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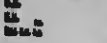
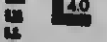
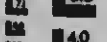
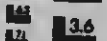
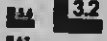
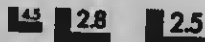
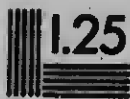
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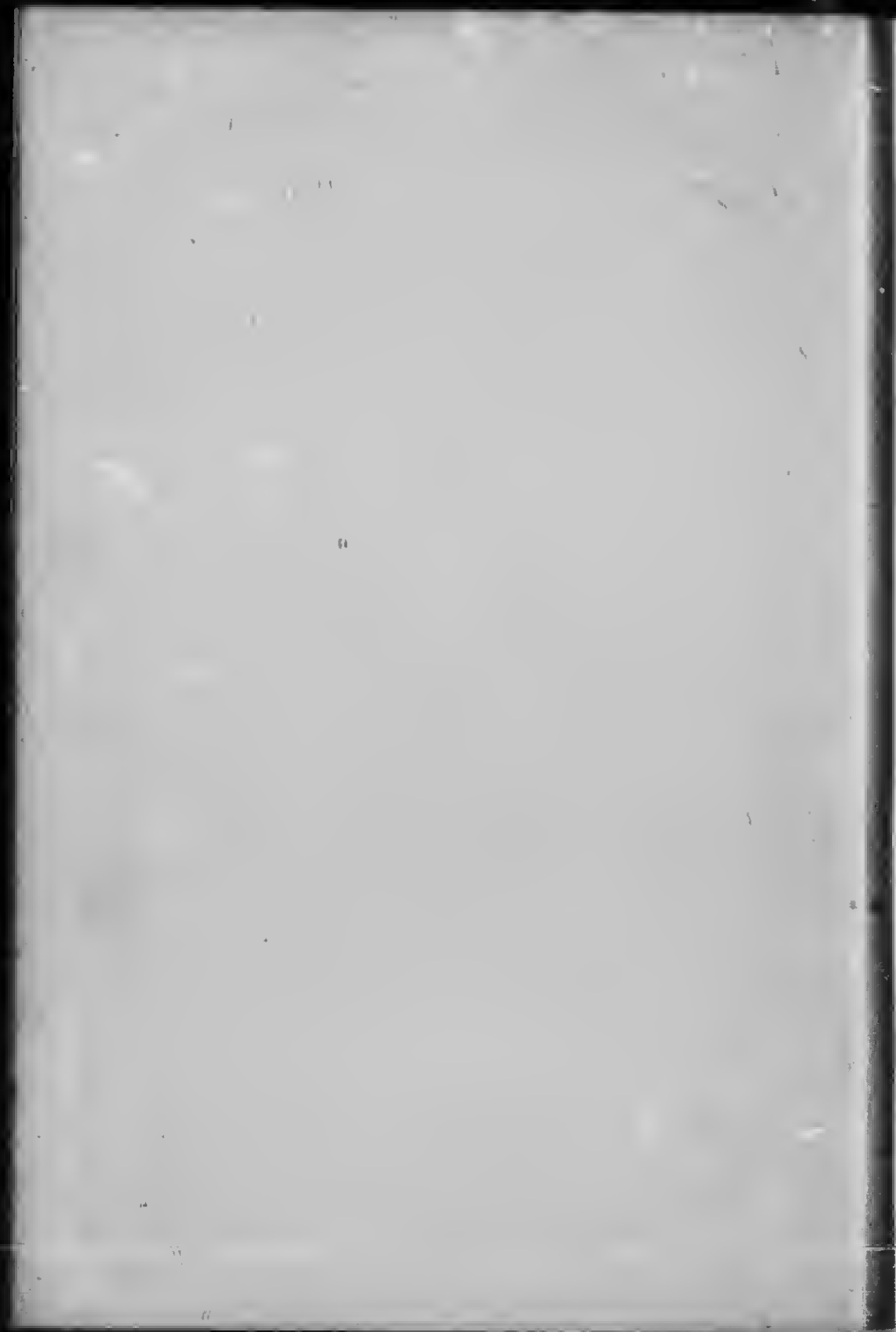
Xmas 1918.

Daddy
from

Irene & Edith.



UNCERTAIN IRENE







"But if anything *had* happened to you—Oh, Philura!"

UNCERTAIN IRENE

BY

KATHARINE HOLLAND BROWN

AUTHOR OF "WHITE ROSES," ETC.

TORONTO
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PUBLISHERS

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1911

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UNCERTAIN IRENE

*March eleventh, 1911. (Second Day Out.)
Latitude: Sunny side of the "Illyria"
deck, in a vacillating steamer chair.
Longitude: Two hundred and fifty-
one miles from New York, one and
one-half miles from the bottom, and
ninety million leagues from Mother.*

It is all over, and here I am, packed off to Europe with Irene Kemper Bradbury, Assistant Professor of Greek at Burnmore, for six implacable and improving months. Jeremiah has been told that he will be expected, on his honour as a gentleman, to refrain from writing to me during that time. I have been told that I shall be expected, as a lady, to refrain from reading any of Jerry's letters, in the remote possibility that

he could so far forget his promises and his gentlemanliness and his honour as to send me some. Sometimes I can't help wishing that we could step back into the Age of Crinoline, so that I could just cry it out. Or else grieve till I should grow pale, and wan, and ethereal, and fade like mist away. Jerry has suggested more than once that we might fade away together, as he elegantly phrases it. But elopements are bad taste, and unkind to your family, and they always put them in the papers. Moreover, Mother and Father feel almost as dreadfully for us as we do for ourselves, and are only upheld in their stern course by the conviction that they are saving me from a hideous and life-long mistake in marrying Jerry; or, rather, in marrying Castleman Amalgamated Steel.

We are Curtis Consolidated, and between Castleman A. and Curtis C. there is a great gulf fixed. Father and Mr. Castleman started out as partners; I remember, years ago, Jerry and I used to write our valentines to each other on those big letter-heads,

with the engraved steam-shovels atop, and the eagle clawing a handful of thunderbolts in the corner.—I always did stand in awe of that eagle.—One day, some of the thunderbolts must have escaped; for Father and Mr. Castleman concluded to dissolve partnership. I remember the day as plain as can be, for Jerry and I had a most disgraceful fight at Kindergarten that very morning, and he snatched a gold-fish out of the tank, and put it down my guimp. Sometimes I wake up feeling that smooth, quick, icy wriggle yet. The gulf wasn't so wide for a year or two; there was plenty of room on earth for both. But presently the Castlemans got the ship contracts, and then we had the Drainage Canal dredges, and then Mr. Castleman stopped coming over evenings to play chess with Father, and Mother and Mrs. Castleman gave up their Monday At Homes together, and Mother even took me out of the Saturday dancing class, that Jerry and his sisters were in, and put me into the Tuesday division. That made me most

unhappy, for there were twenty-six girls in the Tuesday section, and only four boys; and whenever we had a cotillion, there was a stampede.

However, it was not long before I went to Miss Glesson's, and Jerry was right over at Orchard Lodge, and we certainly had some good times. He was at Pride's, too, the summer there with Aunt Isabella, and at Asheville next winter, and at Old Point as we stopped there coming back, and at Brookline when I went up for Gretchen's wedding. When I came back from Gretchen's wedding, I noticed that Father would grow distinctly curt and stiff and puckery; and Mother would grow rather pale and silent, whenever Jerry turned up--and I must admit that he turned pretty often! Still, it didn't dawn on me till Christmas, when we were both asked to the Beauregard's house-party, in the Catskills. There was to be a whole regiment there, including the famous Mr. Reginald Beauregard,--the delightful author-traveller one, I mean,

--and Jerry and I were both looking forward to it as the grand wind-up frolic of the year. Up to that day, we'd been good chums, always; and nothing more. Absolutely nothing. But, Christmas morning, we two slipped off down to the river to try the ice, although Mr. Beauregard, and Mr. Reginald, too, had both warned us severely that we shouldn't, for the ice was not secure. And I stepped on the weakest place, and squashed through. It wasn't more than six inches deep, nor six feet from shore; but I'm afraid I forgot myself, and screamed.

"Philura, you careless piece!" shouted Jerry. He dashed to my rescue: I took a step towards him, stumbled horribly in deep marsh-grass, clutched at a tiny pine-tree, which promptly came up by the roots--then crashed forward, face down, through the ice. . . .

Jerry splashed alongside, swept me up, and dragged me ashore. For one ridiculous moment we confronted each other, blue-lipped, teeth loudly chattering. Jerry was

plastered with frozen mud. I still absently clutched the little tree.

"Philura Curtis, you need to be spanked and sent home!" Jerry began, exasperated. Then, of a sudden, the blaze died out of his irate black eyes: his red head dropped: he gave a queer little sobbing gasp:

"But if anything *had* happened to you—
Oh, Philura!"

Oh, well! It all dawned only too swiftly, then. And realising that we should encounter grave opposition, but convinced that it was only fair to meet it openly, Jerry went straight and told his people. And I told mine.

Just there, we made a most painful blunder. Had we gone together, hand in hand, we could have made a stand against cavalry. But, alone, we were annihilated. Father said that Jerry was a good boy enough, but that he would rather never see me married at all than allied to such blood as that of the Castlemans, whose low standard of business morality was an all-too-evident

index of their personal qualities. The Castlemans told Jerry much the same about me, only worse, I think, because Jerry would not repeat it. (We were the lowest bidders on that great Rio Janeiro contract that week.)

That was depressing enough; but the real blow came when Jerry and I, grieved yet nobly resolute, told them, very gently and tactfully, that we were sorry, but that we should have to go on loving each other, and that they had best resign themselves. They merely replied (very gently and tactfully, too, I must confess) that they were sorry, also; but that they were better judges than we, and that, for the next two years, the subject had best be put aside. Moreover, they had always wished me to have foreign travel which should include the study of historic localities; and here, by felicitous coincidence, Professor Irene Bradbury, the daughter of Mother's beloved school friend, was about to visit the hill towns of Italy; and how fortunate that I could enjoy the advantages of her companionship, her deep

erudition, and her trained methods of research.

Now it's all very well, in stories, to talk about defying your Cruel Parent, and turning aside your own people, who have always Misunderstood, and living your own life, and not being crushed and repressed and trampled on. But when you face this situation in real life, you come bumping up against the grim immutable fact that this Monster of Tyranny is the same one who built your playhouses, and whittled the dolls' rocking-chairs for you, and gave up cigars to buy you a Sheltie, and carried you up and down stairs when you had the croup, and sent you valentines, and bought you a real silver tea-set—Oh, well! In the face of these disheartening memories, you can't be convincingly defiant, somehow. For when the Monster is just a dear, kind, handsome father like mine, it isn't any use to rebel. You can't even say one angry word, nor think one stubborn thought. You just have to choke up and keep still. As for Mother

—Oh, everybody knows what mothers are. As Jerry says, no matter how keenly you may deplore her primitive and unreasoning instincts, and her regrettable pig-headedness, a mother is a mother, still. Or, as Irene would express it, in what you might term Early Irenaic,—“An article for which, despite uncertain working and faulty construction, modern science has not, as yet, evolved an adequate substitute.”

So here behold us, well on our way to the Renaissance Cities, within whose storied walls we shall presently set forth the afore-said deep erudition and trained methods of research. Irene Kemper Bradbury, A.M., M.S., Ph.D., all her little alphabets a-tagging at her heels, and Philura Temple Curtis, with nobody, not even a capital letter,—not even a *real* letter, alas!—tagging after her.

I have been playing cribbage all morning with Mrs. Kenmore and her two twins—(who may be described briefly as Edythe with an e

and Gwendolyn with a y.) The Kenmores are to "do" the Mediterranean, so we shall probably encounter them frequently. Necessarily I am cordial; but I do not fancy Mrs. Kenmore. She is large and bland and angel-eyed, and she wears a great many bead necklaces, and jingling chatelaine bags, and at home she usually carries a cross woolly dog with a heliotrope bow. Then she is always patronising Mother, because Mother doesn't believe in the Nothingness of Matter, and the Supremacy of Mind. To be sure, Mother is so gentle that she doesn't know she's being patronised; so perhaps my resentment is a bit superfluous.

Mother had me promise that I'd keep a conscientiously accurate account of this "trip." She thinks it will make my mind clearer, and more "consecutive." So I had best begin by trying to make my thoughts "consecutive" about my hitherto unknown travelling companion, Irene.

Irene's people used to be very wealthy, but her father died when she was just my

age, and they lost everything, so she has taught school, and cared for herself, these ten years. Mother says she is the typical College Woman. Perhaps; yet Irene is somehow not at all the person that you'd expect an A.B., M.S., Ph.D., to be. True, she must be all of thirty; her hair is dreadfully grey on the temples; and she wears spectacles, not nice cocky eyeglasses, with a smart cord, but the hook-over, grandmother kind, and sometimes even blue goggles, which make her look like a lost automobilist. Worse, she would just as soon be caught carrying a guide-book as not. Yet, as Father would say, there are extenuating circumstances. Her hair has gold streaks in it, as well as grey, and it's full of soft fluffy curl, and there must be pounds and pounds of it. When she looses its austere wiggy braids, the great gold-brown waves swing down around her like a party cape. Then, despite her glasses, her eyes are big and brown and radiant, with heavy lashes, almost as stunning as Jerry's. Her face is tired and anx-

ious, and she has uncounted freckles: yet her cheek is such a warm velvet-white that the freckles don't look freckly; they're rather like cinnamon on a bowl of cream. And she persistently wears those mournful, croupy ruches, yet her neck and shoulders are far whiter and prettier than mine, only no human eye save mine will ever see them to admire. Irene disapproves of low gowns. She says they're unwomanly, and they give you influenza. Irene is a Presbyterian.

Then to hear her talk at the house!—To think of having to live up to all those Emersonian periods, and to do without Jerry, too, just crushed me to earth. And as the steamer backed out, and I saw Jerry jam his hands into his pockets and swing round on his heel, and Father began to wave his hat right before Mother's face, so I shouldn't see her hand go up to pull down her veil, I couldn't stand it. I forgot all my manners, and my personal dignity, and the Kenmores, and the four Yale boys aboard, and everything else, save that the only three people

on earth were standing on that pier—and I *wasn't*. And I fled across the deck and down the slippery steps to our cabin with the heart breaking out of me.

And, worse still, when I reached it, boo-hooing in big gulps, and all blind with tears, it wasn't our cabin at all. Of course, I had gone to the wrong deck. No wonder, when I was in such agony of mind. But unfortunately the people hadn't locked their door, and I blundered right in, and while they were too courteous even to look disconcerted, I feel sure they didn't like it. They were a bride and groom, rather old people,—he must have been almost forty; and she was standing up, and he was down on one knee—actually!—kissing her hand, when I caromed weeping in. Perhaps it was amusing; but the amusing side didn't appeal to me just then. I bumbled out some wild apology, and fled. Two minutes later, I found my own cabin, at last.

It was full of roses and books and candy, and even Jerry's steamer rug, so we could

pretend he was going, too. I shut the door, and threw myself into my berth, and then I just let everything go. Ten minutes later the lock clicked; in marched Irene.

I sat up in the midst of the candy and things, and bumped my head on the upper berth, and mopped my face, and tried to look hospitable, and pleasant.

Irene didn't glance my way. She took off her ferocious peaked hat with the blue veil dangling at half-mast behind. She laid her spectacles on the shelf. That made her more human, somehow. Then she pulled off her great stiff ugly sensible men's gloves, and I saw how slim her hands were, and how much they looked like Mother's.

Then she sat down hard in the biggest chair.

"Now, you blessed homesick lamb," she remarked, "you come right here. And you stay."

I came. I plumped down into her grey tailored lap, and I burrowed into her dear soft shoulder, and I stayed. I cried down her neck and into her hair, I cried all the starch

out of her skimpy shirt-waist, and all the crinkle out of her ruche. Irene never said one word. She cuddled me tight against her soft cinnamon-freckled cheek, and let me sob it out, all the way.

Some hours later, though I don't know how or why, I must have stopped. I was in my berth with a plaid tucked over me, and Irene was pulling out the boxes of Huyler's and things, so I could lie flat.

"Wh—why, Irene?" I began.

"Go to sleep, now. Hush, or I'll tell the Bogie Man!" admonished Irene, sternly. "And I'll shake you myself, for good measure!"

Then she put a wet handkerchief on my eyes, and kissed me twice, and slipped away.

It was sunset when I awoke. I looked like a picked chicken with a cold in its head; but everybody looks a bit dolesome, the first day at sea. So I washed my face, and went on deck. It took some time to find Irene. At length I caught the decorous flutter of that blue veil, and I hastened thither. And I was

just in time to see her readjust her eye-glasses, and to hear her say, in that sweet, cool, clear-starched-and-fluted voice:

“No, it is not the individuality of the experience, which makes it so truly poignant; rather, its universality—”

Somehow I didn't rush into her arms, after all. And when I think of that tearful hour on her shoulder,—I can't help wondering if I *could* have dropped asleep before I thought I did?

However, Irene is wearing a fresh shirt-waist, and a new ruche.

Fourth Day Out.

I suppose I *could* write a Chronicle—of a sort—for to-day. But nobody, not even a Mother, would really care to read it.

Same.

Fifth Day

Sixth Day.

Irene sat up in her berth to-day, and looked in the hand glass. Then she said, under her breath:

“There was a young thing called Irene,
Whose complexion, a pale apple-green,
With mauve for its high lights,
And black for its skylights,
Made a Study in Ultra-Marine.”

Then she laid down the hand glass, and
fainted dignifiedly away.

Irene may be a blue-socking. But she's
a soldier and a gentleman.

Seventh Day Out.

We've been up on deck all day, and it is
glorious. So many people are sea-sick,
poor dears, that we have our breezy corner
all to ourselves. I tramped the deck for
miles this morning. Later, Irene rather
depressed me by reading aloud long ex-
cerpts from Archæological Research. I
retaliated by bringing out Mr. Reginald
Beauregard's oppressive monograph,
Problems of the Later Etruscan Records
(I had teased him into giving me an
Author's copy at Christmas), and read
some sounding although unintelligible

periods. Instead of being bored, Irene listened: at first, in grim endurance; then with a queer, keen interest.

"Where did you come across that book, Philura?"

"Mr. Beauregard himself gave it to me." I'm afraid I preened, a little. "At the Beauregards' Christmas house-party—"

"The Beauregards' house-party? Why, which Beauregard? Not Reginald?"—Irene checked herself quickly. Her brown eyes grew wide and startled. Her pretty flushed cheek paled beneath the sea-tan. "Which of the boys gave the party? Tom, or—or—"

"Why, Tom, of course. Reginald, the famous-author one, has never married, you know. Are they friends of yours, too? Isn't Reginald splendid? Wise and famous as he is, you can't stand in awe of him, he's always so merry, and so kind. They say he's a confirmed bachelor, but I don't believe that. Have you ever met him, Irene?"

"So they say he's a confirmed bachelor,"

said Irene, irrelevantly. Her queer pink flush had faded quite away. "I believe I *have* met him—some time ago."

"It's odd you don't remember positively, he's such a striking personality," said I. "He's a big stately man, with a heavy grey beard, and the nicest eyes, and he's written books, and discovered things, and travelled everywhere—"

"One meets so many people," murmured Irene. She closed her book and the subject with a mild thud. Her eyes looked tired; I remembered, with a pang, that probably the Beauregards belonged to Irene's other, happier days, when she was just a merry girl in her father's home, not a severe young Classical Instructor in eye-glasses and a blue veil. And I wished that I had kept still.

To-night the wind freshened, and we were only a handful at dinner. However, we were quite hilarious enough to compensate for all the collywobblous vacancies. The

Kenmore nephew reappeared, limp but cheerful; and the four Yale men bribed and bullied Mr. Kenmore into presenting them to Irene, and Irene, after heartrending vacillation, presented them to me. Two knew Jerry, and one, Ned Douglass, a rather nice tow-headed boy, had come in fourth, the day Jerry won the forty-yard dash from Cornell; so it was really quite like home. After dinner we had a little dance, and there being just three girls to eleven men, it grew most exciting. We split our dances into three-elevenths, and had delightful wrangles over the divisions, and the poor orchestra became hysterical, and the leader tore his hair. In the midst of the fray, I looked to see if Irene was enjoying the fun. No power on earth could induce Irene to dance; she's a born looker-on. At the age of ten, she undoubtedly chaperoned the other children, while they made the mud-pies. To my bewilderment, there was no Irene to be seen. "That chaperone of yours is a treasure, all right," said Ned Douglass, as we

searched the deck. "She can have me. Just tell her so, when you see her—if you ever do meet her again. Could she have fallen overboard? Or—can that be she? That shadow sitting tenderly aft, next another larger and obviously tenderer shadow?"

"That can't be Irene," I insisted. And it wasn't, although he wouldn't be satisfied till he had routed up the two shadows, to make sure. And of all the people on earth, it had to be that elderly bride and groom! They looked deeply disgusted, and I can't wonder; though it does seem as if they're forever under foot.

Back to the saloon. Still no Irene. But at the door a deck steward touched his cap and gave me a note.

"I'm busy," Irene had written, just on a torn envelope. "Go on and have a good time. Up before long."

"Where can she be?" I puzzled. "Well, it may as well be On with the Dance for me." And on it was. But at midnight the orches-

tra stopped, and we trotted off meekly to bed.

I lay awake a long time, wondering where Irene could be. At last, just as I was dozing off, she stole in.

Even in the dusky stateroom, I could see that she looked strangely excited and tired. She threw down her coat, pulled off her blue-and-white spotty foulard evening dress,—it's a horrid thing, with lace plasters, and it makes her look as if she came out of a missionary barrel, but to Irene it represents joy unconfined. Then—Incredible!—Instead of folding it carefully away, she threw it down, caught her dark serge suit from the rack, flung it on, picked up her medicine case and her plaid—and *flew*.

“Well, on my honor!” said I.

Then I lay and wondered and fidgeted a year or so longer; and, at length, I rose up, deliberately, and did what no real gentlewoman would ever be guilty of doing. But it's a long worm that has no turning, Jerry says. And this was the end of my lane.

I crept into my clothes, put on an ulster, and slipped up on deck.

It seemed mysteriously far and dark and silent there. Away forward, a single officer's figure stood carved out black against the gloom. The wind lisped and murmured, half asleep, to the drowsy water, lapping past the keel, to the great calm stars, wheeling and burning in a far black hollow of sky. The night lifted you, and carried you, and swung you. You drifted miles and years away from your own little life, far above your own little real world, and looked down wondering upon it, a tiny mirror of dreams. . . .

Suddenly I brought up violently against something big and solid—and I came back to earth with a thud. The solid sputtered and apologised, and lit a match. Behold Ned Douglass!

"What under the sun are you doing here?" said he, a bit sheepish.

"Enjoying the scenery," I retorted, blinking the "homesick" out of my

eyes, and hoping he couldn't guess that I had on fur slippers and my hair in a braid. "What's that light on the lower deck? Let's see."

"Oh, nothing special. Something up in the steerage, I believe. Run back to your cabin. You'll catch cold."

"In the steerage? But we haven't any steerage passengers, except that poor woman and her sick baby, that were sent back to Sweden from Ellis Island. Poor forsaken things! What can it be?"

"No, no, you mustn't!" He fairly hustled me back. "You—you—it's nothing interesting. Run along, there's a good girl. It—it's nothing you ought to see. Please go!"

By that time, of course, I had reached the rail. And the moment I looked down, I—I knew. And I understood just why he had tried to urge me away.

It was all dark, except the corner astern, where a handful of people had gathered. Irene sat by the rail, beneath the swinging

lantern. Her hair was all ruffled by the wind, and the broad gold gleams in it shone in the light. A dark heap, like an armful of rags, crouched at her feet. The ship's officers stood bareheaded behind her. The Chaplain stood before her at the rail. We were so near, I could see the gilded cross on the book in his hands.

And on Irene's lap, stretched out across her knee, lay a tiny bundle, all wrapped in sail-cloth,—Oh, the poor, poor little lost thing!

The Chaplain began to read, very quietly. His voice went on and on, deep as the throb of the waves below. After a while he closed the book, and stepped back. Then an officer came forward and took the little bundle from Irene's arms.

