ending.

It would be an excellent arrangement if we could wind things up in real life as unctuously as we do in stories; if, when the blood flows slower, the wronger could turn to the wronged, declaring: "I always loved you! I would *die* for you! To be sure, I failed to *live* for you; but give me credit for being willing to die for you when it isn't necessary! That selfishness, that violence, that deception of mine were just little peculiarities that hadn't become domesticated! You know perfection means growth; and the finest hearth dog was once a wolf in the body of its ancestors."

It would be an excellent arrangement if we could wind up the past with such pretty and affecting declarations; if wrong would melt into evanescence at those accents of ours! Life might be a perpetual aftermath of belated honeymoon, instead of a dismal procession to the madhouse, and the divorce court, and the heal-all for ills that have no healing.

But, unfortunately, life does not end happy-ever-afterwards like the story.

The life you embittered, cynicized, cauterized, cicatrized, brutalized long ago—you have forgotten *how long ago*—remains maimed, unable to face

about and meet your repentance. What if your late love faces about to meet with loathing? What if the soul you sent coursing to perdition, to loss, to ruin, to the cesspool that turns a soul into a ghoul—cannot be called back by all the prayers you send after it, all the tears you shed to wipe out those blots of the past?

However scientific and commonplace, such thoughts are not pleasant. They "leave a bad taste in the mouth." Let us forget, then, and turn to the conventional ending! Let us talk of mercy and forgiveness! Let us repent hard enough: be sure God will forgive wide enough! God's forgiveness would need to be wider than man's repentance. We *may* be washed of stains, but what of the soul *you* sent to the cesspool instead of the fountain springs—the soul which does not wish to repent, which will never wish to repent because it did not choose the evil knowingly—you trapped it into that evil—you *may* be washed, but with whose stripes is that soul healed?

Tom Ward's life was not conventional, though you might have thought that it was from the newspaper comments on his movements, or the sudden bating of breath when he entered a crowd. He had gained his aim—Success—that is, wealth, power, influence more pervasive than the rule of an autocrat. As long as the strikes lasted he had kept on his feet, though he was perfectly well aware that the fast, heavy breathing which had first come to him as he watched the mob, and increased to an

agony as he ran up the iron stairs, and brought a sudden stab when the falling cornice struck him as he clambered along the fire escape—boded something wrong. He had gone directly to his rooms, not wakening his wife the night of the fire; and Truesdale had raced back to prevent bloodshed by the troops. Budd McGee regained consciousness to see the president pacing the library in great pain—of body or mind, who can tell?—with both fists clenched as if to strike an invisible enemy. The boy's impression distinctly was that "the pres'dent waz fightin' himself"; and who can say that the boy was not right? Who can say that the convictions formed as he watched the mob—that living personification of the Great Blond Beast gone rampant, mad, self-destructive—were not fighting those other lifelong convictions on which he had framed his course—that supreme selfishness was the secret of Success, that Force was the umpire of victory? Who can say whether he now felt his own triumphant Force assailed by subtle doubts which he could not fight, by an invisible power that was not Force?

"Boy—first," he had ordered, as the doctors came hurrying in; and, forthwith, Budd McGee was bundled off to the private ward of a hospital, where he promptly fell in love with his nurse. As this is all but the last of Budd, I may add that his use of a nail file and perfumed water dated from his acquaintance with that nurse. I may also add that it was she who taught him to keep his thoughts inside as clean as he did his body outside. For years

afterwards that nurse used to receive bunches of flowers with no signature but "G. P." which Budd had learned was hospital slang for "Grateful Patient."

There was much of this, as there is of every riot, that could never be explained. Who had fired the rifle shot? Why had Saunders leaped like a tiger at McGee? What plan had Goldsmith, the anarchist, suggested that sent the labor delegate dashing out wild-brained to join the mob? Where had Mrs. Kipp disappeared? What caused the explosion? How came the watchman to be off duty that night?

A crack-brained youth found in the mob with an empty rifle would have been sent to the penitentiary if Ward had not intervened. Ward had acquired the habit of interfering with justice. He had his own reasons for wishing to allay bitterness, and he paid the fees of the great nerve specialists who gave their opinion that the youth was insane. Neither McGee nor Saunders lived after they struck the pavement, and their secrets died with them. Two or three of the rioters were sent to jail, and detectives said that they had found traces of explosives under the elevator flume, but Ward declared that a gasoline tank had been stored there. They could go on with their investigating if they wished, he said, but he did not back up his permission with a check, and Justice again obeyed the beck of the financier's finger. If the Wards and the McGees, the shark lawyers making loopholes for themselves to escape and the shark legislators

making berths to fortune, and the sentimentalists who believe that one criminal saved from the effects of his own deeds is of more worth than a thousand innocents protected—have charge of Justice for another hundred years, one wonders what manner of thing it will be. Ward was at least consistent. When he found that Justice could be turned into a farce, he ignored it.

The strike was another matter. So was the riot. Both touched the public to the quick, and for once the good-natured, go-as-you-please to Man and Devil, which always marks democracy after its rights have been won—gave place to a sharp, stern "Stop"; and Lahor and Capital stopped, as they always will when the public awakens. The strikers went back to work. Ward agreed to arbitrate, and no one but the doctors guessed why the great financier's lips sometimes closed with compressed pain like a steel trap, or why his breath came in quick rasps. These were things that the men who envied Ward did not know. Could they have seen him walking the floor all night to forget pain, they would hardly have been willing to pay Ward's price for Success.

But now the conflict was over, and Ward remained at home to rest for the sea voyage that had been ordered. And the rest was no rest. He did not care for the anodyne of other great financiers, an affected interest for literature or art, and he had too much time with nothing to do but think. Before, his thoughts had always reached forward.

Now, they somehow turned back. He was not conscious that life was revising his creed. Indeed, he was barely conscious that he had ever had a creed; but he knew that his life had been shaken from its foundations. He had not known fear, even when the bullet went singing past him with a curious, whistling hum; but when he had clambered down the fire escape with the mob that but a moment before would have lynched him, now howling frantic applause, and arms came reaching out to him with a glistening of tears on the multitude of faces gazing from the dark, something hard as adamant in the man suddenly melted. He felt very much like a good man overtaken in a flagrant wrong, or a sinner caught doing some startling goodness.

One day when Truesdale called he found Ward lying back in a study chair. Mrs. Ward had come in from a motor run and was absently drawing off her long gloves.

"Where are your rings, Lonie?" Ward was asking, noting both hands ringless.

"The wedding ring?" Truesdale thought the smile a trifle too languid. "Oh, out of fashion, Tom! They spoil one's gloves!" And, when she turned, Truesdale thought her indifference a trifle too indifferent.

"And now, Mr. Truesdale, you can tell us about Madeline?" she said.

He did not respond to her pause.

"What is the latest news of her?" she asked.

"I had hoped to hear that from you, Mrs. Ward," returned Truesdale.

She gave him a quick, questioning glance. How much did he know? Why was his answer guarded?

Truesdale, on his part, wondered what her watchfulness meant, why she asked one thing to find out another. A little more than other women, a little less, what was it in her that eluded him? And all the while he was perfectly aware that she knew he was studying her, and hid the consciousness under disdain.

She rose languidly, compelling him to remove a chair from her way by a motion that was half glance, half pause; and he was again aware that she would always study to exact tribute from every man she met. He could not have told why, but he thought of Madeline Connor, who received tribute without exacting it. Somehow, the graces that it was a pleasure to yield Madeline seemed like offerings on an altar of vanity or egotism to this woman. He saw her pause again at the door just long enough to compel him to pass some remark. Then she turned back for a book that chanced to be on the top-most shelf of the library. By the time Truesdale had captured the look she had mislaid both her gloves and her handkerchief. As he hunted them in separate corners he had a vague wonder whether such women would ultimately turn a man into a poodle dog or a footstool.

"I was going to read with Mr. Ward," she said, reaching to the mantel for a letter which Trues-

dale handed to her, "but now that you have come——"

"Pray, don't let me interfere!" Truesdale lifted his hat to leave.

"Read *with* me, Louie?" Ward laughed aloud. "I'm hanged if we've read together since we signed the marriage certificate, but sit down, both of you! I want your advice! Louie, there are ten chairs in this room. Why the devil do you want the one that must upset all my papers? Here, True, here are chairs for you both."

Her by-play, her scorn, her grace, her languor were all as completely lost on the big man as the coquetting of a butterfly before a lion. They were not lost on the younger man. What would have piqued interest and tickled vanity in some men roused a sudden and unreasonable loathing in him. If she had for one instant forgotten herself, if she had for one instant forgotten to play the actress, he would have been offering her homage unconsciously; but a man of the world meets too many Mrs. Wards to care for the type off play-boards.

"I'm much obliged to you, Truesdale, for running me out of that hobble with your machine, the night of the riot," Ward was saying. "I hear the strikers were pretty close hauled between the devil and the deep sea. I say, Truesdale, there is nothing to gain keeping up ill feeling, now that the strike is over. Your men are collecting a relief fund for our miners—they wouldn't take a gift from me. Do you think you could smuggle in an anonymous dot

from me in that relief list? You could—eh? Much obliged! I'll send the check to you. Make it out in your own name—will you?"

Truesdale glanced at Mrs. Ward. Her thoughts were absent. She had barely heard what was said, and tapped her gloves impatiently.

"And about that youngster who tried to get himself cremated the night of the fire? I understand that Miss—what do you call her, Louie?—artist girl, all forehead, soul, that sort of thing, girl who fished the brat out of the slums, you know?"

"I fancy you must refer to a young person by the name of Miss Connor," returned Mrs. Ward ironically.

If possible, he hated her a little more for that glance of tacit understanding.

"I understand this Miss Connor gave the boy a home? Is that so, Louie?"

"I have heard so," she said, smiling.

And again that feeling of repulsion possessed Truesdale. He could not help thinking that that open acknowledgment of scorn for her husband might be a bait to folly.

"Well, the nurse telephones that the boy is fit to be about again; that, in fact, they think him rather a manly little chap up at the hospital. I don't want good material spoiled, Truesdale, by sending him to some boys' school where there's more blue blood than red, more quality than bone! I want him to learn to kick it out in the rough, and get his head well knocked with facts! I wonder if you and

Louie could hunt up some boys' school that would suit?"

A low exclamation had broken from his wife. For the once, Truesdale saw her forget herself with a sudden rush of tears on the verge of laughter or sobbing.

"You are not going to——" she had begun, when her husband took the words from her lips.

"No, of course, *not* in my name! I wanted Truesdale to hand the money over to Miss Connor so that she could do it!"

Afterwards, out in the parkway, Truesdale stood still, thinking—thinking what these offers meant in the change of Ward's attitude toward life, thinking what those sudden tears meant in Mrs. Ward when the boy's name was mentioned, wondering what Madeline liked in this woman. What Truesdale forgot was that Madeline herself was a woman, not a man, seeing as a woman, not as a man. The grating of a horse's hoofs over the driveway roused him from the reverie to see Mr. Dorval Hebden riding up to the Ward mansion.

Inside, Ward had gone to a back piazza overlooking the slope of the hill to a rear arm of the sea. His camp chair was directly between the door and the window of the back drawing room, hidden from each opening. He must have fallen asleep for a warm wind of late Indian summer sprang up, blowing the portière across the doorway, shaking out a perfume of lilac sachet, so that the dreaming man saw himself once more a boy back at the little

unpainted cottage with the sweet-smelling lilac hedges, and the rose-red sunset, and the evening star pricking through the night mist. How still it was! It seemed to be spring again. He could hear the robins calling their mates from top-most boughs of the pines. Far away, the church bells of the city were ringing faintly. His father and the little girls were passing out to the evening services. He was lying on the lawn at his mother's feet, watching with a sort of wondrous reverence as her thin, white hands marked the favorite passages in the Bible where she read. Then, as the light became dimmer, he would take the Bible and, with his young eyes, read over the passages she had marked. They were all promises, promises of peace and grace, of comfort for suffering, of rest in God. The old choke came to his throat that always came when he read those promises and looked up to see the lines of suffering on the calm, white face. Then, the dream had shifted. He was kissing her face—her face grown cold; and she was praying for him with shut eyes; and a terrible sense of "too late—too late" weighted his chest like lead. He was running through the woods again, with the light of the city like a glare of blood against the night sky; and the woods had turned to faces, a multitude of faces, mad, wild-beast faces, wolf-men dancing a Hell-dance in the light of a conflagration; Rawlins, beset by a howling mob of brokers; Kipp, the fool engineer, swaggering, threatening, boasting; Saunders, soft-spoken, licking his lips, oiling his hands;

McGee with his wild, maniac eyes, raving of wrongs; women and children, multitudes of women and children, poor, hungry, cold, hurling reproaches at him, Tom Ward, running through the wood to the red light of the great city that sent up its incense to the God of Traffic. Fear? Did they think he was afraid, those fool faces with their deathless reproach? He had no more pity nor fear of them than he had had of the dog; but the leaden weight had come back on his chest again with a horrible consciousness that bedlam, and pandemonium, and Hell had broken loose in the world; and that he could never satisfy his mother's simple ideas of right and wrong that what he had done was well. He could hear her reading to him above all the uproar, reading from her Bible with her simple, old-fashioned faith of the Beasts that would war for the souls of men, Beasts of Lust, of Gluttony, of Conquest, of Error. Then he was arguing with her so violently that the vehemence of his words awakened him with a start, standing erect, panting for breath, gazing out to sea, his heart beating a queer force pump pulse, that sent his soul tense.

"*Shall* is a very strong word! I don't like the sound of it from a woman's lips, Louie!"

Who was talking to his wife, calling her by her Christian name with that easy, nonchalant familiarity? Ward gripped the back of the chair.

"You *shall not* . . . go away just . . . now! You may as well understand that! If you could go

away now, after all that has passed, just when there is some chance of our being free to do what you have vowed was the one hope of your life"

"Some of Louie's damned hysterics," thought Ward, trying to steady his breathing; but his pulse beat with a hammer throb that stabbed.

There was a low laugh behind the portière.
 "You could hate me if I went away, could you? I don't believe it. Pshaw! If you could hate me, why not call it off and quit? You complain that I am changed? If I *am* changed, why not quit?"

