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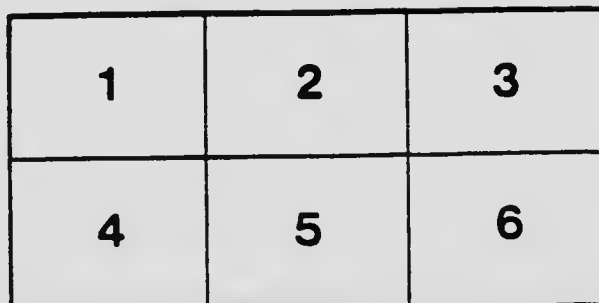
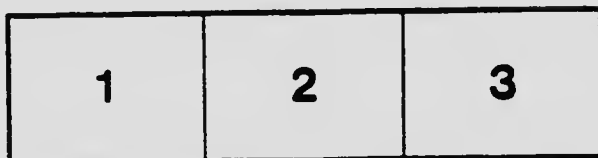
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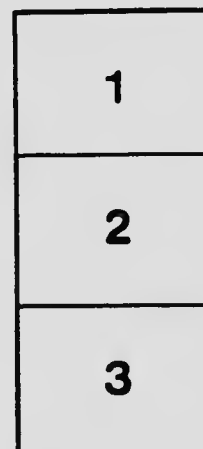
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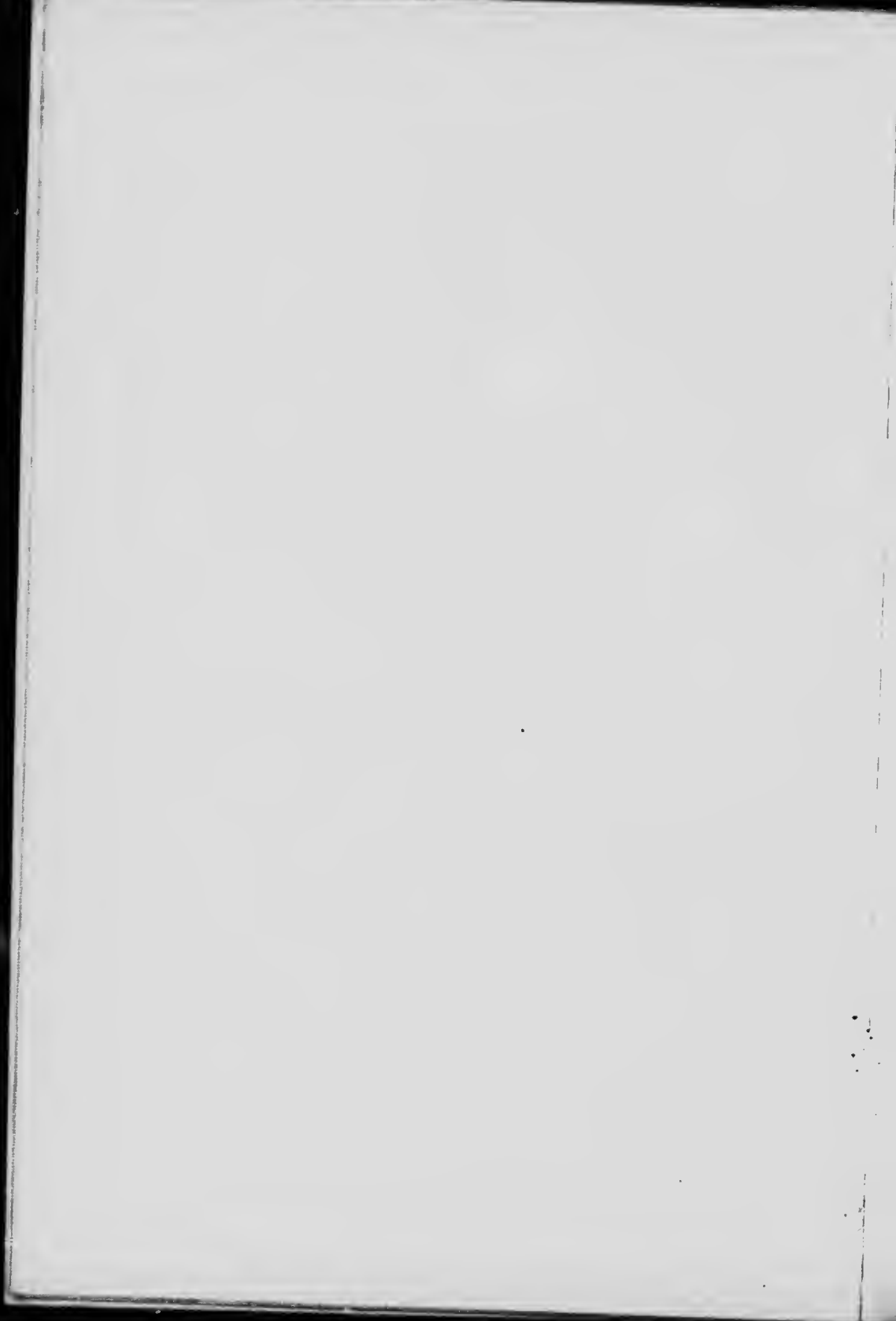
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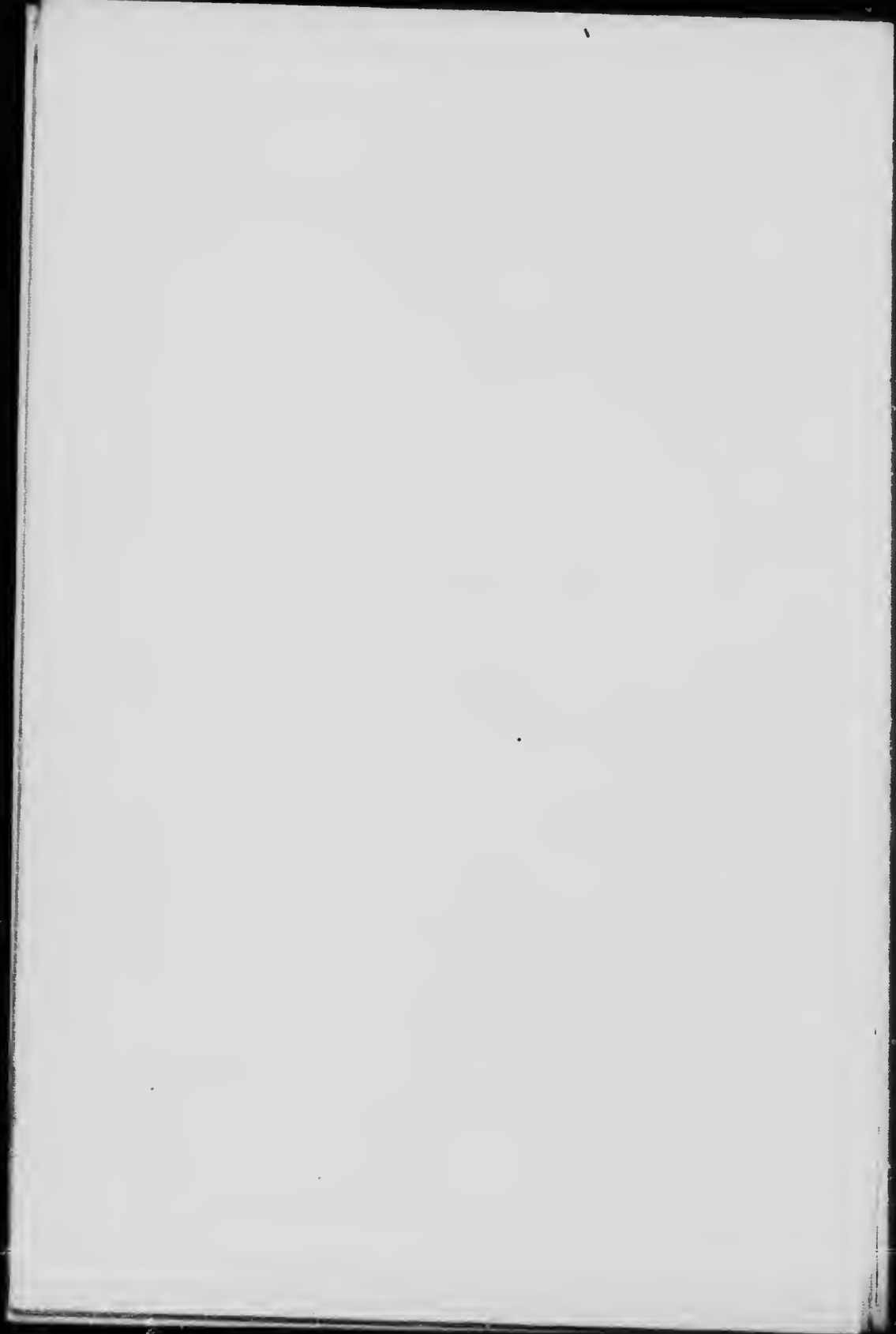


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THE GODDESS







(Frontispiece)

Celestia and Tommy

The
GODDESS

By

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

Author of "The Voice in the Rice,"
"The Seven Darlings," etc.

and

CHARLES W. GODDARD



ILLUSTRATED

TORONTO
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CHAPTER I

DEAR BARCLAY:

Every individual voter feels that he could run the nation better than those appointed to do so by himself and thousands of others just like him. One voter would put the tariff higher than it ever was before; the next would abolish it. But, whichever type of thinker gets his candidates into power, there remain always in these United States millions of people who have to be poor, dirty and discontented.

From this even a child would conclude either that a vast majority of people are doomed to unhappiness by the God who made them or that a vast majority of politicians are incapable governors. As to the first conclusion we know nothing; but as to the second, we are certain beyond peradventure.

With mighty few exceptions, those whom we put over us to govern us are the most incompetent lot of legislators and administrators in history. For the most part they are men vaguely trained to the law. They talk better and oftener on a greater variety of topics than the average man who is making or trying to make an honest

living. They make it their business to be conspicuous, instead of the opposite, and so get themselves elected.

As a body of men, they know practically nothing about anything useful or important, and their small minds are so tangled with the little law they know that they are unable to see through the tangle into the heart of law, which is justice. If lawyers could be counted on to do right the pawnbroker down the street and the shoemaker round the corner would not have to be called away from affairs, important to them, to sit on juries and do justice.

But the thing goes deeper. What in each voter's judgment is the one chief thing that is wrong with these United States? There would be almost as many answers as there are voters. I've asked lots of men, and no two agreed, but I liked one man's answer a lot. He said: "The chief trouble with the country is that its citizens have to pay taxes when they ought to be receiving dividends.

"And this," he said, "would be the case if from the start we had been governed by our best minds instead of by our worst; if as a nation we had been run from the beginning the way Standard Oil, for instance, has been run as a trust."

I am not standing up for the rapaciousness of trusts, only for their efficiency. As a nation

we have been more rapacious and dishonest than any trust that ever lived. This being so, and a blot upon us that can never be wiped out, a wrong of our own doing that can never be righted, it is ten thousand pities that we haven't been efficient, too.

How many billions of dollars was this country worth, as land, coal, oil, forest, gold, silver, iron, etc., etc.? Only astronomers think in big enough figures to answer that. Anyhow as a nation we grabbed, stole and cheated it all away from the people who owned it. And then we began to play ducks and drakes with it.

If from the start our resources could have been handled by a Rockefeller, he—well he might be a thousand times richer than he is, but we—we would none of us be poor. And our houses would be clean and efficient from garret to cellar, and not gutted and creaky, and full of vermin, and half the ceilings down.

Think of a whole country run as a trust, with employment at more than a fair return for every able-bodied man, and fat dividends for everybody in good years! In such a state, by force of public opinion, even a Bryan might be made useful. Even in Utopia there are offices which have to be swept out.

If there is salvation ahead of us, instead of ruin, something of this sort will have to be

worked out from what is left to us of our natural resources.

Failing this, those of us who are rich enough and contented enough as individuals will be pulled down from our high places and trampled by an unreasoning mob until there is no longer anything stable nor anyone contented. The air of this great city which we breathe is 10 per cent. air and 90 per cent. revolution. In other parts of the country the percentage of revolution is greater.

The only man with sufficient mind and power to effect anything good is yourself. But if you personally were to preach the gospel of efficiency, people would think you were working, to put it bluntly, for your own pocket. This gospel then ostensibly must not come from you. It must not come from the rich. From whom then? From the poor, you answer. But, alas! my friend, even the champions of the poor are open to suspicion.

This gospel then must come from where? Why, from Heaven, of course, whence all good gospel have come, or are generally believed to have come. And, seeing that we are in America, where the women are given the best of everything, our heaven-sent messenger must be a woman.

I see your gesture of horror. But she shall

THE GODDESS

5

not be as you see her. She shall be young, and beautiful, and good and sincere. She shall not speak her own thoughts, but ours. The masses will believe in her. The classes may, and if they don't they will have sense enough to pretend to.

With you to help, I believe, upon my word of honor, that I can make this thing happen. Will you help? What do you think?

Yours, as ever,

MILES STILLITER.

To this letter Professor Stilliter received the following answer by return messenger:

DEAR STILLITER:

I'll help if you can answer one thing satisfactorily. To be a successful gospelist the woman, as you intimate, must be sincere. She must believe what she preaches. If she is sincere, how can she tell people that she comes from Heaven? You say she must come from Heaven in order to believe. It is quite a rigmarole. I know that you have been thinking and experimenting for years toward some such end as this. But I am a business man, and I have to be shown.

Yours, with sincere interest, B.

To this Professor Stilliter answered:

DEAR BARCLAY:

She only has to believe that she comes from Heaven. If she can be made to believe that, are you satisfied?
S.

That night the two men met by appointment. Outlining his plan, and occasionally going into detail, Professor Stilliter talked rapidly for almost two hours without stopping, till the sweat stood on his brow and his voice began to fail him. He finished with these words: "And for a few of us, as a mere side issue, there's billions in it."

Gordon Barclay remained for a long time in profound thought.

"There is, as you say," he said at last, "billions in it. Yet if I were sure that we could make it happen, really make everybody contented and not poor, I'd be content to give up everything I have already, and I could die happy."

"So would I," exclaimed Stilliter, hurriedly. "But I'd rather make the world happier and myself with it. Wouldn't you?"

Barclay shook his heavy shoulders, lifted his leonine head and smiled.

"Of course," he said, "I was dreaming. I believe the thing can be done. And without any sacrifice whatever, either spiritual or material."

"It will take a long time."

"I understand that. You have to teach her almost from the beginning."

"I don't teach her exactly. I make her believe."

"Have you a child in view?"

"Now that you're with me, I shall soon find one."

"What are the chances against us?"

"Only these: That before we bring her to earth to preach our gospel, you are dead, or I am, or the revolution has already come, and borne a different and better fruit for us all."

Professor Miles Stilliter was never idle, except when he was asleep. On a certain morning in the spring of 1900 Professor Stilliter, having mislaid his glasses, was unable to tell what time it was, though he held his watch as near to his eyeball as he could without touching it. It was, however, his usual time for beginning the day, for at that moment his valet brought in the morning papers. Professor Stilliter did not read the papers word for word, but column by column. It was astonishing to see so much intelligence and energy and adroitness in a young man who resembled nothing so much as a monstrous baby.

The following headline in the *New York American* almost immediately caught his eye, and put an end to any further search for news:

"TRAGIC END OF A EUGENIC ROMANCE.

"Brilliant John Amesbury, who married one of America's greatest beauties, killed by a trolley car. Widow, prostrated by news, not expected to recover."

A cut of a beautiful young man and a beautiful young woman lent to this unusual item of news a tinge of real tragedy.

Professor Stilliter was out of bed in a twinkling of an eye. He bathed and dressed with miraculous speed. It made you think a little of the way a fire-engine horse is harnessed.

Swift as were all his motions, he dwelled somewhat upon his breakfast. A close observer might have noticed that he chewed every mouthful exactly the same number of times.

The late John Amesbury's house was at Scarsdale. On the morning in which this narrative opens a number of village boys were pulling off a dog fight in the quiet country road that bordered the narrow front lawn. Tommy Barclay, aged twelve, hearing this racket from afar, and full of the tragedy which had overtaken the kind and friendly people in the big house, came up on a dead run.

His efforts to interfere with the sport and to secure peace and quiet for the sick woman in

the house were not met with approval, and, indeed, for a moment it looked as if the noise of the dog fight was going to be swelled by the noise of a boy fight, a dozen to one.

Fortunately for Tommy, the door of the house opened, and a trained nurse, with a long face like a horse and a domineering eye, came running down the front walk with an expression so ominous and formidable that, without a word spoken, the dogs were dragged apart, and the boys made off at high speed. Something in Tommy's face attracted the nurse's attention. She was far kinder than she looked.

"Do you want anything?" she asked.

"The papers said," said Tommy, "that Mrs. Amesbury wouldn't get well." He said no more, but his whole attitude and expression was a poignant question. The nurse laid her hand suddenly on his brown head, patted it clumsily, shook her own head just the veriest little, and hurried back to the house.

A shadow fell upon Tommy, and he found himself looking into the immense thick-rimmed glasses of Professor Stilliter. Intuitively the boy and the man disliked each other. Professor Stilliter would have rather asked almost any other small boy if that was the Amesbury house. Tommy would have preferred to tell almost any other man that it was.

Professor Stilliter, his question answered, moved energetically upon the house, and from the maid who answered the bell inquired for the latest bulletin of Mrs. Amesbury. He stepped forward as if to enter the house, and the servant made the least show in the world of shutting the door in his face. Professor Stilliter turned reluctantly away and heard the closing of the door.

CHAPTER II

AT that moment a buggy driven furiously stopped at the front gate, and, thanks to his glasses, which gave his helpless eyes an almost hawk-like vision, Professor Stilliter recognized Dr. Wainwright, an old acquaintance, if not a friend.

"Glad to see you," said Professor Stilliter. "Are you in charge here?"

"Yes," said Dr. Wainwright.

"Then you can help me, and nobody else can. I never knew Amesbury. I don't know his wife, but as a eugenist I was immensely interested in their marriage, and I have a deep scientific interest in seeing the daughter. Now at such a time as this I could not very well force myself upon the household, but if you could slip me in with you as a consulting physician I will be immensely obliged to you, and there will be no talk of splitting fees."

Dr. Wainwright smiled and nodded.

The object of Professor Stilliter's interest was not hard to find. She was seated, forlorn and disconsolate, upon the bottom step of the front stair. Dr. Wainwright picked her up in his arms

and kissed her. He made her shake hands with Professor Stilliter. He told her that Professor Stilliter was very fond of little girls, and wouldn't she do her best to entertain him while he himself was with her mother upstairs?

Professor Stilliter could not conceal the fact that the child's appearance delighted him, and that his appearance did not furnish her with the same delight, affected him no more than a duck's back is affected by water. She had been too well brought up, and carried her three or four years with too much dignity to run from him and hide, as her instincts prompted her.

She did not resist when he lifted her from the floor, asked her age and said, "My! how heavy she was!" She winced a little and flinched a little when he prodded her arms and chest and felt with evident admiration the firm and chubby calves of her legs, and when he made her open her mouth and looked in and murmured, "Colossal." But when he asked wouldn't she show him the pretty house in which she lived, she did so gladly, for it seemed to put an end to being handled.

For his immediate purpose Professor Stilliter did not need to penetrate beyond the cheerful living room, for here his eyes at once singled out from many three photographs, in which justice had pretty nearly been done, not only to his

small companion, but to her famous father and her mother.

"What is that funny thing on the piano?" asked Professor Stilliter. The little girl looked in the direction indicated, and told him that it was a Chinese "ephelent."

During the moment in which he had succeeded in diverting her attention the young man had slipped the three photographs in their folded leather frame into one of his capacious pockets. His mission in the house finished, he asked her if she would give him a kiss. This was a thing which, it seemed to her, she could neither accord nor refuse. She simply burst into tears. The Professor shrugged his great shoulders, grunted like a pig and abruptly took his departure.

Still weeping, the little girl found her way to a piazza that opened off the living room. Here she seated herself on a very small chair that was her very own and kept on crying until she had almost forgotten what she was crying about.

Tommy Barclay, still lingering about the premises, traced the infantile wails to their source. The sight of his sympathetic face above the veranda railing, across which he had thrown one leg, started tears again, for he was her best friend in the world, and she wished to tell him all about the wicked man with the black-rimmed spectacles. Tommy took her on his knee and

listened and gave comfort. Presently he took from his pocket a little rag doll, and very shyly, for now that he looked at it again it seemed a poor gift, he offered it to her.

There was silence in the room, at once so rich and repressed in its moldings and furnishings, where Gordon Barclay received and gave orders to such of his fellow-millionaires as were in his confidence.

Semmes and Sturtevant, of all men, deepest in his confidence, were strangely moved. The great man for once had not been dealing with facts, but with fancies. Very quietly and earnestly he had been painting for them that terrific future to which, as he saw it, the resistless forces of the world were driving.

It may have been that the presence of Professor Stilliter in the room had a kind of hypnotic effect upon the two men. He stood in shadow against the wainscoting, and his eyes never left the back of their heads.

At first Barclay showed them some of the achievements of capital—steamers too great to be tossed by the waves, interminable freight trains creeping over high trestles, square miles of corrugated iron roofs, the chimneys belching black smoke; streets as bright at midnight as at noon, and as crowded; buildings so tall that they

staggered belief and swayed in the wind; hospitals, hotels, banks, libraries, cathedrals, great acreages of rock and gravel turned into green, umbrageous playgrounds for a free people.

He showed them department stores teeming with life, vast terminal stations, tunnels passing under broad rivers, great libraries, free to rich and poor alike. The waters of whole counties coaxed by one miracle after another into one city to keep its millions healthy and clean. And they stood with him upon the bridge of a warship and passed from the world's second ocean to its first, through the incredible ditch, which capital was to build, and which men already called the Panama Canal.

And then he showed them some of the failures of capital—men and women starving in hundreds, rotting of disease or perishing of sheer disappointment and despair. Bread lines, soup kitchens he showed them; roofless men dying of exposure.

And then in swift flashes he showed them, standing upon a soap box at the corner of a slum, a man in tattered rags, with the forehead of the first Napoleon and the lion-roar voice of Mirabeau—a man who spoke to the wretched and the unfortunate, and the idle and the mischievous, and filled their hearts with fire and passion and hate.

He showed those same men, armed with guns, with poles, with hatchets, with hammers, stopping a limousine on Fifth avenue, dragging out an old man in a fur-lined coat, and hanging him, more dead than alive, to the nearest lamp-post.

He showed them that same crowd, ever growing in numbers and anger, tearing a policeman to pieces; he showed them banks and other strongholds of capital that rose suddenly heavenward in puffs of sordid-smelling gray smoke, and went—not.

He showed them short sieges, in which for awhile rifles flashed from the windows of Fifth Avenue palaces. He showed them these same palaces a few minutes later, turned inside out, half in ruins, the defenders mangled upon the sidewalks. And, ever growing in power and leadership, he kept showing them the man with the head of Napoleon and the lion-roar voice of Mirabeau.

He showed them a city of pedestrians, a city through which neither carriages nor automobiles could move, so great was the ruin in its streets, above which crawled no elevated trains, beneath which no subway ran, a city in which no statues or things of beauty remained whole, a city given over at night to darkness, to drunkenness, to murder and rapine.

And he showed them themselves fleeing by

night, in disguise, a price upon them, dead or alive; and he showed them the Napoleon-Mirabeau bringing order out of chaos, and preparing to hold what he had taken, now begging, now commanding, now wheedling, now killing, and then he showed them battles and leaping cannon—and at last a white flag raised over a fortress, and themselves, personally all three, in the uniform of generals, led forth blind-folded and bound and stood still with their backs against a whitewashed wall.

Finally Sturtevant looked his friend and master in the face and said: "Well, what's the answer?"

"I think," said Barclay, "that I have devised a remedy which shall save us all. Mr. Stilliter."

As Professor Stilliter advanced, Mr. Barclay said to the others: "The world's greatest psychologist."

"You do not have to tell us that," said Semmes, and they bowed to the professor.

"Well," said Barclay, "let's have a look at her."

Professor Stilliter drew from his pocket a folded picture frame of red leather. The gentlemen examined the photographs with an evidence of pleasure not to be mistaken, for the good looks of the Amesburys and their daughter were as certain and sudden in their effect upon

the eye as is the beauty of the Yosemite Valley.

"But," said Sturtevant, "what is the remedy?"

For answer Barclay simply touched the photograph of the little Amesbury girl with the tip of his finger.

"She is the answer," he said, "but, by the way, Stilliter, what do you hear of the mother?"

Professor Stilliter shrugged his shoulders very slightly.

"Dead?"

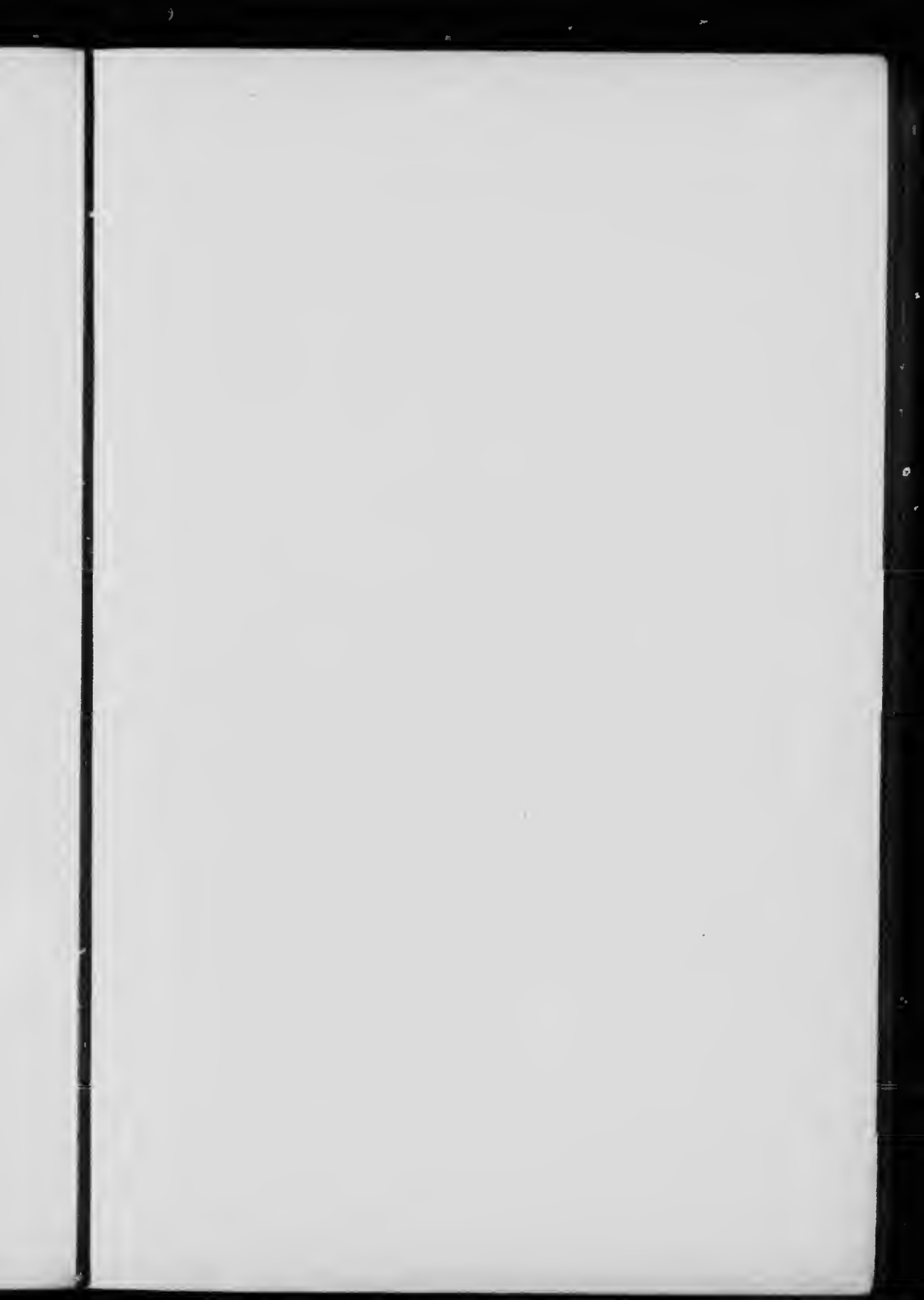
"Dying."

Barclay was not unmoved. "She thinks," he said, "that she is only dying of grief. As a matter of fact, she is taking a great place in the march of events."

"What are the child's habits?"

"She has a nap," said Professor Stilliter, "from 10 to 10.30 and from 3 to 3.30. At other times she is mostly out of doors with her nurse. There is a wood back of the house, in which she has a playhouse, a see-saw, etc. If you wished to see her it would be a simple matter, but I am ready to stake my reputation on her. She is absolutely cut to our plan."

"Which," said Semmes, "is so far a complete mystery to Sturtevant and myself."





It did not take them long to reach the Amesbury house

CHAPTER III

IN spite of Professor Stilliter's guarantee, the triumvirate, as they were both popularly and unpopularly called, determined to have a look at the little Amesbury girl for themselves. In a car driven so swiftly that the traffic cops had to look the other way so as not to get dust in their eyes, it did not take them long to reach the Amesbury house.

They did not, however, draw up before the house itself, but in the wood back of it. Here, togged out in Indian dress so that she resembled the ornamental side of a cent, they found the object of their search. It was no difficult task for three such men to lull any suspicion that the child's nurse may have had.

They complimented her upon the health and good manners of her little charge, inquired after her mistress and learned with every semblance of regret that the latter was sinking hourly. They joked Professor Stilliter a little on the fear with which he seemed to inspire the child. But to Stilliter, looking far ahead, perhaps this aversion seemed a serious thing.

"Well," he said brusquely, "am I right? I

she the finest child you ever saw, or isn't she? Just see the breadth of her skull above the ears."

He would have touched her, but she shrank from him. When Barclay, however, spoke to her she showed neither fear nor aversion, only a pleasant shyness.

"I have never seen you before," he said, "but I am very fond of little girls, and since I have none of my own I do not propose to lose sight of you in a hurry."

Leaving the others, he took the child and the nurse for a little drive in the car, and when they had come back he slipped something that jingled into the nurse's hand, so that the flighty woman felt prepared to go through fire for him.

The little Amesbury girl was of an age when most impressions do not long survive. She would remember neither her father, nor her mother, nor her nurse, nor her Indian dress, nor the play-house, nor the see-saw in the wood; but always she had a vague recollection of three great and important personages, who treated her as if she were more important than they were, and who, on parting from her, bowed over the chubby, dimpled hand and kissed it, for all the world as if she had been a princess.

It wasn't exactly a recollection either, for she did not remember their faces, nor how they came into her life, nor how they departed. It was

more like a dream, only fragments of which here and there survive in the waker's mind. It wasn't altogether a pleasant dream. There mingled with it a certain something of the essence of a nightmare.

Whether it was another man in the background or some monstrous beast with extraordinarily large, black-rimmed eyes, she did not know.

It is curious that she should remember a little of all this and nothing of that message which came presently from the house—a message brought by one servant to another and crudely blurted forth in the hearing of a child.

“Come quick, Mary, and bring the baby; the missus is dead!” She does not remember running to the house between two women, dragged by the hand, and if she did it is most likely that she should remember only the novelty of the swift locomotion, and not the reason that called for it.

The little Amesbury girl continued to live on in her father's house. The law said she might until things were straightened out. There were no relatives to interfere.

But it was a strange life. There was no longer any discipline in the house; even the trained nurse with a face like a horse had to go. The servants began to neglect their work and to amuse themselves. There were always “gentle-

men friends" in the kitchen. Often the lights did not go out till very late at night.

And there were always great goings on and laughter at jokes that could not have been half as funny as the laughter was loud. Nurse began to neglect her charge. She would tell her not to go off the piazza till she came back, while she herself scuttled off to the big kitchen to take part in the conversations and the flirtations and the continual round of good things to eat and drink.

The little Amesbury girl was not a philosopher. Had she been she must have noticed with some cynicism that when laboring people get a little liberty and power they do not necessarily make the best use of them, but try at any price to have a good time, just the way rich people do.

But being neglected by nurse had its advantages, for Tommy Barclay came every day to play with her, and often many times in one day. He was a much better nurse than nurse was. He knew more games and stories; he wasn't always "sharp set" for a cup of tea; he wasn't always breaking up a game right in the middle to talk to a mounted policeman.

Sometimes the policeman dismounted and sat with nurse on a fallen tree. Often she got giggling so that he had to put his arm around her to keep her from falling off. Sometimes he

would pretend that she was his little "baby" (that is what he called her) and make her sit on his lap, and then he would hug her and kiss her, she laughing and screaming and pretending to fight him.

But Tommy Barclay wasn't such a fool. He took good care of one all the time, and she loved him with all her heart. Once nurse told them that they could play hide and seek in the wood if they would be very good and not get lost or wet or let rotten trees fall on them or wasps sting them. And that was a morning to be remembered in many ways. Tommy Barclay was always "it."

At first she would hide behind the nearest tree and make a great deal of noise and peek out to see if Tommy were hunting for her or not. But gradually she learned to keep mum, and to tuck herself into very small places, or to move quietly or to keep mousy still.

Gradually she hid with more and more boldness, running quite long distances before she called "cookoo," and the last time she went to hide she ran a long way, and just when she had dodged behind a big white oak and was going to call "cookoo" she found herself looking into the great, round, black-rimmed glasses of Professor Stilliter.

Before she could scream he had seized her

around the waist with his left arm and had muzzled her with his right hand. Then he picked her up and started to run. As the hand over her mouth prevented her screaming, she simply opened her mouth and bit it.

In his rage and pain Professor Stilliter almost dropped her. He snatched his bitten hand from her mouth, and she began to scream at the top of her lungs, to struggle and kick and to make herself limp between times. And once she twisted clean away from the arm that had her round the waist.

Still she was only a little child, and Tommy saved her. He came out upon them in a shower of broken twigs, hatless and bleeding from an altercation with a green-brier. Professor Stilliter did not at once realize that he was only being attacked by a small boy.

He let go of the little girl completely, then tried to catch her, as he realized the caliber of his assailant. In so doing, his attention momentarily diverted, he received a savage kick on the ankle bone and something like twenty-five blows upon the head and face. During this assault Professor Stilliter's glasses were knocked from his nose.

It was as if, for his sins, some supernatural power had struck him stone blind.

The children did not stay to watch the blinded

man's efforts toward recovering his glasses, and long before he had done so they were safe in the house. Once Stilliter came into violent contact with a tree trunk, and such was his fury at the turn of events that he was not a pleasant sight to look upon. After recovering his glasses, however, his first action proved him the man of science. From a small pocket medicine case he produced a small bottle containing tincture of iodine. With this he cauterized the bleeding tooth marks which the little Amesbury girl had left on his fingers.

That night about 12 o'clock nurse's bed in the little Amesbury girl's room was empty. The house was in darkness, except for the kitchen. From this came sounds of revelry and of a talking machine. The little Amesbury girl dreamed that a man with immense black-rimmed eyes was bending over her, and she waked with a scream.

For once in her life she had dreamed true, for Professor Stilliter was bending over her, and the fingers of his left hand were clasped almost chokingly about her baby throat. In his right hand he held before her eyes a lump of rock crystal the size and shape of a hen's egg.

The crystal appeared to exercise an instant fascination upon her. She forgot that she was afraid and that she wanted to scream for help. She even forgot the presence of Professor Stil-

liter. She thought, indeed, that she was all alone and that somebody had opened a door through which she was at liberty to look into fairyland.

Very far away she heard a voice that said very quietly: "Now you can't scream."

Of course, she tried to, and found that she couldn't.

"And now," said the voice, "you can't do anything unless I tell you to. Get up." She slipped obediently out of bed.

"Dress yourself," said the voice. For the first time in her baby life the little Amesbury girl dressed herself. She even tied her own hair-ribbon in a presentable bow-knot and buttoned her own tiny boots.

Professor Stilliter had long since slipped the crystal back into its leather case and into his pocket. The spell of hypnotism which he had cast over her by its means would last as long as he chose.

"Show me," he said, "where nurse keeps your coats and hats." He selected a hat for her and her warmest coat.

"Now give me your hand," he said, "and don't make any noise." He led her downstairs and out into the night.

CHAPTER IV

SHE never afterward recalled anything of the journey to the north woods which she made with Professor Stilliter. The long automobile ride, the Montreal express held up between stations, the long drive into the woods, and after that, when they had come to the end of the road, the long, toilsome up and down hill tramp, through which she rode first on the shoulders of one man and then on the shoulders of another, until the party came to a wild spot at the foot of the cliff.

Here in the warm spring sunshine, on ledges of rock, a number of drowsy rattlesnakes were coiled in a horrid mass. She does not remember that here, as if waiting for her, were three men who wore black masks over their faces.

When the men who had brought her to the foot of the cliff were gone, with the exception of Professor Stilliter, the three men removed their masks. So when Professor Stilliter, withdrawn a little so that she should not see him first of all and be frightened, told her to wake up she looked into the friendly faces of Barclay, Semmes and Sturtevant.

Barclay advanced with great ceremony, dropped on one knee before her and kissed her hand for all the world as if she had been a princess. Then Sturtevant came forward and did likewise, and then Semmes.

Although Professor Stilliter had told her to wake up, the spell of the crystal was still upon her like drowsiness after sleep. To reduce her once more to a complete state of hypnosis it was only necessary for him to say quietly, "Go to sleep again."

What looked like a portion of solid cliff rose suddenly, without any sound, and disclosed a black passage that appeared to lead to the bowels of the earth. In the mouth of this passageway stood a handsome woman, a little under middle age.

There was a diamond star in her dark hair, and she wore a white garment that fell from her shoulders in stately folds like those of a Roman toga. She came forward, caught the little Amesbury girl lovingly up in her arms, turned and, without a word, walked back into the passageway and disappeared. For a long time the sound of her sandaled feet upon the rocky floor could be heard. Then the moving portion of the cliff slid slowly and noiselessly back into place, and the four men who remained without turned somewhat slowly to each other.

Barclay was the first to break the silence. "Gentlemen," he said, "fifteen years from today she will leave that cavern and bring the world to her feet—and to ours."

"So you are the little boy who is trying to find the little Amesbury girl," said Barclay.

Tommy Barclay had never been in such a magnificent room. The walls were lined almost to the ceilings with books in leather bindings; there was a wonderful mantelpiece of Caen stone in which a life-size Adam and Eve stood on either side of a very fat apple tree and listened to the eloquent address of a very fat serpent.

There was a table of some dark, dull, shiny wood in the center of the room, and here and there glowed Chinese porcelains that any self-respecting museum would have committed a crime to obtain. There were a thousand things to have drawn the attention of a sharp-eyed small boy, but Tommy never took his eyes from Mr. Barclay's eyes. This pleased the great man, who disliked people who showed fear or inattention.

"Sit down," he said.

Tommy almost disappeared into a leather arm chair that smelled vaguely of very expensive cigars.

"You were very fond of her, weren't you?"

"Yes, sir," said Tommy. "Can you tell me where she has gone?"

Barclay did not answer at once. "I understand," he said, "that you, too, have lost both your parents?"

"I live with my Aunt Sallie," said Tommy.

"Is she married?"

"Yes, sir."

"And has boys and girls of her own?"

"Yes, sir; five."

"I understand that your aunt and uncle are not as rich as they might be, and that it is asking a good deal of them to take care of even one extra mouth. Now, I have a great big house and servants and good things to eat, and the only thing I haven't got is a little boy or girl of my own. How would you like to pay me a visit, and, if we find that we like each other, to live with me?"

"I should like," said Tommy naïvely, "to pay you a visit."

Barclay laughed heartily. "You shall," he said, "and you won't have to tell your aunt about it, because I have arranged all that. We thought perhaps you would be willing to come, and so she has packed up all your things and sent them here." He touched a bell on the great table in front of him, and almost instantly, and without any noise whatsoever, a man servant appeared in the room.

"Show Mr. Barclay to his room," said Barclay, and, with a pleasant nod to Tommy, "I'm glad your name and mine is the same. I dine at half-past seven."

Tommy lingered a moment. "You haven't told me," he said, "where she has gone."

Barclay rose and laid his hand almost caressingly on the boy's shoulder. "Tommy," he said, "your little girl has gone to heaven."

It was a very sad little boy who bathed and dressed himself in an Eton suit, a little too small for him, and went down to half-past seven dinner, but he wasn't as sad as he might have been, for he was too young not to be excited and elated by his new surroundings.

He not only had a bedroom as big as a cottage, but a dressing room and bathroom. The former covered with the thickest and softest of rugs; the latter all glass and white tiles and silver plate. While he was bathing the valet laid out his clothes for him, coat and trousers over one chair, underclothes and socks on another chair, and necktie and handkerchiefs on the dressing table, and here also was the nickel-plated watch that he carried and the few dimes, nickels and pennies that he had had in the clothes he had taken off; also the top, one fairly long piece of fish-line, half a stick of licorice and a rusty pocket knife.

In a very small glass of water was a bouton-

nière, consisting of one gardenia, three green leaves and a twist of silver paper.

His first dinner in the great house was a little trying; the room was so big and he was so small. He would hear a little boy say something, and realize suddenly that it was he himself who had spoken.

The butler, with two footmen to assist him, served them, and of these three exceptionally tall and imposing men Tommy was in not a little awe. His host, however, although he had none of his own, seemed to understand small boys thoroughly.

It is possible that some time in his life he may have been a small boy himself. He did not patronize Tommy or talk down to him. He treated him in an offhand, matter-of-fact way, just as if Tommy had been his equal, so if the room had been a little smaller and the men servants fewer Tommy would have sooner felt at home.

In time, however, Tommy would grow up to his surroundings. In time it would seem to him natural to eat in a place as big as a waiting room in a railroad station and sleep in a bed that might have contained a half dozen other small boys.

When dinner was over Tommy sat on and ate nuts, while Barclay drank coffee and smoked a cigar. At 9 o'clock the little boy went to bed.

It was natural that he should feel a little sad and lonely with the unfamiliarity of everything, and that he should have one dream after another.

But they were all about the little Amesbury girl.

He had been told that she had gone to heaven, and it was of her in heaven that he dreamed. He had never read Dante or Milton, and the ideas that he had about heaven were not very elaborate. He had picked them up here and there from people with very little imagination.

The heaven that he dreamed about wasn't a very big place. There was no part of it indeed that could not have been contained within the arch of a theater. If he derived his ideas of it from anything that he had really seen, it was from a comic opera, in which there had been acrobatic men in green tights and spangles, great arches pointed to look as if they were made of gold incrustated with jewels, lovely winged maidens in diaphanous white clothes, who, suspended from the waist by long wires, flapped butterfly wings and appeared to fly.

The heaven of which he dreamed was like this, with many other things mixed in. There was a dog or two; there was at least one red Indian with wings and many streets paved with gold, trees all made of gold and silver and green enamel and jewelry.

There were many curious domestic touches.

Right out in the middle of a golden street he saw the little Amesbury girl, sitting in a little wooden chair at a little wooden table and giving a tea party to a fairy no bigger than your thumb.

Again he saw her robed in white, playing most enviably upon a golden harp, and then she was playing in a garden and had her lap all full of jewels, and when she was tired of these she simply got up and they all fell to the ground in a wonderful bright shower, and she simply left them there, and then he saw her in a sort of a celestial schoolroom. The blackboard had a wonderful carved and gilded frame, just like the Van Dyke portrait over the mantel in Mr. Barc's dining-room.

The little Amesbury girl had a silver desk and a gold inkstand and a pen made of ivory, and when she got tired of writing she simply let go of the pen handle and it went on writing all by itself. There was no word in English or in all the languages spoken in heaven which that pen couldn't spell. It never got hairs in it and it never inked anybody's thumb and forefinger. The school teacher was the most beautiful and charming angel imaginable. She had wings like a dove. The piece of chalk she drew with did not squeak, and she smiled so beautifully that you simply couldn't help understanding what she was driving at.

She was drawing a beautiful map. The upper part of it was heaven. She made a cross in heaven, and said in a bright, sweet voice: "That is where we are, Celestia; that is where we are having our lessons." The middle part of the map was the earth; it was mostly New York City and woods. England, way off at the left, looked like a bullfrog; Germany and Austria looked like two eagles, back to back; France was a little girl in a striped petticoat, sitting on a very high stool and beating a drum; the whole was surrounded with a great broad blue sash of ocean, in which all sorts of ships seemed to move, so cleverly had the angel school teacher drawn them, or such was the magic of her chalk on the blackboard.

To represent what was underneath the earth she used a piece of ruby-colored chalk, and sometimes when she made a particularly broad line a little smoke appeared to rise from it.

This dream went away, and Tommy saw the little Amesbury girl once more in the garden playing with the jewels. Suddenly she rose and threw all the jewels impatiently aside, and then she ran into the house and looked under her pillow and, lo and behold! there she found the very doll that Tommy had given her, and then she looked so happy and contented that Tommy,

even in his sleep, knew that when he waked he wouldn't be as sad about her as he had been.

She was in the schoolroom. The map which the teacher had drawn in red chalk had grown so big that you could no longer see the other maps at all, and it was blood red and smoking. It looked less and less like a map, and more and more like a face. It had horns and pointed ears, but these melted off, and it began to develop two enormous eyes with coal-black rims.

Before the thing really looked like anybody that he had ever seen Tommy knew that in the very next crumb of time it was going to look exactly like Professor Stilliter.

He knew that he must knock its glasses off or perish. He struck at them with all his might, and his hand passed through them, as if they had been made of smoke.

Then he waked up, and with as loud a scream as any healthy-minded and badly frightened small boy ever succeeded in screaming.

CHAPTER V

MR. BARCLAY couldn't help being fond of Tommy, but in some ways Tommy proved an awful disappointment to him.

Adopted into and brought up to be an aristocrat of wealth, he had no interest in money except to spend it. Not that he was especially wasteful or especially extravagant, but only that he took no interest in how the money had been gathered or how it could be made to work.

He was much more interested in horses and boats and dogs and shooting than in any of his patron's financial affairs. He went to boarding school and played on the football team and the hockey team and the baseball team. He took prizes in everything that he engaged in, except studies. It was the same with him at college. He spent half of his time winning trophies for his college and the other half making friends for himself. When he graduated Mr. Barclay tried to teach him banking, railroading and a few other trifles all at once.

Mr. Barclay had no patience with the idea that it is best to begin at the bottom and work

up. He believed in beginning at the top. Tommy did his very best to make good. He attended long-drawn-out directors' meetings and he racked his brains to understand what they were all about. He traveled all over the country to inspect this property and that, and once he almost got into touch with finance; at least he found amusement in one aspect of it. In short, he was sworn in as a special deputy in a time of coal trouble and helped to put down a strike.

Mr. Barclay did not expect too much of Tommy, and soon saw that what little he did expect he was not likely to get. But he was very fond of him and tried to make the best of him. Tommy spent all his leisure time playing polo or tennis or dashing off on hunting trips, and some fourteen or fifteen years after this story opens he became very much interested in Miss Mary Blackstone.

He hadn't forgotten the little Amesbury girl. He never would forget her, but what is the use of a little girl who lives in heaven to a young man who doesn't?

Tommy often dreamed about her still. As he grew older she grew older, and the heaven in which she lived and was educated by the most scientific and philosophical of all the saints and angels became more and more sophisticated and

less and less like the palace scene in a comic opera.

But Mary Blackstone did not live in heaven, did not wear a halo, did not string a golden harp or sit around and look as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth. She lived in a low white house near Southampton, L. I.

It had gardens full of gigantic boxwood, and it had so many fluted columns to hold up its veranda roofs that Tommy, with his distaste for figures, was never able to count them. Some people said the house had a hundred rooms in it; other people said that there were two hundred. These, however, did not affect Tommy.

He was on the most charming and intimate terms with her father, and there was one southwest room in which he spent many and many a week-end, and which was always known to the Blackstone family as Tommy's room.

Mary Blackstone rode horses, played tennis and swam in the surf as well as a strong and courageous boy. Tommy never knew whether she was more attractive in athletic clothes or when, as she expressed it, she was dressed to look like a real lady. Every phase of her appearance charmed him. Unfortunately, these same phases and everything else about her charmed a good many other men.

If she liked Tommy better than anybody else

she was in no hurry to say so. She didn't want to cut herself off from all the other young men, whom she liked almost as well, Carlton Fitch, for instance.

Carlton Fitch was Mr. Barclay's nephew, and in some ways was a great favorite of his uncle. He took so much interest in his uncle's banks, railroads, mines, etc., that you might have thought that he expected to own them some day.

He was not only a nominal director of a great many corporations, but a very real director in the affairs of half a dozen of the more important. He never neglected work for play. Some people admired him tremendously; others said they wouldn't trust him around the corner with a five-cent piece.

Outwardly he and Tommy were always friendly and polite to each other, even after they had become open rivals for Mary Blackstone's approval, but inwardly each had a certain contempt for the other, and, in addition to this, Carlton Fitch was jealous of Tommy, for he had expected to inherit almost the whole of Mr. Barclay's money, and since Tommy's adoption it looked as if he was going to inherit very little of it indeed. He would be rich, anyway, but he was very greedy for power.

Mentally they were poles apart. Tommy, though he loved to spend money, was given to

asking foolish questions about the ways and prerogatives of capital. He couldn't understand why the majority of people in this world have to be poor and dirty and unhappy, why the real producer should have such a small share in what he produces.

He did not go into these questions very deeply, but just enough to be something of a socialist at heart and to feel a certain contempt for people to whom the collecting of money was the most important thing in the world.

Perhaps he only took up socialistic ideas in order to amuse himself at the expense of those who maintain opposite theories, for he didn't go into anything, except games, very seriously or very thoroughly. He did feel very strongly, however, that in a world containing so many able minds it was a shame that so much poverty and misery should be allowed to exist.

"You couldn't live in a house that had a dirty attic and a filthy cellar and tuberculous rats behind the waiscoting," he once said to Barclay. "How then can you live in a city, nine-tenths of it full of dirt, misery and disease?" To which Barclay had answered: "In my own house I am the master. But in the city, if I wanted to clean it up, they wouldn't let me."

"Who wouldn't?"

"Why, the very people who make it dirty."

Understand, Tommy, that in this country any man who is willing to work, oh, not six or eight hours a day, but as hard as he can, and will live on less than he earns, can be clean and rich. It's a small price to pay. Some pay it. I paid it. Others would like to pay it, but still others won't let them. It isn't the rich who keep the poor down. It's the poor who band together to keep each other down and to pull the rich down on top of them, if they can."

But Tommy was not altogether convinced, and he loved to argue. When he got arguing he got carried away and often said things which he didn't mean, but which troubled Mr. Barclay deeply.