Irene stood up a moment, very white and still. Then she stooped and gathered up that dark heap that had lain at her feet, and clasped it tight in her arms. For a moment, the dusky shape just clutched and clung to her. Then it tore itself away, and

cried out with a cry that snatched at your breath, and wrung your very heart. I need not see her face, to know. That this was her child, her little lost treasure—Oh, the poor stricken, anguished mother-soul!

Irene came back to our cabin two hours after, in the grey dawn. I peeped down and watched her smoothing away that sacred foulard, and folding away her laces. And again I felt that queer, queer certainty: that it couldn't be true: that it was all a dream.

"Aren't you very tired, Irene?"

"Tired?" She started, terribly, and dropped her cloak. Then she laughed out. "I forgot you were there, Philura. No; not a bit, little girl. Go to sleep, now. Quick."

"You ought to be asleep yourself."

"Speak gently to the aged," she retorted. And on my word, she looked up at me as tranquil and composed as if she'd never seen a sorrow; as if she'd never even shed a tear.

Maybe she never has. Maybe she's been too busy all her life, comforting other people, and soothing other people's heartbreaks, and letting them cry it out, to have time or courage for tears of her own: to have a chance to cry it out for her own self.

And yet—

Somehow it's awfully queer about Irene!

CHAPTER SECOND

March twenty-eighth. Gibraltar. In a pink-and-purple balcony, high on a yellow, vine-bound wall, with a gay blue ocean, a darling rose terrace, and nine different kinds of soldiers, all marching, by at once.

WE are away outside our bailiwick, for this is not a storied Renaissance stronghold, but just the dearest play-house town that ever sprouted out of a fairy-book, and I am sinfully glad of it, and poor Irene is divided, like Gaul, into three equal parts, amazement, disapproval, and reluctant joy. Irene can't take her pleasure whole. You'll never catch *her* crushing Joy's grape against her palate fine. Not she. She always bites prudently into it, and takes out all the seeds. Poor dear! And to-day, torn from her note-books, and her Mortuary Art, hustled about from

hunt breakfasts to garrison suppers, from tennis in Spain to two-steps aboard the *Texas*, it's no wonder she hasn't readjusted herself.

This is Father's doing, every bit, and I'd give the world to hug him for it till he'd shriek for mercy. By rights, we should have spent a week in London; then, with only four days of Paris to hearten us for the fray, we were to cross into Italy, and begin our majestic pilgrimage—Como, Milan, Perugia, Assisi,—gathering up pearls of research by the bushel-basket. This very moment, we should be knee-deep in Excavations. But the night we reached London, it was pouring rain, that thick greasy, flannelly rain that only London can pour, and freezing cold, and even our fresh smart rooms at the Charleston, with the crimson-cushioned chairs, and the firelight sparkling on the silver tea-things, looked dreary and forbidding. Irene had a headache, and sat through the evening, grizzling over a Map of Tombs. And I—No, I didn't have a headache. Worse. I sat and glowered at that

hateful little smirking foreign fire, and thought how the big open hearth at Beauregard Lodge had laughed back at Jerry and me when we came in from the Lake, that golden, far-away Christmas morning, all wet and chattering and frozen and blissful—

Just as I'd reached rock bottom of my well of gloom, there came a tap, and the stuffed-rabbit footman gave me a box, and a cablegram. I dropped the box, and pounced on the message. From Daddy, of course. Just six transcendent words.

“Cut London go gibraltar lucius texas.”

“‘Lucius *Texas*?’ Who on earth—” murmured Irene.

“Cousin Lucius Townsend, *commanding the Texas*,” I explained, between jig-steps. “And he and his enchanting battle-ship will be anchored at Gibraltar, and we'll have mess dinners, and deck dances, and the whole British Army will keep dropping in to tea. Oh, Daddy, you angel, you idol! It's my treat, Irene. Come along.”

Now you'd think that, halfway through that sentence, any other feminine being under ninety would be doing jig-steps, too. However, you don't know Irene.

Irene turned pale, and put down her pencil.

"*Philura!*" she gasped. "But the government will close the Præneste Excavations to visitors on April fifteenth, barely three weeks away!"

For one immemorial moment, my very soul failed me. I could see that radiant battle-ship melting like hoar-frost before my anguished sight. Then, miraculously inspired, I picked up Baedeker, with a kind compassionate smile.

"Dear Irene, you know how deeply I revere your classical attainments," I began. "And how keenly I sympathise with your eagerness for original study and research—" Irene was looking painfully unconvinced, but I hurried on, though I was nearly out of breath, and big words, too. "But why limit yourself solely to Italian sources? Do you not realise that Gibraltar

contains relics of poignant interest? Do you not remember the Phœnician landmarks, the ruined Carthaginian seaports, the marvellous re-discovered fortifications of Car-teia—”

Poor dear Irene! She had on her near-sight glasses, and could not see that I was reading shamelessly from the guide-book. She looked quite impressed.

“Really, Philura, Gibraltar must possess many interests for the antiquary,” she said, in her pretty, considering voice. “And if it will be a pleasure to you—Please, dear, be careful! This is the last tidy stock I own! And, Philura, it’s almost midnight, and if you keep prancing so, I’m really afraid the hotel people—No, child, I mustn’t stay and talk it over, not another minute. I must read up on the Tiglath-Pileser sarcophagus, ready for the British Museum trip to-morrow. Good night!”

And off she went, in cold blood. To dream of Tiglath-Pileser and his sarcophagus, no doubt.

I tried dutifully to go to sleep; but when I shut my eyes, there was the *Texas*, and when I opened them, there was the cablegram. There was only one fly in the ointment; and that was Jerry—I mean, because Jerry *wasn't* in it. Happy as I was, in this beautiful reprieve from the Tombs, yet that wretched little fish-hook of regretful longing kept pricking me, till even my rainbow-visions of Gibraltar grew dull and lustreless, and the *Texas* herself looked dingy and forlorn. At last, quite disconsolate, I remembered the box that had accompanied Father's cablegram. Filled with the lively hope that Daddy had cabled chocolates, too, I scrambled out of bed, found the box, and sat down on the hearth-rug to investigate.

It wasn't chocolates, but flowers,—apparently. I opened the box, then sat gaping at it, utterly bewildered; for surely no sane florist ever sent out such a collection of greenery as that. First came a big clump of funny coarse marsh-grass; then a sprig

of Norway pine; and, last, a single great, pearl-white bride rose. . . .

And right there I caught up the boxful, wet marsh-grass and all, and hugged it, and laughed and cried over it, all at once. For now I understood. Not a letter, to be sure; for letters were forbidden. Yet there lay that morning at Beauregard Lodge, written out as clearly, as distinctly, as if in Jerry's own big sprawling hand. The marsh-grass we had stumbled through, as he fished me ashore; the little pine, that I had jerked up by the roots; and the bride rose—

That rose was the loveliest word of all his lovely message to me. Yet it couldn't make me quite as happy as the rest of the message did. For it was the only flower of all that hadn't come true.

March twenty-ninth. Gibraltar. Same balcony, same view, only some new kinds of soldiers.

"This isn't Gibraltar, Irene," I said, as we sat at coffee and strawberries on the sea-

ward terrace this morning. "This is the fairy-built city, Nassimia. We've only been here one day, yet we've met everybody out of the Floating Prince's kingdom. The Aristocrats, the Friendly Ogre,—that fierce-eyed Spanish goat-herd we saw yesterday, in the dyed skin coat, and sandals tied with clothes-line,—the Admiral-on-Stilts,—(that's Cousin Lucius, on the quarter-deck of his precious *Texas*), everybody but the Prince himself, and I know he's right around the corner."

"How would Mr. Douglass answer? He's right around the corner—at the Calpe, with the Kenmores," asked Irene, glancing up from her Sacred Sculptures with a distinctly secular twinkle. (Irene knows not one word concerning Jerry. Father and Mother both acted like gentlemen about it, and didn't tell her a syllable.)

"Not for me," I retorted. "Red hair before hay color, any day. But there's plenty of Royalty to choose from. Four of them at the Governor's tea yesterday

afternoon, not counting dear old Cousin Lucius. To be sure, he looked most imperial in that white uniform; but it spoilt the illusion when you noticed how the sunburn was peeling off his nose. But look, Irene! There across the terrace sits the breathing image of the Floating Prince, grown up! That tall grey stunning American, devouring his Paris-New-York-Herald. We'll call him your Prince, Irene, he's so distinguished and so scholarly. He looks like somebody at home, only different. Who can he be?"

Irene groped surreptitiously for her far-sight glasses.

"You can see Harvard and the Somerset Club writ large all over him," I prattled on. "What splendid shoulders, and *what* a granite chin! I'm sure he's someone I know—"

Irene stared in silence. Then she dropped her glasses, with a queer smothered exclamation. Irene has a quaint trick of changing color when she's startled. She doesn't

turn pale, exactly, but her freckles stand out. They fairly popped out then.

"Of all the resemblances—But it *can't* be!" she said, faintly.

"Can't be who?" I asked, promptly curious. "Why, Irene! Is he somebody you know, too?"

"Why, he's rather a type, don't you think?" drawled Irene, ignoring my query with scholastic dexterity. "He's a startling contrast to the podgy Englishman alongside, who is either Major Pendennis or Sir Lucius O'Trigger. And speaking of resemblances, there's Becky Sharp, in the pink linen, under the oleander arch. She's arguing with Mr. Dombey. She wants him to take her cross-country riding this morning, though he'd much prefer a wicker chair here on the verandah—"

"And yonder is the Master of Ballantrae, scowling at his cold muffins," said I.

"And Mr. and Mrs. Peterkin, asking the Lady from Philadelphia whether they shall wear full dress to Guard Mount," said

Irene, fanning herself absently with her Sacred Sculptures. There are times when Irene betrays an almost incredible familiarity with profane literature. "And the Fair One with the Golden Locks scolding the waiter for spilling her chocolate; and King Lear playing dominoes with Mr. Dooley—"

"I do wish your Floating Prince would look this way," I persisted. "His shoulders are so familiar—"

"My Floating Prince, indeed! You're so nonsensical, Philura!" said Irene, quite tart. And, oddly enough, her freckles stood out still more as she followed my eye. "Do finish your breakfast. Have you forgotten that Lieutenant Wallis will be here in half an hour?"

Meekly I finished my coffee.

The day before, Cousin Lucius had come ashore and taken us to tea at the Governor's Palace, then to dinner aboard the *Texas*. To-day, he had detailed Lieutenant Wallis as our escort for a day of exploration, with

severe instructions to me, that I might play with his pretty soldiers, but I mustn't break them, nor lose them, like Tom Sawyer's pinch-bug. Soon Lieutenant Wallis appeared, so dazzling in white duck that I felt like tying a pinafore on him before starting out. And off we went, to explore.

First we were bound for ten o'clock Parade, then the Alameda, then across the Neutral Ground to the Carteya Excavations (for Irene's special delectation) then down to Algeçiras for a glimpse of modern Spain. But Gibraltar alone is a whole world-full of delight. It's just a runaway fairy story, caught and imprisoned in amber brick and silvery stone. At every turn, behold some fresh enchantment: a turbaned Moor, a sombre-eyed priest, a file of laughing Spanish peasants, a bewitching blue or scarlet regiment, swinging by to a quickstep that would make even the haughty bronze statues in the Alameda skip on their solemn bronze toes. The town goes scrambling up-hill, all yellow walls, and tiny green gardens, and

gay tiled roofs, and slim Juliet balconies, and twenty dozen seductive little Moorish shops, as if it were running a race with the merry blue sea below. At the top, you can look away off, down on the town, and the ramparts, and the crowded shipping, with the flags of all nations fluttering and gleaming, scarlet, orange, snowy white, against the dazzling blue. Then your eyes turn southward, across the dancing water, to the faraway azure mountain shadow that sets your heart to thumping when you realize that there lies Africa, the mystic, mighty Unknown. Unfortunately my heart neglected to thump, for just as Irene was beginning to enlarge poetically, down the street came the most engaging troop of navy-blue sailors in funny flat-footed caps, led by a regimental band, playing a march that brought me to the right-about like an incantation. I flew after them promptly; poor protesting Irene and Lieutenant Wallis had to follow; and we chased them all the way to the barracks. It didn't seem far to me,

but Irene lamented loudly. And most of the way was down a cobble-stoned hill, so it was rather hot and puffy, coming back. Then on the way up-hill, we found a cunning twisty street, named Gunner's Lane, —one of the Paths That Made Themselves, as Peter Pan would say. And there we stumbled upon three irresistible shops, which proved, alas, my swift undoing. In the first, I found an inlaid tribal gun, which I simply had to buy for Jerry. In the next, an engraved mirror for Mother. In the third, a bust of Apollo, which I seized for Father's desk, despite Irene's chill assurances that its near-marble nose would melt before we could reach the hotel.

"You'll have to charter a freight steamer home, at this rate," said the laden Mr. Wallis, mildly.

"I'd like to take the shop along too," said I, gazing covetously round the tiny dusky space, crammed like a jewel box with priceless trumpery. "And that poetic old Moor shopkeeper, too. Pipe and all. Let's find

one of those cunning yellow cabs, and load my trophies into that. We—Oh, is that a bugle? Come, quick, Irene!”

Another regiment came swinging down the flowery lane. A scarlet one, this time, with barbaric horsehair fringes, and slender glittering guns, and grim sunburnt football faces,—“Queen’s Own,” Mr. Wallis called them. I dropped my gun and pursued them, for, as I explained over my shoulder to the irritated Irene, the Queen’s Own was the regiment from which all the heroes of the modern English novels are invariably recruited, and this was an incomparable opportunity to investigate Literature in the making. Unluckily the Queen’s Own didn’t care to be investigated, for they struck up a double-quick, and Mr. Wallis and I were left gasping behind.

“If we meet another regiment, Philura, I shall blindfold you and lead you past by main force,” said Irene, wrathfully. “We’re late for Parade this minute. No, dear, I’ll have to be firm with you. You do

not want another of those papier-mâché bronzes, nor any more celluloid-ivory statuettes, either. Mr. Wallis, can't we check this bric-à-brac here, in the shop, till we return?"

"That reverend old bandit would swap 'em for worse imitations yet," said Mr. Wallis, dubiously. "Put not your trust in the Faithful, for they hold it a sacred duty to skin the heretic White Dog whenever there's a show. It's an even chance—I say, listen! Isn't that the Blue Bells of Scotland? Hooray, there comes the Black Watch!"

"The Black Watch!" I cried, and dropped my parasol. Irene clutched my sleeve. But Irene wasn't in time.

"You and the bric-à-brac wait here," I called back, as we pelted away. I was ashamed to leave Irene, and I knew that she was disgusted with me beyond words. But, oh! With that first skirl of the pipes, my childhood was coming back to me, in big jumps. And when I glimpsed the

sun-flash on the bayonets, and the tossing plumes, and the fierce eyes, gleaming beneath, the long years rolled back like a curtain of magic. I was clinging high on Father's shoulder, with Mother on tiptoe beside us, high up in the window on Princes Street, to watch the troops sweep past, that one beautiful joy-month that we three spent in Scotland together. So down that scorching hill I flew, as if on the trail of all my dreams at once.

Mr. Wallis flew too, but with less enthusiasm. Presently I said we'd go back, for he was getting rather white around the mouth, and I remembered Cousin Lucius' stern injunctions. We found the little shop, with some difficulty,—for Gibraltar streets play ring-around-a-rosy with your bump of locality. And there in the darkest corner, rigid on a broken-nosed caryatid, sat Irene, looking like a rebellious Patience on her monument. She sat shading her eyes with a guide-book, and she'd drawn down her blue veil, which struck me as rather

queer, for the shop was dark as a pocket, and dismally hot.

"How tired you do look, Irene!" said I, conscience-smitten. "Come, let's go into the fresh air. Oh, I beg your pardon!"

This last because in the gloomy doorway I had bumped violently against a gentleman, in sun-helmet and goggles, just entering. The man passed me with a courteous, preoccupied bow.

"That's your Floating Prince from the terrace, Irene," whispered I, as we regained the sunshine.

"Prince Nonsense!" said Irene, so tartly that Mr. Wallis recoiled for an astonished whistle. "Philura, where's your yellow cab? I'm tired."

"I'll find one." Lieutenant Wallis bolted round a blossomy corner. But—Joy be! Instead of a cab, he brought back three winsome grey-velvet donkeys, with high red saddles, and glittering patent-leather hoofs, and jingling bells!

"Mercy, Mr. Wallis! Must we ride them?"

"Not a cab in sight," he explained. "Oh, please, Miss Bradbury!"

It took some time to cajole the scandalised Irene aboard the prettiest one. At length, we cantered gaily across the hills to the Parade-ground. However, we were just in time to see the last regiments dispersing, and to meet the glass of fashion returning to town, within whose supercilious gaze, alas, we saw reflected the sad truth that donkeys and blue veils and lumpy bundles of bric-à-brac are *persona non grata* at a dress review. Somewhat subdued, we retreated on the Alameda. There consolation awaited us; for we met Ned Douglass, and he delightedly secured another donkey and joined our cavalcade, despite Lieutenant Wallis' inhospitable glare. And away we went, down the long breakneck slopes, across the sandy Neutral Ground, then out upon the wide gay Spanish plain; a place so strange, it seemed like riding through the gateway to some fantastic unknown planet, yet so familiar that I caught myself shading my

eyes and gazing across the sandy spaces for Don Quixote, ambling upon his Rosinante, for The Glass King's daughter, galloping upon her snow-white mule, with the spunglass diamonds flashing on her bare brown arms, and threaded in her black hair.

Isn't it puzzling, that the same hour, the same identical experience, can bring such different memories to different minds?

To Mr. Wallis, for all his chivalrous dissembling, that hot endless day spent in guiding two ecstatic pilgrims must have meant linked misery, long drawn out. To bad Ned Douglass, it meant reprieve from carrying Mrs. Kenmore's Bag, and hearken-
ing to New Thought. But to me it was just an endless chain of jewelled hours. Before us lifted soft sloping hills, veiled in their tender springtime green, misty with that silver bloom that lies like rumped down on the cheek of a baby grape-leaf. Below, the mellow valleys flamed red with poppies, and shone star-white with anemone. Here and there a group of hoary olives mounded

their grey shadows against the turquoise sky. The wind blew coaxingly, so fragrant from its leagues of violet hills that it was like the fling of blossoms in your face. The loitering colourful groups we passed all gave us friendly greeting. Soldiers in white or scarlet; sailors in swaggering blue; brawny peasant women from La Roque, who strode through the limestone dust in singing files, leading adorable donkeys laden to the gunwale with baskets of fresh-baked bread, with panniers full of indignant fettered hens, with huge sacks of perfumy new-mown grass, all dappled through with flowers. Then top-lofty Moors, with yellow shoes, and puffy white trousers, precisely like the rompers Cousin Arethusa's children wear at home, and vast manyfolded turbans, and dark, incurious eyes. And children, children, children, scattered thick as poppies, all the way. It was all a world of happy ease, gracious, sweet-hearted, indolent, well-pleased with itself, unquestioning friends with you. And my

day would have been one flawless crystal of delight, if only—*if only!*—

Irene should have been happy, too; for half the time she burrowed like an ardent mole in the Noble Dust and Ashes-of-Greatness that her soul adores; and the other half, she popped off her Kodak, now at an unsuspecting ruin, now at our train of impudent, velvet-eyed children (so grimy they were, poor little dears, that they'll show up in the prints like piccaninnies.) The rest of us endured till three o'clock; then, half starved, I implored her to cease her labors and go with us in search of food.

"There's a jolly little inn, only a mile off," Mr. Wallis seconded me eagerly. He had been looking like Loathèd Melancholy in white duck for some time. "They say they have the corkingest pretty waitresses, and—and no end of local colour," he finished in a scramble, for Irene's eye was upon him.

"But we don't want local colour. We want local substance," entreated Ned. He gazed on Irene with plaintive pleading.

"Ham and eggs and beefsteak, and two kinds of pie. Miss Bradbury, really—"

Irene knelt by a prostrate monolith.

"Well, let me copy this inscription," she insisted reluctantly. "Mr. Wallis, can you decipher it? It is so obliterated that I cannot discern whether it is Latin or some earlier tongue."

"Sure," said Mr. Wallis, promptly. He focused his glass. "It's plain Spanish. "Tourists-are-requested-not-to-appropriate-souvenir-stones-from-this-amphitheatre—nor-souvenir-bones-from-the-Cim'ntério.'"

"Thank you," said Irene, quite pink, and very calm. "How much farther to the inn, did you say?"

Ah, that Spanish inn, the Cruz del Oro! I've tried my very best to put it all down in black and white, to amuse Father. But black and white can never portray it. You need all the rainbow pigments, all Rubens' crimsons, and Murillo's dull stained golds, and Goya's dusky grape purples, besides. Low-browed, rose-garlanded, its drowsy court-

yard cooled with fountain spray and lit by slant dusty sunbeams—Oh, for the twentieth time that day, I pinched myself to make sure it was not a dream.

However, when luncheon arrived, I need not pinch myself. Alas, as Ned said grimly, that luncheon was no dream! First came inscrutable little oily fishes, possessing, as Mr. Wallis delicately phrased it, the true aroma of antiquity. Then an appalling stew; "Potage à la Ellis Island," Ned christened it. "Potage à la the Ark," Mr. Wallis corrected him. Whereat we shiveringly put down our spoons, and turned to the really attractive-looking omelet.

"Omelette Surprise," said Ned, languidly. "With chocolate ice-cream, or else pistachio-and-pineapple inside. I do hope they serve a nut sauce, and have it properly piping hot."

The cream didn't appear, but omelette surprise it certainly was. No two mouthfuls alike, save that a dominant note of garlic pervaded the whole. Ned generously offered

his share to Lieutenant Wallis. Lieutenant Wallis nibbled one corner with the deliberation of a shipwrecked mariner beginning on his last sea-biscuit. Irene, who prides herself on her adaptability to every demand of travel, however irksome, gulped down two mouthfuls, with stern purpose, but blanching cheek.

"Coffee?" Irene inquired of the hostess, as a last resort.

"Coffee? No' coffee to-day. Mañana," she responded, beaming. Then, for the first time in my unthinking days, I realised the poignant significance, the tragic racial weakness implied in that one word—Mañana.

"Give me three grains of corn, Mother," warbled Ned, feebly. "'Only three grains of corn. 'Twill keep the little life I have—'"

"But," the hostess smiled fondly upon our hopeless faces, "but would you desire a Duck, Signorina?"

"A duck!" "Mil gracias!" "Oui!" "Sure!" "But no garlic dressing." "Non

pas." "Nevermore." "Not on your life!"

How we did cheer up as she hurried away! It was growing surprisingly dark, and the "atmosphere," reinforced by various smokes of cookery, was almost thick enough to slice; but nothing mattered, in the glorious prospect of the Duck. We talked and sang and told stories; even Irene unbent, and dimpled charmingly at Mr. Wallis' tale of the Serious Subaltern and the Ambiguous Admiral. The two pretty, shy maids hovered in the deep window and watched us with wondering night-black eyes. The low fire crackled and purred; the shadows thickened; the time went on, and on, and on.

We were glassy-eyed and faint when, with a flourish of trumpets, the Duck appeared, its lordly proportions sheathed beneath a copper lid the size of a wash-boiler. Instantly we all revived. Mr. Wallis seized the carving-knife—(a bandit's dirk in its palmy days, I'll swear), and with breezy aplomb, set to his task.

Alas, as I watched his struggles, I owned

a harrowing suspicion that that luckless bird had been torn from the bosom of his family—including the grandchildren—purposely to make a tourist holiday. Presently Mr. Wallis, grimly composed, but mortified cherry-pink, laid down the knife to get his breath.

"I always win the Varsity wrestling matches," said Ned. "Let me get a strangle hold, and try. Kindly talk of something light and cheerful in the meantime."

Gaily we told a few more stories, our pitying eyes glued to the wall. . . .

"I'd forgotten that Keats used to live in Spain," remarked Ned, at length, with the sigh of hard defeat.

"*Keats?*" queried Irene.

"And at this very inn, too," said Ned pensively, "Don't you remember?"

"'Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations—'"

Whereat Lieutenant Wallis arose and assaulted him with the dish-cover.

