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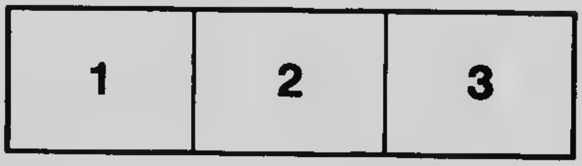

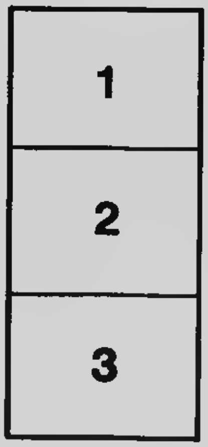

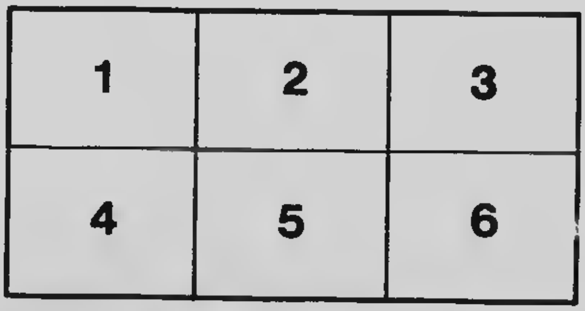

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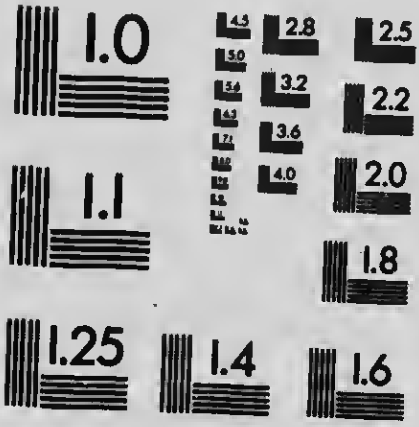
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God's Man

A Novel

By

GEORGE BRONSON-HOWARD

ILLUSTRATED INITIALS BY

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To

HEWITT HANSON HOWLAND

The Second Father of
this Book

PRINTED IN

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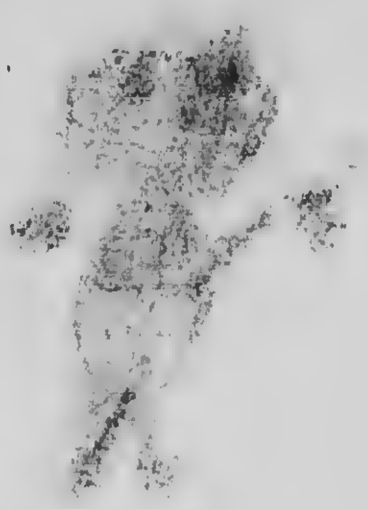
GOD'S MAN



BOOK I

GOD'S MAN

CHAPTER ONE

BEGINNINGS

I. Genesis

IT ALL began with—what? Who knows? The expulsion of our Three Musketeers after the chevying of Quivvers? Quentin Quivvers he called himself, although the Lord (and everybody else) knows that was not his name. The "Q"—"Peter Q. Quivvers" was the way his name was entered at Old King's College—stood for "Quimby." But there was an ancient clam-digger in Q's native village, an ape-like little brown man. And *he* was Quimby, too. Young Quivvers did not wish people to think *he* was "related to *him*"—chiefly because he was. . . .

There, there! Quivvers needs too much explanation to begin with him.

Did it begin with the arrival of Ivan, the *moujik,* the *boyar* to be? Ivan Vladimirovitch—John, son of Waldemar—the Honorable John Waldemar, as he was some day to be called. . . .

But, you see? It takes too long to explain how all *that* could happen.

Suppose we go back a century to the days when Jan Hartogensis and Amalia, his wife, served their patrons at the Yew Tree Inn, in old Greenwich, Manhattan—gold-laced, cocked-hatted patrons, snowy-wigged, club-queued *patroons*, many of them.

Patroons!

Such as the Van Vhroons, for instance. Van Vhroon Manor gave the Lane its name, then. And swords would have left silken sheaths had any gentleman (in wine, of course) had the hardihood to suggest, as a bare possibility, that a daughter of that house might some day be allied with a son of those peasant Hartogensisi. And these honest sons of Jan and Amalia would have used their beer-mallets on any one who dared suggest that their Inn might some day become a place where stolen goods were bought and sold.

And yet . . . all this, in good time, was to come to pass.

And yet again Mother Mybus, then a fresh-faced Russian girl, wandering the old Bowery. Lacking male relatives with swords to defend her reputation against base insinuations, it is probable that she would have used her fists had she been told that she would preside over that same pawn-shop, and that furtive folk would some day submit to her appraisals. . . .

Yet that came to pass also, as you shall hear. . . .

Ah, after all, is there any beginning but one? "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth." The history of any man is the history of the world. No matter where we begin, we must always go back, always explain, that it was thus and so this man was made. And had it been otherwise there would be no evil—nor good—in him. There is no beginning and there is no end.

II. THE FIGHTING L'HOMMEDIEUS

Although, as we have hazarded, there is but one *actual* beginning, that is quite a different matter from the first *definite* beginning. In the case of this chronicle of Arnold L'Hommedieu, his life and loves, and other matters important to him, the latter would seem to be a certain hot and dusty day on the field of Ascalon, nearly a thousand years ago, when there was conferred upon a certain Knight-Hospitaller, Sir Lucas of St. John, the Norman-French equivalent of surname "L'Hommedieu" meaning "God's Man."

This same Sir Lucas, a few years later, fled the Preceptory of the Knights of Jerusalem; having broken his monkish vows and married her whose importuning caused him to do so. For he was not one who could wax fat and wealthy in sin; his conscience would not let him. And, although his sin need never have found him out, it was enough for him that it had found him.

So he set a lifelong penance on himself and chained the woman's lips with a terrible oath never to reveal his birth, his titles or his former pretensions. . . . Reaching the trades-town of Dijon, he who had nearly been Grand Master of all the Knights-Hospitallers became a common Armorer to noblesse and commonesse alike, and was thereafter simple "Maitre Lucas."

So well did he and his indifferently good dame keep his secret that all their children ever found to connect them with the past was a vellum screed concealed between the moldy leather lining and the steel links of the chain-mail he had worn while winning the very honors the screed commemorated. It seemed that, for rescuing some Royal Princeling from Saracen battleaxes, "our trusty and well-beloved Sir Lucas . . . sans surname of birth relinquished when taking his vows" . . . should henceforward be known by that "higher one" (here we arbitrarily curtail certain Gallic etymology and Norman spelling), "Le Homme De Dieu"—L'Hommedieu.

Failing another name—they would much have preferre one which connected them with some ancient family—hi sons and daughters adopted this one. But for all the fine sound of it, the world in general heard no more of the L'Hommedieus until a certain Etienne L'Hommedieu, three centuries later—he who had also been consecrated to Holy Church—duplicated his ancestor's iconoclasm and, afterward, many of his deeds of valor.

But a new religion had come into being since Lucas, and Etienne did not go back to his father's shop after taking a wife, but into the ranks of the Huguenots, carrying a Bible in one hand, a sword in the other as did many in those grim days; and when Harry of Navarre became a good Catholic King, went off to the Low Countries to become a leader of insurgent Dutch, and, when there was no more fighting, came to the New World and helped build New Amsterdam. But certain religious differences with the Dutch clergy made him eager to go where he might be the sole authority on points of worship so he asked for his first reward in return for many services to the Republic and the religion, requesting a grant of land wherever he might choose to settle; then sent to France for any sturdy Huguenot burgesses of Dijon who wished to be assured against persecution when Navarre no longer ruled France. Meanwhile he began, methodically and tirelessly, to search the country roundabout Manhattan Island.

He discovered Havre de Grace by accident, his boat having been blown across the Sound while exploring what was afterward called the Connecticut Shore; and, driven by contrary winds, made the first secure haven he could find.

The next morning, when the early sunlight lay ruddy over the pine-clad slopes of his harbor he knelt and gave thanks for God's wise decision. The spot selected by his Creator—as he piously and somewhat egotistically believed—was a wide harbor, half a mile across, shaped somewhat like a bottle its neck jumping distance across. On all sides the slopes rose to a height of a hundred feet or more, guaranteeing healthful air and no plagues of insects. The soil was fertile, a wilderness of vegetation; and was irrigated by a stream that wound in and out above, then dashed down in a crystal torrent, icy cold, a useful force to be harnessed to a future flour mill. Dolphins leaped and sported showing silver stomachs in the sun, flocks of red-billed green-necked ducks flew low over the marshes and gray geese fished with them in amity, while crows rose over fields of golden corn, their well-filled black bellies purpling in the sun. Jeweled herons, too, fish-hawks and many gulls flew in circles over the shining water, finding food everywhere and, ashore, he could see the breathing places of clams, and strewn along the beach, oyster shells and lobster-paws washed colorless by the tide. Over the dazzling sand a turtle ambled leisurely, as is the custom of turtles.

There were Indians near by, the planters of the corn, a small tribe and a peaceful one, and with these the Chevalier L'Hommedieu made a solemn pact.

The Indians were to retain the left bank of the harbor, where the golden corn gleamed. Although, for safety's sake, lest other and alien spirits be drawn by the success of his colony, the Chevalier had all that land included in his grant from the Dutch Republic. The village of Havre de Grace was built on the right bank; its wharves, docks and public buildings on the lowlands at the harbor-head, the lowland that afterward held the principal streets of the town after the English accession.

And on the high ground arose the Church of the Cross, bearing the L'Hommedieu arms on stained glass especially done by Amsterdam artists. There the Chevalier gave out the Word of God without conflict with theologians, Dutch, French, or otherwise. There, and elsewhere in the town, his word was law, and, though the English came, the Established

Church never. The English found the L'Hommedieu conception of the gospel sufficiently satisfying.

A L'Hommedieu has preached from that pulpit ever since. The eldest son, most frequently the only one—he who toils all day with his hands and half the night with his brains—is not prolific of progeny. In one thing all the L'Hommedieus were unique. The Chevalier had laid down, among other family laws, the chief one. No wages, no gifts, were to be taken for preaching the Word. That must be done for the love of God, the love of man.

"Payment doth stultify the truth, inasmuch as one dependent upon the good will of others is prudently tongue-tied when those who richly endow him shall fail in their duty to their fellows. Though the Word has said that a rich man may not enter His kingdom, many do seek so to enter paying His clerk to suppress reports of their wrongdoing.

"And so I say to you, sons and grandsons (until this issue of my loins falter and fail), you may be free for God only when you are free of men. Till diligently the soil left you, tend tenderly God's creatures of the barn and stable, bring forth the fruits of His land in plenty, so that you may take His pay from His hands.

"And when there is more than enough, it is His word that there are others who have less than enough, and it is your duty to seek and find them and give with both hands, overflowing." . . .

So runs a literal translation of a half-page of the worn old sheepskin, the home-made sloe-berry ink faded, the clerkly Latin only to be guessed at, else the whole document, lordly but loving, fierce but tender, warlike yet only for peace, should here be given. Such a screed only a Prince of Men could have written, let alone lived. That had been the Chevalier's way. He might have been the first and the greatest of the patroons, those lordly landholders, rivaling any Duke of his native land. But it was too little for one who had ruled over many Kingdoms in the souls of men, and who meant that his descendants should do likewise.

So the largest portion of his land became the township's—the common property of all. Every one of his friends and followers received patents from him for farms almost as large as his own, the extra portion set aside in his name being for the upkeep of the Church and for charity. As soon as they could afford a Town clerk the Chevalier filed with him documents that would secure to each his little property, and especially the Indians who had trusted him, against the greed of future white men.

So, as something of Sir Lucas had been born again in Etienne, so was that something born in Arnold nearly three hundred years later, that something that made men hold Bibles in one hand, swords in the other; that something that had cut down heathens at Ascalon and another sort of heathen in the defeats of the Guises and the Alvas.

Arnold L'Hommedieu was to learn on less glorious battlefields, however, men had grown meaner since the Chevalier, dealing blows with dishonest weapons, with what, until stricken, one could not know for weapons at all.

And to learn these things Arnold must know disgrace—the martyrdom of civilization; must be crucified, too, and be, not a noble sight to move hearts, but a mock in the mouths of men; crucified between thieves, to find them, like Barabbas, nobler souls than those respected ones who had condemned them.

And that is the story I will now begin to tell.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CHEVYING OF QUIVVERS

I. Our Musketeers at College

WE nearly began with Quivvers and his chevying before; and, in a way, it would have been right to do so; for that chevying was the first episode in the life of Arnold L'Hommedieu that seriously concerns this history.

Had it not been for pasty Quivvers and his sly ugly ways, Arnold L'Hommedieu would have followed his forefathers as rector of the little gray-lichened church aflame with red sage; and would have striven, in all things, to have done as they did. Instead, through this same despicable Qnivvers, he was to become . . .

Enough of that! What *was* he? That is what is before us now.

Well, truth to tell, in appearance he was much like other youngsters of his sort; just such another as any one of the boys one sees at St. Paul's or Dartmouth or the smaller New England colleges. He was clean and wholesome, if a trifle too inflexible and lacking in humor, perhaps; but that can be forgiven a youth who strove to live up to a standard of honor almost impossible nowadays. Arnold was even less mischievous than other boys of his kind are apt to be; mischievousness and a sense of boyish dignity ill-comport together. Besides, he must remember that, some day, he would be the Reverend Arnold. He owed it to that some-day-to-be Reverend to do nothing to jeopardize his some-day-to-be Reverend influence. He must find things a boy could do that would serve as outlets for his essentially and normally boyish nature, yet would in no way tarnish a Reverend's 'scutcheon.

And he found them. Particularly one.

Although he had never been known to *begin* a battle, he had more sanguinary encounters to his credit than most boys had to their discredit. It was to Arnold that maltreated urchins ran, digging knuckles into eyes already sufficiently grimy to keep up a flow of tears, tangible evidence of the brutal oppression for which they sought a redress they never failed to get. There was a glad light in Arnold's eyes once his much-too-much-in-evidence conscience was satisfied; the light that was in Sir Lucas' at Ascalon when he yielded-not-an-inch to I-don't-know-how-many Saracens and saved the Fat Prince and the Fatter Bishop.

Arnold had the strength of a well-knit boy who is neither too tall nor too broad, and whose mind and body grow together, neither at the expense of either; so that he was able to make the best use of his strength. He would spend hours, for instance, hardening the back of his hand against the barn-door if somebody told him (as somebody did) that the Japanese jiu-jitsu men could strike a more terrible blow with that member flattened, than could their American rivals with said member enfisted.

And, having hardened it, he would go forth casually, pretending to himself it was for the sheer pleasure of walking; but hoping, nevertheless, that something would happen which would satisfy his conscience sufficiently to allow him to test the worth of the jiu-jitsu theory.

Like all boys with the ability to enforce their commands, just or unjust, Arnold rejoiced in, and at times was pestered by, a variety of henchmen; a sufficient number to insure the future Reverend a congregation should other sources fail. By the time we begin to make his acquaintance in the flesh he had left the great majority of these behind. Only two had remained loyal enough, or competent enough, or of good enough address, or with parents who had money enough, to follow hi to Old King's College, where we glimpse him for part of a da,, the week before he—and they—were expelled.

It *was* loyalty in the case of Archie Hartogensis, who had long yearned for Yale; where that patrician, by instinct, the good Squire Benjamin Hartogensis, Justice of the Peace, country gentleman, and son of many tavern-keeping Hartogensisi conveniently forgot, would willingly have sent him; since there he would have met the sons of many other patricians, with or without patrician ancestors.

It *was* loyalty in the case of Hugo Waldemar, son of that other patrician, the former peasant Ivan Vladimirovitch, now known as "the Honnible Johnnie" in that bailiwick that had sent him to the Legislature. For Hugo had a certain curiosity concerning physics and chemistry which might have led to something had it not been clearly impracticable for a future Reverend to prepare for his Reverendship by attending the Boston Tech. And, if not so clearly, it was quite as impracticable for his present Reverendship's purse to pay the price of his son's admittance into the ranks of the "Little Brothers of the Rich." So no Yale for Arnold, either.

Besides, there was the L'Hommedieu tradition—there had been a L'Hommedieu at Old King James' (the "Old" was silent then), since some incensed Jacobites fonnded that University to compete with the Usurpers' memorial, "William and Mary's"; that is to say, some time early in the eighteenth century. Ever since each L'Hommedieu had been gladdened in turn by the proximity of the old Parsonage to such a first-rate seat of theological learning. . . . Even Arnold insisted it was first-rate.

And perhaps it was. It was small though, and the aristocrats of New Amsterdam lineage, whose forefathers were not allowed to enter their sons there because they were beneath the rank of an "Esquire," now turned up their noses at it and found it "cheap," too. But folk of an inquiring turn of mind might have noticed that a number of text-books used in the Greek and Latin courses of other colleges and universities bore on their title-pages "B. A.'s" and "L.L. D.'s" obtained at King James'. And its "Head," an "M. A., Oxon," was esteemed the best classical scholar in America.

He said he preferred King James' because it gave him the most leisure for his own studies, and because the little village of Cyprus, in which it was ensconced, was like a bit of Old England. Indeed, there were in Cyprus besides King James' many other Jacobean buildings in twilight gray.

II. And Why They Chevied Quivvers

It was in their last year at Old King's, and after three terms of studies earnestly pursued—for Arnold had welded his own and his friends' future careers into a most harmonious whole—that an alien intruded himself upon our little community of three. No one of them was ever again heard to credit the theory of "Free Will."

For they could in no way be blamed, justly, for what they did. Although two of the three fathers cared no whit for that, and for long after blamed them readily and stormily and incessantly, and visited their wrath upon them. Only the Reverend Jorian, Arnold's father, sympathized. Yet *his* hopes for *his* son were those most sorely crushed. But *he* could see that the act by which they terminated their college careers was one as unselfish and as devoted as any that had hitherto made him proud to be the father of one, and the foster-father of our other two, Musketeers.

Jorian L'Hommedieu, himself, the gentlest and most forbearing of men, found it hard not to hate the slimy reptile who had dragged his soiling person across the well-planned futures of "his boys." Afterward he was to understand that they were destined, and particularly Arnold, for higher purposes than remaining quietly in their birthplace.

But enough of that now. All in good time. Let us consider the noisome one. Nor blame him too much, remembering the kind of parents he had. (The kind we need waste no time over.) Also remembering that the pendulum must swing far to the left if it would go far to the right; and that certain future good could not have been had Quivvers not been evil.

And he was evil, right enough; born crooked, withal an artful oily beggar, with a trick of getting your confidence and betraying it, which in school and college is called "sneaking" and, in modern business—in which Quivvers afterward shone—"smart."

He early discovered opportunity for this smartness when he found that many of his fellow students took small financial interests in the horse-racing that then flourished in many parks around and about New York City. And there was a saloon, as near the bounds of Old King's as laws and regulations permitted, where bets were transmitted by telephone to a large pool-room in town. Quivvers could see no reason why the saloonkeeper should enjoy this royal privilege exclusively, so he opened negotiations with another and larger pool-room, becoming its official, but secret, agent in the college; and soon had profitably outdistanced his rival, the saloonkeeper—too profitably by far.

The scheme was a simple one and would have won him plaudits in that tricky business world, where, afterward, he figured. It was to circulate tips on horses that had not a ghost of show and, receiving the money, pocket instead of betting it, taking the one chance in a hundred that the horses would win.

Trouble had come for the Three Musketeers when "The Jinx" took a desperate chance with his last ten dollars; "Jinx" for obvious reasons; the boy had never had any luck at anything, although there was nothing on which he would not bet—football, baseball, cricket, even alien and distant polo matches. Quivvers had more of The Jinx's money than that of any dozen others; and The Jinx—a pale harassed little freshman—was facing permanent withdrawal from college life and incarceration in his father's shoe factory, "to begin at the bottom," the lowest of unskilled labor, if his father received any more overdue tradesmen's bills. And beginning with the New Year, then only a week off, many such [illegible] would be presented him, for Quivvers had a purse more than usually swollen with the allowances of Jinx's father that should have gone to tailor, hatter and bookseller.

Jinxy must have been desperate, any one could see that, when he would take a forty-to-one chance on a horse of whom nothing more favorable was known than that he had once given a surprising performance on a rainy day. "Poor Jinx's laying that 'sawbuck' the track'll be muddy," Archie had said, shaking his head at sight of the drawn harried face.

It was pretty generally agreed that poor Jinxy had the proverbial snowball's chance—college boys are not brilliant at metaphor. Arnold, particularly, was sorry to lose him. Jinxy, while not a pal in the sense of Archie Hartogensis or Hugo, was his one literary sympathizer, as opposed to all those others of the college weekly, who worshiped at utilitarian shrines in literature or else sat at the feet of the cynics. The first wanted to learn how best to turn words into dollars, the second how to achieve reputations at the expense of inferior souls.

Arnold and The Jinx alone, of all the youths who wrote for *The Green Bag*—as the Old King's College weekly was called—sought, in Arnold's phrase, "to express the true in terms of the beautiful." And, though Arnold's stuff had the most truth, Jinxy's had a beauty more easily recognized, the beauty that comes from love and a close study of the classics. Vergil's *Bucolics*, Homer, Ovid, Aristophanes, Aristotle, Plato, Xenophon, Cæsar, Petronius, Marcus Aurelius—

these were not schoolbooks to The Jinx, but more delightful than *Arabian Nights' Entertainments.* He would sooner find lyrical English for them than read the most enthralling romance. Where the son of a middle-class manufacturer of boots and shoes developed such tastes is food for the students of heredity, but here he was, the born classical scholar. To take him away from his books was not only to deprive the world of future critical studies of value but of English versions of great beauty as well—work that the world could hardly afford to lose, in order to gain an impecunious race-track follower, a spendthrift, a gambler. For certainly The Jinx would follow one strong leaning or the other; he would work in no shoe factory.

For the first time in his life Arnold had watched with anxious interest for the results of a race, trudging into town with the sad-eyed Jinx and his fellow Musketeers. And for the first time, when the results went up on *The Echo* bulletin board, did he feel the necessity for loud congratulations. The weather at Latonia had been as though it realized the grave issue that depended on its satisfactory, or unsatisfactory, behavior, and the undistinguished forty-to-one shot, cheered by favorable surroundings, had romped past the Judges with the other contestants behind her. Jinxy was saved to the glory of classical literature, and swore in tearful tones, to take his second breath as God-given forgiveness; to bet no more. For Arnold, now that things were no longer awry, had delivered himself plainly of the choice The Jinx must make.

"It's either doing the work you like best all your life, or spending your time with people who think Vergil is a foreign name for a very young girl. . . . What a pity a fine animal like the horse should have such rotten press agents. And, look here, Jinxy, do you know my definition of what they call a 'sucker?' A man who plays another man's game. The bookmakers' wives wear diamonds, the Casino at Monte Carlo builds marble palaces and pays the King five million a year—

they don't do that by *losing*, do they? There's only one successful way to gamble—own the game. And your game is understanding words, not figures. You've pulled out this once—"

But had he? "My luck. Thought it was too good to be true—for me," The Jinx had said wearily, viewing a gray prospect of a life where a love of Latin and Literature was unknown. For profusely apologetic Quivvers told him he hadn't had the heart to throw away the last money the poor Jinxy had, and there it was—the original ten. It happened in the Three Musketeers' study, where, after searching the college for him, strong-armed Hugo had escorted the apologist, grimly.

"Wanted *me* to bring the ten. Said he hadn't the heart," exclaimed Hugo, with increasing grimness. He, good-natured, simple one though he was, had nevertheless the decided conviction that something was radically wrong. To find Quivvers in chapel, of all places—he who boasted openly of an intimate acquaintance with the works of Ingersoll and Paine, and who felt he had thoroughly demolished the Christian religion by proving that the whale's small throat would have prevented his swallowing Jonah—to find this heretic staring raptly at a stained glass Madonna after Botticelli—he in whose room hung the sort of chromos given away as prizes for cigarette coupons; such things were suspicious. And, after turning over abstract suspicion and gazing profoundly at its bottom, Hugo had concluded, with no respect to the cunning of Quivvers, that the young gentleman had done such an obviously clumsy bit of cheating as to retain three hundred and ninety dollars of Jinxy's winnings. And he said so.