Mr. Barclay was supposed to be the coolest calculator of possibilities in America. As a matter of fact, he was a man who owed his greatest successes to impulse. But in the case of Tommy, whom he had adopted, not after careful deliberation and calculation, but upon impulse, it looked as if he was going to be disappointed.

He had planned in complete detail a splendid destiny for Tommy. The boy was to be one of the world's greatest names and powers; its richest man. To the millions that he was to inherit from Barclay the Blackstone millions were to be added by marriage.

Why, in case it ever developed that govern-

ment by the people is a failure, when that government should at last collapse, as in his heart Barclay thought and hoped that it would, Tommy might aspire to be—anything, a dictator, a king.

For a long time Barclay kept on hoping against hope, and attributed Tommy's failures and wrong-headed principles to his youth and high spirits. Then one day there appeared an interview which Tommy had given to a reporter between the chuckers of a polo game, and Barclay threw up his hands.

Talking with the wild carelessness of youth, Tommy had given it as his opinion that in the great coal mine strike in Western Pennsylvania, then at its height, the miners were really fighting for their existence, and that the owners were oppressing them.

To Barclay such opinions uttered by his adopted son amounted to treason. He had the impulse to abandon all those hopes which he had entertained for the boy's future, and he had abandoned them.

First he sent for his nephew Carlton Fitch. To this one he made no elaborate explanation of his changed attitude. He said: "Carlton, I want to see you married and settled down. You are said to be in love with Mary Blackstone."

A light seemed to glitter in Fitch's eyes.

"I'm afraid her father doesn't like me, uncle,"

he said, "and there is someone whom I think she likes more."

"Tommy?"

Fitch nodded, and Barclay smiled grimly.

"I will take care of Blackstone and Tommy," he said; "you take care of the girl."

Then he sent for Tommy. "Tommy," he said, "I'm very fond of you and you have been a bitter disappointment to me."

"I know it," said Tommy; "I can't help it. I'm made that way, but I'm awfully sorry."

"The bulk of my property," said Barclay, "will have to go to someone with more respect for property."

"Yes, sir; I see that."

"But you will always have plenty."

"Thank you, sir."

"That's because I'm fond of you, and because it is only just."

"Even if you are disappointed in me," said Tommy, "please don't stop liking me."

There was something very wistful and manly about the boy, and Barclay was more deeply moved than he cared to admit.

"I shall always be fond of you, Tommy," he said.

Ten minutes later the great man wrote a few direct dictatorial sentences on a sheet of note-paper and sent them by a special messenger to Mary Blackstone's father.

Senator Blackstone, a man with a large mouth, hook-nosed face and white side-whiskers, frowned heavily after reading Barclay's note; frowned heavily, heavily paced the floor of his library, gave vent to defiant mutterings, and then suddenly collapsed into a deep chair, as if very tired, and read the note again:

"DEAR BLACKSTONE:—Don't by any chance allow your daughter to throw herself away on my adopted son. She belongs to the aristocracy of wealth. That aristocracy may one day become a nobility. Mary is fitted to wear the purple and to share the throne of the world's greatest empire. The world in which we live is pregnant with great events. And the weak will go under. Destroy this.

"Yours in haste,

"BARCLAY."

CHAPTER VI

MARY BLACKSTONE sat for a very long time staring into space. She didn't want to give up Tommy. She didn't want to give up all those wonderful possibilities that her father had talked about so solemnly after exacting from her a solemn promise of secrecy.

Could it be true that the old order of things, a president catering to this vote and that, a congress continually throwing obstacles in the way of enterprise and efficiency, was to change all of a sudden? Her father said so.

The people would begin to clamor for efficiency in high places instead of buffoonery, for trained men instead of demagogues. They would clamor to be not flotsam and jetsam in a sea of politics and incompetence, but integral parts of such a machine as the Standard Oil and Steel Trust, with a man at the head of it that would see to the comfort, cleanliness and efficiency of every one of those integral parts. Instead of taxes to pay the people would clamor for dividends to spend, and they would get them. Her father said so.

"They have ground down the trusts," he said, "only to find themselves down at the same time.

"Now the pendulum is swinging the other way. Gradually the trusts will regain what they have lost. What is the next step? Greater trusts? Yes, but beyond that, staggering belief, a trust of trusts. A trust in whose hands will be all the threads of business of a whole continent, and whose stockholders shall be the inhabitants of that continent. Poverty and degradation will cease to exist. The head of that trust may be called chairman, president, dictator; perhaps he will be called king. And already the powers who believe in this coming change have such a man in their eye. He will not be the first king; he is very young, but he will be the second. After him, who? Why a son of his body, trained from birth to fill that great position. And you, my dear, if you wished, might be that son's mother, and wear a diadem."

And so she sat staring into space. And for the first time in her life she found that ambition is stronger than the mere wish to exist and have a good time.

Suddenly, with an excited laugh, she caught up a great piece of gorgeous ancient church em-

broidery that lay across the back of a sofa, and dropped it skillfully so that it hung from her shoulders to her feet like some royal robe; still laughing she darted to one of those glass-topped tables in which things curious and rare are often kept.

From this she took a gold crown that had been taken from the grave of some old Egyptian queen—two gold snakes, their heads and tails twisted together. And she put this upon her head and went and stood in front of a long mirror.

Then she began to play-act—to look very haughty and dignified or very gracious and condescending, to extend her hand to be kissed by imaginary courtiers; she was half in earnest, half laughing.

She heard a soft footstep; there was no time to discard the crown and the robe. Blushing crimson, and feeling very ridiculous, she turned and saw one of the footmen.

His wooden face showed no surprise at her eccentric costume; he did not even appear to see it. He carried a small silver tray on which was a white card.

“Who is it, Bentadge?”

“Young Mr. Barclay, Miss.”

Her impulse was to run to the great hall stair and call down to Tommy. But she hesitated.

Then her eye roved once more, and she caught a glimpse of herself in the long mirror.

"Tell him," she said, "that I am not at home."

Tommy, sure of his welcome, had been told that Miss Blackstone was at home, and had leisurely followed the footman upstairs to the door of the little sitting room.

When he heard her say coolly, even coldly, "Tell him that I am not at home," he felt as if he had been struck between the eyes. And then anger seized him. For she had promised that she would be at home on that particular afternoon, and now here she was saying that she wasn't.

Of course there was nothing that he could do but turn and go. And of course he did these things.

When he was in the open air he drew a long breath.

"I'll get out of this damned city," he said, "and if she happens to want me for anything she'll find that I'm the one that's not at home."

Like many other rich men, Barclay owned a hunting preserve in the Adirondacks, and seldom went near it. But the five granite mountains surrounded by dense forests thickly sprinkled with lakes, was one of Tommy's favorite stamping grounds. It wasn't so much that he

enjoyed killing animals or seeing how many fish he could catch as that once in awhile he liked to be alone and to keep alive and comfortable by his own exertions.

The preserve was real wilderness. One dirt road led from the railroad station at Four Corners to the main camp at the head of the biggest lake, but otherwise the region boasted only a few narrow trails. And you had to make your way from one landmark to another as best you could. And either you had to take plenty of condensed food in tins or trust to your skill with rod and rifle to keep you from going hungry.

Tommy would leave the train at Four Corners, hire a team and get himself put down somewhere along the road leading to the main camp. He would then choose a direction almost at random, walk until he was tired, build a low lean-to shelter, have supper or not, according to luck, make a workmanlike fire to keep his feet warm, curl up in his blanket and pass a luxurious night, waking at daylight, bruised, sore, cold and for some reason known only to those who love the woods, perfectly happy and contented.

His kit on these trips consisted of a blanket, a frying pan, a kettle, a change of underclothes, a very light .22-caliber rifle a 4-oz. fly rod, a compass, a pipe, tobacco and a few other odds and ends, such as matches and salt and a pair of field glasses, and an Oxford book of verse.

One night a few days after Mary Blackstone had treated him so cavalierly, Tommy camped on high ground by the headwaters of a brook.

Just back of his shelter of balsam boughs a knob of granite stood up clear above the surrounding forest. Tommy always called it the hub, because it was almost the exact center of the great ring traced roughly by the five mountains, and afforded glorious views of them and of the low country, meadows, forest and swamp that intervened. It was Tommy's favorite camping ground. He would sit for hours on the top of the hub, his legs hanging over into space, gazing and dreaming.

On a particular night in question he climbed the hub after a fine supper of trout and ruffed grouse, filled a pipe and watched the day fade and the stars come out. What he enjoyed most was the sense of solitude; civilization, of course, was within reasonable reach in any direction, but he did not feel as if it was.

He felt as if there wasn't another human being within hundreds of miles. There were men at the main camp, only fifteen miles away, but he protested that there weren't, and that he was in the heart of a vast unexplored country which no other white man had ever visited.

Presently the moon began to rise, and that always made Tommy mournful and sentimental. If he had been a dog he would have thrown back

his head and howled. Being a young man he sighed, and began to imagine that he and she (a romantic edition of Mary Blackstone with better manners and less worldliness) had come to this wilderness to escape from the outside world and to make their home. What fun it would be! How he would work to make her happy and comfortable! How easy it would be for them to get along forever without anybody else to bother them.

Just then his head fell forward on his breast, and he dreamed that he smelt boiling cauliflower. It was a smell to which he was particularly sensitive, and which he particularly hated. He waked with an angry start, and the smell perished.

His offended nostrils quivered as the nostrils of a wild animal quiver at the smell of man. He was angry and disgusted. And his feelings for the people who had not only invaded his solitude, but had brought a cauliflower, more than one possibly, into the northern woods, were not fit to print. His only satisfaction was that in the morning he would hunt them down and tell them what he thought of them.

But he had a bad night, and when at last he did get to sleep he slept so heavily that day-break didn't wake him. By the time he had washed and breakfasted it was half-past seven, which is a shocking hour in the woods.

He climbed to the top of the hub. Field glasses in hand, he began to search the whole landscape far and near for traces of human beings. But the woods were so dense that it was like looking for a needle in a haystack. What he hoped to see, and what he did presently see, was smoke, a pale amethystine column of it rising near the base of one of the mountains.

To find the fire, or the remains of it, from which that smoke was rising would not be very difficult. He took its bearings very carefully. It was directly between him and the smallest of three barren cliffs which formed the first upthrust of the mountain, and as he judged about half a mile this side of the cliff. At the base of that cliff was a rattlesnake den, and Tommy was in the habit of giving it a pretty wide berth, for the snakes sometimes wandered long distances from their favorite ledges in search of food and water, and a good woodsman like Tommy preferred that they should do their hunting in peace.

"Just like a man who would bring cauliflower into the woods to camp in snake country," he thought; "wonder if I can pick one up with these glasses."

He focused his glasses on the base of the cliff and amused himself for some time in trying to discern a snake. But either the distance was too

great or there was none in evidence, and he was about to give up when suddenly a man walked casually into the field of his vision and out of it.

"Well, I'm jiggered," said Tommy. "I haven't found a snake, but I've found the next best thing. Now what the devil is Professor Stilliter doing in this part of the world?"

Again he lifted the glasses and again saw the Professor. He appeared to be polishing something on the sleeve of his Norfolk jacket. Now and then the something flashed brilliantly in the sunlight. It might have been a pocket mirror or a great diamond. Whatever it was, Professor Stilliter presently dropped it into his pocket, forced his way into a dense clump of bushes at the very base of the cliff and disappeared.

CHAPTER VII

BUT Tommy was not to investigate those bushes at the foot of the cliff. He was within a quarter of a mile of them, walking swiftly and quietly along an old lumber trail, when suddenly his quick ear caught a sound of footsteps and at the same moment his quick eyes caught a glimpse of something white that moved. He stepped quickly into a thicket of alders, crouched low and to all intents and purposes was blotted out of existence.

Along the trail his heavy baby face streaming with sweat, came Professor Stilliter leading by the hand a slim and lovely girl who carried her head like a princess. She was dressed in a white garment that fell in unbroken folds from her shoulders to her feet, like a Roman toga.

On her bare feet she wore thin sandals, on her bare head a circlet of gold, in which jewels flashed. Her mouth had an expression of celestial gentleness and smoothness, but her eyes, half shielded by their lids and lashes, were without expression. She seemed to Tommy like a girl, not of this earth, walking in her sleep. He had

never seen a face so beautiful, so sweet or so touchingly innocent.

Having passed Tommy's hiding place Professor Stilliter turned from the trail and led the heavenly vision to a sort of natural seat that overlooked a quiet pool from which Tommy had often taken trout.

She sat reflected in the pool and looking straight ahead of her, and not seeing—if you know what I mean. Professor Stilliter had let go her hand and was tiptoeing off, abandoning her apparently, but when he had gone a little way he turned and made curious passes in the air with his hands and spoke suddenly in a voice of command the one word "Wake!"

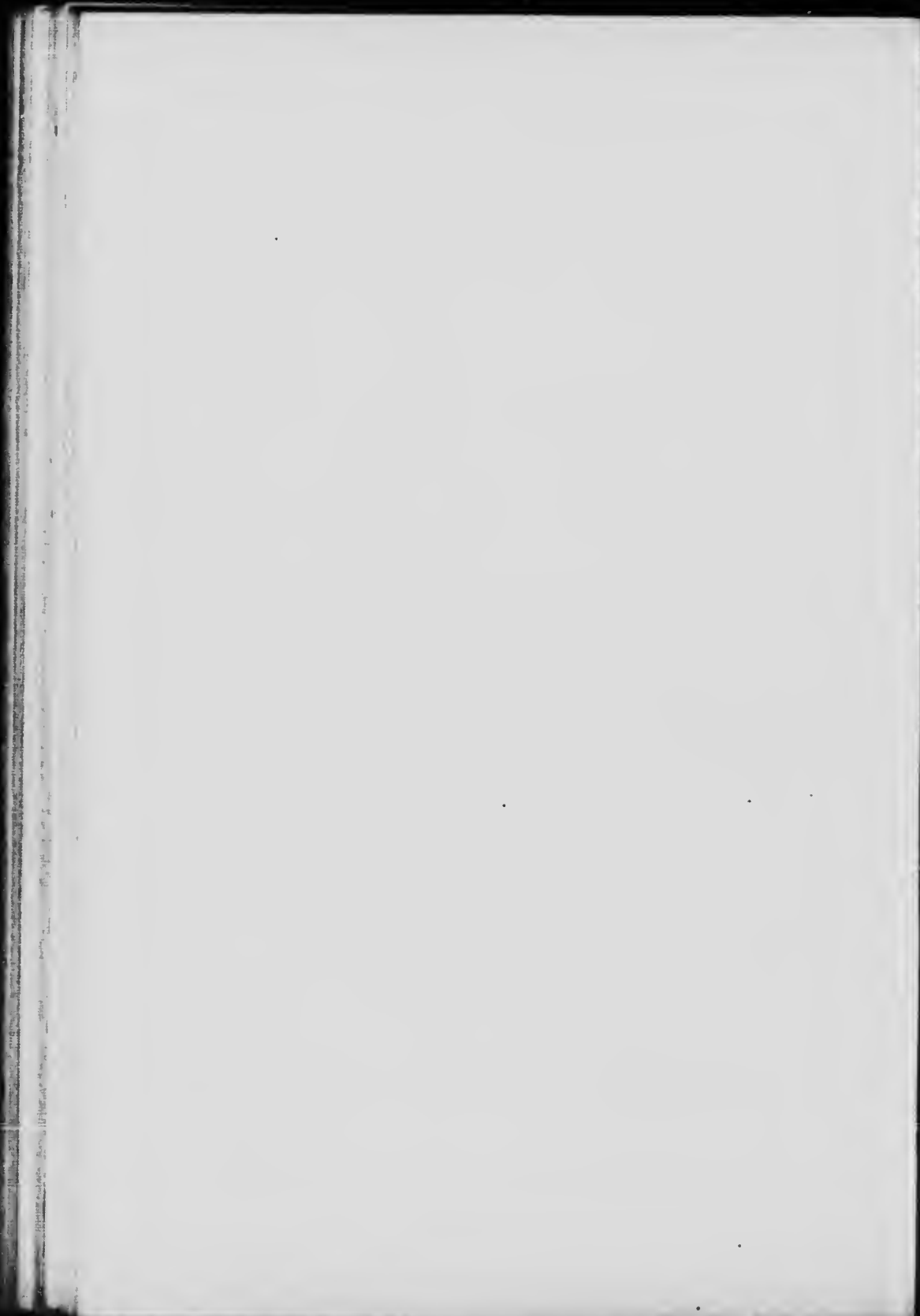
Expression and light came into the great eyes, and she looked about her with a kind of startled delight. Tommy for some reason or other was trembling from head to foot.

A stick cracked. She turned her head toward the sound, but Professor Stilliter had made good his tiptoed retreat. He was no longer in sight.

Then Tommy, still trembling with wonder and excitement, rose from his hiding place and walked slowly toward her. Their eyes met, and the vision smiled the sweetest, most bewitching smile, and in the gentlest and richest voice that Tommy had ever heard she asked him an astonishing question:



“Wake”



"Are you a man?"

"Why, yes," said Tommy.

"Then," she said, "this must be the earth."

"Of course," he said; "you know that as well as I do."

"I wasn't sure," she said, "until you told me. You see, I've just come from heaven."

"Oh, my Lord!" said Tommy. "She's as mad as a hatter. How terrible! And yet she looks sane."

"I'm Celestia," resumed the vision, "and I've come from heaven to make people better and happier. I'm to begin with New York. Where is New York?"

She looked about her as if she expected to find it somewhere among the trees.

"It's a long way from here," said Tommy.

"Then I ought to start at once. Will you show me the way, please?"

"Why, yes, of course."

Then Professor Stilliter came back on the run.

"What the devil are you doing here?" he exclaimed. "Now don't get angry, old chap. This is one of my patients and"—

"I'm not angry," said Tommy, "and don't call me old chap."

Then Professor Stilliter sank his voice to a whisper. "Her mind," he said, "is in an ex-

ceedingly critical condition. Now you just vanish, will you, and leave her to me. She mustn't be upset."

"One condition of her mind," said Tommy, "appears to be fear of you."

Stilliter turned from him impatiently. "Come, Celestia," he said, "we'll go away now."

She shrank from his proffered hand.

"Celestia," said Tommy, "don't you want to go with him?"

"No," she said.

"Don't be afraid, then," said Tommy, "you sha'n't."

"Tommy Barclay," said Stilliter, "you keep out of this or you'll get into trouble. Come, Celestia."

She did not stir.

In a flash Stilliter had drawn a polished crystal from his pocket and was forcing the girl to look at it. As he did so, he said in a tone of command: "Sleep, Celestia, sleep."

Tommy simply stepped forward and knocked the crystal from Stilliter's hand, and Stilliter turned upon him with a howl of rage and attacked him with a shower of windmill blows. Tommy was no longer a small boy, but an athlete, in the early twenties.

He retreated slowly, guarding himself, and then, when he thought he had drawn Stilliter far enough from Celestia, he quietly reached in

under the rain of blows and disarmed him. In other words, he removed those great black-rimmed spectacles without which the great psychologist was blind and helpless.

"Perhaps I'm doing wrong," said Tommy, "but that girl's afraid of you and I'll take a chance."

He darted to the girl's side. "Are you afraid of me?"

"No."

"Then come."

He led her back to the trail and along it.

Stilliter stood as if in the midst of black night, groping with his hands, lest he dash his face against a tree, listening and cursing inaudible curses through his set teeth.

"Why in heaven's name," he thought, "did I take the trouble to bring an extra pair and then leave them in the tent?"

Then fear overcame him, and he began to shout for help.

It was Tommy who answered the appeal.

"Listen," called Tommy, "and don't make such a noise. If you can find the place where Celestia was sitting you'll find your glasses. If not, I'll come back in a day or two and find them for you. You won't starve—not at your size."

Tommy laughed like a schoolboy, and turned to Celestia.

"Now let's beat it," he said and he hurried

her along the trail. "We'll just make a safe offing and then we'll decide how and where to go next. You're not exactly dressed for roughing it. That white thing wouldn't keep a fire warm. Hope you're warmly dressed underneath."

"Underneath," said Celestia, panting and without grammar, "there is only me."

To rescue the girl who called herself "Celestia" from Professor Stilliter had been the work of instant impulse. But what to do next was not to be decided without plenty of reflection. Reflection did not come easily to Tommy, however, especially in the present circumstances. For any train of logical thought upon which he tried to get started was soon interrupted, either by a stolen look at his companion, the necessity of helping her past some rough place, or by some naïve question or other which she would ask from time to time.

He could not make her out at all to his satisfaction. At one moment she seemed perfectly sane, at the next completely mad. The only things of which he felt certain were that she was beautiful and good, and that she was suffering from some form of amnesia by which her powers of memory had been undermined.

"How long have you known that man?" he asked, referring, of course, to Professor Stilliter.

"Not so long as I have known you, but sometimes I feel as if I had seen you both before. But I can't ever have seen you, can I? You can't ever have been in heaven and I've never been on earth."

"If you were seeing him for the first time, why were you afraid of him?"

"For the same reason that I'm not afraid of you."

"And you're not—not a bit?"

"He," she said simply, "is bad and ugly. You are good and beautiful."

As Tommy guided her through the woods toward his camping ground of the preceding night, he kept saying to himself: "But there's got to be a show-down soon. What am I to do about her?"

He almost wished that he had not taken her away from Stilliter, but had instead stayed with them, dogged their footsteps from place to place until he was sure that the girl was in no real danger from the psychologist. Indeed, he was in a state of great mental perplexity, and at the same time there was a novel and romantic quality to the episode that he could not but enjoy.

"If only," he thought, "I might play around with her for the rest of the day and then turn her over to her proper guardians and have no further responsibility I'd ask nothing better."

They came to a little lake. Before Tommy could prevent, Celestia had stepped upon the surface, as if upon a solid pavement, and gone in above the knee.

She gave a little cry of amused astonishment.

"Why, it's"—she cried.

"Yes," said Tommy, "it's wet water. You appeared to think it was a boardwalk. But never mind, you'll soon dry out. Don't they have water in heaven?"

"Of course, but not black and still like that. In heaven it's all alive with rainbows in it."

"They speak English in heaven?"

"Oh, yes, and French and Italian and Spanish and German and American and all the others."

"Can you speak them all?"

"Of course. What good could I do on earth if I couldn't talk to people?"

"Just what good are you going to do?"

"I am going to tell people to be better and not so foolish, and they are to do as I tell them."

"That's a splendid idea," said Tommy, feeling that it was best to humor her, "and then what?"

"Then? Why, when I've made everybody rich and happy I'll go back to heaven, of course, and be happy, too."

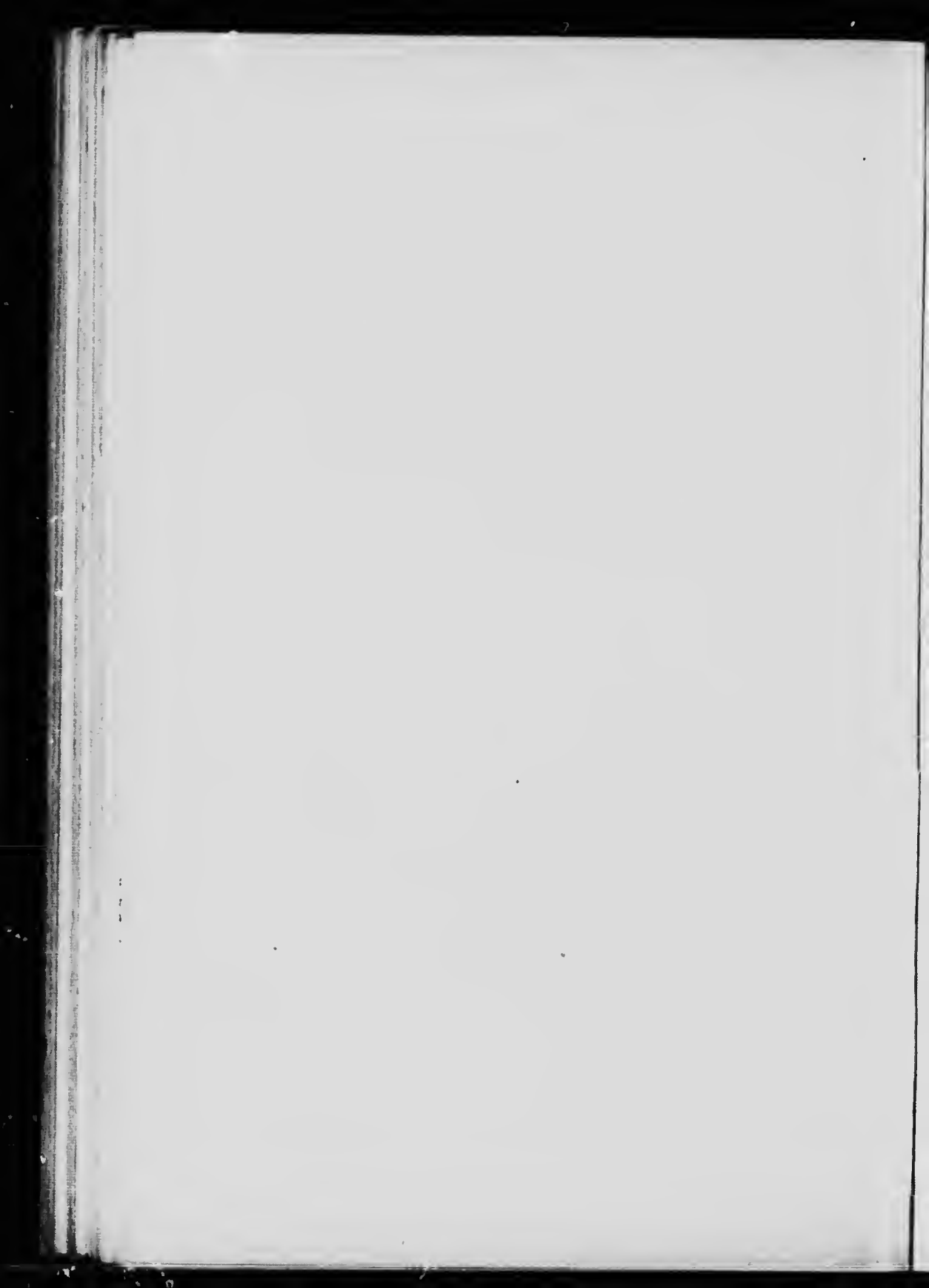
"Are you unhappy now?"

"No; not unhappy, but if I were back in



"They came to a little lake"

(Page 62)



heaven I wouldn't be all wet and muddy and hungry and thirsty, would I?"

"Of course you wouldn't, you poor child," said Tommy, "but soon we'll be at my camp, and then I'll hustle around and make you comfortable."

"And I feel as if my face were on fire, too," she complained.

"Feverish," thought Tommy, with dismay. And then he said:

"Stand still a moment and let me look."

He noticed for the first time the extraordinary whiteness and delicacy of her skin. It was as if she had always been veiled from the sun.

"You're getting sunburnt," he said, with concern. "That's what's the matter."

"Oh, the sun! she cried. "The sun! Do show it to me! I've heard so much about it."

"Isn't there any in heaven?"

"How you talk; why, heaven is so far off."

"Well," said Tommy, pointing, "that's it!"

"That?" exclaimed Celestia—but she could not look the sun in the face for more than a fraction of a second.

"That!" and she burst into laughter.

"Do you know what I thought that was?" she said.

"What?"

"Why, I thought, of course, that that was the

gate to hell. And so that's the sun, and it's burning my face?"

She touched her face with her fingers and then looked at their tips as if expecting that the burn had come off on them.

"I've got some stuff at my camp that will take the burn out," said Tommy. "Look out for that green stuff. It's got thorns, and you can't afford to tear that dress."

They had begun to climb the eminence on which Tommy's camp was perched, and with every step, Celestia showed increasing fatigue. He walked a little behind and at one side, now helping her forward and upward with an occasional touch of the hand between her shoulders and now with a steadily maintained pressure.

"Of course I'm not used to walking," she said; "I'm sorry. I suppose I'll get used to it."

"If you are determined to push on to New York, you will," said Tommy.

His quick ears caught the sudden appetizing cluck of a partridge.

"Let's see if we can get that fellow!" he exclaimed. "You sit down and rest yourself, Celestia. Nobody hunts much in these woods, and the birds are tame as chickens."

She sat down and leaned against the stem of a birch, her breath coming and going quickly, her great eyes following every movement that Tommy made.

But Tommy's first move was really the opposite of a move, for he stood as still as he could and listened. Now a partridge or a ruffed grouse, if you give him his right name, is a born ventriloquist.

First the partridge clucked to the right of Tommy, then to the left; then in front of him and then back of him. Tommy walked a few paces and once more stood still and listened. This time the clucking came from directly overhead, and Tommy looked upward in the dense branches of a young spruce tree, and after so looking for a few moments suddenly smiled. And although she did not know what Tommy was smiling at, Celestia smiled, too.

Having located the partridge, Tommy "assembled," his trout rod, and, with the end of the line, made a running noose. Then he began very quietly to poke the rod up among the branches of the spruce tree. An interested clucking attested to the fact that more eyes than Celestia's were on Tommy.

Tommy, his right hand clasping the butt of the rod, his thumb braking the reel, reached gradually higher until his arm was extended to its full length. He added a few inches to his reach by standing on tiptoe. But even this was not enough. So Tommy bent his knees a little and then jumped.

Before his feet regained the earth a frightful

squawking and flapping arose in the spruce tree, and then there was dragged from it what looked like a pinwheel going at top speed.

Hunger is the most cruel tyrant in the world. Tommy's thumb sought and found the base of an egg shell; there was a sharp scrunch, one last wild whistling of the pinwheel, and then there was one cock grouse the less in the North woods.

But Celestia looked pained now and troubled.

"It has wings like an angel," she said, "only darker."

Tommy was just going to say: "It's got whiter meat than an angel," but stopped himself in time, and changed to:

"Even people who come here to make the world better, Celestia, have to eat."

And he slipped the dilapidated bird into his pocket.

CHAPTER VIII

A FEW minutes later they reached Tommy's camp, and after he had given Celestia a cupful of spring water he cut fresh balsam boughs and made a thick mat for her to rest on, and rolled his coat and some other odds and ends into a pillow, so that she could watch him make the fire and do the cooking.

In the midst of this he remembered that she was suffering from sunburn, and he made her bathe her face in a lotion that smelt of camphor and niter and which burnt a little and then felt cool.

For lunch they had tea, biscuits (one of Tommy's most lamentable culinary articles) and the partridge. Cooked, he no longer looked like the victim of murder, but very beautiful and appetizing.

Celestia ate her full share and then lay back on her balsam boughs and watched Tommy fill and light a pipe.

"Why do you do that?" she asked. "Wasn't the partridge cooked enough?"

Tommy narrowed his eyes at her and for some moments didn't answer. Then he said: "I don't

know what to make of you at all. First you say you come from heaven and act as if you did, then you talk and act like a regular girl, then you pretend that you never saw a man smoke before.

"And then—what are you trying to do to me, anyhow? Is that really the only dress you've got in the world? Do you always wear a golden band around your hair with stage jewels in it?"

And then suddenly a light dawned on Tommy, and he smote his thigh in applause of his own cleverness.

"I know what you are," he said. "You're the queen of the movies. You're up here staging a show, and you got bored and let me run off with you for a lark. Professor Stilliter has had something to do with the scenario. The heroine is supposed to be a little looney. That's you, Celestia—and you're practicing all the time on me. Well, thank heaven, it's only acting. Why, I really thought you were mad as a hatter!"

"No," said Celestia, "I'm not in the least angry. But I'm sure I don't know what you mean, but I like you when you get excited and talk fast and your eyes smile. It rests me."

Tommy shook his head at her and smiled reprovingly.

"You can't keep on fooling me," he said. "Come, now, what's your real name?"

"Celestia," she said.

"All right, if you don't want to tell me yet; it will keep; it's bound to. But tell me then, are you——" he hesitated and blushed. "I'd really like to know. You see I'm rather crazy about you. You're not Mrs. somebody or other, are you?"

The embarrassed smile froze on his lips. He leaped to his feet and stood listening. Faint and clear, sounding cheerful rather than ominous, there rose to them from the valleys below a baying of dogs. Tommy had gone once with a posse of deputy sheriffs to see how a murderer is hunted down with the bloodhounds.

Whole scenes of that pursuit flashed through his mind, and he knew that the baying, which now sounded in his ears, was not that of deerhounds running out of season, but of bloodhounds following a human trail.

He climbed swiftly to the top of the Hub and stood listening, his field glasses glued to his eyes.

A glimpse of two bloodhounds and four men, one of whom was Stilliter and another a full-blooded Indian, crossing an open space recently crossed by Celestia and himself during their un-hurried escape, and in the same direction, brought Tommy down from the Hub in a great hurry.

That there would ever be any difficulty in

evading such a man as Stilliter in the North woods had never occurred to him. He had pictured Stilliter a man of resources in a laboratory or in a dissecting room with an insensible guinea pig staked out on the operating table, but not out of doors. The man was unhealthily white and appallingly near sighted. That such a man could be so hot upon their trail had about it a sinister quality that brought Tommy's heart into his mouth.

As for Celestia—well, she couldn't be a movie actress; no movie actress playing truant would be hunted down with bloodhounds, and he felt that she must be accounted for upon some other hypothesis, but later when there was more time.

Meanwhile there was nothing to be thought of but instant getting together of such things as might prove most useful, and flight.

"We've got to beat it, Celestia," he said. "I'm sorry, because you are tired, but that man"—here by encircling his eyes with his hands he indicated Professor Stilliter's eyeglasses—"is after us."

She rose obediently to her feet. "I don't know why he wants to catch you," said Tommy, "and either you don't know or you won't tell. But you dislike him, and you're afraid of him, and that's enough."

A kettle, frying pan, salt, tea and matches

rolled into a blanket and strapped to his shoulders, his field glasses, ax and fishing tackle were about all that Tommy could carry and make speed under, especially if he had to help Celestia over difficulties. His rifle he abandoned. It would be better, he thought, to be unarmed than to attempt with a light twenty-two to oppose repeating rifles of heavy caliber. And, furthermore, Tommy, though prepared to stand up for Celestia's rights and to fight for them, was not prepared to kill anybody in an affair which was entirely a mystery to him.

They were soon under way, following the higher ground, where the granite outcroppings neither received any impress from their feet nor long held the scent of the leather soles.

But the crests of the ridges were not all granite, and Tommy knew very well that in places they were making what woodmen call a broad trail. A trail of foot-prints and bent and broken branches which an Indian will read as casually as a commuter reads his newspaper; and which, aided by bloodhounds, he will follow as easily as small boys follow a procession through a city street.

That broad reaches of unbroken granite would occasionally baffle their pursuers was all that Tommy could hope for. He counted on these bafflements for making up for the differ-

ence in speed between men and dogs, traveling light, and a girl already too tired and utterly unused to the woods.

He had at first only a vague idea as to just what part of the wilderness he would take her, but gradually his mind cleared up on this point and he became occupied with the problem of getting to that place by a route which their pursuers would find the most difficult possible in following. He had hopes indeed of throwing them completely off the trail.

They turned a little more to the westward, and began to descend from the high ground. The baying of the hounds at this time seemed if anything a little closer.

"Where are we going?" she asked suddenly.

"We're going to hide on a little island in a deep lake, Celestia. Even if they find out that we are on it they'll have trouble getting to us. Very few sailors and fewer woodmen know how to swim. I used to fish in that lake a lot, and I've an old dugout hidden on the shore, and there's the remains of a hut on the island. And I left an old moth-eaten buffalo robe and a blanket there only last fall. If there's anything left of them they'll come in mighty handy, I can tell you."

They came to a broad, shallow stream that flowed brightly under an arch of dark foliage. "Here's where we begin to make trouble for

them," said Tommy. Holding her elbow with his free hand, to keep her from stumbling and falling, Tommy led Celestia to the middle of the brook, and then they waded down it for upward of a mile, as if it had been a winding road, and only left it when the rocky nature of the country through which it was passing offered them an opportunity of so doing and leaving a minimum of trail.

All at once Tommy realized that a great silence had fallen in the forest. And he knew that at last the bloodhounds were in difficulties, for they had ceased to bay.

The oftener Tommy helped Celestia through, over or under some difficulty of the wilderness, saved her from being torn by brambles or encouraged her with his voice, the more infatuated he became with her.

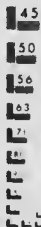
Mary Blackstone's image could be recalled only by an effort of memory. And yet it was only a few days since he had fancied himself in love with her! He confessed this to himself more than once, and could but feel ashamed and sheepish. How long would it be before he fancied himself in love with Celestia, after how long a separation would he discover that he did not love her in the least? He had no stability. Was he never to have a serious purpose in life? Love? Even hate?

All of a sudden they caught glimpses of blue



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water between the tree stems, and in a few moments they saw before them and below them a lovely lake with densely wooded shores and in its midst a densely wooded island.

"Oh!" exclaimed Celestia. "But this earth is beautiful."

"Remind you at all of Heaven?" asked Tommy, a little mischievously.

She looked at him with a sudden grave wonder.

"When I tell you that I come from Heaven, you don't believe me?"

They descended the narrow strip of land which divided the lake from the forest, and here Tommy told Celestia to sit down and rest while he hunted for the dugout and got it into the water.

He returned in ten minutes, paddling quietly, and found Celestia playing with the sand as if she had been a little-child. Her eyes were bright with animation, and she had gotten sand on her forehead and in her hair. Perceiving Tommy, she tossed a double handful of sand into the air, and as the sunlight caught the myriads of bright surfaces, she cried, "What is it? Oh, what is it?"

"Sand," said Tommy.

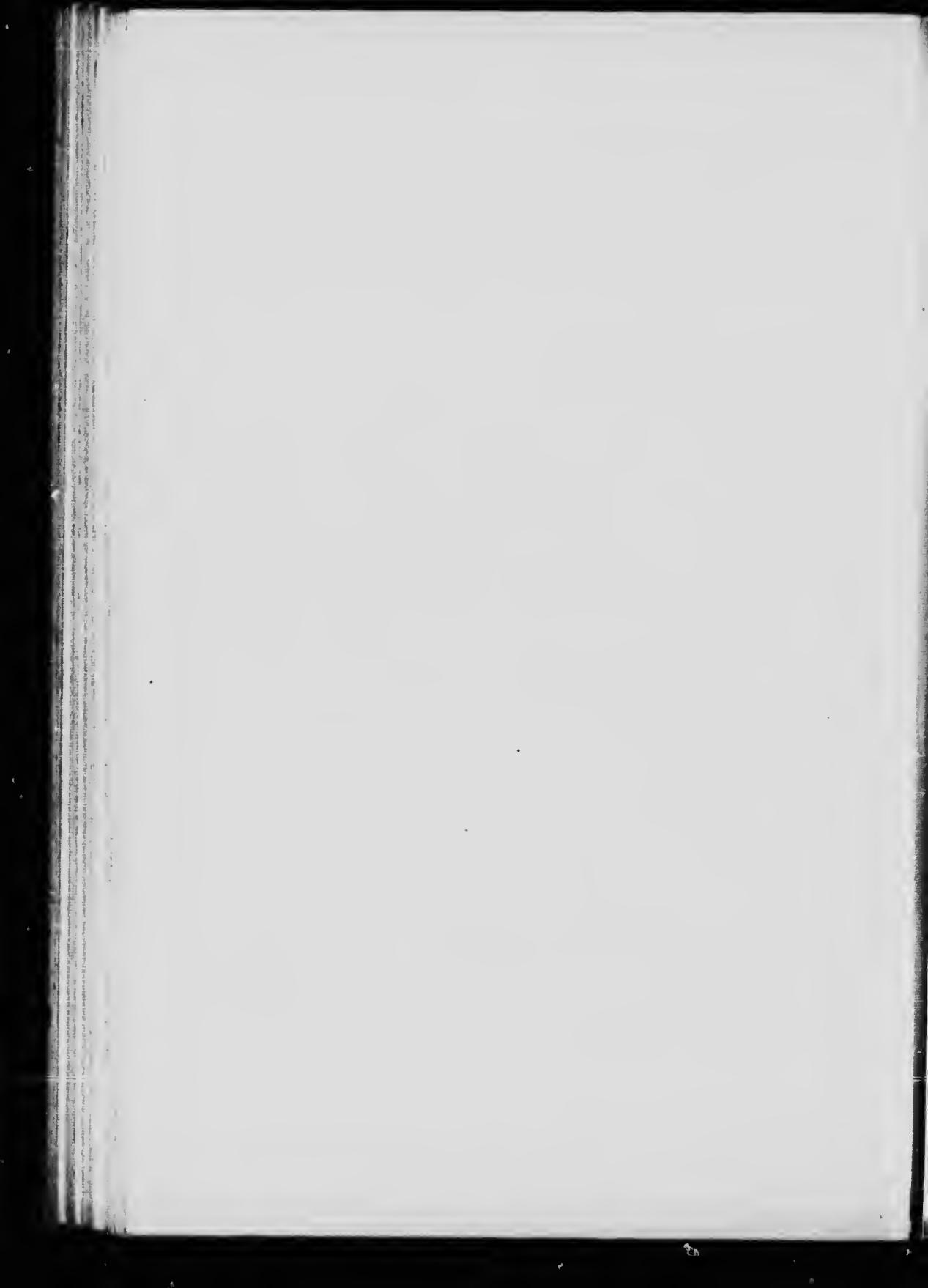
"Sand," cried Celestia.

"Didn't you ever play in the sand when you were little?"



"Oh! but this earth is beautiful"

(Page 74)



"I used to play with diamonds and rubies," said Celestia. "Oh, but this is wonderful. See, you can write in it and draw pictures. Look, I am making the man Stilliter."

And, indeed, with her forefinger for pencil, she made an excellent caricature of him.

"Who taught you to do that, Celestia?"

"An angel," she said with simple gravity.

"Well," said Tommy, "I've heard of people who could draw like angels—but—oh, Celestia, aren't you a little tired of playing this heavenly origin business on me? I don't take any stock in it."

"Why, Celestia," he said, meeting her gaze with equal gravity, "you're just a regular girl. Why, there's blood on your cheek, where a deer fly has bitten you——"

"You've got to believe me," she said, and it seemed to Tommy she was trying to master him with her eyes.

"What are you trying to do to me?" he said. "Hypnotize me?"

And then he laughed, and looked so brown and handsome and good-natured that Celestia had to smile at him.

"Now, Celestia," he said, "I'm going to take you for a boat ride. But you've got to sit still—mighty still. You pretend that you're back in Heaven listening to Israfel accompanied by the Spheres."

But she spoke with a sudden sternness that made him very uncomfortable.

"Is there no reverence left on earth? No faith? It's high time that I came."

He helped her into the dugout, his eyes on the back of her head, enamored with the way her dark, strong hair met her straight, white neck, and as he paddled he kept saying, "Who the deuce is she, and what the deuce is she?"

And to these questions he could not find any answers that were altogether satisfactory.

Just as they were landing on the island there came to them once more, faintly and from far off, the baying of the bloodhounds. Celestia gave Tommy a look full of anxious appeal.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "They are miles and miles from here."

So they were. All of them. Stilliter, the guides, the hounds and the Indian who rejoiced in the name of Old Man Smells-good, which if it referred to anything about him except his ability to follow a trail was an inappropriate name.

They were all there, several miles away; but Old Man Smells-good was in the head of an exceedingly tall pine, which overtopped the rest of the forest, and from which the view was exceedingly fine and expansive. Old Man Smells-good had a pair of eyes that resembled a pair of telescopes. He could see anything that was in sight.



"What are you trying to do?" he said. "Hypnotize me?"

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"See something?" Stilliter called up to the Indian.

"No see a darn thing," answered the Indian without changing his expression. As a matter of fact, by a miracle of optics, he had just discovered Tommy helping Celestia ashore on the island.

Smells-good dismounted the tree and stood shaking his head.

"No see any darn thing," he said. "Dog no good. Smells-good he think a little. Think up where um mos' likely to go."

The old fakir. He seated himself upon his heels, filled and lighted his pipe and closed his eyes as if in deep thought.

Stilliter began to show signs of impatience, but one of the guards said:

"Better leave him alone; he's got a hunch, likely as not."

Not until he had finished his pipe did Old Man Smells-good give any sign of what had been going on in his head. When he rose to his feet, he said simply, "Me find um soon," and started off in the direction of the lake.

Fifteen minutes later he knelt suddenly and appeared to bury his long, hooked nose in the ground. He rose after a moment's sniffing and said: "Me got um, sure." Then he ordered one of the guides to remain behind with the dogs.

And then he went forward, pretending to fol-

low a trail, pointing to marks, which the others couldn't see, for the simple fact that they didn't exist, listening, pretending to hear sounds that couldn't be heard, sniffing, kneeling, and poking his long nose into the ground. Once he poked it into a ground hornets' nest and had a narrow and undignified escape from being badly stung.

He led them to the shores of the lake, and pointed quietly across at the island. Even Stilliter could see a pale column of bluish smoke coming from among the trees.

"Bimeby, swim over," said Old Man Smells-good, "for two dollars. Fetch dugout. Better wait till dark."

And they waited till dark. Then Old Man Smells-good, having been definitely promised an extra two dollars for the wetting, stepped forth stark naked, except for a newly filled pipe, and slipped quietly into the lake.

Meanwhile, with Tommy and Celestia all had gone well. Tommy's old camp was less dilapidated than he expected. A few balsam boughs had made the rotten roof sound above and sweet beneath.

Celestia had had a long rest and then she had followed Tommy along the shores of the island while he fished.

Finally, Tommy's long casts were rewarded. He hooked a fine trout and began to draw him

strongly toward the beach. In her excitement and eagerness to help, Celestia ran into shallow water, stepped in a deep hole, and, falling forward, was for a moment completely submerged.

Laughing and scolding, Tommy pulled her out and literally carried her back to the fire. Steam was soon rising from her wet, clinging robe, but since the fire could only warm one side at a time, and since the chill of evening had begun to set in, she shivered and now and then her teeth knocked together.

"Celestia," said Tommy, "you better take that dress off and let me dry it."

To the young man's horror, he had hardly finished speaking before Celestia had slipped the robe from her shoulders, and was on the point of letting it drop to the ground.

"Hold on! Don't," he cried. For he had seen quite enough to realize that underneath that robe there was nothing whatever—but Celestia. She looked at him, puzzled and wondering.

"Don't be in such a rush," he said. "You wait."

He went into the little hut and brought out the buffalo robe, which he had left there. It was very much the worse for wear, but huge and warm.

"Now," he said, "you take this off and put this on."

Then he turned his back and walked swiftly away.

"You sing out," he called back to her, "when you've changed." And he walked at a distance, frowning and laughing, until he heard her calling to him.

"Are you angry?" she said. "What did I do?"

"Nothing," said Tommy, "but you see on earth young ladies don't take off their clothes when young gentlemen are looking at them. It's just the custom, that's all. It's considered very bad luck. Of course, I've never been in heaven——"

But Celestia did not encourage him to speak lightly of heaven. And he dried her theatrical white dress, and made shift to iron it with a smooth hot stone, and watched her from the corner of his eye, and thought how charming she looked even in that bulky, clumsy buffalo robe.

After supper they sat for a long time by the shore and watched the stars grow brighter and brighter, and as the moon began to rise, dimmer and dimmer. They were happy at being together, spoke in low tones and Tommy answered many questions about the affairs of this earth.

"But then, of course," said Celestia, "you are wicked."

"I?" exclaimed Tommy. "I like that. What do you know about it?"

"Of course, if you are not a man——"

"But I am," said Tommy. "Is that why I'm wicked?"

"There couldn't be a better reason. If you are a man you are wicked, sinful, greedy and covetous of what belongs to other people."

"That's only a judgment of men in general that has been handed to you all ready made. But use your own judgment, not somebody else's. Since you've known me have I done one single thing to make you think I'm wicked?"

"No, you haven't," said Celestia, "but that makes it all the worse. It—it smacks so of hypocrisy."

Tommy laughed aloud, thinking that she was joking. But he ceased instantly when he saw that she was not.

"Celestia," he said, "don't for a minute think that I'm pretending to be good. But wickedness is different. If I were wicked it wouldn't be safe for you to be with me. But as things are, you'd be safe as long as you wanted to be safe, and afterward, probably. In my opinion, very few men—even murderers and wife-beaters—are really wicked. For the most part they are just unintelligent."

"Exactly," said Celestia; "and there is nothing wickeder than that."

"It was more fun talking about happiness," said Tommy. "Suppose we forget the world."

Now you are not going to New York to work yourself to the bone for other people. You're just going to stay on with me in the good, clean woods, and be worked for and made much of. We'll just go on and on through the woods, camping at night by pretty lakes and brooks——”

He looked her very earnestly in the eyes and sang in a clear, quiet voice, with a kind of gallant tenderness, those great lines of Stevenson's, beginning:

“I will make you brooches and toys for your
delight,
Of bird song at morning and star shines at
night,
And I will build a palace fit for you and me
Of green days in forests and blue days at sea.”

“What is that?” said Celestia, when he had finished.

“That?” said Tommy. “Why, don't you think it's a sort of hymn?”

After that they were silent for a little.

Then Tommy said: “Are you warm? Are you comfortable?”

She nodded.

Then very softly:

“Celestia,” he said, “are you happy?”

“I don't know,” she said. “Can you be

happy when it isn't right for you to be happy? It isn't right for one to be happy, because other people aren't."

"I am," said Tommy. "At this moment the sufferings of others don't get me. You see, I have to be shown. Suppose at this moment the entire population of China, having eaten immoderately of contaminated rice, was dying of fits. I wouldn't care. I wouldn't even know. Celestia, if you stayed long enough in the woods, don't you think maybe you'd forget all about heaven and your mission to earth, and be content to be happy?"

"Listen. Once in my life I was really happy. I was a little boy; she was a little girl. If she'd grown up she would have looked like you. Perhaps that's why I'm so happy to be with you. She and I were always happy when we were together or looking forward to being together. Then one day she went away, Celestia. She went to heaven, they told me. And for a long time I was terribly unhappy."

"But you ought to have been happy."

He shook his head.

"If I could have gone with her, perhaps."

"But in heaven she is blissful always."

"But I haven't been. When someone you love—dies——"

"There is no death."

"There are separations that seem to us humans to last a mighty long time, then," said Tommy.

Celestia sighed.

"But I'm happy with you," said Tommy, "because I can almost imagine that you are she—grown up. I'm going to pretend that you are she. That she is the angel they've sent back to earth to make us all better." And he smiled very tenderly upon her.