Our turquoise sky was curtained dark with menacing clouds as we weakly gained the outer air. Away to the south the Rock glimmered, like a vast prow of steel, then vanished behind a racing horde of cloud-shapes, tempest-black. The wind had veered from its violet beds, and now rushed straight down the mountains, cold as November, shrieking like a troop of hunted fier¹s. But deaf to our hostess' wails that we would be drowned, burnt up by lightning, or else beaten to pulp by thunder-stones—her own poetic phrase!—we strapped my bric-à-brac, —mirror, Apollo, gun and all,—to Irene's saddle-bow, clambered upon our patient steeds, and started away.

“Hi, Signora!” Ned pulled up. “Isn't there a shorter cut back to the city? Through the hills yonder, maybe?”

The Signora comprehended, eagerly. There was, indeed, a path; a mere *camino de perdices*.

“‘*Camino de perdices?*’”

“‘Highway of the partridges,’” trans-

lated Mr. Wallis. "A half-broken trail, that we'll have to follow as the birds do—by instinct."

"Then I'll yield command to the other donkey," and Ned dropped his bridle on Pegasus' neck. Mr. Wallis and I followed suit. But poor Irene, who was ahead, must needs keep mandatory hold of her bridle. That's the eternal disadvantage in possessing a strong sense of personal responsibility. You never realise when it's best to yield somebody else the whip-handle.

At first the "partridge highway" trotted meekly on a level, but soon it fled to cover between wild ragged hills. And there our woes began. Not gentle Andalusian slopes, but rocky steeps, and black brigandish ravines, with never a hut nor a human being in sight. The rain thrashed down like icy pebbles, the wind shook us and pounded us and hooted at us—an insolent Spanish wind it was, with a jeer in every blast. It grew so dark that we could scarcely see the white stones that marked our foothold along the

slanting shelf-trails; we were soaked, and freezing, and sulky—and scared.

Suddenly, at the tip-top of the wildest, wickedest ledge, the *camino de perdices* spread its wings and simply flew away. There we perched, like four scared beetles on a telegraph pole. Not a ghost of a path ahead: breakneck rocky walls on either side; and below, black in shadow, the roar of the swollen mountain torrent along a fathomless gorge.

“This trail must go *somewhere*,” insisted the dauntless Irene. “It can’t melt into thin air. Get up, Fra Diavolo!”

Fra Diavolo put all four patent-leather hoofs together, and hooked them into the rock. Irene smacked him with her sodden parasol. Fra Diavolo loosened one foot long enough for a reproachful kick, then screwed himself neatly together again.

“Please don’t, Miss Bradbury,” Ned implored; “if he should buck here, you’d go headlong. Wait till Wallis and I prospect a bit.”

Irene yielded, resentfully. There we two sat, in the black downpour, like irate equestrian statues, while the two boys, half-blinded by rain and darkness, clambered and groped and peered.

"There's a path, after all," said Mr. Wallis, reappearing after some moments, like a drowned Jack-in-the-Box. "We'll have to go slow, for the rock is like wet glass. Come along, now, you fat rascal. Take your feet out of that crack. Hike, Bucephalus, will you?"

No, Bucephalus wouldn't. Not he. As moved by one maddening emotion, the four donkeys backed together and stood, heads down, one rooted mass of obstinacy.

"Let's rope 'em together and make a bobsled," suggested Ned, exasperated. "Get along there!"

His vindictive slap missed Bucephalus and clipped Fra Diavolo. Shocked from his statuesque calm, the Fra bolted the phalanx, and clattered straight down that ghastly cliff.

"Come on, Philura! It isn't half as bad

as it looks!" shrieked Irene above the storm. I followed, *not* courageously—too scared to stay behind.

Sixty feet down, we found the path; a ridge-pole ledge, the river roaring on our left; on our right, a sheer drop into the blackness. My very soul quailed within me. Even the donkeys held back. But Irene's blood was up. She hammered and prodded Fra Diavolo across that giddy crest as blithely as if she urged him over the Rustic Bridge at Central Park.

Suddenly something struck me squarely on the head. Another blow followed: then another.

"Bandits!" I gasped, and shut my eyes. "Oh, if we only had the landlady's dirk! Oh, oh!"

"Hang on, for dear life! Keep your heads down! Worst hail-storm I ever saw!" yelled Mr. Wallis. "Stop, Miss Bradbury, you can't tell where you're going! Stop, I say!"

But Irene pounded straight ahead, and I

followed, terrorised to helpless yielding. All at once, I looked up. Directly down the path, not fifty feet ahead, I glimpsed a toiling muffled shape—a man on a donkey, stooped almost double against the storm.

“Irene, be careful!” I screamed. But the wind blew my voice straight back into my throat, and Irene labored straight on. “Irene, don’t hustle Fra Diavolo so! You’ll run right over him, and his donkey, too. Oh! Oh! Oh!”

For, blind without her glasses, and bewildered by the storm, Irene had lashed Fra Diavolo into a gallop. Down the hill they sped, like a catapult, straight upon that toiling muffled pair. And bowled them like two united ten-pins, right over the edge and down the hill!

And then, without one word, Irene sprang from Fra Diavolo and dashed down after.

“I haven’t killed him, after all,” she called up, calmly, as the boys and I, breathless and sick with terror, reached the ledge. “But he is badly stunned, and his head is hurt, too.

Creep down over those loose stones—careful, Mr. Wallis! There! Now we'll lift him, together. Philura, please stop screaming, and help Mr. Douglass pull him over the edge."

I stopped, and I pulled. Together we stretched our limp victim in the path, and loosened his great storm-hood. He lay as collapsed as a rag doll, his eyes shut, his gauntleted hands dropping flat. There was a deep cut squarely across his forehead. His face was covered with blood.

"I think your engraved mirror did that," said Irene, pleasantly. "And the bust of Apollo hit him over the head. I distinctly heard it crack. Give me your handkerchief, Mr. Wallis."

Steady as an ambulance surgeon, she mopped away the blood. Then she looked down into his unconscious face. And at that one look, her cheeks went whiter than his own, and, with one stricken word, she dropped back, ashen and trembling, against Fra Diavolo.

"Oh, Irene, what is it?" I screamed. "Is

he dead? Did you kill him? Why, Irene Kemper Bradbury! It's your Floating Prince! Your Floating Prince!"

Whereat the victim feebly opened one battered eye.

"'Irene Kemper Bradbury?'" he remarked in an affable whisper. "'Irene?' Is this Gibraltar? Or is this West Newton, Massachusetts? Do I wake or dream? 'Irene?'"

CHAPTER THIRD

NOBODY said Boo for one endless moment. Merely we stared at each other, in a wild surmise. Presently the Prince opened the other eye.

"My dear Miss Philura!" he exclaimed, cheerily. "What a long three months since we met! At Beauregard Lodge."

"Oh! Oh!" I began wildly. "You used to be—you were—"

"I *am*—Reginald Chase Beauregard, Tom Beauregard's brother," he explained, with a charming smile. "At his Christmas house-party, you remember? Perhaps my being smooth-shaven confuses you. I had a full beard then."

"Oh, of course!" I cried, humiliated unspeakably. "How could I fail to know you! And Irene and I saw you this morning, and nicknamed you her Floating Prince—Oh, I

do beg your pardon! Miss Bradbury, this is Mr. Beauregard. Although—haven't you met before?"

"I certainly had the honour of meeting Miss Bradbury some years since, in Massachusetts," said Mr. Beauregard, promptly. He sprang up to bow over Irene's hand, a demoralised but most distinguished object, from the blue bump on his handsome forehead to the mud on his smart shoes. Irene accepted his devoirs with freezing calm. But he went on, serenely regardless. "We have mutual friends still, the Stafford Peabodys, through whom, by the way, I learned of your projected Mediterranean journey. How pleasant that our paths should cross! Or rather—" he glanced at his miry raiment; his eyes began to dance, "Or, rather—ah—collide."

Now that was my last straw. Down I dropped, shrieking, on the nearest boulder. Everybody succumbed. Even poor infuriate Irene leaned against Fra Diavolo and wiped her eyes.

"I never c-can make sufficient apology," choked Irene, melted by mingled shame and giggles to lovely rose-flushed humility.

"You certainly can't—for my carelessness in never glancing behind me," agreed the Prince. "Now it's just two hours till the Sunset Gun and Lock-Out Time. That's a pretty scant margin; but can't I persuade you all to stop at the North Front Guard-Room, my friend Major Brettenham's headquarters, for a cup of tea? He'll be delighted, I know. To be sure, the time is rather short, and we don't want to risk—"

He paused. Nobody had said one syllable. But our ravening faces were eloquent. *Tea!*

"We dined at the Cruz del Oro," Ned explained meekly.

"You dined at the Cruz del Oro!" Mr. Beauregard fairly chortled. "You poor starved wretches! We'll stop at Brettenham's and eat him out of house and home, even if we must scale the ramparts to get into the Rock later. Come on, everybody! All aboard!"

"And, five minutes ago, we were rescuing you!" sighed Lieutenant Wallis, rapt.

"Turn about is fair play," laughed the Prince. "Good, it's lifting a little! Now as we turn the ledge, watch for the view!"

Even as he spoke, the grey cloud-murk swept back, like vast lifting tapestries. Broad across the sea, the plain, the looming splendor of the Rock itself, blazed the sunset, one vast trumpet-call of flame.

Bedraggled objects though we were, Major Brettenham welcomed us royally. He hurried Mr. Beauregard away to tie up his broken head, while his striker, a nice anxious Irishman, made tea, and Irene and I compared notes on our own injuries, and tucked in surreptitious pins. I was thankful that the Guardroom offered no mirror, for rain and wind had conspired to fluff Irene's hair into most reprehensibly becoming disarray, and her cheeks were like red roses, and her eyes like stars, all of which would have depressed her to deepest gloom, had she but known. Consequently I behaved like a per-

fidious pig, and assured her that I had left my purse-mirror at home, although it was even then in my hand, and I was longing for a peep at it myself.

Tea was delicious beyond words. We lavished gratitude on Major Brettenham till that amiable gentleman grew pink and perspiring with embarrassment, we ate like famished orphans at a Sunday-school picnic. The poor Major, how chagrined he was when the little cakes gave out! But the deficit wasn't surprising, considering that Mr. Wallis ate nine, and Ned eleven, and for myself, I stopped counting. They were the loveliest little cakes I ever dreamed of. I do wish I had the recipe, to make some for Jerry when I get home.

"We must be off," said Mr. Beauregard, rising regretfully. "Pray do not gaze so critically at my costume, Mr. Wallis. It may fall short, here and there, yet—"

There was a general shout. Fall short, indeed! Major Brettenham had made him change his soaked clothes for a fatigue suit

of his own. Now Major Brettenham is short and stont, while the Prince, like Barbary Allen's coffin, is long and narrow. And—perhaps the least said, the soonest mended. The dnck tronsers were high-water mark, the sleeves, as Ned felicitously put it, were the correct elbow length, the coat stopped short midway his spine. However, Mr. Beauregard is one of those tall, swinging, stunning men who can carry off a Tuxedo or a suit of chain armor with equal ease; and he wasn't cowed, even by armholes that skewered him, and a collar that hnnched past his ears.

"Hurry, Philura," urged Irene nervonsly, as we trooped out, stuffed and beaming. "If we should be locked ont of the Rock—Listen! Oh-h!"

For thundering across the sandy spaces boomed one deep pitiless report—the sunset gun.

"Whe-ew! That settles us!" gasped Ned.

"Go on, go on!" shouted Major Brettenham, reassuringly, to onr panic-smitten outcries. "Yon can cut through the foot-pas-

sage, donkeys and all. So glad you came! Do stop in to-morrow! Good-bye!"

Headed for home, my donkey went like the wind. The great gate clanged shut as the boys and I dashed up the last stretch. But through the narrow foot-passage we shot, like homing rabbits. Ned, who was ahead, rammed bow on into an angry Spanish gentleman who was on his precipitate way outward, which delayed matters; but two minutes later, we found ourselves safely inside, and wildly exulting.

"Only—only—" then my breath failed me, "where is Irene?"

"Miss Bradbury? Mr. Beauregard? Oh, they'll make it!" insisted Ned. "They've got three minutes more—"

I fled back through the passage—just in time for the closing tableau of the day. Not a hundred yards away stood Irene, embodied Fury, dragging for dear life on Fra Diavolo's rigid bridle; behind her, the Prince flogging Fra Diavolo with two umbrellas and my Moorish gun: and, central figure of the trag-

edy, Fra Diavolo himself, who stood head down, all four feet clinched, the Rock of Gibraltar in miniature. . . .

"Sorry, Miss," said the apologetic Tommie Atkins at my elbow. The footway gate crashed shut.

"Never mind, they'll get in somehow," Ned consoled me. "Beauregard's name is a household word; he'll climb in on the strength of his books about Tibet, if he can't scramble over any other way. Don't worry, Miss Philura. Now, I'm going to take this wilted Pride of his Country down to the Alexandra Hotel, and order two chickens, with giblet gravy, and trimmings to match. That will revive his drooping spirit, if anything will. Good night!"

And he grasped the pallid Mr. Wallis kindly by the hand, and led him away.

Later.

I stopped for dinner, then fell asleep, and only awoke at midnight, when Irene came in. It is now very late, but I shall sit up and

transcribe these last events, for there is no human breast near me to confide in, and if I cannot find some outlet, I shall certainly explode before morning.

"Did you have much trouble getting in, Irene?"

Irene looked tranquilly past me. She removed her wet dejected hat, its blue veil dripping over one ear, with unshaken hands. She was splendidly calm. But I didn't press the question.

"It began with Fra Diavolo buckling his feet together," said Irene meditatively, at length.

"As he did up the gorge?" I ventured.

"Only worse. Mr. Beauregard declined to go on and leave me, and we lost valuable time in argument. When we found the Gate shut, we went back to Major Brettenham. He suggested that he furnish me an escort, back to the Cruz del Oro—"

"That dreadful inn!" I wailed, in horror. "Oh, poor Irene! You'd starve! You'd freeze! And as to sleeping in that—that—"

“So Mr. Beauregard said.” Irene unlaced a sodden gauntlet. “Then the Major tried to procure a special order admitting us. But his commanding officer was dining aboard the *Bellerophon*, and would not return till morning. Then they sent his striker to call in two or three brother officers, and talk it over.”

“That must have been interesting,” I began.

“Quite,” said Irene, in a tone that shrivelled where it touched. “Especially when you realise that my presence was the one element which turned the situation from an amusing trifle into a most annoying contretemps.”

I subsided, for a time.

“And then, Irene?”

“Then, at length, Prince—Mr. Beauregard, I mean—had a lucid interval, and remembered that he had a month’s pass for the West Water-Gate. That solved the riddle. Nothing remained, save to procure a boat, and row across. The oarsman we

found was reasonably efficient, but slow. However, we reached the West Gate by ten. . . ."

Whereat Irene arose, and started towards her room.

"Oh, Irene! Please, *please!*" I implored.

"But when the sentry demanded the pass, Mr. Beauregard recollected that, when he changed into the Major's fatigue suit, he had left the pass in his own clothes."

There was a long silence.

"You went back for it?" I whispered.

"We did not," said Irene simply. "The sentry was young, and zealous. Perhaps we *did* look like suspicious characters, although I should hardly have supposed that blue glasses and guide-books were incriminating evidence. However, Mr. Beauregard's peculiar garments, not to mention his black eye, were against him. And it seems that they have had considerable trouble with smugglers of late. With commendable caution, the sentry kept us in custody while he should investigate."

There was another pause.

"Irene, I"—I began. "I can't—of all the *unspeakable!*—Oh, I've no words to express it!"

"So Mr. Beauregard said. Although he talked quite a great deal, nevertheless. So did the sentry, who persisted in misunderstanding why Mr. Beauregard should have on an officer's clothes, especially clothes which were so obviously not his own. They both became quite irritable. Mr. Beauregard is rather—emphatic—at times." Here Irene grew retrospectively pink. "And the sentry was almost vituperative. Quite a crowd collected, too."

"Did *they* say anything?" I murmured, palely.

"They were American and English sailors, ashore on leave," replied Irene. "They appeared to be laying wagers as to the outcome in case of direct personal combat."

Then I lay back, quite spent.

"Would you mind telling me whether they took you to the police station?" I entreated.

“Dear Philura, you are so imaginative!” murmured Irene. “At the height of the contention, I recollected that I had your cousin the Admiral’s card in my hand-bag, with the *Texas* address. I handed it to the sentry. The result was amazing. He apologised, promptly and humbly, and allowed us to proceed without another word. Only he did say, over and over, ‘I don’t see as ’ow I come to be so block-headed, Miss. You must h’excuse me. I might a’knowed you was some of them batty Americans.’ Good-night, Philura. Don’t rock so violently, child, you’ll tip over. Happy dreams.”

Happy dreams, indeed! I managed to crawl into my bed. There I lay for hours, too exhausted with alternate wails and giggles to sleep. Finally, ever so late, I began to imagine that there was somebody on our balcony, for it seemed as if some odd flowing shadow drifted to and fro against the blind. I knew that was all nonsense; but soon the caged nightingales on the terrace began to sing, very softly. That was irre-

sistible. I crept to the window and drew back the blinds, to listen—and there, tall and silent by the marble balustrade, stood Irene! She wore a long robe, dull red in the light, black in shadow. Her hair was down her back, in two big bumping braids; in the starlight, her cheeks were carmine: her eyes were deeper stars.

“What are you doing, Irene?” I cried, aghast.

“Cooling off,” said she, with a laugh. “Run along, honey. Let Cross-Patch calm her angry temper while she may.”

Calming her temper sounds all very plausible. Although, from her scarlet cheek, her flashing eye, I’d have thought she was nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

I do hope Irene isn’t going to be ungracious to Mr. Beauregard. Surely it isn’t his fault, poor fellow, that she and Fra Diavolo rolled him down the hill, and that the Major’s clothes didn’t fit him, and that the sentry was so unnecessarily conscientious. And if we are to keep on meeting him—not to

say, colliding with him—all over Europe, it will be really quite pleasant. He's such a charming, companionable sort that I hope we may see him often. Although, delightful as he is, Irene is so incensed by this ridiculous tragedy that she'll probably snub him to annihilation whenever the occasion offers itself.

And yet she may not, after all.

It's odd; but you never can tell, about Irene.

CHAPTER FOURTH

*April third. Gibraltar. Up in my little
rose-latticed room.*

BEING homesick for Mother and Jerry is like having toothache; the old-fashioned coming-and-going kind, I mean. When events are falling thick and fast, as yesterday, with donkeys and regiments and the duck and Irene and the Prince, all making history at once, it quiets down. But when I'm alone on the balcony, or here in my pink frilly room, then I remember, and the lonesomeness wakes up, and aches, and aches. And the least little outside thing starts it up, too. It was Mother's darling letter that brought it on to-day. There were twenty-one pages of it, and it dealt almost exclusively with Jerry, past, present, and future. For, while Mother believes herself sternly

consistent in her treatment of me, yet she *will* temper justice with mercy, and temper it so far that there's nothing but mercy left. By rights, Jerry's mere name should be Anathema. Yet by the third sheet she was telling me how well he looked in his new riding clothes, and about his boat being entered for the June races, and how the thumb he cut at the fencing tournament was all healed up. I was so grateful for that last message, for I had been painfully exercised about that thumb. He *wouldn't* keep it bandaged, and I used to lie awake nights on the steamer, wondering if he would have lockjaw before I could get back.

It was too lovely of Mother. Yet her tender understanding only made my ache the worse. I tried to dull it by taking a long walk with Ned Douglass, and eating a great many chocolates, but that only added fuel to the flame. Hour after hour, I wretchedly faced it. But finally my courage all gave way.

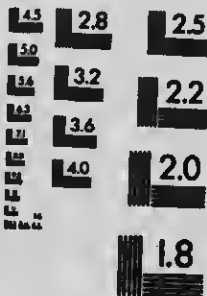
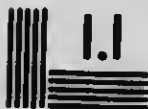
Desperate and tearful, I propped Jerry's



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photograph on the desk, sat down before it, seized my pen—and wrote my very heart out to him. I must have used up nearly a quire of my best stationery; but it was worth it. I told him every single thing since we said Good-bye. All about the trip over, and how happy his flower letter had made me, and about Ned Douglass, and the *Texas*, and the Prince and Irene being locked out and arrested, and everything. Moreover, I told him some things that I've never in the world dared say to him before—not in real words, that is. And, last, I put three rows of squabby curly-cue kisses.

Then I sealed and addressed it.

And put it back into my portfolio. For that letter was never to be sent. It was just a safety-valve. But it certainly did comfort me; even though Jerry would never look upon its face.

Just as I finished, Irene came in. She had on her hateful blue foulard, and she looked simply destitute, but she was as complacent as you please.

“I dressed early, for your cousin the Admiral’s deck tea,” she said. “And this gown will do for the Governor’s dance to-night, will it not?”

Of course it wouldn’t do at all. Equally of course, I chirped perfidious approval. After which, I did some strenuous thinking.

Now dear Cousin Lucius is not a snob. Never. But he is distinctly Captain on his own quarter-deck. And nothing so grinds his valorous soul as to welcome beneath his lordly awning a dowdy guest. Moreover, this tea was to be an Occasion, with many notables,—two ambassadors, an Italian count,—an Aero Club celebrity, at that,—the Governor of Gibraltar, an Austrian Grand Duke, a famous and unpronounceable Russian author, and any number of titled small-fry,—and Irene herself would be the first to realise her malapropos array.

Yet I knew she had nothing more apropos to her name.

Now, Mother had just sent me a lavish check; and Father’s last draft had ite

tempted me to buy the *Texas* for a private yacht.

I crammed some money into my purse, and slipped away up Waterport Street, vaguely confident that the solution would meet me on the way.

It did. It beckoned me on the first corner. A wee shop, overgrown with roses and tree-heliotrope, with a smart gold sign, "English Importations," peeping beneath frills of honeysuckle. And the very first "confection" which the smiling Bond Street saleswoman lifted from its flowered box was the Solution itself.

It started out in life to be pale amber chiffon. Then it was brown, then amber again, with hazy green reflections, and lustrous traceries of gold. Dull overlapping jewels framed the bodice; they looked precisely like Grandmother Townsend's topazes, with their deep golden lights and steady glow. The whole gown struck twelve in the strange rose-garland which hung from shoulder to girdle. Great loose-petaled blossoms, blend-

ing exquisitely with the mingled lucent jeweltints below.

And by way of a sublimely accommodating climax, the gown followed Irene's measurements.

That discovery clinched my resolution,—although I must admit that the price struck twelve, too.

Twenty minutes later, Irene entered my room, to find me scrambling into the Paquin lace frock and the Gainsborough hat, in which I proposed to honor my country's naval service.

"Why, Philura! That lovely, perishable gown aboard ship! At an afternoon affair! Isn't it rather—a little—"

"No, Irene, I don't think it is." I clasped on my big carved-jade necklace, with the diamond buckle. That necklace is most unsuitable for anybody, short of a dowager empress. Still, the effect is rather good, even on me. And from the moment's silence, I perceived that it was not without its effect upon Irene.

"Why, I didn't suppose a deck tea was so elaborate," she pondered, tripping into the trap so obligingly that I felt myself an utter traitor.

"Because the *Texas* is entertaining in a foreign port." I screwed my emerald wreath into my stock. "Therefore she'll wear all her fiags and warpaint, and we fellow-Americans are supposed to take her lead. Besides, with all the celebrities there—"

"Oh, if there'll be celebrities, why no matter," Irene glided sweetly out of the trap, just as I was about to shut the door. "That's the comfort of being a meek mediocrity. One can stay in the background—"

"With all the celebrities there, as I said, Cousin Lucius will like to have us toe the mark," I finished, baffled but not quenched.

That shot went home. There was a very prickly pause.

"What's all this, Philura?" queried Irene, dismissing the subject blandly. My heart

leaped up as I espied her stoop above that flowered box.

"It's an afternoon gown I bought. But it's too large for me. I do wish I could dispose of it, somehow."

Irene picked it up. And as those bronze and honey-coloured flounces billowed across her arm, my hopes began to soar.

"What did it cost, Philura?"

"Forty dollars," said I, crossing my untruthful thumbs, and reflecting that the other hundred and forty would at least look impressive, charged to "Missionaries." And Missionary work it was, too—for poor Cousin Lucius.

"What an absurd price for so perishable a thing."