"Fork out. Come on," he said, shaking Quivvers. "Fork." The pseudo betting-commissioner emitted a snarl of annoyance at the heaviness of his captor's hand.

"You ought to be thrown out of some very high window, on to some very hard rocks—no, sharp nails—no, stinging nettles," said Archie Hartogensis excitedly. "I give you my word, I never heard of such a crook as you, Quivvers. Not in all history is there such a slimy snake."

Arnold, of them all, said nothing, but surveyed Quivvers quietly with speculative gray eyes. More than the stolid but active giant of a Hugo, or the excitable blond Archie, this Athos of the Musketeers realized what Quivvers had done, and knowing how vile and little he was (for all his scrubbed cleanliness and six feet of height), failed to find any words that would express his opinions. Arnold knew, had Jinxy won and Quivvers held it back, the pool-room first must make the bet good; second, discharge its agent; and, though he had always despised the fellow, he gave him credit for too much intelligence to involve himself in so patent a swindle. It was so easy to find a record of the bet.

No, there was another solution, and Arnold found the truth, as always, by surveying all possibilities and eliminating each one not impregnable. His three friends knew his methods; he had worked out too many intricate problems in mathematics for them all, had solved too many of their personal problems in just that quiet staring way of his; but the silence frightened Quivvers.

"See here, old pal," the latter said to The Jinx, forcing confidence into his tones. He had a pleasing voice and, his vicious mouth hidden by a small mustache a la mode, a pleasant face. He took Jinxy's hand. "I'd sooner dive off the clock-tower into a bathtub full of vitriol than have this happen. But I'm your *pal*—you know that—your *pàl*. If I *hadn't* been your pal I'd have *bet* that money. But I was going to add a twenty to it and take up a subscription among the other fellows. I'll add a *fifty* now." Seeing that The Jinx—a trustful person and grateful for the smallest favor—was beginning to regard him as a benefactor, he turned to fields more difficult to conquer. "How much can *you* give, Arch?"

Archie, responding to the sincerity of Quivvers' open self-blaming countenance, veered immediately. "Of all the nerve I ever heard of in the whole world, yours is the worst; taking it on yourself to decide about betting somebody else's money—" He paused, wondering how much debt he dared incur. Quivvers had turned the tables, put *him* in the wrong. He could not afford to be less generous, but, financially, he could not afford to be generous at all. His attitude influenced Hugo, whose brain was not in proportion to his giant-like body, although his heart was. Perhaps he had wronged poor Quivvers. There he had been sitting with awed face, contemplating a sacred picture, and he, Hugo, had laid sacrilegious hands on him, when perhaps Quivvers was meditating devotionally and learning to abjure the heresies of Messrs. Paine and Ingersoll. The superstition of the Russian peasant—from which Hugo was only a generation removed—smote him heavily.

"I'm sorry, Pete," he muttered. "We all make mistakes. I'll put up a hundred. I'm sorry."

"You needn't be," said Arnold abruptly. "Lock the door. Give me the key. Now, Quivvers—"

No hope here for appeals with sentimentalism, bluff heartiness, fake friendship, to this creature of intellect. Arnold had pondered and now he understood. "He didn't bet that money, boys. He told the truth."

Arnold paused. But Quivvers knew better than to take heart.

"He wouldn't have returned it, though, if the horse had *lost,*" said Arnold coldly. "That's how he's bought all those new clothes and stickpins and study fixings. He never *has* laid that sort of bet. Just put the money in his pocket. Well, that was all right, up to to-day. The pool-rooms would have got the money anyway. But the pool-rooms would have *paid* when their judgment was wrong. He took the place of the pool-room. So he owes Jinxy his bet."

From his hasty, incoherent jumble of reasseverated friendship for all, especially Arnold—"the last man in the world I'd thought could *think* such a thing"—Arnold realized Quivvers had not the remotest intention of fulfilling his obligation; and although he saw trouble foreshadowed for all of them, Arnold could, for the life of him, do nothing less. Not for nothing had they been called the Three Musketeers. Coming up together from Havre de Grace school under Arnold's leadership, they had fought, shoulder to shoulder, against sophomore and junior oppression; not content with winning freedom for themselves, they had chastised the bullies of other helpless freshmen, inflicting severe punishment, upsetting all Old King's classic traditions, and given back to many their lost self-respect. "One for all and all for one" had been their juvenile oath in the Hartogensis barn when they were but entering their 'teens, and since those childish theatricals Arnold had held them to it.

They had brought a new idea into the college, an idea that is always new, although it was really novel only when our primitive fathers, the cave men, rose superior to the beasts by believing in it. Bullying of freshmen, save surreptitiously, had ceased since the Three Musketeers came to Old King's though, since it is student ethics not to carry tales to masters, they had their hands full. "The strong should protect the weak," Arnold had told Archie and Hugo, long since back in Havre de Grace, when they hung spellbound to his tales of bygone knightly prowess. He was never to be a preacher, in the local sense, as the Reverend Jorian, his father, fondly imagined he would be; but one can not come of a long line of parsons—ten of them for grandfathers—and not have preaching in one's very veins.

And this was his sort of preaching—the militant churchman's, that of those old Knights of St. John and of Jerusalem; Knights-Hospitallers, Knights of Malta. He was an atavism; he was in fact just what the first known L'Hommedieu had been before a maid had broken his vows. Six hundred years ago that, yet Arnold might have sat for his picture when he told Hugo to hold Quivvers while Archie went through his pockets.

Any quantity of crumpled bills were found, despite Quivvers' kicks and threats and pleas of probity. But not enough. "Take his jewelry," said Arnold.

The pawnshops were still open, and Archie sped to town in Uncle Jabez's ancient hack, while Hugo sat guard over Quivvers, ominous now, for he, too, had been betrayed and must watch himself like a hawk lest "the oily beggar come it over him again"; while The Jinx, alarmed by the sullen silence into which Quivvers had fallen, protested that it did not matter.

It was dusk when Archie returned, and Arnold looked up from the translation at which he had been working steadily, apparently unaware of Quivvers, to whom he had not spoken since his request had been refused. But he spoke to him now, after counting the money Archie had brought.

"Still ninety short," he said. "Wasn't there a cheque-book, Hugo? Give him a pen. A cheque for the balance, Quivvers, and if you stop it you'll be sorry."

He should have taken alarm at the meekness with which Quivvers complied. "To you?" he had asked humbly. Arnold nodded; he was afraid The Jinx might not cash it. "And *now,* may I go?" asked the vanquished one, rising. Arnold nodded and Hugo opened the door.

An hour later they were all in the President's study, the cheque stared up at them accusingly from his blotter; behind him Quivvers with the air of an outraged citizen. He accused them of forcing him to give up money—highway robbery. Nothing was said of reasons save that they claimed, unjustly, that he owed it. The point was, they had used force. He showed the red marks of Hugo's huge *moujik* paws. And the cheque had been in Arnold's pocket where Quivvers had told the President it would be, and it was in Arnold's name. Quivvers had known they could not cash it until morning; had thought, too, that they could explain only by betraying Jinxy's activities in betting, a misdemeanor also punishable by expulsion. Quivvers knew our three would willingly suffer almost anything if they could go free only at Jinxy's expense; would suffer it even though such silence would put him, their hateful enemy, in like disgrace.

Not strangely, but like all mean souls, he did not admire them for this; and while despising them as idiots, lunatics, "suckers," congratulated himself on his own acumen.

But he had underrated Arnold, who was not the sort to suffer unjustly and give no punishment in return. Quivvers had probably ruined a career to which the Reverend Jorian had trained Arnold's thoughts since childhood—a career that was the duty of every eldest son of the L'Hommedieus. Expulsion meant he could never take his place in the pulpit at Havre de Grace, a L'Hommedieu pulpit for more than two centuries; and all because it was vastly more important than he should retain his honor, protect his friends. But Quivvers should not remain to do any gloating, to flourish by evil.

Arnold faced the troubled President, and, since he could be no more thoroughly expelled for two crimes than for one, he spoke freely, in answer to a request for particulars as to the debt.

"It was a bet on a horse-race," he said in a voice that showed he spoke reluctantly. "Quivvers is the agent of a pool-room—Long Tom Kelly's—telephone him if you don't believe *me*, sir."

"We bet with him, too," said Archie, following Arnold's lead, shoulder to shoulder as always—"Waldemar and I. He cheated us, sir. L'Hommedieu got the cheque for the lot."

"Yes, sir," agreed Hugo dutifully, and nodding darkly at Quivvers, who was clutching at the back of the chair.

Quivvers had not expected this; curiously enough, he did not think they might use his own weapons against him, and the fact that none of the three had ever placed a bet with him had made him think he was secure, knowing they would introduce no other names.

"So I'll keep the cheque, if you don't mind, sir," said Arnold, withdrawing it from under the President's felspar paperweight. "It's ours, really it is, sir, and I know you must ask us to resign for the betting if for nothing else, so we may as well have this. We may need it."

That was Arnold L'Hommedieu—fixity of purpose, calm, unswerving loyalty to friends, championship of the weak and hatred for vile and cunning strength that misused power.

The next day the President announced after prayers that three students had found themselves forced to resign; and that, he was sorry to say, he had found it necessary to expel a fourth, Mr. P. Q. Quivvers.

CHAPTER THREE

HAVRE DE GRACE

Our Musketeers at Home

THE Snow Queen honored Long Island with a visit on the day of the boys' return home, and the two hills which sheltered Havre de Grace, harbor and town, were hung and draped with white velvet. Monsieur Jacque Frost had not been idle either; cedar berries were powdered with glistening dust, pine needles glittered like little upturned spears, and he had hung silver-bright swords and shimmering daggers wherever there were eaves or bushes to support them.

When the three boys met half an hour before sunset a ghostly moon was beginning to give to those weapons from winter's workshop some of the sheen of steel itself. And with the setting of the sun gray ghosts galloped around Havre de Grace chimneys, galloped and galloped until the wind whisked them off to disappear among those elf-hills that mortals call sand dunes.

"Of course, it had to go and snow and make us hate to leave as much as possible. It couldn't have been rainy and dismal and generally rotten. Oh, no!"

Thus Archie.

Equally in character, Arnold said nothing.

"He ought to be thrown out of some very high window on to some very hard rocks," said Archie Hartogensis excitedly. "I give you my word I never heard of such a mucker as Quivvers."

And still Arnold said nothing, but surveyed the other two with speculative gray eyes. Yet he realized more than either what this Quivvers had done to them. Of the trio he would lose the most.

"It's a dear old place all right," he said, finally.

"The best *ever*," added excitable Archie.

"And anybody who says it isn't ought to get spectacles," from Hugo.

"A pair like yours?" interrupted Arnold, smiling.

Hugo grinned sheepishly, as always when stirred to emotion he was unable to express or even understand. It was indeed a dear old place! Almost the best ever; for once nothing but such as Archie's exaggerations sufficed.

"Just think—if it hadn't been for Quivvers we'd have inherited all that—"

Archie scowled and deliberately turned his back as, the northeast wind waxing with the waning of the afternoon, the mist was half lifted from Harbor Hill across the way, revealing rectangular and hexagonal blocks of white, black-spotted Noah's ark houses, clustered above and below the spire of L'Hommedieu Church.

"*All* that? Don't be absurd, Archie," said Arnold, hoping to have Archie's wrath turned on him and away from their misfortune.

"*All*—sure! And you know it. And it would have been like one inheriting it—you! 'Three souls with but a single thought.'"

"Don't be sentimental, Archie," said Arnold, and led the way down the slope by what was, at best, a goat's path.

"Now if you'd said three *heads* with but a single thought," said Hugo solemnly.

"Three—right—at that everything that amounts to anything is a sort of Trinity," conceded Archie. He was a great one at metaphysics, the only science that requires no exactness.

"Don't be blasphemous, Archie," said Arnold, using the same expression but with a far different intonation. Arnold's reverence was the inheritance of many centuries.

Hugo saw a storm gathering and interposed: "My Governor won't even send me to the Boston Tech.—no Tech. at all. And that settles me. It was right enough at Old King's—exclusive! But now I've got to go to another 'gentleman's college.' The Governor's so crazy for me to be a 'gentleman'—as if I wasn't one."

"All fathers are crazy," said Archie sullenly, and for the thousandth time that week.

"My Governor says he's made the money. Let me make the family."

Archie's sneer threatened to become a continuous performance. "Oh, I know! Family!"

"Don't be nasty, Archie," said Arnold, who had regained his good temper, and was determined Archie should find his again, too. "Come on, you two."

They walked down to the shore and seated themselves in Parson L'Hommedieu's power boat.

"He wants house parties, like he reads about in novels; with long skinny women in low-necked dresses and garden hats, playing bridge, and Van Doosens, Van Susans and visiting Dukes or Earls or Counts, dressed up in Norfolk jackets and blazers. Hugo's job is to marry a girl who knows that sort by their first names."

"And I don't feel comfortable with that sort," continued Hugo, taking the tiller. "The only girl I ever wanted to *marry* was—"

Arnold desisted from his attempts to set the great iron wheel in motion. "Haven't I told you," he began ominously, "that—"

"Well, can I *help* it?" asked Hugo desperately. "I just can't get her out of my head."

Up in the belfry of L'Hommedieu Church a little light was swung out and up until it hung beneath the very highest point—the great gold cross. Or rather, they could not tell whether they saw the belfry light first or whether it was the row of little lights below that seemed to burst through gray walls and ivy. And then the old Dutch bell rang out its centuries-old reminder that the hour of evening prayer was fast approaching.

"How it'll all end, God knows!" said Arnold despondently. It was as if the earth had opened and had swallowed up all the things that made living on it worth while. And the precious quality of all he was to lose was never more apparent than on such an evening as this, when the falling snow was whitest and the setting sun reddest.

"You've just got to get it out of your head," said Arnold somberly; "just as I've got to get the Parsonage out of my head, and go to New York and get a job. Father put it up to me. Asked me if I didn't think the story of my being expelled wouldn't grow and grow and be distorted—"

"You just bet it would," shrilled Archie; "this town's full of the rottenest, most envious—"

"Precisely," Arnold clipped Archie's superlatives short. "And wouldn't all that growing and distortion hurt my influence as a parson? I had to say 'Yes.' Especially in these days when the number of moving-picture houses that used to be churches is only equaled by the number of garages that used to be . . . Something like that's what he said."

Hugo nodded and looked drearily out to sea.

"You know how hard it is to get people to go to church anyway," Arnold went on; "and how they come to ours because no one could ever say anything against our characters. No matter if what we three did was right or not, people *will* have their nasty little scandals—and if the person amounts to anything, or has had a good character up to then, so much the worse. . . . Why, before we know it, we'll hear that we were forced to resign for some unspeakably rotten thing that we wouldn't even whisper about among ourselves—"

"They'd better not," interrupted Archie fiercely.

"Oh, rot!" Arnold cut some possible heroics short. "Who can keep people from talking? And all those mill-hands of your father's, Hugo! You know how they're always saying about you: 'He's no better than we are.' And how your father has done everything to square their resentment about you leaving public schools for private. And how a lot of these rats around here love to say rotten things about us because we licked their sons for being *little* rats. And, then, there's your father, Arch! . . . No use pretending people like his English squire ways; and making his tenants and workmen tip their hats to him and call him Squire, . . . and all that! And, since he's become Justice of the Peace, a lot more people hate him for sending them up to the Riverhead jail. Just think all those things over for a minute, and—why, before we got back home to-day Paul heard it whispered around High School that we'd had a chorus-girl supper party in our rooms. And got caught at it! And were only allowed to resign because our fathers had so much influence. Know how that was said?"

He expelled an angry breath, then imitated a whining woman: "Of course, if they'd been *poor* young fellows, they'd have been *disgraced.* But of course *Parson's* son . . . And *Squire's* son . . . And *Honnible Johnnie's* son . . ."

"Yes," said Hugo ruefully; "and it's because they're saying things like that—and the Governor's afraid of losing their nasty grubby votes—that I'm being sent away from old Havre, too. Otherwise I might 'a' been allowed to stay and fuss with my chemicals over at the 'Works.' He's so proud of that 'Honnible Johnnie' thing that he wouldn't lose for me or fifty like me. And he's got his eye on Congress now. Being a regular certificated Johnnie of an 'Honorable' . . ."

He, too, breathed contempt. For all his fraternizing with his father's mill-hands. And Arnold's politeness and genuine concern for the welfare of *his* father's parishioners; and Archie's good-natured liking for "Squire's" dependents; the three were intensely intolerant of any concessions made to the ignorant and prejudiced. *They* meant to conduct *themselves* with kindness and firmness allied; giving them "not what they want but what's good for them." Alas! for youth's golden dream of government; that never-to-be-attained benevolent autocracy that looks so incredibly easy and is so impossibly hard.

". . . But why is *your* Governor sending *you* away, Arch, when he's so dead set against public opinion . . . that's the mystery to me—"

Archie's opinion of the "mystery" was thereupon given with a certain amount of profane and, necessarily in Archie's case, excited embellishment.

"I'm not to go back to *any* college. I'm to be put to work with the old-fashionedest old frump that ever wore an out-of-date frock-coat. And act like a prize Sunday-school Rollo every day in the week, for if I get sent back by this old boy that father of mine, who loves money better than the Lord loves the Jews, 'ull just heave me through a different window every time I try to crawl back home. It's the old boy I'm named for—old Uncle Archie Van Vhroon—old school—old fool—old manners—old business—old house—old neighborhood—old everything—the oldest old man in New York and proud of it. And if I don't act like I love everything that's old and hate everything that's new, he'll leave his money to some old home for old chumps with old names instead of leaving it to his old godson and nephew. 'Cause I'll *be* old all right by the time I've stood *him* six months. My hair 'ull be so white it'll make Longfellow's look like Edgar Allan Poe's. And I'll have white whiskers, too. Won't take any interest in shaving or anything. Grow 'em all over. Look like a couple of features peeking out of an iceberg, island entirely surrounded by hair. . . ."

He might have gone on with his tirade, working himself into a new fury every minute, if Arnold had not said, quietly, that at least they could be together in New York. At this Archie's dolefulness took wings. Hitting himself on the chest, a habit he had when extraordinarily glad, mad, or sad, he shook Arnold's hand violently.

"I guess somebody 'ull have something on us, hey?" he cackled shrilly. "Shows, dinners on Broadway, see the sights, hear the sounds, go to prize-fights and belong to a regular bang-up club. I'd rather be a paving-stone in New York than a diamond anywhere else. It's the only life in the world. You're in the primary class when you're away from it. Hey?"

He struck Arnold a tremendous smack between the shoulder-blades, then beat on his chest with both fists and did a little dance.

"I suppose you could run around with a girl and nobody would know anything about it—in New York, couldn't you, Arnold?" asked Hugo hesitantly. "I—I think maybe I'll cut college altogether and go with you two—"

Arnold groaned, "That girl again? Haven't I told you time and time again that she was just *using* you? . . . What's this about *your* going to New York, Archie?"

Archie answered him with a scowl. "Shipping business. *Me* in business! Can't you see me? Me, that hates figures and hates offices, and has always been looking forward to all this." He waved his arm around, scowling again. "That father of mine's just the craziest old bonehead in the world. I could make our place *pay;* make the best paying farm on Long Island out of it—best in New York—best in the world. And all that geology and soils and crop bulletins I've studied—know more about scientific agriculture than any farmer on earth, I do. And all *wasted.* You know what I could do with Exmoor here—and how I love it—"

("Exmoor" was Squires Hartogensis' equivalent for what was known in Sussex County as Mantauket Hill, acquired by him with the proceeds of two centuries of inn-keeping.)

There was no need for Archie to exaggerate now or to beat himself into a fury; there was a catch in his voice, and, had they been women, he would have sobbed on Arnold's shoulder; and Arnold would have sobbed with him, and Hugo would have blubbered in his big clumsy way. Did *they* know what Archie could do with Exmoor (alias Indian Hill)? Did Archie know what *Arnold* could do with the L'Hommedieu church-school? Did Archie and Arnold both know what *Hugo* could do with those smoky ugly works of his father's down there, a blot on the town? Had a night ever passed since their last year of High School when they weren't planning under Arnold's leadership the things they would do to make Havre de Grace the model of its kind?

But what was the use talking about that *now?* They had lost their hold on Havre de Grace, every one; as each gained from the gloomy speeches of the others, Archie's elation being short-lived when he saw that New York meant to Arnold nothing less than imprisonment.

"To be where you can't have horses and trees and green fields and things," said Arnold. His thin face was distorted as he spoke, and he clenched and unclenched his slender hands.

"Do you *have* to go?" asked Hugo wistfully. "I'll stay here if *you* do." A statement Archie did not resent, for there could be no choice between him and their leader.

"What else can I *do?*" asked Arnold bitterly. "That swine, Quivvers, has done for *me,* right enough. I can't be a parson with all my parishioners whispering we were kicked out of college for some stinking, hushed-up scandal. I told you father put it up to me. He wanted me to go abroad on a trip and decide, and whatever I thought was right *would be* right to him. And Paul broke down (good little beggar he is, shows it, doesn't he?) Broke down; yes, sir. And all because he'll get my place, church, farm, the old house—everything. There's not enough for two."

"And you decided to give up *everything?*" asked Archie in awe.

"What else could I *do?*" returned Arnold querulously. "The church is the main thing—making people *believe.* And it helps some in these days, when nobody can say a word against the pastor, when he uses his own money to run the place and pays his own salary. Other churches lose their congregations nowadays; the preachers preach to half-empty pews; but we don't and never have. You don't think I'd take chances with a heritage like that, do you? No. Paul's all right; studies hard, too. It's for the best, I guess."

"Well, not wishing Paul any misfortune," said Archie in his high excited voice, "but he can't ever take the place of about the best pal *I* ever heard of. Hey, Hugo?"

Hugo nodded and put his heavy hand on Arnold's shoulder.

"No use saying it's for the best, Arnold," Archie went on. "It's just the most disastrous thing ever happened, that's what it is."

Arnold smiled. "Don't take yourself so seriously, Archie," he advised.

"I'm not," returned Archie hotly; "I'm taking *you* seriously and what you were trainin' us to do. Look at this town now. We could hardly wait to get through school to begin. You've said it yourself a million times. Used to be God's country, now it's God-forsaken."

"I never said '*God's Country,*'" Arnold defended hotly.

"With these factories going up all the time, because we've got water power," Archie continued, ignoring him, "and the boys and girls leavin' the farms and the fishin' and huntin' where they were healthy, and had healthy children, and going to work in the factories just to get a lot of ready-made clothes and cheap junk, and loaf around picture shows and joints at night, and call themselves 'as good as anybody'—'cause they don't have to wear overalls and get their hands dirty. And as for children—when they *do* let themselves *have* 'em—sickly pale brats no good to themselves or anybody. Breeding a regular slave race. We'd have stopped that, we three; have run factories decently or run 'em out. With your pull as pastor and mine as the Squire's son and Hugo's as son of the owner of the biggest factory of all. It only takes a few big men to turn such a trick. And we'd have turned it all right. Wasn't that what we were working for, and thinkin' about all the time? Don't pull that stuff about it all bein' for the best. To hell with Paul. What does *he* matter in a case like this? It's the worst thing ever happened in the whole world."

You are not to suppose that the sociology and economics in Archie's speech were his own; they were the result of many such speeches by Arnold in the past, which had sunk in and become a part of his two companions, until they were as eager as boys for a new game, to stanch the tide that threatened to inundate their township with broken-down laborers and ill-begotten children.

Arnold had worked out, and was still working at it in detail when the expulsion came, a comprehensive scheme of militancy in local politics, which, with his father's congregation back of him and the hundreds of tenants on Squire Hartogensis' estate, and factory-hands in the Waldemar factory would have made the three masters of local affairs, and, when they had proved their unselfishness and capabilities, masters of county politics as well.

"Gets dark early these days, doesn't it?" muttered Hugo, and cursed himself for his inability to express either his right to love whom he chose, or the emotions that stirred in him at such sights as sunrise and sunset.