"Yes why not, indeed?"
 Was that his wife's voice, that hiss of scorn, of hate? The fast breathing became a torture. Ward felt like a man trying to cry out in his sleep, but powerless. A sudden torpor paralyzed his strength. He seemed to hear the clock again, up in the tenth story of the Great Consolidated, ticking in a monotone that was a taunt in a taunt that was wordless, but somehow seemed to point at this, too, as the fruit of his life creed.

The portière blew in and out with the odor of lilac sachet that had carried his dreams back to childhood. The dying sun sent long shafts of red across the darkening waters at the foot of the hill, and the bats began darting among the big chestnut trees. He had almost persuaded himself that the voices had been part of the dreams, of a nightmare, when a low tone of expostulation came from the portière.

"I should think your sense of the fitness of things would suggest the propriety of my going away, when your husband is so ill?"

Mr. Dorval Hebden was always so sympathetic, so very considerate, so very comprehending without being cold—was Mr. Dorval Hebden.

"Fitness of things?" A woman's voice laughed.

"Does the man who swore that love transcended all conventions now talk to *me* of fitness of things? Fitness of things?" she laughed in a hard, cold, grating, mirthless tone. "Since when did *you* become so solicitous of *my* husband's honor?"

There was a long, terrible silence with no sound but the quivering of the dead leaves blowing across the lawn. Ward had sunk back to his chair, broken, aged, bowed, trembling.

Then, in the man's voice, agitated and scornful:

"You can hardly reproach *me* on that score, Louie!"

"No," she retorted. "We are even there, and even we shall stand to the end! Do not mistake! . . . Even we shall stand to the end, be the consequences what they may! Oh I think thieves have more honor! I have heard of thieves who did not become suddenly repentant just when the risk became greatest! I have heard of thieves who did not take credit to themselves for repentance at such a time. Yes," she added with compressed intensity of anger, "and I have heard of thieves who had a certain and final way of dealing with a traitor."

"Pshaw!" The man's impatient footsteps resounded from the hardwood floor as if he were striding up and down. "If you like to make comparisons with criminals, you may," he said.

"But, as for you," she retorted quickly, "the comparison would be out of place, would it not? There are no memories, are there, of a past that might make even a criminal blush?"

The footsteps ground sharply on the floor.

"I don't care a curse for your acting," the man was answering, "and I care less for your threats! A final way of dealing with a traitor—eh? You choose odd ways of recommending happiness to a man! If you loved another man when you were Ward's wife how do I know that you might not lightly change and love another when you were *my* wife? You are counting on your husband's death! You are making plans dependent on his death." The man laughed brutally. "How do I know that you might not similarly count on my death? If you were not so blind, if you were not so infatuated, you would see that my hanging about here with Ward at death's door is the last thing in the world to bring about what you hope. Because you chose to hide your real nature under a mask, and because you chose to lay aside that mask with me, am I to blame for what I found beneath the mask?"

"And so," she interrupted, "a man may hang his baseness like a millstone round a woman's neck, and call it a caress, till she sinks; then, if she clings to the one hand that should hold her up, blame *her*

for dragging *him* down! Great God—that I could have been such a fool! And, now, you would go to Europe because death might leave the way open for what you vowed and swore by the holiest of human ties was the one aim of your life? You think to make lovers' oaths for a pastime, then to run away when all obstacles to the fulfilment of those oaths are removed? You think to have your way, then let others carry the consequences? You hold my reputation in the hollow of your hand because I was fool enough to believe a man could be a woman's friend in time of need? You could tell the world all? You could even accuse me to him? If I object to a friend turning traitor and thief, you will throw my reputation into the gutter? Reputation? Have I cared for reputation since I was fool enough to take you into my life? Should I be talking to you now if I cared for what reputation means? Wolves—they say—single out the wounded for their victim. You knew that I was unhappy. Through that unhappiness you crept into my life! Yes, I know," she hurried on, as if to stop his speech, "I know we are both to blame, as you have said. I do not shirk my share of blame, nor do I shirk the consequences; *nor shall you!* From a friend creeping through my unhappiness, through that unhappiness passing all barriers of reserve, you posed as the ardent lover begging me to free myself that I might marry you; and now that I am about to be free you will skulk off to Europe? Go!"

she cried with an abandon of scorn, "Go to Europe! Go; and I go too!"

Suddenly the light of the sunset smote through the open door with the colossal shadow of a man standing there holding the portière aside.

"My God, Louic," the words came in a groan, "can a woman fall so low?"

They saw his figure sway, and started forward involuntarily to his aid, but he waved them back, staggering, breathing heavily like one under a death blow. The dead leaves swirled across the lawn in a ragged flock. A bird winging South perched for a moment on the railing of the piazza, uttered a lonely autumn cry, and was gone. The president did not speak. He slowly raised his right hand pointing at Hebden. Then he pointed slowly to the door, and Mr. Dorval Hebden, always so very sympathetic, so very considerate, so very comprehending without being told—passed through the door with what *débonair* grace and nonchalance he could muster, which—to tell the truth—made a very sorry show. He went out swiftly, so swiftly one might have thought that a sense of physical fear propelled him, swiftly with a red face, and tremor of his under jaw, and coloring of a sword-cut across his eyes.

The president sank to a sofa.

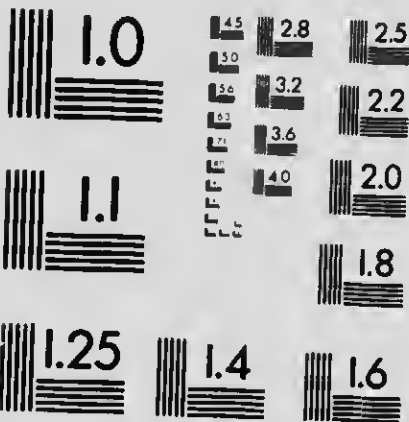
"Come here!" he said.

For the life of her, though she had mentally rehearsed for the hundredth time just what and how



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she would act when this crisis came, she could not ignore his command.

He was leaning forward with his brow on his left palm, his elbow on his knee. With his right hand he drew her to him. She sank to the floor at his knees. This was not the part she had rehearsed to herself. She had expected outcry, anger, reproaches. She had told herself what she would answer, how she would act. His rage would beat itself out against her disdain. She would meet his accusations with words from his own lips, making Self the supreme end of life. But he uttered no accusations. Not a reproach passed his lips. He shook like one sobbing, but there was no sob.

"Tell me," he whispered hoarsely, "tell me, Louie, were you what I thought you, when I married you; or were you always *this?*"

And, with the cruelty of the infatuated woman, she answered simply:

"I was what you thought me when you married me, and I am what you think me now."

She felt the tremor of his hand in a sudden, tense grip, and braced herself for the contest.

"And I have made you what you are?" he asked.

And with the shamelessness that mistakes itself for courage she answered simply:

"You have made me what I am!"

If he had broken out in a torrent of abuse, if he had called her names that are the last insult to womanhood, if he had caught her by the throat to

strangle her, if he had struck her and cast her from the door an outcast among outcasts, she could have endured. She could have laughed; but he did none of these things. He uttered no word, but he raised both hands, gazed questioningly and long into her eyes, put his arms round her, and bowed his head on her shoulder.

"Poor child" he muttered. "You didn't know what you were doing? . . . How could you realize?" . . . Then he broke down utterly, sobbing like a child on her shoulder.

Mrs. Ward had not rehearsed a part for this. It is so with all of us. Rehearse we ever so wisely, the vitalities take us unawares.

They remained so, without speaking, he, broken, she, obdurate, resisting the melting of her own pride. The portière blew in the wind, shaking out the odor of lilacs.

"Why, Tom?" she whispered.

He shook himself like a maimed lion trying to rouse dead strength.

"Then you never cared for me I mean?" he asked.

"No," but her answer was scarcely a whisper, and she was weeping.

"Is it too late yet Louie?"

Her tremulous lips refused to utter the words that she framed.

"You want your freedom?"

"Yes," she said.

"Then you shall have it," he declared, "you shall

have your freedom! I have blighted life enough! You shall have your freedom; but don't throw it away on that base scoundrel! Take your freedom; but I will never see your name dragged in the gutter of the divorce court! You shall sue me—sue me for anything you like! I'll see the lawyers about it! We'll arrange it at once! It doesn't matter with a man, but with a woman it's different! Don't you see she can't go into the gutter without getting everything that makes her worth while dragged so it's dead weight pulling her down? Don't you see the very fearlessness of her . . . her . . . her love will come through that gutter brazen as brass? You can't stand it! You'll sue me!"

She had sprung up, drawing back, dazed as he spoke. Not thus had she dreamed. He, not she, had been in the wrong at the first, and that wrong of his she had used as a justification for all that she did, never dreaming that the mote in his eye might become the beam in her own.

"You mean," she began; but the floodgates of her womanhood broke bounds and she fled hysterically, pursued by a horror of herself, by a loss of trust in what she might do. Her maid had gone out, and the apartments upstairs were deserted. She locked the door. Hardly knowing what she did, she began feverishly drawing out all the rare jewels, the bric-à-brac, the costly gifts of her husband. Then she hurriedly threw a few dresses into a small trunk, and changed her gown for a traveling suit.

Locking the jewels in the escritoire she suddenly remembered that some letters—letters from him who was not her husband—should be destroyed, and these she burned in the fireplace. It must have been midnight when she was interrupted by a knock on the door, and Ward's valet handed in an envelope.

Inside, written in a shaky hand, were these words:

Dear Louie: Let us not do anything rash. Don't worry. Sleep over it. Perhaps we can find a way without dishonor to either. We mustn't lose our heads and make the smash worse than it need be.

Tom.

At first she had thought the note was from some one else, and her trepidation increased.

"Any answer, ma'm?" asked the valet.

"None," she said. "Say it is all right, and see that Mr. Ward takes his sleeping powders and that the doctors come the first thing in the morning."

Taking a pencil, she wrote at the foot of the note:

It is too late. The jewels are in the secret drawer of the desk. Please take them back. Please do not try to trace me; and deliver the trunk when it is sent for.

L.

This she placed in an envelope addressed to her husband above the writing desk. Then, putting on a heavy cloak, she passed silently down the side stairs, and out. The melodrama of her folly, of her self-pity, of her play-acting, had become too

real for endurance. Unconsciously, like a pursued thing, she was trying to run away from the burden of consequences she had bound for her own back—in a word, to run away from herself.

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CHAPTER XXXI

BUT IT IS TOO LATE

FLIGHT is not graceful. Neither is haste, particularly when a man swears and loses his temper. The *débonair* Hebden seemed to be losing his gay nonchalance, for his manner of bolting from the back piazza of the Ward mansion was not in a style comporting with the character of a Don Juan; and now he was pounding over the gravel of the parkway at a crazy gallop, clinching his teeth in an ugly fashion each time the horse reared and plunged to the stab of the spurs.

Of course, one must not blame Hebden. That is—you must not if you would sympathize with his way of looking at things. He felt himself the victim of hostile circumstances—the victim of having a generous, sympathetic, impulsive nature, come in contact with a “scheming fool of a woman.” He felt himself sorely used, somehow put on the wrong side of things so that his conduct showed up in a bad light. Was it his fault that women made fools of themselves over him? Was it his fault that women persisted in mistaking his little kindnesses for love making? Was it his fault that she had

used his friendship to widen the estrangement between herself and her husband?

Of course, he had made vows. What man had not, under the impulse of an unscrupulous woman's fascinations? She had trapped him into saying all these "fool things." He remembered shifted glances when they had been alone together, for no other purpose than "to trick him into making a fool of himself." Wasn't it to his credit that he had wanted to drop the thing when Ward was ill? It had been on her account in the first place that he had wanted to leave and avert gossip. Manifestly, Mr. Dorval Hebden was a badly used, innocent man. He was not at all after the pattern of the ordinary villain. He did not lick his lips with gusto over his acts. He patted himself on the back for not being worse.

To be sure, there were some unpleasant memories, particularly of what Ward had overheard. What Ward had overheard would be harder for Mr. Dorval Hebden to forget than some other things that had slipped into oblivion. You see, Mr. Dorval Hebden's conscience was chiefly external—what others thought and knew; but, then, he had been so innocent of wrong intentions in the beginning and so penitent of bad results in the end that the good intentions at the beginning and the repentance at the end surely atoned for any little mistakes in his experiments of how to get the greatest amount of happiness out of life. For men and women like Hebden the case might almost be

worked out mathematically. Given good intentions at one end, good repentance at the other end, you get the subtracted remainder of a good fellow who has been a little indiscreet, or the angel of the self-sorry sort, who may also have been indiscreet.

But Hehden did not reason in this cold way. He rode like a madman with his thoughts a whirlwind of rage, and mortification, and revenge. How dare *She* bring this humiliation on *Him*? How dare *She* expose *Him* to possible vengeance? And he, who but a few months before had exhausted lovers' vows, who had sworn by the holiest of names that, if she would but free herself, eternity would be too short to contain their happiness—now hated her for listening to those vows, now called down on her all the curses, all the insults, all the reproaches, all the accusations, that could be hurled against womanhood. Then through the tumult of his passion flashed a thought horn of his own suspicion—had she, "the jealous Jezebel," turned Madeline against him, befooled him with her silence all the while she had been pushing Madeline out of his life?

Though he would have humbled himself in the dust to drag Madeline Connor down for all the insults of his humiliation, the thought that Mrs. Ward, whose reputation hung on his breath, could have brought that degradation at the girl's hands upon him added a sense of baffled helplessness. He had ridden without noting where he went till the cold sea-fog struck his face in a misty rain; and he remembered the scream that had emerged from that mist

like a voice from the past, the last time he had been on this sea-road. Then, as now, he thought with a curse her influence had unmanned him, carried him off his feet, brought him face to face with ghastly specters of the recrudescence of the beast in man. Was it his fault that women liked "their fool dreams of an *ideal* love"? Then, he had laughed at those dreams. Now, he cursed them. Then, they had been a joke. Now, they somehow silhouetted his own conduct in sharp, dark, clear outlines. Was that the reason he hated her? Hate her he did, with all the power in his being, in exact proportion to her influence over him. He had meant not to go one hair's breadth beyond what was safe. Hebden was essentially one of the safe sinners. However heavily the consequence of his acts might fall on others, he always took good care to keep on the safe side of consequences for himself. It is a question whether the safe sinner or the convict with the shaven head deserve the more respect.