I thought so myself, considering it was a Chaillot model. And I longed to offer it as a gift. But you don't bring gifts to Irene's Emersonian temperament. Not unless you want it on the other cheek, too.

"Wear it this once, Irene," I suggested, casually. Irene gasped.

"With that rose wreath! Those paillettes! Philura Curtis, I'd look like the spangled lady who jumps through hoops at the circus!"

This painful descent to the colloquial swept me past caution.

"On the contrary, Irene, you would look very suitably arrayed. At an international affair like this, everybody expects to dress the part."

"Scrambling up the ship's side on that unearthly swinging ladder is sufficiently a trapeze performance, without being 'dressed for the part,'" sniffed Irene, cruelly.

"Oh, very well," said I. "Don't wear it. Never. Not for worlds. Of course I knew you wouldn't, even to please me. Nobody loves me, anyway—"

"Philura, you know, I didn't mean to be ungracious!" wailed poor stricken Irene. "I'll wear it, I'd wear an American flag, even, rather than hurt your feelings. Give it to me, dear. It is lovely, and I do thank you for lend—"

She broke off, open mouthed, staring, dumbly horrified, at the bodice in her hands.

"We can take the wreath off, if that's too much, Irene," I breathlessly assured her.

"Take the wreath off!" Irene vouchsafed a pallid smile. "It's hardly a question of taking off, dear. Rather, of putting on. Look!"

I looked. Then, utterly defeated, I dropped my sword and fled the fray. For, in my hasty purchasing, I had never noticed that my "afternoon" gown stopped at the shoulders, a most pronounced décolleté.

"Even for an international affair," Irene could not withhold that parting thrust, "I fear that Blue Foulard and the Background will have to do for me!"

Mrs. Kenmore and the twins were our fellow-passengers in the Commander's launch, sailing out to the anchored *Texas*. There was a high wind, and a tremendous sea, and poor Mrs. Kenmore grew rather wan, despite the steadying arms of Supreme Mind.

And when it came to that glidery little jump, from the tossing gunwale of the gig to the swaying spider-web of the landing-stair, the situation became intense. I must admit that I dread that jump myself. You must crawl out, turtle fashion, from under the launch awning, bumping your head and flattening your hat en route, then balance on the knife edge of the gunwale, while the boat plunges under you like a frightened horse, and the spray blinds your eyes, and everybody, from fleet captain to last marine, hangs over the rail, and shrieks down advice and suggestions and alarmed commands. Just as they all shout "Jump, now!" the boat drops into the trough of a giant wave, and the landing-stage soars up beyond your grasp like an escaping toy balloon. In a moment, the gig goes shouldering high on a still mightier wave, which tosses it level with the stage, but fully ten feet away. So for all the howls of encouragement on deck, you must perforce clutch your hat with one hand, grip a stanchion with the other, and

sink dizzily into the next green roaring pit. When you come up at last, breathless and weak-kneed, your deck audience has quite given you up as an abject coward. It is in a silence that sears your very soul that you wait till the boat reels on the crest of the third heaving monster, draw one parting breath, shut your eyes—and alight with a sickening scrunch, squarely on the feet of the wretched midgy who gallantly awaits you on the stair. Oh, it's a parlous moment. I've often besought Cousin Lucius to swing the gig on deck properly, as they do the life-boats. This scramble is not only utterly unconventional, but utterly terrifying. But he insists that his guests would consider that to be a reflection upon their personal courage. Then I suppose that some mild amusement for the sailors is a necessity, against the monotony of navy life.

Well, I floundered across, scared but safe. Irene took it like a bird. Even the twins were coaxed and bullied over, wildly twittering. But poor Mrs. Kenmore!

"You really must hold the boat still." Thus sounded her regnant ultimatum. "I cannot move so precipitately. Order your men to tie the launch tight to the man-of-war, then lay a board across,—two boards. Then, if you will assist me at this end, and Mr. Douglass at the other, perhaps—"

"But we can't do it, Mrs. Kenmore." "The launch would careen and send us all overboard." "Please hasten, Madame. The next wave will send us close alongside."

"But not close enough," said Mrs. Kenmore, with asperity. "Kindly do as I ask, Mr. Wallis. And immediately."

Just then, the wave slid out from under the gig, and the boat shot headlong down into the gulf that followed. With that breath, her pedestal of Supreme Mind must have crumbled to dust. For I caught a horrified squeak; and as the boat came up, I perceived that she had a drowning clutch on Mr. Wallis' sleeve.

"Dear Mrs. Kenmore, really—"

"You must tie the boats together!" she

commanded him, indignantly. "Of all the careless, reckless, inhuman—"

"But it's such a short jump, Mrs. Kenmore!" implored Mr. Wallis. "Barely two feet across"—

"Two feet across, but two hundred feet down," retorted Mrs. Kenmore. Then with rising wrath, "*Do* hold this wretched boat still! If your men were properly trained in their duty, they would steady it—"

Then out spoke the Sergeant of Marines, a most sententious man.

"Mom," said he, respectfully, "my men air givin' out. We can't hold her alongside one minute longer. You kin jump, or you kin drown."

And Mrs. Kenmore shut her eyes, and vaulted to the landing-stage with faultless grace, and calm, unshaken ease.

Tea on the quarter-deck is tea—with a difference. You can't define the flavor. Perhaps it's the salt wind, or the stars on the coat-sleeves, or the thick ward-room cups, or the rollicking ship's band, romping through

dance-music that invites your very soul to take a turn, or the jolly bronzed faces, or the rattle and swish of canvas and the flames of sunlight on blinding brass and satin polished steel. Perhaps it is the blended aroma of all these things that savors your tiny fat sandwiches, and spices the almond cakes and the weird sweetmeats that greet you at every turn. Be that as it may, a quarter-deck tea is a joy forever, and something to tell your' grandchildren about after that. And the prettiest part of it all was to watch Irene. Irene indoors may be a prissy Archæologist. Irene outdoors, in wind and sun, is a charming pink-cheeked paradox, all sparkle, from curly head to slender shoe. Navy officers as a class are not slow of perception. Despite the blighting shadow of the blue foulard, I caught few glimpses of Irene, after the first half-hour. Then the *Texas* surgeon, a captivating red-headed boy, with a cleft in his chin exactly like Jerry's, had been detailed to see that I enjoyed myself, and the Russian author and

three English officers were quite nice to me, too. So I hadn't much spare time.

At the topmost wave of the frolic, Cousin Lucins sprang up and strode to the rail, with a shout of welcome that was echoed by every man on deck. My *Texas* surgeon gulped his biscuit and followed; my author, even my pretty gilt officers, hardly waited to say "Scuse." And towering above the joyful mob at the companionway, his handsome gray head aloft, battered but beaming, behold the Floating Prince himself!

"Why, Irene, how splendid!" I cried, rushing across the deck to her. "And after all the things that happened to him last night! Did you know he was coming? Why didn't you tell me?"

Irene's expression froze the words upon my guileless mouth.

"I certainly did not know it, Philura," she said, under her breath, but each word double-edged. "Had I surmised it, you can understand that I would not be here. Please drop the subject."

I dropped it. I almost put my fingers into my mouth, to pacify the scorch.

"Tut, tut, you don't need any introductions," trumpeted Cousin Lucius, as he led the embarrassed Mr. Beauregard to the biggest cushioned chair, and sent a steward scurrying below. "Everybody knows you and your Adventures. I've read your Tibet book twice over myself. Now what new Adventures, pray tell?" He tapped an autocrat finger against the Prince's damaged brow. "A stumble on the ramparts? Little altercation with a sentry, eh? Or—Spanish bandits, to be sure! Seven men in buckram suits—or was it seventeen?"

Nobody ever minds Cousin Lucius' chaff. For that matter, it wouldn't depress him if they did.

"Bandits, certainly," laughed the Prince. "Four of them. Starved, and most ferocious!" He glanced at Irene's face of stone, then caught my eye with a twinkle. For all Irene's intimidating glare, I couldn't help smiling back. Then he set himself to

parry Cousin Lucius' teasing questions, with most merciless success. Everybody crowded to hear the fun, with shouts of laughter and most disrespectful cheers whenever Cousin Lucius got a rap. Everything seemed to leap from gay to gayest, as if some invisible finger caught us and strung us up to concert pitch. All but one, that is. For Irene sat moveless, her pretty hands tied in a martyred knot, all her gay sparkle faded and gone, the very mark and pattern of a boredom even unto tears. It was too horrid of Irene, to be so ungenerous, just because of those annoying little accidents. But I needn't have so spent my righteous wrath. Nemesis had marked Irene, its lawful prey.

"Really, Philura, isn't it high time we took our leave?" she murmured presently.

"I never like to go home until I'm sent," I protested. "Besides, Mrs. Kenmore should make the first move."

"She never will," said Irene, gloomily. "She has found a kindred Supreme Mind spirit, in the commander of the *Bellerophon*."

He has a rheumatic shoulder, and she is instructing him how to cure it by denying that he has any shoulder. We may as well go now."

I opened my mouth to argue. But something in Irene's tired eyes made me yield, unwillingly, yet without question.

Our rising was the signal for a general upheaval. Our boat was lowered away, Mrs. Kenmore collected her reluctant treasures: and—just as we might have expected!—Mr. Beauregard presented himself at the stairs, and begged to return to the Rock with our party.

"If I'm not too tediously in the way," he explained, his gay glance questioning me, but with a weather-eye on the glacial Irene. However, Mrs. Kenmore welcomed him, promptly and most mellifluously. So did the twins, and myself, too. So on he came.

Thus innocent and unsuspecting, we trooped gaily down the swaying iron stair. But Nemesis was waiting for us on the bot-

tom step. And as that poor thing says in "Julius Cæsar":

"Oh, that a man might know
The end of this day's business, ere it comes!"

The wind had risen amazingly. The waves rolled impressively high, and came in a most nerve-shaking hurry. The gig hopped from crest to crest, like the Sportive Cow in the ballad. Unluckily, Mrs. Kenmore came last. By that time, all her courage had taken wings.

"No, Mr. Wallis, I cannot try that frightful crossing again. And the sea is so tempestuous that, even if I reached the gig alive, I could never survive the journey to land."

"But Mrs. Kenmore, really—"

"Please do not delay, Mr. Wallis. Daughters, Miss Bradbury will chaperone you tonight, I'm sure. I shall go back on the *Texas*, and remain until to-morrow. Then, perhaps this gale will have abated."

There was a painful pause.

"Go back on the *Texas*? Why—er—"

"Please, Mrs. Kenmore, you'll think us most inhospitable," gasped poor Mr. Wallis, pinky-purple as a morning-glory. "But this is not the—the custom, you know. You'll find it quite a lot better to go ashore, you will, indeed. You really—it isn't possible. Now, Beauregard will take your hand, and I—"

"Mr. Wallis, that is sufficient. I shall remain aboard the *Texas*. My life is too valuable to my family to be thus risked. Good afternoon."

Mr. Wallis sat back, utterly conquered. But, behold a rescuer in Irene!

"But think, Mrs. Kenmore! We can't possibly go to the Governor's dance to-night without you! It would never do!" she cried.

"Oh, Mother!" It was a wail of anguish from the twins. Mrs. Kenmore halted. Then she gave way.

"I might attempt it—" she hesitated, "if only I did not need to see that frightful abyss!"

"Then let me blindfold you!" Irene re-

crossed the "abyss" with a flying leap, twisted her lace scarf over Mrs. Kenmore's eyes—and in another moment, Mrs. Kenmore, safe, but gasping, plumped into my arms.

The gig sheered off with the force of her alighting. Irene, who was poised for her spring, stumbled back, against Mr. Beauregard, and steadied herself by clutching at a loose end of rope, which dangled over the rail of the landing-stage. The unrolled end still lay coiled on the bottom step of the stage.

As the launch swung inward again, Irene sprang aboard, with unfaltering ease. But, absent-mindedly, and most unfortunately, she kept tight hold of that rope. . . .

And by unspeakably awful coincidence, Mr. Beauregard was standing on the unrolled coil.

It all happened in such a blinding flash that nobody, not even Mr. Beauregard himself, will ever know just how it was done. I saw it, every bit, but it shot before my eyes like

a cinematograph; and all I remember is Mr. Beauregard's astonished face as his feet went out from under him. Then up rose a big green wave. And, even as I stared and gaped, Mr. Beauregard was gone.

"Oh, Irene, this time you've drowned him!" I wailed above the uproar. "Oh, Irene, he'll never come up, and he'll think you did it on purpose! Oh, Irene, Irene!"

CHAPTER FIFTH

"EASY, Mom, thar he blows," said the sententious Sergeant of Marines. And up through the green foam bobbed a pale but reassuring countenance, and a limp, clutching arm.

We promptly careened the launch and nearly swamped her in our frantic rush to the rescue. But the sailors on the landing-stage were quicker than we; and in a trice they had scooped up Mr. Beauregard and had stood him, dripping but serene, on the bottom step once more.

We hurried him aboard the gig, despite his chattering demur because of his wet clothes, and hovered over him like so many over-wrought naiads. All, that is, save the remote and supercilious Irene. I wouldn't have believed she could be so inhuman. To

be sure, it *was* rather trying for her. Still, she needn't behave as if Mr. Beauregard had climbed on that rope and let her pull him overboard with malice aforethought. Moreover, Mr. Beauregard was so jolly and so unconcerned about it all that by contrast Irene's sulkiness stood out almost as visibly as her freckles, and far more unbecomingly.

Once in our rooms, Satan of course found mischief still for my idle tongue to do.

"Irene, how can you dislike Mr. Beauregard so? He's not only one of the most brilliant writers and explorers of his time; he's perfectly splendid, just in himself. He's as kind and merry and charming as a nice overgrown boy. Is it because of these ridiculous accidents? Or didn't you like him when you knew him before?"

"'When I knew him before?'" Irene whirled on me sharply, with her two big brown braids clutched in her hands like bell-ropes. Her dark eyes blazed: a furious red burned in her cheeks. "Philura Temple Curtis! What do you mean?"

"Why, at West Newton," I answered, a bit startled. "At least, he said—"

"Oh, at West Newton!" Irene vouchsafed an irritating little shrug. "No, my dear, I did not dislike Mr. Beauregard then. I do not dislike Mr. Beauregard now. However, even you will admit that these incidents have been a little—tedious."

"Through no fault of his, though," I persisted.

"Certainly not."

"And you can't deny that he's handsome, and clever, and kind—"

"My dear Philura, I deny nothing. But let me make one meek assertion." Irene pinned the last braid mercilessly tight. "Namely: That, while your Mr. Beauregard may speak with the tongues of men and of angels; while he may possess all virtues and all graces: while he may be in all ways perfect:—Nevertheless, my one dearest hope is that I may never look upon his face again."

She picked up her brushes, and swished regally away.

As a peacemaker, I seemed rather inadequate. So I turned to the lighter task of making ready for the Governor's dance. And such a dance! Away in the heart of an ancient Convent garden, sweet as the heart of a hundred-leaved rose; guarded by ranks of tall whispering palms, walled in breast-high hedges of heliotrope, so heady in the warm sea wind that they seemed to sheathe the garden in a magical barricade of fragrance. Its endless velvety terraces carpeted with flowers, a royal stairway; its broad moon-bleached court ablaze with gorgeous uniforms, and ringing with music and high laughter, where once only grey hooded figures came and went, and only the silver shadow of the fountain rippled and gleamed against the stars.

The witchery of it all was like a lovely hurrying song. And the Arabian Nights bewilderment of it quite went to my silly head. It isn't every day that you teach the two-step to an apple-cheeked, solemn-eyed boy, who has sent ultimatums to three East

Indian potentates before breakfast, and then quelled a Bengal uprising in time for afternoon tea. Neither is it a frequent pastime of mine, to chatter Navy gossip with a mild podgy gentleman who looks exactly like a Methodist bishop in evening clothes, and whose tired expression is perhaps due to the fact that he carries Egypt in one pocket and Turkey in the other. And sherbet on a rose-wreathed marble bench, beneath an orange tree, with an Acting Colonial Secretary on one hand, and a Viennese diplomat on the other, and three robin-redbreast officers neatly arranged as background, may be sherbet—but it tastes like the brew of the gods. Oh, I walked on air that night. Yet, every now and then, I was dragged down to earth by the sight of Irene. No wind of romance blew that night for *her*. Prim and grim and forbidding she went, flat-footedly treading those marble halls in her solid street shoes and the loathed blue foulard, and never once dancing—not Irene! Instead, she devoted her evening—as she will always

do, unless forcibly restrained—to the socially maimed, halt and blind; a species of self-immolation which exasperates the onlooker, rather than edifies him. To-night her charges were five luckless tourists, who, bidden at the eleventh hour, had come without a wedding garment, and sat unhappily in shirt-waist gowns and sailor hats. Poor things, they clung to Irene like limpets. I made occasional attempts to rescue her, but their piteous faces and Irene's stony eye drove me back.

Somewhere near midnight, the Floating Prince strolled in, and made straight for me. For a man who had been pitched over a precipice, held as a spy, and drowned in the Mediterranean, all in the last twenty-four hours, he looked surprisingly fit. By threatening to call out the *Texas* and make it an international question, he took my fourteenth waltz away from the three subalterns who were quarrelling over it, then asked me to run away and sit it out with him, in the Pomegranate Court.

The Pomegranate Court was a page torn from Lalla Rookh. In the high moonlight, its sculptured walls gleamed mellow ivory; its fountains tossed irised spray against the golden flames of the great bronze lanterns, and scarfed the marble Dryad, who kneels at the brim to drink, in trembling, opaline veils. Somehow its sheer beauty caught at my heart, and sent wave after wave of aching homesickness through me. I looked up at Mr. Beauregard's grave face, standing out dark and keen against the lantern-glow. The look of it hurt me cruelly. For a minute, I couldn't think why. Then I remembered, with a quick wretched pang. So he had stood, cutlined against the yellow hearth-glow in the hall at Beauregard Lodge, when Jerry and I came dripping and laughing in, all frozen, and chortling, and blissful, that dearest of Christmas mornings—

I shut my teeth, and twisted my fan, and blinked hard.

Presently Mr. Beauregard turned to me, with his kind steady glance. He has stern

brows, and rather a stubborn chin, but he has the kindest eyes I ever saw, except Daddy's.

"I'm going to steal you for supper, too," he said, comfortably. "I've hardly seen you. I don't even know where you go from Gibraltar. Italy-and-Art? Or Paris-and-pretty-things?"

"Italy and Tombs," I said, with a smothered gulp. I told him our itinerary, and he seemed keenly interested, and remarked that it almost coincided with his own. All the while, my miserable loneliness pulsed in my aching heart. And he looked so big and gentle and comprehending that I could scarcely keep from breaking down and sobbing out my whole forlorn story: Jerry, and Mother, and our unhappy promises, and everything. Afterwards, though, I was glad I hadn't.

"Isn't that Miss Bradbury yonder?" he said, at length.

I followed his glance. There, hemmed in by her clinging satellites, sat Irene. I could

not see her face; but the droop of those blue foulard shoulders was eloquent.

We looked at each other.

"I've tried my best to break it up," I owned. "Perhaps together we could. But Irene won't like it if we do."

"Of course Irene won't like it," said Mr. Beauregard, curtly. His square chin grew a shade squarer. "Irene never does like things. But this is too flagrantly unfair. Excuse me a moment." He bolted away, leaving me wondering how he happened to call Irene by her first name. It sounded queer.

"I think I've started the avalanche," he laughed, returning, his eyes all sparkles. "But you and I must make the first charge."

Charge we did, to the amazed delight of the five tourist-bodies, and the unrelenting hostility of Irene. But the Prince's affability is frost-proof. Soon we all sat socially round a lovely mosaic table, heaped with good things. Such pâtes, such strawberries, "as big as my two thumbs!" How

I did wish Jerry was along! He never gets enough of them. And presently there drifted by two unappropriated subalterns.

"Ah, Barrington-Jones! That you, Trevor? Come to supper with us," volunteered the Prince, guilelessly cordial. They came. The five beamed and fluttered. Irene stiffened in her chair.

Then, by odd coincidence, two more officers happened along. A moment later, one more.

I looked at Irene. Implacable her brow: yet unsuspecting. I looked at the five: they were positively irradiated. I looked at the Prince: his face of bland, unblinking innocence made me clutch the arms of my chair and gasp.

Soon Lieutenant Wallis whisked me away for our waltz. At intervals, I saw the five, no longer "en phalanx," but felicitously distributed, and having the time of their lives. I couldn't see Irene, though. But after a while the Prince turned up, and stole four more dances, and made himself com-

pletely delightful. And I forgot about Irene.

A pink dawn flush crested the Rock as our jingling red-morocco chariot rattled homeward through the sleepy, flower-brimmed lanes. Irene, silent and evidently very tired, went wearily to bed. But I was wide awake: and, wild to tell all about my good times, I hunted out Jerry's safety-valve letter, and wrote a voluminous postscript. Strategies and compliments, admirals and almond-cakes, "shoes and ships and sealing wax," dripped from my flying pen. At last, suddenly drowsy, I dozed off in my chair. I awoke in full sunlight. Mercedes, the soft-eyed maid, stood there, smiling over two big gilt-corded boxes.

"Flowers, unto you and the dark Señorita," she explained, mellifluously.

Neither box bore address; but the contents showed readily which belonged to each. One was a large spray of white roses, accompanied by Mr. Beauregard's card. Obvi-

ously this dignified offering was intended for Irene, as chaperon. Equally obvious, the fluffy pink roses and stephanotis, with a similar card, were meant for me.

I put the flowers in water, and tossed the cards on the table. As they fell, I noticed something across the back of mine. I picked it up and read it. Just four lines—a quotation, at that. But as I read, I found myself suddenly very wide awake. And feeling very, very queer.

Now, it simply isn't possible that Mr. Beauregard is one bit interested in me. For one thing, I'm years and years too young. Then I'm so painfully ignorant. And I never could learn to be wise as he, no matter how hard I tried. (And I don't want to try, either.) Besides, while he is lovely to me, and begs me for dances, and makes the prettiest of speeches, still it's always in such a jolly big-brother fashion that no sane girl could ever misunderstand. Sentiment from the Floating Prince—it surely cannot be!

I looked down at the card. I glanced at Jerry, in his big silver frame. Jerry's eye was distinctly belligerent. I read the card once more.

"Where I find her not, beauties vanish:
Whither I follow her, beauties flee;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish,
June's twice June since she breathed it with me?"

It makes me feel queerer than ever. Rather unhappy, too. For he is never the man to say such things in make-believe. If I could just run to Mother, and tell her all about it! *She'd* understand. She always does. But there's nobody to tell, except Irene. And, while Irene is wise and sympathetic—still, she's hardly the one to confide in, somehow. I can't tell just how she'd take it. Because—you never can just tell, about Irene.

CHAPTER SIXTH

April thirtieth. Venice. In a large, shivery marble palace, furnished with four gilt mirrors, one onyx table, and one Apollo in a shrimp-pink toga, who eternally lashes the Sun Chariot at a gallop across the ceiling, with a troop of excited pop-eyed cherubs fluttering at his heels. Outside, a grey, wind-swept lagoon, a hooded sky.

ACCORDING to the calendar, it is three weeks since my last journal entry. According to my own bitter conviction, it is three years. Ever since that far-away mystic dance in that shadowed Garden of Dreamland, we have trodden the dusty roads of grim daylight Reality. No more beguiling red-coat fifes and drums send us flying to our balcony; no more gay drives

nor royal quarter-deck frolics lure us from our lofty quest. Throughout these endless days, we know naught save Archæology. We speak, we breathe, we live, in Archæology. For myself, we all but die in Archæology.

To show my sympathetic interest in Irene's pursuits, I spent our first morning in Rome buying various lovely souvenirs; an ebony chair, an adorable gold-leaf panel with angel heads, and, best of all, an exquisite fragment of a marble well-curb, carved in lotus petals, which the dealer assured me he had dug with his own hands from the ruins of the Emperor Nero's favourite villa. All these I bought joyously to add to her collection. But the minute Irene saw them, she sent for the dealer, and how she did talk to him! And he went away sorrowfully, not to say blasphemously, and took with him all my dear Discoveries, for they were not only imitations, but most flagrant and scandalous imitations at that. As Irene said, even a silly like Nero wouldn't

use a plaster-of-paris well-curb, with "Made in Germany" blown along the edge. All this, naturally, has depressed me very much.