The long stretch of harbor was alight, and as they drew nearer it the low-roofed, gray-lichened Parsonage seemed aflame with its red sage. Another stroke of the big motor, another sweep or so, and they were floating amid that vast blackness, the shadows cast by the dark green mass, the ancient wood of the L'Hommedieus.

Arnold pushed down the switch and the thumping of the motor ceased so suddenly they could hardly believe that there had also been a cessation of movement.

Evening had come almost as suddenly. The clusters of red sage above were black now—black velvet. There was neither moon nor stars, and the fog sifted down like snow across the path of the setting sun.

"Reminds me of that sunset over there—Wolverhampton—" said Archie, awed. "When we saw Carol, last—remember?"

"You never give us a chance to forget," returned Arnold, smiling.

"You don't need any," retorted Archie. "You were around there as much as I was—tell the truth, now—"

Arnold hesitated, but kept silent. Archie, however, took no advantage of his silent admission. His eyes were turned Wolverhampton way. And Hugo's toward Manhattan. And Arnold's . . . ?

He was staring over there at the ancient wood of the L'Hommedieus, through which Carol came to greet him, waving a filmy scarf. And then it seemed that they met, and he tried to force on her another scarf, less filmy, less beautiful, in itself; but one that, when it brushed the near-by boughs and floated up to meet the overhead branches, caused them, all wintry as they were, to burst into white blossoms, each one a bell that rang out golden chimes.

Just what all this meant he had not the slightest idea, nor was he able to remember it in detail a second later; it passed, as dreams do sleeping or waking, leaving only an impression, an uncomfortable impression.

Archie saw Carol, too, out there in Sunset Land, saw her where he had seen her last—at Wolverhampton (Wolf Inlet before the Brooks-Catons bought it and built there). And she was running, too. But because the Hartogensisi were a family that had never heard any chimes except the chink of cash—and because they had ceased to beat their women-folk before discovering how to evoke their respect instead of provoke their fear—Carol did not come to Archie as to Arnold, but seemed to flee him shyly.

Seemed, indeed!

But Archie was as little likely to know this as Hugo was to know that the face of Miss Beulah Roberts—Bobbie Beulah, Merry Whirl Company, No. 2—the face that *he* saw out there, was not so modest as the moss-violet, or so pale and pretty as the water-lily she seemed to him. . . .

As is the custom with men when their work has failed them, or when they think it has, the thoughts of our Three Musketeers had turned to man's other heritage: woman. To Arnold, they were fascinating countries unexplored, to Archie and to Hugo, strange shrines in far-off lands. . . .

CHAPTER FOUR

ARISTOCRATS

I. Squire Hartogensis Receives a Proposition

WHILE their sons were recovering from their sentimental debauch, and were landing on the other side of the Harbor to climb the steep hill to L'Hommedieu Parsonage, the son of many centuries of tavern-keeping Hartogensisi sat with the son of many centuries of earth-tilling peasants, in the former's stately mahogany and teakwood dining-room at Hartogensis Hall. John Waldemar sat enthroned in a massive chair at the foot of the table, filled with a genuine admiration for the aristocratic air and gentle appearance of his host, who, in a chair equally massive, sat at the head, a footman in livery passing dishes, a butler with metal buttons on a striped waistcoat, cooling the wine.

The "Honnible Johnnie" was agreeing with the Squire as to the insolence of Havre de Gravians. He, more than Hartogensis, had suffered from these temerarious townsmen. At least there were many who respected the Squire, owner of so much land, landlord of so many citizens. But the "Honnible Johnnie" must depend for his political support on the ignorant and illiterate; to gain their good-will he must keep alive a hearty pretense of equality.

Actually it was no more than half-pretense. For all his sins, he had at least the quality of camaraderie. But just now it pleased the Boss to agree with the aristocratic Squire; he had need of the Squire in the near future, and wanted to prepare the way for a "proposition" of which you are soon to hear.

"The idear," he made remark. "A fellow like me that's got big properties and employs hundreds of men here and in the city has got to stand for that kind of stuff if he wants to be elected. Actually send his own son away from home. It jest shows you, Squire, what a state the country's in when a man of my position's got to act that way to get votes. 'Lots of times,' I says to myself, 'I'd like to be the Squire, who treats 'em like they oughta be treated.' But it's different with you, Squire. *Your* old man left you money, you're an independent country-*gentleman*. My boy Hugo 'ull be the same and so 'ull I, when I get through with politics. But jest now I can't afford it. There's a lot of army-contracts—Bureaus of Medicine and Surgery and what-not that've been promised me if I get my seat in the House. And Department of Agriculture chemical contracts . . . . and lots of others, too. What's more, these here Federal snoopers won't be investigatin' my books and shipments, and all that part of the business I've built up from the time I was a pedlar. One of the biggest parts of my business 'ull go to smash under these new laws they're considering, unless I get into Congress. I never told you, did I, partner?"

The wine seemed to be warning him to indiscretion; but, actually, it was not.

"Told me what?" asked Hartogensis refilling the glasses. Waldemar took the churchwarden clay extended him. To look at them, rosy-gilled and rubicund, with the accessories of long pipes, port wine in crystal decanters, the long witch-faces of the candles on the long mahogany, the dark wainscoted walls hung with ancient oils and eighteenth-century sporting prints, was to imagine an English country-house, a hunting squire of parts and a Corinthian neighbor.

"How I got my start," returned Waldemar jovially. "I wouldn't tell it to nobody but you, Squire. To tell the *truth*, I wouldn't 'a' told it to *you*. For a long time I was afraid you wasn't a good fellow; you know, *broadminded*."

He held the bowl of churchwarden pipe over one of the candles, and the tobacco alight, beamed jovially. "Nothing like a good warm fire and tobacco and drink handy and looking back on the days when you was on the outside looking in. Say, Squire, many's the time I used to stand tiptoe and rubber into some of them old houses around Washington Square and lower Fifth Avenue—that was the swell neighborhood then. Which you oughta know, being one of the old families.

"Yes, *sir*," he added, having waited for the Squire to confirm these ancestral antecedents. "And I always said when I got money, I'd have a house like that with an open fire and all. . . . Well, I got 'em, all right."

The wine lifted its voice and contradicted his approving note. Waldemar took another glass of port.

"Great idear, these long pipes; makes a cool sweet smoke, as they say in the 'ads.' . . . But like I was telling you as to how I got my start. Peddling little pill-boxes. Quarter the box; and they didn't cost me more'n a nickel. Some profit, hey? I saved enough in five years to buy out an old drug-store man who was retiring, hired a drug-clerk with a diploma for twelve a week, and went around to my customers telling 'em to come to my drug-store. I wouldn't sell 'em what they wanted less'n they bought other stuff off'n me—said I was afraid of the police. Built up a great business thataway. Got to be known all over town. Kept open all night, used to sleep under the counter. Believe *me*, partner, I deserve all *I* got. It just shows you what opportunities there is in America for a young fellar who'll *work*. Yes, and *save*, and not have women and *bad habits*. I never drunk, I never smoked, I never even had a girl, until I was way past thirty. And as for *the stuff* in *the little pill-boxes* . . . ."

He winked—"I saw too much of what *that* done to my customers. But if I didn't sell it some one else would, wouldn't they? But if you asked these Socialists and Anarchists and whiners to do what I done, how many would do it? The country's all right, say I, it's the people in it that ain't any good. This here Socialism now . . ."

He spat in disgust.

"They'd keep a man from building up a legitimate business! What's the use of working and scringing and saving if you ain't allowed to make good? Makes me sick."

The Squire had listened in some distaste, but he was restrained from showing any sign of it by a most unwelcome memory of his childhood at the Yew Tree Inn, which, fallen somewhat in the quality of its customers, had been partly dependent on its side-door trade, where negroes and the poorer whites were accommodated with inferior beer and rot-gut whisky.

"As I see it," he said, exorcising this memory, "those who amount to anything will raise themselves. Those who won't don't deserve any pity. Life has changed since the old days. To-day every one has equal opportunity. If they don't take advantage of it, are *we* to blame? Shall we be responsible? I wouldn't mind if they were like they were in my grandfather's day—respectful to their superiors, and all. But if they won't be, they can go to the devil. That's my way of looking at it. And they'd better beware how they alienate the sympathy of the better classes. In fifty years more we'll be in a position to compel their deference again as in my grandfather's day."

He had conveniently forgotten that his grandfather had been one of the most deferential.

"No doubt they've forgotten that only a few hundred years ago they wore iron-collars around their necks with the name of their masters on 'em. We were sorry for them, though, and took the collars off. And look how they've behaved! Look at the French Revolution! There's gratitude for you."

It might have been imagined that, the iron-collar stage having survived in Russia until the day of Waldemar's grandfather (who had worn one), the Honnible Johnnie might have been moved to remonstrance. But he, like the Squire, had a convenient memory. He nodded emphatically.

"As I see it, life's a game with certain rules for playing it," he said. "Then there's three kinds of players—them that's afraid to take a chance, them that takes a chance and loses, them that takes a chance and wins. The first kind don't amount to shucks—they're like sheep—let people shear 'em and brand 'em and just keep yelling 'Baa-a, baa-a.' The second kind's got nerve all right but not brains. They try to get up but only get in jail. The third kind does a lot of the things the second kind does, but they figure things out. And the second kind call that luck. It ain't luck, Squire, it's *brains.* The ones that get caught ain't got any brains, that's all. You got to learn how to play the game according to the rules. What's the rules? The Law. Before I bought my first place, that little Seventh Avenue drug-store, I went to see my Alderman and got him to go partners with me. He even put up part of the money. I knew there was a hundred per cent. profit in the business, but I didn't try to hog it all. There was the Law and the Law had to be looked after. Another fellow tried the same game and got raided. Why? Because he gave *policemen* money. That's bribery, and bribery don't pay. Mine was a legitimate business deal."

Whether or not this unethical unbosoming was ingenuous or ingenious, no mere historian may say. It is possible, as others have observed even from antiquity, that he whose major occupation is delusion may in time come to delude himself. This particular self-deluder then leaned back and took more port with an almost devout air.

"Now that other fellow—Simoney was his name," he explained further, "he braced me for a dollar only the other day. And he had a bigger drug-store than mine and a durned sight better, too. But he didn't study the game, didn't learn the rules. And all the good it did him was five years or something when one of these here Uplifts got after him. He's working for *me* now, taking orders from East Side doctors. . . . They do a great drug business, those kikes, and it's getting so they have to do it with me. There's quite a trade in laudanum since the police started shaking down the hop-joints so much. The 'White Stuff's' on the up-and-up too. We got together the other day, Justus and old Urquhart and some of the rest of us wholesalers, and skyrocketed it (morphine, *you* know). Just doubled prices. We used to get seventy-five cents for a hundred cubes of the unrefined, ninety-five for the same in pressed hypo tablets, half-grains, that is. We raised it to a dollar and a half the cubes, two dollars the tablets. . . ."

He laughed with the pleasure of one who is attaining his object, for a greedy look had come into the Squire's eyes.

"There *was* plenty of kicks," Waldemar agreed, in answer to a question, "but I notice sales keep right on mountin' up. Why, I had to take on another workman in our instrument-branch—which, between you and me, ain't nothing but the artillery branch. Guns, you know."

He laughed boisterously this time. The greedy look on the Squire's face had given way to one of curiosity.

"'Arms and ammunition'—that's my little joke," Waldemar explained. "Morphine and cocaine are ammunition; 'guns'—that is, 'hypos', hypodermic syringes—arms. Course we bluff at making *other* instruments; I've got a case full of probes and bougies and tweezers and scalpels and pretty nearly everything else in the surgical line. But *we* never *make* 'em. I should say not. 'Get the money'—that's my motter. And there's no money in professional instruments—not enough sold and too much competition. But when these here drug-habits started getting good, I see the demand for a good cheap syringe coming—not the four-dollar solid piston kind the doctors use, but one to sell at a dollar and give a profit."

The Squire asked another question. Waldemar disagreed scornfully.

"The four-dollar one—naw!—no profit a tall! Not a tall! Has to be heavy and solid to get the suction and keep the air-bubbles out. But—here's 'nother of my idears!—jest put some gooey stuff in the barrel and you get the suction as good as the solid syringe. . . . One of these here Socialist workmen quit me on account of it, though; said the gooey stuff meant pumping poison and disease right inter the blood. Sich ignorance! As if the drug injection wasn't strong enough to kill anything else. . . ."

He waved his relighted pipe with a triumphant air, and as he approached the business of the evening his enthusiasm was contagious.

"And then the biggest of all and growing every day—cocaine. Why, down South in the Prohibition states where they've closed the saloons and where these niggers and poor whites 'uve been in the habit of getting drunk every Sattiday night, we jest can't supply the demand. I'll have to run up another shack here in a year or so and take over a bigger building in the city—or build one with warehouses to suit. *Building* 'ud be better if I was there with the *cash.* And that's where *you* come in sometime, Squire, if you're looking for a forty per cent. business investment. All I ask you is, run up to town with me some day and look over my books. If that don't convince you, you'd think Gov'ment bonds was a gamble. And don't forget that where other fellars have to walk an egg-shell tight-rope, I'll be walking on Uncle Sam's private wall. And, what's more, I'll be walking with the people who run things in this country—although they need every vote in Washington to do it with, which is where my drag will come in. So if ever there was a safe game, you've jest been interduced to it, and you'll never be interduced to another like it if you live to be a million. . . . Say, you cert'ny do look like that uncle of yours, Squire."

He nodded toward a portrait that hung above. It was part of the "Honnible Johnnie's" system of "jollying," knowing as he did that the Squire fancied a resemblance to his own bulbous nose, in that somewhat swollen pictured feature—an "uncle," the Squire said, but did not add that the avuncular relationship came through his wife. Having been unduly eager to copy the "uncle's" ante-bellum attire, Benjamin had only succeeded in achieving an appearance that smacked of a commercial interest in equine affairs. The frilled shirt, the studs, the spreading bow, the waistcoat cut so low that it might have served with evening attire, the braided tail-coat and wide trousers—all helped to give him the appearance of a prosperous bookmaker, the sort seen at Newmarket and Epsom Downs.

"I looked over your Greenwich village property the other day, that Yew Tree Inn. That's why I wrote you," said Waldemar. With irritating calm, he again filled his churchwarden and again smiled. "When I see what a ramshackle old tenement's wasting a fine piece of property for a manufacturer that don't wan[illegible] advertise, I jest have to laugh, that's all. Why, you've even got the right to put 'No thoroughfare' on the entrance to the little alley; I looked up the deeds at the County Clerk's. All of which is fine business in these days of Uplifts hiring private detectives to snoop around and bribe drivers and watch wagons loading and read addresses on packages. Our wagons could load in that there Rupert Court and with 'No thoroughfare' and a couple of gates to the Passage, no strangers could get in. When I started thinkin' of my new building, I thought I'd look over your property first, partner, and then I knew I didn't need to look no farther. If ever there was a place made to order for what *I* want . . . Why, what's the matter, Squire? . . ."

For the ruby red of the Squire's nose had spread to his other features; he choked, coughed, spat under Waldemar's alarmed ministrations; and an ear placed close to his mouth could only distinguish the damning of Jamesby, his rental agent.

. . . "Don't ring," was added, as the Honnible Johnnie reached for the bell. "It's—nothing—only—I—signed—a three years'—lease—yesterday—with a woman named Mybus. A damned dirty pawnbroker, too."

"Oh, is that all?" said Waldemar, relieved. "That's all right, Squire. Won't want to begin building until after then —if we do, what's a few dollars to buy 'em off. . . . Cheer up, partner. . . ."

He experienced a strange joy in being able so to address the aristocratic Squire. And in knowing it would not be resented.

"No hurry, partner," he added for the sheer pleasure of the repetition. "Well, I've got to leave you now. Back to town to-morrow early, takin' that young cub of mine to lick into shape. After getting fired from college, he's got the nerve to talk about marryin' some chorus-girl. . . . *Marryin'* her, mind you! . . . Times has changed since I was a boy."

Shaking his head sadly, over the depravity of more modern youths, he went his way.

II. The Attic in Gramercy Park

As to the results of that talk with Hugo, you will presently hear enough; more than enough, possibly. But since Arnold is our principal concern, and it had been arranged secretly between them that he and Archie should occupy a joint "apartment," if such a thing could be obtained for the amount of rent-money allowed them, it appears to be our first duty to follow them to the city and to see how they fared.

They were fortunate enough to find the place for the price, and through the last person on earth! Archie's father. And *just* the place! An attic in Gramercy Park whose eaves swallows had not forgotten; nay, nor whose chimney-pots, of which there were half a dozen braces. The house had been erected in those "spacious" days when no room was complete without a fireplace.

It had been a great establishment in its time, that house; and a great family had nested there, too, during one stage of its flight up-town—Archie's mother's family—the Van Vhroons. They had left a broken winged Van Vhroon behind there when they soared Plaza-ward, a collateral Van Vhroon with chinchilla-like side whiskers and an old-world spring-collar and broad black satin stock-tie. To him, Benjamin Hartogensis owed his membership in a certain superior club; and during the days of Mrs. Benjamin's decline and fall this Van Vhroon had been a useful substitute when her husband declined to accompany her on her search after health. Hence, Benjamin had "accommodated" him several times, grumbling outwardly, but inwardly congratulating himself with the thought that the prices of Manhattan real estate were on the upgrade.

So sure had he been of this that when the mortgage-interest went unpaid Benjamin allowed his impecunious relative to remain unforeclosured. He would soon die, anyway, and then a semi-advertised sheriff's sale could be arranged that would give the mortgagee the whole property. And now, thanks to his father's foresight, Archie could occupy "chambers" there, and would have a socially-impeccable old gentleman to take him into exclusive houses.

A moderate rental was arranged—on paper—to be deducted—on paper—from the unpaid interest on the mortgage. And so our Two came into possession of a rambling set of low-roofed and oaken raftered rooms, with diamond-paned dormers, and elm trees hiding them from the sight of passers-by and permitting their occupants to see over the roofs of the city to where that radiant Madison Square Clock-Tower told the time to the darkest hour of the night, and the Metropolitan search-light sought out other sections and lighted them up intermittently.

And for company, they had always the chirping sparrows and, most times, the gurgling swallows, too. And set into niches by their three fireplaces were stores of books, old books, mostly, and rare: "Gulliver" in little fat duo-decimos and Dickens and G. P. R. James and Lytton in squatty three-volume sets, and Byron and Shakespeare and Shelley in long thin double-paged quartos . . . and so-on—down to *Golden Gems of Thought* by "A Lady" and *The Language of Love, or the Flowers' Secrets Revealed* by "A Gentlewoman" (in reduced circumstances who revealed said secrets only to send her little sons to school—so the publisher said, anyhow).

Such as these latter Arnold weeded out of his shelves and put on Archie's, for Archie never read anything anyhow and he liked these better, for the bindings were the newest and freshest-looking. Arnold brought up many books of his own and added shelves over their "study" fireplace, and, ransacking the unused lower rooms, by permission, found many more volumes worthy of a place on them, so that soon the books overflowed into his own room and shelves must be added there too. He was absolutely happy among these treasures of his (treasures unknown to-day), Chateaubriand's *Indians* and those serious romances of Hans Andersen's that have been forgotten and Harrison Ainsworth, complete, in one hundred and twenty little volumes with the original drawings—odd, creepy things—by Cruikshank and others—and a host more that have left the early Victorian era so rich in our regrets and remembrances.

And original black-letter volumes: *The Little Geste of Robin Hood,* for instance. And an old Dutch edition of Lessing, with the English translation on opposite pages. And even Œhlenschläger and Holberg and other learned and instructive fireside-reading of dead days. . . . Everything, in fact, to delight the bookman and bibliomaniac down to

The Golden Ass of Apuleius in half a dozen adaptations. In fact all the book-accumulations of the Van Vhroons since settling in their first home on the Bouwerie—that flowery fragrant-smelling Bower that is now otherwise odoriferous—*our* ill-smelling Bowery.

All this accumulation had been left behind. It was luggage too heavy for the last stage of the Van Vhroon flight. The possession of all that learning would have held them back from further flights. In the days when Arnold came to New York town, books were the last things in the world to help one to attain its heights.

Arnold would have willingly forgotten all about that noisy dollar-getting world outside, that half-civilized wholly uneducated mob that jostled and swore and exuded unpleasant odors in Subway and on Elevated—among whom the slogan, "I'm as Good as You Are," had been translated into overt acts of exceeding and obtrusive offensiveness.

Thus Arnold thought, anyhow. He had yet to learn that one can not afford to be the perfect esthete at the start; one misses too much. Just as Archie would have done well to avoid being the "compleat snob," assisted by his father's blood and by Miss Carol Caton, whose acquaintance we are gradually approaching.

But for one troubling conscience, Arnold would have spent his days sunken deep in soft padded leather—and how soft century-old padded leather can be!—feet upon a hearth-hassock, eyes on the sea-coal fire that lit up the German forest and wood-cutter's hut at the back of the iron grate. Or turned toward the windows where through the elm trees one saw the chimney-pots of the old quarter and fancied oneself in Dickens' London. As one did also when looking downward at the quaint iron railings and gates and grass-plots and the gnarled trees of old Gramercy Park, and the old-fashioned Kensington-like houses over Irving Place way. Or staring up at the rafters, smoky with many fires, or at the well-ordered shelves of books and the firelight on the brass candle-sticks and the brass bowls over the window-seats, the sunlight on the green and crimson of their geraniums.

It was all so old-world-like.

All would have been well but for that same unruly conscience that bade him seek work and cease to be a drain on the none-too-well-filled family purse. So, daily, he Park-Row-ed himself, and forced visiting cards on bored office-boys. He found that City Editors were far more important than Emperors. On his way home he dropped off at Union Square or thereabouts, and found that Magazine Moguls were less important but equally unaware of the importance of a L'Hommedieu. Finally arriving home in time for tea, and just about to be transported back to Book-Land, when in would come Archie, free from his uncle's office and noisily transform himself into a "young society man" by means of a frock-coat, a silk topper and immaculate gloves. And would as noisily demand a similar transformation of Arnold.

Sometimes Arnold would sigh and comply. And sometimes he would sigh and not comply. But always, he would comply and not sigh, when Archie suggested calling on Carol Caton. That is, at first. Afterward, he was neither to sigh nor to comply, only to pretend to snore.

The reason therefor, you are about to hear.

III. THE COSTLY MISS CATON

She lived behind the ivy-covered walls of a certain Murray Hill corner, "barely existed," rather, during a season that barely recognized her existence. The corner opposite her sheltered the second-best private art collection in the world. Its famous owner had made it so since the time he decided he would rather be known as a patron of the arts than a money king in a day when every Lucky Little Rabbit was a "financier."

Our Rabbit—"Good Old Rabbit" was Carol's pet name for her father—was not christened "Henry Brooks-Caton" any more than his wife was "Winchelsea." His name, out of the corn country, appears signed to various cheques (hence we believe in it) as "Henry Z. Kayton." . . . And over that "Z" let us "draw a veil." Let us make a deep impenetrable mystery of it, and pass on to the former Minnie Brooks.

Minnie! Winnie!! Winchelsea!!! "Old-English-family, you-know"! "Younger-Son"!! "Poor-Papa"!!! That is her history, and it is all the space she deserves. . . . She had married Henry Z. when he was an honest, hard-working investor in the Middle West. And of this plaster-of-Paris she had created a dishonest, whisker-tearing, harder-working Stock-Gambler who lived entirely on his Luck.

His old Luck.

He knew that some day he was going to "draw it too fine," hence knew that the day was not far distant when his wonderful wife would never forgive him his bankruptcy. So, for fear she would suspect, he never dared hint that she cease unnecessary extravagances.

Unnecessary? She would have thought you just a plain fool if you said so. Had she not managed, by not being "cheap" (so she fondly believed) in affiliating herself with a "Movement" that carried her into the "smartest" circles. She had tried all the "Movements" when she heard that smart women belonged to them: Christian Science, the Esoterics, the Socialists—many more.

It was not until militant Suffrage came along that she managed to get recognizing nods from Mrs. "Van" and her sister, Mrs. "O.," to have the newspapers refer to her as "one of the smartest young matrons," although she was not really a "young" matron at all—Carol was eighteen. Her mother had spent most of the years of Carol's life knocking assiduously at golden doors; at forty just managing to get a boot-toe inside them.