The hard-ridden horse gradually slackened pace to a walk, and came to a stand in the drifting fog beside the moaning sea. The reins had dropped from the man's hand. Far back, where they had watched the sunset past the piazza portière, were the gathering clouds of storm. Between the sea and the gathering storm the man felt like an atom between two eternities. His thoughts recurred to half-whispered traditions of his ancestors, legends of family traits that flowed through the sap of the family tree and had caused the lopping of a branch

here and there. Was the curse of the family blood in his veins, too, that his life's record bore such striking resemblance to those old skeletons of family history? Was he, in truth, but an atom between two eternities, the past, which he inherited with all the transmitted qualities of blood and character; the future, to which he, in turn, would transmit the stain or strain of his life's current? We know that at one period Ward had faced almost the same question: was a man's life to be determined by the failures and foibles and vices of his ancestors, or could he transcend handicaps? We know Ward braced himself to answer that question, but Hebden's habits were formed. To-day was the slave of yesterday. Because his vices were ancestral, he petted them, and excused them and resigned his self-control more completely to them and pitied himself. He felt himself an atom between two eternities like the chip tossed by the tide there, between the sea and the storm. He was the victim of his own passions, as the sea was of the wind. With an oath, the black spurs into the horse and headed back to the beach. The beast stumbled, and reared with a whinnying scream; and the scream brought back that face of reproach under the iron hoofs, the face with streaming, upturned eyes, pleading for the hope that was to go out in darkness, a face like a ghost clutching out of the quicksands.

"Damn you, floundering brute!" he ground between set teeth. The jerk that lifted the horse from a second fall, and he rode through the

darkening mist with a sort of terror upon him, craning forward, mud-splashed from head to heel, with his jaw hard set. As the rain slashed slantwise against his face, hot, blistering tears—such as no Den Juan would ever dare to shed in a book—coursed down both cheeks. And, of course, the good débonair Hebdens—whom we know, whom we have heard joke over the feat of having wrecked a life or two, cast down to dishonor a name or two—never flinch before the grim reality of their deeds! Of course, though possessed of lachrymal glands, such men never weep and beg for pity when the consciousness of guilt lies heavy and will not lighten for all the self-excusings cowardice can conjure up! Of course not: for two hours later saw Mr. Dorval Hebdens damning his valet for packing so slowly, and damning the cook that the supper had grown cold, and damning the butler for not returning quicker with that ticket up to a moose-hunting country in Quebec, where Mr. Dorval Hebdens had suddenly decided to go.

"Mind you huy the ticket in your own name!" he had called as the butler went out.

Then he laughed to himself.

"If the servants talk, she will think that I have gone to see Madeline," he thought.

And he laughed again, both at his own acumen and the cringing terror of the servants before his displeasure. So successfully had Mr. Dorval Hebdens frightened the servants that they neglected to tell him there had called over the telephone a lady's

voice, which they all recognized among themselves—it was the voice of one to whom Mr. Hebden's private number had been given. When the butler had called back that Mr. Hebden was leaving that very night to hunt moose in Quebec, the telephone had rung off quickly. Midnight found Mr. Dorval Hebden boarding the New York express for Montreal, and thanking Heaven with more zest than reverence that he had the Pullman entirely to himself, except for one party in deep mourning, who seemed to have taken both staterooms for themselves.

"I say, porter, know if there are any steamers bound from Montreal for Europe to-morrow?"

"Can't say, sah! Don't think so, sah! Waz .. wantin' to go t' Europe that way?"

Hebden gave the colored man a five dollar bill.

"No, but I've a friend, Holloway, railway man, wanted me to wire him a passage across! He's been up in the moose country!"

The porter looked at Hebden's hunting gear done up in leather casing, and ventured the remark that "while there wern't no reg'lar lines sailin' from Canaday ports to-morrow, there wuz a nice line of slow freighters."

"Freighters—good Lord!" interrupted Hebden with sudden solicitation for his friend Holloway; but these fears subsided upon the porter's assurances that the freighters, though slow—to which, friend Holloway, it seems, had no objection—had excellent accommodation for a few passengers.

"Then, I wish you'd wire for me at the next station—best cabin, you know—room to himself—give the name Holloway—passage to Europe! Here's the telegraph money," and Hebden increased the porter's wealth by another five.

On reaching Montreal, Mr. Dorval Hebden evidently became solicitous about friend Holloway going aboard the freighter; for, instead of proceeding to the moose hunt, he hoisted his shooting traps to the top of a rickety French cab, and rattled away down hill to the freighter's wharf. And that evening, as the freighter slowed up opposite the eerie heights of gray old Quebec for the pilot to go ashore, there came up on deck, not friend Holloway, but Mr. Dorval Hebden himself, outward bound on the steamer.

The half dozen passengers and a few of the chip hands stood aft watching the church spires, the gray ramparts, the sunlit windows of the hilled city fade over the water. Hebden drew a sigh of relief, and lighted a cigar. He felt like a prisoner who has been acquitted by some fluke of justice, and has resolved to build up a better future on that acquittal. The purser addressed him pleasantly, calling him Mr. Holloway.

"Not Holloway; Hebden," he corrected, offering the purser a cigar. "I dare say the telegram got the names mixed!"

He turned, sauntering along the narrow passage between the deck house and railing, feeling none of that disquiet with which Nemesis is supposed to

pursue guilt. Not for months had he known such a feeling of rest. Every foot of the way was putting wider safety between him and the past.

There is a sort of soporific peace in which nature laps our unrest when we give ourselves to her, either on the ocean or in the wilds. She teaches us the best of all arts, the art of forgetting. We do not think: we dream. We get away from reality till the finger prints, and bruises, and festering sores, and scars of reality become obliterated. The slate is wiped clear. We may begin anew. Hebden felt the gentle touch of such a forgetfulness coming over him now. If he had been brought in contact with a strong, good nature, his character might have struck fire in noble resolutions. Whether the influence of his past in the fiber of his character would have permitted him to keep those resolutions is another matter.

He felt the peace of the templed hills on each side of the swift-flowing river. Ordinarily, he didn't believe in God, except as an attenuated Divinity too completely hidden by the phenomena of nature, or too remotely distant behind the phenomena of nature, for any reckoning in human affairs. He called this God "the Great First Cause"; but to-night, with the calm of the hills around him like a cathedral peace, and the river flowing to meet its destiny—flowing in obedience to resistless laws—and the stars swinging through an infinity of worlds in obedience to other resistless laws, Hebden somehow did not reason about the Great First Cause.

He felt God. He felt his spirit enmeshed in the animal frame yearn out toward that other Great Spirit, behind the eternal frame of things, behind the laws. It was like the feeling of a child for an absent parent.

The tide came swinging up the river with a lap against the freighter's keel, and Hebden fell to wondering about the Power that swung that tide around the globe in obedience to yet other laws. He wondered—quite quizzically and impersonally, of course; the man of Hebden's mould always keeps his speculations impersonal enough not to have bearing on his own deeds—he wondered whether that Power swinging the tide round the globe might not swing a tide of another sort in human life. He looked back on his recent past as if it had been another man's life, wondering that life could be shaken and overthrown by the mad passions of desire, and remorse, and fear, and fate. So completely did the peace of the night take possession of him, so completely did the feeling of security still the mad-dogs in the cellars of his nature, that he asked himself if such mad-dogs were not, after all, hallucinations? And did regret tinge his thoughts? Not a shadow. Because the mad-dogs were quiescent here, on the broad river flowing seaward among the templed hills, he felt all the more certain that the fault lay in the circumstances that aroused the mad-dogs, not in himself. If he had had a taste for literature, he might have expended his pensive emotions in verse. Men whose wives have died of their

brutality have written beautiful sonnets on the departed under the inspirations of such moods, and patted themselves on the back for the beauty of thought.

Instead of making verse, Hebden puffed a cigar, strolling by himself up and down between the railing and the deck house in a pensive mood, which he mistook for repentance. A wind sprang up astern as the steamer turned northeast, and Hebden sauntered farther forward to escape the breeze. Suddenly, before he could turn or collect his senses, a veiled form in deep mourning stood directly across the passageway. The cigar tumbled from his teeth. The veil had lifted, and there looked out, with a strange light—a serpent sulphur light, that was like a mocking gleam from darkness—the face of the last woman in the world that he would have chosen to see.

"Y-o-u?" he stammered, his eyes filling with effeminate tears of rage. "You *dare* to hound after *me*? It is not enough to trap a man, you must drag him down to *your* level? If you had no respect for yourself, you might have had for me! Dare to speak to me and I'll brand you from the ship's galley to the pilot house!"

"Do," she answered quickly in a low, grating voice. "Do; and I'll add to their information facts of your past that will brand *you* with the irons of a felon!"

They faced each other in silence with gleaming eyes, these two who had exchanged vows too great

for eternity to contain, faced each other with a hate that branded deeper than any iron could mark, faced each other, seeing nothing but the havoc each had wrought, faced each other stripped of all the pretense with which they had decked the god of clay to conceal its feet before they had knelt down to worship it, faced each other and knew the lie of all that pretense——

“Damn you!” he muttered with a venom of hate. A quick, fierce motion, and he had struck the hand which he had caressed, and kissed, and fondled, and called the anchor of his hopes.

Mrs. Ward did not speak. She did not cry out. She heard his footsteps receding angrily along the deck. For the first time in her life, she saw her own career stripped of pretense, of fine words, of self-pity, of play-acting. Leaning her head on both arms above the railing, she wept with the despair of utter hopelessness. If the Angel of Pity had been there it might have shocked the Pharisees by whispering that this, the hour of her greatest degradation, of her lowest abasement, of her self-disdain, of her boundless self-loathing, was the truest hour in her life; for it emptied her of Self. The glorification of a sublimed ego had passed out of her life forever.

Downstairs, Mr. Dorval Hebden cursed, and raved, and raged, and asked himself how much she knew. If he had been badly used before, what was he now, when he felt sure that Madeline had told Mrs. Ward, and that there was a conspiracy against

himself? That is it! There is always a conspiracy against the innocence of men like Hebden. For the rest of that long, tedious voyage he was a virulent woman-hater. And he was too virulently seasick to appear on deck, which no Don Juan ever was in the stories of gay deceivers, though some have been known outside books to strike what they have first maimed.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE DAWN

THE fishing schooners rocked to the lazy wash of the river tide. Madeline shut her sketch book, bunched pillows beneath her shoulders at the bow, where she sat, and lay back to watch the warm, mid-day sun among the purple shadows of the hills. Here, the clouds had stretched a floating argosy of fleece across the slope of painted forests. There, the yellow autumn light smote through a gap of the mountains like shafted beams from the throne of God. And the white-sailed schooners brooded over the river, wings at poise.

There is something in Indian summer that resembles a beautiful old age. The sowing is past; so is the reaping. The frosts have come, painting a glory of russet fields and crimsoned woods, like the sorrows of life that have etched age with the lines we love; but over the mellowed peace of a garnered past lies an afterglow, a renewed youth. It is as if the seal of "well-done" were placed on the year, on the finished life; as if life might be lived so that the end would be better than the beginning; and Madeline gave herself up to the reverie of the day as she would have to music or poetry.

The little convent village afforded an outlook on life different from the city. Instead of the night cries—laughter, lewdness, outrage, insolence—were the quiet, vespertine chimes of convent bells. Oh, yes, Madeline had heard these nuns called “narrow,” and their virgin rhapsodies of religious vision jeered as the yearnings of denied instincts, and the repose of the sleepy land denounced as ignorant slavery to priestcraft; but she found the narrow lives gracious of goodness, and the virgin rhapsodies less discordant than the shrieking horrors of a modern divorce court, and the priestcraft slavery a safer thing for strugglers of slender health and slender means than the hard-ridden charities of a dishwater sentimentality that only saves *after* the struggler has sunk.

Here, in the convent village—where neither fame nor wealth was known, where the only two people with a larger income than a hundred dollars a year were the notary and the curé—was a great joy in the mere fact of existence. There, in the city—where fame was a farce for envy to spit its venom at, and wealth so great that its weight drove men mad—was a strife just to exist. Here, men were content To Be. There, men went mad in a vain endeavor To Do. Here, in a rude, simple way, souls seemed to have got an eternal grip of the vital fact that what a man Does must be the result of what he first Is; that not in the fever of a strenuous feebleness is strength, but in quiet confidence. Madeline smiled when she heard the story of one sweet nun

who always turned the picture of her saint's face to the wall when her prayers were not answered. It had not been so long since she, herself, wanted to turn *her* mental picture of God to the wall, because her hopes returned to her empty.

She had sought out a quiet retreat in the convent. At first, she did nothing but rest. She spent long days of utter solitude in the shady pine woods. Even in "a priest-ridden country," you see, there are advantages over a civilization-ridden country. She could not have had such safe solitude within a hundred miles of the centers of civilization—the cities. Solitude in civilization must always keep within ear-shot of a policeman; or else we read of the college student thrown from his horse with "a smashed skull," the girl botanist found dead at the foot of a cliff, where she has mysteriously fallen. The real death is never told, for civilization has a squeamish stomach, and the ruffian of civilization has only to keep near enough a policeman—near enough to obliterate murder with a bribe—and guilt is safer under the protection of civilization with the squeamish stomach than out in the wilds, where primitive instincts act swiftly without leave of sentimentalists and legal quirks.

And then came hazy autumn days, when the convent fisherman took Madeline out in his schooner; sunny, lazy hours, lounging under a shifting sail with the old tar droning endless yarns. It was about this time that Madeline began to realize that she was resting not only in the pine woods, not

only on the shining river with its lapping tide, but resting full of confidence in the eternal order of things: resting in nature and nature's laws that were cradling her back to health; resting in the arms of the Almighty behind the laws.