"But, Celestia," said Tommy, "if you insist that this world is so unhappy, tell me this: Why am I perfectly happy? I'm not good. I'm not sensible. I've never done anything noble or self-sacrificing. And yet behold me; happy as the day is long."

"And I'm happy, too," said Celestia, smilingly.

"You're happy," he said, "because you feel perfectly sure that you are going to make everybody else happy. But that's not why I'm happy. I'm happy because I'd rather be right here than anywhere else; because I've had a good supper, after plenty of exercise; because the night smells of balsam, because the moon is shining and because I've got a delightful companion."

"All these things make me happy, too," said Celestia, "but they couldn't keep me happy for long."

"No?" said Tommy, somewhat chagrined. "If these things are enough, why want more?"

"Why," said Celestia, "after a while I'd get thinking about people who haven't delightful companions, and for whom the moon isn't shining; I couldn't rest then until I'd gone to them and tried to make their lives easier and their hearts stronger and (here she laughed softly) their heads fuller of sense."

"It would be the opposite with me," said Tommy; "the longer we stayed here, the less I'd get thinking about other people and the more I'd get thinking about us. Every mortal man, I suppose, has his conception of heaven (he pulled luxuriously at his pipe), and this is mine."

"But then, of course," said Celestia, "you are wicked."

"I?" exclaimed Tommy. "I like that!"

After awhile Celestia became sleepy, and then she slipped her hand into one of Tommy's, and leaned against him and laid her head on his shoulder. It was as if she had been a little child. Tommy was deeply moved and touched, and at the same time the close physical contact began to trouble him, to frighten him. He spoke, and it seemed as if with his voice he was trying to lift a weight.

"You poor baby," he said, "you're dead tired. It's bed time."

He rose, a little roughly, and helped her to her feet.

When they reached the little hut, Tommy said:

"Now, you turn in there and make yourself comfy. Good night."

"Good night," she said, and went into the hut.

Tommy stood looking at the fire. He stood for quite a long time, in a deep reverie. Celestia's voice brought him out of it.

"Aren't you coming?" she said.

He turned and looked her in the eyes. What was she? Was she the most innocent and guileless creature in the world, or was she something quite different? Was he a chivalrous young man in her eyes, or simply an idiot? His heart suddenly began to beat hard and fast.

And toward that theatrical, beautiful and entrancing figure in the door of the hut, all silver in the moonlight, he began to walk slowly.

In his hiding place, close at hand, no word or motion had been lost on Professor Stilliter. White with reluctance and antipathy, but strongly resolved, he rose on one knee, cocked his Winchester and aimed at the small of Tommy's back.

But Tommy stopped short with a kind of jerk, as a tethered animal stops when it comes to the end of its rope; for he saw clearly, and all in a

moment, that it was not a woman who invited him to share the shelter of the hut, but a little child. He stopped short then and smiled as a boy smiles.

"Not room enough for two in there," he said. "But if you get frightened or want anything, just call. I'll hear. And—good night."

It seemed darker when she had closed the door of the hut and no longer gleamed in the fire light.

Professor Stilliter lowered his rifle with a suppressed sigh of relief and sank down among the bushes. And when Tommy, healthfully tired, had fallen into a sound sleep he withdrew to a distance with his followers, and passed a night of supreme discomfort upon the hard ground. Celestia was safe in Tommy's care, and there was no use separating them before morning.

Celestia dreamed all night, not of that heaven from which she had so recently come, not of the wicked world she was to save, but of Tommy. Dreaming, it seemed likely she was neither a child, nor mad, nor a goddess, but a young woman whose imagination had been strongly worked upon by a young man.

But late and early she waked and stepped from the hut into the cold, still Adirondack dawn. Tommy, his feet to the fire that had almost died, still slept.

She knelt by him and studied his face at leisure. Presently she touched his hand cautiously with the tip of her finger and found that it was cold. Then, happy as a child to be of service, she put wood on the fire and blew the embers into flame. Still Tommy did not wake, and she knelt by him once more and, with a laugh, bowed her lovely head and kissed him.

Tommy was dreaming of her. She had promised to marry him as soon as he had killed the horrible dragon that lived under the hill. Tommy, after a desperate battle, in which he was armed with only a can-opener, had just succeeded in opening the dragon's jugular vein, and was just rushing out from under the hill to claim his reward from the waiting Celestia, when she really kissed him, and he waked, and knew that he had been kissed.

His very first words were of reproof.

"Celestia, dear," he said, "you mustn't do that."

"Mustn't kiss you?"

"Of course not."

Her great eyes assumed an injured look.

"In heaven," she said, "an angel always wakes me with a kiss."

Tommy was wide-awake now.

"What kind of an angel?" he inquired with a kind of cold suspicion in his voice.

"Oh," she said carelessly, "anyone that happened to pass by, and thought that I had slept long enough. But then Celestia liked to be kissed. Don't humans?"

"Yes," said Tommy, "sometimes. I liked it. Only among us it's a sacred sort of thing, and grown-up humans reserve their kisses for celestial moods, or for children, who are always rather heavenly." As he spoke he began to prepare breakfast, and Celestia smiled upon him, but not as if she were very much interested in what he had said, or indeed understood it. Suddenly she said:

"I want to cook."

"You do, do you? Do you know how?"

"I've watched you."

Tommy rose with a laugh.

"Then you shall," he said, "and I'll have a swim to wake me up."

"A swim?"

"You do it in the water," said Tommy gravely, and he made swimming motions with his arms.

"Oh, but I'd rather swim, too, than cook," said Celestia, and she prepared to follow him. But Tommy shook his head.

"Somebody has to cook," he said, "and I was the first to think about swimming and so it would be selfish of you- —"

"You were nicer to me yesterday," said Celestia, and she turned with a little cry of astonishment to the kettle, which had just boiled over.

Tommy hurried away chuckling, and just before he came to the Narrow Island Beach he stripped and hung his clothes on a tree limb, and then he swung his arms about wildly like a cab driver, and leaped and ran up and down to get his circulation going, and then with an athlete's scorn of pain and cold, he ran into the water until it was waist deep, and then dove.

Celestia, busy with the cooking, was not troubling her mind about celestial affairs. She felt very earthly. She felt as any young girl would have felt in such novel and romantic circumstances. And much that had been clear to her the previous day and of surpassing importance seemed now dim and futile, so that a few more days of life in the open, far from the occult influences and directions of Professor Stilliter, might have made a normal person of her.

The reason that Tommy could not understand Celestia was simple. She could not explain herself. She believed beyond question that she had lived within a celestial sphere before, when after a glorious rush through space she found herself on earth, seated by a pool of water and looking into the eyes of Tommy Barclay.

Do you ever dream? Then you know how

real the most preposterous dream can seem, at the time, and for a while after you wake. Suppose you dreamed that you were perfectly happy? You could not afterward describe just what that had felt like, any more than you can describe the magical transitions of dreams nor the spelling scenery which so often accompanies a nightmare.

CHAPTER IX

ALMOST the whole of Celestia's life had been passed in dreaming. Waking or sleeping, she had dreamed, dreamed, dreamed. But her dreams had not been of the haphazard kind that come to the rest of us. She had dreamed what she was directed to dream. She had dreamed what a master psychologist and schemer had dreamed that it would be best for her to dream. Himself unseen and often far away, she had dreamed as he willed.

There had been people to wait on her, and to see to all her physical needs; but for years she had looked these people daily in the face and never saw them. Instead she saw and dwelt among winged angels, and sublimities among serenities passing all descriptions and in a state of absolute uninterrupted bliss.

Educated to her finger-tips in the languages of this world, she had never had a master. In dreams she had been taught, without knowing that she was learning, all that a great and unscrupulous dreamer had thought best for her to know.

And as she leaned to the work of cooking, her



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"She saw and dwelt among angels"



lovely face, red with the heat of the fire, that very dreamer was watching her, from a neighboring thicket, with almost as much admiration as he felt for himself. And why not? He felt that what she was, what she was going to be, was all the work of his own mind. He even felt responsible, but with less justice, for her beauty. At least he had selected her for his purpose from thousands and thousands of children; partly because she was physically perfect, partly because her parents had been physically perfect. And partly because he felt rather than known that her baby skull contained a brain upon which he could play with all his power and imagination.

Is a stone pure? It is neither pure nor impure. But a normal stone is cold. So was Professor Stilliter. Celestia's beauty affected not his heart and circulation, but his mind. Power and success alone touched his heart at this time.

But he wondered why, considering that she had passed almost her whole life under his influence, she had, at what she had supposed was her first sight of him, showed that she disliked and distrusted him. In fifteen years he had taught her much and prepared her for much, but then her dream life ended for the time being, he had shown himself to her, and she had fled from him with a stranger, as if for her life.

"Well, my beauty," he thought, "if you must hate me, you must. But you will do as I wish without knowing it; you will speak to men as I dictate, and, looking at men through your glorious eyes, I shall compel them to believe what you say and to do as you command. Whole multitudes will believe and obey."

He arose from his hiding place and stepped cautiously toward her. It was his intention to hypnotize her and get her away from that place quickly and quietly so that Tommy should not have an opportunity to make further trouble.

It needed no more now than a glimpse of that sphere of rock crystal which Professor Stilliter carried always with him to reduce Celestia to that condition of mind in which she spoke and acted upon impulse, that did not rise within herself. But though he flashed the crystal suddenly in her face and exclaimed in a tone of sharp command, "Sleep, Celestia," either she was too startled and bewildered to see the crystal at all or for once something was lacking in the process, for she sprang to her feet with a cry of fear and ran from him, calling upon Tommy by name at the top of her lungs.

So she ran after Tommy, and Stilliter ran after her, and the two guides and Old Man Smells-good came out of hiding and followed after him. And in this order they came to the shore of the

island, toward which Tommy, alarmed by Celestia's cries, was struggling in a welter of foam.

But when he actually saw Celestia, Tommy's enthusiasm for being of service to her seemed suddenly to cool. He let his feet drop to the bottom and stood with just his head out of water. So standing, he saw Stilliter seize Celestia by the wrist and attempt to force her back toward the camp. He saw her shake herself free with an astonishing show of energy, and it was as if her eyes no less than her hand went out to him in an appeal for help.

The veins stood out on Tommy's forehead.

"Don't let him take me away, Tommy!" she cried.

"You leave her alone!" shouted Tommy.

"If you touch her I'll knock your head off."

But Stilliter by now appreciated Tommy's predicament and smiled dryly.

"Come and do it," he said.

"You know I can't come and do it now, you dog," said Tommy, furiously, "but you just wait."

"Can't," said Stilliter. "In great hurry. Come, Celestia! You'll be better off with me. You can see for yourself that the young man has no intention of risking himself against four of us."

A certain king once offered his kingdom for a

horse. If Tommy had possessed a kingdom he would have exchanged it willingly at that moment for the simplest pair of bathing trunks.

Celestia meanwhile drew herself up, tall, proud and cold; she looked at Tommy just once more, and she looked as if she had never seen him before. Then she turned to Stilliter. "I will go with you," she said.

Two plans had presented themselves to Tommy. He could have told Celestia to shut her eyes until he told her to open them; then he could have come out of the water and fought for her; but he discarded that first plan because he liked the second better. In this he would come out of the water when she had gone, slip into some of his clothes and follow her.

Celestia, Stilliter, the two guides and last of all Old Man Smells-good vanished in the thick of the woods. Tommy gave them two minutes' head start, and then, beautiful as a Greek god, he rushed out of the water to the trees where he had hung his clothes.

They were gone.

Tommy having failed her, it was obvious to Professor Stilliter that Celestia no longer even wished to escape. The heart had been taken out of her. There was no need to throw her into a hypnotic trance. She would do as she was told.

The crossing from the island to the mainland was made in silence. The two guides navigated the old dugout, its gunwales almost awash; Old Man Smells-good busied himself making a compact portable bundle of Tommy's clothes, which he had the forethought to steal, and wondering how much he could get for them in cold cash. Celestia absent-mindedly trailed one hand overboard, and Professor Stilliter, his eyes on the back of her head, thought long thoughts.

Since her emergence from that imaginary heaven, which nothing could persuade her was imaginary, Celestia had proved less manageable than he had expected. He thanked his stars that she had taken a sudden fancy to running away with Tommy, rather than with some other young man.

He disliked Tommy for three good reasons. Tommy disliked him, and twice Tommy had gotten the better of him. Twice Tommy had knocked his glasses off and rendered him blind and helpless.

But he knew all about Tommy and couldn't help respecting him in some ways. Another young man might have taken advantage of Celestia's ignorance and innocence. And Stilliter shuddered inwardly to think what a blow that would have been to the great schemes for which he had labored so long.

And he vowed silently that she would never again run such risks. She was in his power once more, and under his protection, and he would have laughed scornfully at any one who might have suggested that within forty-eight hours he would not even know where she was and that she would be in unspeakable danger.

He took off his glasses to polish them and became for a moment as blind as a stone. And that made him shudder. So he polished his glasses as quickly as he could, put them on and once more saw. Then he felt in his pocket to see if this time he had a spare pair with him. He had.

"Nobody," he thought, "will ever catch me with but one pair again."

A man of iron nerves and of great imagination under perfect control, Professor Stilliter had but one weakness—his eyes. Otherwise he was as strong as a bull; but let him once begin to think about his eyes and he became the prey of fearful and wild fancies.

Most men die but once. Professor Stilliter had died a thousand deaths, and all of them violent and horrible, and due to a sudden loss of sight. During the preceding night, lying miserably on the hard, rooty ground, he had had a most unpleasant nightmare about himself.

He was alone in the midst of a vast, track-

less forest. He was there on scientific business—to record the song of a certain very rare bird. But the bird wouldn't sing. It would only laugh. It made a noise like two little children laughing. And it wouldn't show itself. He had followed it half the day. Once he had had a heavy fall, had broken his spare glasses all to smithereens and had hurt his side quite badly into the bargain.

Now he had stopped to rest; so had the laughing bird. In the forest was the silence of death. Suddenly the bird began to laugh again, and this time the laughter came nearer and nearer. And presently there emerged from the forest into the little open glade in which he stood two children, who held hands and laughed. They were Tommy Barclay and the little Amesbury girl. They walked straight toward him as if they didn't see him. But they must have, for suddenly they stopped and Tommy said:

“So, you are the man that tried to take her away from me and lock her up in heaven, aren't you?”

“Yes, I am, and what's more, I'll get her this time.”

And he lunged at the little Amesbury girl and Tommy simply knocked his glasses off.

He stood still for quite a long time. He could hear the children still laughing as they

wandered off into the forest. The laughter grew fainter and fainter.

Then he knelt and began to hunt for his glasses. He hunted until the knees of his trousers were worn through and the small of his back ached like an ulcerated tooth. He hunted slowly and methodically until he felt that he must have covered every square inch of the open glade.

He stood up to rest. According to his calculations he was in the exact middle of the glade, and so, his legs being in need of stretching, he took two or three incautious steps forward and banged his face into the trunk of a tree.

The blow dazed his senses and he leaped backward as if from a living enemy who had struck him, and struck the back of his head against another tree.

After that he cowered for a while on the ground, whimpering and blind—blind as a mole.

Then he began to scream for help. After an hour his screams grew hoarse and faint and presently his vocal cords relaxed and he could no longer make a sound.

So it was to be death, was it? Death in the forest, when he was still in the prime of life! Death because a little boy loved a little girl and always stood up for her! Well, it had to be, and he tried to resign himself to it and be calm.

Suddenly he heard a sound that gave him fresh terrors—many sounds, the sounds of many soft-padded feet converging upon him from three sides over the dead leaves. Closer and closer they came, very slowly, and Stilliter howled back and he leapt to his feet and ran.

Thorns tore his clothes from his body, the flesh from his bones, and the merciless trunks of trees dealt him blow after blow, but still he ran to escape from the thing that had howled.

All at once the ground became firm and even under his flying feet; he no longer encountered trees or bushes. He had escaped from the forest and from the thing that howled. There was still hope for him. He might still live to be the greatest man that had ever lived in the world. And then the next step that he took his foot never touched the ground at all; it just went down and down and head over heels he followed and fell through space.

He woke so frightened that he was half dead in reality. And it took him some time to pull himself together.

Well, the party landed and took up the long trail to Four Corners.

About leaving Tommy without clothes Stilliter had no compunctions. The young man might suffer. He would undoubtedly catch a

frightful cold, but he wouldn't actually die. "He'll swim across," Stilliter thought, "and walk naked until he reaches the outskirts of Four Corners. Then he'll hide in a bush and call piteously for help. I wish I could be there to see. The scene should have in it the true essence of comedy."

Stilliter had no beliefs that could not be ratified in a scientific way, but he could not altogether explain away the miraculous coincidence of Tommy being the very first person that Celestia should meet.

"Why pick him out to meet her when she comes back from all the millions who might be the first to meet her, the one person who was unhappy when she was taken away? Well, they won't do any more meeting, if I can help it. It really looks as if forces, of which we understand little or nothing, were at work to bring these two together and spoil my plans."

"Why," said Celestia, "do you make me go with you?"

"It's my duty," said Stilliter; "you can't live in the woods at the mercy of the first young man that comes along."

"He was going to take me to New York."

"Well, so am I; by the next train. But look here, you seem to talk rationally enough," he laughed, good-naturedly. "You'll forgive me,

but I took you for a demented person—that costume, you know, those jewels in your hair. You wouldn't expect a sane person to dress that way for a fishing trip. Won't you tell me who you are?"

"I am Celestia," she said. "I come from heaven to make the world happier." She spoke these words in a clear rather loud voice, so that the two guides turned to look at her, and the younger of them, having looked, sheepishly pulled off his hat, and during the rest of the march held it in his hand.

He didn't quite believe that she came from heaven. He didn't quite believe that she didn't. He proposed to take no chances. At least she was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen, or ever hoped to see.

Stilliter passed over the question of Celestia's origin; he appeared to accept it as a matter of course.

"I hope you will succeed," he said. "I could stand being happier myself. Won't you tell me how you propose to go about the matter?"

"If you like," she said; and then for a long time she talked reform and politics to him, exactly as he had taught her to talk them, with the same eager, simple faith and serene conviction. He pretended to be immensely interested in her schemes. But he doubted the practi-

cality. And he tested her with numerous questions, to which during the long years of her training he had taught her the answers.

Toward the end of their conversation he made less and less opposition to her theories. He began to accept and to agree with them. And in three-quarters of an hour she had performed the miracle of converting him to his own beliefs.

If he was amused, he was also excited and exhilarated. "She plays her part to perfection," he thought.

"Well," he said at last, "I believe you are right. Whether you can put your schemes in execution is another matter. Talk to the guides; tell them what you intend to do. See if you can convince them."

So while the party rested at a spring Cestia talked smoothly and earnestly to the guides. The younger never took his eyes off her face; but the elder, after a while, looked only at the ground, and occasionally nodded.

As for the old Indian, he, too, listened, and it seemed as if some feeling akin to remorse was gnawing at his leathery heart for he was seen to cast sidelong glances at the bundle he had made of Tommy's clothes, and later when the party had resumed its way, it seemed as if the bundle had become too heavy for him, for when he thought no one was looking he cast it from him into a thicket.

This was an act of conscience. He had stolen. That couldn't be helped; but at least he would not profit by it. However, only a short time afterwards the old man returned for the clothes.

"Well," thought Stilliter, as he followed Celestia and the guides, "we've a nucleus of votes against the time when we need them," and being a psychologist, he wondered why the younger guide kept looking at Celestia and the elder didn't.

"She works like a charm," he thought, "and she is my work—mine."

And in a way she was, but the scientist took too much credit.

Left to herself, Celestia must have been a force for good.

Toward the end of the long tramp there had to be frequent rests, for Celestia was getting very tired, and when at last they reached Four Corners it was only just in time to catch the New York Express.

During the few minutes there were to spare, however, Celestia gathered all the crowd there was to gather and made the deepest and most lasting impression that had ever been made upon that woodland community.

Something of interest happens in the midst of a remote wilderness, and within a few hours the incident "written up" with details appears in a newspaper. That this is possible is owing nine-

tenths to good management and one-tenth to good luck.

"Johnny" Cumberland, of the *New York American*, had just stepped off the Montreal Express at Four Corners for a few days' rest and holiday in the woods. He had earned this by tracking down, through a period of six weeks, and causing the arrest of a certain gentleman who had been using the United States mail to separate unsophisticated people from their money.

"I want to go somewhere for a few days," said Johnny to the City Editor, "where there is no news."

The City Editor did not make the usual cynical answer about Brooklyn or the State Department. He said simply: "Try Four Corners, Waykocus County, N. Y.," and dismissed Johnny with a quick, pleasant nod.

Johnny, however, had no sooner stepped off the train at the newsless place than he ran head first into news. And the next morning there appeared a column in the *American* devoted to Celestia and headlined like this:

"Angel from heaven found in Adirondacks. Is the most beautiful woman in the world, insane or an advertising scheme. Some think her a female Billy Sunday—wants to reform New

York—will be taken to Bellevue Observation Ward. . . .”

Think of the maddest you have ever been, multiply that by ten, and you will have some idea of Tommy's state of mind when he found that his clothes were gone. It was half an hour before he was able to think.

And by that time there was no longer any sight or sound of Celestia. Almost it seemed as though she never existed, as if she had been an hallucination of some sort. But that he was without clothes was a fact, which he was not for a moment to forget, until he had contrived something to take their place.

A large, angry horsefly lived on the island and wouldn't let him forget. Sooner than have that happen it would take the trouble to bite him suddenly in the small of the back.

Still furiously angry, but calmer, he hurried to the hut and used up a precious hour to make a suit of clothes out of the buffalo robe. He succeeded with an old nail, which he found, in making holes for his arms and legs to go through and in cutting a strip of hide for the belt, but as a suit the affair was not a success. Finally he determined to travel naked, carrying the buffalo suit over his arm, to be donned hastily in case he met anyone.

So he swam to the mainland, keeping the buffalo hide out of the water as much as he could, and on feet which were soon bruised and bloodied, headed straight for Four Corners.

He chose this course not because he expected to find Celestia there, but because he was well known there, and could get clothes and if necessary a posse of men who would help to find out what had become of her.

Badly bitten by mosquitoes, gnats and deerflies, he had by 5 o'clock arrived within half a mile of Four Corners, when a sound of footsteps caused him to dart behind a viburnum bush and dress hastily in his buffalo robe suit. That so dressed he resembled a cross between the wild man of Borneo and a Christmas stocking, did not trouble him. He was covered and proprieties were preserved. That was all that mattered. Stepping back into the trail and renewing his way he came face to face with John Cumberland of the *American*.

John gave one look at Tommy and shuddered. Every brave man has his weakness; an inborn fear of maniacs was Johnny's. He would have given his reputation to be elsewhere, but he had plenty of real nerve, and though he felt that the situation might prove desperate, he resolved to face it like a man.

He had often heard that the way to get along

with maniacs is by humoring them; so he drew a long breath, assumed a ghastly smile. "It is—it must be Robinson Crusoe!"

"What's that?" cried Tommy, sharply, for he was not in a pleasant humor.

"That's all right," said Johnny, backing slowly away. "I thought you thought you were Robinson Crusoe; but if you think you are some one else I think so too. I think whatever you do."

"I am Tommy Barclay," said Tommy with a certain fierceness.

"Of course you are," exclaimed the reporter; "that's what I meant to say in the first place."

"If you think I'm mad"—Tommy began, but Cumberland interrupted with a hasty "No, sirree, I don't. Just as sane as I am. Wouldn't wonder if saner. Maybe two or three times as sane."

Tommy couldn't help laughing.

"Look here," said Tommy, "don't be an ass if you can possibly help it. My clothes were stolen while I was in swimming. I threw this fashionable suit together out of respect for Anthony Comstock, and I'm looking for a young lady named Celestia——"

"The girl from heaven?"

"That's what she says; but how do you know?"

"Me? I interviewed her just before she boarded the New York Express. Professor Stilliter, the famous psychologist, found her in the woods, and between you and me she's some girl."

"Who are you?" Tommy asked abruptly.

"John Cumberland, *New York American*."

"Then you probably know who I am."

"If you're really Mr. Thomas Barclay, I do. Are you?"

Tommy merely nodded, and the reporter knew he was speaking the truth.

"If you've any statement to make, Mr. Barclay——"

Tommy shook his head.

"They took her to New York?"

"To Bellevue. Stilliter couldn't make up his mind whether she was bug house or not."

"I'm afraid she is," said Tommy. "Poor kid. Look here, old man, I'd be a life-long friend to anybody who'd bring me a decent suit of clothes in time to catch the next train. I know everybody in Four Corners, but somehow I can't see myself facing them in this. They have nothing to do but spit on a red hot stove and laugh."

"I've got extra clothes," said Cumberland.

"If you wait here I'll go and come back with the necessary. Aren't you dying for a smoke?"

"I am," said Tommy. "You're a brick."

He accepted three of the reporter's cigarettes and a number of matches.

While they were talking old "Smells-good," the Indian, appeared, followed by several natives, and carefully guarding under one arm the clothes he had picked up by the lakeside. Tommy no sooner saw him and the precious bundle than he demanded its surrender.

"Five dollars," said "Smells-good," holding up his free hand, while his companions grinned, wondering where Tommy was going to get even one dollar.

Tommy, in his buffalo robe, advanced threateningly, then his face broke into a smile. With a dexterous movement he thrust one hand into the pocket of the trousers which hung a little loose over "Smells-good's" arm, and fished out a roll of bills.

"There's your five," said he, peeling off a note.

The Indian was too nonplussed to think. In his greed he handed over the clothes with one hand, while he held the other out for the coveted money.

A roar went up from the natives. The joke was on "Smells-good." He seemed to realize it as his eyes wandered from his one bill to the collection in Tommy's hand.

But he only grunted—visions of fire water seemed to appease him, and he shuffled off through the woods.

It leaked out that the angel from heaven, recently found in the Adirondacks, would reach New York on a certain train, and the entrances to the Grand Central Station were thronged with idlers on the lookout for a sensation. I don't know what they expected to see—some sort of a Carrie Nation, perhaps, at whom they would jeer—certainly not Celestia.

Very few persons in the crowd really saw her—but from these as she passed swiftly with Professor Stilliter to a waiting taxicab arose no jeers and insults, but only a low, humming murmur of wonder and admiration.

She walked like some one in a trance, looking neither to the right nor to the left, but her lovely face had such an expression of serenity and peace and she was so touchingly young that the worst scoffers felt their hearts soften and go out to her.

Her white dress, falling in unbroken lines from her shoulders; the jeweled band across her forehead, would, at the time and place, make almost any other wearer ridiculous.

But Celestia's face was so commandingly good and beautiful that only women and reporters noticed her clothes at all. And only those of them who were in the foremost fringe of the

crowd saw that, except for thin sandals, her small, high-arched feet were bare.

Another crowd not so large saw her leave the taxicab and enter Bellevue Hospital. From these there went up a short, sharp murmur of pity. "Of course, she's mad, poor thing," these thought, "or else they are going to make out that she is, and that's worse. And did anybody ever see such hair and eyes, and such a carriage of the head, or any dress so white, or any one that moved with so much grace?"

Professor Stilliter, who was well known to the Bellevue authorities, though he remained a spectator of all the tests to which her mental powers were subjected, refused to give his own conclusion as to her sanity.

"I've been with her a good many hours," he said, "and, of course, I've formed an opinion, but I refuse to interfere in any way with your experiments and deductions."

At first they all thought she was mad. They couldn't help it. She told them that she came from heaven and had come to save the world. And she told them these things with such simplicity and dignity that it was obvious to the most cynical that she at least believed what she said. "It was like a mother," said one of the young doctors afterward, "telling her children Bible stories."

Cross-questioning could neither shake her nar-

rative in detail or degree, and as her mind continued to respond quickly and patiently to one test after another, they became more and more puzzled. Instead of being able to prove that she was defective, it began to dawn on them after hours of experiment and observation that she was the opposite, not only mentally but physically.

At last Professor Stilliter took the head doctor aside.

"You haven't even a pretext for detaining her, have you?" he asked.

"Not one," said the doctor. "She's as sane as you or I, according to all the tests, and yet she can't be. What's to become of her?"

"Why, as long as I discovered her," said Professor Stilliter, "I feel that I must at least look after her until I discover who her people are. So, if you'll keep her here for an hour, I'll send for her."

The doctor followed Professor Stilliter into the waiting room. This was empty but for a gentleman in a far corner, whose face was concealed by a newspaper. At the outer door of the waiting room Professor Stilliter shook hands with the doctor.

"It's been wonderfully interesting, hasn't it?" he said. "I'll let you know how she gets on. Meanwhile thanks for all the trouble you have

taken. And I'll send for her in about an hour."

The door closed behind him and the doctor turned to retrace his steps to the observation room.

Just then the gentleman in the corner rose to his feet, laid aside his newspaper and disclosed the bronzed face of Tommy Barclay.

"I'd like to speak to you for a moment, if you don't mind," he said.

Dr. Sargent turned somewhat impatiently, but on perceiving that Tommy belonged to the world of wealth and fashion, and was not a reporter, his manner changed to one of brusque courtesy.

"I've only just discovered," said Tommy, "that Celestia—I am not at liberty to tell you her real name (he wasn't for the simple reason that he didn't know what it was)—is being held here until her friends can be discovered. I am one of her friends and I have come to take her away."

Dr. Sargent shook his head slightly, and said something in which Professor Stilliter's name occurred.

"Yes, I know," said Tommy, "but there is a great difference between being interested in a case and being interested in a person. Professor Stilliter is interested in her mental state. And I—well, I'm just interested in her."

"I have no authority to turn her over to you.

Don't misunderstand me, but I don't even know who you are."

"I can't tell you who she is," said Tommy; "it wouldn't be right. But I'm Tommy Barclay, and I can really give very satisfactory references if I have to."

Dr. Sargent smiled now in a really friendly manner.

"You don't have to," he said. "I know you; I know Mr. Barclay very well indeed. And still, as long as Stilliter brought her here, and told me to keep her until he sent for her, I don't really see how I can let you take her away. Of course, I know she would be in good hands; why not wait until I can communicate with Stilliter?"

"I have no use for him," said Tommy, "any more than he has for me. If you let Celestia go with me he will probably be angry, and yet the rights of the matter are entirely on my side."

"I don't wish to be indiscreet, but is she a relative of yours?"

There was a good deal of Irish in Tommy's smile, and his eyes twinkled brightly as he said:

"Not yet."

"Not yet? I don't think I quite understand."

"Why," said Tommy, "it's very simple. I am engaged to her."

If he had been the most truthful young man

in the world he might have said: "I am engaged to her, but she isn't engaged to me."

Still for a moment Dr. Sargent hesitated. Then he smiled and said: "After all, she is not under detention. She's as sane as I am except for the hallucinations about a heavenly origin, and if you want to take her away and if she wants to go with you I have no right to interfere. Just wait a moment, will you?"

In a few minutes he returned with Celestia. She had been very angry with Tommy because he had not come out of the water to rescue her from Stilliter, but the sight of him now dissipated all that remained of her wrath. She took two steps toward him, holding out both hands. And she exclaimed: "Oh, Tommy! I'm so glad. You did come, didn't you?"

"Just as quickly as ever I could," said Tommy.

Dr. Sargent had drawn back smiling. "Lord," he thought, "what a handsome couple."

"I've got a taxi outside," said Tommy. "Can you be ready in a few minutes?"

"I'm ready now."

Tommy lifted a long raincoat which he had brought with him from the arm of the chair in which he had been sitting.

"Will you put this on?" he asked. "I'm afraid New York isn't used to Greek clothes, and we don't want a crowd, do we?"

"No," said Celestia, "just us two."

She turned to the doctor and held out her hand.

"Thank you," she said, "for deciding that I'm not a lunatic."

Tommy put her into the taxicab and they drove up town; Celestia asking a hundred questions a minute about everything which interested her, and Tommy answering her questions as fast as he could and trying to decide what he had better do with her. Beyond getting her away from Stilliter, he had no very definite plans.

"Celestia," he said suddenly, "at first the doctor didn't want to give you up, and I'm afraid I told him a white lie." The young man blushed as he spoke. "I told him I was engaged to you, and, of course, he believes that you are engaged to me. And, of course, you aren't, unless you want to be."

"Are you engaged to me?" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said Tommy, "it happened suddenly, on the island. I'm engaged to you for always."

"Then you must love me."

"I do," said Tommy. "I do."

"You say you love me, and then you say you don't believe what I tell you."

"Meaning about heaven and all?" He asked this, very humbly.

She nodded and said:

"I haven't really tried to make anybody believe but you. But I've looked at you hard, and willed you to believe, and you won't. I don't understand. Anybody else would."

"Did the doctors, Celestia?"

"I didn't try to make them. It isn't necessary yet. I must get a little used to the world, mustn't I, before I can help it?"

On any other point she seemed as rational as any other young girl who was seeing the great city of New York for the first time. But it began to look as if she would have to spend the rest of her life in the taxicab.

No hotel would take her in. Her clothes amounted to no more than an opaque nightgown with a raincoat thrown over it, and her bare feet caused almost as much excitement and distrust as her beauty. Tommy escorted her into two hotels in which only women guests are received. In each the manager flatly refused to admit her.

Then, leaving Celestia in the taxi, he tried other hotels. In each case he thought it would be simple to explain Celestia to the room clerk and get temporary accommodations for her, and in each case he found that it was quite impossible, and that his feeble attempts caused him to feel like a cross between a fool and a criminal.

Finally it occurred to him to try his friends.

Surely, he thought, Mary Blackstone will take her in, if I ask her to, for old time's sake. So he told the driver to drive to Senator Blackstone's residence.

CHAPTER X

LEAVING Celestia in the cab, Tommy learned that Mary Blackstone was at home and would see him, and he hurried upstairs to the little sitting-room. He had not counted on finding Fitch with her; it was one of those unexpected findings which take the wind out of a man's sails, so to speak; and Tommy, full of what he had to say about Celestia to one person, found himself, for the moment, almost tongue-tied in the presence of two.

In her heart Mary still cared more for Tommy's little finger than for Fitch's whole body; but her mind had been opened to ambition, and she had steered it against him.

When a girl has determined that she will not make a man happy, it is often her instinct to do the opposite. But Mary made the mistake of supposing that Tommy was still in love with her. Girls usually do make this mistake about men who once loved them, even if in the interim the men in question may have weathered half a dozen romances, and have been married two or three times apiece.

So Mary greeted Tommy with a kind of cool cheerfulness, which did not make him in the least unhappy, and then she spoke to Fitch with an intimate caressing tone of voice, which, instead of making Tommy frantically jealous, only caused him to smile inwardly.

Then, point blank, she asked Tommy if he had called because he had nothing better to do, or for some special reason, and then, of course, Tommy had to make his appeal about Celestia. To this Mary listened with a cool face and a hot heart, and Fitch withdrew into the embrasure of a window, out of which he pretended to look at the street below with raised eyebrows and a cynical smile.

"Tommy," said Mary, when he had finished, "you grow more chivalrous every day. And I can see how this wild girl, caught in the Adirondack Mountains, appeals to all that is noble in you. But really——" She raised her eyebrows and smiled with irritating superiority.

"But in simple language," she went on, "what you say about her amounts to this: She is good-looking, she is out of her mind, and she doesn't wear enough clothes."

Fitch overheard and laughed.

"Don't," said Tommy, "don't condemn her out of my clumsy words. Please see her, Mary. You can't help wanting to help her. And if you

won't help her, there's no other girl I can go to. Take her in for to-night, won't you? Just for old time's sake."

Mary appealed to Fitch.

"What ought I to do?" she asked.

Fitch came forward with a judicial manner.

"I congratulate you, Tommy," he said, with a sort of a man-of-the-world ("you dog, you dog!") tone of voice. "She stuck her head out of the cab window just now to speak to a newsboy, and what you say about her looks is all too true. But why a show-girl should be found running loose in the Adirondacks in her show-girl costume I don't know. Unless somebody took her there, and—cast her off. Suppose I give you a note to a manager?"

"I'm not going to get angry if I can help it," said Tommy. "I know it's a queer story; but please be a little careful."

Meanwhile Mary had gone to the window, had caught a glimpse of Celestia, and felt her heart fail her with rage and jealousy. But she controlled the expression of her face admirably, and returned slowly to the two young men.

"My dear Tommy," she said sweetly, "the proper place for that ravishingly beautiful young creature is the nearest police station."

Tommy drew a long breath to quiet his anger. Then he said gravely: "I'm always wrong about

everything. Why, Mary, I always thought that you had a heart, charity and common sense. And I was even wrong about that."

And he turned upon his heel and left the room.

It was getting dark and something had to be done quickly.

"Celestia," said Tommy, as he entered the cab, "I'm going to try my father. We've had a sort of row, but we are very fond of each other, and we've a dear old housekeeper, and she'll look after you."

"And your young friend—Mary—what did she say?"

"Nothing interesting or important," said Tommy.

Celestia was silent for a few moments. Then in a small voice she said:

"Nobody wants me. I'm a terrible trouble to you. Your father won't take me in. I know he won't. And—I knew that I wouldn't be happy when I turned into a human being. They told me I wouldn't. But I didn't know how unhappy and lonely I'd have to be."

Tommy, deeply touched, suddenly took her in his arms and kissed her. For a moment she lay against him and her lips moved against his. Then she freed herself with sudden energy and exclaimed, "I mustn't—I mustn't."

"Why mustn't you, Celestia, dear?"

"Just because I want to so much, so I know I mustn't."

"Celestia," said Tommy, "if my father won't take you in—there's one person left—me. I don't want to take advantage, but if only you could love me the way I love you, we'd just go and get married quietly—and then you couldn't be lonely and unhappy."

"I didn't come down to this world to marry," said Celestia, and she sighed.

In his heart, beating wildly and exultantly, Tommy thought, "But you will—you will."

And he ran up the stairs of Barclay's house, hoping that the man he called father would refuse the protection of his roof to Celestia.

But Barclay, notified by Stilliter of Celestia's departure with Tommy, was only too anxious to detain her until she could once more be turned over to the professor's guardianship.

This was more important than any risks to his plans which he might be running in having the girl in his own house. So when Tommy, looking very manly, told his father about Celestia, that one said at once: "Poor thing—poor child—of course we must take her in, take her in first, and think afterward."

"God bless you for a brick!" cried Tommy, and he dashed off.

In less than a minute he returned, greatly agi-

tated. "She's gone!" he cried, seeing no signs of the cab.

"Did you take the man's number?"

"No."

Visions of certain New York pitfalls flashed through Barclay's mind.

"Tommy," he said, "do what you can to find her, and bring her here. I'll look after the police end."

What had happened was simply this: The moment Tommy had entered his father's house Celestia had leaned from the cab window and told the driver to drive on. Why? Because she thought that she was a trouble to him?

No. It was because when his arms had been around her and he had kissed her and she had kissed him back almost all thought of her heavenly mission to this earth had been wiped from her mind, and she had felt that the gates of heaven were closing against her return.

They had trusted her. And she mustn't fail them. They had told her that when she went to earth from the high places and put on mortal flesh she would no longer be free from the sufferings and temptations to which the flesh is heir. And lo and behold!—already she had been blistered by the sun, had been cold, hungry, lonely, unhappy, homesick, and had evinced the wish to lie forever in a man's protecting arms kissed and kissing.

"Where to, Miss?"

The cab had stopped and the driver was speaking to her through the window.

"This will do," she said, and she got out. "Thank you very much," and then, her head bare, feet showing below Tommy's raincoat, she started to walk away.

"Hold on there," bellowed the driver, "how about my fare?"

"Oh," said Celestia, turning meekly.

The driver pointed to his meter.

"Sixteen dollars and forty-eight cents," he said, with a tone of finality.

Celestia stood helpless and bewildered.

"But I have no money," she said.

"You haven't, haven't you?"

The driver leaped threateningly from his box and a crowd began to gather.

Through this crowd a strong, loud-voiced, well-dressed middle-aged woman came pushing and struggling. She caught Celestia by the arm and forced her back toward the cab, the door of which was still open.

"I'll take care of you, dear," she said; "in with you."

To the driver she gave an address in a voice which none but him heard, and a moment later, amid jeers and murmurs of pity, Celestia was once more whirling through the streets of New York.

But the voice of the woman, though coarse and vulgar, was brusquely kind, and Celestia felt that after all her vicissitudes she had found a friend of her own sex—a differentiation, be it said, of which until that day she had never before been conscious.

“Freddie the Ferret” was a remarkable young man. His real name was Frederick Appleton Douglas—and he came of good Scotch-American stock. If he had been bright and bad he might have been a gangster. But he wasn't bright, and he wasn't bad. He was neither a half-wit, nor a whole wit, and he had almost as much moral sense as a cat. That is to say, he had none.

He had neither more nor less moral glow when he gave candy which he didn't want to a child than when he took candy which he didn't want away from one.

His habitual companions, however, were evil. For many such persons in the city had discovered that on occasion Freddie could be tremendously useful. To begin with, his luck distinguished him as much as brains and talent could have done. Some people are always finding four-leaved clovers.

Freddie's gift, though he had never seen a

clover patch or lived in clover, was of that sort. If Freddie went through a rubbish heap he always found something of value. Once he found a diamond horseshoe and sold it to an Italian fruiterer for six bananas. If there was a piece of money or a cigar stump long enough to be smoked anywhere in a gutter, Freddie was pretty sure to find one or the other, if not both.

If Brown was looking for Smith, Freddie was pretty sure to have seen Smith. If he hadn't, it was his luck that he was going to. Freddie had seen more fires, more runaways, more horrible accidents than any young man in New York. He had found more things worth finding and had been irresponsibly responsible for more good and evil turns than anybody.

The police knew him well. And although he was often mixed up in reprehensible matters, they were careful not to arrest him, because he was often so useful to them, and they knew that at heart he was good-natured and not responsible for the occasional harm he did.

Freddie's repute with the police began when he was quite a small boy. Sergeant Rafferty, tall and very serious-looking, encountered him one day and said:

"Say, Bub, have you seen a man round here with one nostril bigger than the other and a bit of his left ear missing?"

"Sure," said Freddie, "you mean Pete the Poleaxe."

"Where?" said Rafferty. "He's shot a man up and he's wanted."

"I seen him," said Freddie, "not five minutes ago. He give me a dime to say I didn't."

"Where'd you see him, boy?"

"He was goin' into O'Gorman's ice cream parlor with Nell the Flinger, family entrance."

"If you've spoken the truth," said Rafferty, "I'll give you a dollar."

Ten minutes later the arrest was made and Freddie's reputation was established.

Sometimes he was sent upon definite missions, and carried them through to perfection.

Flannerman's bar-room was Freddie's headquarters. Sometimes the habitués amused themselves by getting him drunk, but not often, for they were poor men, and even a mild jag costs money. One day the proprietor tapped Freddie on the shoulder and told him that he was wanted on the 'phone.

"Yes, this is Freddie, all right."

"This is Mrs. Baxter."

"Hope you're well, Mrs. Baxter."

"Same to you, Freddie. I bin trying to find Sweetzer all over town. Can you find him?"

"Sure; what'll I tell him?"

"You say to him that Mrs. Baxter says to say she's got a pippin for him."

"Mrs. Baxter says to say she's *slippin'* toward him?"

"Pippin for him—p-i-double p."

"P-i-double pip——"

"P-i-p-p-i-n—pippin."

"Pippin for him."

"You're on, Freddie. You tell him to come right round."

"What for?"

"Why, for the pippin."

"I mean what for would I tell him?"

"Why, for about a dollar, Freddie, if you will bring him around quick."

As Freddie the Ferret left Flannerman's it was his luck to run into Sweetzer, who was on the point of entering.

Sweetzer had the appearance of a ward politician. His hat was high and shiny, his smile was friendly and his eye was shrewd and mean.

"Bin hunting you all over town," said Freddie.

"What for?"

"Mrs. Baxter says to say she's got a pippin for you."

"Not so loud. Where is she?"

"Mrs. Baxter?"

"No, the other."

"I'm to take you round."

They set off at once in the direction of Mrs. Baxter's "Market," as it was called by the insiders, Freddie shuffling and skipping at

Sweetzer's side, prattling and whistling by turns.

Although she had as yet done nothing that was not helpful or kind, there was something about Mrs. Baxter that rang false, and the house in which she lived was a strange place. It was a stuffy, padded sort of house. Every door had its pair of heavy curtains, every chair was upholstered; every picture had a scarf or a sash of ribbon thrown across one corner of it. The house was lighted by electricity, but the lights were not bright.

Mrs. Baxter's sitting room and office was at the back of the house, up one flight of stairs. And here, summoned downstairs by a neat-looking colored maid, she left Celestia to herself for awhile.

Sweetzer and Freddie were in the front parlor. Mrs. Baxter swept in upon them with an important air of mystery.

"Got the real thing this time, have you?" asked Sweetzer.

"You just bet I have," said Mrs. Baxter. "When you've seen her all I'll have to do will be to name the sum. Just step upstairs, Billy, and you, too, Freddie, if you'd like to have a peep at the real thing."

"Usual place?" asked Sweetzer.

"Yep. But go quiet. She's got ears like a lynx and she can see plum through paint and canvas."

The men followed Mrs. Baxter on tiptoe. But she made plenty of noise, stepping heavily and singing as she went, thus disguising whatever sounds might have been inadvertently made by the men.

Just before they came to the door of Mrs. Baxter's office Sweetzer and Freddie ducked off into what appeared to be a dark closet, and pulled the door to after them, while Mrs. Baxter, with a great bustling, noisy cheerfulness, rejoined Celestia.

"You're looking at my pictures, aren't you, dear?" she said. "I love beauty, I love nature. Now that girl with her hands to her hair, ain't she just too cute and graceful for anything?"

Mrs. Baxter's taste in pictures ran to Roman ladies (who had never been nearer Rome than a Broadway photographer) with plenty of bare arms and shoulders and somewhat skimpy togas. Some of them were really attractive looking and had posed gracefully. One had her hands to her hair.

Another looked cheerfully across her snowy shoulder. A third balanced a classic jug upon a saucy, Bowery head. A fourth had caught her draperies with one hand just in the nick of time. Some were in dancing attitudes. One danced madly in a grove of trees and had bunches of grapes in her hands and her hair.

In moving from one picture to another Celes-

tia unconsciously assumed many lovely attitudes herself. Once she lifted her hands to her hair; several times she smiled back at girls who appeared to be smiling at her. And at last she stood with her hands loosely caught behind her and looked up at the masterpiece of Mrs. Baxter's collection.

This was no photograph, but a genuine oil painting. And this doesn't mean anything to it.

As art it wasn't bad at all. Some young fellow with a genuine talent had painted it. He had also succeeded in making a name for himself the picture would have been worth a good deal of money; but Mrs. Baxter explained, "poor Allison had drunk and doped himself to death. And I took this over," she said, "in lieu of money that he owed me. It's called 'The Peacock Girl.'"

The Peacock Girl was as delicately and prettily made as an apple blossom. And she was as sweet and rosy, and a bit proud of having no clothes on like the girls in the other picture, of frozen or shamed. She strolled straight toward you. And in front of her and at both sides and behind her all the way to the rim of the window were peacocks with their tails spread.

The coloring was gorgeous and the eyes of the peacock's tails were like thousands of bright jewels. But the eyes of the peacock girl were so frank and sweet that after a glance at the

rest of the composition Celestia could look at nothing else.

Not so Mrs. Baxter, standing behind Celestia and a little to one side. She looked steadily at two of the eyes in the tail of the leading peacock. In those two eyes she read rapturous approval. So she held up one finger and then with that same finger traced three circles in the air.

At that the eyes in the peacock's tail tried to look obdurate and strong. Mrs. Baxter shrugged her shoulders. Then the eyes winked slowly three times, and Mrs. Baxter, forgetful of everything but her triumph, laughed aloud.

Celestia turned to her with inquiring eyes. She did not know that she had just been sold for a thousand dollars by some one who did not own her to some one whom she had never seen.

"You must be tired standing, dearie," said Mrs. Baxter, "and hungry and thirsty, too. What'll you drink—a glass of wine?"

"Water, please."

"That's nicer, water with a dash of orange juice. You wait here and I'll see to it myself."

Once more Mrs. Baxter hurried downstairs. Once more she found Sweetzer and Freddie in the front parlor.

"I'll send for her in an hour," Sweetzer
"see that she's ready."

"You mean asleep."

"I mean more. Put her into something less audible than that flim-flam white thing she's got on."

"She's going to have a glass of water with a little orange juice in it and a little dash of something else. I guess she'll be ready when you send. It's early, though. How'll you get her out of the house?"

"As usual," said Sweetzer, "in a big trunk."

"There's one thing more."

Eye met eye. And after a little Sweetzer's eyes fell and he drew from his inside pocket an enormous roll of dirty bills of large denominations. Ten bills of a hundred dollars each passed very slowly and with much thumb-licking from him to Mrs. Baxter.

Freddie all this while had not spoken. Now he spoke.

"What did I do it for?" he said. "I done it for a dollar."

"Give him the dollar," said Mrs. Baxter sweetly.

"Give it to him yourself," said Sweetzer curtly.

Mrs. Baxter laughed, turned her back on them both, faced them once more and gave Freddie his dollar. Freddie said: "It's tainted something awful," and shoved it into his pocket.

Had Mrs. Baxter no compunction whatever?

Yes. But she was only doing as she had once been done by. She had to live, or she felt that she had to; and she had hardened her heart to mercy and self-sacrifice. Still, her hands shook as she carried the orangeade and the sandwiches up to Celestia, and her voice shook as she said:

“There, dearie, eat, drink and be merry.”

Celestia ate hungrily and drank thirstily. And presently she said that she felt sleepy and could hardly keep her eyes open.

“It ain’t anywhere near bedtime,” said Mrs. Baxter. “You just curl up on my sofa and take forty winks.”

“You’re so good to me,” said Celestia, and she smiled very sweetly, and in the midst of the smile yawned and showed all her beautiful white teeth, and a moment later, laying her head on a cool silk cushion, she fell sound asleep.

So sleeping she looked more beautiful than a maiden of this earth. Perhaps she dreamed that she was back in heaven, for about her mouth there seemed a kind of celestial expression.

“My God! My God!” exclaimed Mrs. Baxter. “Ain’t she beautiful? And to think that she has to be food for swine!”

A strong emotion seized Mrs. Baxter. It was fear, pity and remorse.

She wished almost that she had never seen

Celestia. But not quite, for Mrs. Baxter was a very practical woman.

"No use crying over spilled milk," she murmured. "And now to change her into a traveling dress."

She left the room hurriedly and came back with all that was necessary to change Celestia from a Greek goddess to an American girl. But her hands would shake, and it took her some time to find how Celestia's dress was fastened, and longer to undo the fastenings. She had no sooner succeeded than she drew back sharply with a kind of muffled groan. Then she looked again.