Unnecessary? Extravagance? Was there any price too high for entering the Kingdom of Heaven?

During those busy days she had not had time to train Carol into the perfect snob; but, her social position assured, so long as she could contribute largely to the Militants, she started to finish what the boarding-schools had only begun; started about the time our Musketeers came up to town.

After Arnold and Archie had called the first time, resplendent in their new tail-coats and shining top-hats, Mrs. Brooks-Caton, after receiving information as to their identity, gave her daughter Lession No. 807, from that handy guide to Social Distinction, "Snobs: and How to Be Them."

"That's all very well for the country, where one can know anybody," she said severely, "but in town one is judged by one's associates, Carol, dear. I should imagine the best thing one can do under such circumstances is for one to be out when such people call." She had lately acquired the word "one" as a pronoun, and had fallen desperately in love with it.

Carol answered in that tired, superior way so popular at the boarding-school that she was jolly glad to be so judged in the present case. "Archie's a nephew of Mrs. Jack Van Vhroon. Your Mrs. Van and Mrs. O. aren't everything. They never get to Mrs. Jack's small affairs, only the crushes"—a distinction making all the difference! For far beyond the little inclosed deer park of superiority where these two ladies ruled were the high spiked walls of a Forbidden City, the captain of the guard thereof being Mrs. Jacob Van Vhroon, who had been known to refuse an introduction to a Duchess—originally from the Middle West.

So Archie became a petted guest at the Murray Hill house, and, although Mrs. Jacob Van Vhroon, herself, would have felt more honored by a visit from the eldest son of the house of L'Hommedieu than by the intimate acquaintance of Mrs. "Van" and Mrs. "O.," the L'Hommedieus had never married among Manhattan patroons and had no collateral branches with names familiar to Mrs. Brooks-Caton So Carol found things decidedly uncomfortable when Arnold called alone. Seldom was it that Mrs. Brooks-Caton did not intrude, insisting on carrying off Carol to fulfil some pressing engagement of which the girl had, hitherto, no sort of knowledge, or else she would remain and ask Arnold disconcerting questions about the doings of fashionable folk whom he did not know.

Not disconcerting to him—to Carol. She would flush and make other and awkward conversation, although Arnold remained quite composed and smiling, replying either that "he had never heard of 'him'—or 'her'"—or that "he could hardly avoid seeing in the newspapers that some such person—whom he could never quite understand why they fussed so much about—had sailed for the Mediterranean."

One could hardly yield Mrs. Brooks-Caton separate victories at these *rencontres;* but one who has been armor-proof against the smiles and snubs of women whom the society reporters delight to chronicle, is serene and calm under the satire of a "nobody"; so when Arnold pressed her for information—"who in the world was that Charlie Dewitt anyway? Had he discovered some famous anesthetic to relieve pain, or written a great book, or painted a wonderful picture, or financed his country's panics, or what?"

Mrs. Brooks-Caton's superior smile would imply he had done nothing so vulgar. Evidently Mr. L'Hommedieu didn't know the *DeWitts* of *Westchester.*

IV. HOW SHE LOST ONE MUSKETEER

All of which, plus some equally offensive mendacity over the telephone, and more of the same whenever he called, had the effect of cooling Arnold's affection for Carol. She must have concealed about her somewhere some of the traits that were so large a part of her mother. And once married and able to lay aside the mask, these would cause her husband to repent, daily, a sorry bargain.

So Mrs. Brooks-Caton drove him away. As he grew to know her better his imagination began to play tricks on him, and he could not look on Carol's pretty flufferies and flower-like prettiness without seeing behind them the mother's shadow; while Carol's little affectations of superiority and that tired manner—fondly believed to be aristocratic at the boarding-school—exasperated him beyond belief.

One day he told her so. During their quarrel he did some more plain speaking and, as he enumerated to her the mannerisms and characteristics he disliked, he discovered, suddenly, and equally to his surprise, that his love for her, by the light of which he had gone to bed each night and risen each morning, needed a post-mortem. Leaving the Murray Hill house that afternoon, he decided never to enter it again, no matter how often she might write or telephone. Both things he was quite sure she would do, if he, himself, did neither.

"Let Archie have her," he said angrily. It was the first unkind thought he had ever had of his friend. Later he proved to have repented it; for, one night of the same week, he brought up the subject artfully, and, no longer in love, spoke of Carol with clear vision.

"We saw the best of her down there all right. She didn't have the time to be a snob then, too busy swimming, canoeing, playing tennis and golf. 'No mother to guide her'—to bother her about social position and her own importance. She'd be a nice girl, Carol would, if she were with nice people, in nice places; but breathing that poisoned air of her mother's lizard friends—"

He shrugged his shoulders and lighted his pipe over their shaded study lamp. "Lizards—what d'you mean, lizards?" demanded the offended Archie.

"Don't you remember when we used to climb up our wire ladder at the cave, drying out on the ledge after a swim. Well, when there weren't any boats passing or porpoises swimming or birds flying I used to watch those funny little lizards that looked like moving emeralds with black pearls set in them—jewels they were—jewels with their bright green backs and living black eyes and legs carved by Lalique in Paris after Chippendale designs—"

"Well," interrupted Archie impatiently, "what've they got to do with—"

"They used to try to climb up that slippery rock wall," went on Arnold reminiscently, "that wall as green as themselves, all oozy with wet. And they'd get up a little way and—smack!—down they'd flop. But did that phase them? They wouldn't even wait to get their breath before they took another spring and fastened their four little Chippendale legs in that ooze, and, this time, they'd go slower, and get higher. But soon they'd flop again and harder, too. Maybe they'd hurt themselves a little this one, and wait a minute, basking in the sun; but pretty soon they'd be off a third time —and a fourth—and a fifth. Sometimes they wouldn't go four feet in a whole afternoon, but they kept trying. I used to wonder what there was up at the top of that wall that made them so eager to get there; so, one day, you remember, we went reconnoitering—I didn't tell you why—said there was an eagle's nest up there or something to get you excited."

"Well, of all the fool things in the world," ejaculated Archie; "of all the fool things that's the worst—getting all bruised up for nothing."

"It wasn't for nothing," returned Arnold, "knowledge of anything important enough to make a whole tribe of lizards spend their lives trying to get it—*that's* worth knowing. You remember what was at the top there?"

"Why—some kind of purple flower, wasn't there? Didn't Hugo start to pick some and you stopped him—said they were poison?"

"Purple poison," returned Arnold, nodding. "Beautiful but poisonous—just to remind people that beauty isn't everything and isn't always to be trusted. No fragrance—nothing—yet I saw one little lizard make the top of the cliff while we were there—come dragging his tired little body over to those flowers—couldn't wait—had to get into that purple poison and die."

He stopped smoking, laying aside his pipe as though it were suddenly distasteful to him.

"What fools I thought those lizards were. How glad I was we were above such foolishness as spending our whole lives in flopping and bumping and hurting ourselves just to wallow in purple poison. . . . But I'm not so sure we're so darned superior nowadays. There's Carol. She doesn't think of anything except who was at the Opera, and is it worth while getting Horse Show Clothes when the people spend so much time looking at the horses? (By the way, wouldn't you like to find a newspaper head-writer strong-minded enough to resist saying, 'The Horse Is King' that week?) Or whether papa's allowance for mother's reception will permit having a couple of minor opera singers or pianists or fiddlers 'oblige.' Or how shall she treat that girl who went to school with her and who still insists on calling, even since her father's had the bad taste to lose everything and she wears last year's clothes and, really, can a swell like Carol afford to be seen taking tea with her at a place like the Rotunda? She's likely to find any number of eligible men there, you know!"

Archie, who had growled several times, now had the courage to interrupt, decisively:

"Cut it out, Arnold," he said; "call her mother a 'lizard' and her friends 'lizards,' but let her alone. . . ." He paused, breathing hard. "I—I mean it, old boy," he finally summarized, miserable under Arnold's gaze. "You had your chance, the same as I, and if—well—if—"

He had meant to conclude with something to the effect that if she preferred Archie to Arnold, it fooled nobody for the fox to say the grapes were sour, with the addenda that, among well-bred foxes, it was fairly average bad taste to criticize such grapes. But Arnold's gray eyes and steady level gaze were especially disconcerting to any one about to impute dishonorable motives to him, so Archie did not finish.

Arnold deflected the conversation to other fields. It was worse than useless to continue it then.

V. How She Won Another

It proved useless also on all future occasions, particularly as Carol, soon after she realized that Arnold did not intend to answer her letters, or to be at home, officially, when she telephoned, wrote a cold little note, demanding the return of anything in her handwriting that might be in his possession, sending with this letter a neat package containing his briefer screeds. Others, which contained some fairly good verse written in her honor, she retained, claiming to have burnt them.

Later, from some unguarded hints Archie let fall, Carol suspected Arnold of sharing his depreciation of her, and so showed the verse to young Mr. Hartogensis. Proving how deeply infatuated her detractor had been and how sorry she had been they could not remain *"just friends."* She felt secure, from Arnold's faithful compliance with her request that he had no proof to the contrary. But she did not know the L'Hommedieu notion of honor if she imagined Arnold would have betrayed a woman's confidence for any purpose so petty as to prove something against her.

So Archie put down Arnold's occasional anxious attempts to break Carol's hold as mere examples of human weakness. He was sorry to see them in his erstwhile leader, but they were natural, considering the heart-hurt that went with the loss of so great a treasure. And he was more inclined to pardon it since it had been because of him that the treasure had been lost.

Such is our egotism, we men. We like to believe that the woman who has chosen us has refused, or might have refused, others who seem far more brilliant, far more important and worth while. "Seem," we repeat. It takes a clever woman like Carol to discover that we, ourselves, though scorning to make a show of honest worth, are really the better men, after all; and, partly for that cleverness, we love her. It is seldom we can love any woman truly who does not make us love ourselves more—if that is possible.

Archie was one in whom it was.

For instance, Archie had never believed he had any talent for financiering until Carol persuaded him that he had, and thus did her share to bring about that calamity which was partly due to the coming of Arnold to Rupert Passage. Carol's chief reason for believing in this latent ability within Archie was the very low opinion she had of "The Good Old Rabbit," as she called her worthy father, a pale little person with fragments of mustache and beard that looked as if he went to a toy terrier to have them worried instead of to a barber to have them trimmed. He wore drooping eyeglasses, too, and, since his business kept him too occupied to remove his hat often, was bald on the part the hat covered. He was, in fact, one of the type that cartoonists use as models for "The Common People."

Yet this competent Rabbit, when ordered by its master, Mrs. Brooks-Caton, had the ability to retrieve out of that muddy stream called Wall Street costly articles and sums of great value. And this was financiering.

What The Rabbit could do, then, anybody could—certainly the man of her choice—man? Archie was just twenty-one—whom, some day, if an unofficial engagement was any sign, she expected to marry. But, before that could come to pass, he must be able to "support her in the style to which she was accustomed." Wicked, wicked phrase! Why, pray, should a youngster, just beginning, be able to do what an oldster, nearly ending, had only recently succeeded in doing? And yet it was "un-American," "unmanly" for such a youngster to accept any assistance from his wife's father, or, if she had money herself, worse to use hers. She might graciously relieve him of her hats and clothes, but the expensive apartment, the servants, the motor and all the rest—it was "manly" for him to provide.

These are lessons the modern middle-class American woman has been implanting in men's minds until the men, as is their custom, believe them original masculine opinions, and are ashamed to be caught without them. And, by inference, Carol was asking Archie if he held them when she insisted on his talent for financiering. He must do something better than sit on a high stool on his Uncle Van Vhroon's dock, superintending cargo-loading and unloading, mustn't he? That is, unless his father . . .

Archie laughed.

"Every bit of income goes into Exmoor, girlie," he said. "And that'll be all the better for us, some day. But he doesn't think a man ought to be married until he's past thirty just because he didn't himself. And even if he didn't get angry, he'd think what Uncle Archie pays me and the income from my mother's money ought to be enough. Course he don't *know*. New York was different in *his* time—a regular village."

"That's what I meant you could use as *capital*—your mother's money," said Carol hurriedly.

She did not even admit the possibility of an income from a mere ten thousand being of the slightest assistance to them, when a decent rag cost more than a fourth of said income, even at six per cent.

"I know The Good Old Rabbit started with a jolly sight less. As *capital*," she insisted again, "as *capital* it's *quite* all right—quite a Godsend. The Street will do the rest. Just watch it. Not the ordinary things, but those new ones just starting that will pay for *capital*—that's how The Rabbit got ahead. Four hundred and fifty per cent. one of his investments paid."

And, indeed, such had been the case. The Rabbit had been a clerk in a western shoe store, when an honest prospector (the last of an extinct race) had stumped into town from the mountains, put an advertisement in the newspaper and awaited the assistance of *Capital* in purchasing machinery to unearth the vast quantities of copper he had discovered. And *Capital* had come in such driblets as the late Zachariah Kayton's insurance money. Later, for his few thousands, The Rabbit had many hundred to show. Such luck had never been repeated, but having larger capital, he did not need such large percentages. However, always, he had profited hugely by assisting in the births of new ventures—mines, inventions, provincial trolley lines, "jerkwater" railroads.

But *autre temps, autre mœurs.* "Big Business" looked after such things nowadays, hence his declension as a financier and the bulk of his former fortune was drifting through the fog-bank of distress and toward the rocks of bankruptcy.

Except in those rare cases where exploiters of new but worthy ventures were inexperienced, large returns for small capital were swindles; and Big Business was glad of it. It taught the middle class to thank Heaven for kindly places called banks which would care tenderly for inexperienced money, and even philanthropically pay a few per cent. of what that money made when properly and sanely invested.

Of course, Carol could not know of these dangerous reefs in the business world. During the times her mother was in Europe and The Rabbit dared open his timid mouth without fear of correction before servants, he partook immoderately of wine at dinner, boldly ordered his butler to cut courses and fetch him a rare sirloin or something of the sort that could be grilled, "and plenty of it," and then sat in his chair (head of the family, as should be), admired by Carol, the butler and the maid who served at table, all of whom listened entranced to the modern fairy-tale of Cinderellus, the shoe clerk, the African—or rather the Rocky Mountain—magician, the haughty shoe store proprietor, and what Cinderellus "said to him, he says." Of other Aladdin-like increases in fortune: the aeroplane that started in an Ohio woodshed, ending in the palace of a King; the headache cure in the little brown bottle that made a drug clerk a millionaire in a twelvemonth; and other wonders of the Right Investment at the Right Time.

It was such a night when she had Archie to dine that he might hear these modern fairy-tales. He listened, his eyes alight, and saw, not the tapestried walls of the Brooks-Caton home, but a smaller edition, his own, and Carol sitting across from him, and The Good Old Rabbit, with another and equally thrilling yarn added to his repertoire—the rapid rise of Archibald Hartogensis, Esquire (once only an assistant in a shipping office), to Place, Power and an Apartment Off the Park.

"Why, I've been wasting my life," he said to Carol, when they lounged, alone, in the Japanese room, with coffee and cigarettes.

Carol nodded. "That's what I wanted you to see," she said. "I thought—when you heard The Rabbit—"

Soon they were in the midst of discussions as to the relative merit of fumed oak and Circassian walnut, white "cottage" boudoir furniture (Archie was not so indelicate as to say "bedroom") and mahogany. Of course, in mahogany, you got four-posters, and those quaint glass knobs and tallboys, and many another interesting individual piece; but with the "Trianon" you could string along the wall, by lengthy rose-colored cords, the "most divine" Watteau prints. . . .

And, that these purposes might be fulfilled, and the smaller edition of the Murray Hill house made a reality, Archie began to take financial papers and to consult with The Good Old Rabbit concerning Large Returns for Small Investments.

Reading the morning paper regarding the exposure of some get-rich-quick swindle, one wonders what hypnotic power was used to get victims to invest. It was *self*-hypnosis such as Archie's; the belief that, somewhere, are philanthropists waiting eagerly to make large fortunes for small strangers. These philanthropists do not need to seek the strangers. They have only to advertise and they come, already persuaded.

It was inevitable that Archie, in his present frame of mind, should fall a victim to the advertisement that finally "wrought his ruin," or that blinded him that he might, eventually, see.

Its immediate result was to separate him from Arnold. To save interminable taxicabs, he said, he must be nearer Canary's and "the club," nearer than Gramercy Park, anyhow. Arnold preferred to remain. Gramercy had the old-world atmosphere he loved; *his* club was there. Besides, his income would not run to Canary's bachelor apartments, or others of the same sort along *the* Avenue. Neither would Archie's—*income*. . . . But, in view of the Right Investment soon to appear at the Right Time, the "dowerright" of the late Gretchen V.-V. Hartogensis was a Fortunatus purse, into which one might dip and dip without causing any perceptible shrinkage.

Arnold prided himself on not mentioning money when writing home. He had lived at his father's expense for several months while awaiting a vacancy, and now, although actually on *The Argus*, the city editor was paying him a beginner's wage—too little to afford the society of Archie's friends—or of Hugo's either. . . .

Which reminds us that a certain catastrophe is close at hand—for us. Several years must elapse before Arnold is to be involved; but they were years that brought no radical change in his condition. That he should soon acquire some reputation as a reporter was as eventual as that Archie should answer that certain advertisement and that Miss Bobbie Beulah should give a certain little supper party.

CHAPTER FIVE

CATASTROPHE

I. How the Honorable John Waldemar Taught His Son to Be Honorable, Too—Introducing Miss Bobbie Beulah

SHE was working you—how many times must I tell you?"

Thus Arnold once, as you have heard—thus Arnold interminably, before and after.

The back of Hugo's watch held a snapshot of a laughing dimpled girl with short soubrettish hair, Miss Bobbie Beulah; at their meeting one of the "ponies" in "The Merry World" company, playing the "one-nighters," Cyprus among them—county seat and seat of Old King's College besides. It was a bad show under shoestring management, to the members of which salaries were uncertain and so was booking.

Hugo had been the good angel for whom girls in such companies pray. Miss Bobbie had ceased to be a "Merry Worlder," the Cyprian engagement once concluded. After having been Hugo's guest at the Sussex Arms for the better part of the following week, he had arranged for her to return to the City of Engagements solvent; had restored to her that solvency several times since; had taken cognizance of her necessity for outfitting, and for singing and dancing lessons, only demanding that she obey his command—not renew an engagement with a wildcat company.

Miss Bobbie had been a faithful correspondent, but, mostly, her literary efforts were devoted to the making of requests for money. Eventually Hugo would have discovered this; life at Old King's and his leader's proclivities presenting few opportunities for visiting New York. But the expulsion had come at a time when Miss Bobbie had been gone from him only a month or more, and his desire was heightened by memory. Had Arnold known of the correspondence and the loans he would have used all his powers to persuade Hugo to remain at Havre de Grace.

"She was *working* you; how many times must I tell you?" he would repeat again and again. "Not that I blame the poor little thing. . . ."

Arnold had been of the party once when Hugo and Archie took Miss Bobbie and others to dine in a private room at the Arms.

"She's had a hard time, I guess. I didn't mind your helping her; help her all you like. But don't fall in love with her. You're just a pocketbook to her, Hugo. She doesn't know whether you're good-looking or not; your bank-book hides your face. And she doesn't know you've got the biggest heart in the world—as Archie would say—she just thinks she's clever enough to get money out of you. That's one of the ways the poor take it out of the rich—breaking their hearts when they only mean to break their pocketbooks."

But Miss Bobbie had considerable natural ability at chicanery; and as Hugo had not spared expense, and as she had procured a Garden engagement, and as a girl who dresses with those young ladies who drive through Central Park in limousines "loaned" by their dear friends has nothing to learn about ways and means in the matter of artifice, Miss Bobbie with a tinted veil was the ideal American girl—as per the magazine covers. And when Hugo saw her again and was assured of this incomparable creature's eternal affection, he had assured her that his was equally everlasting.

And had come back home, expelled, to add insult to injury—in his father's eyes.

How could *his* son be so many objectionable and otherwise unattractive sorts of idiots? No, not *his* son. HIS son. His, always his. He then, with the native cunning that had made the son of a serf an American millionaire, had taken steps to insure the protection of his property.

He had the acumen not to forbid Hugo any further acquaintance with the lady, for that, he knew, would have the same effect as an authorization. No! He advised his son to a cynical end, an end, however, which the average respectable father would have approved as the wisest course; although how they reconcile such view-points with their avowals of sturdy Christianity, it is difficult to understand.

"What a precious green one you are, to be sure, Hugo," he said, laughing, and clapping his son on the back. (It was the same night that he had outlined his life's history to the Squire.) "But I was that way myself at your age. There was a little singer at the *Salammbo,* in St. Petersburg—what they call a caffy chantong—a music-hall. I was gone on this little singer. Nothing would do but we must be married, right bang, slap off. And my Dad, he come to me just like I'm doing now; he laffed—laffed, he did; yes, Hugo, that's what he did. And he said: 'Look here, son, before you asked this here little lady to be your wife did you—well, did you'—"

Waldemar winked prodigiously, slyly, wickedly, like a smoking-room satyr. It was typical of his kind that he did not have the courage actually to put his sinister innuendo into words. Was he not of the sort that buys, eagerly, pornographic Parisian papers, scans them with many chuckles and, between France and America, tosses them overboard? And, if interviewed at the dock, says something impressive about the superior morality of the Anglo-Saxon? With which they have most often no racial connection.

He went over the story of the imaginary little *Salammbo chanteuse* several times that evening, and many times after, embroidering it, dwelling upon its lesson—which was that he soon tired of her after taking sage parental counsel and was indeed glad he had a wise father, who had restrained him, with clearer understanding, from tying himself, for life, to a wretched existence.

"Boys will be boys," he said. "I was huming. I expect you to be huming. I expect every man to be huming. All I ask is decency. Respectability, that's the keynote of the Anglo-Saxon race; that's made her what she is. And she asks that, and only that, from every Anglo-Saxon."

He had a bad habit of intruding bits of his public speeches into his private conversation.

"She says: 'I recognize this here humanity of yours, but I say a man must learn to be respectable if he wants to be huming. Look at these here French. That's what a man gets for bein' huming without bein' respectable. See?'"

Hugo spent a wretched month or so after returning to New York to grace a desk in the office of the Waldemar Manufacturing Company. Then, one night, he drank too heavily, and Miss Bobbie had to do some hard thinking. Here were the Crossways and she must choose. She did not blame Hugo. It was her fight with his father. Hugo was only a pawn, pushed forward by her, back by him. She had her chance, that night, to win a move. Hugo was passionately desiring her to get into his waiting taxi and drive to the minister's. But, to-morrow, it would be Waldemar's move, and her pay at the Garden would just cover the rent and a few minor expenses. She had a friend who had married against the will of a rich father-in-law, and with her young husband, unused to the idea of earning money, had lived in a furnished room and cooked their principal meals over the gas and in a chafing-dish, until the youngster fell in with "the gang" and was now "steering" members of his former clubs to gambling-houses, receiving the "steer per cent." Bobbie had heard of other such cases.

One often wonders, when momentous decisions must be made instantly, that so brief a time is sufficient to review details, the recital of which would consume hours. Bobbie saw her pretty furniture under the hammer—as poor Rosie's had been; saw the beggarly price people were willing to pay for second-hand electrics "as good as new," saw the possibility of "road" tours again—saw other disagreeable things, many of them. Yet, if she refused marriage she must be his mistress; else, sooner or later, he would drift away.

She was wise in the wisdom of necessity, was Bobbie. And she wrenched victory from defeat. Yield she must, but, yielding, lose none of his respect; that was her problem, as she hung, apparently limp and half-fainting in his arms; a problem easily enough solved in the case of one so simple-minded as Hugo.

There is an argument, supposed to be exceedingly artful, which every youngster imagines he, alone, has achieved. Bobbie had often jeered at it when impassioned young men had attempted persuasion with it. It had not persuaded her in the least, but it was just the thing to impress Hugo.