It was as if Law suddenly became Love. She had been crushed when she broke the laws. Now, she was blessed in the keeping of them. At all events, her strength, her resilience, her buoyancy, her delight in living, her capacity for work surged back in such floods that out of sheer relief from idleness she took to sketching the fisher folk. Some of these sketches she sent to the art editor, Perkins, who placed them in a Fifth Avenue window. To her amazement, demands came for more work than she could do. And Madeline smiled half cynically: when she had needed work, none could be found; when she did not seek it, more came than she could do; but, as she knew very well, this was only another instance of natural laws. Before, she had been working against nature; and the whole universe was against her. Now, she worked with nature; and the universe worked with her.

It was like a new light, this view of Law as Love, across her life. Instead of an attenuated divinity half-doubted, it seemed to bring God down a palpitating presence in every moment of the most everyday life; a God of laws in which she lived and moved and had being; laws tending to one great end—Love. She did not believe less in God because she believed more in Law. No longer would

she turn the face of her God to the wall in unbelief; no longer lay the burden of blame for life's monstrous wrongs at God's feet; no longer face such wrongs with the blasphemy that reproaches God or the submission which is a worse blasphemy. It was on the Law-Breaker, not the Law-Maker, that she now cast blame; and the belief created a sort of fierce passion for goodness, for right; an unshunnable obligation of goodness militant, goodness stronger than evil, goodness that smites down wrong with the zeal of the fiery prophets—not because of hatred for the sinner, but of justice to the sufferer.

In a word, Madeline Connor, dreamer, idealist, artist, thinking to catch the form of the beautiful on her canvas and to ignore the ugly, gave up her dreams for facts, set herself to making ideals real, learned that the highest art of all is not the art that creates a picture, but the art that creates a life, better life, life that can become an ideal for humanity. She knew, now, how much higher had been the aims of Truesdale—indifferent to her art, working with the rude implements of the marketplace, weaving no fine-spun words round the battle stress of the dusty commonplace—for his art had not been a beautiful picture, but a battle against the Great-Blond-Beast-Spirit-of-the-Age, a battle for the soul of the new humanity, a victory to mark one more mile-post in the progress of the human race from animal to man. And she knew, too, when all Law trended to Love, and all Love to God, that, in this

man, she had met the Highest Good of life, the thing that brought her nearest God.

It was this consciousness that helped her to look back on even Hebden with a sense of pity. He had attuned his life, not to the God of Love, but to a Venus Mercurius of his own changing fancies—desire to-day, nothing to-morrow, and, at the end of a wasted life, a corruption for the grave. All that idle sentimentalism of affected piety which has diluted modern efforts with the stench of stagnation breeds a poisonous disbelief in all goodness passed out of Madeline's life. Goodness became for her a flame, a fierce passion. She looked out on life and, like Ward in his youth, she too, saw a battlefield; but the battle was for Right, not Power. And over that battlefield there brooded, not the Spirit of Supreme Selfishness, but the Spirit of Supreme Selflessness—the spirit of Love.

Her bedroom was in the convent tower overlooking the St. Lawrence and Dominican Hills. In the morning when she rose in a veil over the river, and the sun came up like a god clothed in clouds of sheened gold. Madeline did not con over the rigmarole of set words which used to be her childhood prayers. She listened to the matin chimes; and her whole being yearned out in wordless worship to the God who was Love. Did she think of Truesdale? If thinking means running all round another's personality with an impudent prying of our thoughts she did not *think*; but all her happiness, her delight in living, her joy in the glory of

world's beauty, her adoration of God, who was Love, went out to Truesdale like incense. She did not think of him; she lived in the atmosphere of her love for him. When the convent chimes rang out their cadences, and her thoughts were wrapt away in the ecstasy of devotion that music or death or love sometimes brings, she did not enter the church with the other worshippers, but, up in the pine woods, or down on the heaving dock, or out in the old fisherman's schooner, she heard the tide of that divine music which rolls to an eternal sea; and her wordless longing was that this, too, might be shared with him whose human love had taught her the glory of life.

In the morning she remembered that other morning when his eyes had given themselves to hers in one irrevocable revelation as the cab clip-clopped down Fifth Avenue; and, in the evening, she lived over another evening when they two had walked the snowed hillside above the city lights, and she—as well as Truesdale—had received sudden revelation of what life's purpose was. And yet these two seldom exchanged letters. They had not exchanged a single kiss. They barely knew the touch of each other's hands.

Indeed, if one had seen Madeline's comments on the margins of books at this time, they would have seemed to justify Hebden's bitter thoughts that "she was a shrew," "a bit of hard marble that should be pulverized," and much more that a refined gentleman of Mr. Hebden's *débonair* graces is per-

mitted to say outside a book to the applause of well bred auditors. One day she was reading a love story in which the psychological he and she became red in the face and purple behind the ears with apoplectic violence. The story did not relate it that way. The story was very impressive about the convulsive symptoms of both actors in the little melodrama. On the margin of that page Madeline wrote two words: "Soda-Water!"

At another time she came on a novel where the lovers hung on each other's lips like ripe cherries. She closed the book violently and threw it over the gun's into the water with a sense of physical nausea. On the day which this record narrates she had been reading a great poem, a poem that had become a classic, in which a woman stakes her all on love for a libertine, fails to redeem him, and so would have lost her own soul except for that Saviour of Souls who said that those who lose their lives shall find them. Madeline read no more that day. Her eyes filled with tears. As the schooner rocked to the lapping tide of the river this is what she wrote in pencil on a blank page of her sketch-book:

Within the court of love, let silence reign!
About the door, dark satyr-faces leer,
Envy and lust and hate press close to hear,
Love's music, and interpret that sweet strain
In thoughts that would love's pure intent profane.
Each word that love can use they will besmear;
Foul perjurers, they, who wantonly would sear
The very love of God with earthly stain.

If vice still mask beneath a virtuous cloak,
Using love's language as a bait to thought—
Let love speak clear in deeds, and so revoke
The power of evil by fair semblance wrought—
If deeds alone speak love, vice is undone—
Vice must turn virtue e'er good fruit be won.

And then she fell to dreaming with the languorous river tide sheen as silver in the noonday sun. The schooner rocked and swayed and bumped against the laving docks. Madeline gathered up her pillows, clambered from the schooner ashore, and walked absently out the full length of an old breakwater pier, where she again ensconced herself among the pillows in the sun. A consciousness, a nearness, a rapture, a sense of Love's presence swept over her in such floods that she fancied she felt as seeds pushing up through dark of earth to meet sun rays must feel—as if those rays were the call of God's voice, the fiat of new life. What did she dream? There was no ear to hear; so she told it to her sketch book, writing swiftly without the erasure of a single word, as if the rhythm of the sun's rays beating into earth, the rhythm of earth swinging through space in answer to the pulsations of the sun, echoed to the rhythm of her own being, pulsing like the beat of dancer's feet to the rhythm of a Universe Love. She could no more have expressed her emotions in anything but rhythm just now than prehistoric races could have expressed their emotions in anything but dances. Mere words could

not express the pulse of soul to that divine music of a Universe Love. Verse had the beat of a throb in its measure; so she wrote in verse:

If you are all I dream of you
 And I but half you hope of me—
 Then, then, dear love, life is too short,
 Too brief, by far, eternity—
 Our love outsounds the utmost bounds
 Of this poor earth's felicity.

* * * *

If you are all I dream of you,
 And I but half you hope of me—
 I gather grace to gain the more
 And pray that I may worthier be—
 To love like thine I pour the wine
 Of my heart's offering back to thee!

* * * *

If you are all I dream of you
 And I but half you hope of me—
 Dear heart, such love comes forth from God,
 'Tis dowered with immortality!
 Love! Lend us wings to leave low things,
 To make this dream reality!

A shadow fell across the sketch-book. At first, she thought it was one of the river steamers which sheered close ashore at this point; but the shadow did not move. She looked up and saw him standing there; not a dream, not a shadow. The thoughts that had yearned out to meet kindred thoughts; the soul that had pulsed to the beat of a Universe Love; the highest hopes that she had ever dared to dream

stood face to face, silent, awed with their reality in such a sun-bathed effulgence of glory as earth must have known on the first breaking of light.

"I have just come in on the stage," said Truesdale.

She slapped her sketch-book shut as if caught in crime. They did not remember till long afterward that each had forgotten to shake hands.

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CHAPTER XXXIII

THE CREED CONFRONTS ITSELF

EVERYONE knows the rest of Ward's scheme for world power: how thousands of shareholders found themselves in possession of stock not worth the value of the paper on which it was engrossed. Everyone wanted to sell, no one wanted to buy, and, after the first payment, there were no dividends.

This brought out curious phases of human nature. Dogs lick the hand that beats them. So do men. There was very small shrinkage of the adulation groveling round Ward's feet. He represented Success. He represented Millions. He represented Power. Some natures will always worship that Trinity, though there was a dumb wonder why the stock venture had not turned out the same for the shareholders as for Ward. The reason was simple. They held the wrong end of the contract. Of the great-deal-of-nothing for a great-deal-of-something—Ward had the something. They had the nothing. There were a few complaints, first in bankruptcy courts, then in legislatures; but the bankruptcy proceedings collapsed in a compromise so wonderfully vague that no one knew what it meant; and the legislators bade the losers profit by

experience—the only profit from this deal for the public.

The strike was another matter. The elemental sensations have a primordial fashion of casting off the vestments of convention. Get a man cold or hungry enough, and he is as indifferent to the preacher as to the police magistrate. As winter approached, there arose what Dillon had forewarned and Ward derided—a vague but unmistakable voice, the sentiment of the people, which said without any mincing of words—profits or no profits, the public must have cheaper fuel; cheaper living. Sentiment is chiefly commerciabile at election time. The legislators gave more heed to this voice than that of the shareholders. All sorts of communications passed between Ward and the government. Ward held out like iron. The strikers held out like iron; and the price of fuel and food went up till the poor were smashing up window sashes and door casings in the tenements for firewood.

The voice of the people became a little louder, the voice of the editors a little more ambiguously bold, the voice of the government more urgent. Ward donated ten thousand more tons of coal to the poor, which the newspapers again exaggerated into a hundred thousand; and, when price touched top notch, Ward sold all the worthless waste of the coal dumps.

Whether Ward took in the significance of what the strike meant, or whether his mind had been so long accustomed to the egoist's point of view that

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he could not grasp what the failure of his plans for world dominance signified—it would be hard to tell. He knew that his plans had slipped a cog somewhere; that Demos—the blind, dull, inert mass of humans whom he despised—was deposing law and justice and moral claims as he had deposed them; that Demos—the many-headed, mad, unthinking thing—was appealing solely to the tribunal of Brute Force as he had appealed solely to it—all this he knew; but whether he realized that the Great Armageddon was simply his own creed of One Man Power confronted by the same creed in the multitude—only the Great All Reader of human hearts could know.

About this time a great many things happened under the surface, like the detritus under the turbid top of spring floods. Vultures find carrion by instinct. By a similar instinct, tramps headed for the seat of the strike. Where there are strikes there will be charity, and there may be loot. Where there is a chance of charity and loot the unfeathered, carrion birds of mankind will flock. Neither Ward nor McGee had counted on this. Each had thought to break down the barriers of law for his own plans to pass through. Neither had counted on the mob breaking through like a rampant flood, where the barriers were broken. In fact, if you had asked McGee about it, he would have answered that there was no such thing as a mob—that the mob consisted of men, who might have been Christs. He forgot that when the Pharisees crucified Christ it

was the rabble that spat in his face; and that there could be no such thing as the corruption of law at the polls if there were no rabble to be corrupted.

The weak-brained had a rare chance for the notoriety of melodrama. Anarchy lifted up her voice, and—shrieked. Conservatism grew hysterical. Hungry folk of the gritless order drank carbolic acid in street cars, or blew their brains out on city squares. To these disorders neither Ward nor McGee paid more heed than a locomotive with full steam up does to toads on the track. People who justify themselves usually need it. Neither Ward nor McGee felt that he needed it. Each had one aim—to Win—to Win by Force! Each believed that he was playing his game according to great economic laws underlying life. Neither purposed letting milk-and-water, wish-washy sentiment interfere with those laws. When the clergy began giving advice, it was like advising gladiators to let go. Either would let go, if the other would quit first. "Bloodless war"—the clergy called it; but it was not deathless. Everywhere the death rate increased among the poor. Then the death rate began to creep up among the workers, who were out of work, and the hospitals, where fuel was scarce, and the slums, where high freights caused high priced food. It was in vain that pulpit and press looked to history for guidance in such a dilemma. There was no guidance from the past, only a finger of warning from the chronicles of some of the old democracies: when the rich and poor got each other in grapples in those days,

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it was the man with the sword who stopped the fight.

"What is the difference between this and what every trader in the country is doing—I'd like you to tell me," Ward demanded of Dillon one night, as they sat talking in the tenth story offices of the Great Consolidated.

"Doesn't every tradesman in the land hire help at the lowest possible price, and sell goods at the highest possible price? Isn't that what I am doing?"

The old colonel blinked both eyes apoplectically.

"But you don't want to buck up against public opinion! Hurts stock—bad business, Ward! Public has votes! That's going to open the door to a devil of a mess—government interference, and all that——"

"Interference? Pah! Government be damned," roared Ward furiously. "What business would the government have to interfere between my wife and her maid in a question of wages? If the maid isn't satisfied, she quits: that's all! No one compels the men to work for me! If the wages don't suit, let 'em quit! They have no more business to compel me to pay them higher wages than I have to compel them to work for lower wages!"

He scratched absently with his pencil on the blotter of the desk.

"Tell you what, Dillon; this talk of government control is rot! What does government mean?—Side that's strong enough to hold the whip handle, doesn't it?—And side that's strong enough to

hold the whip handle deserves to hold it—doesn't it?—Are you going to hand the government of this country over to a lot of incompetent jackasses with no thought above their helts? I guess I know what that means, Dillon: that was my father, about as competent to say how a country should be governed as a—well—we'll not say! Who is fit to be the government—I'd like to know—but the men who have proved their fitness by creating the biggest interests in the country?"