Suspended from Celestia's neck by a narrow ribbon was the smallest, oldest, oddest little rag doll in the world.

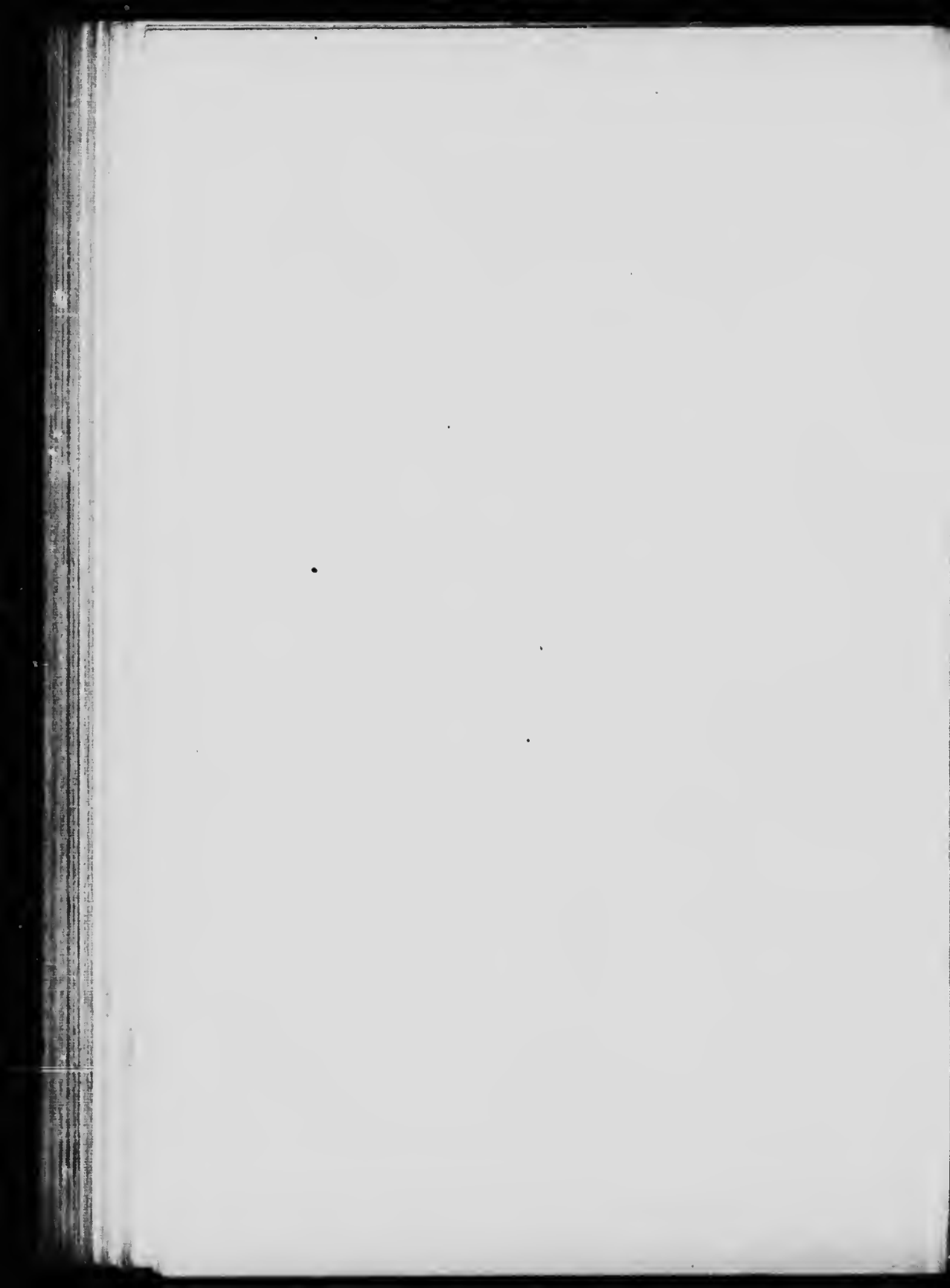
Who knows what silent chords in the wicked old woman's heart were touched by the sight of that doll? She gave a kind of howl of grief, and then she began to say in a kind of hurried sing-song: "Must hurry—must hurry—must hurry."

She found the strength to half carry, half drag Celestia down the front stairs and to half lift, half tumble her into a huge trunk that almost blocked the front hall. Before she closed and locked the trunk she put into it the ten one hundred-dollar bills. And then she tried to compose herself against Sweetzer's arrival.



"Changed Celestia to an American girl"

(Page 138)



He was punctual to the minute. Mrs. Baxter opened the front door herself. Beyond Sweetzer, drawn up at the curb, she could see the express wagon and the trusted porters he had brought with him.

"Everything all right?" he whispered.

Mrs. Baxter closed the door.

"Sweetzer," she said, "she's gone. When I went back with the orangeade she was gone. She must have smelt a rat, Sweetzer. She must have seen your eyes in the peacock's tail. See, I had everything ready; here's the trunk waiting for her."

Sweetzer looked at the trunk. He could think of nothing better to do.

"Well, then," he said, "how about the thousand?"

Mrs. Baxter simply laughed in his face.

"How about the gas company you got me to put up a thousand for?" she said. "You give me my thousand and I'll give you yours."

"You go to the devil," said Sweetzer furiously. And he tore open the front door and marched down the front steps.

Mrs. Baxter locked the front door and chained it, and then she sat down on the trunk containing Celestia and had a luxurious fit of hysterics.

Celestia woke neither sick nor dazed, but cool-minded and rested, in a broad, cool bed. It was

Mrs. Baxter's entrance on tiptoe that had waked her. Mrs. Baxter carried a tray upon which was an orange, coffee and rolls.

"You've had a long sleep, dearie. How do you feel?"

"Very well and happy, thank you."

"When you've had your breakfast you'll have to go away. I can't keep you here; it wouldn't be right. It wouldn't be safe."

Celestia's great eyes asked questions, to which Mrs. Baxter gave no direct answer.

"I've done all I can for you," she said. "I'm very sorry I can't do any more."

It did not take Celestia long to eat her breakfast and make her exceedingly simple toilette. But during these processes she thought and thought, until things became clear to her, and she knew that she had been in grave peril.

Mrs. Baxter burst into sudden tears at Celestia's departure.

"I may never see you again. But I'll never forget you—oh, I've been a wicked woman; but I'll try not to be wicked any more—and it's you that done it."

And she thrust the bills which Sweetzer had given her into Celestia's hands.

"I came from heaven to help you," said Celestia simply. "Good-by and God bless you."

Her eyes bright as stars, she went out into

the early sunshine, and walked slowly in an easterly direction, her head high and the band of jewels gleaming brightly across her brow.

By the time she passed under the first lines of elevated tracks a crowd had collected about her. They did not show her any disrespect at first, perhaps because she had such a royal look of self-sufficiency. But as the crowd increased persons in the outskirts who could not see her well began to make themselves unpleasant. And this example began to be followed by those who were nearer to her. She was not angry or frightened, but progress became more and more difficult, and she looked this way and that for a way of escape.

The door of a mean little house stood wide open. Furniture was being carried out of the house, and there was a middle-aged woman who kept dabbing her eye with her apron.

Celestia made a dart for the door, the crowd now hooting and threatening, reached it, closed it behind her, and was alone in a narrow hallway with the woman who wept.

"What is the trouble?" she asked gently.

The woman's eyes widened with wonder as she looked upon her chance visitor.

"My husband is sick with a broken arm. We can't pay the rent and the landlord is throwing us out into the street."

"Oh, but he mustn't do that," said Celestia. She was still holding the bills which Mrs. Baxter had given her.

"Where is your husband?"

Almost in a state of coma, Mrs. Douglas, for that was the woman's name, led the way into a room from which everything had been taken but one chair. In this sat a middle-aged, patient-looking, blue-eyed man, his right arm in a sling. At his side stood a pretty girl about the same age as Celestia.

"See," said Celestia, "here is lots of money. A good woman gave it to me. And please will you help me for a little while, because I have no place to go, and you look like good people."

Douglas had never seen so much money at one time.

"Who are you, m'm?" he asked. "Where are you from?"

His eyes were blinking rapidly with awe and wonder.

"I am Celestia. I have come from heaven to help you." He looked into her eyes for a long time. Then suddenly he fell on his knees before her.

"Before God," he said, "I believe you."

Then as suddenly as he had knelt he rose and hurried from the room, groping with his left hand as if he was blind.

The young girl followed him.

"He's broken down," said Mrs. Douglas in a voice full of tears and awe, "and he don't want you to see him cry. Just excuse me—please—a minute—he's my husband."

And she, too, left the room, and Celestia was alone, but not for long. Her quick ear caught the sound of a stealthy movement.

"You, Freddie," Sweetzer had said, "if you drop eyes on that girl, you bring her to me—understand? There's money in it," and he added, with a kind of fierce jocosity, "bring her dead or alive." But Freddie the Ferret had understood only the words and not the jocosity. So, when, with his usual bull luck he found the object of his search, right in the parlor of his very own father's house, he cast about for a weapon with which to subdue, or, if necessary, kill her. There was money in it.

When Celestia turned and saw him he had in his right hand a heavy table leg and upon his half-witted face a scowl of the utmost ferocity.

"Don't be afraid," said Celestia, calmly. "I won't hurt you."

And that was almost the last thing that Freddie's vaguely working mind expected her to say. "She," he thought, "ought to be afraid of me. I am a man; she is a girl. I have a club; she hasn't. I am to take her to Sweetzer, dead or

alive. I can crack her head like an egg. So why does she tell me not to be afraid? Why does she say she won't hurt me? Maybe she's got a gun. Maybe she knows something."

All the while her magnificent, compassionate eyes held him spellbound. He heard something fall heavily to the floor. He looked to see what it was. It was his club. He tried to pick it up, but seemed to lack the necessary muscular control.

"What's your name?" asked Celestia.

"Freddie Douglass."

"Do you belong in this house?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then we must be friends, because I belong here, too."

"You going to live with us?"

Celestia nodded.

"Honor bright?" asked Freddie suspiciously.

"Honor bright," smiled Celestia.

It was then no longer necessary for Freddie to take sudden action. If Celestia was going to live on in the same house it would be a simple matter at some more propitious moment (when she wasn't looking at a fellow, for instance) to turn her over to Sweetzer.

Nevertheless, it seemed to Freddie that the matter required thought, and he slunk off to do that very thing. It wasn't easy for him to think.

It required time and luck. He had less good luck at thinking than at anything else.

He started along one path of thought, and just when he ought to have been getting somewhere, some other path would entice him, or he'd turn aside for a moment, or sit down to rest, and by the time he was ready to start again he was very likely to have forgotten which way he had been going.

But sometimes he was lucky, and in a flash he would think out a whole problem to its conclusion. It was as if certain parts of his dull brain were infected with brightness. It was a pity that the dull parts couldn't catch the infection and be bright, too.

His proposition was this: Sweetzer had paid a thousand dollars for Celestia and had lost her. He had said to Freddie in effect: "Get her back. There's money in it." How much money was there in it? Suppose there was so much, how could Freddie turn it into more?

Probably Mrs. Baxter would also pay money to know what had become of Celestia. Freddie knew that his father needed more money to pay the rent, and the bright spots in his brain began to work.

First he went to Sweetzer.

"Well," said Sweetzer.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Freddie, "if I was going to find her. I got a clew."

"Good."

"How much money is there in it?"

"A dollar."

Freddie simply smiled a sad little smile, turned on his heel and started to walk away.

"Hold on, Freddie; I was kiddin' you."

Freddie returned.

"You mustn't kid me. It drives me crazy. I shouldn't wonder if I could find her for (his lips trembled at their own audacity) fifty."

Sweetzer's face did not even show surprise.

"You take me to where she is," he said, "and I'll go you the fifty."

A dull spot on Freddie's brain tried to make him say "All right, come along," but a bright spot suddenly intervened and made him say instead: "All right; I find her sure."

"If you'd asked me that first I could have told you. But now I have forgotten. But it'll all come back to me."

Next Freddie went to Mrs. Baxter's home. A taxicab was drawn up at the curb and the front door was ajar. Freddie simply walked into the house. There were voices in the front parlor. Freddie simply stepped to the heavy portières, which served the front parlor as a door, and stood, listening.

"So help me God, I have told the truth!" Mrs. Baxter was saying, and Freddie judged she was crying.

"So help me, Mister—Mister—what did you say your name was?"

"Barclay."

"Mr. Barclay."

"You see," said Tommy, "I got hold of the cab that you brought her here in. That's how I found that she was with you. I don't know if women like you ever tell the truth, but I am inclined to believe you this time, Mrs. Baxter. Now, where in thunder can that poor child have strayed to?"

"Mr. Barclay, I wouldn't worry if I was you. She came to no harm with me, and I'm as bad as they make 'em."

"You don't know men!" exclaimed Tommy, bitterly.

"I don't know what? What I know about men that you don't know, Mr. Barclay, would fill the latest encyclopedia from cover to cover. Me not know men! I like that."

"Look here," said Tommy, "I believe you do know men and lots of other things. What would you do in my place?"

"I'd offer big money for news of her. Money acts quicker than lightning."

"Why," said Tommy, "I'd give a thousand dollars just to know that she was safe."

Freddie the Ferret stepped into the room from between the portières.

"She's safe," he said, with fine dramatic instinct.

"Safe!" cried Tommy. "Where is she? You've seen her? Who is this young man?"

"He's called Freddie the Ferret," said Mrs. Baxter, "because he often finds things that other people can't. But" (she lowered her voice a little) "he ain't to be always relied on—he's sort of half-witted."

But Freddie's bright spots were all on *qui vive* for once.

"I seen her," he said; "a terrible man was just goin' to baste her over the head with a table leg, but she give him one look, and he beat it."

"Where is she?"

Freddie shook his head.

"She was safe when I last seen her," he said, "but I don't know where she is, and I'd have to hunt for her. Didn't you say you'd give something just to know she was safe?"

"I did," said Tommy, "but I don't know she's safe. You find her and take me to her and you shall have a thousand and more, too."

"You'll get twenty-five from me," exclaimed Mrs. Baxter, "poor as I am."

A bright spot in Freddie's brain made the following calculation: \$50 plus \$1,000 plus \$25

equals \$1,075, and more, too. A dull spot was for saying:

"Come along. I know where she is." But, as before, a bright spot intervened.

"Where can I find you quick?" said Freddie.

Tommy gave him his card.

"All right," said Freddie, "you'll hear from me soon," and he swung importantly out of the room.

He had a new proposition now: how to take Sweetzer, Mrs. Baxter and Mr. Barclay all to Celestia at the same time, so that he could get all the money. This new proposition required very patient thinking, and he walked on and on without considering in the least where he was going.

After a long time he sank down on a bench in Central Park and took a nap. Sometimes he dreamed of solutions to difficult problems. But he didn't this time. He was waked by a hand on his shoulder.

"Why, Freddie, what are you doin' hereabouts?"

"Dunno," said Freddie. "What you doin', O'Gorman?"

"Me? I'm looking for a beautiful young lady in a white dress, with a band of jewels across her forehead."

Freddie laughed aloud.

"Another!" he exclaimed. "What do you get if you find her?"

"I get a good bit, Freddie, and any one that finds her for me and tells me first gets half of it."

"I can find her," said Freddie.

"You've done queer things. Well, if you do, it's a go. You take me to her and we'll share and share alike."

Then Freddie went down to see if Celestia was still there. She was. He had almost walked his legs off, but he was still game. So he went and fetched Sweetzer and showed Celestia to him through a crack in a door.

"How'll I get her?"

"To-morrow at ten Nelly and ma'll be at work; pa's going to a meetin', and I heard her say she'd stay home and do work."

Not without difficulty Freddie collected the \$50 which Sweetzer had promised him. With even more difficulty he wrote a note to Tommy Barclay, to Mrs. Baxter and to O'Gorman.

He wrote: "Be at my house (and he gave an address) at a few minutes before 10 o'clock, and I'll take you to her."

"FREDDIE THE FERRET.

"P.S.—Bring the money you promised, or I won't."

CHAPTER XI

ALL Freddie's victims except Sweetzer met in part of Freddie's house a little before 10 o'clock. One glance at O'Gorman was enough for Sweetzer. He knew that he had lost out and he slunk off, cursing.

Freddie opened the front door and said:
"Walk in."

They walked in. Then he showed them into the parlor, and there was Celestia.

But she wouldn't go away with Tommy, and O'Gorman had no authority to take her away.

"That's up to the Professor," he said.

But when Stilliter found that she was with good people and wouldn't go with Tommy he was contented to let matters rest where they were, as you shall read.

Celestia's real work had begun. Often upon the lips of the elder Douglas, and always in his heart, was the belief that Celestia was divinely inspired and of divine origin. He would tolerate no other theory from anyone. To Celestia's theory of world reform he listened devoutly and in a humble way.

Mrs. Douglas and Nelly also believed that Ce-

lestia had come from heaven. Freddie, however, knew better. He knew that she came from Mrs. Baxter's, but for some reason or other he did nothing to spread his knowledge. And indeed in his own way he began to worship her.

Friends and acquaintances of the Douglas family came to the home out of curiosity and remained to listen and to wonder. Her effect upon these simple-minded folk was extraordinary. They asked no questions. Her word seemed to them the last word. But when they carried that word to others who had not seen her it was not so convincing always. It was her eyes more than her logic that won minds to her way of thinking.

She looked no longer like a Greek goddess, but like a simple working girl. And yet she remained magically lovely to look at and commanding.

Stilliter, after ten minutes' talk with Mr. and Mrs. Douglas (during a short absence of Celestia), concluded that she could not be in better hands. Indeed, it had been in a similar family that he had intended to place her.

"She says," said Douglas, "that every man jack of us ought to have a real share in the country. That we must treat misery and poverty not as necessary evils, but as epidemics, and stamp 'em out. And I tell you the man who

runs on that platform will get a heap of votes in this district. Nobody ever tries to argue with her. You just listen and believe."

Stilliter reported to Barclay and the other members of the triumvirate. And those who had begun to lose faith in Celestia once more became enthusiastic.

"Don't hurry her any," said Barclay. "Let her doctrines spread from the house she's living in, slowly and naturally, until she has a real following. Then when we do begin to advertise her it will be more effective and cheaper."

"I'm only afraid of one thing," said Stilliter. "She is interested in that boy of yours, Tommy, and when she is with him she seems to shake her mind almost free from the control that I had been establishing over it all these years. I thought I had made her quite proof against falling in love and all physical temptation. But it seems not."

"Any young man," said Barclay, grimly, "who seems to be making trouble for us will have to be sent away somewhere and kept there."

But Celestia, having begun to make converts, was engrossed in the work and had no longer the leisure, or, indeed, the wish to waste her precious time in philandering with individuals.

When Tommy had finally traced her to the Douglasses he went often to see her, for it was

hard for him to be away from her at all. But, as we Americans say, "She did not give him a good run for his money." She appeared calmly fond of him.

But she was no longer a complete stranger to the world and its ways. She hardly ever "happened" to be alone when he came to see her, and she seemed always on the point of doing something or other in which he could not take part. If he wanted to talk of their adventures together she would draw him into arguments on social questions. But where she succeeded so easily with others she failed with Tommy. The great eyes had no effect on the young man's mind, only on his heart. He loved her more and more, but he did not flinch from telling her that he thought her schemes for the benefit of mankind were impracticable and foolish.

"Why, Celestia," he said, "I don't deny that you've some mysterious power over people, and that if you keep on as you are going you'll end up by making a great, loud noise in the world. But suppose you do get what you want? Suppose that even in time you do elect a Congress, a Senate and a President; suppose you do get the States to amend the Constitution; suppose you do succeed in changing the whole country into a gigantic trust—what of it?"

"Can't you see that you will be hurting the

people instead of helping them? Can't you see that the men who run your great trust, my respected father among them, will become the greatest autocrats the world has ever known? Can't you see that you would simply be playing into the hands of capital?"

Celestia simply smiled on him and shook her head.

"I can convince anybody but you," she said.

"I can't convince you, and I don't know why."

"That's too easy," said Tommy. "You don't convince anybody by logic or argument. They just naturally believe you. You've got some way of making them believe you. I think you're a sort of witch. I think you are way up in magic. But you can't hypnotize me, young lady, and you know it, and it annoys you. Do you know why you can't? I do.

"If there was any part of my heart and soul that didn't love you faithfully and true, you'd have power over me, just as you have over Freddie the Ferret and old man Douglas. But there isn't—not the least smallest fraction of a square inch. You can't hypnotize the man that truly loves you any more than you could hypnotize the man you truly love. That's a well-known law."

Tommy was half in earnest, half joking.

"I don't know what you are talking about,"

said Celestia, "and it doesn't matter. And now——"

"Please don't send me away," said Tommy. "It's the first time we've been alone in ages, and I've got millions of things to tell you and millions of other things to—well, to look at you. Celestia, do you know you are more beautiful dressed like a working girl than you were dressed as an angel?"

"It's quite impossible, of course, but it's absolutely true. You are the most beautiful thing in the world, and probably the most obstinate. By George! I wish I could hypnotize you and convert you to my doctrines."

"Tommy," said Celestia, "you talk more nonsense than anyone in the world. I don't believe you've any brains at all. But if you've really got a million things to say to me, you'll have to say them walking. I'm going to the shop where Nelly works to talk with the girls."

"They don't vote," said Tommy.

"They don't hope, even," said Celestia; "and so I am going to tell them to be of good heart, for they shan't always be poor and unhappy."

"Well, it'll be a treat for them to look at you and hear your voice. And can I come?"

"You can come as far as the building, but you can't come in."

"Can I wait till you come out and fetch you home?"

Nelly worked on the fifth floor of an old-fashioned firetrap belonging to the Octagon Shirt Manufacturing Company. The business was not making a great deal of money and the building was heavily insured. Celestia parted from Tommy in the street.

"Won't there be a row," he asked, "if you interrupt work to make a speech, or can you make yourself heard above the sewing machines and the smell of patchouli? Or do you go from girl to girl and whisper in each one's ear?"

"I have to pay for a chance to speak to them," said Celestia; "ten dollars a minute for ten minutes."

"Look here," said Tommy. "Where do you get all your money?"

"From people who think I can use it better than they can—from people who believe in me, Tommy."

She smiled on him as upon a child, and he saw her running lightly up the first flight of narrow wooden stairs, until she was lost in the squalid darkness of the place.

Tommy paced the narrow sidewalk like a sentinel on duty. Now and then he looked upward at the long line of fifth-floor windows and thought how high they were from the ground

and how dirty. He wondered if Celestia had begun to speak yet. The building was so old and foul-looking that he began to be afraid she would "catch" something. He wondered if the shirts he himself wore were made in some such sweatshop. The mere thought made him itch.

He looked at his watch.

"She said ten minutes," he thought, "and she's been gone fifteen. She must come soon now." After that he paced the sidewalk no longer, but stood so that he could watch the stair up which she had vanished.

A couple of young men entered the building. They passed under a sign which said, "Positively No Smoking," and Tommy was annoyed to observe that both were smoking cigarettes. One threw aside his cigarette, still lighted; the other kept on smoking, and they passed out of sight up the stairs.

Tommy entered the building and stamped on the cigarette butt until it was out. Then he returned to the sidewalk. Then he began to fidget and worry.

"It's a flagrant violation of the rules," he thought. "It ought to be reported. Why, this place would go like a piece of fat pine. It wouldn't be burning, it would be more like an explosion."

He fidgeted some more, and then he made a sudden resolution.

"I'll report these two cubs to the manager," he said. "And if he doesn't seem properly interested I'll make things hot for him."

So Tommy entered the premises of the Octagon Shirt Company and began to look for the manager. Some people said he was in such and such a place, and others didn't know. But a girl who seemed to be dying of consumption said that Mr. Grady had just stepped up to the fifth floor, where the sewing machines were, with a young lady.

At once Tommy pictured this Grady as greasy and bediamonded and hated him. Also, so strong was his imagination, he imagined that he smelt smoke.

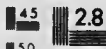
At the opposite end of a long, dark room Celestia's lovely, earnest face seemed to shine like a light. She was speaking very softly and gently, but every word was distinctly audible even to the furthest pair of ears. It seemed to Tommy that the room contained hundreds of girls and hundreds of sewing machines.

As a matter of fact there were almost a hundred of each. Near Celestia stood a dark, stoutish man with a pencil over one ear. "Grady," thought Tommy, and hated him less, for although the man was greasy and did wear something that looked like a diamond in his neck-tie, there was a kind of reverent expression upon his coarse, hard face.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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Celestia was just finishing when Tommy entered. She finished, and there was no sound whatever in the room. Then one girl left her place and went slowly toward her, others followed, until as many as could be were crowded closely about Celestia and Grady.

They wanted to look at her closely, too, if only for once in their poor, sordid lives. To some it seemed that even to touch her hand would be a happiness to remember always. What had she done to them? They didn't know. But such of them as had been on the verge of despair—and these were not a few—felt hope warming in their hearts. They must toil on for a while yet, and suffer and long for light, for ease, for health, but in time all would be well. She had said so, and they believed her.

As for the man Grady, she had looked into his eyes just oncé, and he, too, believed. But dark thoughts tormented him. There were upon his conscience—for one had just been born in him—many sins of hard-heartedness, brutality and work. In that building there was not one girl whose life he might not have lightened a little if it had pleased him.

It had pleased him to do the reverse. Suddenly he felt moved to take the whole world into his confidence and to promise amends to those whom he had injured.

"Girls," he said, in a loud, strong voice, "just

one or two words, please. I don't know what the talk we've been listening to has done to you. But it got me. I charged this—I don't know whether to say Lady or whether to say Angel—a big price for the privilege of speaking to you for ten minutes.

“I want to say, first of all, that it won't cost her a cent. And if she needs money to carry on her good work in this world she can have my pile. But that's not all I've got to say. Be a little patient. Don't crowd her so. If I'm any judge of faces she won't go without letting the last least one of you touch her hand.

“Girls, I've been a slave-driver so long that I got hardened to the work. If there was ever any kindness in me it seemed to me I had to stamp it out to get results. I've driven you and driven you till you hate me and fear me, and till you can't call your souls your own. I might have been different and got the work done just the same. But I wasn't.

“Well, I'm going to be. She said things would get better some time. They're better right this minute. Can't you feel the difference? Can't you feel that I'm sorry for the things I've said to you and done to you? I tell you I'm ashamed. I don't know what keeps me from sinking down through the floor. The hardest things I've got to say comes next. Some of you

girls know me for a hard, cold-hearted man. Is there any girl here who can say worse than that of me?"

He paused as if waiting for a reply. Then he went on:

"Well, there is one girl here who could say worse than that of me, if she would. But she won't. She won't squeal. So I'll have to do the squealing. Molly Bryan! Step forward, please, Molly Bryan. I've something to say to you that I want your friends and well-wishers to hear."

Very slowly a slender girl with tragic, haunted, dark eyes came forward.

"Stand alongside of me, Molly, and turn so's everybody can see you. Some of you," he went on, "have known Molly for a long time. Was there ever a better-hearted friend, or a cheer-fuler worker? Look at poor Molly now! She looks as sad as the East River on a winter day. It's no news to any of you, or I wouldn't go into it.

"But Molly's got no big brother, nor no heavy-fisted father to look after her. All she had was herself to look after herself and a heart that trusted everybody. And you know as well as I do, as well as she does, what's come over her eyes, that used to be so bright and smiling, to make them look the way they do. Look here——"

He took a much-crumpled paper from his breast pocket.

"Girls," he said, "this here is a license for me and Molly to get married. It's four months old now, but it's a perfectly good license; in perfectly good working order. I fooled her with it. That's what I did——"

He turned abruptly to the girl at his side.

"I don't ask you to forgive me now, Molly, not this moment, I don't, not till I've made good with you by kind words and thoughtful deeds. But I do ask you to step out with me right now to the office of the nearest magistrate, and—and I'll always be good to you."

Celestia stepped swiftly forward, took the girl's thin, pretty face between her two hands and kissed her.

"I know you'll be happy," she said.

After Celestia, many others, some crying with excitement, came forward to kiss Molly and wish her well. And then the manager made Molly take his arm, and he led her the length of the room, looking proud and manly, and out of the door.

They passed very close to Tommy, and of course he could have stopped them and told them about the two young men smoking cigarettes, but he didn't. The scene which he had just witnessed seemed to have wiped the matter from his mind.

As for Celestia, she seemed to have disappeared under a wave of girls, and Tommy turned on his heel and moved toward the door with the intention of waiting for her outside the building, where she had told him to wait.

He had his hand on the door knob and had started to pull the heavy zinc-swathed door open when, from the outskirts of the crowd, a very young, sick-looking girl said suddenly, in a loud, piercing voice:

"I smell smoke! I smell smoke!"

There was a dead silence. And then another voice spoke:

"It's coming through the floor. Look at it! Look at it!"

Tommy, a sudden great dread in his heart, hurried toward Celestia. He had traversed half the length of the room when the girl who had spoken first screamed at the top of her lungs, "Fire! Fire!"

Others took up the cry, and upon the instant pandemonium broke loose. Wild with fear and excitement, girls ran this way and that, screaming and howling. Sewing machines were overturned, girls fell and were trampled on in the rush for the door, the room's sole exit. Tommy was almost knocked down.

There was no longer any doubt that the building was really on fire. Just how the smoke got

into the sewing-machine room you could not see, but there was plenty of it—enough to make Tommy cough and to fill his eyes with tears. Celestia, after a desperate effort to calm the girls, had not moved. It seemed almost as if she was waiting for Tommy to come and get her.

“Come, Celestia,” he said, “let’s get out of this.”

As he spoke a billow of smoke shot up between two planks, and for the first time the crackling of burning wood could be heard.

By this time really horrible things were happening at the pine-bound door. It opened inward. The first girl to reach it had flung herself against it, of course, and tried to make it open outward. That same girl now looked as if she was trying to climb over the top of it.

The pressure of her frenzied companions had lifted her head and shoulders above them, and it was doubtful if there was any life left in her.

The noise those poor girls made was frightful. They were maniacal with terror. They screamed that the door had been locked, they yelped, they bit, scratched, hit and pushed, pushed, pushed to get at that door.

Tommy tried to fight his way to it. He intended to get to it and fight the girls back from it so that it could be opened. It seemed to him

a matter of life and death that he should do this, and I'm afraid he wasn't very gentle, and didn't stick very closely to the rules of chivalry. He was very rough, and he used every ounce of his strength. But those girls, wrought upon by terror, were as if made of steel and wire, and it seemed as if they thought that their one chance of safety was to keep Tommy away from the door. One young girl, screaming at the top of her lungs, hit him again and again between the eyes with her clenched fist, another flung her arms around his neck and tried to twist his head off.

He forced his way to the middle of the crowd, and then he had to give up. It was all he could do to fight his way out again.

The other end of the room was in flames. Through the soles of his shoes Tommy knew that the whole floor was burning on its under side.

A glance at Celestia filled his heart with pity that was almost intolerable. She, too, it seemed, had gone mad with terror. Along the walls of the room were many fire buckets half full of water. Celestia had caught up one of them and was running toward the struggling mass of humanity around the door. But Celestia had not gone mad. She was excited, but her mind was still capable of putting two and two together.

She hurled the contents of the bucket into the

thick of the crowd, and raced off for another. The effect of that sudden, hard shower of cold water was extraordinary. It seemed to change the psychology of the crowd from fear of fire to fear of water.

Tommy, perceiving this, instantly himself caught up a bucket and began to fling water on the crowd, and between them they began to clear a way to the door. But the fact that the floor was beginning to burn through helped.

Tommy got to the door at last and dragged it open. That started another stampede that had to be controlled with more water and with more violence. But gradually Tommy at the door and Celestia in the crowd began to bring a little order out of the chaos, and to herd the girls through the doorway like sheep—not too many at a time.

Twice there was a jam, but Tommy straightened the half-witted girls out, hurrying one and warning another. He was too busy to see what Celestia was doing, but he called to her from time to time.

It had been a slow business, and by now the floor was burning clear through in many places, so that some of the last girls to pass through the door to safety went with burned feet.

“Hurry, Celestia,” called Tommy. “We can go now.”

She did not answer.

He saw her at a window struggling to open it. She was, you may say, on a little island of floor surrounded, well not by a sea of flames, but by a strongly rising tide thereof.

"This way, Celestia! For God's sake don't jump!"

And he ran to her across the smoking and burning floor. As he reached her a portion of the floor over which he had just passed fell in with a crackling, crashing sound, and through the aperture flame and smoke roared upward as from the crater of a volcano.

Celestia had not succeeded yet in opening the window. As Tommy reached her she staggered and fell into his arms.

He turned with her toward the door and groaned like a thing that had been hurt to death. Escape that way looked impossible.

Supporting Celestia with one arm he succeeded in opening the window. The crowd in the street below saw them and a kind of groaning and lamentation arose.

Celestia began to revive.

Tommy had turned his back to the window. Not until the last moment would he let her jump, and then only to escape a more shocking death. Meanwhile his heart beat strongly and he pressed her closer and closer to his breast as if he thought as they had at best but a few min-

utes to live he must make her understand how much he loved her. Speech could not help much.

And of speech he had not in those moments any great command. So he pressed her close to his breast and kissed her upon the eyes and the mouth, and murmured and murmured over her.

"Oh," he thought, "if only she could love me, could let me know she loved me before the end."

It seemed to him that he couldn't die, that he mustn't die without her knowing that.

Then a sudden and more practical thought came into his head. If he was to die, he must die trying to save her. Then she would understand. He looked about him wildly, and his eyes fell upon a great roll of black and white striped material for making shirts. Leaving Celestia leaning against the wall near the open window, he made a dash for the shirting and the fire buckets that still contained water.

It was his notion to wrap Celestia in the wet stuff, to take her in his arms, and carry her safe to the door, and to that safety which still seemed to exist beyond.

By some strange freak of the fire there was still quite a large area of flooring surrounding Celestia as yet unburned. But between that and the door, to make the crossing, seemed to offer but one chance in a hundred.

The one who was carried might live to tell the tale. The one who did the carrying could hardly hope for so much. He would be so badly burned that although he might be alive when he reached the street, he would not live long thereafter.

It takes many words often to tell of what happens in a few instants of time. From the first cry of fire to the time when Tommy had wrapped Celestia in the wet shirting, and was preparing, you may say, to wade through hell for her, was only a few minutes.

The last girls to leave the sewing-machine room had only just reached the street. Fire engines were still coming. The crowd that watched the conflagration was still growing.

"Now for it," thought Tommy, and to Celestia he shouted (he had to shout to make himself heard):

"Don't be afraid, dear. I'm going to get you out of this."

And he gathered her strongly in his arms, pictured out with swift eyes what appeared to be the best route through the flames, drew one great, long breath of fresh air, and just then another piece of flooring fell in, and Tommy saw the narrow hallway beyond the door burst suddenly into a perfect hell of fire.

He was too late by a matter of instants.

If he had not wasted those precious instants in kissing her he might have saved her. The agony of soul that he went through with this realization was frightful. Death by fire seemed almost too good for such a fool.

Then suddenly it seemed as if his mind broke and that he had gone mad, for he began to shout and laugh all at once.

Had he gone mad?

Or hadn't he?

Tommy had not gone mad. From the great roll of shirting material he tore enough broad strips to reach to the sidewalk, knotted them together, made a double bowline (which is almost as easy to sit in as a chair), made Celestia sit in it, swung her out of the window, and lowered her to safety. His own escape was not so easy, for every moment the fire gained upon him, and he was unconscionably scorched, while making the upper end of his line fast. A moment after he reached the sidewalk the line burned through and fell.

Tommy was so dazed that when a reporter asked him what his name was, he told him, and all his friends had the pleasure of reading about the rescue in the afternoon papers.

Barclay and Stilliter were very much disturbed, and Mary Blackstone was so furious with jealousy that she succeeded in making

Fitch, who was with her when she read the paper, furious and jealous too. But he kept this to himself.

Mary was not only angry with Tommy and Celestia, but she was angry with herself.

"It was in my power," she thought, "to pull that minx's claws. Tommy brought her here, and I refused to take her in. I was a fool. It's natural enough that in a surrounding of common laboring girls she should shine out like a superior being. She *is* good-looking; there's no doubt about that. And she's probably got a magnetic voice, and knows how to roll her eyes and make men feel sorry for her.

"And so she's made a fool of Tommy. But put her among the kind of people *he's* used to and see how she'll bear that comparison! When he sees her trying to eat oysters with a spoon, for instance, and mistaking father's butler for the President of the United States—if I'd only taken her in for a few days and asked people to meet her!—— I wonder if it's too late now?"

The more she thought along these lines the less she thought that it was too late to do anything. Celestia's address, owing to the notoriety of the Octagon fire, was now common knowledge, and without any exact plan Mary determined to visit her—as a preliminary to disillusioning Tommy.

She confided this idea to no one.

Six months of persistent love making could not have advanced Tommy's cause as far as had one lighted cigarette butt thrown into a pile of greasy rags.

She, the messenger from heaven, had been saved from a hideous death, not by any direct intervention of Heaven, but by the ready wit and strong hands of a young man who did not believe in her, or her cause, but merely loved her.

During those moments when it had seemed as if death could not be put off, Celestia had thought very little about saving the world and making it happier.

Like any other young girl in the same situation she had thought principally of saving her own skin. And remembering that this had been so, she could not but be a little shaken as to her own powers and worthiness.

She believed herself a human being for the time she should remain on earth! But not a human being born of human parents.

In heaven she had been all celestial, and would be celestial once more when she returned to heaven. She had merely been changed temporarily into a human being by the Divine Will for Divine purposes. That was what she believed, with the complete faith of a little child.

The Octagon fire did not really shake Celes-

tia's faith in herself, her origin or her destiny, but it set her to asking questions. What line must she draw between herself as a human being and herself as a celestial?

Already certain pains of this earth and certain pleasures had been thrust upon her. She had not been able to prevent the fire or to escape its terrors.

No more could she keep her heart from beating a little quicker whenever she thought of Tommy. How long was she to be a human being? Until her work was done—a few years at best. She would have to eat, and to drink and to sleep. What other indulgences could she grant herself? Only such as would not interfere with her work. Is the best work done on a minimum of pain or pleasure or a maximum?

If she had to love all men, was there one whom she must not love more than all the others put together? Had Douglas, before he broke his arm, worked better or worse because he had a loving and faithful wife? Why far better, of course! He had indeed at one time been in the drinking way, but a pair of eyes, you wouldn't have thought them especially bright or blue, but he did—had saved him.

Already Tommy had helped her with her work. If only by the fact of saving her life so that she could work. If he could be always

near her, wouldn't he be always helping? And she couldn't answer any of these questions satisfactorily.

There were two voices in her mind. One kept saying, "Let yourself go—love him—it's all right," while the other kept saying, "Of course you are human for the moment, but you have no right to be as other humans are. You mustn't let one man displace from your heart that love of the whole world which it contains."

Of one thing only she was sure—that she would decide nothing until she was sure that her decision was right. But this begging of the question for the time being did not seem to have a silencing effect upon Tommy himself.

CHAPTER XII

A MAN, erroneously, assumes certain rights or claims upon a certain woman. If she won't be his, at least she ought to be, because he saw her first, or he was first to love her, or he intervened in her behalf and saved her from something or other—in the case of Celestia, Tommy had saved her from death. Also he had been the first to see her, and the first to love her.

"Celestia," he said to her one day (his hands still in bandages from superficial burns), "if only to be logical and consistent, you ought to marry me. I know that you are absolutely sincere in the belief that you are going to make the whole world happy. I'm a small part of the world. Unless you make me happy—and you don't show any symptoms of doing that—you can't possibly succeed, can you?"

Celestia considered, half smiling. Then she said, wholly smiling:

"What did you mean the other day when you said merely to look at me, merely to breathe the same air I breathed, merely to hear the sound of my voice, was happiness for you?"

"Oh, Celestia," he said, hopelessly, "there's

no answer to questions like that. Those are the things that a man just has to say to the girl he loves. I don't know why he has to say 'em, but he does. They are the truth and not the truth. It's heaven just to look at you. Yes, it is. And in the moment of looking it's hell to think that maybe you are never going to love me and belong to me."

"But marriage," she said more gravely, "is a whole life's work in itself. And already I've a whole life's work cut out for me."

"Celestia," said Tommy, "you are so wonderful I believe you could do two whole life's works at once. I do. And I—well, maybe I could manage one on my own account; but it wouldn't be work. It would be doing things I just couldn't help doing—loving you and trying to make you happy."

"Tommy," said Celestia, "if now, when we are not even engaged——"

"I am."

—"not even engaged to be married, you exert yourself in every way to keep me from going about among the people and telling them how the world may be made a better state, try in fact to keep me all to yourself, how would it be if we were married? I've got to go the way I have been sent to go, and you, with the law on your side, and all the traditions of a man's

rights in marriage, would try to prevent me——”

“What if I promised not to?”

“You’d have to promise that.”

“I want you so,” exclaimed Tommy, “that I’ll promise anything. Will you marry me?”

“I don’t know, Tommy, dear,” she said.

He drew a long breath, rose and walked to the window.

“I think not,” said Celestia, and then noting the really tragic expression upon the young man’s face, she added, “But sometimes I think I’d like to.”

It had been found necessary to install a telephone in the Douglas house, on account of the swiftly spreading range of Celestia’s engagements.

This was now heard ringing and a moment later Freddie the Ferret interrupted them to say that someone wanted to speak with Mr. Barclay.

Tommy returned from the telephone looking still more dejected.

“I expected to stay all afternoon,” he said, “and help you with your mail; but it seems that my father wants to see me very urgently and I suppose I’ve got to go?”

“Of course you have,” said Celestia cheerfully.





"Perhaps my life, which I owe to you, is such a debt"

"Freddie," said Tommy, "I neglected to hang up the receiver, will you do it?"

It was sometimes hard to get rid of Freddie.

When the Ferret had gone out, Tommy made one last appeal to Celestia, going very close to her and speaking swiftly in a low voice.

She heard him out gravely, and at the end of his impassioned pleading shook her head still more gravely.

"When I know what is right for me to do," she said, "then I'll tell you. And what I tell you will be final. There are some debts that people have no right to pay. Perhaps my life, which I owe to you, is such a debt. I don't know.

"But I know this, that if you want to go on seeing me, you mustn't make love to me any more. It makes it so much harder for me to think clearly. Some morning I shall wake up knowing what I ought to do, and if I wake up knowing that I ought not to marry you, then, of course, I won't."

Tears gathered in her eyes, and she added: "Even though it broke my heart. Now go."

"May I come back when I've seen my father?"

"If you'll be good, Tommy."

So Tommy promised, very elaborately and at length, to be good, and in the act of promising

broke his promise several times and hurried to see his father.

In spite of their recent differences of opinion, and Barclay's long series of disappointments in Tommy, they met with perfect friendliness, and as if there had never been any trouble between them. Barclay opened the conversation with a laughing reference to the Octagon fire.

"I used to look for your name on the sporting page of my newspaper," he said, "but now I have to turn to the accounts of socialist meetings and of fires. Was it as close a shave as the paper made out?"

"It certainly was," said Tommy; "it wasn't just twice over; it was five times over, and I didn't think my beard would ever grow again."

"How did the famous Celestia behave?"

"Like a brick, except when she fainted after getting all the other girls out."

"I am very interested to see her," said Barclay, "and to hear her speak."

Mr. Barclay paused; then he said: "By the way, talking of seeing your exploit in print, I noticed a picture of you and the young lady, sitting in the center of a wreath."

"Yes," said Tommy, blushing a little. "The girls in the factory insisted on giving it to Celestia to show their gratitude for saving them."

"Well," the older man continued, "a friend

of mine heard her speak to the Shirtmakers' Union after the fire, and came away talking like a lunatic. How does she impress you?"

As a speaker?"

Barclay smiled and nodded, Tommy blushed and did not smile.

"She has a beautiful voice," he said; "she seems to speak to one person at a time until everyone has been spoken to. The most interesting part is her power of convincing people. Men whom I have known to have had opposite theories seem to come right around to her way of thinking."

"You?" suggested Barclay.

"No. She doesn't seem to alter my beliefs at all."

"She claims to have been sent direct from heaven. Do people believe that?"

"The mass of the people who have heard her don't even question it. Personally I question it very much. But if the police of the city can't find out where she does come from pretty soon, I'll begin to believe it myself."

"She believes it—of course." Barclay said this with a sarcasm which his adopted son was quick to resent.

"I will stake my soul, sir," he said, "that she believes it."

"But you don't, and you don't believe in her

crusade. What is her idea—the usual thing? To destroy all existing conditions, lump the money, divide up, and begin all over again?"

"No," said Tommy, laughing. "That's what you think my idea is. Celestia isn't for destroying large fortunes (indeed, some of them might become even more swollen if her doctrines became law). She believes that there is enough wealth in the country to make all the inhabitants clean and comfortable if we could do away with the waste of money; if, in other words, the United States were run to make money instead of to spend it. Plausible, isn't it? And absurd."

"Why absurd? I have no quarrel with her theory."

"Of course not. You'd be one who would have to profit by it willy-nilly."

"The absurd part is to think that the great American people can be made to execute so drastic a change in their laws—with the politicians of all parties crying calamity. You see, Tommy—thinkers can only work as long as they can think, but politicians can and do work all the time. But there is more to this young woman than I had imagined. You say she has a following?"

"That grows by leaps and bounds."

Barclay appeared to be somewhat impressed.

He did not speak for some moments, but studied the chandelier and tapped his knee with an ivory letter opener. Then he turned once more to Tommy, and asked him a question.

"Where do you come in?"

"I'm very fond of her," said Tommy, simply.

"Hum!"

"Perhaps I should put it more strongly."

"Do you mean that you are paying her serious attentions?"

"In so far as she will receive them."

"I am very sorry," said Barclay.

"I'm sorry that you are sorry."

"If at your age," said Barclay, "I had found myself seriously in love with a girl in her station of life, I should have had pity on her."

"You haven't understood. I wish to marry her."

"I understood perfectly. But your friends are not going to recognize her as their equal. You can never feel upon terms of real equality with her associates."

"We should have each other."

Barclay laughed harshly.

"Have you any idea how long the love of the average young couple is sufficient to itself? Hate, jealousy, greed—those are enduring passions, but love has almost as much constitution as an orchid."

"There are exceptions."

"You have no right to try to prove that at the expense of someone you think you love, or at the expense of someone who for many years has been enduringly fond of you."

He smiled very kindly.

"Yourself, sir!"

"Myself. Better go away, Tommy. It will hurt, but not for long. Why not take a few friends for a cruise? I'll send you round the world, if you like. You can hobnob with Maharajas and Malay potentates, catch mahseer, shoot tigers, race elephants——"

"Don't you think I'm old enough to know my own mind?"

"How about her career? She seems to be doing good in the world. Few are. You don't want to spoil her life."

"Oh, it's no use arguing," said Tommy, rising. "I must marry her—if she will have me. Even if I thought it wrong and unfair, I am no longer a free agent."

"How will you support her?"

"Why——"

Barclay shook his head. He was still smiling.

"You've had a great deal of money to spend. What have you saved?"

"I'm not a mouse," said Tommy, "and you are not a cat. You are cutting me off because

you honestly think it will be for my good. Well, God knows I don't know how to make a living, but I can try."

"Whenever you change your mind about Celestia, or give me a definite promise that you will not try to marry her, I shall be more than glad to put you once more upon your old footing."

"Well," said Tommy, "we have had a good many differences of opinion, but we've never quarreled, have we?"

He held out his hand.

"My hat off," said Barclay, "to the best sportsman I have ever known."

But in his heart he thought that Tommy would very soon tire of earning a living, and his word went forth to the effect that he would not look with approval on any institution which should offer salaried employment to Thomas Barclay. And from one institution to another this word spread like rumor.

But Tommy did not at once look for employment. Of course that, considering how difficult it is to find employment, would have been the sensible thing to do. But he did what a lover would do. He went at once to look for Celestia.

Meanwhile no less important a person than Mary Blackstone had looked for Celestia and

found her. Descending from a twelve thousand-dollar car of foreign make, she had rung the front door bell of the Douglas house and been admitted by Freddie the Ferret, whose chief pleasure in life it had become to be ever as near Celestia as possible, to do chores for her and to run errands.

"You want to see her?" asked Freddie.

"Celestia? Yes."

"Step right in."

He ushered her into a front room where Celestia was busy at a table covered with papers.

"High-flyer to see you," announced Freddie, and withdrew.

Celestia rose and came shyly forward. She did not know her visitor by name. She had never seen her before. But something told her that the slim, beautiful dark girl in the tailor-made suit was not altogether a stranger.

"Should I have made an appointment?" asked Miss Blackstone.

"Surely not. This is much simpler. Won't you sit down?"

Mary was careful to choose a chair which stood with its back to the light.

"I came," she said, "upon a most delicate errand."

"Yes."

"We have a mutual friend——"

"Mr. Barclay."

"How did you guess?"

"None of my friends would be at all likely to be a friend of yours, too. All my friends in this world, so far, are either poor people or laborers."

"All but Mr. Barclay."

Celestia nodded.

"I've come to speak to you about him. He has as you know a great future before him. He is the idol of his father's heart, and one of the best-loved young men in New York. His friends very naturally—please don't misunderstand me—it's nothing *against you*—but we've all heard of the melodramatic Octagon fire rescue, and we all know how susceptible he is to romance and beauty and—you are beautiful. Do you mind if I say that? You are perfectly beautiful——"

"But I belong to a different station in life than this mutual friend of ours who is so susceptible to romance and beauty, and you have come to beg off for him with arguments about blasted prospects and ruined careers and social ostracism."

Though Celestia spoke with great gentleness, Miss Blackstone was for a moment greatly taken back. But recovering, she laughed good-naturedly and said:

"You are not only beautiful but clever. You read me like a book. And this being so, you must see just as clearly as I that it *wouldn't do*."

"But suppose——"

"Think of his future, my dear girl. Let him off!"

"Suppose he doesn't want to be let off?"

"Of course he won't want to be let off—till afterward."

"Why couldn't I make him a good wife?"

"You are too sensible to ask questions like that. You couldn't expect his friends to——"

"Receive me? Perhaps not. And yet I speak a number of languages; I have your word for it that I have good looks. At table my chief weapon is a fork. I am young and healthy, and I haven't been long enough in this world to have a past. Am I so utterly different then from other people in society? Is it against me that I work hard and feel that I have a mission in life?"

"Perhaps."

"If I am to let him off you must give me a better line of reasoning than maybes and perhapses. What if my whole happiness was bound up in him; his in me? If I told you that we were already married——"

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Mary.