"We can't, we can't," she wailed. "It would be wicked. He'd never forgive you, and I'd never forgive myself. Suppose he died without forgiving you. Then you'd hate me. Oh, don't say you wouldn't—after a while you'd hate me. We're married anyhow, dearest one. He, nor anybody else, can't change that; we're married in the sight of Heaven." (Yes, she even dared that!) "I'll never love any one else, and you won't either, will you, dear? And, maybe, some day, when he sees he can't make you love anybody else, maybe then he'll see that there are marriages that don't have to be made in churches. 'After all, could a priest mumbling a few words make us love one another more'—"

The last was word for word as she had heard it from at least two youngsters and one middle-aged man, who had started late as a Don Juan. But it was novel to Hugo, to whom the deception of women was alien. He broke down, kissed her hand, and said she shouldn't sacrifice herself; and—

But to quote his respectable and highly original father, after all, Hugo was "huming."

II. Bobbie's Little Supper Party

So long as Miss Beulah Roberts had looked forward to being Mrs. Hugo Waldemar some day, she had so ordered her existence that, when she should be fulfilling matronly duties, no reminiscences of indiscretions would be possible to envious women and other carping critics. Such favors as she had received at Hugo's hands had been received, inwardly, with gratitude, which had prevented any extravagant requests. (The electric had been an unexpected Christmas gift, Hugo's own idea, kept secret.)

The gratitude also prevented her from saving anything at Hugo's expense; even the twenty-five dollars of weekly wage was expended. She avoided the class of girls who flouted conventions, and who let it be known, flagrantly, that their salaries were only "taxi-cab fares"; avoided restaurants, too, where such girls, and those who paid their expenses, were the chief attractions.

She was a simple child of nature—a country girl—who believed in the great American myth of social equality. A girl had only to keep her good name and not get talked about, and she was "the equal of any one." Bobbie plumed herself on her superiority to "those society dames" who smoked cigarettes publicly, and who had started a scandalous fashion in divorces. Really, marriage meant nothing to them at all.

Now, marriage was the ono thing reverenced by Miss Bobbie. Her people had been Roman Catholics for centuries, and, once it was plain to her that Hugo desired marriage, she had honestly gone to work to fit herself for that sacred state. Not only did she eschew acquaintances of doubtful repute, but she endeavored to purge her speech of slang and solecisms generally, to avoid late hours and to cease to look upon Hugo merely as a dispensation of Providence for getting her bills paid.

A wiser man than John Waldemar or one who loved humanity better than empty honors would have perceived, in her efforts, a commendable spirit which would have resulted in a wife not to be disdained.

But all that was changed now. Hugo's gifts were no longer favors, and she must smother the reproaches of a conscience that hitherto had found in monthly confession to Father Ryan, and in fulfilling his small penances, all necessary solace. She dared not go to the worthy Father now, so denied an anodyne, she sought a stimulant.

Since there was to be no marriage with Hugo or anybody else, she had still the idea that a compromised girl was doomed never to hear "an honest man's name"—no acquaintances *could* contaminate her; so the girls she had once avoided she now sought. One ever seeks for bosom friends, those with whom one can be perfectly honest; and with the "home-cooking" girls, those who earned a living by chorus work, as they would have by sewing or selling ribbons, or those ambitious young ladies who were in vocal training, or went to schools of expression while doing chorus work for experience, her former chums in the company—Bobbie had to tell too many tall tales about her recently deceased uncle in the West, whose will had given each member of her family a small competence; too often had she contradicted herself on details.

It was inevitable that she should come to avoid them and seek those who had no horror of Hugo's place in her life; should come to despise them finally as "softies," "sillies," who did not have the sense to take the good things as they were offered.

In the new mode of life that came to pass through the advice of these more sophisticated ladies Hugo's allowance was severely taxed to pay the bills. Such young persons never by any chance walked if a taxicab was anywhere in evidence; nor were there more than one or two places on the Avenue sufficiently expensive to gain the approbation for frocks and hats. They "dressed" after six o'clock as punctiliously as if they were to dine at a Plaza palace and frowned on male friends who did not do the same. They lived in luxurious apartments, furnished exquisitely by giving a certain "lady decorator" *carte blanche* to procure tapestries of the correctly faded sort, real rugs from the actual Orient, pictures by painters of some reputation, and "period" furniture; and they counted that night lost when, after the theater, they did not show off a new gown in some smart supper-place, or give an affair of their own in a private dining-room, or at their own apartments.

One autumn night Bobbie gave her first supper party—one that was to christen the new and expensive flat in "Devonshire Mansions." Information of it was telephoned in to the city editor of *The Argus* by one of those anonymous persons called "tipsters," who earn some sort of a living by betraying their friends' secrets. This one gave full details of Bobbie's party and her guests; and the news came in time to send a reporter to investigate. The bargain was that the story should be "exclusive" for the first edition, which went out of town; the tip would not be telephoned again except for later editions of the other Democratic papers, and the cheque was to be sent pay-day to John Jones Smith, *Poste Restante.*

Hanging up the receiver, the city editor looked around for the best man in the "shop" to detail on so important a "story." Arnold L'Hommedieu was in the act of resuming his dress coat, having returned early from the German Theater in Irving Place to write his review of the first performance in

America of a Wedekind one-acter. Arnold's knowledge of German made his visits to the Irving Place Theater frequent; just as his knowledge of music sent him—paradoxically, pessimists would claim—to light operas and revues.

But *The Argus* permitted no man an exclusive specialty, and, though ordinarily Arnold would have gone home after writing his criticism, he felt no resentment when the city editor called his name across the crowded noisy room.

"Story for the first edition," said the city editor, thrusting the telephoned notes in Arnold's hand. "As much as you can write and take chances on setting it. I'll hold a column anyhow—double score head—double-leaded lead. Pay some phone girl extra to send it in while you write it. It needs a good man to get over the delicate parts. It's a great story, L'Hommedieu. Means our party 'ull carry that county." He gave him two twenty-dollar bills. "Don't spare any expense—and rush! It's only exclusive for the first edition. Rush!"

It could not have been said that he spoke the last word; he exploded it. Arnold flew down the stairs. Not until he was in a subway express thundering on its way up-town did he glance at the sheet of folded "copy" paper. Then he started so violently that he was thrown heavily against one of those eternally vigilant and suspicious women who take even such an untoward accident as evidence of the general depravity of the male sex.

Arnold stared helplessly at the paper, then began bitterly to swear in tune with the thunder of the express. Why had he not looked at the paper and told the city editor that the man was one of his best friends, and what he asked impossible, for the brief notes included the names of John Waldemar, Hugo and Bobbie Beulah.

The Honnible Johnnie was both Republican and the "Reform" Candidate this time. The Democratic Machine had been allowing loose road-houses and similarly disguised brothels to flourish in Sussex County as long as they showed a commendable and patriotic desire to assist the Machine to rule the people reasonably.

The Republicans had interested the pulpit, but another sort than that presided over by Jorian L'Hommedieu; this being a subject that would provide sensational sermons to attract congregations back from the moving-picture shows. Stump speakers had reminded citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah, and had urged the killing of the canker-worm that would destroy that morality for which the Anglo-Saxon race was famous—most of this being line for line from some of Mr. Waldemar's famous public speeches.

One did not need to be a newspaper reporter to realize the significance of the remaining notes: "His son is giving a chorus-girl supper party to his girl—Devonshire Mansions. Has rooms in East 38th Street, but never uses them. Get the Devonshire elevator man and the door man (both places) to confirm this. Then get a look at the supper party on some pretext even if they kick you out afterward. . . ."

Why hadn't he read this in the office? The city editor would have understood and sympathized when he explained how dear a friend Hugo was. Well, he would do the next best thing. He would telephone from Fourteenth Street, so that only the few minutes of the journey were wasted.

The express grated and screeched to a stop and Arnold plunged out of subterranea, searching a public telephone. But as he reached it he realized there would be no difference in the results, whether he wrote the story or another. The scandal would ruin the chances of Waldemar's election just as surely; the father, justly violent, might drown Hugo; cut him off—poor Hugo, who, since his chemicals had been taken away before he had mastered them, had not the faintest trace of ability to support himself. For the moment Arnold's Puritan conscience was torn between duty to his paper and to his friend; but not for long. It would not harm the paper not to print the story; it would *ruin* his friend.

He hailed a taxi driver and promised him an extra tip for speed.

Arriving at Devonshire Mansions—one of those huge piles of ornamental stucco, with Parian marble and atrocious "art" in the lobby, and many manufactured palms, all beloved by the ostentatious Manhattanese—he was admitted by a boy in a uniform and buttons that would have done credit to a Rear-Admiral, levitated skyward by another and admitted to a rosy-papered apartment by Hugo's valet, Tompkins. Hugo, pushing into the hall at the sound of the bell, gave an inarticulate cry of joy; for never before had Arnold consented thus to honor such fêtes. Before he could explain that his taste had suffered no relapse, Hugo's huge paws impelled him violently toward an open doorway. Bobbie, standing on the table in a mock reverential attitude, about to rechristen in a costly vintage, a young man whose patrician features gave rise to the suspicion that it would be difficult to improve on his hereditary patronymic, jumped down, echoing Hugo's boisterous welcome. Whereupon the entire party of young men and women, all in evening dress that bore the marks of superior shops and some imagination, kept up the reputation for originality, for which such parties are famous, by gathering around the newcomer, glasses upraised, and chanting lustily and unmelodiously: "For he's a jolly good fellow—" oft repeated; a statement that did great credit to their penetration, for Arnold's face was as glum as possible; during which entertainment Hugo, as host, hastily poured half a pint of wine on the floor in the process of getting half a gill into a glass that, willy nilly, must be thrust into Arnold's hand. Several of the wilder spirits whereupon hoisted Arnold on the table, demanding some a speech, the majority a song; the hired negro entertainers obliging with a pot-pourri of popular tunes, signaling encouragement and requesting selection.

Had Arnold followed his inclinations he would have hurled his wine into Hugo's eyes and broken the glass on his head. There came to his mind among other unpleasant things some remembrance of a Persian revel, and a handwriting large upon the wall. He swayed and teetered on the flimsy table, trying to dismount, but the laughing throng prevented, young Colin Rhynshinder holding his knees. "Speech," demanded thickly this heir to an ancient name; "Speech. Gotta have speech. He's a jolly good fel-low, and jolly good fellows gotta make speeches."

And, all the while, those reporters from the other papers were getting ready to make a descent, unallied with sentiment, upon a worse scene than Arnold had suspected. More than the usual number of wine-glasses had been broken, more than the average number of girls had had their hair disordered by the clumsy embraces of men not sober, more torn dresses were pinned up after having been trodden on by turkey-trotters, and the glass tops of center-tables and mantel were a mass of smoldering cigars and cigarettes, tossed down without being extinguished—a foul reek. Altogether, just the sort of local color necessary to a highly successful newspaper "story" of Little Sons of the Rich and chorus-girls.

"A speech? All *right!*" said Arnold bitterly. *"All right,"* he shouted, for only shouting was in order. *"I'll make a speech—"*

"He sees he's gotta make speech," cried young Colin, delighted. "Hurray. One—two—three—and a tiger." They welcomed an excuse to make more entrancing noises, and Arnold, inwardly groaning, wondered if there might be reporters in hiding across the street; if so, those shouts were enough proof to print the story.

"You wanted a speech," he began.

"Yes, yes," said young Colin gravely. "Aye, aye, sir."

"Listen," said Arnold sharply, "keep still."

"Silence for the reverend gentleman," said a girl, laughing shrilly, believing this humor. "Amen," said another in the deep bass which had gained her a wholly false reputation as a mimic.

"Listen; listen!" clamored Arnold. "Everybody's got to

go *quick* and *quietly*. Don't take taxis in front of the house here; telephone for them to be sent two blocks down. Hurry, get your things, get out. And *quiet—quiet*. There's a story out about this party; reporters 'ull be here in half an hour—any minute. And if all of you don't want to see your names in the papers to-morrow morning—*hurry*. You don't *understand!*" This in reply to a question from the now half-sober Rhynshinder as to what business of newspapers was a private party. It was plain most of the others, too, regarded Arnold's speech as a joke in poor taste—"You don't *understand?* Well, isn't Hugo's father running on a Reform Ticket? To reform *what?* All-night turkey-trotting road-houses! Get the point? He'll lose the election if you keep going on ten minutes longer."

Rhynshinder, now completely sober, mentally, although his body refused radical measures, turned to the others, sketching rapidly what was not clear to them. "We've gotta blow—quick. Come on, Hetty. Good night, everybody. You know my things, don't you, Tompkins?"

"This way, sir," said Hugo's valet, leading them off to a bedroom pressed into service as a cloak-room.

"No noise—remember," Arnold called after them. But it was unnecessary to warn Rhynshinder; he had something to lose himself from any such story—a rich wife, for instance, the only hope of his creditors—and his one wish was now, that he had not been inspired to imitate the "humor" of some royal foreigner, said to have used a dancer's slipper for a drinking cup. This shoe had been Hetty's and she now resolutely refused to limp, "like a broken-legged duck."

"If you'd get shoes your size a little champagne wouldn't hurt 'em," he snarled.

Arnold dashed into Bobbie's dressing-room, returning with a pair of patent pumps. "Oh, they're much too *large*," objected Miss Hetty, a statement to which Miss Bobbie took instant umbrage, a feminine word-battle ensuing, only broken short by Rhynshinder crying aloud to Heaven in exasperation and pushing his lady to the door, Hetty carrying the pumps gingerly between jeweled fingers.

Meanwhile, Arnold, urging on the others, had cleared the room, and, assisted by Tompkins and the maid, was hastily restoring it to an appearance of order, paying no sort of attention to those emerging dressed for the street. These insisted on dallying, even at such a time, annoying the worried Hugo and Bobbie with the conventional banalities regarding the pleasant evening spent. It was not until the hall lock had snapped on the last of them that Arnold spoke again.

"How much cash have you?" He took the roll of crumpled bills Hugo produced. "Now go and get the elevator man and the hall porter." This to Tompkins, who hastened off; "A fine mess you've landed in, my boy. I'd like to know which of those *friends* gets his living by telephoning scandal to newspapers. Go put on your night-dress, Bobbie. You, Hugo, get back to your rooms and divide this between your elevator man and hall porter." He had halved the roll and now thrust half forward. "I'll attend to them, *here*. While they're up, walk down and out."

"But the money—the cash—what's it for?" stammered Hugo heavily.

"Oh, thickhead!" returned Arnold wearily. "So they'll tell the reporters you're never there at night, of course. That's what you *want* them to know, don't you? You might add, *gratis*, that you're seldom sober and beat your father when in drink. All that sort of thing helps a man to be elected." As some comprehension came to Hugo's tired eyes Arnold heard Tompkins in the hall and pushed Hugo into the dining-room. "Step out when they come in," he added, sliding the folding-doors; and, then, under the escort of Tompkins, the two Rear-Admirals entered, their hands heavy with the weight of the gold braid on their caps.

"There'll be some reporters here soon," Arnold told them succinctly. "They'll ask you if there was a party here to-night, who was in it, and whether Mr. Hugo Waldemar doesn't live here? You'll look amazed. Look as though you think they're crazy. They'll offer you money, but not this much." He dangled the remaining bank-notes, allowing close inspection; "And this is what you'll get if there's nothing in the papers to-morrow. If there is, what the reporters give you will have to support you until you get new uniforms, for you'll lose those you're wearing now when Miss Beulah moves out, explaining to the agent that it's because the servants talk too much. . . ."

They began, as do all professional bribe-takers, with reproachful asseverations of their high integrity. Arnold cut them short. "Then you never heard of Mr. Waldemar—wouldn't know him if you saw him?"

"He never comes here on *our* shift," said the larger Rear-Admiral—a Vice-Admiral, this one. "The night shift," he added slyly, but with an open candid glance. Arnold laughed grimly, was then ashamed. Why, unless they were tipped, *should* these men care what happened to the wasteful, noisy, often insulting people of the White Light Social Register? No doubt these tips were bestowed, unselfishly enough, on their children, for whom they hoped, at no distant date, to provide a better playground than the New York streets, where, daily, they were exposed to the danger of just such people's motor-cars. "Very well," he said briefly, but not unkindly. "See to it."

So, when another reporter came later, asking for Miss Beulah, as though she was in the habit of receiving him at a late hour, Rear-Admiral No. 2 bore him skyward and Miss Beulah's maid, rubbing her eyes and holding together her dressing-gown, said her mistress could see nobody.

"It was as quiet as Woodlawn Cemetery: no lights, nothing. And the elevator man hadn't seen anybody go up there to-night—not even after I showed him a ten-spot. Somebody's been stringing us." Thus spoke the delegate of the district reporters, returning to his comrades, waiting in their favorite café.

"Sure: *we* know that," said another looking up from his poker-hand—the delegate who had gone to Hugo's apartments: "Waldemar's in bed with a toothache and he's always there at night. Nobody but a spiteful dame could have phoned in a foolish tip like that."

But the city editor of Arnold's paper knew better, for next day a letter from the tipster explained how Arnold's machinations had made his tip miscarry; and Arnold, after making sure there was none within earshot, made no effort to deny this. "He was one of my two best friends, Mr. Chapin," he explained simply; "to print that story meant to ruin him for life." And he repeated the argument with which he had convinced himself. "It didn't hurt the paper not to print it and it would have ruined him."

Chapin looked at him grimly. "Of course, you know you're fired," he said.

Arnold bowed.

"But don't go out under the impression that you're any martyr. Unless Benedict Arnold and Judas were martyrs. If we'd printed that story, we might have kept that unscrupulous rascal out of Congress again—another one who gets fat on misery and degradation. You've *elected* him."

But Arnold, recalling the bluff jolly face of John Waldemar, his charities and his church-going, put down this statement to partisan prejudice.

"And more than that—to show you what *I* think of a man who'd do what *you* did," said the city editor, rising from his chair, "I'll blacklist you in every decent newspaper shop. We don't get the goods on many fat rascals, and we can't take any chances having our work destroyed by having Little Brothers of the Rich for reporters. Go and work for your friends, the Waldemar kind: you'll never work for a decent sheet again. . . ."

All of which Arnold found to be true enough when next day, next week, and next month, he hunted for another berth.

"If he'd give them the gaff he'd just as soon do it to us," argued city editors, for his guilt had been represented unfairly, the narrators considering as negligible the story of the "best friend," and telling the tale from the standpoint that young Waldemar was wealthy and how he had made it worth young L'Hommedieu's while.

It was soon after he left *The Argus* that Arnold moved from his comfortable rooms near Gramercy Park, one collateral Van Vhroon informing the other, when Archie asked for information almost a week later, that he imagined young L'Hommedieu was a sad dog: running away from a girl like that. . . .

"Like *what?*" Archie's eyes did not twinkle as they might have done in the case of any other man whose engagement in gallantry had had undesired results. . . . Arnold was . . . Arnold.

Whereupon the older collateral Van Vhroon described a certain "splendid girl"—and described Carol accurately. Carol it was, right enough: Arnold having returned some signed and otherwise inscribed photographs found in a trunk, long unused. . . . And, although Archie had picked out the apartment they were to occupy . . .

Fortunately, Archie's estimation of Carol's charms was as inaccurate as his belief in her integrity—hence the other's description meant nothing to him. "Sold his things, shipped his books home and skipped, leaving no address. . . ."

At *The Argus* they refused to hear any mention of Arnold's name. It was then that Archie, hearing about Hugo, began to realize why. Hugo's loudly advertised suicidal intentions failed to alter the situation: Arnold was not to be found.

They would never have thought to look for him in those depths of Manhattan to which he was to descend, and from

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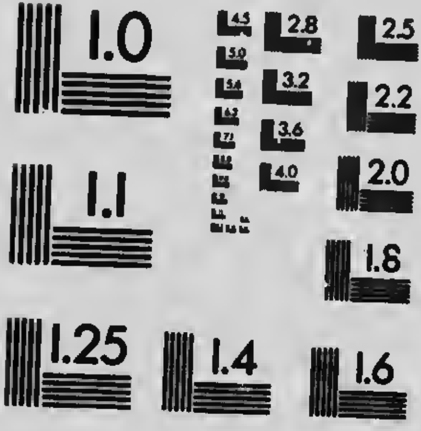
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which he was to emerge some six months later, sick of soul and body: ready to become that rebel against the laws the L'Hommedieus had upheld for half a millennium, that notorious rebel he was soon to be.

Which is also the story of Annie Eunice Chasserton.

END OF BOOK I

BOOK II

CHAPTER ONE

ARNOLD'S ADVENTURES IN PLUNDERLAND

I. Little One and Velvet Voice

SOME centuries later (so it seemed), on a certain night in January, Arnold awoke in another room than that one in which he had gone to sleep. But, inside hall rooms in Manhattan being almost identical, he did not immediately realize this. Beside the Hotel Tippecanoe's similarity was not confined to shape and size but included contour and content—dark gray bed and bedding—white to optimists only; chair in collapse, trunk in contempt—or shrunken suit-case. And "bureau" . . .

Were an historian always an artist ordered about by an orderly conscience, he would begin and end with that bureau. Serried with scratches and Saturn-ringed by wet tumblers whose economy of size betrayed the saturnine liquid spilt, just as surely as the sizes of certain concurrent circles went to show that tea or coffee had splashed out of certain cups or over certain saucers . . . the "bureaus" of inside hall rooms in Manhattan are records as plain as the pikestaff of the amateur symbolist.

In the case of the room in which Arnold found himself, some of the hideousness of this material realism was hidden by a bureau cover of corrugated burlap: the super-cardinal color-scheme of which was ameliorated in its turn by some semi-silver somethings which—as obviously as the semi-satin skirt protruding from beneath the semi-circular protection of a semi-silken wall-cloth—he had never owned. . . .

But the single window here was as cobweb-festooned as his own; was otherwise as opaque; the grime of twice yesterday's ten thousand days having settled there.

Arnold observed also that the single jet was as short and as slender and as lacking in ambition as his own. Minimum burners had failed the management until the installation of gasometers like toy banks and as greedy of dimes, dimes yielded just as grudgingly. . . . No!—this jet had even less altitude. . . . Then he noticed that its superlative dimness was due to a small saucepan . . . that dragon which, until the onslaught of St. George of the Gasometer, ate up all the profits of those who rented rooms to impecunious light-housekeepers. . . .

Arnold's gaze swiveled toward the only unexamined angle of the room. And there sat two girls, their backs toward him; from their position evidently hugging the "radiator"!—a position indicating either childlike faith, or powerful imagination.

Arnold knew too much about this monster to find in the girls' juxtaposition any explanation of what he continued to consider a rather remarkable and remarkably cheeky intrusion. . . . It was half an hour before it occurred to him that if he aroused himself from his apathetic abandon, he might connect effect with cause by a process no more complex than listening to their whispered conversation. So far, this had been but a confused buzzing. He opened his eyes.

The smaller of the two was leaning forward, a tiny hand on the other's knee. "Zen—w'at you do, zen, girl?"

"Then," replied the other, her tone tired: "well, then, I thought I'd move to a cheaper place so's not to be broke next time."

The sympathetic quality of her voice, its velvety richness, or throatiness, seemed to say that displays of emotion were prevented by a strong effort. This odd voice affected Arnold curiously. One of his sort in his weakened state is free of bodily cravings and quick to visualize. . . . (Which is possibly why decadence grew out of impressionism—both originally accidental.)

This particular impression if pictured would have resulted in a slim necked, crinoline girl fingering a harpsichord, a China bowl of powdered blue—blue roses—a blue room . . . drawing-room . . . Jacobean . . . its old damask and dim faded, Chinois tapestries . . . like those of a certain L'Hommedieu guest chamber. The picture vanished however before Arnold could master its details.

The Little One was speaking again.

"Zot ees good? Leev like beggars-woman? Zot is 'appy, *hein?* Oh, joyful. Look, girl. Eef a man 'e own a motor-car w'at break down—from too much 'ard work—must zhe *chauffeur 'e* save *'is* money to pay? You just like zat: you work too 'ard for 'im: zen you break down—zen 'im what owns the machine let 'im pay ze doctor bills. . . . Your lofely eyes, red too. But w'at *zey* care? Nuzzings! . . ."