Then, for some unexplained whim, Irene has twisted our itinerary out of all natural semblance. The hill towns, which were to be first, will now be last, and Naples and Sicily will be ours in a fortnight. At first, I had supposed that we might encounter the Floating Prince again; but this altered route has dashed my hopes. I suggested as much to Irene, but she didn't seem interested. However, I'm positive that I glimpsed him crossing the Campo at Siena, and I started to run after him, then reflected that, after his rose-message it would hardly do. Yet surely I must have dreamed those roses, and that simpering rhyme. Mr. Beauregard and schoolboy sentiment! Perish the thought. It cannot be. However, that tell-tale card stares up at me whenever I open my portfolio. . . .

—"Is there no method, to tell her in Spanish, June's twice June since she breathed it with me?"

It's all an enigma. And to puzzle over it makes me homesick—which is worse still.

Perhaps homesickness, not Archæology, is the real groundwork of my discontent. Outwardly, everything is beautiful for me. Irene is a dear. Always. The Kenmores, who are stopping at a lovely frivolous hotel on the Calle Grand, are so sweet and hospitable that I blush hourly for my censorious sins. Ned Douglass, right across our Canal, spends his days taking us sight-seeing, his nights conducting gondolier serenades on our late-Renaissance doorstep. Yet all these dear people, all Venice, all the world heaped up, counts but an air-blown bubble against the one thing that I really want, the one face that I'm all but starved to see. And that's Jerry, Jerry, Jerry.

Awhile ago, it was Mother, too. But now I realise that wanting Mother was just a part of wanting Jerry. The only thing that keeps me alive is my firm unreasoning certainty that, some day, my aching dreams will all come true, and I shall really see him.

Impossible! And yet I know he'll come to me. Knowing this is my one solace, my one saving hope. Though if I should see that red head coming round the corner this minute, I should die of joy.

It would help out, these grim days, if I could write more on that safety-valve letter. But in our flurried packing at Gibraltar, I must have tossed it, with some discarded notes, into the waste-basket; for it is nowhere to be found. I do hope none of the servants read it afterward, for it was extremely sentimental in places. Although perhaps Spanish people don't make kisses in curly-cues, in which case they wouldn't understand, anyway.

Just one message from Jerry has reached me, in all this immemorial month. In the Hotel at Rome, I found awaiting me a big, beribboned box from Cuyler's, full of motto hearts. Red and white peppermint, pink and white wintergreen, inscribed with all the dear poetic messages of days long gone, when we were young, and learning to

write our names vertical. "Ever thine," "Forget-me-not," "To my own." It was unprincipled of Jerry, for it made me almost as happy as that flower-letter did. However, my guilty joy was soon quenched, for Irene noticed the open box, and absent-mindedly ate most of them, while I was off exploring Saint Peter's with Ned Douglass. I couldn't be vexed with Irene, for she had had a most trying day, being shooed out of first one excavation, then another, by ungenerous guards, who suspected her of conspiring to carry off the Forum in her suitcase. Still, it did grieve me.

But there's something worse still. The blackest drop in all my cup of gloom is—the way Mother has written. About Mr. Beauregard.

I wrote her a few things—nothing definite; but mothers have a second sight which flashes straight through your tangled little half-truths, and reads the very bottom of your deceitful heart. (Sometimes they read things that aren't there at all, but that's a

mere detail.) And Mother wrote back that she was heartily glad that I had met Mr. Beauregard again. For she had known him always, and to her he embodied the highest type of manhood. To be sure, he was no longer a boy. He must, indeed, be quite twenty years my senior. But his broad experience and his delightful temperament made him charming, alike to old and young. Moreover, when one considered his excellent family, his brilliant services to science, best of all, his sterling integrity—

Just there, that letter went flying into the grate. I didn't dare read another line.

Yes, I know very well that Jerry is nothing but a boy. The son of a commonplace steel manufacturer, with no broad experience to speak of, and no more scientific knowledge than a chipmunk, and good manners, except when he forgets and whistles, and red-headed into the bargain. True. He's only a boy. But he's my boy. That makes all the difference. Anybody who wants the

Floating Prince can have him, and welcome. Learning, and family, and temperament, and all. Mrs. Jeremiah Castleman is quite good enough for me.

May first. Venice. Still in my big draughty salon, beneath the indefatigable Apollo.

I laid down my Journal yesterday, too cross and dismal to write more. What happened next is almost too dreadful to put down.

However, I may as well confess it. I cannot tell a lie, because, like the lady in the fable, someone will be sure to find me out later. I have been arrested, or what would be called arrested in America. And if Italy owns such a thing as a Rogues' Gallery, I am in it.

It was partly Irene's fault, for she would go to the Scuola di San Rocco, to make notes on those saucer-faced cherubs, despite my pleas to go souvenir-shopping instead. (It does seem to me, when those poor little angels are so mournfully awful to behold

that it would be kinder to pass them over in silence.) However, they're a link in the chronology of Renaissance Art, so Irene says. Missing links, Jerry would say. Thus I was left to my own devices, which is always dangerous.

I remembered that Mother had just gone on the Orphans' Home Board, and that she might be interested in hearing how Orphanages were managed in Italy. Forthwith, live cherubs struck me as being a much more attractive topic of investigation than painted ones. So off I started, in search of a Venetian asylum to investigate.

It was hard to make Pasquale, my pet guide, understand what I wanted, for his English is very sketchy, and I haven't any Italian at all. But at length he comprehended; and after a long twisty trip, miles on miles of rowing, through tangled water-paths, I found myself climbing out of the gondola to scramble up a queer hippety-hop crevice of a street between two stately marble palaces, whose noble, carven coats-of-

arms, especially the griffin-guarded cornices, formed most convenient support for the wire clothes-lines and their amazing family washings which were swung between.

The Asylum hardly justified my researches, it was so far behind the times. No nice gingham nurses, no brass cribs, no frilly net curtains, not even a sign on the door. Instead, just an old yellow marble pergola,—what we'd call a summer-house at home,—with not even window panes,—not to speak of frilly curtains!—between it and the windy April sky. Great webs of grape-vine cloaked its fluted columns in rustling tapestry; around it rippled the green and silver ribbon of the Canal. It was picturesque beyond words, but I don't believe it was really sanitary; and the one toothless old woman, who seemed to be Superintendent and nurses and Board of Managers, all in one, was so artistically untidy that she should have stayed in the Teniers canvas, where she belonged. But the babies! Nine of them, ranging from the velvet-eyed imp

of five, who emptied my bonbonnière at one gulp, to the apple-cheeked, sleeping bambino, curled like a kitten in the loop of the nurse's shawl. I poured all my small silver into her ancient lap, explaining through Pasquale that it was for the Institution, which sent her into paroxysms of gratitude. Then I sat down and played with the children till dinner-time. Oh, they were so dear! Other things in foreign countries may seem unfamiliar and tedious and queer. But children are always homelike. Not even garlic, and strings of orange beads, and petticoats made from damask chair-seats, can quite disguise them.

It nearly broke my heart to leave them; and they all clutched my skirts, and howled, too. Particularly the three cunningest ones, a golden-headed girl, Addolorata, and the two-year-old twins, her brothers, who looked like Correggio putti, done in browned ivory and red rose-leaves. I picked up the tiniest twin, to comfort him. He gripped me round the neck, and burrowed his curly head into

my shoulder: I could feel his grieved sobs hushing to comfort against my cheek. I looked down at the other two, with their wide, tear-drenched eyes, their pitiful, little, half-clad bodies, their darling, clinging hands, shut in my gown. One moment, I hesitated: then I yielded to what Irene would call the Inspiration of the Utterly Absurd.

"Are they real orphans? Are all their relatives dead?" I asked.

Now I do wish that nations like Italy, which depend so largely upon pantomime to express their thoughts, would establish an official code of gesticulation, and hold to it, instead of wigwagging at random. The other day, when Pasquale was showing us the Doge di Lapponi's tomb, he made certain large flowing gestures, to indicate that di Lapponi was dead, and had been dead for some time; or, as Irene more graciously phrased it, his mortal frame was long since re-absorbed into sunshine, flowers, and air. Pasquale told it by waving his arms. First, straight down, fingers mournfully pointing earthward; then

vehemently he wafted towards the sky; and, last, with wild windmill swoops, he flailed the wide horizon.

Now, when the old nurse made the same identical flourishes, how was I to know that the cherubs' father was working on the railway embankment, that their mother was washing windows at the Hotel Britannia, and that their grandmother was stirring an eel-broth stew?

The biggest twin scrambled on a broken chair, and climbed into my free arm like a squirrel. His under-lip rolled out: his wet black lashes swept his sulky crimson cheek and curled out at the corners, exactly like Jerry's. I remembered that I had nearly twelve hundred in my letter of credit, "over and above." And Aunt Corinna's legacy will be made over on my nineteenth birthday.

"Then—since there's nobody on earth to care for them, I—I'm going to adopt all three," said I. "I don't think I'll take them to America right away: but I shall keep them in our apartments till I find a more suitable

home for them." I was going to say, "a more decent one," but I stopped to save her feelings. "Wash their faces, please, and I'll take them right along. We have a covered gondola. Now, here's my address. I'll have the adoption papers made out to-morrow. Good-bye."

Oh, to see those precious dears when we loaded them into the gondola! Such faces of frightened rapture, such shrieks and squeals of joy! The nurse looked a little uncertain: but she counted the money in her lap, then seemed reassured. Pasquale alone looked anxious and distraught. But he usually looks that way whenever I'm leading the expedition, so I didn't notice him.

However, when we swept into the big blazing Canal, on which our Palazzo stands, I did feel a little queer. It was just sunset: the Canal was all gold and rainbow in the stormy light, crowded with gondolas full of radiant voyagers in dinner-going bravery, sparkling with music and laughter. I tumbled the babies ashore, and hustled them

furtively up the grand stairway to our rooms. Annina, our little maid pro tem, was laying out my blue crêpe for dinner. She dropped my slippers, and said a great many excited Italian things when she saw the three: but finally I made her understand. Also I arranged for her to keep them up in her tower room over night.

Irene, I knew, would be tired, and explaining things might be tedious, so I decided to wait until morning. Moreover, while Irene is both charitable and sympathetic, still the acquisition of three orphans at one fell swoop might be a bit overwhelming.

Irene came home at length, white and heavy-eyed. I ventured some airy remarks anent her researches: but her first words smote me to dumb amaze.

"Tell Annina to pack our bags, Philura, and put in plenty of warm things. We'll take the early train to Palestrina."

"To Palestrina!" I ejaculated. "Up to that steep shelf-town, built away on top of two other towns, where even the horses gave

out, and we had to scramble up that appalling citadel hill ourselves! Why, Irene? Surely there's nothing to study there, except the fortifications the One-eyed Giants put up, and you know every stone in that polygonal wall!"

"But I want to go, I must! Anywhere!" said Irene, under her breath. Her brown eyes lit with a dark, frightened gleam. I could hear Annina's voice, cooing to Addolorata and the twins. I trembled.

"It's just somebody singing, upstairs," I remarked easily.

"I didn't even hear them," said Irene, dully. "Give me Baedeker, Philura. We'll reach Palestrina by eleven—"

"Irene, you're dreaming!" I cried. "We're in Venice now, not Rome. Palestrina is hours and hours away. Irene, what does ail you? Have those frescoes gone to your head?"

Irene put her hands to her temples.

"Perhaps they have," she said, with a wry smile. "Certainly, I'm worse than stupid.

But I must go somewhere—*anywhere!*” She sprang up, and began to pace swiftly up and down. Suddenly the red burned high in her cheeks, a splendid flame. “Philura, won’t you choose a trip for to-morrow? Anywhere—away from here!”

“I’ve always longed to go to Padua, and weep over Juliet’s tomb,” said I.

“Very well. Padua, then. No, I don’t want any dinner. No, I’m not ill. For pity’s sake, Philura, don’t fidget so. I have a headache, and I won’t see you again till breakfast. Good night!”

“Breakfast will be time enough,” I assured my shouting conscience. “Though perhaps I’d better wait till we get home from Padua, in the evening. I don’t want to interrupt Irene’s train of thought. I’m sure I’d better wait.”

And wait I did, although when I slipped up early to peep at them, the babies were so adorable, I longed to call Irene. However, to judge from her pale preoccupation at breakfast, her headache had lasted all night,

and it did seem a shame to disturb her. I wasn't quite sure how she would take it, either. Three did seem a good many. But with Aunt Corinna's legacy, I could send them all through the High School, at the least.

Padua lay wrapped in drowsy golden silence, a sweet old romance told in pages of narrow grass-grown streets, of crumbling pillars upholding carven doors and dim, far-echoed galleries, of deep-walled gardens and still waterways, of balmy winds and mystic, chanting bells. Irene, however, seemed wholly untouched, even by the grace and pathos of the Tomb itself. It was so hot, she said, and her head was bad, and Padua had no really worthy excavations, anyway. So she stayed at the hotel, while I wandered happily about with a Paduan understudy for Pasquale. Presently I found a jewel of a church, with glorious windows, and quantities of lovely inlaid work, like Aunt Isabella's mosaic earrings, so I flew to bring Irene to see. But Irene coldly responded

that those fair casements were very modern, and very bad indeed, and the mosaic was an artistic crime, and that I had better spend more time on my Progress of Mural Design. So I went off to the confectioner's and ate apricot tarts, and planned to send Addolorata to Wellesley, and give the twins a year or so at Tech.

It was quite dark, save for the last dying sunset red, when we plashed up to our own torch-lit palace landing. I climbed out first; Irene followed, wearily. Half-way up the steps, we stopped short; for from the top step rose three waiting figures. One was our faithful Pasquale. The other two were small, solemn gentlemen in skimpy gilt-edged uniforms, and cockaded hats, and large white cotton gloves. As we would have passed, the two queer objects,—particularly stylish footmen, I thought,—turned, and deprecatingly blocked our way.

“What is it, please?” Irene peered through the twilight.

“What do they want, Pasquale?”

"Scusi, scusi, Signorina," spluttered Pasquale clutching my arm. By the torchlight, I saw he was very pale. "There is arrived a request, a demand, a dissension—No, Signorina mia, I beg, do not enter! Remain here, I beseech. It is not for your gentility to behold. Even now, with respect, there occurs within of disquiet, of alarm, of agitation—"

Of agitation, indeed! Lights flashed in the tall windows above; down the echoing corridor rang stern angry voices, a long fierce shout,—then, above the mounting clamour, a child's scream!

"Pasquale, what does this mean? Philura, child, what is it?" For I had dropped on the step, overwhelmed by swift sickening prescience. "Have you been buying some more antiques, dear? Haven't I warned you, times without number—"

"Antiques? Hardly antiques. No," I answered feebly. "Pasquale, did you deceive me? Aren't they real orphans, after all?"

“Real orphans?” Irene caught my wrist. “Philura, what have you done? *Orphans!* Are they puppies, or what?”

“Veritable orphans are they not,” quavered Pasquale. “For that they have both father, mother, also five brothers and six sisters, also of uncles and cousins, also grandmother and great-grand—”

At which, with a thunderous bang, the front door crashed open. And after it the deluge.

First came a gigantic peasant in rough skin trousers and cherry-pink shirt, his bull head flung back, trumpeting like an enraged elephant. The tiniest twin swayed on his mighty shoulder. Behind him scuffled a brawny contadina, hugging Addolorata as if she meant to eat her; then a magnificent old lady in purple satin and a blue check apron, passionately embracing the biggest twin. Behind surged an hysterical crowd, servants, gondoliers, sympathising neighbours, five brothers and six sisters, making even more uproar than

the chief actors themselves. The crowd paused, blinking, in the lighted doorway. Then, with one cry of rage, they swept unerringly down upon me.

“Thief!” “Murderess!” “Malocchio!” “Thou who stealest children by bribe! Take thy vile gold!” This from the old nurse, Lucia, who flung the handfuls of coin at my feet. “To steal our babes!” “To lay upon them spells, ill-starred—”

“Patience, patience!” besought Pasquale, waving imploring hands. “Can you not realise that your wrongs shall be righted? Are not the gendarmes here to enforce?”

“The gendarmes!” Pasquale, what nonsense are you talking?” cried Irene.

The little solemn men wriggled consciously, and changed their cocked hats to the other hand.

“Gendarmes?” I echoed. “What have gendarmes to do with this, pray? Why were those children kept in an orphan asylum if they weren’t real orphans, I’d like to know? Pasquale, you and Lucia here told me that

their parents were all dead and buried, that they had no clothes but those shocking rags they wore—”

Unluckily, their mother knew some fragments of English.

“‘R-r-r-rags!’” she remarked to the assembled multitude. “Thus does she name those garments illustrious which I have made from the lambrequins of the Duchessa for my bambini! ‘R-r-r-rags!’”

There arose an angry mutter. My knees began to tremble. Then, by ill-luck, that darling Addolorata saw me, and put out her podgy arms with a crow. That settled it.

“Misérable! Not content with stealing the bodies of our children, she will also steal their souls, their loves!” shrieked their affronted mother. “Come, let us fly, else she will witch them from us, always!” She snatched the weeny twin from the father, crammed it under her free arm,—and away she flew, with the flight of an angry hen. After her streamed neighbours, grandmothers, five brothers and six sisters—the entire

chorus, in short. There remained, to be reckoned with, only the burly father, one large left-over brother—sheepish, unutterably—and the two Majesties of the Law.

Naturally, Irene and I both pounced upon Pasquale.

“Pasquale, how could you be so stupid? Couldn’t you understand that the Signorina wished to visit an orphan asylum, not a *day nursery*? Philura, what possessed you? You’ve collected ivories, and terracotta, and warming pans, and statuary, enough to stock a museum. But deliberately to add orphans—”

“I didn’t do it deliberately,” said I, half crying. “It was all on the sis-sis-spur of the moment. And it was every bit Pasquale’s fault, mixing me up so. I told that untruthful old Lucia that I’d come down to-day and bring the documents of adoption—”

The two gendarmes bobbed up as touched by a single spring.

“Documento?” They murmured meekly, lifting their hats like polite tin soldiers.

And into my palsied hand they thrust—a huge, rattling parchment, folded, taped, sealed—sealed, as Lorna Doone's lover said, with seals enough to keep an Easter ghost from rising.

It fell unopened from my palsied hands. I was no more than an Easter ghost myself.

Irene caught it as it fell. She rose to the occasion as only Irene can arise.

"It appears to be a warrant," she remarked, mildly interested. She stepped to the landing torch, and read it, by the aid of first one, then two, pairs of glasses. The loutish brother eyed her nervously. Even the big father made a surreptitious sign of the horns. Evil eye, indeed! Four of them, and removable at that!

"Dear me, how tedious! Listen." She turned her glittering battery upon the father, who dodged and blinked. "Here you accuse this Signorina, this *American Signorina*," she halted impressively, "of having stollen your children: of carrying them by stealth to America. This is most ridiculous. It is all

a mistake, as you know. Withdraw this charge, while you have yet time; I would not see you in serious misfortune."

It was magnificent; but Irene had miscalculated her man. His fingers never moved from their gesture against witchcraft; but his big body swelled, defiant. A torrent of Italian streamed from the gendarmes. He met it with insolent shrugs and laughter.

"The gendarmes say," translated Pasquale, "that you have reason, Signorina. They beg the Signor to withdraw his charge. He replies that, though he waits here till the world's end, yet shall justice be done."

"What is justice?" I fluttered.

"Banishment," said Pasquale, obligingly, before Irene could forestall him. "Also labour in the streets, or incarceration solitario upon the nourishment of bread and water."

"Philura, sit up and behave yourself," commanded Irene, crossly. "I never heard anything so silly in all my life! Never mind, precious, all we need to do is, get the Amer-

ican consul. Pasquale, go to the baker's and telephone the consul to come straight here."

Pasquale went, to return with a long face. The Signor Consul had gone upon a pleasure trip by motor; how to reach him, his servants did not know.

"Cross the canal and bring the Signor Douglass," ordered Irene.

Pasquale was back betimes. The Signor Douglass was not to be found.

"Then fetch the American Ambassador. He was one of your Cousin Lucius' guests at that deck tea," said Irene, the dauntless.

"He's stopping over on the Grand—"

"Oh, don't, I'd rather go to prison than have everybody know all about this!" I wailed. But Pasquale was already gone.

We waited, endlessly. The father towered, watchful, behind me. The poor little gendarmes, deeply shamed by their unchivalrous duty, sat meek and depressed on the bottom step. Irene put cushions behind me, and brought me a cup of tea.

"I really feel that we ought to offer the

gendarmes a cup. It is no more than hospitable. They must be getting chilly," ventured Irene, with a wan smile. So we did, which pleased them very much. But the father rudely tossed his into the Canal, and the son dodged his as if it were a cannon-cracker. No poisoned draft for them.

At last Pasquale's tenda flickered against our landing stones.

"Signorina, I find no one, no one!" he whispered palely. "His Highness, the Ambassador, is forth, at a great ball; when I insist, his Eminence, the Secretary, has intimidated me with the box upon the ear. We can do nothing, nothing, nothing!"

The brutal father heard. He gloated. The dear little gendarmes cast on me looks of pity, and shivered in their tidy shoes.

"Indeed, we can do something, and that right away!" snapped Irene. "Pasquale, bring me my long cloak and my big umbrella. I'll start out this minute. And the first white man I meet, be he American, or English, or Austrian, or whatever, I'll go on my

knees to him for help. Come, Philura! Now, don't hang back and look horrified. I shan't go on my knees, either, I shall command him to aid us, or face conclusions and the umbrella. Come!"

Just as we reached the bottom step, a tall dark figure came striding down the shelf-pavement which ringed the palace adjacent. His long coat was flung back; in the moonlight, I caught the polished gleam of festive evening array.

"Irene, don't! Don't! Oh, this is awful!" I moaned, as she forged ahead. "How do you know who he may be?"

"Whoever he is, he'll have to come to our rescue," said Irene, set as Fate. "I'll drag him to it bodily, if he resists." She clutched her umbrella, and strode straight to him.

"Sir, I beg your pardon, but I am obliged to ask your assistance. I am an American woman, studying here. I find myself in a most annoying predicament—"

The man stopped short. His stick clattered on the pavement.

"Wh—what! Ir—Miss Bradbury!" rang a deep, familiar voice. "And—My dearest little Lady Philura! My *dear* people! At last I've found you, and, on my word, I do deserve to! This is the fifth pilgrimage I have made to your Palazzo in the last two days. I caught a glimpse of you on the Scuola staircase yesterday, Miss Bradbury, poring over—or, rather up *at*—the Titian frescoes, but before I could reach you, you had melted from my sight. Most mysterious! I searched the entire gallery—Why, what's all this? Your retinue?"

"Oh, Irene!" (No, I *didn't* say it: but I could hear my voice, like a rapt cuckoo clock—) "Oh, Irene, Irene! The Floating Prince! First you knocked him down the precipice, then you drowned him, and now you drag him into—This!"

Just then, the Canal lights flickered and went out. A moment longer, I saw Irene and the Prince, their faces going queer colours and flashing like kaleidoscopes. Then everything went quite black and still.

The next thing I knew, I was lying in our own vestibule, propped up tight against a big steady shoulder. Irene knelt beside me, holding both my hands. The Canal lights had come back; but they were dancing like a swarm of demented fireflies.

"She's coming out nicely, bless her poor terrified, little heart." The Prince's voice rolled beneath my ear, a big, soft, soothing rumble.

"Don't let it frighten you so, Irene, child. Try her pulse again. Steadying up? That's good. Better, little girl?" His big firm palm folded over my hair, precisely the way Daddy does it. "Now, you take her, while I deal with this riff-raff."

He stood up, his black eyes fixed on lowering father and sheepish son. He struck a tremendous spread-eagle attitude: I had a confused recollection of Fourth of July orations, and election speeches, with the Star-Spangled Banner and a great deal of red fire at the end. Then, in deep, slow, shuddering accents, he began.

It was Italian, of course, so I couldn't catch a word. But, Oh! Even then, it made my flesh creep, in its echoing horror. The little gendarmes blanched and quailed. Pasquale groped for his amulet, and whispered gibberish with his fingers crossed. The lubber son, wild-eyed, crowded his large thumbs into his ears.

The father held out longest of all. Even he trembled at last beneath that rolling, pitiless thunder.