"Don't worry," said Celestia, "we are not. But I am certainly not going to give him up on the grounds that I am not his social equal."

"Your motives will always be under suspicion. Don't you know that you are a penniless girl, and that he will be worth millions?"

"He never told me that," said Celestia, "but so much the better. Honesty is the most useful thing in the world and next comes money."

"But to marry for money!" Miss Blackstone expressed contempt in every line of her firmly cut mouth. Celestia said nothing and looked amusedly inscrutable.

"If he does marry you," said Miss Blackstone, suddenly losing control of her temper at the look on Celestia's face, "people will say it was because he had to. Two can't camp in the North woods without a chaperon and escape malicious talk."

"It would seem so," said Celestia, slowly. And she started to turn very pink and ended by turning white. And there began to burn suddenly in her breast a feeling of which until that moment she had known nothing. Sweet she was, gracious and good. She thought she had been sent by Heaven to help everybody in the world. Nevertheless those sharp, burning pangs which she was enduring were jealousy.

"You love him yourself," she said, quickly, "and so I think I will marry him after all."

"One can't argue except with an equal," said Miss Blackstone, and turned upon her heel.

As she left the house Tommy Barclay was on

the point of entering it. She was so angry that she cut him dead.

He smiled, but not altogether with amusement, for nobody really likes to be cut by anybody, and went in to Celestia.

He expected to find her as usual, friendly, cool, well poised and aloof. She was none of those things. Tears were just going to overflow her eyes and run down her face, and as for being aloof, she no sooner saw Tommy than she ran to him, as a child runs to its nurse, and flung her arms about his neck, and told him that she loved him and would marry him "right away."

Poor Tommy! He held her close and caressed her, and there was a big lump in his throat, and never a word that he could say until at last the meaning of his silence was clear to Celestia, and she tore herself loose from him.

"Now it's you," she cried, "who won't marry me."

"Oh, Celestia!" cried Tommy, "how can I? I haven't a penny in the world!"

A dozen of the most important men in the United States were gathered in Barclay's office upon his urgent invitation. Celestia was already making such a stir in the city among the poor that Barclay and Stilliter had concluded that the time was ripe to try her effect on the rich and efficient.

Only men whom they could trust were present. The last to arrive was Kehr, the coal baron. His word was as good as his bond, and, except that he spent oceans of money on Chinese antiques, he was said to be the stingiest man in Pennsylvania.

Professor Stilliter had been telling of some recent experiments in hypnotism of which he had just received the account from an Arabian correspondent. As Kehr entered he caught the word "hypnotism" and snorted:

"All rubbish!" he exclaimed. "Might's well believe in ghosts or Democrats. I'd like to see anyone hypnotize me!"

After this he shook hands with Barclay and the others, last of all with Stilliter.

"You don't believe in hypnotism," said Stilliter, "because you don't know anything about it. I've got something here, though, that you do know about, none better."

So saying he took from its case that famous crystal of which mention has been made.

"It's not the biggest one in the world," he said, "but it's the best."

Kehr's eyes sparkled, but he only grunted, as he took the crystal into his hand.

"Take it to the light," said Stilliter, and he followed Kehr to the nearest window. Barclay nudged the man nearest him and winked one eye.

"I am not rich," said Stilliter quietly, "but

I will give you a thousand dollars if you can find a flaw or an imperfection of any sort in that crystal."

Kehr brought the crystal so near his eyes that they had to cross to see it, and he began to turn it slowly this way and that. Stilliter kept up a running fire of comment in the same quiet, even tone. Then he said, "Why, you must have had a bad night. You can hardly keep your eyes open; better just let 'em shut and have a little nap."

He reached around Kehr from behind and quickly took the crystal away from them. Then he turned to his audience.

"Did I hear someone say, 'put up job?' I hope not. It wouldn't have been worth while. Why, he was easier to hypnotize than a chicken. Tell the gentlemen how easily you were hypnotized. Turn and face them first, make a little bow. That's a fine fellow. Now then!"

Kehr spoke in a dull, monotonous voice:

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I was easier to hypnotize than a chicken."

"Spoken like a man!" exclaimed Stilliter. Tears of laughter were running down Barclay's face. He wiped them away.

"Some of us do think this is a put up job, Stilliter," he said. "Make him do something more important."

"Well," said Stilliter, "we all know Mr. Kehr for a man who in money matters is conspicuously backward about coming forward. I might make him dance for you, sing for you, eat soap or stand on his head. Still you would think that it might be a put up job. It wouldn't cost him a cent."

He turned to Kehr and in a voice of command said: "Sit down at that desk in the first position of writing."

Kehr obeyed.

"Take a sheet of paper. Ink your pen. Prepare to write. Write as I dictate: Dear Professor, I. O. U. ten million dollars."

Kehr finished and there was a craning of necks to see what he had written. The I. O. U. was passed from hand to hand.

Suddenly Sturtevant broke the silence.

"This," he said, "is only a scrap of paper. It hasn't cost him a cent—yet."

"True," said Stilliter, "well, then," he turned to Kehr.

"Have you any money with you?"

"Yes."

"Say yes, sir."

Kehr did this, and then produced from an inner pocket a thick roll of yellow-backs surrounded by a broad rubber band.

"I think it would be pleasant if you distributed them among the gentlemen present."

He began to do so; when, suddenly, Stilliter waked him.

Kehr looked at what remained of his great roll and his jaw dropped. He stammered. Then his brows knitted and the sweat came.

Stilliter handed him the I. O. U.

"There is no hurry about this," he said, sweetly; "still if you could let me have a couple of million on account."

"It's my writing," said Kehr, "but I don't remember writing it."

He was in agony.

"And still you don't believe in hypnotism?"

"That crystal—I."

He turned a pained, astonished face from one to another.

"You may tear up that I. O. U.," said Stilliter grandly. "But we shall keep the actual cash you have distributed as a souvenir of the occasion."

Just then a door opened quietly, and Barclay's private secretary ushered Celestia into the room. The capitalists rose as one man. It was their homage to dignity and beauty. Barclay stepped quickly forward.

"Thank you for coming," he said. "We are busy men, and it is difficult for us to get to hear

you. But from what I have gathered it seemed to me that we ought to hear you. And now," he smiled with a kind of gentle, old-fashioned gallantry, "I am sure of it."

Her eyes lingered a moment with Barclay's and he looked away. Then, her lips parted in a serene smile, she looked slowly at each of the others.

"You don't look like evil men," she said. "But I have been told that you grind the poor, and that there is no mercy in you. But that's all rubbish, isn't it?"

Rubbish or not, they all looked a little ashamed of themselves.

"Of course you've made mistakes," she went on sweetly, "but that wasn't malice, was it? It was ignorance. For you can't want the poor to remain poor, and the wretched wretched. I have been sent to show you how this great house, which we call the world, may be clean and fit for human beings to live in.

"You shall ask me questions if you don't understand." And then she spoke for a long time, gently and persuasively, looking slowly from face to face, using simple words that children might have understood.

In a far corner of the room Stilliter stood. His eyes never left her, and he looked like a man laboring under a great strain.

The effect of Celestia upon the capitalists was curious. At first they looked cynical and amused, but physically attracted to her. Then they looked interested, and then astorished.

Only Kehr retained his expression of shrewd conservatism. Now and then he asked a terse question, and did not seem convinced by her answers. But to the others, after a while, her answers seemed unanswerable.

"And so," she finished, "I don't ask you to give up anything. You shall even have more if you must. I only ask you to help me with the others—to see that the billions which are wasted sha'n't be wasted—so that through cleanliness we shall do away with disease, and that through the general well-being, every man, woman and child shall have a right to be happy."

"How about the Constitution?" snapped Kehr.

"Some of you," said Celestia, "will sit in the convention which is to write the new constitution."

He gave a hoarse, harsh laugh.

"How about the solid South?"

Celestia shook her head at him as at a pugnacious and pig-headed child.

"We shall have to liquify it," she said. Then, her voice once more grave, and her great eyes sweeping the circle:

"Who is going to help me?" she asked; "we shall need millions—millions in money—millions in brains——"

Barclay stepped swiftly to her side and, with that same smile of gentle, old-fashioned gallantry:

"My dear," he said, "don't worry about that."

And he turned to the others:

"You have heard a new gospel in the world," he said. "If it's a pipe dream I'm crazy. Gentlemen—what she wishes can be done. And if you are with us, it shall be done."

One by one they came forward, like men in a trance, and shook hands with Celestia. All but Kehr.

"Anything to stand in with old friends," he said, "especially when that's the side your bread's buttered on; but if it's a question of believing that what we've listened to is anything but nonsense, you can count me out."

"We'll run you out," said Barclay, "as Senator from Pennsylvania. And you'll do as you're told."

Celestia laughed merrily.

That so great and conservative a man as Barclay should lend the promise of his backing to the doctrines and tenets of Celestia aroused ex-

traordinary interest all over the country, and even in England and on the Continent.

In New York, Barclay was not only a financial but a social leader. Once a year he gave a great ball, to which everybody who was invited went, unless sickness or some other major cause had laid them by the heels. But it is not here a question of Barclay's great ball. Those who looked levelly at him or up to him in a social way felt that he had set the stamp of approval on the girl from heaven, and burned to know her.

Celestia was showered with invitations, most of which she declined. But she did not decline them all. It was her duty, she felt, to convert to her cause all sorts and conditions of men and women, the man who had been born with a golden spoon in his mouth and the man who had been raised with a revolver in his hip-pocket.

Now, although Celestia moved on a calm level of democracy, loving almost all men alike, she found in the ways and houses of the rich more opportunities to be amused and joyous than in the houses of the poor. If the rich were worthless as a class, she had to admit their cleverness in concealing it. And many of them she could not but believe were in love with righteousness. They feted her and made much of her.

She was asked to speak in the ballroom of a great house overlooking Central Park. The in-

itation to do so was instigated by Mary Blackstone, but Celestia did not know this, and the name signed to the note of invitation was one which tempted her to accept. It was a name which above all others stood, in the opinion of the man in the street, for all that is richest and most foolish.

To this function Tommy Barclay was among those invited (all part of Mary Blackstone's plan), but though he yearned to be wherever Celestia was, in spite of their latest quarrel, he was too busy tramping the streets of New York in search of a job to accept. Mary had hoped that among those to the manner born, Celestia, in spite of her genuine good looks and magnetic voice, would appear insignificant if not impossible. She was doomed to disappointment.

Celestia, abandoning for the occasion her work-girl dress, and assuming once more that graceful flowing white garment in which she was first seen (outside of heaven), not only set a new standard of beauty, but started a new fashion in dress, and a kettleful of jealousy among the women.

At the end of the long ballroom—a great space of mirrors, and silk, brocaded with garlands, flowers overflowing baskets and cupids—was a platform for musicians. Upon this, to a great assemblage of fashionable men and

women, all talking at once, Celestia appeared suddenly—and there was silence.

The lovely low-browed face crowned with the strong dark hair, the steady, kind, unfathomable eyes were like a command that had to be obeyed.

Celestia never began at the beginning of a speech. She never started by expressing surprise at being asked to speak, or astonishment at perceiving so many upturned faces. Nor did she start by saying what she was going to talk about when she really did get started.

At the point where Celestia began another would have been half through. She plunged right into the heart of things with a compelling sweetness and seriousness that were irresistible.

Gestures, as a rule, are not to illuminate what is being said, but either to draw attention from the awkwardness and lack of poise of the speaker, or as an outlet to a superfluous energy for which there is no room in the channels of speech.

For the most part Celestia stood with her hands lightly clasped behind her back. She rarely made a gesture of any sort, and never a gesture which for one moment drew attention from her words, her voice, or, indeed, her beauty.

In that crowd of gilded listeners only one heart and understanding was unmoved.

Mary Blackstone had an inkling of the secrets concerning Celestia. She knew that her own

father would not profess to believe a voice that had suddenly risen among the people unless it was to his interest to do so.

And when not only her father professed belief but the man to whom she was engaged and such colossi of the business world as Barclay and Sturtevant, Mary, in the telling American phrase, "began to smell a rat."

If it was to their advantage to believe it was also to hers. Nevertheless, Celestia's arguments and magnetism only served to stiffen Mary's understanding into opposition. For it is almost an axiom that to those whom we hate we are never of easy persuasion.

But the other hearts in that audience went out to Celestia. She gathered hearts as Ellen Terry used to, as Mme. Dusé. And as for the minds in that audience, for there actually were minds, and sound ones, these felt the privilege of having been among the first to realize that a new day might very well be about to dawn upon a dark world.

Men and women there were present who highly resolved that never, never would they do so and so again. Some kept their resolutions for several days; others for long periods of time. Merely the intention of living more wisely and more righteously is not perhaps enough, but God knows it is something.

She finished speaking, her hands dropped to

her sides, and her eyes, well, though they had been open all along, they seemed to open, and she looked almost frightened and puzzled. A roar of applause rose, and in the back of the room Professor Stilliter, who had been under a great strain, wiped the perspiration from his brow.

Celestia came down from the platform very shyly, and the men began to crowd about her and to shake her hand. They crowded about to tell her that they believed her, that her cause was theirs, that when the time came she could count upon them for money and for service.

"But it won't be easy," she smiled. "It's a greater house than this that we have to clean. A hundred years of mistaken laws and customs are not to be swept aside in a day. So, indeed, I shall need your service and your backing and your votes."

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"Celestia's hostess took possession of her"

CHAPTER XIII

CELESTIA'S hostess took possession of her and women forced their way among the men in order to look closer at that simple Greek dress which, worn as Celestia wore it, so put to shame their own bare arms and shoulders and modish costumes. Few men are good witnesses of anything, but many women with the tail of an eye can take away with them not only the material and effect of a costume, but the way it was made. Among the women present Celestia was being copied right and left.

Unfortunately it had been decreed by an elusive Providence that some women shall be shaped like May poles and others like butts of malmsey; still others are shaped like pretzels or question marks, and upon none of these is the costume of the ancient Greeks a thing of beauty. To be tolerable in Greek dress a woman must have a noble look. To look beautiful in it she must also be beautiful.

Most of the women, seeing how the men had crowded about her, copied Celestia and made themselves ridiculous; others carried it off rather well, and still others looked stunning. This may

be said of every fashion that has ever inflicted itself upon the world, and is a truth which, if better realized by woman in general, would be of immense financial service to man in particular.

Among the poor, when she said that she came from heaven, among the unfortunate and the downtrodden, Celestia was taken literally by so many that it staggers belief. We have only to remember that less gifted prophets have succeeded in imposing their divinity on multitudes. About Celestia there was nothing that rang false. She was goodness and sincerity personified.

Among the more sophisticated, the statement of her origin was taken as a figure of speech; not by all, of course, but by a vast majority. "Anything or anyone that is really good for us may be said to have been sent by Heaven," these explained. "She doesn't, of course, mean to imply that she stepped into a fiery eight-cylinder limousine that was waiting for her at heaven's gate and came down through space in defiance of all speed laws.

"But, anyway, it doesn't matter. She's inspired. That's the main thing. Did anyone ever see such eyes or hear such a voice? It will be interesting to see what she will do when she has to go against the politicians," etc., etc.

To pave the way for their ultimate coup d'état it was part of the triumvirate's plan to allay

some of that bitterness which so many of the poor entertain for so many of the rich. So Professor Stilliter, making use of those means which we have so often explained, put it into Celestia's head to go about a good deal among fashionable people.

To the simple-minded, newspaper-read Douglas family it was all but inconceivable that there should be any such qualities as kindness, simplicity and virtue (except perhaps among the servants) in a Fifth Avenue mansion. And they were among Celestia's first converts to a contrary opinion.

"And where are you going to-night, my dear?" asked Mrs. Douglas. "And where did you get such a wonderful cloak? And you've done your hair differently." . . .

Mrs. Douglas and her husband, sitting side by side (they had been holding hands), gazed at Celestia in astonishment. Nelly, who had entered the room just behind Celestia, was flushed with excitement and mystery.

"My dears," said Celestia, "it's a very long story. But first of all you must know that I am going to a ball. And Freddie is going with me."

"Just wait till you see Freddie," exclaimed the Ferret's sister. "You should have observed Celestia fixing his tie," and Celestia smiled at the recollection.

But old Mr. Douglas looked troubled and anxious.

"There's no harm in Freddie," he said presently. "But it's pretty certain that he will bring away something that doesn't belong to him."

"Oh!" exclaimed Celestia. "How unjust. Has Freddie taken anything that wasn't his since I've lived in this house?"

"That he hasn't!" said Mrs. Douglas. "And it's all your doing."

"Freddie is a good boy," said Celestia; "and he is going to be a good man."

"He's got so," said the honest Nelly, "that he don't light a cigarette till he gets around the corner."

"This cloak," said Celestia, "(Isn't it lovely?) isn't mine. It was loaned to me by a very beautiful lady. And so was everything else I've got on."

With heightened color, she threw the cloak back from her shoulders, and showed above an exquisitely simple gown of mauve tulle her dazzling arms and neck.

"It's mufti," cried Celestia, and she did not look so much like a reforming angel as a delighted child.

"Mufti?"

"Perhaps I don't mean mufti. It's a disguise. Nobody is to know who I am. And so

I have to look just the way the other people do. And I'm to look, lea. and listen." . . .

At the expression on the old people's faces she broke off short and then went on in a compassionate voice:

"Oh, my dears, you look as if you were shocked as if you were afraid for me. But there's nothing wrong. Nobody will hurt me. And besides I'm tired of preaching and preaching and preaching. And I think it will be such fun!"

Just then Freddie came in resplendent in full evening dress. He had slicked his hair straight back and flat to his head and he had borrowed a gold (at least it was yellow and shining) watch chain to go across his waistcoat.

Perceiving the state of wonderment into which his respectable parents were thrown by the wonder of his attire, Freddie hummed the opening bars of a delightful maxixe and gave an inimitably grave and graceful exhibition of the steps that went with them.

A born dancer was the Ferret and like many other unbalanced persons he had an exquisite ear for music.

"Celestia," he said, "says she's just goin' to look on. But I'm goin' to dance. These up-to-date dances were danced on the Bowery more'n

a hundred years ago. And there's nobody can do 'em better than me."

If Celestia really thought she wouldn't be recognized she made a great mistake. It would have taken more than a conventional ball gown to disguise the compelling glory of her eyes, and although she did not dance, she was from the moment of her entry the center about which everything revolved, or, better, she was the center about which all the men revolved. Freddie the Ferret was a little center unto himself.

It was whispered about that Celestia had brought with her a genuine Bowery tough, a reformed gunman, and society, always keen for new sensations, proceeded to satisfy its curiosity, but not altogether at the Ferret's expence. A dance hall had always caused his mind to work more consecutively and with more coherence than any other surroundings. Presented to his hostess, Freddie was neither perturbed by her importance nor her diamonds.

"Want to whirl?" he suggested with an engaging smile, and—as Mrs. MacAdam afterward told a friend: "I was so flabbergasted by his cheek that I 'smiled a kind of sickly smile' and went as I supposed to the slaughter. He made me dance better than I ever danced before. At first I kept wondering if my diamonds were safe (of course I keep the originals in safe deposits;

haven't seen them for eight years) and if he had a gun in his hip-pocket.

"Then I began to wonder why it was that I had never before really understood what it means to keep time. Why, it's thrilling! But of course you know. You always keep such beautiful time. And he made me dance all sorts of new steps. And, my dear, he flattered me so, and——"

Here Mrs. MacAdam blushed and laughed at the same time. "Once I bungled something frightfully and nearly went down and what do you think he said? 'You're all right, kid! Cling to popper.' Kid! What do you think of that, at my time of life? I couldn't get angry. I tried a little, but it was no use; I liked it. And when we'd finished, I was struggling to think of something to say, and what do you think I did say?" Here Mrs. MacAdam once more blushed and laughed. "I said, 'The night's young. I hope you'll ask me to spiel again.' He said, 'You're on.' And sure enough he hunted me out for the very next fox trot.

"But by that time all the real kids wanted to dance with him, and we old fogies had to stand aside. Can't you see the modern débutante? For years she's been dressing and painting herself up more and more, and at last she gets a chance to dance with a real gunman. No, he's

never really shot anybody or worn stripes. I wish you could have been there! Some of the men got him in the smoking room and since then everybody talks his language. Mrs. Selden admits that she tried to make him fall in love with her; but she failed.

"He's head over ears in love with this wonderful Celestia person, and small blame to him. She is too lovely. I've never seen a girl stay so long at a dance, herself not dance and look awkward. Of course she was surrounded by men. But she wouldn't talk shop. And do you know she isn't so dreadfully serious. She can make people laugh if she wants to. She wore conventional clothes, and proved once and for all that she can wear anything she likes and get away with it."

The account which Celestia gave of the ball had less to do with dancing.

"The dancing isn't wicked at all," she told the Douglasses. "It's innocent and graceful and good-natured. And the people? They aren't wicked either. They are just like any other people, only they've got more money. It's a great blessing. Some day everybody will have money.

"And all the people I talked to were kind people, who want to do good, and make other people happy, and don't quite know how to set about it. But we are going to show them, aren't we?"

"Freddie was so good! They said he was the best dancer there. He dances a little differently, but better. They all said that. And if only you could have seen the flowers! See, Mrs. MacAdam gave me these roses to bring to you. The house didn't have walls and wallpaper. It was all mirrors and flowers and palm trees!"

Celestia sighed and then laughed at herself for sighing.

"Where's Freddie?" she asked. "Is he still sleeping? I'm going to talk to the Typesetters' Union, and then I am to meet and talk with some of the Independent Workers of the World. And then I am to have lunch with the Bishop of New York. And then, my dears, I'm going to leave you for a while. I'm going to go out to Pennsylvania, where there is a terrible strike, and nobody will listen to anybody. But I'll be back before you know it."

She kissed Mrs. Douglas and hurried out. Celestia was almost always in a hurry now.

Nelly was waiting for her in the hall.

"Are you really going to Bitumen, Celestia?"

"Yes. Really."

"I thought you might like to know that Mr. Barclay is already there."

During his search for work Tommy Barclay returned once to the house where he had lived

for so long in such luxury to get together a few of his personal belongings, but no more than could be carried in a couple of dress-suit cases. From this visit he brought away clothes he required, a picture of his mother, and one, much faded, of the little Amesbury girl.

His evening clothes, his black pearl stud, his tennis and polo cups, everything indeed of real value that belonged to him he left behind. It was his intention to enter the ranks of labor, on an equality with the other laborers, and by dint of sheer determination to work his way up until he should be in a position to support the girl of his choice.

Still, when he had refused the old butler's offer of the savings of half a life time, and heard the doors of the solid old mansion close behind him for perhaps the last time, a lump rose in Tommy's throat, and he went down the steps slowly on feet which already seemed to have lost their buoyancy.

A suit case in each hand, he was turning toward the east side when he was accosted familiarly though respectfully enough by a youngish man in a brand new and very ill-fitting suit of blue serge.

"Are you Mr. Barclay?" asked this one, and, at Tommy's assurance that he was, he jerked his thumb toward a companion and said, "I'm

Gunsdorf. This is Cracowitz." Tommy bowed as politely as to the President of the United States or the Secretary of the Navy, and said:

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?"

"Gordon Barclay won't see us," began Gunsdorf; but Tommy interrupted a little austerely:

"Mr. Barclay won't see you?" he said.

"Are you the two men who have been figuring lately in western Pennsylvania?"

"We are," said Gunsdorf, and Cracowitz nodded vehemently. "Mr. Barclay ought to see us, and if you are his son you can go to him."

"Why ought he to see you?"

"For his own good and ours. We can't do anything with old man Kehr. He's for a fight to the finish. It doesn't matter about us men, but how about the women and children? How about them?"

"Oh, I am on their side always," said Tommy.

"Then you'll fix it so that we can see Mr. Barclay?"

"Mr. Gunsdorf," said Tommy, "were you ever stone broke?"

The question shocked Mr. Gunsdorf into admitting he never had been.

"Well," said Tommy, for the first time smiling, "I am. Mr. Barclay has turned me off without a cent and has disinherited me besides. That shows how much influence I have with him. But

I can tell you this about him: if he has said that he won't see you, he won't."

"We'd about come to that conclusion ourselves," said the miner. "You looked like a last chance."

"All right," said Tommy, "we'll try it," and he beckoned the two to follow. They mounted the steps and were admitted to the house Tommy had just left.

The young man did not wait; he ushered the two straight into his father's presence.

"What's this?" demanded Gordon Barclay.

"These two gentlemen," said Tommy, introducing them, "want to talk about the coal strike. They say——"

The elder man whirled. "Get out!" he shouted. "I won't say a word," and he marched out of the room.

Tommy looked at the men. They nodded. They left together.

When they reached the street Gunsdorf asked:

"What are you going to do, Mr. Barclay, is it manners to ask?"

"I was going to ask your advice," said Tommy. "My wish is to start life as a day laborer."

"Sure? Then you'd better come out to Pennsylvania with us."

"But I want to earn a living. I ought not to

begin my career as a laborer by striking for higher wages, ought I?"

"We can find something better than stone-breaking for a man of your education," said Gunsdorf, "if you're on our side."

"I am on your side," said Tommy; "that is one of the reasons why I have been disinherited."

As he spoke Mary Blackstone drove up in an open car and called to him. Tommy sprang forward with courteous alacrity. And Gunsdorf murmured, "The dickens he's been disinherited!"

Mary leaned from the car and spoke in a low, thrilling voice, only audible to Tommy:

"Tommy, dear," she said, "I'm so wretched. We've made such a mess of things! Can't we begin all over again?"

Tommy answered with great gentleness: "We can't begin all over again," he said; "things can never be as they were. But we can be friends, Mary."

She shook her head and the corners of her mouth turned bitterly down.

"You and I, Tommy," she said, "might be almost anything in the world to each other—but friends, never. You may drive on, Rugby."

Tommy held out his hand, but she turned from it, as if in scorn, and the motor slipped quietly forward.

"H'm!" murmured Gunsdorf; "he has been

disinherited. And he's just told her. And she's given him the mitten."

Well, many a leader of capital would have come no nearer the truth. For to the casual eye Tommy instead of Mary had been the pleader and the rejected.

In the mining town of Bitumen in western Pennsylvania there was for the moment an armed truce between the strike-breakers and the strikers.

The latter, under the leadership of Gunsdorf, held the village; the former, under the personal supervision of Kehr, had built a strong palisade which commanded the railroad station and the approaches to the town by rail. Both belligerents maintained a system of sentries, and a genuine state of war existed. More than one striker had been given a public funeral; more than one strike-breaker had departed from Bitumen in a narrow box.

So much was clear. Less clear were the causes which had led to actual violence. It is enough that they led to a demand for larger wages and shorter hours, which Kehr, representing the owners, and intrenching himself behind the statement that too many such demands had been acceded to in the past, had peremptorily, and in a manner not tended to conciliate, refused.

A general strike had been called, strike-breakers and special deputies had been called in, and there had been dynamiting and sudden death.

On their arrival at Bitumen Gunsdorf had taken Tommy to his home and introduced him to his wife and also to other miners.

The leaders were somewhat alike. Each had a supreme contempt and even hatred for the class which the other represented. Each was a strong-willed, stubborn man, having much power over other men. Neither was altruistic. At the back of Gunsdorf's head lurked the idea that one day he, too, might be a capitalist who should employ labor. Kehr had every intention of one day employing more labor himself. Neither truly represented the cause for which he stood. Both were prepared to sacrifice any number of other people's lives for the betterment of their own.

There was, however, this difference between them: Men obeyed Gunsdorf because they believed him to be a strong man of the people, with the interests of the people at heart; men obeyed Kehr because they had to.

So Tommy felt about Gunsdorf when he heard the thick-set, trembling, passionate assailant of privilege hold forth in the Town Hall, when he saw tears gush out of the man's eyes as he told of women and children who were going under

because there was no longer any bread in the house, and when he pretended that he could hear their cries and clapped his hands to his ears.

Tommy had been introduced to the "brother" as a safe man, but when Gunsdorf began to advocate a midnight rush upon the stockade and massacre of all who might be found within, many eyes were turned upon the silk-stocking to see how he would take the suggestion.

"We will put them," thundered Gunsdorf, "where they shall never again no more hear the voices of women and children lifted in joy—or in sorrow. We will show the world what it is to tread upon the poor and the unfortunate, so that little children die of hunger. What do we claim? Only a fair share of what belongs to us. What do we get? Crumbs and offal chucked to us from the rich man's kitchen door."

There was a howl of rage that must have been heard in the stockade and caused some of its defenders to tremble. When this had rumbled away and died to nothing like a peal of thunder, Gunsdorf rolled his little eyes upon Tommy.

"Let us hear from the new brother," he said, smacking his lips. "Come up on the platform, Brother Barclay, and let the brothers and sisters see you."

One of the sisters eyed Tommy very closely as he slowly ascended the platform. She was

Mrs. Gunsdorf, a young, dark, heavy woman with smoldering eyes and a scarlet mouth. When he turned and she had a good look at his handsome, brown, clean-cut face, her deep bosom began to rise and fall rapidly.

Tommy was in an awkward position. In full sympathy with his audience, he was not at all in sympathy with dynamiting and murder. His education told him that though an attack upon the stockade might prove successful, its ultimate effect upon the attackers would be retribution in an extreme degree.

"It seems to me," he began quietly, "that what we want is justice—not vengeance. Have we——"

A loud chorus of mockery drowned his voice.

But Cracowitz shouted at the top of his lungs, "Give him air," and when he had secured a sort of silence he went on: "Brother Barclay is all right," he shouted; "he thinks the same as we do, only he don't think it the same way! Give him air!"

The speaker got a laugh, and Tommy was given air. And seeing that he was being given air, he smiled a very winning smile (it happened to light first upon Mrs. Gunsdorf) and began to speak once more—this time with confidence, because by good luck he had happened upon something to say, that seemed to him worth saying.

"Brothers," he said, "your backs are all turned to the door of this hall. Mine isn't."

He had succeeded in exciting their curiosity. Many turned and had a look at the door, and then looked back at the speaker. One or two smiled and nodded as if they knew what was coming, which they didn't. Tommy continued:

"While you were so loudly applauding my opening remarks (laughter and nudgings) that door opened and the door closed."

Once more heads turned toward the door.

"And," said Tommy, raising his voice for the first time, "a man went out.

"He went out in a hurry. He went out for two reasons. First, because his business here was finished, and, second, because he knew that I recognized him in spite of his false moustache. Well, you could have caught him if you hadn't been so busy making noises at me. He was a Pinkerton man."

Tommy checked an outburst of rage with a commanding gesture.

"His business was to find out if we are going to attack the stockade or not. He thinks we are. But we are not!"

"Why aren't we? Who told you?" etc., etc.

"It's for you to decide," cried Tommy, "but I wish you'd let me tell you what I saw on the platform at the freight station."

Again by exciting curiosity he had secured attention.

"I saw," said Tommy, "a large wooden box. On the box was printed Rotary Air Pump. But on the box under these words had once been printed the name Goss & Goss. That conveys no meaning to you? Goss & Goss is a firm which does business on Broadway. It deals in uniforms, rifles, ammunition and cannon. Brothers, the Rotary Air Pump which I saw on the platform at the freight station is a machine gun."

There was a long and ominous silence.

"Have you ever," continued Tommy cheerfully, "watched a man watering his front lawn with a hose? It's easy for the man with the hose to hit every blade of grass on his front lawn. It's just as easy as it is for the man with the machine gun to hit every man in a crowd.

"Attack that stockade? That's just what old man Kehr wants you to do. He will mow you down like grass, and the public will say it's your own fault."

Not only did the large crate contain a machine gun, but smaller cases which Tommy had not observed, marked "Picks and Shovels," containing high-power rifles and ammunition. But for that night, at least, old man Kehr's deadly preparations for giving the strikers what he consid-

ered a well-deserved and salutary lesson were in vain.

Dawn broke.

"They're not coming," said the Pinkerton man. "They must have listened to Barclay, after all. But it looked, so help me, as if they were going to tear him to pieces first, and try to rush us afterward."

"Any man with brains," said Kehr, "is a menace when he's on the wrong side of a question. We must get rid of Mr. Thomas Barclay. Give me that code book and a telegraph blank."

After some labor and a grim smile at the finished product, old man Kehr dispatched the following cipher to Gordon Barclay:

"Suckers won't bite. Your muttering carbureter Tommy has tickled Aphrodite. Please pound his whiskers quick."

"Now, then," he said to the Pinkerton man, "rush that!"

The triumvirate and Professor Stilliter went together when Kehr's cyphergram was handed Barclay, and although they imagined that its contents were important they couldn't help laughing at its wording:

"Suckers won't bite. Your muttering —
— Tommy has tickled Aphrodite. Please pound his whiskers quick."

Something about that blessed son of mine," said Barclay. He opened a drawer in his writing table and took out a code book, and then, with the aid of the others, deciphered the message. The plain English of it was this:

"Strikers won't fight. Your adopted son Tommy has spoiled our plans. Please call him off quick."

"Well," said Stilliter, "what will you do?"

"Kehr," said Barclay, "is blo' thirstily anxious to teach the strikers a lesson. He being the man on the spot I have felt obliged to give him a pretty firm hand. But I am glad there has been no bloodshed. It seems to me that this is a matter for Her to settle. Stilliter, can you make Her call this strike off and bring about a state of peace in Bitumen?"

Stilliter simply reached for a telegraph book and wrote:

"Kehr, Bitumen, Pa.:

"Am Sending Her,"

and signed it

"BARCLAY."

"What will you do about Tommy?" he asked. "He'll be even more in the way when Celestia gets there."

After a moment's reflection Barclay wrote a telegram to Tommy:

"Come home at once, must see you on important business."

These telegrams dispatched, Sturtevant and Semmes took their leave, while Barclay and Stilliter sat on for a time in silence. Barclay was the first to break it.

"You will have no trouble in persuading her to go?"

"She dislikes me, but she does what I tell her—only I don't tell her. I don't understand her aversion to me. She knows that I am with her heart and soul for the common good. And she is willing to work with me. But I repel her."

Barclay smiled grimly.

"You have never made any great effort to please the ladies," he said.

"A mistake of youth of which I begin to repent in middle age. I have made the mistake of imagining that I could live and die an abstract intellect. It's my eyes, I suppose. They made me hypersensitive."

"But you weren't born with weak eyes."

"No—when I was at college a retort burnt in my face. I had splendid eyes as a child. No-

body ever had a better physical equipment than I had—a stronger body or a stronger brain. I am the kind of man who ought to marry and have children."

Both were silent again. Then Stilliter said:

"I've been giving the matter more and more thought. It seems to me a sort of duty."

Stilliter sat gazing off into space through the thick lenses which gave him sight, and Barclay, a troubled smile on his lips, sat and watched Stilliter's face.

"You must have someone in mind," he suggested presently.

Stilliter gave a kind of guilty start.

"And suppose I have?"

The smile faded slowly from Barclay's mouth.

"I do suppose that you have," he said sternly; "but don't tell me that our plans are to be wrecked because you have turned amorous in your middle age."

"I thought," said Stilliter, "that I had myself in absolute control."

"This is frightful!" said Barclay simply.

"Oh, don't worry," said Stilliter; "the great work shall be accomplished first. But it seems only right to tell you what my intentions are—after the work is finished. Has anyone so great a claim on Her as I?"

"You repel her. You have said it."

"I have willed her to like me. It is the one thing I cannot successfully will her to do. . . . I'm just saying what my ultimate intentions are."

"Don't you think," said Barclay, "that when her work is done, the poor child ought to be turned free to live—to love and to be happy?"

"I do not," exclaimed Stilliter, "for the good of the human race, I do not."

He rose and started slowly for the door.

"Wait a minute," said Barclay, and he interposed himself between Stilliter and the door; "have I your word of honor that you will attempt nothing against her, that she will be safe with you until her work is done?"

"You have my word of honor," said Stilliter, but he did not look his master in the eye.

At what was really in his mind and heart Stilliter had only hinted. His statement, however, that he was a perfect man mentally and physically could not have been caviled at. The easy roly-poly strength of his youth had vanished. He was no longer covered by a porpoise-like thickness or adipose deposit, but looked hard, fit and trim, like an athlete.

And his mind clear as a bell, and capable at a moment's notice of tremendous concentration, was like a machine carried to the power of perfection. He was the most perfect man he had ever known; Celestia was the most perfect

woman, and he could not but believe that offspring of a marriage between them would be more perfect still.

Ever since her return to earth he had brooded on this proposition. At first its scientific side only had inspired him. It was a scientific duty for two such perfect human beings not to remain forever apart. He had brooded coldly.

But gradually her beauty and her indifference to him (it was more than indifference, it was positive dislike) had warned him out of his coolness. He no longer wanted to marry her solely because he thought that such a marriage would be scientifically correct—but because he wanted to. Furthermore, he felt that he had a right to her.

He had picked her out as a little child and he was by way of making her the most famous woman in history, and the most useful. Surely she owed him something in return. Something? She owed him everything.

CHAPTER XIV

MEANWHILE Tommy had been invited to live with the Gunsdorfs, and had carried his belongings to their house. This was an unpretentious structure exactly like several hundred others in Bitumen. It differed only from the majority in the fact that it was one of the two end houses of a long row.

Downstairs there was an entrance hall which contained a hat rack. On the left as you entered was a room that was a dining room when it wasn't a sitting room and vice versa. Back of this was a kitchen and store closet.

Upstairs there was a large bedroom and a small one, and two closets. Above these there was an attic with head-room for a dwarf. A faucet in the kitchen sink supplied running water.

Similar mansions in Bitumen housed a dozen people. Tommy was lucky to have a whole room, however small, to himself. There was also in the back yard a well with a bucket, and here, if a man really wanted a bath, and was willing to get up so early that nobody would see him, he could get one.

As leader of the discontented, Gunsdorf ran

an open house. There was always talk and something to drink in the front room downstairs. Here policies were hatched just as they are in the Cabinet room in Washington, and here drinks of the most vile rye whisky could be had by the initiated for the asking.

From the very first, Mrs. Gunsdorf had done her best to make Tommy comfortable. Not a tidy woman by nature, she put her house in order for his benefit and kept it so.

From the looking-glass in the kitchen at which you combed your hair before meals she scrubbed the fly-specks. She bought a new comb with a full complement of teeth to hang on the chain, she washed the roller towel, and for the first time in her life took an interest in cooking, seeking instruction from neighbors who had reputations in that line.

But she managed for a time to confine her amorous feelings toward Tommy to deeds and attentions. She tried to make her manner toward him just what it was to other young men who came to the house. But when discussion was hot in the front room, and the whisky was going, and nobody was noticing her, she feasted her eyes on his brown face and her ears on his quiet, resonant, well-bred voice.

It was a shirt-sleeve house. Directly you came in, you hung your coat on one of many

hooks in the hall, and if you had been much on your feet, you sat with them on the table after removing your shoes. This last was a custom which Tommy found himself unable to adopt; but he hung his coat in the front hall, with the others, and got used to sitting in a room in which, to use his own phrase, the atmosphere was "chained to the floor."

Mrs. Gunsdorf was always coming and going. She would appear, silent as a ghost, listen for a while to what the men had to say, and as silently finish. Sometimes she "shoved in her oar." And she had a gift of hitting the nail on the head. But she spoke always with a kind of restrained feline ferocity.

All the time her mind was filled with thoughts and visions of Tommy. Sometimes she would take his coat from its hook and strain it to her breast. Sometimes when he was out of the house she would go to his room, and sit by the hour, feasting herself on day dreams of him.

In her mind at least she was already faithless to her husband. But this did not trouble her in the least. If she ever had a conscience or moral scruples of any kind about anything, all these had vanished with her first sight of Tommy.

If Tommy had suspected her admiration for him, he would have felt very sorry for her, and

he would have changed his lodging. But his mind was very innocent about women; and he accepted the flowers which appeared on his bureau in a cracked shaving cup just as he would have accepted the same flowers growing in a wood.

It was some time before he even realized that she was very good-looking, in a sullen smoldering way, that her eyes and teeth were very fine, and that she had a lithe, strong, pantheresque way of moving.

One day there was a violent socialistic discussion going on in the front room. Mrs. Gunsdorf had appeared twice at the hall door to listen and gaze surreptitiously at Tommy, and had twice vanished upon some household duty or other.

Having closed the door softly, she turned swiftly to where Tommy's coat hung, and pressed it passionately to her cheek; a paper rustled in the breast pocket, where she knew no paper had been earlier in the day, and after a moment's hesitation, and impelled by a sudden unreasoning jealousy, she snatched it out of the pocket and examined it.

"THOMAS BARCLAY,

"Bitumen, Pa.:

"Come home at once, must see you on important business.

"BARCLAY."

Mrs. Gunsdorf felt as if she had been struck a heavy blow between the eyes. Was her God-like champion of labor only a hypocrite and a spy? For a moment it seemed as if her knees had turned to water. She put the telegram back in its pocket, and having pulled herself together, once more entered the front room.

She seated herself somewhat heavily between Tommy and her husband, and with a hand that shook reached for the whisky bottle and poured herself a stiff drink.

Presently she began to take an animated part in the discussion. No one ever remembered her to have been so bitter against capital and the crimes of capital, or so imaginative in the invention of horrors by which those crimes should be punished. She became so eloquent after her second drink of whisky that for the first time Tommy found himself regarding her with a certain admiration.

It was five o'clock when the sitting broke up with everyone except Gunsdorf and Tommy (who drank nothing) the worse for liquor.

Gunsdorf had business elsewhere and he hustled his guests out of the house, feeling rightly that they were sufficiently primed for the time being.

Tommy and Mrs. Gunsdorf remained seated, side by side. Mrs. Gunsdorf reached for the

whisky bottle and Tommy laid his hand on her arm and said: "Don't; what's the use?"

Her arm trembled under his hand.

"I'm sick," she said in a thick voice; "sick."

"That stuff won't help any. I'll go for the doctor."

"I'll be all right. I'm faint—that's all."

To Tommy she seemed to be making an effort to pull together.

"It's the air in this room," he said. "Let me take you outside."

She seemed to acquiesce, and he helped her to her feet and toward the door, his left arm around her waist. She leaned more and more heavily against him, until it took real strength to keep her from falling. In the front hall she appeared to collapse entirely. Her hand dropped backward as if her neck had been suddenly dislocated, and she lurched forward.

It was necessary, he felt, to go for the doctor at once, but he could not leave her lying in the front hall. So, not without difficulty, for the stair was very narrow, he carried her up to the room which she shared with her husband, and laid her on the bed.

Then he was for leaving her, but she had flung her arms about his neck and was holding him tight. Her eyes had opened and shone brilliantly in his face. Her cheeks and temples were

crimson, and there was no longer any fear of him in her or shame.

For a moment, so innocent was Tommy, he thought that her sudden fainting sickness had culminated in a sort of fit, and it was not until he felt that her lips were greedily seeking his that he realized his position.

He shook himself free, not gently, and without a word, turned and marched out of the room and down the stair. He took his coat from its hook and put it on, laid his hand on the knob of the front door, hesitated, turned on his heel and went back up the stair.

He had closed the door of Mrs. Gunsdorf's room behind him. Now he knocked on it, and in a stern voice, for youth and innocence are very stern, said: "Mrs. Gunsdorf?" There was no answer. He raised his voice a trifle.

"Do you need the doctor, or don't you?"

This time she answered him:

"I don't need any doctor and you can go to the devil."

Tommy shrugged his shoulders, went to his own room, bolted the door and prepared to read till supper time. But he couldn't read. The new problem which had suddenly risen in his life was too disturbing.

Presently he heard Mrs. Gunsdorf stirring in her room. She came out, and stopped in front of his door.

"Are you in there?"

"Yes."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm thinking."

"Are you going to tell on me?"

"No, I'm not going to do that. But I must find some other place to live."

Silence. Then Mrs. Gunsdorf:

"Please don't . . . won't you open the door? We can talk better."

It seemed such a confession of cowardice not to open the door, that Tommy opened it, and they faced each other across the threshold.

"It was the liquor," she said. "I'm like that when I drink. If you won't go away, I won't drink any more."

Her hair was disheveled and she had been crying.

"If Gunsdorf found out why you went away, he'd skin me alive. I won't trouble you any more."

She looked very frightened and pathetic.

"Then you'd better fix yourself up," said Tommy. "You look as if—well, you look as if you'd make your husband suspect something or other."

"I know. I've put my curling tongs on to heat. I'll look all right when he comes back."

There was a somewhat awkward silence, which Mrs. Gunsdorf broke.

"I know you despise me. But—oh, you wouldn't understand."

"I'd try. If you told me."

"Would you forgive me? I wouldn't have done it, only, only—I feel about you the way a dog feels about her master, and—oh, can't you give me a chance?"

"A chance?"

"I'd follow you to the ends of the earth; I'd slave for you, and when you sickened of me, I'd take my medicine."

"But, Mrs. Gunsdorf, you are a married woman."

"That's no reason. That's an excuse. What does marriage matter to a woman like me?"

"I don't know. But I'm afraid it matters a whole lot to a man like me. I'm terribly sorry for you."

"Sorrow never filled an empty heart."

"What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to cherish me when you're in temper, and to kick me downstairs when you're out. I want——"

"Mrs. Gunsdorf, I'm not that kind of a man. If you're sorry—I'm sorry—but really now, do be reasonable. Suppose I feel the same way about somebody that you feel about me?"

It was as if he had given her a detailed explanation. For she cried in a grim, desperate

sort of voice: "So that's it," and turned abruptly and went back to her own room. But she had no sooner passed the threshold than she turned and exclaimed:

"For God's sake, come quick, the house is on fire."

Tommy darted after her, and perceived that the alcohol lamp with which she heated her curling tongs had run over and set fire to some papers in a scrap basket. It was the work of a few seconds to subdue this incipient conflagration with water from Mrs. Gunsdorf's wash pitcher, and when he had reduced the paper to a wet, blackened mass, and blown out the alcohol lamp, he turned and found Mrs. Gunsdorf laughing at him.

"I don't know why you are laughing," he said coldly; "it might have been serious."

She was between him and the door, but she stepped aside and let him pass.

"What's the matter with this door?" he asked, after a fruitless effort to open it.

"It's locked."

"Why?"

"Because we've got to have our talk out. And I don't want you running away from it."

"Do be reasonable, Mrs. Gunsdorf. Let me have the key. This won't do at all, you know. Where is the key?"

He seized her by the arms as he asked this question.

She smiled at him, half closed her eyes and held up her hands high above her head, as people do at the command of highwaymen.

"You can search me," she said.

Tommy's temper was beginning to rise, and he frowned.

"If you don't give me the key I shall have to break the door down."

"Yes, and I'll say you broke it down. But not from inside out. I'll say you broke it down from outside in."

"You had better give me that key," said Tommy.

She smiled inscrutably, for she had hidden the key in a very safe place. It was at the moment reposing in the right-hand pocket of Tommy's own jacket, into which she had dropped it while he was busy putting the fire out.

"Dare you to look for it," she said; "I won't resist."

Tommy took a step forward.

"This is getting serious," he said; "what's the idea?"

"Guess."

The room had two windows on the street side. Tommy turned from her in disgust and approached these. But there were people in the

street. And he knew at once that to be seen climbing out of Mrs. Gunsdorf's bedroom window would excite the most unpleasant sort of comment. He was so angry that it occurred to him to choke that key out of the Gunsdorf woman. He turned and looked her over with cold, angry eyes.

"Did you ever hear that a woman scorned was more dangerous than a loaded gun?" she asked. And added sweetly: "Gunsdorf ought to be getting back."

"I hope so," said Tommy. "I shall feel obliged to tell him the whole story."

Mrs. Gunsdorf laughed out loud.

"You're too good to be true," she added. "You blessed innocent."

"We shall see," said Tommy. He started toward the window and stood looking out.

Looked at from any angle he felt himself to be in the very devil of a predicament. He had outraged Mrs. Gunsdorf's pride, and she would not spare herself in order to be avenged upon him.

If he made a plain statement of fact to Gunsdorf it was quite likely that he would not be believed, and, furthermore, his mind revolted against telling such a story about any woman.

Presently he perceived Gunsdorf with three others coming down the street. His face, somber

and frowning, turned slowly as his eyes followed him. He wondered how a man like Gunsdorf would act at discovering another man in his wife's room behind a locked door.

"Your husband is coming home now," he said; "hadn't you better let me out? You've only a moment to make up your mind."

He turned slowly and faced her. She had let down her hair, so that her eyes shone at him as through a mist, and she had torn open the bosom of her dress. Her shoulders were heaving slightly. She was laughing at him.

They heard the sound of the front door being opened and slammed shut, and then voices in the hall.

"Promise to be my feller," whispered Mrs. Gunsdorf, "and I'll let you out."

It was not easy for her to face the scorn in Tommy's eyes. For a moment she met his gaze, and then her eyes fell before it, and began to glance stealthily this way and that.

"Don't ruin yourself," said Tommy; "think this thing over. Let me go now. To-morrow, if you still wish to make a row, I will come back; you can lock the door. Everything will be as it is now. But for your own sake don't do anything in a hurry. Take twenty-four hours to think it over. Perhaps what seems good enough to-day won't seem good enough to-morrow."

Her answer was a piercing scream for help. Repeating this scream again and again, she began to storm about the room, overturning a chair and the washstand. Then, with an insane swiftness for which he was ill prepared, she flung herself upon Tommy, struck him a heavy blow on the mouth, rumbled his hair, and then flung her arms round his neck and half-strangled him. All the while her screams for help pierced through the walls of the house.

Tommy was in a position at once ridiculous and terrible. He strove to free himself without hurting the woman. Then came a rush of heavy feet up the stair, and the bedroom door was carried inward clean off its hinges, and through the opening came Gunsdorf. Rage had transformed him into a beast. It was fortunate that he was unarmed.

To him it must have appeared as if his wife had just torn herself free from Tommy. At the threshold of the room stood Gunsdorf's three friends, at once menacing and abashed.

"What is it?" thundered Gunsdorf.

There was a silence. Then Mrs. Gunsdorf spoke, her hands at her throat, as if with difficulty.

"He was hiding behind the door," she said; "when I'd passed into the room, he slammed it shut and went for me."

"Is this true?" Gundsorf faced him and advanced toward him with clutched hands.

"She'll tell you next," said Tommy, "that I locked the door and put the key in my pocket."

He spoke with so much scorn and assurance that Gundsorf hesitated, and turned toward his wife.

"It's just what he did do," she said; "he locked the door and put the key in his pocket."

Tommy's hands dropped into the pocket of his jacket, and his right hand closed upon the door key. He did not need to speak. His face told the story. Slowly he withdrew the key from his pocket and tossed it onto the threadbare carpet.