She spoke with many spreadings of the palms, jerkings of the head, elevations of the shoulders. In her mischief incarnate became repressed energy, standing she seemed perpetually balanced insecurely for a spring: sitting she oscillated like a rubber ball on an inclined plane. . . . Closing his eyes Arnold thought of a squirrel first listening, then up and away. . . . Opening them again he became aware of an exceptional, if artificial, daintiness: her hair was abundant but artfully coifed to suit her small head and add to her height, her cherry-colored kimono, a miracle of cleanliness (and in such a house!) was so closely belted it seemed form-fitting. Thus she sat, the soles of her slim pitter-patter foreign shoes rested on the radiator and tipped back the rickety chair at a dangerous angle.

"Jus' like zat," she repeated, with the gesture of an equilibrist who has just achieved some difficult feat, or of a philosopher having acquitted himself satisfactorily of some knotty problem.

"He couldn't afford it, poor man," returned Velvet Voice. "Racing overtime to keep one jump ahead of the bankruptcy court. And the rent he pays for that tiny top-story loft! Small ones like him have to take on contracts that are simply *awful.* The work's just *got* to be done in so many days. Why—our wages for *two* days behind take every cent of his profit. And for *three* days! Forfeit! Pay *them,* mind you. His month and our month all for nothing. Worse than that: it loses him money. But . . ."

She laughed sympathetically. "But, nowadays, when it looks like he'll have to forfeit, *we* go on strike—"

The Little One's back stiffened, as though the temptation to prefer charges of mendacity was restrained with difficulty. Her face, which Arnold could not see, must have betrayed her.

"It's true!" Velvet Voice laughed again. "The poor have to stick together. And *he's* poor, all right. . . . You see, if we *strike,* there's no *forfeit.* Strikes are in all contracts. We've 'struck' twice just to help him. He doesn't make anything off of *us."*

"Oo izzit zen?" inquired the Little One, as if humoring the illogic of a child. "You zink he mus' to get—take zose contracks."

"He can't *get* the decent ones—not many. They go to the big fellows. We only get the left-overs, the coarse cheap work the big firms don't want. And I've heard the *little* fellows tell Simonski that if they have to pay *him* decent prices, they'll have to shut up shop. And it's so. He explained it to me."

"You talk foolish—I never 'ear nobody so foolish. *You* work for nuzzing. You say 'e work for nuzzing. And now ze *shops* don't make nuzzing. *Nobody.* Zat is unpossible; not?"

"The little stores have to sell too cheap to make *much* profit," explained Velvet Voice. "They're almost as poor as we are, those little fellows. If they don't," she added, anticipating the question, "everybody goes to the big ones."

"Zen *zey* ge-getze money," said the little foreigner triumphantly. "*Hein?*" The other nodded. "Zen *zey* can pay. You go work for *zem*, girl. *Zere* you are. Jus' like *zat*."

"They get it *all*," responded the other bitterly.

"Zen zey can *pay*. You work for *zem*. *Zere* you are. Jus' like zat."

"But they don't *have* to. The others can't, so they *won't*. 'If you don't like it, find some other place. There isn't any. So there you are. Just like that—"

She imitated the Little One mischievously, but her gaiety was only momentary.

"You can't tell *me* anything about working in New York. Big department stores, little specialty places, big manufactories and sweatshops—I've tried them all. And I like some so-called sweatshops best—where you don't have to keep up any *front;* where they don't expect you to spend all you make on *clothes*. That's the cruelest part about the big ones. When some investigation starts, they say: 'If they wouldn't put it all on their *backs!*' . . . And they'll fire you if you don't. Come to work looking shabby and they'll say: 'Nix with that "poor working girl, God defend her" stuff. That's why we pay you extra—so's to look decent.' Oh, it's a scream!"

She threw back her head and, despite her velvet voice, laughed unmelodiously.

"Eet eez fonny becauze you are not *gay*, girl? Because you do not *lif?* And all for nuzzings. *Zat* eez *fonny!*"

"Sure it's funny." Velvet Voice was still laughing harshly. Then rising to stir the simmering contents of the saucepan: "Go up to Central Park some Sunday and see the cars and carriages, and look at the men in 'em who get our money. There they sit and their chauffeurs and coachmen are always ten times better-looking. And there *they* sit—their bosses. Little fussy side-whiskers, little round stomachs, or little flat chests, trying to look important. Then the woman alongside says something. Watch 'em jump like pet cats being stroked or patted on the head. . . . And there the women sit—*their* bosses. Then look at *them*. Such fool clothes! Silks and satins and velvets and *crepes*—for out-of-doors! And always made some fool way dressmakers call 'smart.' And they look all wrong and out of place in them, because most of 'em were born to scrub floors. And the way they try to look proud and haughty! And not knowing how, the very people they're trying to make good with just laugh and sneer at them. 'Look!' I heard some society woman say, one of those tailor-made ones with a single-quill hat; one that looked 'right'—one Sunday in a crush. 'How hideous, Molly!' she says: 'And the creature's diamonds! Some bookmaker's wife, I suppose.' The other says something worse than that, *much* worse."

The velvet voice held that quality one associates with a woman's heightened color. "And the common one wasn't either thing they thought. She was the wife of a man with the biggest shirt-waist factory in town: two thousand girls. And all working their heads off for that fat woman to put on fool-clothes and fool-jewelry and be laughed at. You can't do anything but laugh." She arose and stirred the contents of the saucepan again.

"I wouldn't," the Little One returned fiercely. "I wouldn't *not; net.*"

"What *would* you do?"

The question was asked languidly, with no hope of any helpful answer. To Arnold it seemed that Velvet Voice had made an exhaustive study of her personal problem, without discovering the angle of successful vision, therefore mistrusted any cursory solutions. Arnold once had interviewed a life convict;

her attitude was similar: her prison, the world; her chances of escape, save one, the same.

The Little One had suddenly toppled her rickety chair back. Bang! One tiny hand was now extended dramatically. But her confidence died before she spoke; such was the other's steady gaze, and her words, when they came, were not dramatic at all.

"Zere are ways," she answered shortly. But her attitude seemed to indicate that one needed education before one might understand. . . . But: "Oh, plenty ways," was all she added, aloud.

"I know *one,*" said Velvet Voice. "It doesn't appeal to me. I'm not saying I'm better than anybody, but to have drunken men paw you; and fools dirtying themselves . . . to drink hard to forget how rotten you are. . . . And are you any better off? Instead of working for rabbit-men and donkey-men and nice little dog-men, you work for nasty little fox-men and wolf-men and hyena-men—policemen and politicians and—"

She spoiled what should have been a profitable lesson in Anglo-Saxon alliteration for the little alien, finishing lamely: ". . . don't you know!" And the attitude of the angry Little One added emphatically, this time, that she did.

"Girl!—You don't zink zat me—Sonetchka—zat I am like zat—no?" Arnold saw her in profile now; nostrils quivering, lips trembling, eyes snapping. "Girl!—you don't zink zat *I* am like zat?"

"Why, no," returned Velvet Voice, startled. "*You* didn't think—" Her interpolator as though electrically shocked, leaped across and into her arms, crying and clinging like a helpless child, then shaking herself like a pet animal after handling. It was plain she lacked either humor, or its equivalent, logic; else could she have resumed the rôle of protector and adviser—while Velvet Voice continued her soothing pressure of one tiny hand.

"You can use my rooms, girl—you sleep wiz me," said the

Little One peremptorily. "I 'ave air an' light and I 'ave traveling stove—*alcool.* We cook nice brikfas', *hein?* I tell you," she said suddenly, with that air of solving problems that sat upon her so grotesquely, "I hate to cook brikfas'. You be my cook: I pay wiz ze brikfas'. Say—jus' like zat—'Yes, my dear.' Say it, girl."

She caught Velvet Voice's hand. "Yes, my dear," said Velvet Voice with comic obedience.

"Well, you come, come," urged the Little One. "Come, girl. Sleep."

"Leave your door on the latch: I'll come when I've fed him this." She removed the saucepan from the gas and poured its contents into a little white pitcher.

"Poor man," said the Little One, and he knew she was standing over him. "Poor, poor *malczech*—" ('mahlchick' the word sounded to Arnold who wondered in what language it had a meaning). "Eet is good zat you skr-skr-skr-skrim and I come to 'elp you, girl!" It was evident she used the word "girl" as a term of affection. "Nevver you carry 'im yourself. Too 'eavy. 'E was more 'eavier not soon ago, too," she added, touching Arnold's thin drawn cheeks with the pointed tip of a glittering pink finger-nail. "Sometime I see zem like zat in the Ghetto, poor *schnorrers.*" Her pity was cut short by a prodigious yawn: "Oh—I—aw—come soon, girl"—and took herself off still yawning and covering her mouth with the little paw of the pink pointed nails—for such a little mouth needed rest after accomplishing what would have altered all history had it been done at the Tower of Babel.

As the door closed, Arnold felt a gentle tugging at the sleeve of his shirt (he had sold his last pair of pajamas, one of a dozen silken frogged things, Hugo's Christmas-a-year gift). The tugging, though gentle, was insistent as was the velvet voice that kept inquiring if he heard. He opened his eyes.

She had velvety eyes, too: oval face with an old ivory pallor, soft dark eyes, eyes almost oblique, eyes almost as Oriental as her oval face. Away from the Little One, her height did not by many inches equal his own five feet ten: only the other's excessive smallness and her own excessive slenderness had made her seem so tall.

Arnold was a match for her there; it would be difficult for any feminine slenderness to match the thinness of five months of scanty nourishment, capped by four weeks of sickness.

"How did I get here?" he asked. "Or you? . . ."

"Drink this," she said.

"But—," he began.

"Drink first," she insisted.

It seemed that the saucepan contained a combination of oyster-liquor and milk: grateful warming nourishment for one who had fasted so long. With an effort he remembered his manners. Well for him he did: the shock though he drank slowly was severe enough to force him to desist until a sudden burning pain should subside.

Perspiration sprang from every pore and lay like powdered cocaine crystals on his forehead; but with the peacock egotism of the male when in the presence of any female who stirs, consciously or unconsciously, his sense of sex, Arnold locked his eyes and set his teeth. Weakness by the mere fact of her presence had become humiliating. And how bitterly he resented the proof that concealment had failed, when she began, openly, to pity him.

"Poor boy," said Velvet Voice, enjoying her mothering immensely. "No wonder."

"No wonder what?" Arnold asked, opening his eyes, with a great effort of will, smiling. She did not answer, so he harked back to Sonetchka's fragmentary speech.

"You and she carried *me* in here," he wondered aloud. *"Why?"*

"I suppose *I'd* have been annoyed if you'd done the same for me"—to his further wonderment, she was actually apologetic; "I don't blame you for being angry. . . . They say only *cowards* commit suicide."

Once more the laugh that submerged the velvetiness. "Naturally that's said by those who don't know. Cowards?—Night after night I've got out the whole apparatus, yes, and turned it on and waited. And then I've leaped up and turned it out. Even with everything to gain and nothing to lose, there's that blank leap. Now if I only believed in *something,* why, I'd take a chance on Hell being better than this—for me anyway. But that blank leap into—nowhere—? . . . I suppose a person's got to be sick, or in pain, or facing some horrible tomorrow. . . . Mine's just monotonous misery, and, being sane and all that, I keep thinking that there's always a chance: I've got one chance, anyhow—that 'one chance' is what keeps our wretched noses to the grind, I suppose. Why, when I saw you lying there, I said to myself: 'I guess he lost his last chance.' But it was pain, wasn't it?"

Much of what she said was almost incomprehensible to Arnold. But she did not seem to mind his silence. Her talk with the Little One had loosened the reserve of a year without confidantes. And there was much she could tell a fellow-suicide, much she could never have brought herself to tell any one else.

As she talked on, Arnold realized why she so considered him—and shuddered!

It was a night of storm and snow and while he slept some vagrant gust must have extinguished his flickering gas. She had noticed the odor, one so overpowering as to diffuse itself widely . . . and knowing gas to be the favorite lethal weapon of the poor, had investigated.

She told him about it, and of how her scream had brought Sonetchka's acquaintance and assistance. . . . "Don't pretend to thank me," she said, contemptuously interrupting some such stumbling attempt.

"*I* shouldn't thank *you.* But *you* wouldn't have the chance with *me. You* didn't even lock your door. Anyhow, your way's foolish—takes hours and hours. If you'd had this—"

She reached under his pillow and brought out a coil of insulated rubber piping: but where an attachment for a movable gas-fixture should have been was a nursing nipple for some Brobdingnagian baby.

"My idea, that," she tried to say flippantly. "Think I could get a patent on it? It would make things so much easier for poor people, wouldn't it? My!—but it's hard to grip that hose with your teeth and say 'prunes and prisms' with your lips, at the same time."

Arnold shuddered at such sinister information, especially as it was patently the result of personal experience.

"How about advertising it?" continued the girl in the same grimly satirical vein: *"Comme c'est!* Are you Hungry? Ill? Miserable? Trouble's But a Bubble. Buy our 'Beauty.' . . . No Poor Man Can Beat It! . . . Don't you love it?"

Arnold's original idea of undeceiving her, vanished—her belief in his attempted suicide was his strongest hold on her imagination. And heredity was too much for him—he became "the" L'Hommedieu again. The strong may be temporarily vanquished, but let others than himself need their strength . . . and the world's knee was on their necks as so much thistle-down . . . Velvet Voice's life was too precious to be wasted.

Yet Arnold had seemed powerless before poverty. Shipping-clerk for wholesale "notions," salesman of Ninth Avenue shoes, conductor for Brooklyn commuters, section boss, timekeeper for a lumber man, bookkeeper for a grocer—he had filled a mort of the many badly paying places open to the semi-skilled. And had filled them well. . . . But such as would keep him fed and half-decently clad did so at the expense of his soul. Unfit for heavy unimaginative labor, it stripped the flesh from his bones, sent him home staggering and into a stupor, not to sleep.

From this he would awaken early, back aching, hands smart-ing, bloodshot sunken eyes. Highly-bred racehorses die when put to dragging drays.

"Theorists talk learnedly of the immense amount of proteids a dime will buy, demonstrate irrefragably that ten dollars a week will keep a man in the pink of condition. Let them try to be clean and well-fed—as well as useful—on that sum. Professor Blank—who voiced the economic conclusions printed in yesterday's 'Argus'—is probably paid by plutocratic endowments . . . that the coming generation may be as ignorantly merciless as is this one.

"The worst of it all is that it needn't be so: that it does no one any good that it should be so. . . ."

"Old Subscriber" Arnold had sent this to his former "shop" a few days before. The indignation was fiercer now with the knowledge of this girl's plight. . . . Seeing color flooding his cheeks, she considered it safe to leave him.

"No talk," she said; "sleep—and rest—see you in the morning."

Unheeding his protests, she extinguished the gas and went out, but immediately returned, fumbling for something. Thinking it her purse, Arnold was hurt. But then came the noise of something flopping, and he understood!

The rubber-hose! Apparently she did not encourage its use in others.

II. THE TRUNK THAT WOULD HOLD THREE MEN

Velvet Voice had reported for work long before Arnold awoke. The Little One, having taken her place, brought in an affair of nickeled steel, compact but complicated, poured in alcohol, . . . managed, deftly, mysteriously, a breakfast of grilled bacon, poached eggs and toast; coffee from another engine, a pair of elliptical half-globes that, when the water boiled, reversed automatically, fragrant steam signaling with their little spout.

"Russian," she said proudly, observing his interest.

"I don't know how to thank you—" he began. . . .

She interrupted with a wave of a little hand—back dropped the kimono folds revealing a dimpled elbow—miracle—another kimono from Miss Cherry-Pink of the previous night; neither the sort of garment worn by the poor. What was she doing in such a hotel? What . . . who, was she? "Russian!" "Sonetchka" . . . people called her—she told him, while he ate.

" 'Sonetchka,' 'e say"—she went rattling on, telling of some rich man who had loved her—" 'Sonetchka: I loof you. I zink you are jus' loofly. I worsheep you, Sonetchka:' 'So?' I say (jus' like zat). 'So? *Zat* is 'ow mooch I care whezzer you zink I am loofly.' . . . 'E was 'ansom zat *barin*, too. . . . Those ozzer stupid little pig girls zink I am crazee. My muzzer she beat me. But still I say '*Zat* for your *barin*.' I run away, zen. . . . You look like 'im. 'E was fine-looking man, 'im."

"A baron?" asked Arnold.

"*Net—net*—not *baron—barin*—zat means not *mouzik*, not *peasant*, zhentleman. . . . But eat. Finish. . . . How you feel now?"

"I think I'll get up," said Arnold. She nodded, pleased. "And I will ge-fix ze room for 'er. She nice, *hein?*" She had a way of mixing up her languages, using scraps of any that suited her peculiar pronunciation. She came forward and helped Arnold to rise. He was surprised at the steely strength of her diminutive wrists.

"I am str—r—ong, me!" she affirmed, flattered by his expression. "Zat come from 'ard work w'en I run away: w'en I was so 'igh—jus' like zat."

The complete rest of the night, the quart of warm oyster-milk, the plentiful breakfast, all seemed to have exorcised Arnold's demon; the kindness and sympathy of the two girls had exiled his hopeless apathy. . . . He meant to see that

Velvet Voice never carried out her threat. But, to do that, he must better her condition.

In the old days, dressing before bathing would have made Arnold uncomfortable all day. Indeed, it was only recently that this costly luxury (cleanliness *is* a luxury, professors' pratings or no), had ceased to consume a large percentage of his pay. Gradually, as ill-health and enforced holidays separated him from clean tubs and perpetual hot water, acquainting him with cloudy zinc and colonies of rectilinear khaki-coats resident therein, Arnold learned to sponge instead of bathe. This morning, he went to work at it, weak though he was, as though to make up for previous derelictions . . . attired himself carefully, brushing his one decent suit, hitherto used only when applying for positions. It was Avenue tailoring and had not lost its distinction of cut. Long since he had come to the wearing of the usual collars; but several of his unusual neckties still showed smart and costly above the waistcoat. His hat, soft brown camel's hair, was indestructible.

He was welcomed with surprise and approval by Sonetchka. She, with Turkish toweling and photogravures cut from current magazines, had transformed Velvet Voice's dingy room into one with some pretensions as a human habitation, while the gas-light was mellowed by a shade contrived from tissue-paper and cardboard. . . . She was still busy, stitching away at more toweling which was to hide the dubious bedspread.

Arnold's admiration for the metamorphosed room equaled Sonia's for his changed appearance. Neither expressed admiration orally, however—for a third person was suddenly added to their company: a boy who stared vacantly from the wide-flung door.

He was neatly, though cheaply, dressed: black suit, black tie, black shoes; but—also—a round straw hat, telescope variety, and outside, snow. Not because of poverty: the hat was new, not a last summer's hat that had weathered the seasons, since. Nor did its wearer have the abashed air of one conscious of oddity of apparel, but lounged in the doorway searching the room as if for some familiar face. He gave no sign of having seen either of its present occupants.

"You want to see somebody?" Arnold asked him.

He turned and viewed Arnold, letting his gaze travel over the expensive tie, the snug coat shoulders, the hair smooth and glossy from much hard brushing; and, as he looked, scowled fiercely: the scowl repeated after a careful scrutiny of Sonetchka.

"I want Annie Eunice," he said. "I'll fix her. Locked me up, she did. And it was all nice and greasy. Oil everywhere. *And* oats. Especially oats. I hate oats."

He spoke rapidly and passionately, coming forward with hands clenched. As he came, Sonetchka arose in alarm and the newcomer, observing the trunk on which she had been seated, lost all evidences of anger and chuckled hugely.

"Trunk," he said. "Trunk. Tee-hee," and he giggled: then he drew his arm through Arnold's and addressed him confidentially: "I've got a trunk. Hold three men. Paid three hundred dollars for it. Got a little bunk in it and everything. Going to sail to England in it, get away from this goddam country. It's fast, too. I'll show that son-of-a-gun Lipton. I'm an American, I am. Thousands for defense but not one cent for tribute." He laughed in an unmistakably silly way, adding:

"Damn America. What's it ever done for me? Shut me up with oil everywhere. And knowing how I hate oats! I'll show 'em. Got a cigarette?"

Although the question was addressed to Arnold, Sonetchka, who had now a look of horrified understanding, extended a box of thin Russian ones. The man with the straw hat took one, thoughtfully, scrutinizing it with the utmost care.

"Have to be careful," he said. "They try every way to poison me. But I'll fool 'em. Tee-hee," he giggled. "I'll fool 'em. I've got a lot of poison myself. Paid three hundred dollars for it. Going to drop it in the reservoir. And all the birds were singing in my old New Hampshire home. Thousands for defense but not a cent for tribute."

He resumed his thoughtful mien and, patting the trunk with an air of intelligence bestowing patronage upon worth, he seated himself on it.

"I'll put a mast right here," he said, inspecting it. "With sails. Then lie down and smoke cigarettes all the way over. Three hundred dollars' worth I've got in that trunk. Yes, sir, bought 'em in London yesterday."

He produced a thick roll of bills: looked then at the two strangers and giggled, and with a sharp glance of mistrust, replaced them in his pocket.

"You jus' give zat to me—zat money—now!—right now," said Sonetchka, meeting his eye. She thrust out her hand. "Put it zere. Right zere." His eyes fell before her steady gaze. She repeated her command, stepping nearer as she spoke.

"It's mine," he whimpered. "They gave it to me for writing my name. Write your name and we'll give you three hundred dollars." He pointed to Arnold. "He said it."

"Yes," said Arnold, realizing that some good reason lay back of Sonetchka's treatment of this unfortunate. "But I said you were to bring it here and give it to this lady, didn't I?"

"Thousands for defense but not a cent for tribute," said the boy, slowly drawing out the money and reluctantly surrendering it. Sonetchka returned him a single bill.

"Zere's one t'ousand dollar becauze you obey," she said, tendering the "ace" with a gracious air. "You ze eet is good to obey. Eh?"

"I can buy a *new* trunk with a thousand," he said greedily. "Hold *ten* men. Go a thousand miles a day. *You* can have *this*. *You* sail to England in it. It's a good trunk. Go quick and beat that old son-of-a-gun Lipton. I'm going to race Barney Oldfield in my new one." He crossed to the door.

"So long," he said: "I've got to hurry or I won't catch him. He's got a thousand miles start of me."

"Wait," she ordered: "I go weez you. You wait. I dress." She motioned Arnold out as the man in the straw hat returned.

"Why does *he* have to go?" asked the latter suspiciously. "Maybe he'll phone Oldfield and he'll get an aeroplane and beat *me*."

"Zen we will, too," she returned soothingly. "A beeg hairoplane—begger zan zis 'ole 'otel—" At which he giggled again and, taking a second cigarette, seated himself, thoughtful of his coming victory, on his discarded International Cup racer.

Before Arnold could ask a question Sonetchka had begun to explain. " 'E's 'er brozzer," she said.

"What?" asked Arnold, not recognizing this queer jumble of lacking aspirates and reinforced sibilants.

" '*Er brozzer*," replied the Little One, dabbing at her eyes.

"*Brother?*" gasped Arnold. "*Hers?*" Sonetchka nodded and opened the door to her own room.

Here all evidences of a cheap hotel disappeared. Arnold saw silver candelabra with embroidered shades, mantel ornaments in bronze and marble, an oblong leather cigarette-box, nail-studded . . . articles of hammered brass. Beyond was a bed canopied and hung with rose-colored draperies. The rooms were enormous—sitting-room and bedroom: once part of the Presidential suite, afterward familiar to the fashionable overflow from the Brevoort House, a few blocks to the west—but farther than Africa now.

A small white dog leaped up, barking sleepily at the stranger.

"My baby-dog," cried Sonetchka passionately, and hugged it tight. "Wazzums?—well—w'at a baby." Thus intermittently addressing it—"dolly-dog" and "angel-child"—she explained the case of Velvet Voice to the doubly amazed Arnold.

III. Why Hans Chasserton Wore a Straw Hat in January

Half an hour later, at his offices in lower Broadway, "Our Mr. Krafft," of Cleyne, Thurndyke, Martinseft and Krafft, glanced at the written slip a volcanic Arnold had sent in and, having little conception of the relations existing between the orthography and phonetics of any name that appeared "foreign," he coughed discreetly, as who should say the poor fellow was responsible for having an outlandish French name, of being other than an "Amurrican" citizen. If Mr. Krafft had been born with any such family name, he would have been known as Lommeydoo.