At length, Mr. Beauregard glanced at us: then he stepped close to the stubborn wretch, one finger grimly pointing. In a voice to harrow up your soul, he grimly, bitterly intoned, in English, his final searing spell:

“ ‘Rich man,
Poor man,
Beggard man,
Thief,
Doc-tor,
Law-yer,
Indian chief.
Tin-ker—’ ”

There was a squeak from the gendarmes: a groan of anguish from the large son, then a clatter of retreating heels. Son, gendarmes, and Pasquale, joined in the frantic flight.

One moment more, the father stood his ground, shaken but determined. Then Mr. Beauregard's voice struck a hollow, curdling note:

“ ‘ Soldier,
Sailor, ’ ”

The silver Canal below us was shattered by an echoing splash. Utterly overwhelmed, our final accuser had not even waited to unchain his gondola.

“What was the rest of it?” choked Irene. She and I were collapsed in tears and laughter in each others' arms.

“The first five minutes were odd stanzas of ‘Hiawatha,’” explained the Prince. “They sound awe-inspiring in Italian. Then I polished them off with our Phi Sigma fraternity oaths. They're rather paralysing,

under any circumstances: coming as they did, they were the last straw. Now, if you two will go to bed and try and get some sleep, I'll promise that, between the Consul and myself, you shall never hear of this affair again. I'll probably stop in to-morrow, to report. But—" his gay glance met mine, then danced triumphantly on the subdued Irene, "*Please don't run away to Padua to-morrow—nor anywhere else. No more Kidnappings, nor Mysterious Disappearances, either, if you please. Felice notte!*"

"I wonder how he happened to call you—Irene," I pondered, while Irene took down my hair.

"I wonder how he happened to call you—My dearest little Lady Philura," murmured Irene.

I wonder too. And I wish I didn't.

I can't help wishing I dared ask Irene's advice and opinion about the whole matter. Though really, there's no telling whether she'd be serious about it or not. You never can tell, about Irene.

CHAPTER SEVENTH

May seventh. The Capuchin Monastery, Amalfi. In a coquettish white cell, all ruffled Swiss and pink ribbons, with clover-and-buttercup walls, and sunshine-framed squares of blue Mediterranean sparkling through every loop-hole window.

SINCE our late excitement, "The failure of Benevolent Assimilation," Ned Douglass calls it,—the days have seemed tedious anticlimaxes. I see little of Irene. Her days have fallen back into the strait and narrow path of Research. I'm not sure whether it is towers or tombs or tumuli that she finds to explore; but it's something absorbing, for she stalks off, armed with guide-book, notes, and magnifying-glass, at early dawn, and returns only at dusk, too tired and dull to eat

her dinner; much less to join the Prince and Ned and the Kenmores and I in our nightly frivolities. I have teased and scolded without avail. Now I shall argue no longer. For this morning, in the midst of my beguiling pleas that she cease researching, and race to Sorrento with us in the Prince's touring-car, Irene suddenly turned on me, very gently, yet very gravely.

"Philura, you dear, please don't. It isn't that I *won't* share your good times: it's because I *can't*. No, you don't grasp my reasons. Bless your precious, stupid pate, I'm thankful you don't. Now run along."

I ran, obediently. Her quiet final words made me feel very choky, indeed.

Of course, she wants me to know that she simply cannot afford our frolics. This trip may mean indolent pleasuring for me; but it must mean tireless study for her, if she is to earn back the time and the money she is now spending. That is all.

It is most unfair. Would I were a fairy godmother! A millionaire fairy godmother,

with a Prince in every pocket of my wishing-coat! A real Prince, not a Floating one, at that!

My own frivolous days flash past swifter than the weaver's shuttle. In the mornings, Ned and the twins and I go on long, glorious expeditions. We clamber up and down lovely steel-engraving cliffs; we skim that ineffable blue bay in a crazy spider of a launch, which threatens momentarily to explode and blow us all to Capri. We fish, and pick wild flowers, and take snapshots of everything, from blue-and-gold mountains to pink-and-brown bambini. On the stroke of two, behold the Floating Prince, and his smart dark-blue motor, pawing and snorting at our portcullis, as it were. For Irene, the drawbridge is always up. She's invariably too busy to go. For myself, I know that it is most injudicious, to accept so constantly; yet I can never find a valid pretext for refusal. When he's away, I can realise that Mr. Beauregard is becoming deeply interested in me, and that I am acting most

unwisely. But when he sits in the automobile beside me, laughing and telling jolly boyish stories, when he lounges on the Monastery gallery, humming the latest song, telling the latest breezy Continental gossip, then all my mincing scruples take flight, for shame. He's as crisp, as impersonal, as dear old Cousin Lucius; he's as kind and teasing and prosaic as my own father. Never a languishing glance for me; never a tender tone. Mr. Beauregard and sentiment are farther apart than the poles.

"And yet—and yet—"

Each morning brings its flower-greeting: punctilious; unvarying. White roses, slim, formal, exquisite, for Irene, for me an equal gift, but gayer, less studied. Though nowadays his card bears no poetic scrolleries. I daresay his ears burn whenever he thinks of that caramel quatrain. Mine would. In fact, they do.

Irene hardly notices his flowers, and never thanks him. Of course, she realises that they're merely the chaperon's oblation.

Still, she might spare one gracious word. I do get quite exasperated with Irene.

May Eighth. Amalfi. On a grey rock shelf, hung out like a giant's plate-rack above the dear swallow's-nest town, the rippled terrace of vineyards, the endless silver-seamed mosaic of the gulf below.

The Prince went to Sorrento to-day. Ned Douglass has taken the twins crabbing. Irene is studying terracotta tax-lists at Pæstum. I don't care for crabs, nor tax-lists, either, so I planned to have Pasquale take me donkey riding, up the hills. However, to our amazement, no Pasquale appeared this morning. Instead, a strange guide presented himself. He bore a lengthy communication, couched in patchwork English-Italian, which proclaimed that the grandmother's cousin of the desolated Pasquale was exceeding ill at Ravello, and commanded his filial presence. He was shamed, heart-broken, thus to desert his adored

Signorina. Hereby he confided them to the bearer of this message, his life-long friend, Oreste. True, Oreste had no English, and, being peasant, but little gentility. But he would prove in all things honest, experienced, and competent. To his adored Signorina, the writer would remain, to his last breath, their afflicted, their devoted, Pasquale.

“‘Honest, experienced, and competent.’” Ned dubiously surveyed our meek, expectant servitor, who stood, shock head bowed, tattered cap in grimy hand, awaiting our august pleasure. “‘H’m. Maybe. He doesn’t look it. Got an ugly jaw, and a sneaking eye, too.’”

“‘Mercy, don’t!’” protested Gwendolyn Kenmore. “‘He might understand.’”

“‘Oh, he hasn’t any English. Pasquale says so. No, don’t go riding with him, Miss Philura. He’s a bad lot. What’s the use of running foolish risks?’”

“‘He is hardly the ruffian type,’” remarked Irene, viewing him through her double glass. “‘Rather, the lines of the degenerate. Notice

the slanted cheek-bone, and the peculiar ear-lobe. His attitude, too, is significant. Do you see how his knees tend to turn inward?"

"Oh, that's because he's so embarrassed," said I. I couldn't help pitying the poor awkward wretch. He needed no English to understand that he was under fire—and raking fire, at that. "Do let me go with him. He looks perfectly stupid, I know, but I'm sure he's perfectly honest."

"Not much, Miss Philura. Look at that monkey forehead, and that brute chin. He's that cold-blooded Hill sort, that would cut your throat with pleasure for your gold cuff-links."

"But maybe Mrs. Kenmore will go with me," I pleaded.

"I?" quavered Mrs. Kenmore. "Not for untold gold! He is the breathing image of a Barbary pirate. I saw one once, in a play, in Detroit,—it chills my blood, even to remember. Philura, if Miss Bradbury does not see fit to prevent your riding in his care,

then I shall act, in your mother's place. I shall take the responsibility of forbidding it myself."

"Oh, very well," said I, with what grace I could muster. "I'll sit on the terrace, then, with a book, till you come back. Oreste, we won't need you to-day. Here!" I gave him some small coins. "Go back to the village, and report to-morrow, at eight."

Oreste went, most unwillingly. Poor fellow, I know it hurt his feelings. But he's so painfully unattractive! As Ned says, he *may* be all right. But he certainly doesn't look it.

So I've crept off, all by myself; to be as homesick as I please.

If only I had that lost safety-valve letter of Jerry's, to write my heart out! If only I dared begin another letter to him! But, failing in both these things, I try to fix heart and thought on Mother, instead. And, thereby, my last estate is worse than my first.

Oh, I do wish there weren't *quite* so many

beautiful things in the world! They do make me long for her, so miserably! I want to snatch up this golden altar, or that luminous fresco, or the saucy beggar, or the lovely plane tree, and run home with it to her. When I was little, and went to the neighbourhood children's birthday parties, I used to scurry back home across the lawn three or four times in the one afternoon, to take her my pretty things. (Once, when extremely young, I naïvely swept the spun-sugar wreath off Jerry's birthday cake, and ran with it. How he did howl!) She and I always share things. Since I've grown up, it's the same way. Coming home from dances or the theatre, I'd slip upstairs to her dear lacy room, dim in the candlelight, and curl up on her bed, and tell her my partners, and what the girls wore, and what we had for the supper, and everything. To whisper and giggle it over with her made it twice as much fun.

To-day I long for her more keenly than ever before. Although the confidences that fairly

burn my lips will not be happy ones for her to hear. For, sooner or later, I must write, and tell her the truth. That, while I love her with all my heart, while I know that she and Father are always doing their tender Best for me—Yet now, at last, has come the time when I must take my life into my own hands.

It will break her heart, to hear this. It will break mine, to have to say it. But I cannot stand it any longer. I can't live without Jerry's love. I'll starve.

Mother will understand. For down in her heart, Mother is just as silly over father as I am over Jerry, this very minute. And, down in her heart, she would gladly see both Castleman Amalgamated and Curtis Consolidated go to irremediable fragments, rather than see me suffer for an hour. Yet Father's judgment rules her. To her mind, he must be, in all things, forever right. The King can do no wrong. And Father—Father is different. Men always are. It's no use to hope.

Yet Father finds neither lack nor fault in Jerry. It's just his dear grim obstinacy, which sets his love for his great enterprises, his passion for supremacy, above his foolish little daughter's whims. That's the way Father would phrase it. Alas, Jerry is not a whim. He's six feet two, and built like a blacksmith, and redheaded atop of it all. And I love every swaggering inch of him. Dear blind, complacent Daddy! Some day, he'll learn, alas, that he's not dealing with a Whim!

May 9, 1 A. M. High in my tiny white cell, once more. The rest are long asleep, but I must tell it all over again to myself, before I'll dare believe it. Beneath my window, the sea breathes deep, like a tranquil resting creature, sighing in happy dreams. On the low sill, a nightingale pours out his golden heart to the listening stars.

It all happened just as everything happens in this world. Unutterably ridiculous

on the surface. Beneath the surface, terribly real—and yet more terribly dear.

Just after dinner to-night, I noticed Oreste hanging around the terrace, looking most forlorn. Evidently he had misunderstood my orders, and had reported at eight that night, instead of eight next morning. Poor abject fellow, it seemed too bad to hurt his shaggy feelings again. So I prevailed upon Mrs. Kenmore and Gwendolyn to let him take us for a walk, up the rocks.

Poor Mrs. Kenmore, how she did fidget! First, she made him walk ahead, in the cheering hope that thus she would prevent him from stabbing us in the back. Then she made him walk behind, in terror lest he lead us into a brigand's den. Her flutters made me almost nervous myself. He certainly was a most unprepossessing object. For one thing, he was dressed as Italian peasants dress in opera choruses,—and nowhere else,—scarlet silk shirt, velveteen trousers, and truly buccaneer girdle, holding a white-handed Something, in all probability an

ivory-hilted dagger. Moreover, he was as big as two of Pasquale, knit like an athlete, with thick black parted hair, and a dark flushed face, and—*blue glasses!* Those blue glasses did worry me. They made me think of a ghost story I once read, where the Wicked Solicitor wore blue glasses, or else green ones, I can't remember which. Still, he seemed civil enough, although he had nothing to say except, "Si, Signora," in a gruff embarrassed voice. But at length Mrs. Kenmore's forebodings became contagious. I summoned all my Italian, and dismissed the guide for the evening.

"Go away, far, also stay away," added Gwendolyn, in her best Berlitz. Poor Oreste, with a reproachful stare, melted into the dusk.

The moonrise was lovely from the rocks. But coming back, through a big gloomy olive grove, Mrs. Kenmore suddenly nipped my arm.

"Philura! I knew it!" she whispered. "That shadow, lurking behind the trees!

That guide! That terrible guide! Oh, we'll all be robbed, and murdered, and thrown over the cliff! Oh, why didn't I leave my earrings and my pearl necklace at the Monastery! Oh, dear, oh, dear!"

"That's nothing but leaves in the moonlight," blustered I, above my pounding heart. I strode forward, quaking.

"Oreste, is that you? What are you doing here? Didn't I send you away? Why did you come?"

The new guide stepped from his tree-screen and confronted me. His blue spectacles glittered gaily in the wan moonlight. His lips were very pale. Queer unreasoning prescience caught at my heart, and smothered the sharp rebuke upon my mouth.

"I came because I couldn't help myself," he said, very low. "Why else should I throw down my job, and rush over here, and bribe Pasquale, and dress up in these minstrel duds, and tag you all over the country, I'd like to know? Because I was starved out, that's why. I couldn't stand

it any longer. And Philura, darling, you've needed me as pitifully as I've needed you. You know it. You're starved, too."

Behind us lifted Mrs. Kenmore's anguished shrieks: I did not hear. For I was in the new guide's arms, and we were sobbing it out like children, I with my face against his foolish green-plush shoulder, he with his precious red head, in its silly black wig, upon my own.

"Run along, quick, Philura! They're rousing the hotel!" Jerry tore my hands from his neck and mopped the tears from my face with his huge red handkerchief, and hustled me back through the grove to the Monastery gates. "Go calm the old lady, before she brings the fire department. Come to the Corramini Fountain for half a minute, some time to-night. Wash your face the minute you reach the house. I'm afraid that burnt-umber has rubbed off on your forehead as it is. Good-by, you darling—you darling!"

"And I saw the i-flash of his stiletto,"

Mrs. Kenmore's wails were piercing the monastic calm. "And heard her wild outcry—Oh, dear, oh, dear!"

"Dear Mrs. Kenmore, how the tree-shadows must have deceived you!" said I, hurrying in. Whereat Mrs. Kenmore started to faint, then revived for sheer amaze.

"But you spoke to him—you talked with him—"

"Indeed I did," said I, loftily. "I talked with him to some purpose. He is—dismissed, Mrs. Kenmore. I consider him wholly inadequate. We will not see that guide again."

Forsooth, we never will. Even the last smudge of umber was scrubbed away when we met at the fountain for our stolen moment. He was all my Jerry—only so much handsomer, so much dearer, than ever he used to be! I dared not look at him. I couldn't quite stand the joy of it. And to listen to him was even keener joy.

"Oh, I know I've broken my word," he

retorted, against my weak reproach. "Philura, girl, how could I help it? How could I stay away? When you yourself broke your word first? When you wrote and told me how lonely you were, and how you loved me, and begged me over and over to come—"

"I broke my word!" flashed I. "Jerry, for shame! When I've held to it all these century-long days! When I've not sent you one word, not one line, not even a picture-postal! Though keeping still almost broke the heart out of me—"

"Philura, you're dreaming," said Jerry sternly. "You wrote me everything, up to the night you left Gibraltar. Dinners, and deck teas, and all about the fellows who were dancing attendance, that sentimental Wallis chap, and cheeky Ned Douglass—wait till I get at him!—and Beauregard, even, devoting himself to you. Do you wonder I dropped everything, and took the first steamer? Look here!"

He groped in his pocket, and crowded a

letter into my hand. Soiled, and crumpled, and creased: but even in the starlight, my first glance told all.

That safety-valve letter! That wild outpouring which I had thought swallowed up forever in the Gibraltar waste-basket!

"Philura, where are you?" It was Irene's voice; a bit concerned, too.

"I'll take it all back, Jerry," I whispered. "Good-night, boy. But this is the final mystery. No human mind will ever pierce its depths."

"Irene, when we left Gibraltar, do you remember seeing any letters lying on my desk?"

Irene's fair brows knit, perplexed.

"No, dear, I don't. Except the one I stamped and mailed for you."

"You stamped and mailed—"

"Yes. A rather thick letter—I remember I had to put on three five-cent stamps. It was addressed to Jeremiah somebody; I didn't notice particularly. I knew you'd

forgotten all about it. You know sometimes you aren't quite punctual with your mail, dear, so I didn't think it necessary to speak of it."

Oh, Punctuality, Punctuality! What glorious crimes are committed in Thy name!

CHAPTER EIGHTH

May twelfth. The Monastery.

ONLY three days since our dear foolish miracle. But what a long, tantalising eternity it seems!

Oreste, the mysterious, has never re-appeared. However, Mr. Jeremiah Blake Castleman's sprawly signature now adorns the hotel register, and Mr. J. B. C., himself, scrubbed, conventionally clad, and in his right mind, adorns the gallery, one eye wistfully meeting mine at long sad intervals, while Ned Douglass, with maddening good-fellowship, clings to him, and pours out football reminiscences from morn till dewy eve. Faithful are the staying qualities of a friend, especially a friend who played quarter-back on your Freshman team. For all our machinations, Jerry and I can't

achieve two minutes together. And conscience doth so make cowards of us both that we hardly dare glance each other's way. None of our party could suspect anything, to be sure; for the Kenmores and Irene never heard of Jerry before, and Ned and the Prince know him only as a friend from home, and never dream of the tragic romance going on under their cheerfully oblivious noses. Yet our conscious guilt rises between us like a wall of glass.

In our hurried meetings, Jerry has managed to tell me just two things. First: that Father has just been awarded another big contract, right over Mr. Castleman's head, which, of course, deepens the gulf between us to a chasm. Second: that Jerry thinks me twenty times prettier than I ever used to be, and he loves me twenty thousand times more. The heart-rending depression of his first statement is somewhat mitigated by the heart-warming assurance of the second.

Alas, though I can't compass ten words

with my own boy, I have perforce had ten times ten with the Prince. Shun him as I may, nothing short of deliberate rudeness could turn aside the steadily waxing flood of his deep, unmistakable interest in me. To make things worse, Jerry is so painfully grumpy, about Mr. Beauregard and Ned, both, that I try my best to avoid them. Ned takes his congé with unflattering cheerfulness, and turns gaily to Gwendolyn Kenmore. Mr. Beauregard overlooks all my chicken-hearted evasions, and marches straight ahead. I decline the motor: Mr. Beauregard brings a smart high cart and a frisky cob instead. I frown languidly upon the launch: Mr. Beauregard orders a row-boat. I find it too hot for sight-seeing: Mr. Beauregard, blithely acquiescent, sends Pia or Tomaso for veranda chairs, an armful of magazines, a bowl of iced pomegranate. Meanwhile, Irene goes her archaic road, with never a glance our way. But Jerry looks our way, alarmingly often, with a glare that makes me shiver to my soul. And if he once

suspects the deep, unspoken fervor of Mr. Beauregard's devotion,—for devotion, alas, it is,—I dare not think what may happen.

Moreover, I dare not think of what is sure to happen: as surely as the coming of the stars.

The situation between Mr. Beauregard and myself is now unquestionable. It is no use for me to act the ingenuous ostrich any longer. Dodge and evade as I may, the fateful hour of Declaration is closing down upon me.

It makes me laugh and groan both at once. The mere idea of the Floating Prince condescending to little tow-headed Philura! And when I think of having to say to him, —“I deeply appreciate the honor, Mr. Beauregard. B-but—” Oh, my coward heart drops leaden to my shoes!

If I only knew how to write it, I'd send him a note this minute, and tell him just how hopeless it is, in order to spare him the mortification of a verbal refusal. But it would be awkward to word such a note tactfully.

Irene could do it for me; but she's so weary and distraught these days that I hardly know her. Sometimes I feel as if I would never quite know Irene.

Mr. Beauregard has just paused at the salon door, and remarked that the moonrise is delightful from the east balcony. Will I not join him? I am going, my heart in my throat, my knees knocking together, knowing my Fate, but powerless to flee it. Worse, I can feel Jerry's jealous glare fairly searing me. He'd rise right up and follow, if he only could. But Ned Douglass sits on his chair-arm, and fondly prattles of the team-work at the Princeton game. He cannot choose but hear.

Oh, if Mother were only here, so I could run to her and hide! Yet I'm a traitor to Mother, for I can't help loving Jerry the dearer. And I'm a traitor to Jerry, letting him stay near me, when I know how it will anger all our dear, obstinate people at home. And I'm thrice a traitor to the Prince, dear noble, unsuspecting soul! I do hope this

disappointment will not blight his splendid life. But one never can tell.

Very much later.

For a long half-hour the Prince and I sat in silence on the dim, jewel-lit balcony. The night sky gleamed dusky amethyst, star-fretted; the bay was a silver floor. Lifted in visionless waves, like the creeping mist below, there rippled the faint soft music of a passing boat-song. It came and went, a lilt of far enchantment, sweet as the breeze that tossed the bougainvillæa at our feet. It was one of those perfect hours that lie like a pearl in your memory. If only Some One Else had shared it! If only Jerry might have leaned at the wreathed gallery beside me, his happiness giving back, doubled as in a mirror, my own joy to me! Alas, Jerry, though plain to sight, was far away, grimly playing cribbage within the lighted salon with Mrs. Kenmore and Irene. I clenched my hands for patience, and I waited.

At last the Prince spoke. He was very

deliberate and purposeful: chivalrously gentle: determined: grave. His quiet poignant confidences touched me to the heart. I could scarcely keep back my tears. To think that I must wait, and listen, only to hurt and shame him at the end! Oh, it just stabbed me, through and through!

"You're such a child, dear little Lady Philura," he said, very softly. "Perhaps it is not fair to come to you as I come to-night. But I have waited all my life for what I now ask of you."

"P-Please, Mr. Beauregard," I began. The words died on my mouth. He went steadily on.

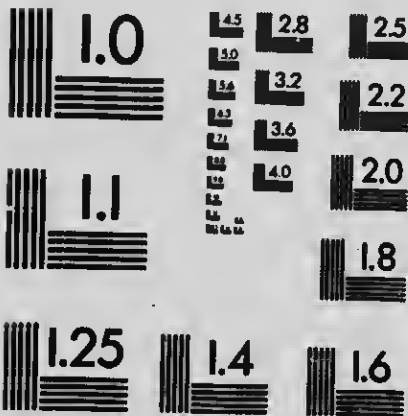
"I am fully twenty years your senior. But I'll ask you to put that aside, and to listen, as you'd listen to one of your own generation, to young Castleman yonder, say. There are some tedious things to explain to you. We'll have them over with, first.

"To begin with, as to myself. I was the youngest child in an easy-going, jolly family; naturally, I was petted, indulged, never dis-



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ciplined in any way. I didn't grow up a bully, exactly: but not far from one. I was used to having everything as I pleased, I was never thwarted; everything came my way.

"Later, the world indulged me, quite as my family had done. First at school and college, later in my profession, I had every success. It seemed the natural course of things. I never questioned my right to all these gratifications. They were my due. When I met the one woman in all the world for me, I never dreamed but that I could win her, too."

(I felt a shade less contrite. When you're asked merely as consolation, to play second fiddle,—the situation is not *quite* so harrowing.)

"She was just a slip of a girl, ten years younger than I. She was a great beauty, even then, and wonderfully clever. In many ways, she bore a striking resemblance to you." (I smiled my pensive gratitude, but he didn't seem to notice.) "I had always

known her, for our families were old friends, but until the year I returned from Peru, she had seemed merely a delightful child. But, that summer—”

He paused, a little heavily. I understood. I, too, had known “That Summer.”

“Oh, well! That summer, awakening came to both of us. Child that she was, puzzled, hardly comprehending, I do believe she loved me, with all her golden heart. And she promised to be my wife.