"This looks bad, Gundsorf," he said, "but if you'll listen to me."

"I will listen to you in hell," said Gundsorf.

"Take him, boys."

Gundsorf's three friends came slowly forward.

"They're going to kill me if they can," thought Tommy; "and I don't want to be killed."

He drew a low breath and clenched his fists.

"Don't kill him," cried Mrs. Gundsorf suddenly, "not yet!"

"Why not yet?" growled Gundsorf.

"Because, you fool, if you kill him here—in my room—people will think——"

"What will they think?"

"They will think—oh, don't make me say it."

Gunsdorf began to scratch the back of his head.

"That is true," he said presently. "We had better take him away somewhere. For now we will tie him. When it is dark we will take him away somewhere in a carriage. We will take with us also a stick of dynamite. A stick of dynamite with a lighted fuse makes a fine gag to go into a man's mouth. It keeps him quiet forever."

"You don't need to take him away," said Mrs. Gunsdorf; "there's a fine, strong elm tree in front of the house. Take him downstairs, call in the boys and read them the telegram he's got in his inside pocket. Nobody need mention me—and the boys'll do the rest. . . . The dirty spy!"

Gunsdorf and his three friends closed in upon Tommy from three sides. Mrs. Gunsdorf crept stealthily along the wall to take him in the rear.

"Gunsdorf," said Tommy suddenly, "just read that telegram. You can't hang a man on that. It's from the man who adopted me and brought me up. We differed because I am on the side of labor. He says he wants to see me on important business. That doesn't make me a spy, does it? Be reasonable."

Ordinarily, for Gunsdorf had an intelligent mind, he would have placed a just value upon the telegram as evidence against Tommy. Just

now his reason was blinded by jealous rage. It is doubtful if he even read the telegram. He crumpled it in his hand and thrust it into his trousers pocket.

At that moment, seeing that the affair had passed beyond reason and debate, Tommy stepped quickly forward and lifted Gunsdorf clean from the floor with a terrific right-hand blow under the point of the chin. Swift as lightning he turned and struck the nearest of Gunsdorf's friends between the eyes.

This cleared the way to the door, and he sprang toward it, but only to fall heavily on his face, for Mrs. Gunsdorf had grappled him from behind about the ankles.

A minute later they had overpowered and tied him hand and foot.

Fifteen minutes later Tommy stood on the top of a stepladder, surrounded by an enraged mob of men and women who showered vile epithets upon him. The stepladder stood immediately under the limb of a great elm tree. With this limb Tommy was loosely connected by a length of quarter-inch hemp rope. Other ropes had been attached to the foot of the ladder upon which he stood, so that at a signal it could be yanked suddenly from under him.

Tommy was not frightened. He was dazed from rough handling, and somehow he couldn't

believe that they really meant to hurt him. It was merely an unpleasant dream from which he would presently waken safe in bed. Then his roaming eyes met Gunsdorf's.

Gunsdorf no longer looked strong and terrible, but shrunken and puzzled. His eyes blinked with great rapidity. Presently Tommy caught sight of Mrs. Gunsdorf. He shook his head gently at her, as much as to say, "You know you really ought not to be such a story-teller."

She covered her eyes with her hands, as if she could not bear the sight of his mildly accusing eyes.

It was only very gradually that the truth dawned on him, and a great lump rose in his throat and pressed against the rope which encircled it. Yes. They were going to kill him. He would never see Celestia again.

He began to think of her intentionally, with all his will. If he had to die, at least it should be with gracious and loving thoughts.

So great was his concentration that the crowd surrounding him seemed to grow vague and misty, and he actually seemed to see her—in her white dress with the band of jewels across her dark hair—and the vague, misty crowd was falling away before her to right and left and she was coming swiftly toward him.

Presently she seemed to be directly beneath

him, looking up into his face. He smiled at her; he couldn't help it. Then she turned her back to him, her face to the others, and she spoke in a gallant, loud voice:

"What has he done?"

A shiver went up and down Tommy's spine. In the name of all that was miraculous that hallucination in white with the gallant voice was really Celestia. Yes. And there, hanging back in the crowd, was Professor Stilliter, with his thick glasses, and Freddie the Ferret, Freddie brandishing that big automatic which his father had forbidden him to carry. Celestia was answered with cries from here and there:

"He's a traitor, a spy! He was going to betray us."

Gunsdorf crept toward her holding in his outstretched hand the fateful telegram.

"We found it on him," he said.

Celestia read the telegram and flung it angrily from her.

"Is that your evidence?"

Gunsdorf shrank from her.

She stepped toward him, and he had to look her in the eyes.

"Do you believe that he is a spy?"

Gunsdorf's chin dropped upon his breast and he began to shake his head slowly from side to side. The crowd began to murmur with astonishment.

"Then why did you accuse him?"

"I—he," mumbled Gundsorf.

"Why, in the name of justice?"

"He—he is a ravisher."

"A what?"

"He attacked a defenseless woman. It was to shield her reputation that I said he was a spy. In any case, he deserved to be hanged."

"He—attacked a defenseless woman!" exclaimed Celestia, and she laughed with a kind of cold scorn.

Mrs. Gundsorf crept slowly forward.

"It had to come out," she cried suddenly; "he attacked me, if you got to know."

"He attacked you?"

"I swear it by——"

There was a battle of eyes.

"Look at me! Look at me" exclaimed Celestia. "If you are telling the truth you can surely look at me."

Mrs. Gundsorf lifted her defeated eyes in one last effort.

"Now tell the truth," said Celestia. "Speak out, so that everyone can hear you."

For a few moments Mrs. Gundsorf was silent. Then suddenly she lifted her head defiantly and spoke in a loud voice.

"I lied," she said. "He didn't attack me. I loved him and he wouldn't look at me. I trapped him in my room, and locked the door and put

the key in his pocket. Then I screamed for help. That's all. I did it because I loved him, and he wouldn't look at me. If he wouldn't look at me, I said, he shouldn't look at anyone—ever. I'd rather he'd be dead. And that's the truth and the whole truth, so help me God."

Then Gunsdorf spoke.

"Cut that man loose," he said. Then he turned to his wife, and very quietly and methodically, but with all his strength, struck her on the point of the jaw, and laid her senseless at his feet. Low murmurs of approval greeted the act.

Meanwhile the noose had been withdrawn from Tommy Barclay's head and the ropes which bound him had been cut. He came slowly and painfully down the ladder, and stood before Celestia, holding out both his hands to her.

But she did not look at his hands, and only for a moment at him. It was as if she had never seen him before. In the back of the crowd somebody chuckled. It was Professor Stilliter.

"Celestia," pleaded Tommy.

But she would not look at him, and her dark, deep eyes began to gather eyes in the crowd, and then she began to speak; began right in the middle of a speech, as was her wont, and spoke to them of justice, and patience, and brotherly love, and scolded them a little for having flown at conclusions and so nearly stained their souls with innocent blood.

And when she told them quite simply that she had come from heaven to make the world a better place to live in, those who succeeded in catching a glance of her eyes believed her. And the others kept a dead silence and greatly wondered.

When she had finished, the crowd opened for her, and she passed sweetly and quietly through, and vanished after a while, followed only by Freddie the Ferret and Stilliter.

"Stop her!" somebody cried; "she's going to the stockade. We want her with us."

But nobody made a move to follow her.

Mrs. Gunsdorf raised herself on her hands and moaned. Tommy, all compassion, stepped swiftly forward and helped her to her feet.

His heart ached terribly because Celestia had not spoken to him. He wondered why she had been so cruel.

There were two reasons. Professor Stilliter was the chief one; the extreme good looks of Mrs. Gunsdorf was the other.

The thought of any physical contact, however unwilling on his part, between Tommy and Mrs. Gunsdorf had turned Celestia's not altogether celestial heart to ice in her breast.

Although Kehr had been instructed to give Celestia every chance to settle the strike, and to hinder her in nothing, he was still determined to bring about his own kind of a settlement if



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possible. Close-fisted and narrow, he was nevertheless a man with beliefs and principles for which he was not only willing to sacrifice his fortune, but his life if necessary.

To Kehr a man who agreed to work certain hours for certain wages and then went back on his agreement was no more to be considered or treated with than a mad dog. To his finger tips he was capitalistic and believed in property. At his finger tips he had innumerable examples of contented laborers who had become affluent, and of discontented laborers who had finished up in jail.

"Once," he would say, "labor did the most work possible for the least possible pay. Then labor did a fair amount of work for a fair amount of pay, but nowadays labor wishes to do the least work possible (and the worst kind of work), and to receive therefor so much pay that there can be no return on the capital which employs labor.

"Where are we drifting to? If an eight-hour day and a raise, why not six and a raise? Why not four? Two? None? My men want to breakfast in bed and receive their pay envelopes at the same time. I wasn't like that. I went to work for wages that a dog could hardly have lived on. But I saved, and waited, and I worked as hard as I could without complaining. And now look at me!

"Any healthy-minded, able-bodied young American can get rich in less than no time, if he will work as hard as he can, save a portion of what he earns, and keep his ears closed to the fools and devils who preach laziness and discontent."

Conditions at Bitumen had come to such a pass that Kehr could see no possibility of compromise. The country was suffering from what amounted to a coal famine, and the fault lay, so Kehr honestly felt, with a group of two-legged animals who didn't know enough to come in out of the rain.

All over the country, so Kehr honestly thought, labor was rearing its head like that of a venomous snake. Already it had bitten many innocent people, and some were dead and some were ruined for life. Now you don't argue with a venomous snake. You either kill it or you run from it.

Kehr was not the kind of man who runs from anything. He had a big stick, and, if he possibly could, he was going to hit labor one good crack over the head. Anyway, his plans were all in order. He had goaded the strike leaders until they were ready to order an attack on his stockade, and he was grimly ready and even eager for that attack to begin. Tommy had thwarted him once. Now they had sent Celestia to thwart him again.

Still he received her with politeness, and told her that he was glad she had come.

"I'm glad you've come, young lady, because I know your theories, and I'm glad to have the chance of showing you how impractical they are in the face of an actual condition. You want labor and capital to be friends and to work hand in hand. Can a gunman be friends with a bishop?"

"Why, yes," said Celestia, "when they get so they understand each other. But a day will come when there won't be any gunmen."

"Nor any walking delegates, nor any fools who spend more than they can earn and then begin to holler murder and set off dynamite. Now you just sit down in that chair, and I'll tell you in a nutshell the history of the last few years that has led up to the present situation. To begin with, I was a day laborer myself in those coal fields——"

Celestia raised her hand in protest. "Don't tell me your side of the quarrel," she said; "tell me theirs. When your heart is very hard against a man, the best way to soften it is to say all the favorable things you can think of about him. I'd like you to tell me all the good things you can think of about Gunsdorf, and then I shall go to him and ask him to tell me all the good things he can think of about you."

"From neither of us," said Kehr grimly, "will you hear any good of the other."

"Then," said Celestia, smiling gently, "I shall have to do the talking for you both."

"You can change me into a breakfast food as easily as you can change Gunsdorf into a human being."

"Some day you and Gunsdorf will shake hands and you'll both admit that you were both wrong?"

"You admit that he's wrong?"

"Yes, Mr. Kehr, and you, too."

She rose and smiled upon him.

"I am to come and go as I please?"

"If you go among those devils over there in the town I won't be responsible for the consequences."

"But I've been among them already. They were going to hang a man, but they listened to reason."

"What man?"

A vision of Mrs. Gunsdorf's face floated through Celestia's mind, and caused her eyes to narrow a little, and look quite stony.

"A man of no importance," she said lightly.

"But I shan't go back to the town to-night. What is the password?"

He told her.

"I shall talk with some of your men to-night.

And to-morrow I hope you will have a change of heart."

She smiled so sweetly at him that his crabbed old heart actually warmed toward her, and then she set out alone in the electric-lighted darkness to explore the strong place which capital had set up against rebellious labor.

CHAPTER XV

KEHR must have had a military ancestor from whom he had inherited a talent for making defensive warfare as nasty as possible. From the outside his stockade surrounding several acres of ground presented no great obstacle to an attack in force. It was not as high as it might have been, nor as thick or strong. The tops of the logs of which it had been built were not even pointed. It did not seem to have been pierced with a sufficiency of holes for rifles.

Indeed, Mr. Kehr's stockade was not so much a defense as a temptation. His real defenses began just inside. For twenty feet the ground was pitted like a sieve. In each pit a pointed stake had been planted, upright. Within this ring of mischance were vicious entanglements of barbed wire.

In Mr. Kehr's plan of defense the stockade would be surrendered after a mere show of resistance, the strikers swarming over the top would become entangled among the staked pits and the barbed wire, like flies in a spider's web,

and then Kehr could make them sorry that they had ever been born.

He had two machine guns placed on an eminence from which they could sweep the whole inner ring of the stockade. He had plenty of rifles, plenty of ammunition, and what was more important he had plenty of men who could be relied on to shoot down their fellow men.

If by any chance the stockade and the entanglements were carried, the assailants would be confronted by an inner stockade, higher and stronger, built around a spring and well stocked with provisions.

But the attack, Kehr felt, if it ever did come to a head, would end bloodily and ingloriously in the barbed wire. Labor would have had a much-needed lesson, and whatever the consequences to himself he would not have lived in vain.

Four feet from the top of the main stockade on the inner side was a shelf-like walk of heavy planks, from which sentries could look out upon the world beyond.

Celestia's first act of exploration was to climb a ladder which gave access to this narrow way and start along it. Almost instantly the white apparition was challenged by a sentry.

Celestia gave the password and made the man tell her what his hours and duties were.

"Do you really mean," she said, "that if you

saw a man out there, and asked him his business, and got no answer, that you would try to shoot him?"

"If I saw him in this light," said the sentry, "he'd be so near that I wouldn't have to try. I couldn't miss him."

"And he might be a deaf man who didn't hear your challenge. I don't think you'd shoot him, would you? Wouldn't you just shoot somewhere near him to frighten him?"

She looked the man steadily in the face.

"Wouldn't you?"

"I got no business talking to anyone when I'm on duty."

"Wouldn't you?"

The man made a snuffing noise.

"If I hear you fire," said Celestia, "I shall know that you didn't shoot to kill, shan't I?"

The sentry, an alert young fellow to begin with, seemed now to have fallen into a kind of trance.

"I guess," he said, "I'd do anything you said, if you looked at me while you said it."

Celestia smiled and passed on. She made the whole tour of the stockade, instilling merciful feelings into the heart of each sentry that she met. At last, just as the moon was rising and flooding the world with light, she came back to the first sentry. It was easy to see that he was

glad she had come back. He drew a long breath and his eyes brightened.

"Why," she asked, "have almost all the trees been cut down?"

"So's we can see the strikers a long way before they get to us."

"Then why have they left that one big grove, so near the stockade? They could take shelter in that, and if they had a small cannon——"

"But they haven't."

"They ought to have, oughtn't they? If it's to be a fair fight. But there won't be any fight, will there? Still you haven't told me why all the trees have been cut down except that one grove—see, it's got a fine old stone wall around it. If I were the captain of the strikers——"

"It was left stand especial," said the sentry, "by Mr. Kehr's orders. And he knows why it's been left, even if nobody else does. I'm dead certain of one thing. Anybody who thinks he's safe in that grove will be making a great big mistake."

"But why? A bullet can't go through a stone wall or a big tree."

"Do you know what a blast is?"

"I think so."

"Well, suppose the strikers occupied that grove in numbers and began to fire on us. Suppose just then every tree in the grove blew to pieces and fell on 'em, and the stone wall sailed

up in the air and fell on 'em, and the earth they stood on opened up and swallowed 'em, and shuts its mouth on 'em afterward and wouldn't let 'em out?"

"Is that what it's for?"

"I don't know, ma'am. You asked me what it's for, and I don't know. I'm only telling you what it might be for. What it would be for, if I was old man Kehr."

"How would he make it all blow up?" asked Celestia.

"By electricity. He'd have a switch somewhere that connected up all the detonators in the grove."

"What is a switch?"

The sentry explained as well as he could, and after wishing him good-night, Celestia went slowly away, deeply pondering. Once, twice and again before descending from the platform she paused to look thoughtfully at the grove, and she could not but feel that the sentry's guess as to why it had not been razed to the ground was probably correct. If so, where should she look for the switch which was to detonate the dynamite? In some building, of course, guarded day and night. It would not be a building in which men ate or slept, but one that was either empty, or only used for storage purposes or rarely visited.

While she pondered on this, she heard her-

self sharply challenged, and found herself face to face with a young man who stood with his back to a sheet-iron door in the side of a small sheet-iron house that had no windows.

Celestia gave the word for the night and asked the man what he was guarding.

He shook his head.

"But I want to go in and see for myself," said Celestia. "Mr. Kehr told me that I could go anywhere I liked."

"Door locked," said the man simply, "and Mr. Kehr don't want anyone fooling round this building."

"Haven't you got the key?"

His eyes were beginning to feel the magic of her eyes, and his ears of her voice.

"I have not."

"But you know where it is?"

"What if I do?"

"Why, you'd tell me, and I could get it and open this door."

The man tried to laugh roughly and failed.

"Where is it?" she asked.

There was a short battle of eyes, and Celestia, as usual, conquered.

"Mr. Kehr said you could go where you liked?"

Celestia simply nodded and continued to look the man in the eyes. He hesitated a moment and then leaned over and lifted a large, flat stone.

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"And what?" she said sweetly, "are your orders about that switch?"

Under the stone a bright, nickel-plated key shone in the moonlight.

"Thank you," said Celestia; and she took the key and opened the iron door of the little iron house and went in.

"For God's sake," said the man, all trembling now at what he had done, "don't touch anything. Only look!"

"Then," said Celestia, "come and show me what there is to see. It's all dark in here."

The man followed her hastily into the building and struck a match.

"That there!" he said in a whisper; "that there switch. That's all there is to see. Now come out. Please do."

The match had gone out. Celestia followed the sentry into the open air, and while he relocked the door and rehid the key she thanked him very graciously, as if he had done her some small, gracious favor.

Well, she had seen the switch, and just before the match went out she had read these words painted on a rectangle of white cardboard:

"Don't touch. Dynamite."

"And what," she said sweetly, "are your orders about that switch? What will be the occasion of setting off the dynamite?"

The sentry affected not to hear.

"You have to tell me," said Celestia.

After a moment's silence he said:

"And what?" she said sweetly, "are your orders about that switch?"

"I'm only to close the circuit on a direct order from Mr. Kehr. I don't know why I'm to close it, or what will happen if I do."

"When you do," said Celestia, "lots of poor wives will be left without husbands, and lots of poor babies will be left without fathers."

The sentry shuddered.

"So you won't obey that order, will you?"

"An order is an order, ma'am."

"I am giving you an order."

"I take my orders from Mr. Kehr."

"The order I am giving you is from God. Look at me."

He looked at her, and after a time, whether the order came to him from God or not, he knew that he must obey it.

Celestia strolled away in the moonlight. "Soon," she thought, "I shall have arranged that there shall be no defense; I must also arrange that there shall be no attack. No wonder they sent me—so many human beings don't seem to be human."

Then she lifted her sweet voice, and called for Freddie the Ferret, but he did not answer to his name. He had gotten himself left behind in the town, and she was worried about him. But not very much. She thought that he might have followed her and been let into the stockade. But this couldn't be so, or he would have answered.

At least he had nothing to fear from the sentries. She had told them about him, and they would pass on the word, and anyway they weren't going to shoot to kill. Furthermore, Freddie had a delightful faculty of landing on his feet.

Since returning from the town she had not seen Stilliter. She wondered what he was doing and why she couldn't like him.

If Celestia had had a square deal from Kehr she might have reduced the hostile feelings of the strikers and the strike-breakers to nothing and brought about peace in Bitumen. But it was written that while she slept soundly in the little house which had been set aside for her use Kehr, who never slept in times of danger, went on a midnight tour of inspection, and made certain discoveries which filled him with anger and anxiety. The very first sentry whom he talked to made a damaging confession.

"Seen nothing to-night?" Kehr asked.

"Only the lady, sir."

"What lady?"

"The lady in white."

"Oh."

"Yes, sir."

The sentry gave the appearance of one who wishes to speak but is afraid.

"Well, what is it?"

"After talking with her, sir, I think I ought

to be relieved. My orders is to shoot to kill. After talking with her, sir, I couldn't do it."

"You wouldn't obey my orders?"

"I couldn't, sir."

"When you have been relieved you will report yourself at the guard house. You are a prisoner."

"Yes, sir."

Kehr returned to his headquarters and gave orders that all the men then on sentry duty should be relieved, and sent to him. From all he obtained similar confessions to that made by the first sentry. One by one he interviewed every man in his command, and found, to his great relief, that only those on duty at the time when Celestia had made her tour of inspection had been tampered with. These he had locked up. Then he sent for Professor Stilliter.

"She's made a fine beginning," he said. "Give her time and she'd corrupt every man in the post. After that if we were attacked it would be a massacre—of us. Old man Barclay's off his head. I am willing to give her a free rein to settle this strike, according to orders, but I won't have her jeopardizing my life, or the lives of those under me."

"To-morrow," said Stilliter, "she will go among the strikers and pull their teeth. Give her rope—she'll settle all this turmoil out of hand and make everybody love each other."

"To-morrow," said Kehr, "she will find herself locked in her house."

"I shall consider it my duty to break down the door and let her out."

"Her house will be guarded and you will approach it at your peril."

"I have orders from Barclay—so have you."

"His orders would be different if he was on the spot."

"They would be the same. Restrain Celestia by force, and take the consequences."

"This place," said Kehr, "is under martial law. I shall probably send her away to-morrow. In the meanwhile don't you attempt to interfere."

"I'll telegraph Barclay."

"You will not. You will go to your room and stay there till you are told you may come out."

Stilliter turned angrily on his heel, opened the door of Kehr's office and found himself confronted by two men with rifles.

"Escort Professor Stilliter to his room," said Kehr, "and see that he doesn't leave it without orders from me."

Early the next morning Gunsdorf, Carson, Cracowitz and Tommy Barclay arrived before the gate of the stockade under the protection of

a white flag, and were admitted presently, after being blindfolded, to a parley with Kehr.

"Barclay," Gunsdorf explained, "comes on a private matter. He wants to thank the lady who saved his life yesterday. If that isn't possible he wishes permission to go back to his friends in town."

"You others have come on business. Well, I'll listen to you once more—if I can. Barclay may see the lady."

Tommy was blindfolded once more, and escorted to Celestia's house. He was pushed in, told to take off the bandage over his eyes and heard the door lock behind him.

He found himself in a plain little sitting room about twelve feet square. Two doors opened from it, but both at the moment were closed. Of Celestia there was neither sight nor sound. Tommy seated himself in a plain deal chair and waited. Half an hour passed. Then he began to call to her, at first softly and then more loudly:

"Celestia—oh, Celestia—where are you? It's Tommy."

Presently he heard himself answered in a sleepy voice.

"What is it? I've just waked up."

"Don't trouble then—later will do. I came to thank you for yesterday, and to ask why you

wouldn't speak to me. I couldn't sleep. I had to come."

"I'll come in a little while," said Celestia. "Do you mind waiting?"

After what seemed an eternity to Tommy she came.

"Oh, Celestia," he said, "you hurt me so. Why wouldn't you speak to me?"

"I don't quite know," she said, hesitatingly, "but I will now. Only I don't want to be thanked. I want to forget all about that. We can talk as we go. I am going to talk to the strikers this morning. Already some of the men here feel more peaceful. The main thing is that there mustn't be any blood shed until I have had a chance to make everybody see everything in a true light. You stopped one attack on the stockade. That was fine!"

"It was common sense."

"It was fine! Shall we start now?"

"Have you had breakfast?"

"Some of the strikers will give me a cup of coffee. That's all I need."

She smiled radiantly upon him and went to the door of the house.

"It's locked."

"Yes, I know."

Celestia raised her voice. "You! Without there! Open the door!"

A stern voice answered her:

"Orders are to keep the door locked and shoot anybody who tries to leave the house."

"That doesn't apply to me."

"It applies to you and to the other prisoner."

"Come around to the window. We can talk better there."

"Orders are not to talk with the prisoners or to look at them, unless they try to come out. Then the orders are to shoot at sight."

"Yes, but just come to the window a moment. I don't think you understand."

There was no answer. She turned swiftly to Tommy.

"What does it mean?"

"This, I think," said Tommy: "Kehr wants the stockade attempted. He is afraid I will prevent the attack and that you will prevent the defense; so he's locked us both up. Gunsdorf and a committee of strikers are with him now. They will make certain unreasonable demands. He will refuse. When they return to the town the attack will begin; and if they don't return to the town by 11 o'clock the attack will begin."

Celestia pondered this for a few minutes. Then she called again:

"Open the door! Open, I say!" but in vain. She turned.

"We'll need all our strength. Have you had breakfast?"

"I couldn't eat till I'd seen you and you'd spoken to me."

Celestia laughed and once more approached the door.

"How about breakfast?" she called.

"Orders are to supply breakfast on demand."

"Can you make it breakfast for two?"

"Certainly."

Ten minutes later the door was opened, a steaming tray was slid along the floor through the opening, and the door was once more closed and locked.

Almost in silence, for they were both very hungry, Celestia and Tommy ate a hearty breakfast.

Once again, as at the Octagon fire, Celestia and Tommy found themselves in agreement. Each was bent upon saving life. Tommy told Celestia of the fighting temper the strikers were in, and Celestia told Tommy of Kehr's preparations for making the defense of the stockade a shambles of those who should attack it.

She told him, too, how she had made a beginning of softening hearts, but seeing that she had been locked up she feared that the softened hearts had owned up to Kehr and been put where they could do no mercy.

"But, Tommy," she said, "they wouldn't be such fools as to attack in broad day, would they?"

"They are very strong numerically, and very weak in the head. Their cause is just enough, but they always present it to notice in unjust ways. Their every passion seems to them an argument. Labor is its own worst enemy. What labor needs is friends, friends of education and experience, dispassionate men and women with no ax to grind.

"If they succeed in rushing this stockade and massacring everybody in it, what earthly good will it do them? None. And they don't see it. They think capital will be so frightened that it will simply curl up its toes and yield to their every demand. Why, Celestia, there are men in that town so ignorant—you wouldn't believe it! There are grown men over there who think that all the forces of American capital are impounded in this stockade, and that if these forces are scotched capital will no longer have anyone to take up the glove for it.

"Gunsdorf's a wise old fellow. But he's not in this game because he loves labor, but because he loves Gunsdorf. Carson is a fanatic—an honest fanatic. Cracowitz is an out-and-out anarchist. It's a pity, because fundamentally theirs is the side of justice. I wish I could hear what they are saying to old man Kehr. I'm

afraid it won't be a soothing interview for anyone."

"They came with you?"

Tommy nodded.

"I begged them not to come, but Gunsdorf would do it. I think——"

"What?"

"I think that if there is an attack on the stockade Gunsdorf doesn't want to be mixed up in it—technically. I think he intends to make Kehr so angry that Kehr will throw him and his companions into the lock-up, white flag and all. Gunsdorf's not returning at the given time, 11 o'clock, will be the signal for the attack, and, good Lord! how the poor fools will be slaughtered."

"If you could get to them, and tell them about Gunsdorf?"

"They might not believe me, but if I could get to them I'd certainly try it."

"He has no right to lock us up," said Celestia. "I wonder how many men are guarding this house?"

It was only a matter of moments to ascertain that there were but two, the house being one of a row that had windows only at the front and back.

"We might get away over the roofs," Tommy suggested.

They ascended to the second floor, and found

a ladder which led to a trap door in the roof. But Tommy found it impossible to open this. It was either nailed down or held by some weight too heavy for him to budge.

They returned to the parlor and sat for a while in deep thought. Whatever Celestia's thoughts may have been they succeeded in bringing into her eyes a harsh, cold look, and when she spoke at last it was no longer in the same easy, friendly voice.

"I've got an idea," she said, "but I don't like it. That woman put it into my head."

"What woman?"

"You know."

"Mrs. Gunsdorf?"

Celestia nodded.

"That man out in front," she said, "is a human being. If he heard a woman screaming for help, he would try to help her, wouldn't he?"

"Celestia!"

"Oh, you mustn't be frightened," said Celestia coldly. "You will be standing with a rifle in your hands just as if you were threatening me. When he rushes in to save me you will have to seize him and keep him quiet until we can get away. But you mustn't hurt him."

"Suppose the other sentry comes, too?"

"He won't hear. I'll only scream—in moderation."

Tommy laughed aloud, and Celestia, forgetting Mrs. Gunsdorf, laughed too.

"We must get out of the stockade somehow," said Celestia.

"How will we keep him quiet after we've gone?"

"You must hold him so that he has to look at me. When men look at me they have to do what I say."

"I know that," said Tommy, "all except me."

"All except you."

"I suppose," said he, "it's because I love you so."

"Love! I begged you to marry me and you wouldn't."

"Oh, Celestia, how could I? I haven't a cent in the world."

"What does money matter? But this isn't the time to argue about love. This is the time to think about saving life."

The sentry who guarded the front of the house heard a sound of shades being drawn, and found that the room to the left of the front door had, as it were, closed its eyes. For a moment the sentry smiled cynically. Then remembering the one glimpse he had had of Celestia, and her wonderful look of candor and innocence, the smile faded from his face, and its place was taken by an expression of anxiety.

Just at that moment the door knob was turned violently this way and that, and as suddenly was still again. Then the sentry heard a voice—a woman's voice—a half-choked voice, full of fear and horror that half moaned and half said, "D-o-n-t! D-o-n-t!"

Then there was a sound of a heavy body being dragged away from the door.

The sentry didn't hesitate a moment. He unlocked the door, flung it open and leaped into the hallway. He was in time to see Celestia's heels bump over the threshold of the parlor door as Tommy, half laughing and half ashamed, dragged her from the hall.

The sentry leaped to the rescue of those heels and their beautiful owner.

The situation with which he found himself confronted in the parlor was not, however, in the least what he expected.

Against the opposite wall stood the female prisoner—laughing. The male prisoner was nowhere to be seen.

The gallant sentry's lower jaw dropped and hung loosely.

Celestia stopped laughing and came a step forward, looking the sentry squarely in the eyes. He had been warned not to look at her, but couldn't help himself.

"I hope you are not going to shoot anybody with that gun."

"No, ma'am."

"Then put it down."

He did so.

"Come here."

He approached close to her.

"Will you do me a favor?"

"Yes, ma'am." He had to say it.

"Promise?"

"I promise."

"I want you to wait in this room in the most comfortable chair and not leave it for an hour. Will you do that?"

The man was completely hypnotized.

He moved languidly to the easiest chair, seated himself, crossed one leg over the other and began to rock slowly backward and forward.

"Come, Tommy," said Celestia.

They closed the parlor door after them and slipped cautiously out of the house.

But there was no need of caution.

The platform along the stockade was lined with Kehr's men, and the attention of these was engaged with matters outside the stockade and beyond.

"By George!" exclaimed Tommy. "They must be expecting an attack."

They ran across the open space to the main gate of the stockade, and were halted by a sentry. Fortunately the password of the night before

had not been changed. Celestia gave it, and asked the man to open the gate. He had orders to let no one leave the stockade.

"What, no one!"

He found himself looking into a pair of profound eyes, that somehow or other seemed to muddle his brain.

"You must open it—for me!"

He hesitated, then turned slowly and began to fumble with the somewhat complicated fastenings of the gate. A few moments later Tommy and Celestia were in the open.

About two hundred yards distant was the grove surrounded by a stone wall which Kehr had not razed with the rest of the timber. It was swarming with men.

Celestia turned the color of ashes. And without a word she darted toward the grove as fast as she could run, followed by Tommy. As they ran Tommy took out his handkerchief and waved it above his head as a flag of truce.

Cries of "Stop" reached them from the top of the stockade, but they ran on.

"Shall I bring them down, sir?"

"No," said Kehr. "Damn them!"

His face was convulsed with rage and disappointment. He saw Celestia spring to the top of the stone wall and begin to speak to the men who swarmed in the grove. And his fury knew

no bounds. But mingled with it was a cold streak of caution.

He had but to make a certain signal with his arm, and the men in that grove and Celestia and Tommy and the stone wall and the grove itself would fly heavenward in one awful discharge of dynamite; but that signal he dared not give.

Tommy and Celestia were safe in the shadow of Gordon Barclay's protecting wings.

"Listen to me," Celestia was crying, "and believe me. You've got to believe me. You think you are sheltered here. The whole grove is mined. One spark of electricity and you will be blown to pieces."

The men hesitated, and looked at her in wonder. Tommy came to her aid.

Kehr, watching from the stockade, saw his victims beginning to escape. They left the grove in twos and three, sullenly but not slowly. Celestia, still standing on the top of the wall, had turned and faced the stockade, her hands on her hips.

So standing the sun shone full upon her, and she gleamed with a brightness and glory that seemed hardly to belong to this earth.

Even Kehr was moved. True courage always moved him. And in his flinty heart was a certain sense of relief. It would have been horrible

to blow so many men to pieces—dogs and fools though he honestly thought them.

That so many of the strikers had had the narrowest kind of an escape from being blown to pieces by dynamite did not make their feelings for Kehr and his men any friendlier, but one thing was certain—if harm came to the girl who had risked her life to warn them of their danger it would have to come to her over their dead bodies.

Wherever she went among the strikers she was welcomed with a kind of gallant adoration. Something about her seemed, when she entered a room, to pull the rudest and the most ignorant men to their feet. Everywhere she went she preached her gospel, softened hearts and made men and women hopeful of better things. Her rostrum was the kitchen, the front steps, the shade of an elm. She was indefatigable.

No mind, however feeble, was unworthy of her greatest pains. Little children she took upon her knee and talked sense to them. And presently only those who were naturally bloodthirsty and who loved violence for its own sake talked openly of attacking the stockade. It seemed to Celestia that the strikers' demands were not unjust, and she determined to end the strike by persuading Kehr and the men he represented to meet their demands.

Elections were coming on, and the best way to secure the labor vote was to see that labor's envelope was better filled than ever before. With a new form of government in control of the nation's most disinterested and able men there would be such a saving of national waste that doubling the pay of every laborer in the country would be but a drop in the bucket.

Tommy could not see any possible good in Celestia's form of millennium.

He felt that, innocently, of course, and with the best intention, she was trying to betray labor into the hands of capital, and he fought her doctrine tooth and nail. But what she seemed to offer was so glittering and alluring to the poor and needy that Tommy's opposing arguments found few listeners in Bitumen.

Celestia preached that government of the people by the people, for the people had been proved a gigantic failure for two excellent reasons (1), it isn't by the people, and (2), it isn't for the people. The Fathers who set down some very noble aspirations in black and white were instantly succeeded by politicians who twisted those aspirations to their own ends.

We are to-day a government of the people by the politicians and for the politicians. Patriotism, if it isn't dead, has gone to sleep. There are patriotic Virginians, patriotic Vermonters,

too, but there are very few patriotic Americans. If the great city of New York under the threat of the enemy's guns was mulcted of a billion dollars in tribute do you think the States far from salt water would care?

They'd make a loud noise with their newspapers, but a majority of their patriotic inhabitants, I think, would laugh in their sleeves. And this sort of thing is the fault of the politicians, who have beclouded all the clear issues.

That every city of the size of Pottawotauni should have a post office twice too big for it is not doing anything for the people. A navy powerful enough to protect the Atlantic Coast and the Pacific Coast from any enemy or group of enemies would be doing something for the people.

The salaries of Congressmen and Senators and pensions paid without reason or justice would go far toward eradicating consumption. As it is, the money is absolutely wasted. If some Congressmen and Senators are able and patriotic, 90 per cent. of them are the opposite, and render really able and patriotic legislation out of the question.

No business run as these United States are run could possibly be a success. No employee of such a business could be blamed for failing in respect for his employers or in loyalty to them.

Do we want our country to be respectable and a success or don't we? Let it be run with the same American efficiency with which the Standard Oil Company has been run and nobody will be poor and no part of any city will be dirty and full of disease.

If there were no waste there should be plenty of money for everybody, or at least of the things money can buy. Celestia was insistent on this. The Lord God gave us the apple tree. The kinder you are to an apple tree the kinder it will be to you, and the more it will give you. But maltreat it—let sod shut off air from its roots, let horses and cows chew its bark half off, let bores riddle it, San José scale strangle it, tent caterpillars defoliate it, and still it will for many years persist in giving you something.

Not the eagle should be the emblem of America—a mean-hearted, treacherous bird—but the noble and generous apple. Belgium, I dare say, could be kept alive for a month on the apples which rot on the ground in Westchester County every autumn.

As we waste the apple, so we waste everything else—raw material, finished product, health and brains.

CHAPTER XVI

IN the face of Kehr's stubbornness it was not easy to make progress toward a settlement of the strike and at last Celestia telegraphed to Gordon Barclay and asked for definite power to speak to the coal companies and treat with the labor leaders.

His answer was a flying trip to Bitumen.

He was very sharp with Kehr, humbled him and browbeat him, caused Gunsdorf and the other leaders to be released, and then, after a long, secret conference with Professor Stilliter, he gave Celestia the power she asked for.

Before returning to New York he sent for Gunsdorf et al., made a personal peace with them and obtained their political allegiance.

"Celestia," he told them, "is right. The troubles between labor and capital are only one symptom of the great national wastage that has gone on since the beginning of things. The Constitution is a fine instrument, but it doesn't work as it was meant to because of the politicians.

"We can't get a new Constitution without a revolution. But that revolution need not be bloody. We must give up electing men to high

office on promises of efficiency, and elect only men with records of efficiency. We must be a nation and no longer a collection of States pulling the Government every which way for local interests.

"We must see to it that the country is run like a trust bank or a great industry."

And he showed them how he believed that Celestia's system in question would wipe discontent from the face of the country.

"Celestia," he said, "has been empowered to settle this strike. In her judgment you are entitled to what you have asked for, and you will get it. But as the cost of living keeps rising, the advances which you are to receive will no longer spell luxury.

"You'll be in precisely the same box you are in now. No permanent good will come of makeshift adjustments. Labor will find no permanent content under present conditions. I look to your individual and collective support for the new Constitution.

"I believe that as a platform it will sweep the country in November, for its advantages to both labor and capital are so obvious that these two will be on the same side for once and henceforth, and when they are on the same side there is no resisting them."

Only Tommy and Mrs. Gunsdorf held out

against Celestia's influence. Tommy had never been affected by her hypnotic sway, and Mrs. Gunsdorf had devised a trick to thwart it.

Having learned that there was something in Celestia's eye, some power which she could neither fathom nor resist, Mrs. Gunsdorf maintained her own independence in thought and action by the simple expedient of never meeting Celestia's eye.

Mrs. Gunsdorf was violently opposed to Celestia's theories. This opposition was not arrived at by elaborate mental process. The two women loved the same man. And the man very obviously loved Celestia (for when he wasn't with her he was trying his best to be with her). This was enough to place Mrs. Gunsdorf on any side of any question if only it was the opposite to Celestia's.

Twice, when Celestia was addressing meetings of strikers (in the interest of peace and progress), Mrs. Gunsdorf succeeded in creating such violent disturbance that she had to be removed forcibly from the room.

The strikers' favorite place for meeting was in a large, shabby dance hall, in the meanest and most squalid section of Bitumen. Having been ejected from this hall, Mrs. Gunsdorf stood upon the outer steps, a picture of impotent and jealous rage.

A young woman who, from her plain, neat costume rather suggested that she might be a lady's maid, and whose features were not distinctly visible owing to a thick veil, turned from perusing a bill poster which announced to the passerby the purpose of the meeting, at that moment in progress, to look at Mrs. Gunsdorf.

Mrs. Gunsdorf in turn eyed the stranger, and her rage gave place gradually to curiosity. Neatly and smartly dressed young women were very rare in Bitumen.

"Is the meeting over?" asked the stranger presently.

Mrs. Gunsdorf shook her head.

"Nor likely to be as long as there's a fool left to listen. When she gets through speaking they yell for her until she has to speak again. Ever hear her?"

Mrs. Gunsdorf shrugged her vigorous shoulders with contempt.

"I never have," said the stranger. "I think I don't want to."

"Then what brings you to Bitumen? People are pouring in from all around to hear what she says. There doesn't seem to be any other reason for coming to Bitumen."

"But she doesn't seem to have impressed you favorably?"

"Me! Hush! I don't say she hasn't got

good looks of a kind, but what a man can see in a namby-pamby, goody-goody like her gets me. Well, I'm going to move on. So long!"

The stranger hesitated, then simply followed and overtook Mrs. Gunsdorf.

"Do you mind if I walk with you? I—I was going your way."

"How did you know which way I was going?"

"I mean the way you are starting to go." The stranger laughed frankly. "And that's not the whole truth. I came to Bitumen to find out certain things. I'm a sort of reporter and new at the business. The boss told me there was a big story here and for me to go and get it. He only gave me a few hints to go on, and——"

"You want to ask me some questions? Is that it? Well, fire ahead."

"Of course," said the stranger, "anything to do with Mr. Gordon Barclay is a headline for the newspapers, especially now that he has taken up with the girl from heaven and is advocating her policies. Mr. Barclay's adopted son, as everybody knows, is on the other side—I mean about the policies. Well, I—I mean my newspaper—has got a hint that this—this young Mr. Barclay got into trouble down here—came very near getting lynched, and that the reason was—well, something to do with a woman.

"Now, you live here. It isn't a very big

community. You know all about everything that goes on. You see, it means such a lot to me, getting this story. Can't you help me out?"

"Tommy Barclay," began Mrs. Gundorf, paused, gritted her teeth and went on, "is mashed on the girl from heaven."

"Yes," said the stranger, almost in a whisper.

"There's a woman in this town," Mrs. Gundorf resumed, "who'd be willing to lie down and let him tramp on her. No, I don't mean Celestia. She likes him well enough in her namby-pamby, too-busy-to-think-of-love kind of way. I mean another woman with red blood in her veins.

"Well, she made all the row. Crazy jealous she was, I guess. Her love seemed to turn to hate, and she made out that he—oh, got too fresh with her, and yelled for help, and her husband and some friends came, and they were going to lynch Tommy Barclay, had him on a ladder with a rope around his neck, when along she came——"

"The woman?"

"The girl from heaven. And she talked, and pretty soon she got hold of the woman, and made her own up."

"Made her?"

"If you're fool enough to look in her eyes, she can make you do any blame thing she wants

you to do. But I've learned sense. I don't look at her eyes, and then I'm all right."

"And then there was no truth in the rumor that Mr. Barclay got too fresh with a woman?"

"No truth at all."

The stranger made a small, faint sound. It wasn't a word or a sigh or a murmur, but it seemed to mean something, for Mrs. Gunsdorf stopped abruptly, looked sharply at her companion and said:

"You seem disappointed."

"I?"

"Yes, you!"

The stranger laughed, nervously. They had halted just in front of the "family entrance" to a saloon.

"I want to know why you're disappointed."

"Why," said the stranger, a little lamely, "I might be a friend of Mr. Barclay's, and I might think it would be better for him if he got over his fancy for Celestia. And a fancy for another person would prove that he had, wouldn't it?"

"Are you a friend of Tommy Barclay?"

After hesitation, the stranger said, "Yes."

"So am I," said Mrs. Gunsdorf, "and that being so, I guess we've got a talk coming to us. Let's go in here."

A moment later Mrs. Gunsdorf and the stranger faced each other across a dirty table

in a dirty-windowed room that smelled of drink, and a bartender with an evil face had served them with a horrible mixture of whisky and water. Mrs. Gunsdorf gulped down a large mouthful with apparent relish, but for the stranger one small sip seemed to be enough.

"We can talk straighter," said Mrs. Gunsdorf, "if you'll lift that veil."

The stranger hesitated, then obediently turned up the veil, and disclosed the regular and beautiful features of Mary Blackstone.

"I guess," said Mrs. Gunsdorf, after a moment of admiring scrutiny, "we'll unswallow the story about your being a reporter. You're a friend of Tommy Barclay and you belong in the same walks of life that he does."

Mary nodded.

"Well, I'm Mrs. Gunsdorf. I'm the woman that tried to put him in Dutch."

Miss Blackstone's eyes blazed with sudden interest.

"But you—you don't hate him any more?"

"Me? I hate him just the same way you do—neither more nor less. But I'll tell you who we do hate, if you don't know. We don't hate each other because he's passed us both up. We're in the same boat. We hate her."

"We have good cause to."

Mrs. Gunsdorf's shapely hand shot across the

table, and Mary Blackstone clasped it for a moment in hers.

"I've told you my name," said Mrs. Gundsorf.

"I am Mary Blackstone."

"Gee!" exclaimed Mrs. Gundsorf, "but I thought she'd be dressed different. How do I know you're not stringing me again?"

"These are my maid's clothes," said Mary. "I didn't want to be recognized."

Mrs. Gundsorf still looked a little doubtful, and Mary, smiling a little, touched the neck of her dress and disclosed a string of pearls, each pearl perfect and not much smaller than a cherry.

"I believe you," said Mrs. Gundsorf. "But cover that thing up; you don't want anyone in Bitumen to know you've got that."

"If I lost it," said Mary, "and the right person found it, I wouldn't care."

She spoke in a cold, defiant sort of way, and then fastened her dress once more over the necklace.

"You think," said Mrs. Gundsorf, "that if it wasn't for her—you'd stand a chance."

"Don't you feel a little that way, too, Mrs. Gundsorf? You are wonderfully good-looking, you know, and Mr. Barclay seems to have cast in his lot with labor. It looks as if you'd stand the better chance of us two, doesn't it?"

Mrs. Gunsdorf shrugged her shoulders.

"We couldn't stand any less chance than we do now. And the oftener he sees her, the less that chance gets."

"If she really comes from heaven——"

"The quicker she goes back the better?"

Mary laughed a cold little laugh.

"I'd not be the one to hold her back by the skirts."

"Nor I."

"But," said Mrs. Gunsdorf, "if she went to heaven, and anyone in this town had a hand in sending her, and got found out"—she shuddered—"that person would be torn to atoms."

"Where does she live?"

"They've fixed tents for her and her party just outside the town. They call it 'Headquarters of Celestia—the Girl from Heaven.'"

"Who's in her party?"

"There's Professor Stilliter—I guess she goes to him when she's in a fix for what to say next. There's a kind of half-witted fellow named Douglas. She keeps a couple of secretaries going day and night. There's a cook and servants, lots of people. Wouldn't be easy to come at her."

"Have you any idea," asked Miss Blackstone, "how much these pearls I showed you are worth? No idea? A woman could live on the income."

She could wear pretty clothes and have a servant. If she had a husband she didn't like, she could afford to divorce him.

"Do you know what I'd do if anyone should come to me and tell me that a certain person was never going to get in anybody's way again? I'd give those pearls to that person gladly, or I'd lose them where that person could find them."

"What's the use of riches when your heart's sore?"

"No use at all," admitted Miss Blackstone, "and still I'd rather be rich and heartbroken than poor and heartbroken, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Gunsdorf, thoughtfully. "I would."

Miss Blackstone rose, her hand at her throat where the pearls lay.

"I hope," she said, "that I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again—soon. What do you think?"

"Oh," said Mrs. Gunsdorf, "I shouldn't wonder."

And she, too, rose from the table, with a look in her eyes at once firm and resolved.

And now the town of Bitumen became, as one paper put it, the center of a new world.

Kehr had assented grudgingly to the settlement of the strike on Celestia's terms. He had come out for Celestia's policies. And because of his very grimness and stubbornness his late enemies

began to see that he would be a tower of strength to any cause which he should espouse.

In that town, where a week ago his life would not have been worth a moment's purchase, he was already being talked of as the next United States Senator from Pennsylvania.

Special correspondents had begun to flock into Bitumen. Many who came to jeer stayed in a state of great wonderment and began presently to number themselves among the faithful.

Stop for a moment and try to realize the power for good or evil, the collective power, of the newspapers of America. If they are not the whole voice of the people, they are alone that part of it which can make itself heard.

The newspapers united could elect any man they pleased.

You could conjure up to yourself a hoary, nightmarish monster out of the newspapers united. But the newspapers will never become the wicked or beneficent monster of might. Some will always continue to speak for the foolish, some for the wise; some one thing one day and the other thing the next. Even thus divided, great is their power.

If we have any wisdom as a nation, we owe it to the newspapers. Likewise, we owe it to them that we are not always wise or on the side of righteousness.

Celestia then began to develop strength in the

newspapers. She was to develop so much before her course was run as is hardly believable. Already the idea of changing our government was no longer a news headline, but a definite and by no means uncomfortable thought in the minds of men.

Some newspapers detested the thought because it was new; others welcomed and embraced it because it was new. Still others, and in the end these became her most powerful supporters, took some such attitude as this:

"You may argue for the new gospel; you may argue against it. You may call it treason; you may call it progress; but when all is said and done, certain facts will shine out clear as crystal.

"As a people we ought to be happy; we are not. Millions who ought to be clean and healthy are dirty and sick. There is enough money for everybody. A very small portion of this is in the hands of the efficient few; the rest is nowhere, being lost, wasted, thrown overboard.

"In those whom we elect to high office two qualities only seem necessary—inefficiency and selfishness.

"What are we going to do about it?"

A certain scientific person (of fiction) having constructed a very large monster in the image of man, brought it to life—and it got away from him and raised all kinds of Cain.

Celestia was no Frankenstein; but Professor Stilliter no longer found in her the apt and docile pupil of earlier days. He found it harder and harder to control her. More and more she thought for herself. The reason for this failure in his power over her was not far to seek.

He loved her with a love that he found daily more difficult to keep in bounds. To control another person's mind great concentration is necessary. Now, the state of love makes it almost impossible to concentrate upon any other state. So when Professor Stilliter would be trying to will Celestia—to say precisely so and so to an audience, the half of his mind would be concentrated upon her beauty (joyously), upon her desirability (gloatingly), upon his love for her (ardently), and upon her dislike for him (with fury and hatred of those whom she liked much).

Consequently she didn't always say or do precisely what he willed her to say and do. Still, she had been under his sway for so many years that it was only natural for her to think upon as many subjects as he thought. And indeed Celestia's oratory was finer on the new basis for self-initiative, and she had more power on the minds of those who listened to her.

If Stilliter could have been entirely eliminated from her life, her life at least for a time must have gone on very much as it was going on. She believed that she came from heaven, and

that she had come to make the world better, safer to live in, cleaner and happier.

Tommy argued with her so incessantly and often so intolerantly that if she hadn't been in love with the mere sound of his voice she couldn't have stood it.

Late one afternoon she came home to her little city of tents, very tired, and lay down in a hammock under a shady tree to rest. In spite of her celestial origin, Celestia was very human, and just as attractive to a sticky house fly as any other human being.