"I came to talk to you about a boy named Hans Chasserton," said Arnold, and grimly watched the smile fade from the Krafftian face. So large were the offices of the firm, so many the employees, so numerous the partners, Arnold had hardly dare hope to meet immediately the one whom, with all his being, he yearned to do an injury. Yet Mr. Krafft's neat little face, pale with guilty knowledge—for Arnold had the psychic quality of impressing, for the moment at least, his own moral standards on others—his neat little hands nervously toying with his neat little bow-tie: these things convinced Arnold that this was the very gentleman that Sonetchka's story had sent him, headlong, in boiling rage, to find.

"I do not care to discuss the matter," said Mr. Krafft, his eyes turning longingly toward his ivory push-button, between which and Mr. Krafft stood the young man, whose eyes gave Mr. Krafft plainly to understand he was in for some ugly moments.

"After all," said Arnold unpleasantly, "it's no great wonder I should have met the very man I wished to see. Your name is lowest down on the sign. Doubtless your nature is like your name. And so you are given the low-down work to do; unknowns like myself and young Chasserton help you keep your place," he added in a rising tone, as the lawyer seemed about to saunter easily toward his desk. Mr. Krafft had taken that position by the window to be engaged in staring forth abstractedly when his unknown client entered; it was impressive not to be aware at first of the presence of unknown clients. Now he wished he had been content merely to sit at his desk and rustle papers.

"Two orphans, Hans Anderson Chasserton and Annie Eunice Chasserton. Point Number one; orphans, Mr. Krafft, Annie Eunice fourteen, Hans twelve. She didn't send him out as bundle-boy or cash-boy. He had been going to the Polytechnic when her father died, and she used the insurance money to keep him there—while she worked. In factories till her eyes went back on her, in stores until the doctor told her to look out for varicose veins, standing on her feet all day. Then back to the factories again, and so on. It went on that way until the boy graduated from the Polytechnic and spent a year in the Nonpareil Motor-Car shops. Then they gave him a job demonstrating—"

"Mr. Lommeydoo," said Mr. Krafft, edging toward his push-button, "you are either the biggest lunatic in New York or the—" under Arnold's eyes he failed to recall a second superlative. Some eyes can be very ugly when they choose.

"I shouldn't speak of lunatics if I were you," said Arnold softly. "And keep your place." Entirely voluntarily this time Mr. Krafft stepped farther away from the push-button.

"Where was I?" Arnold asked; "oh, yes! young Hans got a fifteen-a-week job demonstrating new cars. Five and ten-dollar tips when he showed some purchasers how to run 'em. . . . Then he and his sister made a deal for a little house—one of those model cottages. Paid so much a month—'why pay rent?' you know. Ten miles out in the country. She kept house. No more stores or sweatshops—home. Then enter Apple-Booster, enter Snake, enter Rat—your client, Mr. Krafft."

Arnold was no longer red-hot: he was white-hot. "Eve thought pretty well of the serpent, too, history tells us. Well, when your client bought that Nonpareil six-cylinder-sixty—made especially for him, wasn't it?—and Hans was to show him how to run it, and got a week's vacation for it, Eve's serpent was nowhere; even that last day when he was running it himself, and she, his sister, had heard Hans beg him not to drive too fast. 'At eighty miles an hour any little accident's fatal,' Hans said. But when they started off down the Motor Parkway, I guess your client told Hans to shut up. Then the puncture. Even then she was grateful because he had had Hans taken to a private hospital—she didn't know it had to be private—and promised if he was permanently disabled he'd have a life pension. Then he goes off to the other side and leaves it all to you, I guess, and she had to let the model cottage go. Couldn't keep up the payments and all their savings had gone into the first instalments. Nearly a thousand dollars. Back to the stores and sweatshops for her. But she kidded herself along: it was only till Hans came out. Then he could get his old job back, or—keep your place, Mr. Krafft, don't let me have to tell you again—if he was disabled, there was that pension. She gave your client credit for not knowing she had lost the house and was back sweating: that she didn't even have enough spare cash for a trip up to that White Mountains sanitarium. But with your client so kind about the private hospital and the sanitarium, she felt sure it was *all right*."

He paused, surveying Mr. Krafft malignantly. "Anyhow, his *lawyer* told her right along, up to a few weeks ago, everything would be arranged. And that's just the joke. Everything *was*. What makes the joke twice as funny is that her eyes have gone back on her again; and she can't stick in the shop. So what would be more shriekingly farcical than her meeting this brother who is going to save her, wearing a straw hat in the winter and talking about sailing across the ocean in a trunk that holds three men."

Mr. Krafft's collar seemed to be choking him: a prophetic collar, this. He avoided Arnold's eyes, but the avatar of the fighting L'Hommedieus had pocketed his Bible to have both hands free for battle. "Well," he asked in the ugly fighting voice of his breed; "Well?" He thrust forward a hand palm outward, forcing up Mr. Krafft's neat little dimpled chin, so that the neat little eyes were forced to meet his. "Well?"

"The matter has been arranged," said Mr. Krafft miserably, sure this answer, although legally flawless, would not be acceptable to a high-handed bloody-minded young pirate. Vanished all his eager little pride at having compassed a neat bit of chicanery for which his senior partners had praised him without stint, for which a large fee was forthcoming. So strong was Arnold's domination that Mr. Krafft saw his neat little legal trick for the cheap cowardly business it was.

"The matter has been *arranged?*" asked Arnold, speaking lower as his fear of himself grew. "You send the boy off where his sister can't see him, she might get suspicious and consult a lawyer. Send him to some out-of-the-way place where they perform illegal operations, I suppose; where women go when they are supposed to be in Europe—nobody but doctors that ought to be disqualified would stand by this damnable fraud. Is that what you would call *arranging?*"

His talent for analysis had supplied the missing and nefarious details. It had not been difficult after hearing Sonetchka repeat Annie Eunice's confidences of the night before: although they might have seemed hazy to an average auditor. Arnold thought at that time, before he learned who the man was whose carelessness had been responsible for Hans' condition, that this man would have been willing to do the decent thing had not these lawyers, greedy for fees, advised otherwise. After hearing Sonetchka's story, Arnold had realized the significance of that three hundred dollars that had somehow stuck in the boy's witless brain. No doubt they had his signature to a quitclaim—an absolute release. In his present condition, three hundred dollars was a gigantic fortune. But, for the release to be binding, the *medicos* at the sanitarium must be ready, if called on, to testify to the absolute sanity of Hans when he signed it—otherwise all this trickery was for nothing. Arnold realized that Krafft had not omitted to secure himself on this point: therefore, his shot as to the character of the place, had been only the result of logic. Its accuracy was evidenced by Mr. Krafft's astonished start. Had Chasserton's sister suspected; had some one investigated? Arnold followed up his logic.

"How long has he been *out* of the place? A month? Two months? Or did you date the quitclaim a month ahead and take a notary in with you. If you didn't you never allowed that boy to come to her directly he left there. She could take him to *any* physician and have him declared insane. And, then, it wouldn't make any difference *how* your shady sanitarium doctors testified. But, of course, if he signed that quitclaim a *month* ago, he could have had another accident for which your client *wasn't* responsible. Or, after he left your place, perfectly O. K., some low-minded lawyer like yourself might put him up to *pretend* to be insane: to blackmail your client—"

"Exactly," said Mr. Krafft; but he put a high-backed chair between him and Arnold before he said it. "Exactly. He was *quite sane* when he left Doctor Brydges' admirable institution: too well established for your libels to affect it. Doctor Brydges has the testimonials of many prominent people."

Arnold gripped the back of Krafft's protecting chair. "So I'm a blackmailer, am I? And the boy's insanity assumed? I just wanted to get your line of defense, you little rat—"

With a sudden kick, he cleared the chair from his path; and, springing at Krafft, locked both hands around that gentleman's neat little neck. But for the gurgling of the man held at arm's length, only the roar of Wall Street—jackals consuming dead lions and lambs, bulls and bears planning other killings, hyenas astir in anticipation; the customary noises of Manhattan's Monte Carlo—was to be heard in the room. For the moment his old strength seemed to return to Arnold. His muscles had not gone soft in his illness; only the energy to use them had been at low ebb. Now, the motor of his will at high tension again, he was happily confident of his power: the great human machine was as competent as ever. He laughed gladly, fiercely, as he flung Mr. Krafft into a chair.

"Well, put it that way—blackmail," he said, then waited until Krafft should finish choking, spluttering, spitting. "The law's on your side—keep it. With no money and no pull, what's the use of the law to anybody. Anyhow, you've got a good *legal* case. That blackmail idea was immense, for *both* of us." He waited again, smiling grimly at the fancy that had seized him. When he went on analyzing in his usual fashion it was only to convince himself, to watch Krafft's face to test the accuracy of his analyses. "They had to pass a law in France that people who got run over should go to jail. That's the only way they could keep the hospitals from being overcrowded. So many people threw themselves under motorcars. Great for damages; and what was a broken leg or amputated arm if they could quit work for the rest of their lives? So when they weren't lucky enough to lose their limbs or something, their lawyers—your kind—hit on that insanity dodge; got doctors to teach 'em how people act who go crazy from blows on the head—"

He looked up. "I'm boring you. You're well aware of all that; I can see you in court now, you and your associates, quoting all the authorities for it, all the precedents. You'll wait of course until you get the right Judge. Then you'll call on him to help you put a stop to this criminal perjury. 'That man is no more insane than I am,' you'll shout to the jury. And the poor little sheep on the jury 'ull look at Hans Chasserton as if he were Black Bart or Jesse James; and if they have automobiles themselves they'll think *their chauffeur* might get hurt and try the same trick some day, and most of the others 'ull think of that girl their wives don't know about. *She* might try this blackmail trick if they get tired of her and quit. You know you can always get a favorable verdict when you shout 'Blackmail.' Almost everybody's got something to conceal and everybody's afraid some day they'll have to pay somebody to keep it quiet. Blackmail!—that *was* an inspiration. I'm much obliged."

Arnold's voice had increased in bitterness; the corners of his mouth were turned down. "Call up your bank," he added suddenly. "Have 'em send a messenger with five thousand in small bills—tens, twenties, fifties, no larger. And have him hurry—your bank's near here I suppose." As Krafft gave him no answer, he went on. "Tell your telephone girl to send him right in when he comes."

"Are you crazy?" Krafft almost shouted.

"Keep quiet," said Arnold fiercely; "shout like that again and I'll choke the life out of you. You do what I say."

"I can't sign the firm's name alone—another member has to sign too," whined Krafft eagerly, too eagerly. Arnold pulled out from under some volumes in yellow calf, a large square cheque-book. Flipping it open he viewed the signature of the firm stamped on each cheque, the line below preceded by the word "per" and sufficiently wide for but one other name. Arnold, his thumb pressed against one of these forms, delivered the book to its owner.

"Liar," he said briefly. "Now do what I told you. Here's the telephone." He lifted and handed it, the long cord reaching to the window. He was aware of the ivory push-button.

For a moment, Mr. Krafft held the heavy instrument as a child holds a strange toy. When he had seemed to solve the reason for its existence, his bearing was too cowed and abject to arouse suspicion in Arnold, who was never to be accused of holding too high an opinion of the average human's intelligence. But, having little conception of the deification of mere money, he was yet to learn that the stupidest of men may succeed in collecting vast quantities of wealth, just as the early Christian martyrs gladly suffered death in the arena; wealth-worship being the only *live* religion to-day because it is the only one people are willing to *die* for. Mr. Krafft's religion threatened, every ounce of him responded to a stirring call to arms:

his brain became a dynamo fed by the force of thousands of fiercely throbbing nerve ganglions; and a thought-process that, as he was possessed of limited mental endowments, would have consumed an ordinary hour, eventuated in the one silent moment before he asked for a telephone number.

"Five-two-seven-eight?—is that you Mr. Terence—this is Mr. Krafft of Cleyne, Thurndyke, Martinseft and Krafft—tell the cashier to send over five thousand dollars in small bills—tens, twenties and fifties—nothing larger—a client here wants them. If you haven't them, get them somewhere else and bring them over here yourself—I *must* have them immediately. Very important. Don't trust a messenger. It's too easy to run off with such money. It can't be identified, you see. Hurry. Good-by." He slammed down the receiver before Mr. Terence had an opportunity of replying with a single word: Mr. Krafft had spoken with too feverish a rapidity.

"I'm sure there isn't five thousand there," he whined again, reverting to his former manner as he accepted the pen Arnold had inked and handed him. Resting a corner of his cheque-book on the window-sill he wrote a date in neat Spencerian, filled another blank to "Cash"; paused at the third. But let there be no further secret made of it: the controversy that followed was but the result of a cunning plan to keep the mind of the bloody-minded young pirate so occupied that he might not cogitate on the double meaning of the neat little telephone message; even though, to the man at the other end of the wire, no bank-clerk as you rightly suspect—it had been vague to the point of misunderstanding: Mr. Terence, Agency Detective, had, in fact, been divided when he received it between suspicions of drunkenness and dementia.

"Hadn't I best leave the amount blank in case he doesn't bring *quite* five thousand? All our cheques are in sequence. If we destroy one, it makes trouble in our bookkeeping. You understand—" Mr. Krafft was surpassing himself as a creature of intellect.

The telephone bell rang. Arnold came closer and faced him across the top of the instrument. "No, I can't see *anybody* just now," Mr. Krafft answered his telephone girl. "Except one person. Send him right in. Mr. Terence from the Bank."

Again he cut off an earnest effort to promote absolute understanding. "Mr. Terence from the *Bank,*" the girl two rooms away asked to the empty air; but her question was soon answered in the person of Mr. Terence himself. Followed by two others as rosy-gilled as himself, he leaped from an express-elevator into the reception-room. "Oh, *you,*" said she of the switchboard.

"Krafft's in his reg'lar office, miss?" asked the rosy-gilled one addressed, breathing heavily.

"And he said—" she began; but again she finished to emptiness. The three were racing along the private hall. In his room, Mr. Krafft, having filled in the third blank with the amount demanded, was whining out a request for a receipt to show his client. "Otherwise it's a dead loss," said the neat little man humbly.

But in a space of time too brief to have a designation in our chronological measurements he was neither neat nor humble, nor yet little. He had climbed on a chair when Terence and Company burst down the unlocked door—the method of turning the knob being too simple for the mental processes of police detectives—and, as they threw themselves upon the bloody-minded pirate, Mr. Krafft disheveled his scanty topknot by scratching gleefully, as a dog flea-questing vengefully.

Followed overturning of furniture, smashing of inkwells and paste-pots. The head of one of the rosy-gills struck a brass-bound table corner as he staggered back from the first blow of the fighting L'Hommedieu; who, himself, went through the lower pane of a window—one of those with but two panes, an upper and a lower; so that, as the glass crashed down to the pavement, half his body hung in space. But it was not as an applicant for one of Mr. Carnegie's life-saving medals that Mr. Terence tackled his legs, bringing him back to more solid support, but for the pleasure of driving him into some book-cases and adding several pounds of shattered glass to the general debris. Nor did Arnold misinterpret his motives but swung lustily and flattened out half of Mr. Terence on an oak center table, where he lay like an unruly corpse in a dissecting room. Then Arnold became the gyrating center of a Catherine wheel of arms and legs, all three rosy-gills fastening on him like beagles on a cornered fox, all three crashing down, wildly struggling.

Mr. Terence was the first to disengage himself from this dusty and irregular pyramid; and, swearing wildly, he kicked Arnold's head viciously but accurately. As pain faded into unconsciousness, Arnold could hear the once neat little man chanting on his own cunning.

"You can let him be a minute, now," said Mr. Terence, his gills rosier than ever; and, pantingly introduced the others to Krafft: "Lieutenant Wiley, Sergeant Kirstenbaum, Central Office—just happened to be in the office when you phoned."

They always "just happened" there. Although "front-office dicks," less prosperous souls circulated envious rumors that they used official time and civic expense accounts to add to the exchequer of that firm; also recommended it on all possible occasions to distressed citizens, accrediting to it attributes of persistent and successful sleuthing not to be found in those on the pay-rolls of the municipality.

But now was the time for despised municipal powers to be asserted and the puffing Lieutenant asked what was the charge? The topknot smoothed out, the chant of cave-man cunning ceased, and Mr. Krafft, a neat little lawyer once more, considered. Best not refer to the Chasserton case lest a note of sympathy be struck in the public press before the charge of blackmail made that impossible. "Assault with intent to kill," he finally evolved. "The ruffian threatened if I didn't get him five thousand . . ." Enraged at the thought of his humiliation, Mr. Krafft gave the senseless body a second kick, then hurried the actual story to give his cunning stratagem in detail. "Neat dodge, telephoning *you,* Bank, eh? And the way I put it. Ha! Ha! I knew if you didn't quite understand, you'd investigate. Unidentified bills. Client. Ha! Ha!"

"*I* tipped him," said Kirstenbaum sullenly. He had come into forcible contact with the brass-bound corner, and was feeling a lump the size of an apple; "They thought you was drunk or crazy."

"Then it's assault with intent to kill, intimidation, and attempted grand larceny, eh?" said Terence hurriedly. "He ought to get life for *that*—a fifteen-years' stretch anyhow. Well, let's get him up out of that, or some silk-stocking reformer 'ull be writing letters to the Mayor about police brutality."

Behind a screen was a stationary wash-hand basin where he drew water, emptying it on Arnold, to the intense amusement of clerks and office-boys; even of the other members of the firm, all of whom were crowded together at the door while Krafft explained excitedly. Three dousings, one hot, arousing Arnold's consciousness, he was hustled to his feet, into the elevator, and down to a surface car. Here Terence left them.

The Desk-Lieutenant at Police Headquarters entered the charge and seemed about to speak concerning disposition, when Arnold's captors winked, and the Lieutenant was content with ordering him into custody.

So his few personal possessions were removed; he was pushed down a flight of stairs, and up a cell-corridor. His small dark cell contained a plank stretched from wall to wall, a water tap, a toilet. Not until then did Wiley and Kirstenbaum deem it safe to leave him.

"Dangerous guy, that," he heard one say, as they retraced their way. "Look at my head. Keep an eye on him."

"What's the idea?" asked the Lieutenant, when they returned.

Kirstenbaum scowled. "Don't quite understand it myself, yet. Going back now to see the complainant. We wanted to git him behind the bars first. Dangerous guy, that—look at my head." He indicated the apple lump.

"Well," said the Lieutenant, "if they go through with *these* charges . . ." He squinted along the blotter and addressed his comrade of the high desk. "Ten years, eh?"

The Sergeant also squinted. "Unless he gits away with that first offender racket—I ain't never seen his mug in the Hall of Fame."

"Listen," said Wiley contemptuously, "listen: he's goin' to be chased. There ain't a tree high enough for *him* to climb. . . ."

Down in his cell, the descendant of the fighting L'Hommedieus—he who had planned to be a power for good in the land, to rectify abuses, to be a terror to evil-doers: he who had scorned to apply to friends for aid in so small a matter as the conquest of New York: he who was now a mass of aches and bruises—lay, face-downward, on his rough plank—vanquished.

CHAPTER TWO

SONS OF SUBTERRANEA

I. Sonetchka Visits Mother Mybus

ARNOLD had left Sonetchka early in the morning. She waited until Velvet Voice was due to return before she took matters into her own little hands: Annie Eunice must not be allowed to see her brother until something more hopeful had been arranged. Sonetchka did not know about the rubber hose, but she was an impressionist in emotions and often as accurate intuitively as was Arnold analytically: so was conscious of her new friend's utter hopelessness with regard to everything except Hans. On him she had insisted pathetically. Even if he was injured, there was the pension; and that, she had told Sonetchka the night before, would realize her vision—a little patch of truck-farm land, eastern shore of Maryland: the pension eked out by strawberries and Anne Arundel tomatoes for Baltimore-Washington markets. Thus in time, they could build themselves a house: at first they would be content with any sort of rough shanty. She could work if Hans was disabled. All they needed was the small capital necessary for a start and to tide them over until profits began.

Meanwhile, as the day wore on, Hans Anderson Chasserton had bought, in imagination, every conceivable article that one thousand dollars could buy. As pitiful as was his case, Sonetchka had laughed many times at his ridiculous parodies of sense. Sometimes, in his wanderings, he achieved a piece of perfect nonsense that would have pleased the lovers of Lear and Carroll. He was an entertaining madman and harmless.

"Come," said Sonetchka, giving up hope of Arnold's return. "We go 'ome, now."

"But Annie Eunice?" he asked, ceasing his play with the little white dog. "I've got letters for her. Like a flock of birds. All white and everything. You throw them up and they come down flying like white geese. Letters. For Miss Annie Eunice Chasserton, Hotel Tippecanoe. Letters. One thousand letters. See? I hid 'em so they couldn't take 'em away. Look."

He removed his coat, chuckling, and, tearing some threads of the lining, a cascade of envelopes rippled out. He threw a handful up in the air. "Like white geese they come down," he said delighted. "I hid 'em. I'm smart, I am. I'll fool 'em all." Sonetchka picked up some of the envelopes. On each, inscribed carefully, was his sister's name and address. But all were empty: fifty envelopes and not a letter. She could see Hans in his captivity, carefully addressing, then hiding them away from the sight of his keepers. Tears sprang to her eyes.

"Come," she said, patting his hands. "Here: put on this," and she fetched from a closet a man's great coat, tearing off price and size tags. "*She* 'as gone. W'en *she* come back, *she* come and get you. We go 'ome now. Come."

She caught up the little white dog, kissing and fondling it extravagantly, and murmuring endearments in her native tongue. Then she placed it in a rose-pink basket that matched the canopy draperies of her bed, and shook a warning finger. The dog closed its eyes and played dead. Hans followed her out, trotting obediently alongside her. He had been trotting alongside her all day; at different times she had tired of waiting, had penned a message for Arnold, and had taken Hans forth; first to a lunch-room, again to the moving-pictures, a third time to wander around in the maze of old New York streets of which Astor Place is the center. The Hotel Tippecanoe was just around the corner from it, on that forgotten Manhattan thoroughfare—almost "no thoroughfare" nowadays—Lafayette Street.

This time they turned west along Eighth Street, past the mansions of the one-time great, now the sweatshops of such as Simonski, for trousers, vest and shirtwaist-making; past the Brevoort House, its old face rejuvenated with white paint. . . .

Washington Square was a thing of beauty and mystery against that winter sky of blue, its trees silver-laced and interwoven with the flakes and festoonery of the Snow-Queen. Huge crystal balls of light, like iridescent fruits of the night, illuminated its ice and snow until the old Square shone like some Russian winter palace. Over it all Judson's cross, the highest ornament on the highest Christmas tree, seemed lowered from the very sky. Hans wished to climb the tree and get the cross to give to the Little One to wear.

"You come," Sonetchka said severely.

Abashed, Hans trotted on. They passed Jefferson Market, and its old police court where Arnold, almost at that moment, was being arraigned.

Then it seemed that they disappeared, like folk in a fairy-tale. Ninety-nine passers-by would have failed to observe the entrance to Rupert Court, that narrow arched passageway set in between a tobacconist's and his aunt's penny-shop. The passageway was slippery with ice. Some primal instinct that had survived both boyhood and loss of reason, stirred in Hans, producing some Pyle-like pictures. . . .

An old hexagonal lantern, mounted on a post, and kept alight by Mother Mybus—the lamplighter of the district had long forgotten it—illumined the frozen flagstones and picked out the three golden apples over the doorway. Sonetchka entered the shop-door, pressing a button that silenced the bell. A high-collared young Hebrew, ideal of "dressy" Fourteenth Street men, greeted her warmly but with respect.

"Ain't seen you since George Washington died," he said: adding benevolently: "say I heard a *scream* the other night. A 'comic' downta K. & P.'s ses: 'I didn't know he was sick.' . . . Going in?"

"No, I come 'ere jus' to see you, you so 'andsome," she retorted, rebuking him. Then in more gracious tones: "I wish you would look hafter my fren' 'ere—" she indicated Hans, interested in the show-case, and tapped her head significantly; then stooped and disappeared by a rabbit-hutch door beneath the counter.