"That's all right—that's all right," hlinked the colonel, feeling himself in deep water, "but, as I've told you, Ward, I don't care one damn who is the government, or how the country is governed. Neither does the average man! I'm not out for glory, and Europe, and that sort of thing! This proposition as I work it out is—which side is going to knuckle under?"

"The weak side, of course! The weak side surrenders first! The strong side wins out every time; and that's right! Way some of these fools talk, you'd think the earth ought to be given as a Christmas present to all the lazy luhbers who haven't gumption enough to get up and quit being slugs on the under side of the hoard; you'd think that men who haven't sense enough to manage to feed their own children should be allowed to manage the country! That's why I say it is right when the strong side wins out! That's why if the government pokes its nose in this affair, I'll see that the government changes the stripe of its colors—the govern-

ment has no more right to side with labor than with us——”

“Expect that it depends on the will of the people, and the people demand coal,” wheezed the fat old gentleman, feeling not only that the water was too deep, but that the current swept along too fast.

“And if we bring in a thousand foreign ... uers a weck, the people will have their coal!”

“Foreigners?” Dillon was perspiring visibly and mopping the sweat from the back of his neck.

“You mean to bring in non-union——”

“If the public has coal, where is the kick, Colonel? Am I to be told not only what wages I am to pay, but what color of skin the men are to have that I hire? I say, Dillon; just you tell me”—he rapped the desk with the knuckle of his forefinger—“exactly where is this interference to end? If we consider the outside——”

“Outside! A thousand foreigners a week! Good Lord, man!” the other burst out explosively, “if you bring foreigners in, you’ll have a bears’ garden inside——”

“If you feel that way, Colonel, you should pull out,” smiled the president contemptuously. “The first thousand will be in on to-night’s train! I say, Saunders—did you request the local militia to protect those men coming in to-night?”

The secretary glided softly into the office, caressing his beard abstractedly.

“Not only the local militia! I telephoned the governor to have the State troops ready!”

Colonel Dillon rose from his chair, buttoning his coat.

"It's only a quarter to ten, Colonel! Going so early?"

"I have an appointment with a man! I wish we were well out of it, Ward! There will be the deuce to pay if you bring those foreigners in here! What if they join the World Workers, as McGee boasts? We've scored right up to this strike business! It's the strike knocked the bottom out of the market and scared the investors off! We might have doubled proceeds if it hadn't been for this strike! Good Lord, the pool could have fed out lines to the market for another year if it hadn't been for this strike! Elevator running yet? It is eh? McGee boy running it? Relative of that firebrand, who's played the mischief isn't he? I wish we were out of this thing, Ward!" He stood buttoning his gloves. "Anyway, you can count on me to back you up when you have things settled," and the director took his portly person off with a vast waddling of loose flesh through Saunders' office.

"Count on him when things are settled when the figi.[†] has been won without a smell of hot shot round his red nose? That's your safe man always: preaches you a sermon if you fail, sings a te deum if you succeed! Courage doesn't seem at par to-night, Saunders."

Mr. Saunders faintly smiled.

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"And yet," he confessed, "I don't like the look of things, Mr. Ward."

The trouble with the Great Blond Beast is, when it is a man, it thinks. Ward had had his own thoughts of this servile tool in the person of the secretary ever since he saw Saunders at the trial, and quickly guessed that Kipp's salary had not been sent to Peru. Tools were necessary to Tom Ward, tools that cut; but he took good care to hold the handles of such tools. If the government were to interfere, it would be as well to have a grip of iron on the handle of this particular tool. A man may hate you, or want to drain your purse or your blood, but if he can only do it by hanging himself, he is not likely to try. That was why Ward always made a point of putting dangerous people at his mercy. He put them there, and kept them there.

"Don't like the look of what?" he asked sharply.

"Do you mean the corpse of that fool engineer? Neither do I like the look of that, Saunders; and I like his salary charged up to your credit less!"

The hand caressing Saunders' beard dropped like lead. The ferret eyes opened wide, like a thing cornered too suddenly for craft. He moistened his lips twice.

By this time the president was looking at him, and the look suggested another line of thought.

"I understood," answered the secretary thickly, "that I was not to involve the company . . . that, in fact, you preferred this case should not be reported to you?"

"But did you understand you were to appropriate a dead man's salary?" demanded Ward harshly.

Saunders drew up as if an impending blow had been averted.

Then the president *didn't* know? It was the money that was causing trouble.

The secretary's thoughts raced in the leaps of a pursued weasel, and his eyes closed to the customary, furtive slit.

"I understood I was to draw on the contingency fund," he explained. "And and the company had to pay the widow off!"

For a moment Ward sat perfectly, stonily still, his eyes opening and concentrating as the secretary's closed and shifted. There was silence, broken only by the even, measured ticking of the office clock. Then the chimes of the city square rang out one two three, and Ward had bounced to his feet with an ejaculation that was wordless.

"So that is it?" he exclaimed ferociously.

Four five six 1 The measured strokes beat not half so loudly as the secretary's heart. There was a pounding in his temples that dulled thought, a stab like vampire teeth at the base of his brain, a strange, parching fever in the roof of his mouth; still he stood there, dejected, waiting, soft and furtive in his steal^h as a cat.

"By God, sir, now I understand," thundered Ward, seizing both sides of the desk so that the wood creaked.

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Eight nine ten! rang the chimes.

Saunders' knees smote together. Involuntarily he had shrunk and started back as the president advanced till he was against the wall, with Ward towering over him, massive, pitiless, enraged.

"You white-washed scoundrel," slowly muttered the president. "How did you know that the man was dead before the body had been found? Tell me that, you reptile! You were sending the salary to Peru with the letters, you said? How did you know was dead out in the river?"

Saunders looked up. He would have spoken, but his tongue uttered no sound; and he saw a the president's eyes that was not a look to sidestep. Crushed, speechless, chattering, with the fire of a deathless hate—the hate of the weak for the strong—on his bloodless, upturned face, his clenched teeth gleaming between the yellow lips, the secretary sank to his knees as under a blow.

"Guilty as hell," muttered the president, gazing down on the crawling thing at his feet. "I gave you a free hand, did I? and you used it to murder that poor, brainless fool of an engineer?"

A tremulous groan escaped from the yellow lips.

"And that's what McGee meant? That is why he could have torn the lying Jezebel to pieces for perjury? That is why he went fishing opposite the pool, which you had filled up?"

Get up on your feet!—It is always weak tools like you spoke the wheels of things——”

The secretary's teeth were chattering, but he lied to the end, or rather—he accomplished a more notable feat. He told the truth and lied in the same words.

“I,” with a long pause, “I gave no orders to fill the shaft! The foreman filled it without orders while I was changing my suit! It was a terrible mistake. I know no more of Kipp's death than you do——”

“And I know too much,” harshly interrupted the president. “And I'll know more when I see McGee! Make a note of that! I'll see McGee! If you are guilty, you'll sign a contract for a hotter place than this office I'll see that McGee boy, and”

As if conjured from the floor, Budd McGee burst through the felt door panting, white-faced, a picture of terror.

“The soldiers are comin’,” he gasped, “and there's a mob—in the street—below.”

For an instant there was no sound but the ticking of the clock. Then something rolling in the distance set the air palpitating.

“Double-bolt the front door,” ordered the president. “Swing the iron gate, boy” And he switched out the electric light, leaving the office in darkness.

It was like an ominous growl, long, low, oncoming, a storm rising at sea, the far r-u-s-h of a mighty

wind that set earth and air palpitating, the swift beat of an army of marching feet.

"Those men are running!" observed the president quietly, peering from the window into the dark canyon of the street. "They are not the troops. They're screaming like shrapnel shells." Ward turned peremptorily.

"Saunders, telephone the governor to send the State troops at once! And Saunders, . . . you needn't chatter all your teeth down your throat at once! We're perfectly safe here!"

The secretary vanished in the dark of the hall. The president turned back to the window, standing in the shadow of the casement. It was like the wind of a rising storm at first—a deep, full diapason, then shrilling to a scream, then the voices of human throats rampant ravenous bloodthirsty, setting the hollow between the high buildings atremble with a cry a hideous cry hungry savage myriad-throated, . . . shrieking for its prey: the Great Blond Beast gone mad—the spirit of the Mob!

A thrill ran round Ward's scalp. He felt a curious tingling, stinging back and forward to his fingertips, but it was not fear. It was a fascination, hypnotic and frenzied—the Spirit of the Mob gone mad down there—the Spirit, mad in his own blood, with a drunkenness of Destruction, hurling men out of themselves, out of civilization, mad with only one desire, and that a Conflagration! Power? He had thought that he knew what Power was—One-Man

Power! But there was Ten-Million-Man Power, power enough to blow up the universe with pent force! Death? What did this mad-beast Thing care for death? It was a ghoul to send death laughter echoing down to the corridors of eternity!

It came to him, standing alone in the darkness this power was the People, . . . the American People, . . . outraged, . . . balked of Justice, . . . baffled of Rights, . . . bursting off all bonds of Justice and Right, . . . about to do what he had been doing all his life, trample Justice and Right under its feet!

In the most impersonal way, as though he were watching a pantomime a horrible pantomime of Men reeling back to the Beast—he realized that they the frenzied People the myriad-throated, maniacal Thing seeking its prey ravenous to glut lust of hunger and vengeance in blood—were seeking Him Tom Ward the Unit, that had thought to dominate the Mass!

Then a voice quivering with a palsy of terror was sputtering incoherently in the dark.

"They are at every door! What will we do? . . . All the fire escapes lead down to the street! The State troops are coming, but the track's been pulled up to keep out the foreigners! They are shouting names!"

The secretary was weeping in great wrenching sobs from the pit of his craven stomach. His manhood, held together by the flimsiest hypocrisy, now

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fell to pieces before a Reality! He was like a soul stripped of clothes, of flesh, of pretense, of formulas, stripped naked; and all that was left was a quaking Terror!

"Hold your tongue, you poor coward," ordered Ward. "They don't know we're here. The thing is to get out of the building before they blow it up—in fact before the music begins! Why should you fear to die, Saunders? You didn't share any fear with Kipp.—Get up off your knees—you damn fool—would you crawfish to Almighty God?"

The secretary's sobs became violently uncontrollable.

"Stop," ordered the other sternly. "You'd turn a man's gorge! Don't cling to me! Get up!" He grasped the cringing figure by the collar of the coat, dragging the body forward. "Now, look out and face the music! No whining to those fellows down there, Saunders—take your cold hand off—have you snake's blood, man, that you twine and squirm? Stand back, sir! Look out! Their argument is hunger, down there, Saunders—hunger gone mad!"

Strange, as the mob hooted, execrated his name, cursed his charities with laughter, brandished clenched fists and glinting pistol points at the building, gyrating round the torch lights with yells of frenzied, wild-beast hate—strange that high above, clear, solemn, measured, unperturbed, impersonal as God, the tick tick tick of the clock marked the swing of Time through Eternity!

Strange what mockery that ticking told!—That a

man might gain the whole world and lose his soul!—Theft in the gross, and theft in the small: what was the difference?—Against Justice, against Pity, against Right—he had written Zero! Against Justice, against Pity, against Right—the Mad-Beast Voice screamed, shrieked its . . . Zero!—Force, the victory of Brute Strength, the conquest of Might: that had been his creed! There, then, was his creed, myriad-throated, let loose, gone mad in the Mob!—Law—he had laughed at law! There, then, was lawlessness let loose!—What was to bind this behemoth of turbid riot, this Stalking Darkness? What to restrain it from avenging Unpunished Wrong, Naked Want, Anxious Fright?—He had cast restraint to the winds; so had the Mob!—he had espoused Force!—There, then, was Force unleashed!

“You have broken down law,” the clock ticked out to eternity. “You have defied every bond that binds man to man, that keeps man from becoming down respect of government with a bribe! How do you like it?—You have pilfered from the many, and crushed the weak, and corrupted justice, and broken down respect of government with a bribe! How do you like it when the many come to loot you with violence; when you are the weak; when the justice you have corrupted cannot defend you; when the virtue of government violated by a bribe becomes—Lynch Law?—There are your deeds: eat the fruits! You brewed the hemlock: drink it!

“The she-dogs of Hell and of Hate—are let

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loose! Who unleashed them?—The Great Blond Beast, rampant, wading in blood, supreme in selfishness, heedless of victims, marching to triumph, glorifying Self—that has been your measure of manhood: the Great Blond Beast justified in seeking its prey—that was your choice! How do you like the Great Blond Beast when it is myriad-throated seeking You? You telephone for troops you want the Law to protect you . . . Did you help or hinder Law protecting them? What's the matter with your scheme of existence . . . Ward? . . . Where have your little plans slipped a cog?"

He heard the ticking of the clock, just as we may notice the perfume of a flower in a death chamber, unconsciously; and it gave him a curious feeling of a Soul, Alone in Immensity, quite Alone, utterly cut from all bonds, utterly beyond earth and the conquests of earth, wending darkly through Eternity always, Alone; and unconsciously he began breathing very heavily and fast like one stricken. Humanity had been to him a Thing to be looted Now, Humanity had turned to loot him and all his kind he saw civilization going down under the multitudinous feet of the Great Blond Beast and he knew that he and his kind, more than the mob whom they despised, had caused its overthrow.

In the street, McGee, the labor delegate, was struggling between the mob and the iron doors of

the Great Consolidated. Those in front were pushed by those behind, and those behind crowded forward by newcomers, pressing, with a brute disregard to gain a place where they could see, trampling, shoving aside, adding their voice to the shout that shook the streets. Men grabbed the men in front by the shoulders, and with a leap either threw those in front under their feet or wedged a place in the solid mass of mad humanity.

McGee's herculean form loomed like a gladiator's from the front steps. When he had finished speaking and struck the mob back with the baton of a policeman, who had fallen, there was a solid wave backward of the throngs; but when he turned to the door they were on him again so closely that he could barely free his arms.