Such a house fly made a dead set for her, and she found it impossible to rest. She went into the headquarters tent, which was the biggest and coolest, and the day's work being over and the secretaries gone, tried to rest there. And couldn't. She was tired and discouraged.

She was tired because she had been doing too much, and she was discouraged because she was tired. Tommy had an uncanny faculty for dropping in upon her when she was in those moods. Possibly Freddie the Ferret had something to do with this faculty, for he worshiped Tommy.

Be that as it may, Freddie was about the tents when Celestia came in tired. He vanished presently, and a little later Tommy appeared, looking very brown and manly and refreshing.

Celestia heard his voice and called out to him,

a little petulantly, perhaps. Tommy poked his head in through the door of the big tent and greeted her loudly and joyously. He found her telling stories to a child of the camp, but the moment she saw him she put the child down and greeted him cordially.

Meanwhile Professor Stilliter, in his tent, reading a deep and thick book on "The Psychology of Government," heard the two voices—and couldn't read another word.

"Celestia," said Tommy, "you look so little and helpless and unprotected, curled among those curtains, that I'm tempted to pick you up, put you in my pocket and take you somewhere where you can't get into any more mischief."

"I dare you to try!" exclaimed Celestia.

Then they both laughed, and Tommy advanced into the tent.

So much articulate speech Professor Stilliter overheard, but no more. After that there came to him only the murmurs of one voice or the other, sounds which to a jealous man were more provocative of impotent rage than actual words would have been.

He stared at the book, in which he was no longer able to read a word, and "eat his heart out," as the saying is.

"One of these days," he thought, "she'll say 'yes' to that meddling fool and leave all my

fine schemes high and dry. If I really thought that, and sometimes I really do think it, I'd—I'd——"

Now the Professor took off his eyeglasses and thought very hard indeed and looked very horrid and blind and evil. Every now and then he murmured to himself: "My God, why not?"

"So you dare me to try, do you?" said Tommy.

Her eyes sparkled now; she was feeling very much rested.

"Yes, I do."

Quick as any cat the young man leaned over and picked her up from the midst of the curtains as easily as if she had been a kitten, and so held her almost at the level of his chin. And now Celestia felt completely rested. It was as if she had received refreshing strength from Tommy's strong arms.

"Oh," he said, "if a deluded nation could behold you now!"

"Put me down," she exclaimed, "somebody might see us."

"Of course they might," comforted Tommy. "The tent flaps are wide open. But I don't care if I never put you down."

"Tommy!" she exclaimed.

"I should worry!" said Tommy, but when she began to struggle he put her down.

"And what did you mean," she asked, her great eyes flashing, but not with anger, and her cheeks flaming, "by a deluded nation?"

"You don't look as if you could," said he, "but you've deluded several million people out of a hundred million, and it looks as if you were going to delude the rest. But you'll be sorry enough for yourself when they find out they've been deluded! Celestia, I've the most love for you that anybody in the world has for anybody. Isn't that enough? You love me, don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

"You ought to trust the man you love. You ought to trust his judgment."

"I do—about love. But——"

"Oh, I know what is coming. You think you see clear, but you don't. You're as blind as a bat. But some day you'll see—you'll see when your own chance of happiness is gone forever, and your theories have brought more evil on mankind than it endures now."

"Tommy," said Celestia with a shudder and great seriousness, "how can you love and think me evil?"

"You evil! You precious lamb!"

She waved aside the arms that had gone impulsively out to her.

"If in your judgment I am going to bring more misery into the world, then I am evil in

your judgment. How can you reconcile that with loving me?"

"Celestia," said Tommy, "if you select such a man as my father (much as I love him) for President, give the power of making the laws to such men as Kehr, whom you are talking of for Senator—why, he's placarded all over town—why, you'll have an efficiency government, I don't deny that, but mark me, it will be an efficiency that will begin at home! Those who are rich now will be richer, and there will be more of them; those who are poor now will be poorer and more wretched."

"You assert and assert and assert, but you don't reason."

"I don't reason! Well, I like that."

"Give me just one reason then for thinking that too much efficiency is a dangerous thing."

"That's a challenge," said Tommy. "I accept it, and here's one good reason. The first thing a government that was too efficient would do would be to muzzle the press, so that nobody could complain of its efficiency. When you muzzle the press you extinguish liberty."

"And I tell you that a man would rather be poor, filthy and free than a rich slave. There's only one real difference between an aristocracy and a republic. The newspapers of a republic print the news and the newspapers of an aristocracy don't."

"According to you, I'm not fit to live."

"Oh, Celestia!"

"If you even own that I was going to ruin the world and that my death would leave the world as it is, would you wish me dead?"

"What an awful thought, Celestia!"

"Would you?"

"I would wish you somewhere where you could do no harm. I would keep you always in my arms and never let you go."

"Tommy, dear, you're . . . awesome sometimes."

It was almost dark when Tommy tore himself away and went back to town. Celestia would have liked to have sat on and on in the darkness, thinking long thoughts. But her reverie was interrupted by a voice, which its owner, without great effect, was evidently striving to make agreeable.

"Are you ready to talk a little business now? May I come in?"

"Yes, come in."

There was a reluctance and petulance in Celestia's voice which did not help to assuage the jealous frenzy which possessed Professor Stilliter.

"Celestia," he said, "look at me and listen to me."

She looked and listened.

"This folly of yours, this weakness, is going to imperil the cause——"

The words meant nothing to her, trembling with a passion growing more and more careless of consequence. He was exerting all the powers of the will to subdue her.

Presently her eyes faltered and half closed; her head drooped. An equally extraordinary change came into Stilliter's voice. It became at once greasily soft, caressing and triumphant.

"Come to me. Come close."

It was now very dark in the tent.

"Kiss me! Kiss me!"

At that moment from far off there sounded the whistle of a departing train. On one of the platforms stood a young woman, thickly veiled, who might have been mistaken for a lady's maid.

She was waving one hand to a friend, who waved back; with the other she appeared to be somewhat significantly tapping the neck of her dress.

The friend on the platform looked surprisingly like Mrs. Gunsdorf.

And at that moment there was a sound of footsteps just outside the tent. The feet which made the sound belonged to Freddie the Ferret. With his usual good luck he appeared to have arrived in the very nick of time. Professor Stil-

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"Freddie the Ferret appeared"



liter was not at that time to receive the kiss for which his greedy mouth was waiting.

"Wake up!" he said in a disgusted voice.

Celestia put her hands to her eyes, woke and couldn't remember just what had been said.

"I think I'm too tired to talk," she said.

"So I see," said Stilliter, as Freddie entered the tent. "Better rest then."

And the psychologist withdrew, quite sane again and rather badly frightened. An open-flapped tent was certainly no place for making love by violence; yet for a moment the cautious man had lost all thought of self-control and all fear of consequences.

Freddie shook hands and Celestia laughingly held his hand a moment. He had to be assured that Professor Stilliter had not been offensive before he would go.

It was on the afternoon of the next day that Barclay, Sturtevant and Semmes came to Bitumen with a whole train load of capitalists and bid-dable men expert in politics. The entire town—almost the entire township—was at the station to meet them. Several brass bands played different patriotic airs at the same time, and doubters and skeptics were carried off their mental balance by the excitement and the shouting. Swaying and tottering above the heads of the

crowd were all sorts of banners and transparencies, variously inscribed and emblazoned—

“Vote for the New Constitution.
Kehr for Senator.
Every Citizen a Stockholder.
Dividends Instead of Taxes.”

From the station to the stockade, now wide open and shorn of its warlike barbarities, the crowd marched, pushed and scrambled, headed by the bands, and having in its midst a number of broken-down, funereal-looking hacks in which, four and four, rode the most pompous and distinguished-looking visitors, smoking long black cigars and smiling and raising their hats whenever the crowd called upon them by name.

When the head of the procession came near the tents of Celestia, set back from the road on a little knoll, it halted, and every man bared his head and began to shout her name. The shouting brought her presently to the door of the main tent—a slender girlish figure all in white, whose eyes shone with excited triumph, whose mouth smiled with ineffable sweetness and who waved to her followers and adorers a white and slender hand.

Even at that distance her effect upon men was magical. Hats which looked as if they had

grown on their wearers' heads for years as fungi grow on stumps, came off and were waved violently or thrown into the air. Throats grew hoarse with shouting. Then she backed from their sight into the big tent after one last wave of the hand.

And they, because they knew that she would come to them later in the stockade and speak to them and fill their hearts full of hope and courage, allowed her now to withdraw from their sight, and, after one more minute of shouting, they took up the march once more and went roaring toward the stockade—late strikers, late strike-breakers, capitalists, politicians, men, women and children—all wild now with excitement and enthusiasm—the two most contagious diseases in the world.

Celestia stood meanwhile in the center of the big tent; and she too was trembling with excitement and enthusiasm and the sense of personal triumph. And she looked so young and innocent and beautiful that for a moment the frown faded from Tommy Barclay's forehead and the ache from his heart.

"Oh, Tommy," said Celestia, "you won't spoil it all *now*, will you? You'll be somewhere in the crowd where I can see your face when I stand up to speak, won't you?"

"It goes to my heart," said Tommy, "to see

how they love you. It goes to my heart to see how happy their love makes you. But I can't go to the stockade to be a face in the crowd. I'm afraid things might go to my head."

"I was so happy," said Celestia, "and now I'm not so happy."

"Those people are in such a state of mind," said Tommy, "that if you said the word they would march on Washington and try to pull the President out of the White House. I've hoped against hope. I've seen your power, known that you had it and hoped that you didn't really have it. You made a little mark on the great city of New York; you will go back on the wave of your triumph here, and sweep it off its feet, as you have swept Bitumen. If you go to the stockade and show yourself once more to those crazy people and speak to them, you will start a campaign of revolution that will sweep a sufficiently sane country off its feet.

"I see you flashing from city to city and from village to village in your special train, winning all hearts, persuading all minds and spreading, as I think, upon my honor, the seeds of national disaster. In the name of all that is most sacred to you, Celestia, stop while there is still time. Speak to those people if you must, but tell them that you have been deceived, that you are the plaything of capital and that they have been de-

ceived; wash your hands of politics and sophistries, step down, resign. In the image of all that is noble and fine you have created a monster. Don't breathe the final breath of life into that monster and bring it to life—a Frankenstein that you can never hope to control once it gets on its feet and begins to think murderous thoughts. If you go to the meeting in the stockade you will bring the monster to life. Have you no fear of the consequences?"

She shook her head firmly, but with a little sadness.

"Celestia," he said, "back of these tents the woods run to the hills, the hills to the mountains. Will you come?"

For a moment it appeared that she hesitated.

"Won't you come?"

Then she drew a deep breath and stiffened her spine.

"I believe," she said gently, "that God sent me to do what I have done and what I am going to do."

"I know that you believe that," said Tommy, with a thrill of reverence in his voice. "If I didn't know that you believed, I shouldn't let you go to the stockade."

"You couldn't hold me forever."

He drew the back of his hand across his eyes, as if to shut out some horrible scene.

"No," he said, "I couldn't hold you forever. They would come and take you away from me. I should have—you would have to be so that you couldn't speak to them—any more."

She came close to him and lifted her hands to his shoulders and looked up into his eyes, a pitiful little figure, shrinking and frightened.

"You couldn't have the heart, Tommy—not *me*—no matter how wicked you thought I was."

"I couldn't," said Tommy, "thinking that you are a misguided angel of light. No. I couldn't. . . . Well, dear, God knows I wish I had your eloquence and the power upon hearts. You won't find everybody on your side; you'll find many abler men than I talking and writing against you and trying to save this country from madness. I—oh, I love you so that I feel as if my heart was breaking. And to think that I can't even wish you good luck."

"There's the motor for me now," said Celestia. "I know you can't wish me luck, but you could kiss me if you wanted to."

Those who had heard her speak often said that she had never spoken so well—with the exception of just the first few moments, when she seemed to be a little dazed and nervous. Three times during her speech the crowd rose to her and shouted till it seemed as if there was never going to be any end to the shouting, and when

she had finished speaking, and stood there swaying like a lily, and flushed with a sense of nobility of power and triumph, pandemonium broke loose.

Out of that pandemonium, that began with cries of "Celestia! Celestia!" another name gradually took form and substance. "Barclay! Barclay!" they bellowed, at first in a kind of syncopated roar, then in unison, and finally with a rhythm that drove men half wild with the desire to be in time with it and that actually made some of the buildings in the inclosure sway.

"Barclay! Barclay! We want Barclay—Barclay for President! Barclay! Barclay!"

Thus the boom was launched. Barclay rose from his place on the platform, walked straight up to Celestia, took her right hand in his and lifted it to his lips. Then he turned, standing on her right hand and faced the shouting and the tumult. There was no smile of triumph on his face, only a look of grim, bulldog determination and probity.

After a long time they let him speak. And after he had spoken they went wild again.

"I will do what a man may," he said in a voice that carried to the most remote pair of ears, "to make the wishes that you do me the honor of wishing come true. If I am elected President, I will make these United States into a

fit habitation for men and women and little children, so help me God!"

A little later Barclay's secretary stole away to the telegraph station and sent a message. An hour later the inhabitants of Bitumen, dispersed now, and for the most part drunk, were electrified by the spectacle of a snow-white train of cars that pulled slowly into the station and was then backed onto a siding.

Celestia transferred her few belongings from her tent to the rear car of this train. The car ahead was for Stilliter and certain other managers and advisers; the next car was the office car. The one ahead of that was for a chosen body of the most select, able and pampered correspondents.

The snow-white train pulled out of Bitumen, and the whirlwind campaign began.

I cannot at this moment lay hands upon her exact itinerary, but it is enough to know that representative parts of the whole country had a chance to see her. Now for the most part her audience would be composed of thin tall white men in long black coats with broad black felt hats; upon the outskirts of such negroes could be seen; or she would speak to men in flannel shirts and leather "chaps"; or from the rear platform of her car, halted at some little station that stood in the midst of wheat or corn spreading to

the horizon, to hard-headed farmers and their hard-headed women folk; or to foreign-looking men and women, their hands stained with picking and sorting oranges; or to wildly rough and chivalrous men in mining camps; to sophisticated crowds in great halls in cities, to crowds of sweating laborers in choking halls in cities that belched out so much smoke day and night that you could hardly ever see the sun or moon. Wherever she went the effect that she had upon her audiences was magical. But she could not go everywhere; she could not hope to reach everybody in the larger cities; and those who were sent north, south, east and west to speak for her—able orators, long tried in the political arena, and worth every cent of their pay—had not, of course, the power of hypnotizing into belief. She merely looked at a man and he believed, whereas from them, with all their golden tongue work, their impassioned friendship for the downtrodden and unfortunate, many went away doubting.

Other trains were making whirlwind tours of these United States. Not every capitalist was on the side of capital. A badly frightened and very able man in the White House was fighting for his political life. Into the arena there came at last a dribbling of genuine patriots, who, like their forefathers, were ready to give for their

country their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor.

It wasn't all smooth sailing by any means. Still no new movement had ever made such progress in so short a time, and the end was not in sight, nor the beginning of the end.

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CHAPTER XVII

A MAN gaining in strength from day to day among those who stood for the old order of things and opposed Celestia, was Tommy Barclay. He had a great fervid quality of honesty which no one could doubt, and he had a look on his face, very lean now from short nights, hard work and the constant buffetings of trials, of a young hero who has set himself to do to death a dragon that is ravaging a countryside. With experience and practice had come a quick-wittedness in emergencies, ease and the better control of a naturally fine and far-carrying voice.

His triumphs were many. His downfalls came when he crossed Celestia's path too closely. If he was speaking by chance in the same town at the same time, he would have no more of an audience than he could have counted on the fingers of his hands. If he followed her too closely, he spoke to deaf and unsympathetic ears.

"The crime of the ages!" cried one rough miner who was suffering from too much heart, too much whisky and too little mind. "You

great big, whistlin', thunderin' boob, did you ever set eyes on the lady?"

And Tommy, to his horror, had failed to find any answer to that question anywhere in his head, and had stammered and become tongue-tied, and been bored and had done harm to a cause which, so fanatical he had become, at this time seemed to mean life and death to him.

In exalted moments he felt that he had crushed the love of Celestia out of his heart.

Once, in a little Northern town, standing on an improvised rostrum of packing cases and in the midst of addressing a large crowd of quiet, sensible people who appeared to like him and to like what he said, it was Tommy's bad fortune to have Celestia arrive from her snow-white car and steal his audience away from him. His "sea of upturned faces" became a pool with more than half the faces turned away to try and see what all the excitement was about further down the street and everybody getting more and more restless and inattentive. A sudden tremendous cheering took the rest of Tommy's audience away from him on the run, with the exception of one young woman who wore a thick brown veil and was half concealed by the stem of an elm.

For a moment or two Tommy did not see her; his eyes were on the backs and twinkling legs of his fast-disappearing audience, and there was

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"His triumphs were many"



a smile on his face, half rueful resignation and half amusement. He did not notice the woman until she called attention to herself by speaking:

"Don't stop," she said; "they haven't all gone. It isn't fair to me; I've come a long way to hear you."

With an exclamation of pleasure Tommy leapt down from his rostrum and ran to greet her.

"Why, Mary Blackstone!" he exclaimed. "What the dickens are you doing 'way out here?"

"I've told you. I came to hear you speak. You are getting to be rather famous, you know, and I thought it was my duty (her eyes sparkled under the veil) to hear you—at least once."

"Well," said Tommy, smiling back, "you missed all the good parts. Something tells me that I was going to finish very strong, and then the diversion came and only you stood your ground. Shall I get back on that soap box and give you my peroration? Or shall we see if we can get near enough to Celestia to hear her?"

Celestia's name fell from his lips with the utmost coolness and nonchalance, so that Mary Blackstone's heart gave a sudden bound of joy, and the hatred which she had for the girl from heaven abated somewhat.

"If you don't mind," she said, "we'll not try

to get any nearer to Celestia than we are now. Indeed I'd rather walk in the opposite direction, because I see something that looks rather like a park, and that would mean a bench to sit on. Even your impassioned oratory couldn't make me forget that I had to stand for a long time to get the benefit of it."

They turned and walked toward the little city park.

"What are you really doing in this far-away place, Mary?"

"I missed you at Lynnsburg and Pies Crossing and succeeded in connecting with you here."

"You didn't really do all that traveling just to hear me talk through my hat, did you?"

"No, I didn't, really, and you didn't really talk through your hat. I came, as a matter of fact, to tell you something that I think you ought to know."

They reached the little park, chose a bench and sat down.

"I'm all ears," said Tommy, "and I'm dying of curiosity."

"I think you ought to know," said Mary, "but I'm rather frightened at the thought of telling you."

"Much more of this," said Tommy jocosely, "and I'll not be dying of curiosity, I'll be dead." Then, gravely, "Is it serious?"

"I think so very . . . Tommy, you'll make what use you please of what I'm going to tell you; but you'll promise not to let anyone know that you got the story from me."

"I'll promise that, of course."

"Of course," said Mary, "if Mr. Barclay is the next President it will be a great thing for his friends, among whom he has told me so many times to include myself that I have ended by believing him. It would be a great thing for me."

"It would be a sorry thing for the country."

"I'm not so sure of that. He doesn't think so."

"I credit him with the utmost sincerity, but with absolute lack of political vision. If they pass the new constitution, and my father once gets in the saddle, only death will get him out. His successor would be a man of his own choice and we should have ceased to be a free people."

"We should have begun to be an efficient people."

"It is better to be free."

"That is a matter of opinion, and, anyway, it's neither here nor there at the moment. If he is elected it will be a great thing for me—won't it?"

"You would have more position and power."

"Well, I'm willing to forego that. I'm willing if you like to say that it is better to be free

than efficient; better to be poor voluntarily, and unwashed, than rich and clean by force. Then I admit all that. What do you think of the political prospects?"

"I think," said Tommy solemnly, "that the election depends on Celestia. If she can reach enough people before she breaks down from overwork, she will elect her President and her Congress. I've seen this over and over. We send our best men to a place, they make a good impression, show the people the fallacies in Celestia's gospel of prosperity and happiness, and then, having laid a good foundation of sanity and honesty, along comes Celestia and sweeps the place off its feet, and in twenty minutes undoes the work of a dozen good men."

"If—if she broke down—now, within a week or so, has her campaign enough momentum to succeed by its own weight?"

Tommy considered thoughtfully.

"It's an even bet," he said, at length.

"But people don't really swallow her assertion that she was sent from heaven for the especial purpose of running a political campaign?"

"Many swallow it. She does herself, you know. And hers is no political campaign. It's revolution."

"Of course, she has a wonderful gift of ap-

pearing sincere. But she can't really believe what she tells people about herself!"

"But she does," said Tommy.

"You're sure?"

"I have known her very intimately, and I'm sure."

"If her faith in herself could be shaken?"

"How could it? The best detectives in the world have been working on her origin. No clew leads anywhere. If she doesn't come from heaven, where does she come from?"

"She comes," said Mary, "out of the heart of a gigantic conspiracy."

"She is no conspirator."

"Unconsciously only. Tommy, where the detectives have failed, I haven't. I know all about Celestia. Who she was, where she went to, where she comes from and where she's going."

"Going?" exclaimed Tommy in such a voice that a pang of jealousy shot through Miss Blackstone's heart.

"Many ignorant people," said she, "actually believe that Celestia is divine and descended from heaven. As her beauty fades her voice loses its power, and if in some way she should show herself human—marry—have a child—the belief of those people would turn into disbelief. But if having seated the new government firmly she should vanish in the heydey of her beauty, inno-

cence and power, vanish as mysteriously as she appeared, more than half the nation will end by believing that she was truly the Daughter of God. Believe me, Tommy, the powers that produced her at the right time aren't going to let her grow old and wrinkled. She will go back to heaven. And a nation will believe that the government she gave it was devised by God and must be right."

"Do you mean they would murder her?"

"As casually as you would murder a mosquito."

"This is frightful!" exclaimed Tommy, jumping to his feet.

"I haven't told you who she is."

"True, you haven't."

He sat down again.

"Professor Stilliter," said Mary, "selected her as a perfect specimen of childhood. She was kidnapped and brought up in a great underground system of caverns—somewhere in the Adirondacks."

"But she would remember."

"No other child has ever been brought up as she was. From the moment they kidnapped her she was kept in a state of hypnosis. She was taught by hypnotic suggestion. The caves in which she was brought up seemed vast to her as space itself. Bright angels appeared to come and

go. Through the caves is the only access to a certain mountain top. There she could exercise in the fresh air unseen by anyone. Her physical life was just as real as yours or mine; her mental life was nothing but dreams, hallucinations and imaginings.

"Stilliter was her teacher, and one other man."

"What man?" asked Tommy.

"His name doesn't matter. Just before it was time to bring her to earth, he—well they caught him trying to make her kiss him—and ever since then he's been—dead.

"Her memory tells her of no physical ills or wants, only of a wonderful, ineffable, disembodied, serene state of happiness and holiness. There was a Voice—to which all bowed down in worship. That voice told her at last that she must descend to earth and do as she—has done."

"What an extraordinary story!" exclaimed Tommy. "But incredible."

"No," said Mary, "not in the least. Extraordinary, if you like, but not incredible. You don't know Stilliter. Her name before they took her to heaven and named her Celestia was plain—Amesbury."

At that name a host of old and poignant recollections flooded Tommy's mind. For the second time he sprang to his feet.

"My God!" he cried. "My little Amesbury girl—of course she is. A hundred times I've been on the verge of that knowledge—and yet because it was impossible that she should be—the definite knowledge never really came to me. For *Heaven's* sake!"

"Now do you believe me?" asked Mary coldly.

"I must, Mary. But how did you find this out?"

"It doesn't matter. I wormed it out of somebody. Now what will you do?"

"I'll go to Celestia and tell her about herself, and shake her faith in herself."

"You'll need proofs."

"You think so? I'm not sure. Are there any?"

"I can't produce any. But——"

"But what?"

"Well, it might be a good thing if you could locate the cave. That's the only thing I can think of, offhand."

Tommy fell into a brown study. Then he said:

"Mary, what is your motive in telling me all this?"

"Perhaps I don't want Mr. Barclay elected. Perhaps I dislike Celestia so much that I want her to be humbled even at my own expense. The motive doesn't matter."

Mary's real motive in making the foregoing revelation to Tommy was not entirely clear even to herself. Above all things, she wanted to be rid of Celestia. The promise of a fortune in pearls to the person who brought her definite word of Celestia's definite elimination from mundane affairs had not borne fruit. Now Mary thought that a collapse of Celestia's power over men, through a shaking of her faith in herself, might produce definite results. Celestia, on learning that she was not a divine being but a fakir, would become not only valueless to the arch-conspirators but a stern and awful menace to their plans. They would succeed swiftly and without mercy where Mrs. Gundorf had failed.

It wasn't for want of trying that Mrs. Gundorf failed. It wasn't because her spirit was weak or her arm nerveless, nor because the knife which she carried in her stocking wasn't long enough or sharp enough for her purpose. Advantageous opportunities for doing the murder and escaping undetected were rare. She had had but one, for Celestia was so surrounded and guarded as a rule that she was hard to come at.

Mrs. Gundorf had only had one good chance. She had failed then because she had been so foolish as to look Celestia in the eyes, and the power to do the wicked deed had been stricken from her.

She didn't have money enough to track Celes-

tia all over the country. (Mary should have provided for this.) But she had done her best.

Now another excellent opportunity seemed to offer.

Celestia's snow-white train, practically deserted, occupied the siding. It would be taken off at midnight and run slowly, so as to arrive not too early in the chief city of the North woods.

Mrs. Gunsdorf chose a moment when no one seemed to be looking and boarded Celestia's own car at the observation end. She knew the room in which Celestia slept and entered it. There was a three-quarter bed in white enamel, a bureau ditto, an arm chair, and a door ajar that disclosed the white and nickel fixtures of a white tiled bathroom. The little suite fairly dazzled with its cleanliness and whiteness. If there is anything in contrast, it was a wonderful setting for a bloody crime.

The room offered only one hiding place. Mrs. Gunsdorf knelt, flattened herself to the floor and crawled under the bed.

As always, an ovating crowd followed Celestia to her car, or, as on the present occasion, surrounded her to it. Beside Professor Stilliter, she walked among them, talking with gentle persuasion to those nearest her. When she mounted the steps of her car they cheered her to the echo.

She had to show herself several times and make little speeches before they finally dispersed and went about their business.

Tommy Barclay alone remained. He mounted the steps of the car and knocked on the glass of the door. Professor Stilliter opened it.

"Could I see Celestia a minute?"

"I'm afraid not. She's dead tired."

But Celestia had heard Tommy's voice and came out of her stateroom, where she had gone to lie down.

"I'm not too tired," she called, "and I'd like to see him."

"But only for a minute," cautioned Professor Stilliter, and then, with seeming reluctance, he withdrew, and closed behind him the door of the passage that led past the staterooms to the dining-room end of the car. But the Professor went no further. Having closed the door, he applied his ear to a hole that he had had bored in it for just such occasions as this, and listened.

"I'm sorry," Celestia was saying, "that I had to steal your audience away from you. It would have been more sportsmanlike to let you finish speaking and then to have tried to steal their hearts and minds away from you. Wouldn't it?"

"Yes," said Tommy slowly, "I think it would, Miss—Amesbury."

Behind his door Professor Stilliter started as if someone had stuck a knife in him.

"Why Miss *Amesbury*?" asked Celestia.

"Because it's your real name. I knew you when you were a baby. We were great friends. Then you went away. My father said you had gone to heaven—so you had, but only to a place that you were taught to believe was heaven. Then you came to earth—and I've recognized you. I wonder I didn't before. But I do now. There's no mistake possible."

"What utter nonsense are you up to now?"

"Sometimes little girls wear socks and chubby brown legs. The little *Amesbury* girl had a little round mole just under her left knee."

"So have I," said Celestia. "What of it?"

"Why, this man Stilliter," said Tommy, "who kidnapped you when you were a kiddy, has taught you to think, by mental suggestion, that you are what you think you are, instead of just a lovely girl of flesh and blood like the rest of us."

She shook her head, and murmured something about "nonsense"; but there was something so earnest and convincing in the young man's voice and manner that what he said could not but shock and disturb her.

"I'm sure you believe this, Tommy, but—it's quite out of the question. I remember my heavenly home as if I had left it yesterday."

"You remember a mental condition, not a physical reality."

There was a short pause. Then, "What you've said ought not to trouble me at all," said Celestia. "I don't know why you say it, or why you think it's true, but *please* don't argue with me about it now. I'm so tired that I'd almost like to believe it myself."

Professor Stilliter pricked his ears at that, for he knew very well that wanting to believe a thing lives next door to believing it. If Celestia could be made to believe what Tommy had told her, her usefulness would be at an end. She would have to be got rid of. The Professor trembled. The triumvirate would be for putting her underground. So would he; but he would be for putting her, not in the grave, but back in those vast caverns whence she came, and where he, who had power over her, could visit her at his convenience.

He wanted the woman more than the triumph of that cause in whose interest he had trained her so painstakingly for so many years.

Let her believe. He might be willing to help convince her. He wasn't sure.

"If," said Tommy, "I can show you this cave—if I can find it—then would you believe?"

"I don't know," said Celestia. "I'm so tired—please don't talk to me about it now." Then she smiled at him, and said: "It's a wonderful

invention, though. Find the cave first and *then* talk to me."

"Celestia—don't you want to believe?"

Then Professor Stilliter heard a sound that almost made him foam at the mouth. "She does want to believe," he thought, "and she will. And her usefulness will be at an end, and she will belong to me. Why not anticipate a little?"

He stood there trembling. He heard Tommy say good-night, and go. Then he heard Celestia enter her stateroom, and lie down with a sigh of weariness. He listened for a long time. The sound of her breathing told him that she had not yet gone to sleep. And, anyway, it was not in his mind to disturb her now. That would be for later, when the train was in motion and the lights out.

So at last he walked stealthily off to his own car and called for a big glass of brandy and soda.

Meanwhile, Celestia lay on her bed, her hands folded on her breast and her mind reviewing and reviewing the statements that Tommy had made.

And under the bed, trembling with hatred and excitement, lay Mrs. Gunsdorf, waiting for that time when Celestia's regular breathing should tell her that the defenseless object of her hatred was sound asleep.

So tense were Mrs. Gunsdorf's muscles that

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"The first scene"

the handle of the stabbing knife which she had drawn from her stocking was wet in her hand.

Presently Celestia's breathing sounded slow and regular.

"She's asleep," thought Mrs. Gunsdorf; "the time has come," and she began cautiously to edge herself out sideways from under the bed. But Celestia was not quite asleep and the noise Mrs. Gunsdorf made waked her, and just as Mrs. Gunsdorf was beginning to rise from the floor, Celestia slipped from the bed, eluded a hand that clutched at her dress, snatched from the bureau a heavy silver hand-mirror, the only weapon of defense that was in sight, and darted into the observation compartment.

Celestia was less like a creature flying for its life than one who attempts to understand a situation with a view to mastering it, but who in the meanwhile is not going to run any risks of being accidentally hurt. Had the other been the case, she must have fled screaming through the outer door of the observation compartment, out into the night. She did nothing of the kind.

In the center of the place was a heavy table covered with periodicals; behind this Celestia took her stand, ready, like a child playing tag, to dodge in either direction. Her eyes, wildly excited, but fearless, strove to meet and master the eyes of her assailant, but could not, so bound

was Mrs. Gunsdorf by the knowledge that she must look anywhere but at those eyes.

Followed a time of stillness, tenseness and quick breathing. Then efforts by Mrs. Gunsdorf to get on the same side of the table with Celestia, and calm, reasoned thwartings of these efforts by the latter.

Mrs. Gunsdorf was at a disadvantage. Not much older than Celestia, she was heavier, less alert, and she dared not make a full use of her eyes. Her face averted, so that with the tails of her eyes she only had partial glimpses of Celestia, her rushes were more or less at random. Once she threw herself headlong half across the table and stabbed, as a snake strikes—only to find that she had miscalculated the distance entirely.

There was another pause.

"Why do you want to hurt me?" asked Celestia. "Why won't you look at me?"

Mrs. Gunsdorf's only answer was another rush. Celestia threw a chair in her way and once more succeeded in keeping the heavy table between them.

She was getting angry. What right had anyone to chase her with a knife? If the woman would only look at her!

Mrs. Gunsdorf, thwarted and murderous, was nonplused at the ease with which, so far, Ce-

lestia had eluded her. Her eyes, downcast, had for their momentary range of vision, a pile of reviews, just in front of Celestia, and a portion of Celestia's dress.

Quick as thought, Celestia laid the hand-mirror with which she had armed herself face up upon the pile of reviews, and behold! in the depths of the shining refractor the eyes of the two women had met at last.

So great was Mrs. Gunsdorf's dread of those wonderful eyes, so greatly had the memory of what they had once done to her worked upon and grown in her imagination that the sudden sight of them gazing commandingly up into her own from the depths of the mirror numbed and dazed her like a blow on the head. With a great effort to collect her swimming senses, she jerked her head up, and found herself looking into the eyes themselves. Catastrophe was upon her; she had no longer the power to look away.

First hatred of Celestia was wiped clean from her heart; she did not know why she had come, what she was doing in that observation car. Then the knife fell from her nerveless fingers, and she felt peacefully drowsy and as if many heavy troubles had been lifted from her shoulders.

But Celestia, having about her something of

the sternness of a just judge, picked up the knife and put it back in Mrs. Gunsdorf's hand.

"At last," said Celestia, "you shall go away thinking that you have done what you came to do—Celestia, who had done you no harm in this world, but whom you wish to stab to death with that knife, is asleep on her bed in her stateroom. She is very tired and very sound asleep; still you must move cautiously."

And Mrs. Gunsdorf, her eyes fixed and dead, but the rest of her features wearing a wicked, murderous expression, began a horrible, grotesque, tiptoed advance toward the open door of Celestia's stateroom. Then, in her hypnotized brain, she seemed to see Celestia asleep upon her bed; and then she was driving her knife many times to the hilt in the beautiful white breast.

"Once more for luck," said Celestia, with a kind of awful grimness, "make it a baker's dozen. Thirteen; now she's dead. Now she can't try to help anybody any more. You're sorry now and frightened, aren't you? Well, perhaps they won't catch you. Nobody saw you come, nobody will see you go. But, of course, poor Celestia will be found murdered, and there will be a great hue and cry. And if they find a woman hiding in the woods with a wild, hunted face and bloody hands, and a bloody knife in them, they'll know just what to think. So slip

into the bathroom there and get the blood off your hands and off the knife. The left-hand tap is the hot water. Hurry! There is no time to lose."

So Mrs. Gunsdorf hurried and hurried and washed and washed, and Celestia stood grimly by and looked on.

"It is curious that it doesn't all come off, but then there was such a lot of it. Try the pumice-stone, try that little bottle; it's for removing ink stains. I'm afraid it's no use—you'll always see those spots on the hand that held the knife. You'll really have to go now. Someone is sure to come, and you'll be caught."

She accompanied Mrs. Gunsdorf, now quaking with terror, horror and remorse, to the rear platform of the car.

"You'll hide in the woods at first," said Celestia. "Do you see that star? Follow it for an hour—then you'll wake up. But you will remember that you have murdered an innocent person. There will be the blood on your hand to remind you. If there was another, or others, who set you on to do this thing, you can report to them that the thing has been done."

Then Mrs. Gunsdorf hurried down the steps of the platform, round the main line of rails, glancing furtively about her, and disappeared into the night and the forest.

Celestia dined all alone that night, and went to bed soon after, utterly exhausted, after locking the door of the observation car and of her own stateroom for the first time in her life.

At midnight a locomotive was attached to the snow-white train and it was drawn slowly on its way deeper into the heart of the North woods.

Soon after the train had started, Professor Stilliter entered Celestia's car from his own, and, after plying a well-oiled pass-key, stood looking down at the darkness where she lay.

Presently he touched the bottom of an electric torch and her face shone brightly in the circle of radiance. Then with his free hand Professor Stilliter began to make caressing passes over the smooth white forehead, up and down and across and across, never touching it, but always so close that his hand had a sensation of warmth.

After a while Celestia passed from natural to hypnotic sleep; her eyes opened partially and had no expression in them.

"To-morrow, Celestia, dear," whispered Professor Stilliter, "when your work is done, when you have spoken to the people, you are to go back to that heaven from which you came. Now that you are beginning to doubt your divine nature, your usefulness is over. But the heaven to which you are going is not what you think, my blessing! It will be a heaven on earth. I

shall be in it with you. To-morrow we are to be married. Say that you are glad."

Celestia's lips parted, and in a voice cold and without emotion she said, "I am glad."

"You will say that you wish to go for an automobile ride in the forest. At five o'clock there will be a motor ready and waiting. You will enter this, refusing to be accompanied by anyone, and you will do exactly what the driver tells you. I had planned our elopement for to-night, but there was a difficulty about the license."

He bent over her as if to kiss her, but something at the very last moment seemed to restrain him.

"Sleep now, darling," he said; "the other sleep, the sleep of nature that makes us all over again between days."

He tiptoed out, closed the door of her state-room behind him, locked it, turned and received a smashing blow in the face. He gave a grunt of fear and pain and heard his eyeglasses smash to pieces as they hit the floor of the car.

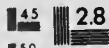
For a long time he had been in the habit of carrying two spare pairs in leather cases, one in each of his waistcoat pockets; he now reached for one of these and it was knocked from his hand as he strove to ward another blow from his face—after the blow had landed.

Guarding his face and head with one upturned



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arm and elbow, and breathing fast with fear and excitement, Professor Stilliter sought and found the door of the passage that led to the other end of the car, and succeeded in placing it between himself and his assailant. Then groping with both hands, and in his blindness bumping from side to side of the brightly lighted passage, he turned and fled.

Meanwhile, Freddie the Ferret picked up the broken pieces of Professor Stilliter's glasses and threw them into a cuspidor. Perceiving the leather case containing the second pair lying where it had fallen, he picked it up, and after a moment's hesitation opened it, slipped the glasses into his pocket (he thought there might be a reward offered for them), snapped the heavy case shut and laid it in a prominent position on the center table.

Then he began to wonder what everything was all about anyway. He himself had no business in the observation car without invitation; but he had an excellent excuse. He had almost missed the train, had just managed to swing on to the rear car, and since he was one to whom no simple lock offered any difficulty had let himself in. He had been on the point of passing through the train to his own quarters forward when it had seemed to him that it would be a glorious thing to stand guard all night before Celestia's door like one of those knights of old of whom

he had just been reading in a book which, according to Freddie's judgment, was half glory and half animosity.

There was only one light burning very low in the observation car. Freddie turned this out and started to stand guard in front of Celestia's door. After a while he moved further off and sat guard, and then slept guard. Then he heard something moving, and without thinking, for he was still half asleep, attacked that thing, and as he would have said himself, "Made a monkey of it."

Discovering now that his victim had been Professor Stilliter, who had only come, probably, to fetch a magazine or something of that sort, Freddie was in mortal terror. It would have comforted him greatly could he have known that Professor Stilliter was equally frightened.

One thing was sure, Freddie mustn't be discovered in the morning. So he made his way forward to his own quarters, his teeth knocking together with fear of Professor Stilliter, but encountering nothing more dangerous than a number of negro porters sound asleep.

The next morning Professor Stilliter recovered the leather case which he imagined to contain what was now his one remaining pair of extra glasses, and without opening it slipped it into his waistcoat pocket.

The glasses themselves were, of course, in the

Ferret's possession; throughout the day he kept his ears open in the hope that a reward would be offered for their return. None was, and presently, in his usual happy-go-lucky way, he had forgotten all about them.

Through the night, now standing by the hour on sidings, now at water tanks, now crawling forward, the snow-white train had covered the few miles which separated its last stop from the chief city of the North woods, which was to see the finish of Celestia's "upstate" campaign.

An energetic tramp walking the ties could have covered the distance in about a quarter of the time.

Less than midway between the last stop of the snow-white train and the chief city of the North woods was Tommy's old stamping ground and the cave in which Celestia had been brought up.

Tommy, traveling through the night, at first on a bicycle, along the ties and then on foot, knowing now that there was a cave to be found, and about where to look for it, had discovered the entrance thereto, just at dawn, and had penetrated deep enough to discover certain traces of human habitation and deceit.

Of these last he selected a tarnished metal star that had once shone like gold, and put it in his pocket.

Further into the labyrinthine system of caverns he had not dared penetrate, for fear of being lost. "When I bring Celestia," he said "to show her the proofs, I'll bring a ball of twine, like people in fairy stories, so that after exploring we can find our way out."

All through that night another person had been journeying through the North woods; but with a different motive. Tommy had hastened toward something which he hoped was ahead; Mrs. Gunsdorf had been fleeing from something which she feared was behind.

Having made a great circle, she came out on the railroad track, and walked the ties. But she did not reach that city to which all were bound until the middle of the afternoon. Then inquiring the way, and hiding her right hand (because of the blood stains which she had not been able to wash off), she sought and found a certain quiet hotel of which Mary Blackstone had given her the address.

It was to this same address that Tommy, fresh from his discoveries, had hurried for a bath and rest. The rest turned into the same kind of rest that a fallen tree enjoys. He slept like a log on his narrow bed, and was aroused late in the afternoon by a sound of voices.

The partitions of the little North woods hotel were of thin pine boards. The occupant of room

No. 1 could hear the snorings of the occupant of No. 5—four rooms away. Mary Blackstone had the next room to Tommy's, and to this room came Mrs. Gunsdorf with the hand she dared not show and her story of murder done in the night.

To Tommy it did not matter who had murdered Celestia. She was dead. He listened in a kind of trance to the story of the killing. He heard Mrs. Gunsdorf rejecting the pearl necklace, and he overheard a violent struggle in which Mary Blackstone prevented Mrs. Gunsdorf from killing herself, and got the knife away from her—and a little later he heard Mary saying, "Take this; it's only a quarter of a grain. You'll sleep and forget."

Then he left his room and burst open the door of theirs, and in a voice so weak with passion and horror that it could hardly be heard he whispered to them the things that they were—and was gone.

A moment later he was running at full speed toward the railroad station. And a few minutes later the two women, in an automobile which Mary had commandeered, were fleeing, as they imagined, for their lives.

To get away—to hide in the woods—to escape to Canada—anywhere for a respite—nothing else seemed to matter to them.

Some man tried to oppose Tommy's entrance

to the observation end of Celestia's car only to be thrown so violently to one side that he realized he had encountered a force with which he could not cope. And Tommy, half dead with grief and rage, burst into the car and found himself face to face with Celestia.

She was standing and appeared to be in the best of health; but she had a dazed look, or rather an inattentive look. She did not seem to resent Tommy's violent intrusion in the least, nor to be surprised at it, nor to express any other emotion. The clock in the car indicated a few minutes to five.

During the day Celestia had spoken to half a dozen audiences. Many who had heard her first speech had heard the other five. And the culmination of her upstate tour had been a triumph.

"It's so wonderful!" exclaimed Tommy. "I heard—but you're not even hurt, are you?"

"I am going for a drive," said Celestia, in an expressionless voice. "Is the car there?"

"Yes, the car is there," said Tommy.

"I have to go at five o'clock."

She neither looked at Tommy nor spoke to him, but as the clock began to strike five she hurried out on the rear platform, descended to the ground, and crossed the down track to a large black touring car that was waiting at the side of the road, the engine turning slowly.

The driver of the car, a dark man heavily gog-

gled, sprang to the door for Celestia. Freddie the Ferret, who was hanging about, also sprang to perform the same office, with the result that this small service for their Goddess fell to the lot of Tommy. At least he was the one to get his hand on the door knob. But he did not at once open the door. Celestia's behavior was so strange that he thought she must be ill. While he hesitated, the driver said, "Here—one side!"

"Are you speaking to me?" asked Tommy icily.

The man did not answer. He merely attempted to get hold of the door knob, and failed.

"Better luck next time," said Tommy.

"Please open the door," said Celestia; "I have to go for a drive."

"What do you want mixing in this?" said the driver. Tommy did not answer, but said to Celestia:

"I wouldn't go alone with this man. Why not take me to look after you? I won't speak even once, if you'd rather not."

"Better get in, Miss," said the driver.

"Something wrong here," said Tommy, as Celestia pushed him gently to one side and started to open the door for herself.

"Hurry up," said the driver.

Celestia hurried and Tommy's face began to flame with rage. At the same time he formed a

pretty shrewd guess at the condition Celestia was in.

"How can you tolerate such insolence?" he exclaimed, his brows lowering.

"I have to do everything the driver says," exclaimed Celestia in an unemotional voice.

She climbed into the car, and shut the door after her, the driver sprang to his seat, and Tommy stepped calmly on to the footboard. The driver, seeing this, attempted to throw Tommy off the footboard. Tommy simply got his fingers in the man's collar, jerked him clear of the car and let go. The man fell heavily on his head and lay still.

"If you have to do everything the driver says," cried Tommy in a jubilant voice, "I shall be the driver. Jump in, Freddie, while the jumping is good. I may need you."

Freddie jumped in and seated himself by Celestia with every evidence of pride and importance, and the car lurched forward just as its former driver began to show signs of life.

It was only a hundred yards to where the road entered the woods; a dense second growth of spruce, birch, pine, balsam and larch, succeeded after about a mile by a splendid fragment of primeval forest. Here Tommy brought the car to a stop, got out, and opened the door of the tonneau.

"I'd like you to sit in front, by me," he said gently.

And Celestia obeyed him like an automaton.

"There's dirty work here," thought Tommy. And once more the car went forward. He addressed various questions to her, but got no answers. It was as if she did not hear him. She sat bolt upright, looking straight ahead with unseeing eyes. It was only when he spoke words or phrases with a semblance of command that she showed signs of understanding. As when he said, "Don't try to fight this road. Take it easy. Lean back."

The road came out of the forest, passed between two swamps and ascended a long hill, fenced and pastured, from which there was a view of rough farm land, and in the distance a wooden village with a steeple in the midst.

At the bottom of the hill a car had skidded from the road and come to grief in a boggy ditch. The driver was trying to lever it out with a fence rail. Two women stood watching him. At the sound of Tommy's car sweeping down upon them, they looked around, and Tommy recognized Mary Blackstone and Mrs. Gunsdorf. His face became white and grim. He gave his engine more gas, and rushed by them, hurling a column of thick dust high in the air.

Mrs. Gunsdorf, at sight of Celestia, became for a moment like a stone image of horror. Only her head turned a little, and so standing she looked after the car. Then very slowly, as if she was lifting heavy weights, her arms, twisted and tense, rose from her sides, reached the horizontal—and then without a word or a sound she dropped dead in the dust.

CHAPTER XVIII

NEXT to the church in the village stood the little parsonage. A car was drawn up in front of this, and in the middle of the road, looking expectantly at the car which Tommy was driving, stood Professor Stilliter with a white flower in his buttonhole. Also on the lookout was a clergyman and a lady who was doubtless his wife.

To Tommy the scene was like a page in a book, written for children in words of two syllables. Stilliter, the white flower—the clergyman. It was almost too simple.

To Stilliter the driver who should bring Celestia to him was a man of no importance. Not until the car was almost upon him with undiminished speed did he divert his eyes from Celestia's face to that of the man beside her. Upon the face of that man there was a jubilant boyish grin.

Tommy pressed a button, the car gave one of those sudden signals of warning that sound like a giant being sick at his stomach.

Professor Stilliter leaped aside, but not in time to escape being grazed by the mud guard, which sent him rolling.

Freddie the Ferret leaped to his feet for the sheer joy of being alive to see his enemy bite the dust. When Professor Stilliter got to his feet the car was passing out of the village. To get his own car under way was not the work of a moment, the driver having gone into the back yard of the parsonage for a pail of water, and remained to gossip with the maid of all work.

But Tommy knew that there would be a pursuit, and thenceforth drove his own car, or rather the one with which he had eloped, as fast as he dared. He had no personal fear of Stilliter. But he wished, if possible, to show Celestia the cave, and the proofs that she had once inhabited it. The state of hypnosis that she was in troubled and distressed him. But sooner or later it must pass, he thought. Certainly nature must come to the rescue. Meanwhile, he took a pathetic pleasure in working on her mental condition with a view to promoting her comfort.

"You look tired, dear," he said. "Are you?"

No answer.

"The driver says don't be tired. And you have to obey the driver."

This had a marvelous effect. Her head no longer drooped, color came into her cheeks, and into her eyes a look of vivacity. In one way Tommy was rejoiced; at the same time he felt as if he would rather like to cry. There was

something so pathetic about her absolute docility.

"Soon," said Tommy, "you are going to leave the car and go for a long walk through the woods with me. You'll walk fast and not get tired. We're going to the wonderful cave where you lived and played when you were a little girl, and which they taught you to believe was heaven——"

He broke off suddenly. Then asked her a question.

"Do you have to do as the driver tells you?"

"Yes."

"Do you have to believe a thing if he tells you to believe it?"

"Yes."

It would be absurd to say that Tommy was not tempted then and there to do an unmanly thing. In a few moments, by the power of mental suggestion, he could undermine her belief in herself, in her origin and in her destiny. It would not even be necessary to take her to the cave. They would simply drive on and on until they came to a civilized place and could be married. All this occurred to Tommy and tempted him. But like the good gentleman that he was, he resisted the temptation at once, and with finality. If he was to shake her beliefs, it would be by fair means, open and above board.

Half an hour passed. Tommy shut off power,

and brought the car to a stand at the side of the narrow road.

"Come, Celestia," he said, "and follow me."

He turned his back upon the road and stepped off boldly into the woods. Celestia followed him, walking as she had been told to do with swift tirelessness. And the Ferret followed her.

There was no need to describe that walk or the country through which it led them. It was just such a walk as Tommy had told her of, long and fast. But it didn't tire her. It was for the most part along narrow blazed trails, but sometimes Tommy took short cuts known to himself. When there was no longer light to see by, they rested, and Tommy put his coat around Celestia and Freddie put his over her knees. They rested there till the moon rose, and then went on more slowly, but no less surely, until they came to the bold, upthrust mountain mass at whose feet Tommy had found the entrance to the famous cave.

And now the fact that Celestia showed no sign of coming out of her trance worried him immensely. What was the use of taking her into the cave and showing her its charm and tinsel? Better to explore it more thoroughly himself, but carefully, lest he get lost, so that when she came to her right mind he could show her through with more speed and authority. Once

more he put his coat about her, and told her to sit just within the entrance of the cave. To Freddie he gave his knife and showed him how to cut balsam boughs for a couch and pillow.

"When Freddie gets enough," he said, "he will make you a bed, and you must lie down on it and rest."