“In accordance with her insistent wishes, we were not to be married for a year. I was going abroad for three months, to complete my second book; I urged an earlier marriage, but she refused. Her twentieth birthday would be soon enough, she insisted. Perhaps she was right. But still—

“That January, while I was in the hill country of Armenia, scores of miles from direct communication, a cablegram was sent me, telling her father’s death. Twice the message was missent. When at last it reached me, it had been three weeks on the

way. I started for home immediately, only to be stopped at the frontier by a threatened revolution. It was a month later when I reached her—my poor girl!

“At the steamer dock, a letter from her awaited me. Without explanation, she freed herself from her engagement, and requested me not to pursue the matter further. It was not the long delay. She was too gentle, too reasonable, to be swayed by that. But she felt—my poor child!—that the circumstances of her father’s death cut her off from me forever. Involved in an appalling financial scandal, overwhelmed and desperate, he had taken his own life. Years after, it was proved that he was absolutely innocent. He had been the tool of others, all the way through. Yet she felt that the shadow of his pitiful disgrace made an eternal barrier between us. I could never win one word from her.

“My consciousness of what she must be suffering tortured me. Yet her pride,—for half her resistance was sheer pride, I well

knew,—infuriated me. And that I should be forced to give up, vanquished! I, who had ruled my little world, supreme!

“Finally, tormented, humiliated, angry,—for I had the fiend’s own temper, and plenty of pride of my own,—I thrust myself into her presence. We had a bitter scene. I was cruel. She, in return, was adamant. Her pride came first, always. I went away, determined to forget.

“I wasn’t altogether successful, however. Twice I put my pride away, and begged her to yield her pitiful senseless will, to give up her bitter resolve, and let me come to her. But when my second pleading letter was sent back to me opened but unanswered, I lost all hope. Again I went away, and bound myself that I would not struggle longer. I would let it go.

“I’ve saddened you by this, I know. But it is only just that you should realise what I would ask of you. You’re just the age that —that She was.” He sprang up and came close to me. His eyes grew very tender.

His big hands caught my shaky cold ones, and held them fast. "Philura, you might be her very self, in beauty, in wilfulness, in spirit. Perhaps your child heart will grasp the truth where an older woman, tired and grieved with life, would never understand. I want to put aside all these hard memories. I want to build up my life again, Philura. I want happiness, as eagerly as if I were twenty, again. You and you alone can give me this happiness, if you will. Look on what I have said, with your own truthful innocent eyes. Is there any use for me to try? Dare I hope? Even now, so late, after all these wasted years—Can there be love, and peace, and understanding still for me?"

I pulled my hands away, and stumbled to the rail. The utter frankness of the man, his utter pathos, this revelation of his love for me, which was less love than pitiful heart-hunger,—I couldn't even speak. If it hadn't been for Jerry, my own Jerry, I could almost have turned to him, and begged him to let me give him what little comfort

my foolish clumsy hands might know to yield. At last I swallowed my sobs, and began.

"I—I didn't suppose it m-meant so much to you, Mr. Beauregard. I can't tell you how sorry I am. But there isn't any hope. There never will be."

"There isn't any hope? What makes you so positive? Are you sure?" His long hand gripped the railing: the thrill in his deep voice brought an answering sob into my own.

"B-because I don't love you, Mr. Beauregard. Because there's Somebody Else. I'm honored beyond words by what you have told me. But I don't love you. That's all there is to say."

"You don't love me," repeated Mr. Beauregard. He turned to me, with a wavering gesture. To save me, I couldn't resist peeping through my fingers, to see his wan, grief-ravaged face. And, dreadful as it all was, I couldn't help feeling very tragic and melancholy and interesting.

. . . "You don't love me," he said, once

again, his voice shaken with a heavy tremor. Suddenly he flung his hands over his face: he swayed back, fairly pitching against the balcony rail. "You—you—You—precious—little—lovely—idiot!" The words came in strangling gasps. "Whoever asked you to? You darling mutton-headed angel! And you thought it was you—*you!* Great Saint Patrick! Couldn't you understand me? Didn't you know that it was all Irene? Couldn't you *see?* When there's never been anybody else, in all my life, but just Irene—Irene?"

At length, somewhat breathless, I emerged from the wreckage of my romantic header, down the Stairway of Dreams. And I am thankful for the saving grace which enabled me to giggle, even in the face of my unspeakable downfall.

"But, truly, I thought you did like me—a little," I persisted.

"I did. I do. A great deal," the prince assured me, his nice eyes dancing. "Otherwise, why should I have confided—"

“And you’ve been taking me all sorts of places, and sending me flowers, and books, and candy, and trinkets, and—”

“And thereby scheming for dear life to win even a glance from Irene—”

I subsided, quenched.

“And that poem, ‘June is twice June,’ that you put into my roses at Gibraltar—”

“*Your* roses!” Poor Mr. Beauregard changed color. “When I put that card, with my own hands, into Irene’s flowers!”

“Then I must have mixed the boxes—and she never saw it!” I wailed. The Prince swallowed a groan, then smiled instead.

“It’s a comedy of errors, all the way,” he said, with determined good-humour.

“There lacks now only the Unrequited Swain, to strike his lute for you. Where is he, anyway? Surely there must be dozens of him!”

Now that one teasing merry word was the touchstone. In a breath, the longing to confide my own beloved yet woeful romance swept me off my feet, and I poured out my

whole heart-rending story. Rival contracts and Christmas house-party, Father's ultimatum and Mother's firm yet quavery adherence, the ill-starred safety-valve letter—all poured from me in one continuous stream. And the comfort of his kind grave understanding was beyond words to express.

"We must go in," he said, after a long while. "My dear little girl, you have honoured me immeasurably by your confidence. I only wish that I could be of service. Castleman is a fine chap, clean-cut, well-bred, sterling straight through. If your parents' opposition is founded, as you believe, on business pride alone, believe me, it can soon be over-ruled. Pride can't stand long between two such hearts as yours."

"Pride has stood between you and Irene," said I, and could promptly have bitten off my silly tongue.

"Yes," said Mr. Beauregard, under his breath. "It has. But that is—different. Philura, child, listen. You know that your parents love you dearly?"

"Y-yes."

"And that they have trusted implicitly to your honour in this affair?"

"Yes. But, Mr. Beauregard—"

"Very well, then. Now, would it not save endless sorrow and misunderstanding, if you would write to your mother, and lay everything before her, honestly and without reservation, straight through? Mothers aren't like other people. They don't question, nor hold back. They don't misunderstand. And such a mother as yours deserves your confidence to your last thought."

"I know that," said I miserably, "I—maybe I will, Mr. Beauregard. And, since you've advised me, may I speak one word of advice to you?"

"Twenty."

"Then—Go and tell Irene what you have told to me. Above all things, tell her that you love her—and *make her understand.*"

Mr. Beauregard checked me with an ugly little laugh.

"My dear amusing child, what nonsense!

Irene knows it, every word. As to my love for her—if I vowed it daily for a thousand years, she never would believe me. She'd never be convinced."

"Well, you convinced me, without much effort," said I, turning scarlet again. The Prince passed a considerate hand across his lips.

A moment I reflected.

Now when Jerry and I found out that we loved each other, we were both in such a hurry to say so that neither one had manners enough to wait till the other had finished speaking; so I can't remember one word I told him, that day I slumped through the ice, and much less can I recall what he said to me. But it was quite as definite as if we'd wavered and stammered and boggled a week; and infinitely more assuring.

"I'd tell her, anyway," I said, at last. "I'd tell her every day and hour. For if you only say it loud enough and long enough, be sure the time will come when she will hear, and understand. And now, good night."

"Good night, you dear little partner." Mr. Beauregard gave my hand a sturdy shake. I fled softly through the deserted salotto, and into the dark corridor—to run squarely into Jerry, at the turn.

"At last!" remarked Jerry, with a gusty sigh, pulling me into the light. "Philura, if that wretched Beauregard monopolises you another evening, I'll call him out! I won't endure—"

"Oh, Jerry, Jerry!" I burst in, my arms around his neck. "Oh, Jerry, think of it! He's in love with Irene! Irene!" Out came the whole thrilling tale.

"Honest, Philura?" Jerry paused to grasp my astounding statements. "Upon my word, I can't believe it! Why, I thought, all along, it was you!"

"So did I," I answered, meekly. "But it isn't, it's my dear Irene. And she doesn't know it, but—Oh, Jerry! Can't we help them? Can't we put it through?"

"Indeed, we'll try," vowed Jerry, elated. "We'll put it through with a whoop. Al-

though, from what I have seen of Miss Bradbury, Beauregard would stand a better chance if he had focused on something warmer-hearted, more responsive, less remote,—say the bronze goddess on the Dogan. Or, the moon.”

“True,” I agreed. “And yet she may surprise us, after all. You never can tell about Irene.”

CHAPTER NINTH

May twenty-ninth. Rome.

JERRY and I are working our passage. We have learned to spurn delights, to live laborious days. Talk of the toil of Sisyphus with his boulder! It were child's play, against our hourly struggle, to push the obstinate and unseeing Irene up the Hill of Propinquity to the heights where she shall hear, and see,—and understand. Alas, even as we reach the summit, breathless but triumphant, it is only to see her roll stolidly down-hill once more! Of all the indifferent, ungrateful!—Yet give her time; and, even to her wilful, mote-blinded eyes may the deeper vision be vouchsafed.

This last week, her behaviour has been peculiarly maddening. She almost seems to divine our loving machinations, and to de-

light in bringing them to grief. She clings to her investigations, like a drowning man to a straw. She is too busy for picnicking, too tired for cards in the evening, too easily chilled to pace the moonlit beach with me (a brilliant but mournfully fruitless scheme on Jerry's part. Each of us was to beguile an unsuspecting victim down that golden pathway. Then, at the poetic moment when they met face to face, we two would suddenly vanish in the distance. The Prince came along like a lamb, but Irene wouldn't even lay down her pen to argue. So it fell through.) With infuriating reluctance, she chaperons me when I decline to be satisfied with Mrs. Kenmore alone; but, even then, her conduct is all but malicious. The weather has been cloudy of late; so even on our trips in the Prince's automobile (and nowadays Irene sits in front with the Prince, you may be sure. Jerry and I attend to *that!*) Even on these grand and glorious peregrinations, she flatly declines to wear any save her oldest and most battered clothes, "Because it's rainy," as if

that were a valid reason. Oh, she would try the patience of a stained-glass saint!

Yet to-day, at last, we dare hope that our long-sought goal is in sight. For to-morrow we go to ancient Viterbo, thence we climb by motor to the famous mediæval castle, from time immemorial the home of the noble family of the Rampollo. There we are to be entertained by the Count and Countess della Rampollo, at a grand state-and-festival house-party, and a supreme and majestic Italian-Aristocracy Dinner.

The Count di Rampollo and his beautiful Russian wife are very close friends of Mr. Beruregard's, and it is through him that the invitation has been extended to us. This affair is to be the crowning glory of our whole trip abroad. Even the *Texas*' reception to the British Admiral will take second place in our reminiscences, so the Prince declares. Even that wonder-dance in the Governor's garden will pale before its splendors.

Therefore, for this august occasion, aided and abetted by several unsuspecting fellow-

conspirators, Jerry and I have planned our grand coup. It involves some risk, I must admit. Like all such blown air-castles of sheer genius, it stands upon exceeding perilous ground. Moreover, if we should fail, we'd find it rather awkward to make explanations. However, we must succeed, for all the Gods of Romance are with us in our reckless quest. And, by to-morrow's moonrise, as the Sinful Conspirator always mutters darkly in the third act, even by yon pale mystic radiance, we shall see what we shall see!

Viterbo. The Morning After. On the griffin-trimmed stairway of the Albergo.

The fated moon has risen and set. The Rampollo dinner, that marvel of ancient pageantry and modern grace, is a resplendent memory. To outward seeming, our evil stratagems are gloriously triumphant; yet we know nothing in certainty. I have a bad cold in my head, as the reward of my unselfish efforts; while Jerry has involved himself

in so many wild prevarications that nothing short of international arbitration will ever untangle him again. None of these things matter—If only!—But Irene has not yet appeared, this morning. And I dare not hazard a guess as to results.

But for the tale thereof:

Now, to reach the Villa Rampollo is something of an undertaking. It is a great grey frowning castle, high in the dim olive-cloaked Cimminian Hills, miles upon miles from the railroad, and a stiff motor-trip even from Viterbo, the nearest town. It is only of late years that the Rampollos have attempted to live on the estate, much less to give house-parties there; for until recently this entire district has been infested with brigands, so that people dared not travel without armed escort. Nowadays, the brigands are all driven out. A few still lurk in the wild overgrown passes, and down the ghostly cave ruins near Ferentinum, twenty miles away. But the main route is perfectly safe. Consequently, Mr. Beauregard urged

us to make the double journey, from Rome to Viterbo, thence to the Villa Rampollo, in his big touring car.

Jerry and I hearkened with glad anticipation. Whereat Irene cruelly pulled every pin-feather out of our wingèd hopes by flatly declaring for the railroad. True, she unwillingly agreed to accept the motor from Viterbo to the Villa Rampollo; simply because she couldn't reach the Villa any other way.

"It's plain contrariness, because she knows we're trying to throw her with Beauregard," growled Jerry, as we lingered under the oleanders, that night. "Equally, it's contrariness, to insist that she's going straight back to Viterbo the very night of the dinner, instead of stopping over, as the Rampollos have begged us to do. As chaperon, her word is law. But it's no fair, to spoil all our fun, and curtail the Rampollos' invitation—and such an invitation!—just because she's determined to escape a tête-à-tête with Beauregard. And Beaure-

gard is a splendid chap. She ought to be the proudest girl on earth, that he cares for her. Moreover, give him half a chance, I'll wager—"

Jerry stopped short, with a deep breath of inspiration. Even in the moonlight, I saw his face turn slowly crimson, till it flamed almost redder than his hair.

"Upon my word, Philura, I've got it!" he whispered. "Beauregard shall have his chance! We'll fix it! We four will ride serenely and properly together to the dinner, in Beauregard's car. But, coming back, down past those woods and water-falls, through moonlight bright as day,—there'll be only two people in that car of his! Do you see? For, by inexplicable coincidence, the other two will have been left behind. And if, on that twenty-mile ride, through that divine, etherealising radiance, if Beauregard can't seize his opportunity and make the hour his own, and the girl, too—Well, then, Irene may forgive him. But *I* never shall."

"But, Jerry, how ridiculous!" I protested. "Irene couldn't leave me behind!"

"She could, if you'd gone on ahead, couldn't she?" responded Jerry. Which Alice-in-Wonderland retort bewildered me past argument.

"You mean we'd arrange for another vehicle, and slip away? Why, Jerry! How awful!"

"I mean just that. Now don't look so horrified, Philura. I'll hire another machine in Viterbo; even if the town is a Norman relic, it surely boasts a garage; and have it sent out to the Villa while the dinner is in progress. Then, while we're making our adieux, I'll explain to Rampollo that, Beauregard's touring-car being a trifle uncertain on hills, and you being a dismal coward about breakdowns—"

"I like that, I must say," I interrupted, tartly. "And if Mr. Beauregard hears that you've criticised his beloved Panhard, he'll never forgive you. You'll see!"

"Not he. He'll be too busy shedding tears

of gratitude, and urging me to be best man. Leave all to me, Philura. All you need do is, look guileless, and follow my lead."

I pondered.

"It sounds impossible. It *might* go through. If only Irene wouldn't insist on wearing that blue foulard! Even Italian moonlight can't etherealise that."

"Can't etherealise what?"

"Her dinner dress," said I, dismally. "Of all the dreary, hopeless, unbecoming—"

"Buy her a new one, then," said Jerry, the magnificent.

His words were like a kindling coal to my dull wits. As in a vision, I beheld that ill-starred bronze and amber gown, bought for the *Texas* tea. As in a vision, I saw Irene's fair arms and ivory shoulders rising from those waves of emerald and woven gold, Irene's soft eyes flashing clear as the jewelled corselet, Irene's cheek rosed like the drooping radiant garland!—

"Jerry," said I, "I'll do it. All you need do is, look guileless—and see that one par-

ticular suit-case is left behind, in the confusion of departure, at the inn at Viterbo. Better yet; have your own knock-about case at hand,—it's the same size and color as Irene's,—and tuck it into the tonneau at the last minute, in place of the one which the porter will carelessly leave on the portico step. Thank goodness, poor Irene is so near-sighted. It's an inhuman trick; but surely the end will justify the means. The game is ours, Jerry. Good night!"

"Philura!"

The great gold Mercury above the ramping lion-guarded mantel-piece struck lightly twice upon his jewelled shield. Thirty minutes past seven; barely half an hour before the potent hour of the Dinner! I tore my greedy eyes from the ranked portraits of seventeenth-century Rampolli which glorified my majestic Guest Apartment, and crowded in another hairpin.

"Philura! For pity's sake! Come here!"
The voice shook with rising tragedy. I

shook, too. Quickly I freed myself from Annina's admiring hands. Dutifully I turned towards Irene's door.

"What is it, Irene? I haven't a minute to spare, dear. Can't the maids bring what you want?"

"Can't the maids bring it?" Tragedy flamed to wrath in those lifting tones. "Open that door! Come here!"

I opened it, trembling. I felt my conscious guilt leap in one vast, betraying flame from traitor brow to heel. But Irene hadn't her glasses on, and couldn't see.

"Shoes, gloves, gown, everything, was packed in that one suit-case!" Irene stood wringing her hands: the words fell from her white lips like drops of molten lead. "I must have exchanged with somebody on the train! I can't understand—*Will* you look? Philura Temple Curtis! What have I done, to deserve all this!"

The suit-case lay open at her feet. But from its depths no blue foulard proclaimed its modest worth. Instead, there billowed

forth: One canvas hunting coat; two pairs of high boots; a smart kid case, obviously built to hold a dress-suit; a pair of field-glasses; a labyrinth of unravelled fishing-tackle.

"Wh-where's your party gown?" I marvelled, blank.

"'Where is it?'" Irene sat down, swaying. "Child, will you kindly realise that it is somewhere between here and Rome, and that that sacerdotal Dinner will be announced in twenty minutes more?"

For one reeling moment, I sat on my ivory-velvet chair, moveless as if turned to stone. Then, superbly, I sprang to meet the fray.

"Come into my room, quick. I've an extra party gown along—such luck! Annina, stop wringing your hands, and unstrap that biggest wicker case. Irene, pull out your hairpins. Felicie, pile Mademoiselle's hair high, with a soft pompadour, and stick in this diamond butterfly—"

"Philura, are you crazy? I never wear

my hair high, never! And that preposterous youthful ornament—”

“You’ll have to wear it high with this gown.” I snatched out the filmy skirt, then the glittering bodice. “Moreover, this dress demands diamonds. Annina, get the little pearl and diamond chain from my jewel-bag, and clasp it on for Mademoiselle. Then put on these slippers—”

“That circus dress!” groaned Irene. Yet, dazed to obedience, she was already halfway into it. Then the sight of the high-heeled jewelled shoes which I had thoughtfully provided brought a wild wail of protest.

“Philura, I *can't!* I'll not risk my life on those absurd Chinese pagodas. It's too inhuman. I *won't!* Or—Give me the shoes you've just taken off. They're dressy enough to do.”

Ruin that ensemble with my clumping shoes, indeed! Even her own hideous tan square-toes would have been no worse.

I stooped, then moved quickly to the low window. There sounded a faint clink. It

might have been a small thick-soled object dropping on the tiled gallery without.

"Where *are* your shoes, Philura? Hurry!" commanded Irene.

"I—I don't seem to find but one," I mumbled, groping madly through my suit-case.

"I—I do believe I've lost the left one, somehow. You'll have to wear the slippers, Irene. Put them on."

"Lost it!" Irene turned on me, looking of a sudden so alarmingly intelligent that I quaked in my deceitful stocking-feet. "You couldn't! You've just this minute taken them off!"

"We have only ten minutes, Irene."

Irene collapsed, shuddering.

"I'll give up the dinner. I'll not go down at all. Never. I shall simply die, dead. Philura, you must make my excuses—"

"Irene, you'll have to face it out. Think! You can't affront your hosts like that. Put on the other slipper, Annina. There!"

"But my spectacles?" quavered poor Irene, piteously subdued.

"You must have packed your indoor pair in that missing case," I answered, after pell-mell search.

"So I did," said Irene, meditatively. "But I can wear my blue automobile ones," she added, and in cold blood. There was a crunch of breaking glass.

"You can't, because I've this minute stepped on them," I called, from the other room. "I'm dreadfully sorry, Irene. You'll have to go down without any glasses at all. I'll buy you a new pair to-morrow."

Irene opened her lips: but the deluge was checked by a clinking tap, and a honeyed Tuscan voice:

"Will the Signorina permit me the honour? May I announce to them, there is arrived the dinner-hour?"

Midway through that gazzling festival, Jerry caught my private ear.

"Is it Irene?" he whispered, his appreciative eyes on the bewildering vision at Mr. Beauregard's side. "Or is it some Picture Lady, slipped away out of her frame?"

"Look at Mr. Beauregard's eyes. That tells," I whispered back.

"True enough," murmured Jerry, suddenly grave. "That's no picture to him, you may believe. That's the Real Thing."

Jerry's side of the intrigue did not move quite so smoothly. We made our faithless escape deftly enough; but our hired automobile proved a Lombard relic, too. What with rusted engines, broken tires, and a most disobliging steering gear, it cost us three toiling hours to gain the lights of Viterbo once more. I was elated, yet puzzled, when I heard Irene come in, an hour later, but I dared not question why. That lingering return looks entrancingly hopeful. Still, I can't help foreboding—a little. However, I will be patient; and soon, I hope, Irene will tell me all.

Later.

Irene has told me all. That is, all that she intends to tell. And that is quite enough for me.

It is too crushing. Never before in this cold world did such angelically good intentions meet with such heart-sickening defeat.

And when I think how hard we worked, with what unselfish eagerness we strove to serve and aid! Saddest of all, we need never dream of winning their gratitude for our loving pains; for neither Irene nor the Prince will ever suspect that they have been the objects of our tender benevolence. And considering the way things have turned out, perhaps it's quite as fortunate for us that they never will.

"Cheer up. The worst is yet to come!" Thus Jerry reassures me. But I can't cheer up, for nothing worse can possibly befall. If ever again I try to play *deus ex machinâ*, if ever again I poke my meddlesome fingers into the wheels of Fate, I hope my guardian angel will box my ears and stand me in the corner, as I deserve, and keep me there till Fate's chariot has rolled safely by.

Ten minutes ago, I encountered Sora Angela, our fawn-eyed landlady, in the vast

albergo corridor. Her dimpled brown hands clutched a huge brass breakfast tray.

"For the Signorina Bradburree," she beamed. "She is still weary, and she has the foot lamed, that she cannot walk; thus, I carry her coffee."

"The foot lamed?" I asked, startled. "Why didn't she tell me? How did it happen, I wonder? I'll take up that tray."

Irene sat in a low chair. Her left foot, bandaged, rested on a cushion. In her lap lay her Hand-Book to Etrurian Remains. On the table before her were spread her Chronological Tables, her Sketch Notes, and three new blank books. The mere sight of that array of ammunition struck dread upon my heart.

"Did you sprain your ankle, Irene? Why, how could it happen? Did you have a nice ride home? Does—does Mr. Beauregard know you are hurt?"

Irene poured her coffee with placid, sinister ease.

"It is a sprain, but a slight one, Philura.

Your pretty shoes were to blame, I fear. I caught the high heel between two cobbles, and it twisted over. Yes, we had a pleasant ride home."

"And Mr. Beauregard—"

"Mr. Beauregard started for Rome early this morning, I believe." Irene languidly inspected her tray. "Dear me, that toast isn't half done. I hardly think we'll meet him again, as he goes on to Constantinople."

"B—but . . ."

"And, Philura, I planned to go this morning to the Palazzo Municipale and complete this sketch of that largest sarcophagus, but with this stiff ankle I can't manage it. Will you finish it for me, dear?"

"Why, of course. But, Irene, has he really—"

"And you might bring me a rolled bandage. Angela tied this one, and it's not comfortable."

"Yes, Irene. But did Mr. Beau—"

"And a fountain-pen filler." Irene started on another piece of toast. "And

some strawberries, and—Oh, yes! Try and find some souvenir post-cards, won't you, please?"

Souvenir post-cards!

She must have seen the outraged tears in my eyes as I turned from her. Spartan forever, she broke another egg.