"Cattle," he muttered between his teeth. Then he wheeled on them with a shout—"Keep back—fellows! What would you do? Will it help your families to be shot down like dogs? Why do you act like cattle rushing on the shambles? Don't you know the troops are coming? Who is that fellow pushing? Knock him down, somebody? He's no union man! He's a blackguard making riot for loot——"

But he might as well have spoken to a tidal wave. The flood waters had come through the dikes he had broken down, and he could no longer hold them back. There were screams, jeers, laughter, rallying hoots, with the long, low, ominous undertone like

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the roar of a beast—that Ward had heard palpitate from the distance.

"Coat of tar! String Ward up," and the pusher dived from sight as if the earth had yawned.

"Keep back men, and I'll go in," shouted McGee.

"You're bought, Sam! What's your price, man? To hell with the crowd of 'em——"

" and if the company promises," called McGee.

" aw! Come off! 'Nuff o' that! Too much talk! Give 'em dose o' their own medicine!"

" we'll assemble again in the morning," roared the labor delegate. "Remember one act of violence"

"Rot! Rot!" roared the voices.

" will lose everything we have now"

"Shut up, McGee! Show us what you *can* do! Deliver the goods! We've had enough rant."

Striking the surging throngs back, the big labor leader shook the gate as if he would tear the iron from the hinges.

"Smash her in," roared a chorus of angry calls, and some one to the rear fired a pistol.

("Fools! They'll get enough of that," muttered McGee.) Putting his foot on the inmost bar of the iron guard, he stepped over the metal spikes, kicking the oak door till the timbers rattled.

"Give it to 'em, McGeel! Ram her in! Why don't you fire her? . . ."

McGee's coat had caught on an iron spike as he slipped down wedged between the iron gate and the oak doors, and the cloth ripped to his neck. His hat was gone. His eyes were on fire. The veins stood out knotted on his neck like ropes, and blood from the cut of a stone hurled amiss streaked one side of his face.

"Look out for the troops behind," he warned with one look back, and he shook the oak door with all his strength.

The false alarm drew the mob back for the fraction of a second. In that second the oak door jarred. Then an opening the width of a slit revealed a boy's face peering out.

"Let me in, Budd?" Then, in a whisper: "I can save the president," and he had thrust his foot in the opening, and stretched one hand inside on the padlocked chain.

The boy had opened the door. McGee's big form was inside. A wild yell came from the mob, swelling, multiplying, rolling in waves through the canyoned street. Then all was shut off, for Budd had slammed the door, snacking lock and bolt before anyone could jump over the gate.

It was then that Ward and Saunders had noticed the roar subside to a low rumble. McGee sent the elevator cage up with a bounce, Budd bounding on the big man's heels as he threw his weight with a

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pounding rap against the lighted door of the general offices. The glass quivered under his blow.

"Other door," cried the hoy.

And the labor leader dashed into the secretary's office with a resounding slam of that door. It was then that Saunders had clasped the knees of the president, who was so intent on the mob outside that he did not hear the noise in the office. Misled by the light, McGee had plunged through the general offices. No one was there. Then he caught a glimpse of the dark door with the felt dummy. He flung both door and dummy wide, pushing one door back, the other forward, and planting his feet firmly to keep the two doors open.

In the sudden glare two dark figures were silhouetted in the half light of the open window.

The two men in the window suddenly beheld a form in the open doorway, wild-eyed, with blood on his face and hands, clothes torn almost from his body, and a weapon in one hand. Then the thunder of an upheaving volcano burst from the street in one shrill, singing scream.

The light had revealed the men in the window to the mob. McGee stood dazed, for a rifle shot had ripped the air, and something snarling flung against the labor leader's chest, a weasel on the breast of an eagle. Craft pinioned to Forcel Both doors slammed shut with a sudden darkness. Saunders and McGee had locked in each other's arms, a death grapple of hate.

Each had thought the shot aimed at himself,

whereas it was fired by a fanatic in the mob at the exact moment that the light revealed the figures in the window. There was a scuffling through the dark across the carpet. The president started forward, but stumbled. When he regained his feet two figures were crushing backward over the window sill: the labor delegate plainly trying to hurl free of the secretary, the vanquished secretary dragging his enemy with him.

It needs but a spark to blow up a mine, but a spark to alight the conflagration of the Mob; and the chance shot of the crack-brained fanatic was that spark. A detonating crash, one belch of death, a sudden tottering of the great building, and the live flames leaped to mid-heaven like a monster rocket. The Great Consolidated had been blown up. The building was on fire.

In the glare that lighted sky and streets, the upturned gaze of the terror-frenzied mob saw something in the likeness of two struggling men totter above the windowsill; then there shot through the darkness down down down, what struck the pavement ten stories below!

There was a panic scattering. Sky and street were wrapped in flame. Fire gongs clanged. No one thought of that other figure in the window, no one but a child, who clung to the man's arm in the sooty, smoky dark.

"The elevators are afire, sir! Come up the next stair, Mister Ward—come quick—there's a fire escape, sir!"

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A sulphurous darkness smote their faces as they dashed to the hall. The great, iron girders rocked, and melted, and bent in their sockets like many of our other modern inventions in the heat of elemental fact.

"Crawl, sir," sobbed the boy. "Crawl under the smoke! There's an escape—front—first hall up! Crawl under the smoke," but the speech had sucked in a hot breath. The boy's clasp had loosened in the darkness, and he fell.

Why should the president of the great world-power have paused to feel through the smoke for this waif of humanity fallen by the way? What had the Creed of the Strong to do with ambition stooping to a weakling, risking life to rescue a child of nameless parentage from death? Ward never realized until afterward, when he was trying to comprehend the sudden and extraordinary reversal of lifelong principles at that instant—that he had continued feeling, diving, hitting through the powder smoke of blackness for the unconscious child until a great billow of flame roared through the elevator cage directly across the stairs leading to the escape. But the sudden glare lighted the smoky blackness. The boy lay head foremost against the stair. The man grasped the child in his arms, and with a leap over the flame cleared four stairs at a step, and flung bodily through the glass door of the front hall leading to the fire escape.

The iron railing led past a window, where smoke rolled out in clouds. Pushing from the wall, cling-

ing to the iron guard, Ward paused before the new danger. Flames shot through the smoke, throwing his figure in clear relief against the high wall. Some one below saw him, and there was a roar of amazement, followed by a terrible hush.

The mob that would have torn him to pieces and thrown his body to the dogs of the street but half an hour ago—recognized, not Ward, the president of the Great Consolidated, who had conspired to conquer the world and master labor, but a Man, a Man in terrible peril of instant death, coolly carrying over his shoulder the unconscious form of a child. Before dashing through the flame that billowed from this window above the fire escape, they saw him pause to wrap his own coat round the boy as a shield—then he had thrown the boy face down across his left shoulder, and, clinging to the parapet of the building with his right hand, he bent and crawled beneath the shooting flames of the window.

Some one in the crowd cried out that the iron railing of the fire escape was red hot—didn't people see?—that was why the man couldn't hang on to it. Who was the man, anyway? Anyone know who this man was? Was it McGee? Who were the men that had fallen from the window as the bomb exploded? Fire gongs were clanging. Policemen beat the crowds back. All through the Great Consolidated glass was going off like pistol shots, and there was a roar that funneled the canyon of the narrow street into a tornado of red flame.

Suddenly the man was seen again—a black speck

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crawling against the parapet—still holding the boy. The man paused, tore the coat from the senseless form of the boy, and flung it to the street below—it was in flame. The crowd saw him next wrapping his own vest round the child—then he disappeared in the dark.—Who in all creation was the man? He was a hero, whoever he was . . . there he was again three floors below, down—hanging to the parapet—where the explosion had blown the iron steps away from the wall . . . a shout . . . a cheer . . . a multitudinous cry of exultation broke from the crowds below before they had recognized the president.—Women cried and clasped each other—men felt sudden lumps in their throats . . . there he hung to the parapet, while firemen were raising the hook ladders in feverish haste—then a falling cornice sent the spectators hack in a cloud of sparks and smoke . . . when they looked again the man was handing the boy's body down to the firemen strung on the ladder. When he reached the ladder himself, the spectators went frantic—they shouted . . . they tossed . . . their caps . . . they cried "well done," and clapped their hands . . . but the man was seen to stumhle on the ladder as if he had grown faint—firemen were on each side of him, helping him down . . . the shout broke into fierce, hysterical exultation . . . Then suddenly . . . quieted . . . Some one shouted . . . "By the Lord . . . it's Ward . . . it's Ward himself . . . it's Ward risked himself to save the kid's life . . . the kid was the elevator boy . . . McGee's

nephew." . . . There was a terrible silence . . . men and women went emotionally to pieces and wept and didn't know why . . . At the foot of the ladder Ward swayed and fell heavily in a man's arms. It was Truesdale come up with his motor.

Policemen cleared the crowds back behind the ropes and would have cleared a way back through the streets for the car, but Ward was seen to wave them off as the firemen lifted him to the big limousine. He raised his head—they were waving the ambulance forward for the boy. Ward signaled the firemen holding the boy. The spectators saw the child laid in the car beside the president. Where was the Mob, many-headed, riotous, bloodthirsty, that but a moment before would have torn him to pieces? A way opened before the car. The onlookers could see that his face was scarred and gashed. He held his handkerchief to a cut. Not a hand was raised to threaten or strike as the motor glided through the open way. But a moment before the Mob had been bent on murder. Now it was no longer a Mob—it was humanity touched to its depths.

As the car wheeled up the park driveway, Ward turned heavily and looked back. There was a lurid glare, but it no longer seemed incense from a World of Work to a God of Traffic. It was a holocaust to the Spirit of the Mob.

"It looked as if furies were unchained for a moment or two there, Truesdale," said Ward, holding the boy carefully.

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Truesdale, too, glanced back. What he saw was not the vision of Labor and Capital in heroic contest of Strength, in the Armageddon of McGee's dreams. It was the light of a conflagration glittering on the bayonets and helmets of the State troops.

"I say, True, in the interest of of"
(he almost said humanity) "common sense, would you mind going back and telling those fool troops not to fire on the crowd?"

Labor and Capital had come to the long-threatened grapples. But the last glimpse was—bayonets, the last sounds—a measured tramp, a roll of drums, a bugle call to arms! The man on horseback had emerged from chaos to restore order and levy tribute for his services. Ward sighed heavily and sank down in his own thoughts.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE ARMAGEDDON

HE sat down on the breakwater beam above her, throwing his hat to the pier.

"Good!—You are looking better!" he exclaimed. "Is it fresh air or fame? I hear about your pictures of rural life everywhere. I saw some in a window on Fifth Avenue; but, do you know, when I went in to buy them, they had been sold weeks before?"

She had been surreptitiously shoving her sketch book under a pillow.

"I didn't know," she answered absently. "You must remember I am out of the world. There are neither critics nor price lists here! We do things here from the joy of living. Perhaps it's neither fresh air nor fame. Perhaps it is happiness! But you—you have grown very—grave in these marketplace battles of yours. I hear you are coming out conqueror. Conquerors should be jubilant——"

"When they haven't sacrificed too much for victory," he interposed.

They did not speak for a moment. She felt, rather than saw, the shadow on his face. It was tinged, not with regret, but renunciation. An invisible but impassable barrier seemed suddenly be-

tween them. All that she had hoped of him he had more than proved; and yet she felt the reserved force of the man, the hidden motives of character, to be far greater than what she knew. It gave a sense of masterful power, of quick, sharp decision, of straightforward, unswerving purpose. She could hardly believe that this man was the playmate of her childhood days, whose will she dominated and swayed to lightest fancies. A new strength seemed to have come out of the battle that had hardened and stiffened his manhood. She was half afraid of this new force with its unknown depths, and yet she was perfectly conscious that, if life accomplished nothing more, it had been worth while for just this: the exquisite happiness of having been known, and loved, and understood by him. He drew a long breath, half laugh, half sigh.

"Well, whatever comes, Madeline, it's good for a person to find a niche, and fill it, and fit it! You have found yours. Your success proves that! I suppose a person who aims high must have moments when distrust of those aims comes; when despair must be as deep in the other direction! It's all right for us halfway-ups, sitting on the fence, to sit jeering when the aim drops, cheering when the aim goes up; but I dare say we don't know anything about those times when you high-fliers look plumb down where you might drop if you happened to lose courage! It's all right to preach pretty maxims about hard work, and perseverance, and time opening the way! There are thousands that have

been practicing that line of virtues all their lives just to find themselves wornout old stagers stamped failure at the end! How is a person to know whether he has the stuff in him till he tries? And you've got to take big risks when you try! Those who aim high have to fly unhandicapped, turn their backs on the past for good and all, sacrifice everything without being dead sure they can win anything! We marketplace fellows get a lien on the future before we give out our money, take collateral securities before we stake the venture; but you artist people haven't any backing but your own courage! If your inspiration turns out to have been inflation—why—you've wasted life without anything to show for it but the spectacle of courage making a shy at the moon! Most of us haven't the grit for that sort of thing——”

Madeline laughed.

“And when we succeed we are so far below what we aimed that to us it's failure! And when we fail we've at least had the zest of trying——”

“Yes, I know, what men call 'the fun of the fight' whether you win or lose; but do you know I didn't like to think about your losing? I was so jealous of your not succeeding enough to justify the attempt that I used to doubt the wisdom of a woman trying anything outside the old lines! I think that's at the bottom of half men's jealousy toward woman's efforts. We don't mind seeing a man making a donkey of himself by thinking he is a roaring lion when he is only a braying jackass; but we do hate

to see a woman play that part! I knew you could not play the poseur at art—that's one of the things gave me hope—you were so dashed unconscious of your aims being high that you just niggled along at work; but, now that you have disproved my fears, you'll forgive the confession that I used to be deadly afraid all your youth would slip past in useless effort; that you'd only gather apples of ashes!"

"And do you think that any toiler ever lived without having the same fear at times?" she asked.

"But you were right! I was wrong," he went on. "I knew that in my soul of souls all along; but I knew it hetter when I saw the people on Fifth Avenue looking at your pictures. Why, one old demirep. of a sewer digger pulled up before the window grinning with glee. 'Purty near hear them waters tinklin' in that picture,' he said. 'Purty near fancy you woz a boy back fishin' on the farm creek, eh?' I felt as if your picture had given that old soul a sun bath, Madeline! I could have shaken the old beggar by the hand. I began to see how your gifts belonged to the whole world, not to me well?" Truesdale paused "while one had a perfect right to love you, it was quite another thing to come asking" and Truesdale broke off abruptly.