To Freddie he said:

"Go back down the trail, and do your cutting there. I don't think Stilliter can have followed us, but if he has you will hear him coming. In that case get back to the cave as fast as you can and shout into it as loud as you can."

Then he took from behind a ledge one of a number of candles which had served him on his previous visit and the piece of chalk, lighted the former and proceeded to his work of exploration. His method was simple. Whenever he made a turning that might be difficult to remember or retrace, he made a chalk mark on the granite, according to a system of directing marks which he had devised. So proceeding, and ever gradually ascending, he penetrated deeper into the mountain, his mind glowing with amazement at the subterranean marvel of nature, and with indignation at thought of the deceitful and irreverent use to which it had been just used by man.

To retrace his steps would be perfectly simple,

because of the chalk marks. All he needed was enough light to see them by.

Tommy had entered the cave in ignorance of two things. The first was that there was another entrance to the cave, known only to Professor Stilliter, and the other is best told perhaps in Tommy's own words. It was a piece of knowledge that came to him suddenly out of a clear sky, or should we say a dark cave.

He stood stock still and swore twice.

Then he said to himself:

"What a confounded blithering idiot I am. All I had to do was to tell her to wake up, to come out of her trance, to be herself and she would have obeyed. Better late than never, though." He turned suddenly to retrace his steps, and that motion saved his life.

There was a deafening crash, and the bullet which was intended for Tommy's heart drew blood from his hand and knocked the candle from it. The place was in total darkness.

Then Tommy heard Professor Stilliter's voice:

"Got him, by God!"

Tommy had the sense to keep perfectly still. He even held his breath. Then he heard cautious footsteps, as one who groped in the dark, and then died away until there was no longer any sound at all. He went down on his knees and began to grope for the candle. Every second

wasted favored the chance of Celestia's falling into Stilliter's power. Tommy's mental state was half a groan and half a cry of impotent rage. If only he could have got his hands on Stilliter! What had become of Freddie the Ferret? Why hadn't he given warning? Oh, God! Oh, God!—

Freddie the Ferret had not given warning for the simple reason that Professor Stilliter had not reached the cave by the trail along which Freddie was cutting balsam from the shrubbier trees. He had come up from a different direction, and entered the cave by its other mouth. He had expected to find Tommy and Celestia somewhere in its depths. As we know, he had found only Tommy. Having, as he thought, disposed of Tommy, he had now to find Celestia, who was, as he imagined, somewhere near the outer entrance to the cave. And there, just within it, he found her, Tommy's coat about her shoulders.

"Come," he said.

"The driver told me to wait for him."

"I tell you to come with me. You are no longer to obey the driver. He is a dirty hound."

She rose with a kind of reluctance.

"The driver is a dirty hound," repeated the Professor. "Say it yourself."

"He is a dirty hound."

"He is dead. Say you are glad."

"I am glad."

"You want to come with me."

"I want to come with you."

"Up the mountain there is—there is a minister and witness. We are going to be married to-night. I have telegraphed the triumvirate that your work done, you have gone back to heaven. Soon you will be in heaven. Say that it will be heaven with me—my bride."

"It will be heaven with you."

Nothing colder or more automatic than Celestia's voice can be imagined.

"Kiss me."

She kissed him. And as to what has been said of her voice the same may be said of her kiss. And at that moment, it may be said that Professor Stilliter earned whatever fate might befall him.

Grinning like a satyr, his pulses thundering with passion, the Beast took Beauty by the hand and led her up the mountainside toward the little hut that was known to him.

At that moment Tomny, groping in the darkness, half dead with dread and anxiety, had not yet found his candle, but was just going to—too late to be of any help.

But at that moment also Freddie the Ferret, coming up the trail, with his usual luck, per-

ceived Celestia and the Professor in the moonlight.

He dared not shout to Tommy in the cave. He laid down the great double armful of balsam boughs on which his divinity was to have rested and, weighing in his unbalanced mind the little penknife that he carried against his mortal fear of Stilliter, he drew a deep breath and followed after them up the mountainside, on feet that made no sound.

In far New York the triumvirate, dining at Gordon Barclay's house, received the following telegram, which Professor Stilliter had sent, so sure was he of outwitting Tommy, from the village in which he had intended to marry Celestia:

“Wayside, Adirondacks.

“TO GORDON BARCLAY, Esquire:

“Sure now that the cause for which she came to earth will triumph, Celestia the Goddess has gone back to heaven. We shall never see her any more.

“STILLITER.”

Said Semmes: “The blank of a blank has abducted her himself.”

Said Sturtevant: “What the devil does he mean?”

Gordon Barclay, after thought, said: “Her

work is over. We are going to win. There is no doubt about that. It is better for humanity that she should go. And yet it is very horrible to think—to think what it is possible to think. I hope to God that it wasn't bungled—that she didn't suffer."

He was silent for a moment. Then, his voice strengthening:

"The Gospel that we have taught her to preach has more to it than we thought. Let us speak bluntly. Many years ago the scheme was convicted by greed and the lust of power. With the years, these passions fail in me. I would like to do good to humanity. Our scheme—the Gospel which we have preached through Celestia is a weapon with a double edge—a philosophy to use—or abuse. If I am elected President, gentlemen, I shall do what I may to—to—oh, you know what I mean. . . . I thought I wanted Power. To hell with power! I want to be great."

He shut his mouth on the word like a steel trap and, deeply moved, sent for his butler, and told him to bring another bottle of wine. . . .

Celestia and Stilleter came to the door of a little log hut.

"That," said the Psychologist, "is the gate to Heaven—enter, my angel."

As the Beast was about to force her into the hut the silence of the night was broken by a twig crackling sound that might have been made by a cautious foot pressing gently on a very dry twig.

Stilleter faced sharply about, and listened.

His eyeglasses and his strong white teeth, the upper lip being drawn back with a kind of snarl of apprehension, gleamed in the moonlight.

The sound was not repeated. Gradually the Professor's snarled lips relaxed and closed over his teeth. But for some time longer he stood listening and trying to see into the shadows. Then he turned to Celestia, and after a moment of silent and greedy contemplation spoke.

"We are going to be married," he said. "We are about to enter the church." And he followed suggestion by suggestion, it is not quite clear why, unless he had in him a streak of that quality which causes a cat to play with a mouse.

In Celestia's mind rose a shadowy picture of an altar, of a clergyman in a white surplice, of candles that burned in candelabra, of an altar boy, of a great bell made of flowers. She was standing facing the clergyman and the altar, at the foot of the steps which led to it. Why she was standing there she did not know. Oh, yes, she was going to be married. She was going to

marry Professor Stilliter. She didn't know why. She didn't love him. He had made her say she did more than once. She had heard herself say that she loved him. But it had been only her lips that had said the word, not her mind, nor her heart, nor her soul.

Now she was being married. The clergyman was asking her some long solemn question. Now she was repeating words after him, but only with her lips.

"I, Celestia, take——"

Freddie the Ferret had never been more puzzled in his life. He was not very familiar with the marriage ceremony, but still he recognized the fact that Professor Stilliter and Celestia standing a little way from the log hut were going through something of the kind.

But where was the priest? Freddie, peering from under the tree which hid him, could not see any third person. Perhaps the priest was in the hut speaking to them through the open door.

Driven by a curiosity which overmastered his fear of Stilliter, Freddie crept out of his hiding place and advanced over a broad outcropping of granite on feet which made no sound.

The mockery of a marriage service over, Professor Stilliter no longer made any effort at self-control; he seized her in his arms, and was

himself seized by the collar and jerked vigorously backward.

It was so sudden and so unexpected that for a moment Professor Stilliter's heart stood still, and he almost died of fright. Then with a kind of whining cry he tore himself loose and faced about.

Professor Stilliter was a powerful man, and Freddie was no match for him. They clinched after an exchange of blows, and Freddie a moment later found himself lying flat on his back, on a very hard place, with Professor Stilliter sitting astride of his solar-plexus and beating him in the face with his fists. But this method of reducing the writhing, dodging, struggling Ferret to insensibility was not quite enough. With his left hand claspng the youth's throat, Professor Stilliter reached with his right for a heavy lump of rock. There was murder in his eyes. It was that look of murder that Freddie, who had succeeded in freeing one arm, struck at.

Something bright and shining flashed in the moonlight, there was a sound of glass shattered to atoms, and for the moment Professor Stilliter was stone blind.

He gave a grunt of rage, and reached into his waistcoat pocket for the case which he supposed contained his one remaining spare pair of glasses. As we know, the case was empty.

Unmanned by this horrible surprise, the Pro-

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"Freddie threw himself in her way"

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fessor forgot his intended victim for a moment, and Freddie, seizing the golden opportunity, made a desperate effort to rise, capsized the Professor, eluded the snatch which the latter made at him and won free.

Professor Stilliter rose slowly to his feet, his face pale as with the anticipation of death. So he stood a moment, and then in a voice that shook he called to Celestia, who had remained standing in front of the hut.

"Come here, Celestia," he called.

She moved obediently toward him. But the Ferret threw himself in her way. Some instinct told him that these two people must be kept apart. Celestia did her best to reach Stilliter, but Freddie prevented her by force. He threw his skinny arms around her and dragged her slowly in an opposite direction.

Stilliter did not repeat the order to "come." He merely called to her to "hurry." And obediently she hurried; but in the direction which Freddie had been forcing her to take. She had hurried a hundred feet before Stilliter realized his mistake. He called to her to stop, to turn back, to come to him, and all these things she tried to do, but Freddie would not let her. And he forced her further and further away, across the mountainside and down. Direction was not in his mind, only distance.

Professor Stilliter's commands to Celestia

grew fainter and fainter, until at last they could no longer be heard. And now the moon had sailed her course through the heavens and had descended behind the mountain, and there was a darkness in which Freddie was almost as helpless as the victim of his chance blow.

He still had Tommy's knife, and with this he cut a great pile of tender balsam for Celestia to lie on. By good fortune the night was not cold. Celestia lay till morning without moving or closing her half-open eyes. And Freddie stood guard over her, then sat guard and then slept.

Stilliter also slept after a time. He had found his way to the hut, and had controlled his panic-stricken mind sufficiently to reason that if he was to find help or if help was to find him it would not be at night, but in the day time.

He had many nightmares.

Toward dawn he waked in a cold sweat. In his sleep he asked himself this question:

"How will I know when it is day?"

Tommy found his candle at last, lighted it and retraced his steps by means of the chalk marked at the turns and forks to the mouth of the cave. He had not expected to find Celestia. And yet it shocked and unnerved him not to find her. He called to her at the top of his lungs, twice, then thrice, and to Freddie. He had no

answer. To continue shouting was a waste of breath. He would need all his breath perhaps to catch up with Stilliter and Celestia. Already he was on his way down the trail which led eventually to where he had left the purloined automobile, and along which somewhere or other he hoped to come up with the psychologist and his victim.

Stilliter, Tommy reasoned, on coming up with the abandoned automobile, must have left his own, taken to the woods and reached the vicinity of the cave by this very trail.

Why hadn't Freddie the Ferret given warning? Tommy thought that the poor boy had probably been shot down in cold blood. There was no time to look for the body. Tommy proceeded at a dog trot—not a run exactly, but that gait, a little faster than a walk, that makes the least demand upon the wind and muscles. He kept this up, with occasional lapses into fast walking, until the moon set.

"They must have had a tremendous start of me," he thought, "or else," and his heart sank, "they're gone some other way." He paused abruptly and hesitated. "Why," he thought, "he wouldn't make the poor child take this long tramp again without a good rest. Even I don't like it any too well, and I'm strong as a horse. He's probably taken her somewhere just out of

the ear-shot of the cave; he may know of some shelter, and I've been getting further and further from her instead of nearer to her."

Still Tommy could not make up his mind to go back to the cave. Nothing was sure. If Stilliter was somewhere ahead with Celestia, and Tommy gave up following, the game was up. If they were merely resting near the cave they would be coming along in the morning and he could ambush them somewhere along the trail. And he hurried on as best he could in the darkness.

His own car was as he had left it. Stilliter's was standing just behind it. The driver had wrapped himself in a lap robe and was sound asleep in the tonneau. Also in the tonneau was a good-sized wicker picnic basket, which on examination proved to be well stocked with sandwiches, cold chicken and Thermos bottles containing hot coffee and soup.

Tommy carried the basket into the woods without asking permission of the sleeping chauffeur and ate a square meal. He had not until now realized how hungry and thirsty and tired he was. The choicest provisions in the basket he put aside for Celestia. "If I'm hungry and tired," he thought, "think what she must be! But I suppose Stilliter tells her that she's just

had a square meal and she believes the dog, but that can't last forever."

Having eaten, Tommy rested for half an hour, took up the heavy basket, and once more hit the trail. But now he went slowly and stopped often to rest. He had seldom been so tired in his life, and only an overmastering love and anxiety for Celestia kept him going.

It was no longer night. It wasn't yet dawn; but that lovely interval between when in what appears to be pitch darkness things become suddenly visible. Tommy stumbled on, shifting the heavy basket frequently from hand to hand.

As it got to be broad day, he was careful to make no noise. At any moment now he might hear sounds of Stilliter and Celestia approaching.

About this time Freddie and Celestia (or, rather, Freddie alone; for Celestia merely suffered herself to be led) were trying to find their way back to the cave. But for once the luck of the tenement dweller was at fault. A man brought up on numbered streets and rectangular city blocks has no incentive to develop a bump of locality, and at last Freddie, with cold fear in his heart, admitted to himself that he was hopelessly lost. I shouldn't have said hopelessly; the mariner has his sextant and compass to guide him across the waters; the woodsman has

the sun and the stars, and the mossy sides of trees to help out in intuitive sense of direction, and Freddie the Ferret, feeling in his inside pocket, found to his unmitigated relief that he had his pack of cards.

Forthwith he made Celestia sit down, and he knelt, and having shuffled his greasy and shabby deck, he dealt thirteen cards face down in a very accurate circle. Then, one by one, a look of faithful expectancy on his face, he turned them over.

Twelve of the cards he then gathered up and put with the pack. The thirteenth was the ace of hearts.

This Freddie lifted with reverence and great care, so as not to change the direction in which it pointed, until it reached the level of his eye and he could sight along it.

A blasted pine standing alone was the first landmark to which the Goddess of Chance directed Freddie the Ferret.

"We're not lost now," he said, and he helped Celestia to her feet.

You may call it what you please. The fact remains that Freddie the Ferret had had a return of his usual luck and had hit upon the general direction of the cave.

From the foot of the blasted pine he selected another landmark and pressed on.

At about this time Professor Stilliter waked

from that sleep in which he had asked this question:

"How will I know when it is day?"

He got up and groped about in the hut until he had located the door. He opened this and went out. The door was on the shady side of the hut; no warm rays of the sun fell on the Professor to tell him that it was day. It was cool as night in the shadow. One hand always touching the hut, he felt his way along the side of it until he had turned the first corner. Here the logs felt warm to the touch, and he knew that day had come. He sat down in the warm sunshine to think out a plan.

Above all things, he must guide himself by pure reason and logic. If he yielded to impulse, nothing good would come of it. He mustn't make a false start.

To begin with, what had become of the trusty guides who had lived in the vicinity to keep watch and ward over Celestia and the scout of the cave. Their pay went on; it always would; but Stilliter, sure of their good faith, where unfaith meant a hounding down with death at the end of it, had not kept close track of them. Old Man Smells-good, the Indian, probably still hunted and fished in the neighborhood. Or, if all these had gone, others perhaps had settled in the houses which they had built.

It was far better that Professor Stilliter

should be found than that he should go through the dangers and agonies of seeking. Under ordinary circumstances he knew the region like the palm of his hand. The cave itself he could find his way about in as easily as in his own house. But knowing things when you see them is very different from knowing them when you can't see them and can only touch them. What is merely a depression by day is an abyss by night.

In wooded countries there is nothing better than a fire to attract attention. If any lonely or hungry person is in sight of that fire, that person will go to it, across lakes and mountains if necessary.

Professor Stilliter had matches. He might or might not be able to find the materials for a fire in the neighborhood of the hut. He wished to make a big smoke and one which would endure a long time.

After half an hour's work, never losing touch with the hut, Professor Stilliter had collected sufficient inflammable material to soft-boil an egg. This would never do, and he was wasting time.

He was tormented by that feeling which perhaps gave rise to the adage the "more haste, the less speed." Time was vitally important; he had to do things quickly and he couldn't. He stood against each of the four walls of the hut in suc-

cession and shouted for help a few times at the top of his lungs. But, as he expected, nothing came of this.

"Well," he thought. "I'll have to burn my shelter. It will make just the big smoke I need. And I shan't be much the worse off. It won't look like a camp fire, but like the beginning of a forest fire. It ought to bring a watchman."

The logs of which the hut was built were thoroughly seasoned and full of pitch. By aid of the heap of old dried-out balsam which had served him for a pillow during the night Professor Stilliter succeeded in setting it on fire. His ears told him that the fire was going to be a success, and presently, too, the heat that began to emanate from it.

He crawled to a little distance and sat down with his back to the fire. It wasn't likely that anyone would come in less than an hour; it might be many hours before anyone came. But he was very sure that his fire would bring someone eventually.

Sitting and waiting, now making attempts to calculate the passage of time, and failing signally, now thinking unhappy thoughts, and now vengeful, passionate thoughts, he sat on and on for eternities of time.

He contrasted what might have been with what was. By now Celestia should have been

his, linked to him by indissoluble bonds. Perhaps now, he thought, she would love me. He would have kept her in the cave for a while, and then he would have sneaked her, feasting his eyes on her beauty, to some far country, where her face and voice were not so well known. There he would marry her legitimately, and by him she could have many wonderful and beautiful sons and daughters.

That was what might have been. Instead, behold him, sitting in pitch darkness, his shelter burning behind him, as a call for that help which might never come. How long, oh, Lord, how long!

Suddenly through his right hand, which rested on the ground, there shot a sharp stab of pain. He jerked his hand upward with an oath. It flashed through his mind that he had been stung by a ground hornet. As a matter of fact, a little creeping tongue of flame had burnt him.

Professor Stilliter's fire was spreading. Crevices in the rock in which were lichens and dried mosses carried little torches hither and thither, torches that were only too eager to kindle and set fire to something worth while.

The main fire made such a crackling and roaring now that Professor Stilliter had not heard the lesser sounds which it made in spreading. It was some moments before he realized that he

had not been stung but burnt. It was a smell of burning cloth that made this clear to him. The Professor's coat had caught fire. He moved further away until there seemed to be nothing about him but unburnable rock. He found the place in his coat which was burning and managed to spit upon it till it was out.

He sat down once more. He was in the midst of one of those great open splashes of granite on the mountain side. As a matter of fact, he was near the edge of one of these masses. Within reach of his hand was a dense tangle of tinder dry scrub trees, shrubs and dead wood.

Suddenly this shrubbery caught and went off almost like an explosion. Professor Stilliter staggered backward from the intense heat, and realized presently that he was backing into another area of heat equally intense.

On his hands and knees he made off in a direction that took him winding between the two; he went quite a long way. In his breast was the first touch of panic.

Now for the second. Directly in his path there arose a steady, a vibrant, a horrid and incessant clashing; of all the sounds in this world—the coldest blooded and the most menacing and sinister.

The fire urged him forward. The rattlesnake coiled in his path, dared him to come on.

He rose to his feet, shivering and in an agony of fear and dread. Suddenly he cried aloud:

"My God! My God! What have I done to deserve this?"

Only the fire answered him and the rattlesnake. Presently it became necessary for him to go forward or to burn to death where he stood.

He went forward with slow, high steps—a figure at once tragic and grotesque. But the snake, too, had grown uncomfortable in the increasing heat, and he, too, made off after one final balancing and drawing back of his head, the jaws wide open as if to strike.

Seven high-arched steps Professor Stilliter took before he dared once more to put his hands to the ground and crawl. It was as well. One more step would have taken him over a little precipice.

Wherever he went the fire found him out and drove him on. A strong wind had risen, and as the flames winnowed their way down the mountainside and across they found more and larger stuff to feed on.

CHAPTER XIX

PROFESSOR STILLITER got heart every now and then. His hands and knees were lacerated, his face had had some hard knocks. His blind eyes smarted with smoke, and the air which he breathed half choked him.

He came at last to the forest, and the fire followed him and drove him. Sometimes it would seem to him that it had taken a different direction, and that he was by way of escaping from it. It always ended, however, by finding him out, and driving him forward. For a while he could keep his distance easily; then for a while he would have to hurry. It was during these that he got his worst hurts. But his natural strength and stamina, coupled with the furious desire to live, kept him going. Once despair of saving his life seized him, and there came into his head the desire to meet death in a manly and dignified way. "I will stand here," he said, "until I burn." And he stood and squared his shoulders and held his battered and bleeding head high and erect. But when the heat became so intense that his clothes began to give out smoke, he turned once more and fled.

To a man with average sight it would have been an easy matter to have eluded that fire. It had descended the mountain in a narrow path. It was Professor Stilliter's misfortune that he had been unable to sidestep it. By taking up his original stand at the back of the hut, instead of at the front, he need not have moved until help came.

Even now Old Man Smells-good was standing at a comfortable distance from the red-hot ruins of the hut and wondering what fool had set it on fire and why.

Through the forest itself the fire was only burning a broad path, confined to this by open barrens and swamps or by timber too green and well watered to burn. From the mouth of the cave it looked like a receding column of smoke, and there was no real menace in it for anyone but Professor Stilliter. Him it hounded on and on. And now, continually, like a child that babbles, he was asking God to save him, Christ to pity him.

As he lost blood, his progress became slower and slower, and death stared him in the back. He was to have one short reprieve. He came to a gravelly bank so steep that in trying to get down it he began to slide, could not save himself, and was dumped presently into ice-cold deep water.

For a moment the shock refreshed and invigorated him and gave him hope. He could swim, and water cannot burn. Whether he was in a pond or a lake of some size he did not know. If a lake and not very large, he could swim across, and at least find safety from the fire. At first it was easy to swim in the right direction, guided by the heat that came from behind, but after a while it was not so easy.

He was a good swimmer, and while floating and treading water he managed to get rid of his shoes and most of his clothes. He would need them when he got ashore. Yes, but he would have to do without them.

He began to tire again, and there was no sign of the opposite shore.

He was in one of the narrowest lakes in that part of the Adirondacks, but it was several miles long, and he was trying to swim it from end to end. The jig was up.

When he realized this he hastened the inevitable by screaming and screaming and then by bursting into tears and sobbing.

After a while his final struggles stopped. He floated in the water with his face under; a kind of foam came to the surface from the corners of his mouth. Twice he drew up his knees and kicked feebly, as if he was still alive and trying to swim.

After a long time, Freddie the Ferret, leading Celestia as if she had been blind, blundered to the foot of the cliff in which was the main entrance to the cave. Into this he penetrated a little way and there began to shout for Tommy with all his might. The only response was the echoing of his voice.

So Freddie went back to Celestia, and there she stood with a bewildered, puzzled look on her face, and both her hands being held by Tommy Barclay himself, who was breathing as if he had been running uphill.

"Don't look puzzled now, Celestia," Tommy was saying; "you know me. It's all right. I'm the driver, you know, and you have to obey the driver. So wake up. Be yourself."

Then Celestia spoke.

"The driver," she said, "is dead. Professor Stilliter told me."

"Told you I was dead?"

Celestia nodded and turned away as if the matter was of no further interest.

"Freddie," exclaimed Tommy, "what are we going to do about Celestia? Has she been this way ever since I went into the cave?"

"She's bughouse," said Freddie simply.

"What's happened? How did you keep Stilliter from getting hold of her? He thought he'd shot me. I couldn't get out of the cave as

quickly as he could. I supposed, of course, he'd run off with her."

"He did," said Freddie, laconically.

"But here she is. What became of him?"

"Dunno."

"What do you know, Freddie?"

Then the Ferret told his little story of battle, his fight to the finish in the moonlight.

"He gets me on me back," said Freddie, "and beats me face up. And I knocks his specs off and they busts, and he ain't got no more, and I ducks out from under, and he calls to her, and she wants to go to him and I won't let her."

"Where was this?"

"Dunno."

"Far from here?"

"Dunno."

"But you must know in a general way?"

Freddie shook his head.

"Look at me, Freddie! You do know."

But the Ferret's spine stiffened. And he met Tommy's eyes without flinching. He, too, had his standards of right and wrong. Let the evil-doer suffer!

"I knows," he said, "but I don't tell."

"But, good God, Freddie—a blind man—in this wilderness——"

"Can go to hell," said Freddie.

"Now, look here——"

"What are you two talking about?"

The man and the boy wheeled toward Celestia as suddenly and with as much wonder as if she had pointed a gun and shot at them. She had spoken in her natural voice. She spoke again:

"Stilliter?"

"Yes, Celestia; we were speaking of him. He is in awful trouble."

"He was in awful trouble"; her voice was sweet and gentle, but very serious. "He's been trying to get me to help him, but Freddie wouldn't let me go, and he couldn't make me understand just where he was. The fire was after him. He couldn't see, and he got hurt trying to get away from the fire. But it chased him and chased him, until he fell into a lake and drowned."

Her words carried an astounding weight of conviction. She felt the horror of her knowledge, and she had suffered while her enemy suffered, and yet she was serenely sure that Stilliter's departure had left the world a little better off.

"We'll have a look for him, when we've had a bite to eat," said Tommy. "I'm all in, at the moment. Freddie, run down the trail till you come to a big, square basket, and bring it back here, will you?"

"What are we all doing here, anyway?" asked Celestia.

Tommy told her. It was quite a long story. It was hard to make her understand at first, but it grew easier and easier. It was as if she was rapidly convalescing from that sickness of mind into which Professor Stilliter's dark powers had thrown her. Freddie came with the basket, and he and Celestia ate ravenously, and Tommy less ravenously, because he had already broken his fast, and because it was so wonderful to be telling Celestia all about what had been happening and to have her understand.

"And that's the door of the cave where you say I was brought up?"

"Where you were brought up, Celestia—upon my word of honor."

She shook her head, but without conviction.

"I want to see," she said.

But Tommy leaped to his feet.

"You're the rascal that stole my clothes!" he cried.

Old Man Smells-good grinned from ear to ear.

"Well, I'll forgive you," said Tommy, "and give you money if you'll find Professor Stilliter."

The Indian shook his head and said, "No good."

"He's got a lot of money on him, and he'll give you some if you find him and he's still alive."

"Dead?"

"Maybe." And Tommy told briefly what had happened and what Celestia believed had happened. The Indian set off at a great pace toward the column of smoke which marked where the fire had been checked by the lake.

Then Celestia and the two others lighted candles and went into the cave. They went in silence from cavern to cavern. Here the electric plant still looked in good running order. Here a man might hide and pretend to be a voice. They did not explore the whole extent of the great subterranean; only enough to prove that someone had lived there for many years in a state of pseudo magnificence, something like the settings of an expensive Broadway production.

"Doesn't any of it seem familiar?" Tommy asked.

She turned to him and threw her arms round his neck, and began to cry like a little child.

"Hell!" said Freddie.

"No," said Tommy stoutly. "It's turned out to be heaven after all. Beat it, Freddie!"

To Celestia the train seemed to move no faster than a snail. To get back to the world in time to undo what she had done, before it should be too late, occupied her mind to the exclusion of almost everything else. Stilliter was dead. His influence had no longer power on her. She be

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came more rational and human with every passing hour, and she became no less sweet.

They had waited at the cave until Old Man Smells-good came back with definite news of Stilliter's death.

"Him plenty enough dead," he said, and nodded repeatedly. Then, with a mouth so innocent that even butter wouldn't have melted in it, he said:

"He not got a lot of money on him."

"Not now. I know that," said Tommy, "as well as you do."

When at last they reached New York they proceeded at once to Madison Square Garden, where a tremendous pro-Barclay mass-meeting was in session. The triumvirate were all present. Celestia, in a dark cloak, with a veil over her face, waited outside with Freddie until Tommy should signal to her to enter.

He came presently.

"Sturtevant is speaking," he said quickly. "He's explaining how you, your work done, have gone back to heaven—and, by Heaven, Celestia, they believe him! You might think it was Matthew, Mark, Luke or John addressing a lot of early Christians; people are sobbing. Better come now and get it over with."

Sturtevant broke off in the midst of his peroration. A slim, white, commanding figure was

moving slowly toward him. His jaw dropped. Then he dropped to his knees and, a look of rapture on his face, he cried in a voice of thunder, "Celestia!"

Even this piece of play-acting could not save the situation for him. The people had caught in his face the first swift-fleeting look of unutterable fright and dismay. And now they had caught sight of Celestia, and rose to her with a great roar of sound.

She passed slowly through them, mounted the platform, turned, lifted one hand a little, and there was silence.

She asked them to be patient with her. She had wronged them. Perhaps she had done irreparable harm in the world. But it would be wonderful if they would listen to her once more—they had always been so good to her——

And presently she had them enthralled in the spell of her clear, sweet voice. And she told them her story from the beginning. And when she had finished she just stood and looked straight ahead of her. And murmurs swept the vast place, as little breezes go dappling over smooth water. Then Celestia turned and pointed to the triumvirate.

And a man with a voice like a trumpet stood up in the midst of the hall and started for the platform, shouting, "Kill!" "Lynch!"

The man was Gunsdorf.

Then hell broke loose. And the three arch-conspirators turned and, darting between the curtains at the back of the platform, fled for their lives.

But nobody hurt Celestia, or thought of hurting her, and after a time Tommy got her away and took her out of the city to a little town in Westchester County, and left her there, until he could get a license to stay there with her.

Gordon Barclay's servants had orders to admit no one without orders. The city was in a turmoil. With each fresh edition of the newspapers the situation of the conspirators became more serious. In the public parks effigies of them were hanged or burned. It became necessary to keep a cordon of police about Barclay's house. In Semmes's house and Sturtevant's no window remained whole. For twenty hours these two men had been Barclay's guests.

Gunsdorf's great hour had come—that hour for which he had plotted all his life, and lied for and schemed for. He had been the leading figure in the mob that had tried to lynch the triumvirate in the first burst of rage. And he found himself suddenly at the head of all the lawless elements in the city. He was drunk with power and a sense of his own importance. But openly he spoke of his love for mankind.

Through a man friendly to him and deep in Gundsorf's councils Tommy learned that the life of the man who had adopted him and been good to him was in danger. His house was to be stormed over the heads of the police, and himself hanged or torn to pieces, as might happen.

All their differences fled from Tommy's mind and he remembered only their mutual affection; so he hurried to the old familiar house and was presently admitted.

"It's just to say a few words," said Tommy, and he told Barclay what Gundsorf was planning for that very day.

Gordon Barclay had turned very gray in the last days. He was a broken and disappointed man. Still he clung warmly to that remnant of life which remained to him.

"We'll go to Gull Island," he said simply, "till this thing has blown over. I suppose you are not unhappy about what has happened. It's a pity she came back. . . . Tommy, when we quarreled I was ambitious for power only. Later I began to think that Celestia was a real panacea for a sick world. So that if I had been destined to rule, I would have ruled for the good of the people. I want you to know that what began in cynicism ended in faith and honesty. I have put you back in my will for practically everything I possess. Carlton Fitch has turned knave.

Mary, if she marries him, will be worthy of him."

"You'll need somebody to keep house for you at Gull Island," said Tommy. He was too moved to refer to what he had just learned. "I'll get Celestia there as quickly as I can."

"Have you married her?"

Tommy looked very manly when he said that he had. And Barclay smiled one of his old-time dazzling smiles.

"And I think," he said, finally, "that you had better get out of this house as quickly as you can. I'm going, too. I can't afford to be a hero."

They shook hands and parted, never to meet in this life again.

Late that night Tommy and Celestia and Freddie the Ferret, whom Tommy was trying to train to be his valet, caught the last boat for Bartell's, on Bartell's Island, from which Gull Island may be reached in an hour in a fast launch. They had had no word of what had happened in New York. At Missaquid, the point of departure for Bartell's, there seemed to be some sort of a rumor in the air and a state of suppressed excitement. Usually it is a town that goes to bed very early. But this was not the case to-night. There was a rough-looking crowd at the station and at the wharf.

Tommy, without arousing suspicion, could not find out if Barclay, Semmes and Sturtevant had gone on ahead or were following.

"If they are behind us," he said to Celestia, "they'll have to charter something. Perhaps father will come all the way by boat—that would be best. His own yacht would be spotted. But he'll work something."

Gull Island resembles a loaf of bread that has risen too much. A rounded, billowing top is set upon high, almost perpendicular sides. There is only one landing place, and from this the habitable portions of the island are reached by a steep and narrow path. A determined man with a pile of cobblestones could stand off an army.

It was Gordon Barclay's favorite estate. The timber was mostly scrub oak and scrubby little pines, but in a dense grove of these Barclay had built a low, rambling house which was very dear to him, and wonderful rose gardens which were even dearer.

In this island retreat, open and ready for the master the year round, the triumvirate, if only they could reach it, would be as safe from mob violence as on a ship at sea.

A steep climb, a wild expanse of star-lit moor, little ancient trees growing very close together, a strong perfume of bayberry bushes, of sweet fern and roses, and then the low-ceilinged,

softly lighted hall, with many men servants, a cool, delightful night soundly slept—these were Celestia's first impressions of Gull Island.

In the morning she went with her husband to the eastern cliffs, and she had her first look at the ocean—sullenly tumbling, white-maned—under a gray and sullen sky.

The wind blew in their faces—a cutting, wet wind, the beginning of an easterly storm.

In short, it was about as nasty a morning as you could ask for. But to Celestia and Tommy the weather seemed heavenly, and expressly manufactured for lovers and love-making.

Soon after Tommy's departure, and before the triumvirate could complete their arrangements for the retreat to Gull Island, the streets contingent to Gordon Barclay's house and the streets in the neighborhood began to fill with men and women who looked like the dregs of the city.

But it was immediately in front of the house that the crowd was thickest and most menacing. Here men made fiery, unbridled speeches and were cheered to the echo; and here the police, erect, unperturbed, superb in danger, wondered in their hearts if they were going to live through the day.

There was no actual violence until Gunsdorf arrived. He, high above the crowd, on an im-

provised rostrum, roared for blood and vengeance.

Weapons began to flash.

Then the police tried to disperse the mob, and, after hard fighting and the breaking of many heads, were overpowered, passed over and swept aside. Then the crowd began to swarm over the tall iron gates and the spiked iron fence. One man slipped, and so impaled himself that when he finally tore loose and dropped to the ground he was in a dying condition.

There was a fountain—a bronze youth, arms akimbo, who with puffed cheeks blew a fine spray of water. Him certain stray, violent men pried from his base and used, swinging him by the feet and arms, to batter down the solid, heavy front door of the house.

This done, the leaders rushed in, and for a moment were halted by the uncompromising dignity and grandeur of the hall. Facing them was a flight of marble steps. At the top of these stood Gordon Barclay. When the crowd recognized him they yelled like a pack of wolves. The corners of his mouth twitched with a kind of glassy contempt. He turned slowly and passed through a doorway that was just behind him, slammed the door shut and locked it. Not till then did he show a sign of fear or haste. Now, however, he ran swiftly through the library, out

at the other end, and down a back stair to the service courtyard. Here, headed for tall wooden gates in a tall brick wall over which wistaria was festooned, stood a powerful limousine car. The engine was purring. On the box sat two brave and handsonie young men in the Barclay livery. In the body of the car sat Semmes and Sturtevant. Sturtevant looked furiously angry. Semmes looked sea-sick.

At the gates stood two footmen, ready to fling them open. Most of the crowd was at the front of the house. In the narrow alley at the back there was only a scattering of riffraff. One of the men on the box handled a double-barreled shotgun. In Sturtevant's hand, cocked, was a .45 automatic.

Meanwhile the bronze boy of the fountain came up the front stair, battered head-first, and was used to ram down the door behind which Barclay had been seen to disappear.

The first man to enter the long, rich library was Gunsdorf. He gave only a glance at the open panel which disclosed the inviting interior of a safe, or at the greenbacks and yellowbacks of all denominations which the wily financier had scattered about the room, on tables, on chairs, on the floor—such things were for children.

Raging for his comrades to follow him, Guns-

dorf rushed the length of the room, found the back stair down which Barclay had retreated and came in less time than it takes to tell it to the service court at the back of the house.

But nobody followed Gunsdorf. The open safe, the scattered hills, stopped men as a solid cliff might have done. Vengeance was forgotten, and the crowd began to loot.

When Gunsdorf reached the courtyard the gates were half open. On strong steel brackets fixed to the back of the car were two spare rims, with inflated tires. These formed a resting place for Gunsdorf's feet and a grip for his hands. But the first forward leap of the car, followed by a hair-raising swerve to the left, almost threw him off.

Shots were fired. The car went over something soft that screamed and that remained in the street after the car had passed, and thwacked like a newly landed fish.

Gunsdorf stood upon the spare tires and clung to them, and the lights of New York whirled by.

The scene of the riot was far behind. Up Fifth Avenue the car raced. It was that hour before dark when in the summer traffic was light, and the face of the great Gordon Barclay at the window of the car was enough to make even the boldest traffic cop think twice.

Through Central Park, out Seventh Avenue, across McComb's Dam Bridge, up Jerome Ave-

nue, through Fordham to the Pelham Parkway, into New Rochelle and out, through Mamaroneck, Rye, Portchester, the car flew. And like grim death, his purpose never swerving, Gunsdorf clung to the spare tires. His feat was worthy of a better cause. Vengeance is not man's. " 'Vengeance is mine,' saith the Lord."

The old fishing town of Giddings was dark as sin. The financiers, conferring, had determined to make this, rather than Missaquid, their point of departure. They would be too late to catch the last boat for Bartell's. Giddings, with Missaquid, formed the base of a triangle, of which Gull Island was the apex. Therefore, if they could here charter some craft to convey them to the island, there would be a great saving of time.

The car ran half way through the little town, turned a right angle and descended to the wharves, and here, in the darkness, stopped. Gunsdorf was the first to alight; he slipped into the shelter of a shed that smelt of fish and flung himself to the ground.

Why didn't he shoot down the financiers as they alighted from the car? His hands were so cramped from gripping the tires he could not have held or pointed a gun; they were shaking like leaves of poplar trees in a wind. He was in acute physical pain.

But, lying on the ground, writhing with ex-

haustion, he began to recover little by little from the ordeal through which he had passed, and he was able to keep an eye on the car and on the shadowy men whom he hated, and to listen to what they had to say to each other and to the fisherman whom they routed from his bed, and who finally, for a prodigious sum of money, consented to venture out in the easterly storm that was brewing and carry them and their luggage to Gull Island.

The name of his little schooner was the *Mary Nye*. She was at the end of the long wharf, half unloaded. No, he had given up fishing; there was more money in coasting. They couldn't start at once; he would have to get his crew together—two men and a boy. Had they really come all the way from New York? They must be hard set. Better come to the house. He'd rout the missus out of bed, and she'd give them coffee.

Barclay gave some orders to his driver, and much money; also he gave much money to the other man on the box, and he shook hands with them both and thanked them for their devotion to him, and told them that their future would be his care.

Then the car went one way and the financiers and the fishermen went another, and presently Gunsdorf, doubled half over, like a man crippled

with rheumatism, rose from his hiding place and hobbled off in a third.

The Mary Nye lay in the lee of the long wharf near the end. She was a dirty little ship. Amidship was a hold, formerly used as a container for codfish; it still stank of them. The hatchway giving access to this hold was open, and into it Gunsdorf descended. It seemed to him, after exploring the schooner from stern to stem, to offer the best means of concealment. The little cabin aft was cleaner. It would be the choice of the triumvirate for their own quarters.

Gunsdorf was half crazy with fatigue. In a far corner of the hold he found a pile of sacking and flung himself down on them. But there was something hard among them that hurt him. He groped for this, and found that it was a powerful, two-handed augur, fixed with an inch-and-a-half bit.

He pushed it to one side and in a moment was sound asleep.

Barclay was restless; the cabin was stuffy and verminous; he preferred the deck and the open air. So it happened that in passing the main hatch, in a lull of the wind, he heard a sound as of a man snoring. He had left Semmes and Sturtevant complaining of the discomforts of the cabin. Captain Nye was at the wheel, the two men and the boy forward.

"Here," thought Barclay, "we've got a stow-away aboard. Some poor son-of-a-gun of a wharf rat, I suppose."

He strolled aft.

"There's someone asleep in the main hold," he said.

"The hell there is!"

"You can hear him snoring if you listen at the hatchway."

"Well, let him snore."

Gradually it dawned upon Barclay that the presence on the schooner of a man unknown and unvouched for was not pleasant. So he descended into the hold, struck a match and had a look at the sleeper's face.

Then very softly he returned to the deck, half closed the hatch, and, thrusting his head through the opening that remained, he called loudly, "Wake up, there!"

The snores ceased and were followed by a kind of sleepy groaning.

"Gunsdorf," called Barclay, in a sharp, incisive voice, "can you hear me?"

"I hear you."

"What are you doing on this boat?"

No answer.

"Well, you'll not be able to do any mischief. You seem to like it down there. I am going to close this hatch so that you can't open it. You

will not get out until the boat is back at her starting point. The captain is a safe man. You will not find out from him where I have been set ashore. So good-night to you."

Gunsdorf's answer was to fire two wild shots from his automatic. Barclay slammed the hatch to and succeeded in fastening it so that it could not be opened from below.

Then he went once more to the captain and talked to him for some time in an undertone. After that he waked Sturtevant and Semmes to tell them what had happened.

"He's been insane for some time," said Sturtevant. "He wouldn't stop at anything. I hope to God he hasn't got a stick of dynamite with him. He'd think nothing of blowing himself to pieces, if we went, too."

Gunsdorf had no stick of dynamite. He had only an automatic with a few cartridges in the magazine, and an insane, murderous rage and hatred in his breast.

So they'd land somewhere, would they? He'd be carried back to the starting point, would he? Not if he knew it. His ride on the back of the automobile was all in vain, was it? He'd show 'em—damn 'em!

And his hands, their strength refreshed by hatred, insanity and suicidal daring, sought and found the big augur and began to bore a hole

through the bottom of the schooner. He would drown, but so would they!

After a time the edge of the hole he was boring became damp, water began to trickle from the bit, then to spit and hiss, then the bit went clean through, and when he had withdrawn it water spouted upward as from a garden hose.

Gunsdorf laughed aloud and at once began to bore a second hole. When he had nearly finished a third the bit broke short off, and Gunsdorf cursed. But the Mary Nye was taking in a good deal of water, and the failure of the bit only seemed to have postponed the time when the sea should close over her.

But in the book of fate the Mary Nye was not destined to perish by water alone. Among her heterogeneous coastwise cargo which had not been unloaded, from the small hold back of the main hold, were two sacks of unslacked lime. After a time a trickle of water found its way to these, and they began to smoke.

The first person to be aware of the smoke was Gunsdorf. It filtered into the main hold before it found its way to the deck. Gunsdorf at the moment, with a kind of diabolical eagerness, was trying to calculate the rapidity with which the water was rising. This was a difficult matter, owing to the motion of the vessel.

When he smelled the smoke his heart almost

stopped beating, he was so frightened. Water and dynamite had no terror for him, but death by fire had always been his nightmare. He was like a man waking after a great drunkenness, during which, let us say, he has committed some crime which to his frenzied brain at the time of its commission had seemed a reasonable and even a meritorious thing to do, but the memory of which makes the same brain, the fumes of alcohol gone, a prey to the most awful terror and remorse.

In short, the man had recovered from his murderous and suicidal madness. He was sane—a rational creature who realized what he had done and that the deed was in vain, and that he alone would be destroyed by it.

What madness to suppose that such a man as Barclay would stay by the Mary Nye till she went down? She carried a boat for just such an emergency. But he, Gunsdorf, while the others rowed merrily off, would be left to drown in the dark.

In the first moments of reasoning it did not occur to him that the ship was on fire. Rather he thought that the smoke was some devilish device of the triumvirate to asphyxiate him.

From the eastern cliffs, which received the onslaught of the open sea, Tommy and Celestia walked to those lower western cliffs whose feet

are washed by the less strenuous waters which flow between Gull Island and the mainland, and here, sheltered from the wind, they seated themselves, ostensibly to admire the view, but really to admire each other.

The view consisted of gray water, a vast expanse of it, in commotion, and of a vast expanse of sullen gray sky; and, many miles distant a small schooner beating slowly up to the island.

"They must be cooking a bonny breakfast," said Tommy, "judging from the smoke."

"Judging by the smoke," said Celestia, "they've got more than one stove."

"By George, you are right!" said Tommy. Then, a moment later, with excitement: "She's on fire. That's why the davits are swung out-board. They are waiting till the last moment to lower a boat. Thank the Lord, they've got one! I suppose they want to get into the lea of the island. It must be pretty rough out there for a skiff. They're not making much headway, though. She looks very low in the water. Probably leaks like a sieve, and the fire keeps them from getting to the pumps."

"Can't we do anything to help?"

"Not unless the launch has come back from Bartell's. She went over early for newspapers and supplies. Let's go see."

So they raced off to the landing. The launch

had not yet returned, and there was neither sight nor sound of her. A cat-boat without even a mast was drawn up on ways, and the only other craft at the landing was a flat-bottomed skiff, so low in the water that she could not have lived in the rough water outside of the harbor.

"We can't do any good," said Tommy with a great deal of regret in his voice. "Let's hurry back and see the end of it."

They stopped at the house for field glasses, of which there were several pairs in a drawer of the hall table, and hurried back to the western cliffs.

In his explorations of the night before Gunsdorf had noted the sacks of lime raised from the floor of the hold to keep them from any chance water. And it dawned upon him it was his own fault that they had gotten wet and generated enough heat to set the ship on fire.

Captain Nye had kept his courage up, and held grimly to the task of trying to make head against the fire and against the water rising in the hold.

Through what remained of the night, and through all the long, anxious morning, he and his two men, aided by Barclay, Serenes and Sturtevant, had fought like heroes against the fire and water.

It was discouraging to have to cart into the

burning after-hold so much of the water that they blistered their hands pumping out of it. At one time it looked as if they were going to get the fire under control. In that event they could have kept the vessel afloat indefinitely.

Captain Nye had suggested bringing Gunsdorf on deck and putting him to work, and the effort had been made. The man was disarmed as he came up, wet to the knees and choking with smoke. But at the sight of Barclay all his hate returned. He would not work; they couldn't make him.

"Why the hell should I," said he, "when I took the trouble to bore the holes that are sinking her, and to start the fire that's burning her?"

All regarded the man with a horror that was akin to awe. Anger succeeded this.

"Is that the truth?" asked Captain Nye.

"Yes."

Captain Nye motioned to his two men. They seized Gunsdorf and after a short struggle cast him back into his prison and battered down the hatch.

"There's no room for him in the small hold," said Captain Nye; "and there's no more mischief he can do down below."

It was only the fatigue of those who were trying to save her that eventually settled the fate

of the Mary Nye. Her captain called the party together.

"Thanks, all hands," he said. "You've done all we could do. We'll need what strength we've got left to get us ashore. So let her burn."

The boy, who had been at the wheel ever since the discovery of the fire, was relieved by Captain Nye. The boy promptly lay down on the deck, and the others followed suit, resting themselves against the side of the schooner, waiting for the small boat.

At last the moment came when Captain Nye thought best to abandon ship. His eyes filled with tears.

"Don't grieve, Captain," said Barclay. "I'll value her value five times over. You're a good man."

As they were about to step into the boat that bumped alongside, but little below the level of the main deck, Barclay said curtly to the boy, "Can't you tell Günsdorf to die like that?"

He himself unfastened the hatch. Günsdorf had climbed upon the ladder to keep out of water as long as possible. He was more dead than alive. They had to lift him into the boat.

She rode very low in the water and rolled precariously when she had drifted out of the lee of the doomed schooner, and when she hit the rougher water she rolled quietly over and floated bottom up.

The shock of the cold water revived Gunsdorf so that he did not at once drown. He succeeded in getting hold of the boat and keeping his head out of water.

Over the inverted bows Barclay crawled out of the water and lay sprawling on the arched, slippery bottom of the boat. From this advantageous position he looked about eagerly to see whom he could help. Of that whole party only Barclay and the boy could swim. Sturtevant and Semmes, if they ever came to the surface, were never seen again by mortal eyes. The boy swam to the boat and climbed up on it, with Barclay's help.

Then, for the first time, Barclay saw the agonized face of Gunsdorf. The man's grip was failing, and he knew it. At a little distance Captain Nye floated face down. His two men came to the surface, came together, clinched and died, each trying to use the other as a ladder by which to climb out of the water.

Barclay looked for a while coldly into Gunsdorf's face, and then looked away.

"For God's sake, help me!"

Barclay's expression did not change. He did not look at Gunsdorf.

"For Christ's sake!"

Then the little boy, his teeth chattering, said:

"'Taint pretty to see men drown," and began to blubber.

With an oath, Barclay reached for Gunsdorf and tried to draw him out of the water. It was a difficult and precarious operation.

"Steady! Don't get rattled," said Barclay. "You, boy, steady her as much as you can."

And Barclay worked with all his strength to save the wretched man's life.

There was a strange look in Gunsdorf's face. It was no longer hatred. There was hope in it; but, more than that, there was something that was akin to love. A miracle had been wrought in the evil man's heart.

Barclay trying to save him!

"You're a good man," he said. "I thought you were the devil."

"My man," said Barclay, "I can't get you up here. I'm sorry. My strength is petered out. If it's any comfort to you, I forgive you for what you have done. I've done plenty of evil, too. I guess we both thought we were trying to do good. We looked at life from different angles. You didn't believe that men like me were human beings; I had the same feeling about men like you. I guess that's mostly what's the matter with this world, anyway."

Holding tightly to Gunsdorf's hand, he still managed to keep the anarchist's head out of water.

All this Tommy and Celestia saw from the top of the cliffs. They had recognized the two

chief actors in the drama, and Tommy's suspense over the fate of the man who had been good to him was awful to see. It was that white, quiet suspense that transcends all outcry and lamentation.

"Gunsdorf," said Barclay, "I'm slipping; I can't hold you any longer. I'm sorry."

"All right," said Gunsdorf. And he let go of Barclay's hand and sank like a stone.

"My God!" exclaimed Barclay. "What sand!"

The moment Gunsdorf's head reappeared Barclay slipped quietly into the water and tried to save him. But Gunsdorf had gone down open-mouthed. He was too confused to understand the calm, steady command of Barclay—to keep his head—to keep still.

He tried to climb upon his would-be savior, and they went down together. Then Barclay's presence of mind left him, and he too grappled.

And so they died—in each other's arms.

The little boy, his teeth chattering, pushed on the inverted boat, blubbing bitterly.

On the cliff of Gull Island the girl from heaven was trying to console one of the richest men in the world.

THE END.

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