"It's the reclining-statue sarcophagus, Philura," she called, as I went palely away. "With one thumb gone, and a mouth like a button-hole."

Jerry met me on the portico. There the smiling Angela gave me a note, in Mr. Beau regard's big steady hand.

"Good-bye, and a happy journey, my dear little Partner," it ran. "I thank you for many things, and I keenly regret that this must be the end of our pleasant meetings. Pray give my adieux and my thousand congratulations to the lucky Mr. Castleman. And here are all my heart's good wishes to you.

"Yours ever gratefully,

"REGINALD CHASE BEAUREGARD."

Whereat my own heart welled over. So did my eyes. And the blessed Angela, instantly divining, caught me to her velvet cheek.

"Ah, the poor Signore, he has departed in sore haste!" she crooned. "And weary must he now be. Since that he has trundled the cart of Andrea all this steep mile, from without the city, up the hill to the Albergo, and the Signorina within it, also! Truly in no other way could the injured Signorina have reached the inn; but his arms must have been strained to breaking. And then to depart, without even one little egg, one cup of coffee!"

"Wait a minute." Jerry caught her arm. "Just say that over again, won't you, please? Who is Andrea? Who, for pity's sake, did Beauregard trundle up the hill? Not the Signorina Bradbury, surely?"

"The automobile of the Signor Beauregard has ceased to revolve while yet a mile from the town," explained Angela, with dignity. "And—"

"All my doing!" Jerry dropped his head in his hands with a groan. "I thought his tank was full! I sneaked his emergency petrol to help that threshing machine of ours home. Oh, *what* a goop!"

"The car has ceased to revolve, as I have said," Angela reiterated. "It is then far past the midnight. By vast labor, the Signor has dragged his car into the barn-yard of Andrea, for safety. Then he and the Signorina Bradburree have continued their journey on foot. But a few steps, however, and the Signorina has damaged her foot, in its high heel, that she may not move. Then has the Signor returned to the cottage of Andrea, and requested of him his donkey-cart. The cart? Yes. But the donkey? No. The donkey is also much fatigued, and declines to move from his stall. Therefore the Signore has placed the Signorina upon the cart, and has of his own strength wheeled it up the hill. On this long slope of cobbles, all the way from the hut of Andrea, and by night, it has been no gentle task, believe me.

The hands of the Signore are blistered as with ploughing, and his beautiful coat of fine cloth is split down the back, even as a chicken prepared for the roasting—”

Whereupon, with a strangled whoop, Jerry toppled backwards over the railing.

“But he has not permitted the Signorina to step foot upon the ground, not till she has entered the albergo. Then he has roused me, and bade me that I bathe and bandage the hurts of the Signorina. When I return from her, the Signore awaits, but long enough to give me my reckoning, and to say *Au rivederci*. Then is he departed. Ah, the grand Signore is he, even in his coat, which is split as a chick—”

“Come along to the sarcophagusses, Philura,” entreated Jerry, feebly. “Perhaps the sight of them may calm me down. Certainly nothing else will.”

I have just finished drawing the thumbless lady with a mouth like a button-hole. Jerry is lying in the thin daisy-sprinkled grass across the courtyard. Occasionally I see the

daisies sway violently; then I know the situation has swept over Jerry once again.

For myself, I cannot smile. It is no use to hope longer. For after this last weird, unutterable fiasco, not even the forces that bind the stars in their courses could re-unite the Floating Prince and Irene. And it is all my fault, my loving, officious, pig-headed fault. I could cry my very heart out!—

Yet through my aching mind there sings a haunting far refrain, dear even to my earliest infancy. And, try as I may, I can't quite quench my unbidden laughter, even in unbidden tears:

“ ‘The road was so steep, and the path was
so narrow,
He brought his little wife home in a wheel-
barrow.’ ”

June fifteenth. The Courtyard, Viterbo.

The die is cast. I couldn't stand it any longer. I have written to Mother. And I have confessed everything, straight through.

I haven't told Jerry what I have done, which seems unfair. But Jerry might not understand, while Mother will be sure to. That's the iramemorial advantage about mothers. You need not explain things. They know it all, without a word. Then she has always been so honest with me that I can trust her, even in this, the hardest demand that I have ever made; my plea that she will talk things over with Father, and bring him round to our side. For Father is the real sticking point—or rather, Steel Consolidated. There, too, is the rub with Jerry's father; only that is Steel Amalgamated. If only we dared hope that, some day, the two companies might see fit to combine! But that fond dream can never be.

Anyway, I'm happier, now that that letter is written. But poor dear Jerry is quite melancholy, these days. I somehow think that perhaps his conscience prickles a bit, too.

This past week, we have explored Viterbo thoroughly. Viterbo is Froissart and

Romola and the *Aeneid*, all staged together, with the Conflicts of the Gods and the Giants for a background. It is an Etruscan-Roman-Lombard town, built in the fourteenth century, and, I should judge, never painted nor papered since. It looks like a city cut off a missal border, with its burning deep blue sky, its grim dark tunnels of streets cowering between the huge century-stained walls, its steep, black towers with curly-tailed lions prancing on the ridge-poles, where the hospitable lords-and-owners used to stand and pour down hot water and arrows and boiling oil whenever bandits or robber barons rode into town. There are huge coats-of-arms carved on the walled street corners, and a wonderful papal palace with noble columns all trimmed with the most unfortunate animals flattened into conventional designs along the top. And everywhere you go, you meet smiling peasants under green umbrellas, and glowing stained-glass kings and saints and martyrs, and bewitching push-carts laden with flowers and roasted kids and black bread,

and everywhere scenery, scenery, scenery. Jerry and I adore it, and could be happy for weeks, just poking and prying about. But Irene, who is so restless and irritable that I hardly know her, is bent on exploring the buried Theatre of Ferentinum, too.

Ferentinum was razed by the Viterbans in the fourteenth century, so there's nothing much left now, save the great amphitheatre which the government is excavating. It is a wild, deserted, spectral ruin, away in the heart of the hills and Briganddom. Tourists are forbidden even to ride near it without official escort. Moreover, Mr. Beauregard and Jerry have both told us that we were not to go there, ever, under any possible circumstances. But Mr. Beauregard is so long departed that his commands have lost all force. And to-day Jerry has gone quail-shooting. Consequently, for all my warnings, and Angela's tearful pleas, Irene, escorted by two guides (who are armed with pistols probably last used in the Garibaldi Campaigns) has boldly sallied forth.

I did not kiss her good-hye. For Irene and I are now pleasantly formal. It is all my fault, as usual. Her big white roses came, as always, this morning. Again my unruly tongue slipped its leash.

"Irene, have you heard from Mr. Beau-regard?"

"Why, no, dear." Irene studied her hack hair. "Have you?"

"Irene, how can you! And he's the dearest, loveliest thing!—"

"You sweet, absurd Philura!" Irene's eyes flashed dark with somhre mockery. "Pray what should so glorious a heing want of me?"

"Yourself," I hlurted out. "And your silly pride. And your love."

"Neither I nor my pride are much worth the having," said Irene, under her breath.

"What about your love?"

"Dear Philura, you are almost tedious." Irene's pale cheek hlazed. Her voice rang sharp and cold as an angry bell. "You forget how little I should have, of myself, to

give. Incidentally, you forget that I am thirty-one."

"Then I'd take him before I was thirty-two," said I. And, utterly shame-stricken, I fled.

It is almost dark. I do wish Jerry would come. Angela is calling me from the gallery. I wonder—

CHAPTER TENTH

*June sixteenth. The Gargoyle Portico,
Viterbo.*

PERHAPS this is the same old world of yesterday. But since the Miracle, it seems a fair new planet, remote and strange.

I ran down stairs at Angela's delighted cry, expecting to find Jerry. Instead, a masked and goggled apparition met me in the door, and caught my hands in a mighty grasp.

"Miss Philura, you'll nickname me the Limpet," laughed the Prince, pushing back his helmet from his kind, dusty face. "But this is positively my last appearance. I learned to-day that the Allegrino clan is terrorising the country near Ferentinum, so I raced up—unnecessarily, I dare say,—to warn your party not to ride out that way.

It's exceedingly dangerous. Though perhaps you have not even thought of going there."

"N—no, I haven't," I stammered, feeling rather guilty, somehow. "At least, I myself—"

The Prince eyed me keenly.

"But Irene?—Miss Bradbury?—Of course she would never be so reckless!" He turned on his heel, flushing. "This was a wild-goose chase, at best. I'm going back. Good-bye."

"But, Mr. Beauregard, Irene—"

I need not finish my sentence. He read it for himself.

"*What!* Has she actually started there!" He seized my arm. He whitened to his steady lips. "To-day! When the whole hill-country is panic-stricken! Which road did she take?"

"The steep one, over the polygonal bridge. But she'll be perfectly safe, Mr. Beauregard, truly. She took Andrea and Pietro, and they each had a gun."

"Andrea and Pietro? Those moon-faced innocents! Oh, and they each had a gun,

indeed!" Then Mr. Beauregard exploded. To see his splendid temper flame sky-high made even Jerry's image totter on its throne. "Fetch me a horse, one of you fellows there! If she took the bridge road, the auto can't follow. Run to the locksmith's and bring me some cartridges, Angela. Now, don't worry, Miss Philura. I'll bring her back, safe—although I may break in rudely upon her researches!" he ended with an angry laugh. He scrambled upon the drooping little pony which the eager Lucio had brought, waved his hand to me,—and away he galloped, down the City hill. And up-hill past him plodded Jerry, with the face of a sun-burnt cherub, and a game-bag so heavy that it cut his shoulder.

Jerry and I exclaimed and marvelled. I boldly dared to hope. Jerry merely sniffed.

"Bully for old Beauregard! He doesn't know when to let go, does he? He's just the finest fellow going, Philura. But what's the use? Irene can't see it. And she never will. Set against a large moss-covered stone man,

sculptured twenty centuries ago, with one ear knocked off by the Saracens, and both arms cracked by the Goths, he stands no show. Irene is joined to her idols. Let her alone."

We had a merry little supper which we cooked for ourselves, in the big vaulted, stone dining-hall, with the tall wind-blown candles chasing frolicking shadows from every dusky corner. We had honey sherbet, cooled with snow brought down from the mountains, just as we used to make maple-sugar snow at home, and my chocolate was delicious, and so were Jerry's pancakes, only a shade lumpy, as he forgot the soda. Afterwards we went out on the great griffin staircase, to watch for Irene and the Prince. But the wind had risen suddenly cold, and purpling rain-clouds hid the stars. So we went back to the great goblin-lighted hearth, and teased Angela into letting us make currant doughnuts in the big pot which swung like a witch's cauldron above the glowing coals.

We were so busy and so happy that the boom of the Convent bells amazed us beyond measure.

"Nine o'clock! It can't be!" said Jerry. "Now where are those superannuated Babes in the Wood? Borrowing Andrea's wheelbarrow, I daresay."

I peered from the barred window. A wet black gust swept my face.

"Jeremiah Castleman, it's raining! Raining torrents! Look!"

We ran to the door. Against the mighty shoulder of the wind, it took our united strength to push it open. Once outside, the storm pounced down upon us like an angry hawk. The black air whistled with freezing sleet. The roar of the wind through the trees below came up to us like the thunder of a torrent. Jerry pulled me indoors with a grave face.

"This is no joke, Philura. Angela, put on hot water, ready for coffee when they get back, and have a fire in the Signorina's room. Guess I'll make up a posse and start out."

"Eat there are five roads of return," protested Angela. "Also, the Signor is not mad. He will never attempt the return through this tempest, this net of darkness. Near Ferentinum is there an inn. Of a badness, truly; but better ill food and a hard bed than slaughter by these fiends, the brigands. There will he leave the Signorina and return upon his horse, alone. We have but to wait. Therefore why not wait in content?"

Jerry subsided, grumbling.

It seemed a long time before the clock struck ten. And after several ages, it was eleven. . . .

"You go to bed, Philura. They can't come to-night."

Even as Jerry swallowed the yawn, which threatened to engulf him, there sounded a clatter of hurrying feet across the gallery flags, a tumult of high voices. The huge barred door swung back. Up the steps streamed the very cavalcade of Bedlam.

I was so utterly stunned that all I recall

is but a hideous, jumbled dream. A tangle of frightened, stamping horses, a swarm of haggard men, an uproar of panic and command. In the midst of the *mêlée*, I can still see Irene. Whiter than the candle-flame; inexorably calm; her linen habit hanging in rags, her blue blouse torn from shoulder to wrist, and stained with blood. And reeling from his saddle against her strong arm, limp as a fainting girl, wounded and pulseless, yet his gaunt face hardly paler than her own, the Floating Prince. . . .

Somehow between us we laid him on the great settle before the fire, and washed and bound the gunshot wounds—only scratches, thanks be! and coaxed back his slow wavering breath. After a fathomless eternity, his nice long lashes lifted. I saw his own dear jolly smile come flickering around his ashen mouth.

Tearfully rejoiced, I opened my own mouth, to voice my glad relief. But Jerry, with incredible forethought, brought his large hand down and shut it for me, tight. Rude as it

was, I've been grateful to him, ever since. For that slow waking smile was not for me.

"That you, Irene?" rather feebly.

"Yes, Mr. Beauregard."

"Quite a lively episode, wasn't it?"

"Quite."

Pause.

"Odd, how this room keeps swimming. It spoils my perspective. Let's see. To begin with, I hunted for you maybe two hours before I found any trace."

"Yes."

"And when I did come up with you, it was in the underbrush, behind that ruined arch. And almost dark. And you thought I was a bandit."

Ominous silence.

"So you called Andrea and Pietro. I, like a fool, never thought to shout out who I was. So, as I broke through the brush, you snatched that machine gun of Pietro's—"

Jerry's fingers gripped my wrist.

"And blazed away."

A silence which could be felt.

"You winged me twice, too. Lucky for me that you're such a poor shot, Irene. Otherwise—"

"Really, Mr. Beauregard, does it not tire you to talk so continuously?"

Jerry and I flinched. The Prince did not turn an eyelash.

"Not on this topic," he responded, urbanely. "Then I pitched over, and you and Pietro flew. But you could not bear to leave even a bandit to die so miserably. Back you came, with Andrea for protection—at long range. When you found it was I—"

"Angela, can you heat some broth for the Signor? He grows ery tired."

—"You tore your habit into strips and bandaged me as best you could, and started home. Andrea was too panicky to help much, and Pietro wept considerably, so you had it all to do yourself. Also, you deliberately took the most dangerous road home, because it was the shortest, and you wished to save me as much fatigue as possible." He rested a moment. "You walked beside me, and held

me on the horse, every step of the way, for fear I should faint and fall off."

Another pause.

"And now you're drenched, and tired to death, and half sick from excitement. Yet here you stay, and wait on me, and care for me, as if—Really, Irene, aren't you just a *trifle*—inconsistent?"

Thereat I seized Jerry's reluctant hand, and dragged him from the room. Alas, even at the doorway, I caught her coolest, bitterest tone:

"Really, Mr. Beauregard, you must excuse me. Angela is so slow about your broth, I'll heat it myself."

Away she fled through one door, even as I urged the sulky Jerry through the other.

"So this time, she's shot him full of holes," said Jerry, gloomily. "Precious little good it will do him, too. He'd as well give up, right now. Did you hear her dress swish as she flounced out to find Angela? He'd better take his trusting heart and ready hand elsewhere. Irene is not for him."

I said nothing. The iron of this final disappointment had cleft my very soul.

"I wish I had the rest of those doughnuts," continued Jerry, meditatively. "So much excitement makes me rather faint. They're in a bowl near the fireplace, Philura. Slip in and get them. You won't disturb him."

I slipped in, obediently. I felt the need of a doughnut myself.

Mr. Beauregard lay with closed eyes, his thin face cut like a medallion of ivory against the dark, ancient carving of the settle. I tiptoed past him, the deep brass bowl of doughnuts clutched in my arms. As I gained the shadowy doorway, the opposite door opened. In came Irene, head aloft, carrying his steaming broth. I felt for the door-knob. . . . Somehow it eluded my hand. . . .

"Here is your soup, Mr. Beauregard."

Irene's voice clinked frozen defiance. I sighed, and reached for the knob again.

"I don't want any soup, thank you. Put it down. Then come here."

I let go the knob.

Irene, scornfully unheeding, started for the pantry.

"Irene, come here." His voice was very low.

For one poignant breath, Irene stood at bay. Then she came. So would Vesuvius have come, if he had summoned it in just that tone. I realised that I was eavesdropping, but I dared not move, lest again I put my foot into the psychological moment. So there I clung and palpitated to the door-casing, like a butterfly on a pin.

"May I do anything for you, Mr. Beauregard?"

Mr. Beauregard half lifted his tired eyes.

"You certainly may. Sit down."

Irene sat down. Her attitude suggested a mediæval lady-heretic, taking a rocker, while she waited for the thumb-screws.

"You are fairly comfortable, Mr. Beauregard?"

"Very. Pray let us leave my bodily state out of the conversation. Kindly answer one question. Why, if you supposed me a bandit,

did you come back so instantly to my aid to-day?"

"Really, Mr. Beauregard!"

"Whatever your motive, your act was most charitable. At the same time, it would gratify my curiosity to know whether you were quite certain, that your assailant was really a brigand, or just a presumptuous fellow who—"

"Pardon me, Mr. Beauregard, but—"

—"Who loves you so dearly that he cannot endure to feel that you may be chancing your life, and burdening the days he cherishes,—even though he need never hope for the right to share them."

Irene stood up, white and speechless. With a torturing effort, he dragged himself to his feet, and shut her hands tight into his own.

"Listen to me, Irene," he said, slowly. "Once upon a time, there were two fools; unutterable fools— No, you shall hear me out. You shall not go. The woman—Oh, the woman was the proud sort of fool. But the man was worse. For he boasted a Temper,

a superb, ungovernable Temper, and, so far from ruling it, he gloried in its sweep and flame. Oh, he was a poor sort. However, the man and the woman found each other one day, and together they built a house. And they called it the House of Dreams.”

There Mr. Beauregard’s voice broke queerly. But he spoke straight on.

“But it didn’t stand long. For one day the man’s Temper and the woman’s Pride both stormed down upon it. And there was nothing but wreck and ruin left.

“The man and the woman went away, and tried to forget. But, ever since, they’ve wandered about, they’ve gone searching—”

Irene stood rigid, pale as snow.

“Searching—What?” He caught her face in his hands, and turned it to the light, and laughed at it, mockingly. But it was a mockery sweeter than his pleading voice, tenderer than tears.

“Searching—what? What have you found, in all your Excavations, my girl? What does your beloved Archæology reveal to you?

Dust and ashes? Waste, and regret, and hateful self-distrust? So it has been with me.

"Irene, once more, listen. Even though we shattered our treasure together, can't we go back, together,—and find the bits? Haven't you walked in lonely forgetfulness long enough, my darling? Won't you go back, with the other fool—and build that House of Dreams again?"

He swayed a little, weakly, and sank back on the bench. And then—

Somehow, Irene had fallen on her knees beside him, her face hid in her hands. And I saw his dear grey head bend down to meet the golden head upon his knee.

Then, at last, I found the door-knob. And I ran. And I was so overwhelmed with joy, so blind with foolish happy tears, that I fell over two chairs and a bag of beans, and narrowly escaped rolling down cellar. But I didn't disturb *them* by my uproar. Not they. They wouldn't have noticed an avalanche, if one had happened in.

"Oh, Jerry, Jerry!" I sobbed, my arms around his neck. "He—he has told her once more, and this time she—she *knows*. Oh, I'm so glad!"

"Watch out, Philura! There, if you haven't spilled half those doughnuts into the soft soap!" cried Jerry, irritably. "Oh, well, maybe they'll wash off. So don't cry, dear."

"I'm not crying for doughnuts," I gulped. "But to think, after all he has gone through, and *she* has gone through, to have it end like this—at last!"

"Not to mention what we've gone through, for their sweet sakes," said Jerry, feelingly. "Of all the strenuous romances! Next time I feel like helping along at match-making, I'll go down to Father's roller-mill instead, and ask the boss to give me a shovel. Good night, Philura. Take this doughnut. Most of the soap is washed off the biggest end."

"Well, Irene, one thing is certain. Assuredly, you need never feel, as long as you

live, that you encouraged him unduly," said I. We sat curled in each others' arms, on Irene's bed. Our long hours of whispers and tears and laughter were melting into the first rose-gleam of dawn. "For yours were Cave-lady tactics, through and through. First, you knocked him down that Spanish precipice; then, you had him arrested by that Gibraltar sentry. Third, you tripped him up and ducked him in the Mediterranean. Next, you dragged him into my mournful blunder at adoption. Then you made him split his dress-coat, trundling you home in the wheelbarrow. To-day you shot him for a brigand—"

"Oh, Philura, don't, don't!" poor Irene cried. And she was so fair and strange and lovely, with her wan tear-stained face and star-lit eyes, that I could have knelt before her. "Oh, Philura, think of the days we have lost, the years that have slipped away! And all my fault, my own proud, foolish, wicked fault. If only I can make up for it —If only I can make him happy now! But,

Oh, I'm not half good enough for him, for my own lover. I never, never can be!"

Then I didn't say another word. For when they reach that stage, they're past all reason, and all argument. And, worse, it lasts. *I* know.

"Ah, well," said I, "you're the last one I'd have suspected of such hopeless sentimentality, such utter, lovelorn foolishness. But then—you never can tell—about Irene."

June eighteenth. The Courtyard, Viterbo.

Jerry is sitting on the bottom stair step, eating chocolate, and weaving me a daisy chain. To mortal sight, Irene and the Prince are also in plain vision, he in a cushioned chair, she on the railing beside him. I have reason to believe, however, that they are really soaring somewhere between here and the fleecy cloud-rack above the western hills.

Jerry's conscience has been nipping again of late. He has been gloomy and mysterious for days, poor boy. Half an hour ago, the murder was out.

"Philura," in tones of bland abstraction, "have you—ah—written home lately?"

"Yes."

"Have you happened to—to make any mention—"

"Yes, I have. I wrote Mother two weeks ago, and told her every word. Every single thing. I was a coward, not to tell you before, Jerry. Please forgive me. But I couldn't live and stand it; to feel I was deceiving her. You won't understand, dear. But, truly, I had to. I couldn't treat her so."

Jerry braided another daisy with infinite care. He would not meet my eyes.

"Maybe I do understand," he said, very low. "Maybe I've been in the same boat myself. Look here, Philura. Will you forgive me if I confess that I've done the same identical thing?"

"Jeremiah Castleman!"

"I've written my people, and owned up, too," he went on, crimson-eared, but defiant. "I couldn't endure to act such a sneak. Of course our people are all wrong, to make us

two innocents take the brunt of their business animosities. Just the same, my father is my father, and the best one ever. I couldn't bear it, to feel that he and Mother were still trusting me, and I wasn't playing fair. So I wrote, two weeks ago, and told them, every word. Straight through."

There was a long silence. Gazing down the courtyard, I perceived our Angela, puffing up the cobbly slope. As she caught my eye, she smiled, and waved the envelopes in her hand.

"Jerry, this isn't the day for the American mail," I said, suddenly dizzy and faint. "Yet Angela is bringing me a letter. Do you suppose that Mother—*Can* it be—"

"Cablegrams. One apiece," said Jerry, elaborately unconcerned. He put the brown envelope into my unsteady hand. For a long minute, we looked at each other.

"They're probably ordering us home, in disgrace," said he, quietly. "Brace up and read it, sweetheart. If we're doomed, we're doomed."

He read mine over my shoulder.

"Mother sails Paris tuesday meet hotel
d'angleterre love

"father."

"Yes, she's coming to take me home," I
choked. "I wouldn't have believed it of
Mother. I *can't* believe it! What does your
message say?"

Jerry did not reply. Black eyes staring,
mouth agape, he put the sheet before me.

"Curtis-castleman consolidated congratu-
lations all around kiss philura for me

"JEREMIAH B. CASTLEMAN."

"Jeeminy Christmas!" Jerry's voice
sank rapt and low. "And we thought—we
thought—Philura, look up, honey! Don't
you understand? Curtis-Castleman Consoli-
dated! See what that means! Your mother
isn't coming to take you home. Not on your
life! She's coming to help you buy your
trousseau!"