And Madeline Connor's world suddenly began to whirl. She looked up to see his face white with compressed emotion. What was it brought the question to her lips?

"Why did you come?" she said.

Truesdale knotted his hands very tight round one knee. That soft tremulo in her voice like the low, golden notes of a trill—half blending sound and silence, sense and soul—sent a sudden, electric thrill all round Truesdale's scalp, and down his back, and out to his finger tips. It was a sense of intoxication to the music of beauty that one sometimes feels when orchestral melody fades to a throbbing silence. It is the sort of music one can hear over and over in imagination. Truesdale tried to persuade himself that it was the tone of her voice which brought that unwarned thrill.

She had turned to him with her face resting on her hand, her elbow on the breakwater beam. Truesdale looked past her hair, not trusting his eyes from the steamer ploughing the river; but you cannot very well gaze past an object on a level with your eyes without being conscious of its presence, of its form, of its color, particularly if that color consists of hair gold-shot in sunlight, and eyes with pupils dilated almost to the edge of the iris, and hectic spots flushing and waning to each breath. Truesdale was conscious that the eyes were waiting for him to answer the question, which was still tingling its awkward iteration—"Why did you come?"

"I've been asking myself that question all the way down," he said. "When I took the train when I took the train"

"Yes?" said Madeline.

"I imagined that I was coming to let you know

that the ruby crank was ready to buy the whole necklace, if you needed to sell it——”

“Who did you say he was, True?”

“Didn’t want his name mentioned,” answered Truesdale.

“When you took the train, you thought you were coming about the rubies?”

“But when I reached the stage, I made up my mind that an artist becoming famous might not wish to sell her necklace?”

Madeline’s look never left his face. What did she see? What was she studying? What was she trying to decide?—Silence now, and silence forever! It is not easy for a proud nature to come out from behind the barriers of its reserve. Without—says Scripture—are dogs, and the Kingdom is safest in our hearts. Should she risk the leap to bring that other into her kingdom? For an instant her whole existence seemed to hang at poise like a climber daring a leap across the abyss to reach new heights. Strange how, at that moment, sight and sound etched themselves on memory forever: the quiet nuns pacing the convent garden up on the hillside, reading their sacred books, the quiet nuns of the cloistered existence, without risk, without fear, gracious of goodness, ignorant of life as children! The voice of the river, swift flowing, hastening to the sea! The songs of the children from the convent school! The white-winged, quivering sails where fishermen were carrying returns from the year’s catch back to some hamlet home! Everything find-

ing its aim, hastening to that end; and her own life at poise! She knew life would never be just the same to her after that instant. She knew the glory of life would either become ineffably brighter, or fade to the light of common day. And then, before she knew it, her voice was saying in a low, timid tone that she scarcely recognized as her own:

"And tho' she might not wish to sell the necklace, you came on—True?"

And the manner of her saying it somehow conveyed to him that she was inexpressibly glad he had come.

Truesdale got hold of himself again.

"I thought that I'd like to see you before you went back to the world, you know! You used to belong to us all! Now, you belong to the world _____"

"To the world," repeated Madeline.

"And soon a chorus of people will be singing the same thing—what you have done for them! I wanted to tell you what you had done for me before the tune got old to your ears, Madeline?"

He was watching the long trail of lace fret left by the river steamer, and such a stillness of sun-bathed glory lay on the sleeping hills as lighted the world on that first dawn of day.

"You will help hundreds just as you have helped me," he declared. "I don't suppose I was either better or worse than other men when I came back from Europe to begin life! It's the spirit of the age, Madeline: get happiness, and Devil take the hinder-

most! It's the false god of the times: never mind the grapes; press out the wine, tho' the wine be blood; it may not be comfortable for the grape; all the worse for the grape; that's what grapes are for! Get Happiness! Get Wealth that conduces to Happiness! Get Dividends that make Wealth! Get big returns that make Dividends! Get 'em, tho' you put the public in the wine press, and the laborer, and the buyer, and the seller, and the investor! Get 'em fair or square, crooked or clean! The Only Good is Success—the Only Evil Failure! Put your scruples in your pocket along with the profits, and get there! That was life! I was so dead sure that the good were only good because it made them happier to be good than bad, so dead sure that the good were only good as a sort of mollycoddle to their own failure—that the word 'Good' did not mean much for me, Madeline! You remember that first day in the studio? You could have had me for the lifting of your hand, and you knew it; and you didn't lift your hand; and I thought that I had the most of things that would mean Happiness for a woman! At first I thought there was some other man! Then I found there wasn't; and I'm afraid that I cussed your art pretty soundly! I hadn't any patience with your dreams and ideals; but I couldn't get away from the memory of you and what you stood for! I couldn't make you out. I only knew that you stood for something the very opposite of the Spirit of the Age; that you didn't care a cuss for Self; and that you weren't

piously resigned to enemies too strong for you! You didn't submit to wrong and call it resignation to God! You wouldn't kowtow to the Devil, and side with the winner to save your own skin! I knew all this, and yet I had scarcely known of you for three years! I was right, wasn't I?"

Madeline listened, waiting.

"I knew when I bucked against the Great Consolidated the world would call me a fool! I was risking a certain fortune for pretty nearly certain ruin! I was risking all chance of winning you! And yet, somehow—I can't explain it—when I thought of you, I couldn't do anything else than what I have done! You made me walk up to the scratch, and do what was right, or try to find out what was right by bumping facts into myself! The thoughts of you somehow made me understand that life won't pan out unless it's founded on something deeper than Self!"

Madeline sat silent, thinking, listening, entranced in reverie. Then his life in the thick of battle had pulsed to the rhythm of her own. His help in her life had been an echo of her help in his.

"Is that all?" she asked presently. And again that low, mellow tremor, blending sound and silence, sense and soul, throbbed like chords echoing back the music of another soul.

"All?" he repeated. "Isn't it enough? Isn't it about the whole difference between a hog and a mortal, the Great-Blond-Beast and a man? That's what I meant when I said you gave my life Purpose!"

That's what I mean when I say you will give many lives Purpose; that I must not put myself between you and that end; that your life must not be diverted from using your gifts——"

But Madeline stopped him with an impatient gesture.

"Do you think that art is God's greatest gift in life?" she asked, with all the love, all the yearnings, all the beauty of her dreams, palpitating in the low, mellow tones like the throb of light to the sun.

"Madeline," he answered hurriedly, "if you plead against your art to me, I am lost!"

"*Against* my art?" she repeated, looking up in his face. "I am pleading *for* it! Do you know why my art has succeeded? Because you have given it Purpose! Art is not an end, True! It is only a means to an end, like the language little children learn so that they may express the spirit by and by! I thought there was a higher Purpose in life than art, True!—Something beautiful as the Love of God, tender as the Love of Christ!"

"Madeline," he answered quickly, "can I be strong against this? Do you realize what this means, dear? Do you know what love is?"

She spoke slowly with breaks of sheer happiness through her voice in little thrills that would not be stilled, as though each word were a note of that golden music flowing out to an eternal sea, throbbing to the rhythm of a Universal Love.

"Do I know what Love is? You have taught me," she said.

The flute tremor of tone, the warmth of her breath across his hand, the light that had come over her face in a transfiguration—swept him from all moorings of time and space beyond the bounds of common moods. He could not speak. He could not think. Life seemed to have broken in an effulgence of glory that overwhelmed the senses, that snapped the bonds of humanity, that gave him the Spirit of God without measure. He had no desire for Time to move on. Time was Now! He lost all consciousness of Where he was, Who he was, What he was. He knew only a Presence, the Presence of that Universe Love underlying all Life. Life was Love! And Love was God!

“Why does my work succeed now?” she was asking. “Before I dreamed a dream and painted dreams; but there came one whose love put my dream to shame; whose life was the best picture of all; who never sought my sympathy; who never took me at my weakest point; who never talked goodness, but lived it; who risked all for the sake of right without thought of reward; who helped me without letting me know that I was being helped! Without any boasting or fine-spoken words, True, this man went into the thick of the fight, and he lived the dream that I had tried to paint! Oh, I think God never showed me anything better than that, True! I do not think that I ever could have known that God was Love, if I had not known that man, True! When life seemed nothing but a wild beast fight, slimed with the hypocrisy called civiliza-

tion, when justice seemed a farce, and love a bait for lust, and God asleep, this man came to me concealing his help, with a love that was silent as the Love of God, tender as the Love of Christ! Could I do anything but paint beautiful pictures when I saw all life through the light of his love; when my heart sang a gloria to God all day for this gift of gifts; when every thought I thought was his and every joy I knew went out to him? I must not throw my gifts away?" she laughed, low, tremulous, joyous as the thrill of bird song. "And my greatest gift of all is the gift this man is going to throw away for the sake of my art? Oh—True?"

He could not answer. He remembered how he had watched the white fret of the steamer trail fade to silver on the river. Then life seemed to break the bounds of earth, of common moods, of common words. No words that lips frame could express that moment when all life, all the lives that had preceded his life, all the universe, all the ends of being suddenly merged into the transfiguration of this Love. It was the acme of all he had fought for, all he had not dared to hope, all he had ever read or dreamed of men's visions transporting beyond the bounds of time and space. He felt as if he had caught the skirts of Eternity, of Immortality! He could defy Death! Love was deathless, and love was his, transfiguring life with the Spirit of God. There was no past, no present, no future—only Love, eternal, without beginning and without end. God was Love. This was Life, Life unquenchable!

In Love had they found the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.

And then, in a whisper, "Oh, Madeline, can we live this every common day? Isn't it a dream?"

And then, low, tremulous, joyous with little trills and breaks of sheer happiness . . . "No more common days, True: not a dream an awakening!"

"Can we keep it this way always, always?"

And from her, ". . . . beautiful as the Love of God, tender as the Love of Christ!"

And then, words breaking from his own lips, that he had thought no man had ever uttered. And then the silence too full of happiness for any words that lips could frame.

And then, her breath across his hand whispering . . . "Do you suppose they can see us from the convent windows?"

Truesdale glanced round with a jerk.

"No," he said; "and, if they did, it would empty their convent walls."

"Oh, True," and she was laughing, but he could no more have touched her hand in his present mood, or drawn her face to his, than he could have profaned a temple.

The courier running down from the convent to the breakwater saw nothing but two people idly watching the white sails dip to the tide. The man doffed his cap and handed Madeline a telegram that had come in one day late on the noon stage. She

opened it, unsuspecting; for messages daily came about her pictures. Then she sprang up with a low cry, handing the yellow paper to Truesdale. To him its meaning was deadly clear.

"Mrs. Ward on the outgoing freighter Labrador. Spare no expense to intercept steamer. President Ward suddenly ill."

It was signed by Ward's physician.

Truesdale and Madeline did not speak what each knew the other thought; and, if souls are damned for lack of silence, no word of reproach passed the lips of these two.

"They must have come by the New York express, the very night I came, by Poston," said Truesdale.

"They?" she questioned.

"And President Ward has sent that himself," added Truesdale, and he told her of that last evening at the Ward home.

"Oh, let us do something! Let us act at once!" she urged.

"When does the freighter *Labrador* pass here?" asked Truesdale, turning to the courier.

"She don' stop here! It was her dat pass here two hour ago!"

"Then it was the *Labrador* that passed as we were watching?"

"Oui, madem'selle!"

They walked up the pier too stunned for words.

"Is there no telegraph on this side of the river?" demanded Truesdale desperately.

The habitant shook his head.

"How long would it take us to ride to the nearest telegraph?"

The habitant shrugged his shoulders.

"Six hour, mebbe—seven! Mebbe horse go lame—eight!"

"To think," said Madeline, "to think that we have been standing at the very gates of Heaven while she——" but she could not finish.

They were opposite the chapel. Instinctively his eyes questioned hers.

"Yes, let me go in alone," she said.

She did not sob and cry out after the passion of her kind. She knelt at the altar wordless, wringing her hands. Suddenly her grief was aware of some one kneeling beside her and a hand closed over hers. It was Truesdale.

Kneeling so, trembling, her grief loosened and spent itself in a storm of tears.

"I have not prayed since I was a boy," he was saying, "but I couldn't help following you in! I never felt God so near! I couldn't help praying that our love might be kept as beautiful and pure as the Love of God——"

"And as tender and human as the Love of Christ," she added passionately.

And the light of a sudden comprehension was about them in a flame. She did not withdraw her hand. They gazed in each other's souls with an

uplift of splendor that would raise and illumine their lives forever. Then in the dim light of the chapel, awed as in an Immortal Presence, he took her in his arms and their lips met.

Drawing her hand through his arm, he led her out to the sunlight.

They were married that night at the Protestant Rectory, and entered the stage to return to the city just as the vespertine chimes of the Catholic Chapel began swinging and swelling through the valley in runs, and rings, and cadences that echoed to the purpling hills, to the silver river, to the tide of the far sea.

What those vespertine chimes sang only Madeline and Truesdale knew. There were no other passengers, and, as the stage drew up the hill, they could hear the chant, faint and far, of the nuns praising God. Then the stage rolled through the gap, down to the shadow of another valley. The night chill of frost and dark closed in round them. She raised her face with some whisper, throwing hat and veil and the rug he had placed for her to the empty seat across the passage. The little tallow candle below the roof under the driver's seat flickered out with a jolt. He drew her into his arms, and she fell asleep with her head on his shoulder, wakening now and then to ask where she was, and uttering little snatches of words, which made poor Truesdale thank Heaven for the gift of life.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE GREAT FACT OF ALL CREEDS

WARD had a persistent fancy all night long after sending his valet upstairs with the note for Mrs. Ward that he heard her footsteps gliding through the house coming to him. Again and again an impulse possessed him to go to her, but he was restrained by the consciousness that these very masterful impulses of all their wedded life had been the yoke that had galled her into an assertion of her own identity. He had never thought of it before, but he knew now that never for the fraction of an instant from their wedding day had he considered her will, her desires, her happiness. He had not even permitted her to join in his plans. He had excluded her from them, and shut her out from his own life hopes. He had regarded her exactly as he had regarded his yacht, or his house—a tangible asset combining the qualities of value, rarity, use, and beauty. If she had been another type of woman content to play a semi-inanimate part among the rest of the house furnishings, she might have filled all Ward's expectations of a wife; but it was precisely because she was not that type of woman that Ward had chosen her for his wife.

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He had wanted a possession of distinguished personality, of individual character, of sufficient originality to stand out from the common herd. He had won it in his wife, and, by excluding her from his life, had turned all the force of that individuality in on itself, with the result that her egoism had become as blindly dominant as his own. He saw that now when it was too late.

Once, toward midnight, he thought that he heard her door open, and he rose from his chair to meet her halfway, but somewhere else in the dim-lighted halls another door closed, and utter silence again fell over the big house. Then the footfalls through the silent halls seemed to become a ghost of memory gliding through the past. All the fleet, forgotten years came back before him, kaleidoscopic, unspeaking, unaccusing, irrefutable witnesses; memory of that breaking so violently from the old life of shiftless poverty, of his wife riding through the woods as a little girl planning her conquests, of the long, hard years toiling in the dark unknown, of the first, upward steps half doubtfully, of the first, glorious intoxication of Success, of the widening outlook on life each upward step gave him, of how he had practically bought his wife to save her father, of the final touching on that pinnacle of an almost Supreme Power, when the whole world seemed to lie below his feet, and then the riots like an earthquake or conflagration overwhelming his kingdom! What was the difference between the anarchy of those riots and the revolt of his wife? The thoughts be-

came unendurable to Ward. "We have done the same thing in different ways, she and I," he thought. "We have defied everything for Self! We've made the same mistake! We must pull out of this . . . out of this," he told himself, passing the dim halls, drawn by an overmastering impulse up the stairs to the landing toward his wife's room. He wanted to tell her frankly how they had both made the same mistake, and then, perhaps, . . . He did not finish the thought, but in his heart half hoped they might both agree to begin life again.

There was no response to his light rap on the door of his wife's room. He turned the handle and stepped in, to find the candles still burning above the writing desk, the room empty, the little steamer trunk drawn out from the wardrobe and apparently packed. Something that Ward had never known before suddenly gripped and paralyzed his powers—a great fear. As if by instinct, he locked the door to shut the world's prying out. Then he caught sight of the note above the writing desk.

"I'll save her yet, in spite of herself," he said, crunching the paper in his hand; and he gathered up all the telltale jewels left piled on the desk, tossed the bed as if it had been slept in, locked the door to the maid's room, blew out the candles, and, going downstairs, telephoned a morning paper that "Mrs. Ward had left the city for a short visit."

When the maid inquired in the morning "How long Mrs. Ward would be away," Ward's valet conveyed the information that the carter, who had

come for the trunk, was to express it to Canada; and the servants somehow received instructions, without being told, to tell all inquirers that Mrs. Ward had gone to visit Miss Connor on the St. Lawrence. Thus he would save her from herself to the end.

Even when the coachman announced smilingly that Mr. Dorval Hebden had also gone to Canada, it was offset by the valet's news that the yacht was to be put in commission for the president to join his wife at some northern port on the way to Europe. If some in the servants' hall smiled knowingly, their smiles were turned to speculation on learning that the valet had been sent to Budd McGee in the hospital for the exact address of Miss Connor in Quebec. That day, when the great specialist came to consult with the doctors about the president's symptoms, the patient was found speaking over the long-distance telephone with some telegraph office in Quebec.

The stock lists exhibited a distinct flurry in the Ward securities that day. It was acknowledged that the financier was ill, but the newspapers, that were pro-Ward, explained that Mrs. Ward's absence was proof enough that the president was not seriously ill. All the next day equipages rolled through the park to the door, and cards of sympathy for the great man lonely in his mansion gathered up in pyramids on the hall tables. Telegrams of inquiry poured in from premiers and monarchs. Daily bulletins were posted on the pillars of the Ward drive-

way, announcing the convalescence of the president; but what puzzled the doctors was that the convalescence did not progress. It was arrested. The patient neither responded nor sank. He seemed simply waiting.

Three days after Madeline had received the telegram, Truesdale was ushered into the Ward library to find the president lying back in an easy-chair. The sick man gave no sign except to motion the nurse from the room. Then he looked sharply up.

"You have been with Miss Connor?" he said. "Your marriage was in the morning paper. I wish you great happiness."

Truesdale could only grasp the extended hand.

"Then it was too late, the telegram, I mean?" Ward asked lightly.

"Yes, it was delayed on the stage, but I have cabled the steamship company to let Mrs. Ward know of your illness."

"And I have ordered the yacht across to be at her services over there. She hadn't the least idea that I was on the verge of a bust-up when she decided to go away so suddenly. I intended to join her with the yacht."

There was silence; then Ward was asking casually:

"Is it known that she was unwise enough to go by a freighter at this season?"

"It is not known what steamer she went by. I understood that she was called so suddenly that her luggage had to be sent afterward."

The president gazed long at the fire.

"She was very fond of your wife, Truesdale?"

Somehow the remark had a pleading sound.

"Yes, one of those things we men don't understand, that friendship between women! They seem to have more room in their lives for that sort of thing than men have! I can't tell you how cut up Madeline was to miss the steamer."

Both were speaking with constraint, each wondering what the other knew, bridging the abyss with the commonplace.

"If I should kick off just now," resumed Ward thoughtfully, "it might be unpleasant; unpleasant for Louie, you know! Mrs. Ward's absence might cause remark. As soon as I am well I'll join her abroad. I am afraid I have let business monopolize too much of life, True! I owe Louie these lost years, and will do my best not to kick off too soon, but I say, True," he laughed awkwardly, "if it happens that I have to cash my checks—discount the last, big check ahead of time—can I depend on you and Madeline to save Louie any nuisance of gossip, sensational reports about her absence, you know? It will be three weeks before word can reach Louie. I understand that special steamer of hers makes a twenty-one-day job of the herring pond—rather slow if you wanted to get word to a woman that her husband had taken passage to the other world! It's all right for Louie—just the thing she needed, a long, ocean voyage, tone her nerves up; but why the deuce I had to go off the bat the minute Louie

sails for Europe!—well—I depend on you and Madeline to sidetrack the gossip! By the way, I've made a little provision for the youngster McGee your wife used to help! Needn't be surprised, you two, if I ask you to look after that, too!"

Not another word did Ward utter that might suggest anything unusual about his wife's absence; and, if a word spoken in season is good, the unseasonable word left unspoken is better. They talked far into the evening, of their past contest, of the farcical justice of the age, of the ease with which public life could be debauched, of the sharp, hard lines of bifurcation that were splitting the democracy of the new century into plebeian and patrician classes, of the danger from such bifurcation to the future of the human race, of the New Dawn if the two forces could come together.

"Tell you what it is, True," exclaimed Ward vigorously; "you tried to swing the marketplace along the lines of the Ten Commandments without any force behind to make her go! I tried to swing the force along without any regards to the great, big, everlasting laws of right and wrong that underlie the foundations of this old universe! And we both of us pretty nearly came a ripping smash! You have got to have Power to be able to do anything in this life. If you don't control Power, Power will control you; but you've got to have it founded on the everlasting laws—call 'em Ten Commandments or what you like—of Whoever made this old ball in the first place, and set it spinning through space

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according to those laws! You've got to have Power to fight the wolves, or else turn wolf yourself, or else be eaten up!

"Tell you what we need, True! It's a Jesus Christ to put some ginger in the Ten Commandments; to teach us the curse of father to children isn't the spite of a vengeful God, but the taint of bad blood working out in the children; to trace back the evil act to the evil thought; to show theft in the gross is just as much theft as theft in the small!

"You see, True, all this mighty learned talk about things nowadays is just poking mud to make believe the waters are deep! Your scientists talk about transmitted inheritance, accumulated tendencies, and that sort of thing being the impulses we've inherited through a billion years or so of evolution from animal to man! But I'm hanged, True, if I see much difference, when you strip that of big words, between transmitted impulses to act like a hog and my poor mother's old-fashioned doctrine of original sin! When you get it all down to a solid, rock-bottom basis of hard fact, science stripped of its big words, religion stripped of its theologies—science and religion should be the same thing! At one stage in the game I thought religion mush because it seemed to have so much tweedle-dums, and hymn-singing, and God's-will-be-done to-sit-still-and-do-nothing when there happened to be a particularly hard row to hoe! I decided the Ten Commandments were a crack job put up by cunning priests to hold the people in tow! I thought I'd be

hanged if I let God himself say what I should or should not do! I knew most of human laws had been jobbed by shark lobbyists to fill their own pockets, and I thought about the same of the Ten Commandments—they were good for fellows to keep who weren't strong enough to break 'em and defy consequences!

"But that's where I made my mistake—I tell you! I wasn't scientific enough! 'Thou shalt not steal' isn't the rule of a God who's a martinet! 'Thou shalt not steal' isn't said to keep me from doing something I want to! It's a fact, a matter-of-fact statement, just as much as 'Thou shalt not put thy hand in the fire without being burned!' Commandments aren't given as orders! They're statements of facts, the same as scientific laws; statements of the eternal order of things by which the Almighty-Some-One runs His job! That's it, True, and don't you forget it! I knew all this that night I bucked up against Lynch Law, when you saved me with your motor! That's the mistake Louie made, too, you know! Only she dressed her excuses up in high-faluting nonsense about 'self-satisfaction, and Jove being above law,' 'and the gratification of impulses being right because they spring from the soul, which is a part of God.' I don't see much difference between Louie's reasoning and the modern gabblers, who say 'commerce is too complicated' for the old-fashioned limits! By Jove, True, I wish she were here to-night! I think we could both see things as we never did before! You know she realized

that I was off the track all along, but somehow she couldn't make me see it! But I see it now I see it now!

"You tried Goodness without Power! I tried Power without Goodness! Won't go, True! You've got to hitch the two up together tight, or you'll have a stinking mess of rotting ideals on your hands, and I'll have Lynch Law! We've got to hitch 'em together tight, Goodness and Power, to keep our new democraey from splitting on the old lines of class hate! Seems to me if we can get that combination—Goodness and Power—it's bigger than the Great Consolidated! It's a New Dawn for humanity. It's better than hogging the whole earth for half a dozen men! It will roll the human race along a peg or two to a New Humanity!

"Come again," he said, as True rose to leave. "They say strong men die hard, and I'm too strong to die without a vigorous kick! I'll fight 'em to the end, the way those old Norse fellows used to sail out on a hark when they were going to die and meet it in storm! Come again, and we'll talk this new combination over! I feel the way I did when I set out from home long ago—as if I had got hold of a great, big idea worth fighting for, as if half a dozen men hound together with this idea—fighting fellows with lots of blood and brawn—might hoist the race ahead by a century or two! I feel as if I might begin a new life with this idea, and don't forget," he called, as True passed out, "don't you forget you're a lucky devil to have such a wife!"

True left the house with almost a liking for this bandit of the marketplace, who aimed greatly and succeeded greatly, independent of scruple or restraint, and who now seemed to be aiming the greatest of all.

Before going to bed, Ward asked the nurse to hand him an iron box, from which he drew the miniature of a child's face with long black curls, a lock of hair framed in ebony and a broken string of corals such as little girls used to wear. They were childhood keepsakes of his wife. He placed them under his pillow. Then he bade the nurse draw her cot outside the door, for he knew that he could sleep better alone in the room.

Twice during the night the doctor tiptoed up from the library, and looked in hopefully at the sleeping face.

"It's odd how such a splendid body doesn't respond to the stimulants! It's against all science," said one physician, "but that sleep is natural!"

But so is Death natural, and against it no remedies avail, for when the nurse looked in at four in the morning the president was sitting up in bed with hands clenched to the counterpane in the tensivity of their struggle. Like the Norse heroes, he had fought to the end, and no one had witnessed his defeat. The great Force was dead.

The doctors announced an elaborate diagnosis of exactly what heart complications had caused Ward's death. Sermons and editorials moralized on the

high pressure of living which had cut down in his prime such a man of strength as Ward; but I think Madeline and Truesdale could have told the real cause of his death in fewer and simpler words.

The details of the obsequies do not concern this record except as they reflect the spirit of the times, and one newspaper announced that forty billion dollars were at Ward's funeral in the person of the pallbearers. Madeline and Truesdale followed the remains to the yacht, which bore the body to a mausoleum in those foreign countries which Ward had thought to conquer. Near his resting-place, it was reported, Mrs. Ward had retired prostrate with grief.

A society journal of the muck-rake species gave an account that was too guardedly nameless to be libelous and too thinly veiled for any concealment of two runaway lovers escaping a husband's wrath by seeking refuge on a slow freighter, where they spent a honeymoon of three weeks on mid-ocean. How lover-like that honeymoon was we may guess; but any gossip the report may have caused about Mr. Dorval Hebden was promptly disproved by that gentleman at once coming back to America, where he frequented club life as before. The advantage of the report appearing in this particular weekly was that its name was generally a guarantee of untruth. Only people who wanted to believe credited what its columns reported. About that scar of a cut above his eyes Hebden vaguely referred to a duel.

To be sure, when Mr. Dorval Hebden was once twitted in the club regarding a hurried trip to the moose grounds of Quebec, he assumed a smile that might be taken for either consciousness of his prowess, or indulgent regret over past folly; but when it was noticed that his air suddenly changed on hearing that Mrs. Ward had inherited the whole of her husband's enormous fortune except handsome bequests to Budd McGee and Mrs. Jack Truesdale, some of the clubmen expressed very frank opinions about Mr. Dorval Hebden, which it is not pleasant for a gentleman to overhear.

"I could respect him if he were even a manly, decent blackguard," a voice had said, and Mr. Dorval Hebden passed out of the club with sensations. He was always so very sympathetic, so very considerate, so very comprehending without being told—was Mr. Dorval Hebden, and that quality continued to give him great favor in women's eyes.

As for Truesdale, he gave his wife two wedding gifts: the necklace which the ruby crank had succeeded in buying, and the check which the ruby crank had paid for the jewels.

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