II. THE UNGODLY HORDE

Mother Mybus' was a business that required neither publicity nor casual patronage. That street-strollers were unaware of her presence up the narrow passageway, that thus she failed to find a market for many remarkable bargains, that their tickets were soon flyblown, failed to disturb Mother's serenity. Hers was a soul that yearned for no intrusions. When she heard a stranger's step follow the hideous tintinnabulation of her special shop-bell, she peered out from behind her iron grill in positive annoyance. No hostess, mindful of a reputation for exclusiveness, could have been more upset at alien intrusion. Mr. Hartogensis' notions of English exclusiveness were simply nowhere.

Her guests knew better than to annoy Mother by allowing the shop-bell to ring. They pressed a button as Sonia did, one out of ordinary sight, and passed in noiselessly on rubber-heeled boots. Then Mother minded no more than the flies that buzzed about her flowers. She sat silent with her knitting before what had once been the Yew Tree kitchen-fire: a huge space of red tiles and red bricks, in summer filled with pots and tubs [illegible] boxes—for, since Mother had come to Rupert Court, she had remembered that, in her native Russia, flowers bloomed in the spring and many might be kept alive all year.

On the other side of the fireplace, also in line with the iron grill, there sat at all seasons, one as thin as Mother was fat, as screwed and scrawny of face as she was round and placid, a fellow who was her age and looked her father's; one who wore spectacles of expensive black tortoise-shell. It was her one mania to help him pretend he was not quite blind.

He would often call out wrongly, that some man was wearing a red tie, or some woman a purple dress, and woe to the uninitiated who dared to correct him, or do other than echo Mother's admiring assurance that it was wonderful how Nikko's sight was returning; soon he would be as able to see as you or me.

Nikko had been her sweetheart in Petersburg, and when the Autocracy had broken up his hand printing-press and he was sent to the quicksilver mines, for such iconoclastic statements as those of the Brotherhood of Man, Mother had heard of it, and had sent after him a man who had reason to know the horrors of convict labor and who was expert in escapes. This one had found that bribes are as adequate in Siberia, as elsewhere, and police as easy to hoodwink.

But he had brought back a blind Nikko—a condition not unusual to the miners of mercury, yet this fat, wicked old woman was so illogical as to regard it as a special persecution and to use it as an added excuse for her depredations on a sane and upright state.

But, because Nikko might not allow himself to be supported without protest, she pretended there was some income derived from the sale of those works of his, no longer of the Brotherhood of Man, but the Efficiency of Rebellion. These he wrote laboriously, tracing his lines by means of a narrow band of rubber slipped along the page, and of each pamphlet Mother had a few bound in tooled calf with raised gold letters, so that he could appraise them with thin approving fingers. The remainder of the pamphlets, unbound, were sent out to a private mailing list, to which he was always adding new names. The printing of Nikko's work cost Mother the proceeds of many remarkable burglaries. But she was recompensed by the forceful effects of Nikko's propaganda. There was no burglary, or pickpocketing, or crime—only *War*. Once begun, he would preach excitedly:

"They take our labor and our time—"

"Not mine," Pink, the Cagey Kid, interrupted on first hearing this. "I take theirs." It was purely a technical joke. This "Kid" specialized in watches—"soupers," he called them.

But Nikko never heeded interruptions; "and they build palaces with our blood and bones. It takes a dozen children's lives each year for the upkeep of one of their mistresses—"

"Ah," said the Phony Kid, "that shows they don't know women. I've grabbed many a dame like that and never give her nothing but a punch in the jaw. They don't know everything, them rich guys."

But when a man has lost his eyes for a Cause he can only win, or die; so Nikko had no sense of humor, a handicap to people in deadly earnest anyhow. In the end he prevailed over lighter spirits. His similes took hold of their imaginations; rebels against authority are always imaginative. They liked hearing themselves called "Rebels," their activities "War." It pleased them to know that, all along without being aware of it, they were setting good examples to the submerged seventh.

"They throw away the wealth of the world with both hands, wealth we helped to make, and they offer us, not our half or our quarter, or even our tenth—they offer us only enough to keep us alive, so that we can go on working for them. And I say that every man who rejects their unfair bargain does a noble thing—"

"Pink, you're noble," said the Phony Kid.

"So're you, Beau," replied the Cagey Kid. And they shook hands and embraced.

"We are two jolly noblemen, we are because we're noble," they sang cheerily.

"*Why* are we noble, Nick?" asked Pink.

The "Pink" was Pink because he took a devilish pleasure in causing Pinkerton race-track detectives to "look more than usually silly"—to quote him—by abstracting their watches on all possible occasions; and he was "Cagey" and "Kid" also for the reason that he had never been arrested and was juvenile of appearance.

"I ask you, Nikko Nikkovitch, I ask you, as one nobleman to another, *why* are we noble?"

"Children," Nikko would say wearily. He passed a withered hand over a troubled forehead. Mother Mybus frowned and the two youths looked serious.

"I wasn't joking, Mr. Nikko," said Pink with the air of a dutiful and eager scholar. "I merely wisht to know why was it, that was all."

"They offer us—you—him—all our class—wages to be their bondmen. Only enough that we may marry; marry and bring other slaves into the world. No joy, no light, no laughter. Children though you are, you knew their offer was unfair and you refused it. You became Rebels, and if every one of your class would do the same, the Masters would make other laws, fairer laws—laws that if they dare to prevent *you* stealing, they must make their McKisses cease stealing. Stealing, no matter what name *they* give it, for 'you own the law,' say the Rebels. 'Very well, we reject it. We will make our own laws until you make better ones.' Do you understand?"

They did not, precisely, for Nikko's was book-English; but the Phony Kid was moved to contemplation. "I dunno as I ever thought much about it before, but I guess you're right, Mr. Nikko."

He considered his own case, his father in the mills, too weary when he came home to do anything but fall into a heavy sleep after dinner, except on Saturday night, when he came home drunk and laughing and told funny stories and sometimes took them into the gallery of a theater. "Beau"—his mother, poor, fluttering creature, with a penny-novelty habit, had christened him "Beau-lieu"—had liked his father better when he was drunk. . . .

"Come on up to the Attic, sucker," said Pink, breaking in upon his own and his partner's gloom. "Nothing like Li-un for plottin' against the Common Enemy. . . ."

"It grows—slowly but surely," said the blind man; and, until Sonia came that night, meditated and massaged more of the mercury out of his thin wrists than he had for many silver moons.

III. Hans Chasserton Takes Up Residence at the Yew Tree Inn

It was not a room to invite suspicion, that old Inn kitchen, with its shining flagstones, oak doors, huge fireplace with hissing teapot on the hob and sleek cat snoozing on warm tiles, decorated with domestic scenes from Dutch life, as was its Delft-blue china in an overhead rack; and in the broad belly of its bay-window—its panes opaque for a far different reason than those of the Tippecanoe—red geraniums in green window-boxes. Nor were the old people other than types of an admirable and irreproachable family life, until one saw Mother's eyes—those of some ancient but very wicked mouse.

She was in her accustomed place on one side of the fireplace, Nikko on the other. There was no light except that of the leaping red flames, and neither Nikko nor Mother turned when Sonetchka entered. Too many passed through for Mother to show interest, and Nikko for all his expensive tortoise-shell spectacles might look all he liked. . . .

But because Mother prided herself on a certain technical virtue—the technique of which, after being revised by every technician, from Adam to Aristotle, had been abandoned in despair—few females were "in right" at the Inn. And Nikko needed no spectacles for one with so light, so "ladylike" a footfall.

"The Little One," he called joyfully. Mother dropped her knitting; and, not only an ancient but an enceinte mouse when afoot, waddled to and pawed Sonetchka as such a rodent might paw another and dutiful and younger bringer of succulence. . . .

"It is *thou,* Naughty One," she chuckled. . . . Sonetchka, answering both, added endearments surprisingly American compared with Nikko's sonorous Slavonic. Mother fetched her own comfortable chair, knelt and, wheezing, unlaced little fur-lined, fur-topped storm-boots and rubbed little silk-stockinged feet; Sonetchka seeming to accept these offices as her right.

"Naughty, wicked Little One," excoriated Mother; "who hast caused thy *batushka* and thy mama to grieve as for one lost lamb! Three weeks since we saw this Ungrateful Little Animal, eh, Alexandrovitch? . . . Would thou wert mine, and how I would *knout* thee, Most Mischievous of Little Frogs."

Sonetchka laughed. Mother was her dearest Mama Petra Borisovna, she averred—and Nikko, who had also begun to scold, was her darling Papa and Saint Nicholas. . . . And Mother, mollified, shod the Cinderella feet in red-heeled, ruby-studded dancing slippers, a pair that had attracted the Inn's attention while dancing their owner into what the sensational "Sundays" called "society." And Sonia uncoiled Mother's mighty masses of Indian-red hair—an especial pride —beseeching the while certain esteemed Slavonic Saints to verify her statement that Mama Petra was little more than a "Little One" herself.

"If Nicholas Alexandrovitch could only see thee," she supplemented, stroking and releasing in its loose abundance each heavy braid until the kneeling fat woman was enveloped in a mantle that, as the mane of some roan mare, might have had points. . . . But no Sonia becomes a Sonetchka, or any Bona, Bonita without possessing what is more important than physical beauty. And this Sonia saw what Mother wanted her to see.

"He would be proud, that Father Nikko, that *batushka*. Eh, son of Alexander's son?"

"He *sees*, that Alexandrovitch," said Mother, with sudden asperity. "And better each day, eh, Nikovita? Last Saint's day it is my good fortune to observe the most powerful lenses. And so I send our Mr. Pink to that Fifth Avenue shop and the frames are the real shell of the best turtle, taken from a pair awaiting their adjustment to some gilt-edged *boyar*. Already he paid fifty roubles. In my girl days fifty roubles was riches. It would be strange indeed if Alexandrovitch saw no more clearly with a *moujik's* fortune on his nose. . . ."

"Always I know when something quite bright dazzles me," confirmed this cunning and mentally sound-sighted son of Alexander, who, from acquiescing in Mother's hallucination of his improving sight, had found a chance for perpetual compliment. Also had grown to believe that he saw what he ought to see. These were his seventh spectacles. Master Pink had taken an unnecessary risk in adding another pair of frames. But Pink's was the usual zeal of the artist. And to snatch the spectacles of a Sir Hubert of the Street after they had rested on his nearly nose. . . .

"Very bright—thou hearest—and I spoke no word of having unloosened thy hair. And does it not shine very bright, as Alexandrovitch says?" . . .

Mother leaned over and kissed the Little One as if she had been responsible for a novel miracle. Yet, Mother knew that Nikko knew that little Sonia could not resist the temptation of unloosening that hair, so that she might coil and recoil it in odd and bizarre *coiffures*. Thus employed, standing behind Mother, who had resumed her seat, Sonetchka explained her absence; and that she explained in Slavonic explains the absence of slang and massacres of Murray.

"Such disgrace! I am arrested in Delaney's by a common store detective, me—the Little One! to be arrested by a common store detective, and to beg and pray and weep to the owner; I shall not forget that humiliation, never! I told him, oh, such lies—anything the good God put into my little head. Not even did I conceive I was to be sent to jail. I told him that I only feared that my worthy mother and father should expire from shock. Once, in France (I was a little French girl) my parents had been rich and, oh, how I was dressed; oh, so beautiful! But, here, they were poor and I could not dress, oh, so beautiful! (And I shed tears, and loud!) So I stole—and—oh, sir, this is the first time. Oh, sir, if you knew how I wanted beautiful things, oh, so much! . . . The owner—that good old man—he looked close at me and sent away the store detective. 'My dear, you do not need to steal,' he said. And with his hair so nearly white, he told me we must be very careful when we met for fear of the scandal—of meeting his grandchildren, no doubt. He took me to a restaurant private room, and there he made love. But I was innocent, and, oh! so much afraid! He said I would soon learn to love any one who would be so good to me—'tee-mid leetle w'ite birrd.' . . ."

She ceased her Slavic speech to mimic other throatily tender metaphors, marred by a gradual and ghoulish thickening of lips—not hers. It was remarkable that her thin, straight little lower lip and short, rosy, curved upper could reproduce such sickening sounds. . . . "And who would not be kind to me? Next day, when we met, I would be wearing, oh! such a beautiful ring. And he kissed me good night whether I willed or not. And so I took his watch. Jus' like zat."

She relapsed into English again, and, burrowing into a huge white-fox pillow-muff, produced many mysteries in white tissue paper, one of which was solved when Sonia, scorning Nikko's spectacles, unwrapped a watch the thinness of a soda-wafer.

"Fifty little roubles! Bah! Five thousand, zis! *Zat* for your Mr. P-i-n-k!" snapping little jeweled fingers and plunking out the "Pink" with the sound of pistol-shot and exit of projectile. . . . One unversed in that most obvious and persistent paradox, a woman's use of words to conceal her meaning, might have imagined Master Pink "in Dutch," to quote him.

Nikko's forefinger flew furiously across his knee. He was taking long notes for his next pamphlet on capitalist infamy. His black finger-nail seemed a stylus; at any rate such pantomime performances were somehow transferred from cuticle to cerebellum.

"Good—nobly done," was his scowling comment. "Thou wert always my best of rebels. . . ."

"But Sonia Victorona was to explain her absence of these three weeks, . . ." Mother reminded him mildly. No chance for satiating curiosity if Nikko began inveighing against modern Bluebeards. . . . Yet her tone conceded him the right of decision.

"It was Mordkin," said the Little One, with an air of having satisfied both listeners. She wanted to polish up on Nikko's "peculiar" political economics; needed to if ever she was to effect Velvet Voice's conversion to her own creed.

Mother wrung her hands.

"Thy love for dancing," she wailed; "I knew it could not be good. And now you love a *dancer*. When you could not love one of my boys!"

The Little One laughed, then was as grave as she had been gay.

"My dog—" she said, "that dear darling of mine, my own treasure, his mama's little friend, the dearest in the whole world. Always I come at eight. I feed him. That night the old one kept me to know where I live. And that Mordkin he screams and cries his little self into fits. Two whole hours he screams. When I come I must have in a doctor. . . . That night I dream grandmama's spirit comes and whispers: 'Once fallen, luck gone. Steal again, no escape!' And I dream I am in prison and my darling Mordkin cry himself dead, and I am a murderess never to be forgiven by Father God, and I wake up and see my little white darling with his little black nose so sweet, and his little red tongue so cute, peeping out, and I promise him I don't steal no more, not once more, but be good girl. . . ." At least that is the nearest literal translation of her breathless narrative.

"Just like zat," she concluded, dropping into English again.

She spoke with intense seriousness, and the little white dog's death agonies revived in retrospect the original emotion reproduced, she wept noisily. Neither of the older folk contradicted her. Mother Mybus was Slavic, hence superstitious; and Nikko, the mystic, called *his* superstition symbolism. But . . .

"She soon forgets and goes back again," thought Mother, knowing Sonetchka's love for expensive clothes. But to contradict her spiritual protector was to invite ill-luck. As for Nikko, he was busy endeavoring to symbolize the little white dog.

"Then I move my things to a cheap hotel, so the money will last—a hotel where I live once when I am very poor. I do not even bring you the last things I steal—tapestries and candlesticks and furs. . . . Instead I use them to fix up the ugly cheap rooms. I think and think and think and then grandmama come again and says: 'Go be a dancer on the stage, for you can dance so well.' Those three weeks I look around to be a dancer. They say 'Chorus.' I say, *'Net!'* . . . I find plenty places to-morrow, next week, next month. It is not about that I come about, but for my friend—"

She told them of Annie Eunice and Hans. Nikko arose and stumped the room, thumping his rubber-tipped walking-stick violently, and deciding that the great revolution should be several years sooner. Mr. Krafft's client should pay dearly for these wrongs done the Chassertons. Then Mother Mybus sat stolidly, only wishing Nikko would not excite himself over everybody; *her* sympathies were for her *friends;* nor was she above profiting by the bitter need of business acquaintances afoul of "the common enemy." These sentiments and actions, however, she concealed painstakingly from Nikko.

"And so I have brought the boy here to thee." Sonetchka, finishing her story, became affectionate again, with "thee's" and "thou's." "Many times have I heard Mama Petra Borisovna desire a man-servant, deaf and dumb like in Africa, one who could understand nothing, tell nothing. This Hans will be such a one. He understands nothing; he can tell nothing, and if you say he will be seized and sent away again he will not dare venture out-of-doors. It will relieve thee of much housework, little mother. To think that thou, a rich woman, must labor and sweat with pail and bucket and mop. And so many rooms, too—"

"They clean their own rooms, many of them," said Mother hesitantly. "It is not so much work."

Nikko broke in sharply upon her. One would never have imagined from their respective attitudes that the business and the money were Mother's and that Nikko existed by her generosity. He spoke with all authority.

"We will take the boy, Petra Borisovna," he said sternly. "Why do you suppose the good Father allows you to wax rich if not to aid His injured ones? It is well, too, to have such an unfortunate in the house. The sight of him, and the knowledge of his wrongs, will make the boys braver and more daring; will encourage them to go farther, and what is most to you, to more profitable business."

Mother's eyes brightened. Nikko was always right. Sonetchka, needing no more than such a look, opened the low rabbit-hutch door and told the high-collared shopman to send in her friend.

"Zis ees your 'ome, 'Ontz," she said, shaking a finger at the friend when he appeared. "Zere ees Muzzer and zat is Farzzer. Zey will make you 'appy and you will do w'at zey say, ju' like zat. Kees your muzzer, 'Ontz; kees your farzzer."

Bashfully, finger to his mouth, the boy advanced, pushed by Sonia, and touched each forehead with dry lips. Nikko caught his hand, patted it welcoming him, reassuring him.

The boy's eyes brightened. "Following in father's footsteps, following my dear old dad," he said affectionately. "And everything was like you want it. Yes. Peas and sweet-peas and green corn and tomatoes. And a honeysuckle vine. And all the boys they say to me, good-day to me, hurray to me. . . . See this coat—you wouldn't think it cost a thousand dollars. Yes."

"Sit down, boy," said Nikko, peering at him helplessly. "Sit down." He pushed forward his hassock with a slippered foot. The boy seated, the old man quieted him with a hand on his shoulder, and Hans, soon silent, watched the fire. Sonia yawned, stretched her arms, debated a question.

"You want that you should go up to the Attic, eh?" asked Mother slyly, surmising accurately.

Sonetchka's scornful snort served to negative this, . . . until Mother added: "All the boys they are there now, never so many at one time. Good business to-day, never better. . . . Mister Pink, him, too."

"W'at I care for your Pinks?" asked Sonetchka, again scornfully. Both unconsciously relapsed into English when they discussed matters involving the untranslatable jargon of subterranea.

Mother choked a laugh, forbearing to irritate the returned prodigal, and Sonia presently reconsidered. "Oh, well," she said, rising. "Oh, well, . . . and moved off toward the stairway and Apricott's Attic.

At the foot of the attic stairs she gave three short rings and three long ones. A huge door, sheathed in sheet iron, swung outward automatically by a mechanism used in those cheaper Manhattan flats that have neither hall-porters nor elevators, and a pair of morose eyes regarded the ringer.

IV. OLD MITT-AND-A-HALF

The swallows' nests were just under the eaves; here was the attic where Jan Hartogensis and Amalia had slept; where, now, only the most trusted of Mother's customers were allowed. If Mother's room of the *grille* was a select and exclusive club, this was tho Holy of Holies. . . .

It was in charge of Enoch Apricott, ascetic, with a face like some melancholy King of Diamonds, for his eyebrows drew down his forehead into a V-shape, an equilateral triangle, their articulation its apex. Such another was the lower part of his face—one to delight a Cubist—a broader triangle this, with the chin for its point, a chin like Punchinello's, the line joining his high cheek-bones, its base—a line that crossed heavy, sunken, discontented eyes. Above the chin were bloodless, almost fleshless, lips. Ascetic? It was the face of a Jesuit.

No woman had ever entered his life; no woman ever should, he swore. It was a part of his religion, and a stern and steadfast adherence to religion was necessary to one whose forebears foreswore all else to worship in their own way; who, ever since, had sacrificed most of the joy of this life for one more enduring hereafter. Yet their descendant kept a rendezvous for thieves; and, a disciple of Swedenborg, justified himself. The Lord was forging in the fire of His wrath the Mighty Flail to sweep clear the Unjust Kings and Wicked Princes. These men who gathered in the Attic were the Scourge of Locusts, the Pest of Flies, appointed by the Lord to Devour and to Sting, pending the time when Pomp and

Pride should rise to its height and the Mighty Flail should descend.

Enoch Apricott. The foreman at the Garryowen shops could have told you that such a one had for fifteen years been on his pay-roll, beginning as apprentice, finishing as expert machinist at seven dollars and fifty cents per diem; diligent, earnest and careful; and, at the lunch-hour annoying fellow workmen by expounding hidden meanings in *Revelations* and other Apocryphal "Books." "Mitt-and-a-Half"—by the underworld dictionary, "mitt" a hand, "half" differing from no other half. But Enoch had lost *three* fingers of his right hand, so that "a half" was a slight euphemism. That same foreman would have sworn that Enoch lost those missing ones through reprehensible carelessness, this conflicting slightly with his general statement of "diligent, earnest and careful." One does not remain foreman at the Garryowen by giving testimony in law-courts that will result in heavy damages to be paid by the defendant; so, when called upon as a witness, the foreman failed to remember that he had recommended the machine which was to snatch away Apricott's expertness, be "scrapped" and a new one installed on which the belt would not slip. The superintendent, who had forwarded the recommendation urgently advising it, suffered from a similar lapse of memory. So Apricott went out to find work suitable to a man with only a hand and two-fifths, while the Garryowen Company continued paying twenty per cent. dividends and a large salary to the learned corporation counsel who helped save them from the necessity of paying damages to disabled workmen.

It was then Apricott began to believe in the Mighty Flail, the Unjust Kings and the Wicked Princes, among whom he would have numbered, had he known, Benjamin Hartogensis, Esquire, the distinguished country-gentleman who owned a large block of Garryowen stock, the entire price for which he was not to pay until his son, Archie, began to frequent Enoch's Attic.

Apricott had not come to Attic-keeping all at once. He had yet to eat up his savings while he discovered how little work was actually suited to a hand and two-fifths. It was only Mother Mybus who found any good reason for the existence of one with missing fingers. He had come in to pawn his most precious possession, to which he had held the longest—a huge watch-chain, some sort of emblem of high standing in a Machinists' Secret Order. Her assistant had returned to her to have it appraised, interrupting an earnest conversation with a gentleman renowned for daring but lacking skill. If only she had some one to send with him, some one expert at locks and safes.

So Enoch's charm worked wonders and he came to believe in the Swarms of Locusts and Pests of Flies. And he developed inventiveness, under the whiplash of revengeful desire, inventiveness hitherto given over to discovering hidden meanings in Apocryphal Books; so that, soon, Mother found him too valuable a man to risk in actual service and kept him about her to give her plans practicality, to advise and counsel the unskilful, and, also, since she found her Horde was going into mixed society to get what was now provided in her Attic, and as mixed society contained informers and weaklings, she fitted up the Attic and added Apricott as a lure—the great Apricott, who knew more about safes and locks than the men who made them.

His were the morose eyes, from behind the huge door and through a Judas-hole, that regarded Sonetchka and became reassuring, nay, grimly joyful when turned in the other direction. Old Mitt-and-a-Half had regretted the desertion of so clever a thief as little Sonia—the Pest of Flies had lost one of its sharpest Stingers, the Scourge of Locusts one of its greediest Devourers. . . . Therefore when he announced her return to her brother Flies and Locusts it was with a geniality alien to his cloudy creed.

Two men leaped up from recumbent positions, one to resume his hitherto discarded trousers. The room held nearly a dozen others, in groups of twos and threes, all reclining around little lamps set on filigreed trays.

The two men to rise were, strictly speaking, not men at all—only the Phony Kid and his companion, Pink, the Cagey. The latter, reconsidering, resumed his attitude of Oriental ease, taking on in addition an air of studious indifference. What, after all, did the arrival of any mere "gun moll," no matter how proficient in her profession or attractive in her person, mean in his young life, he would like to know? And as Sonia entered he seemed to be slumbering.

V. THE CAGEY KID "TURNS SQUARE"

Sonia was no stranger here; any possible existing doubts were banished by the sight of the Phony Kid catching both her small hands, drawing her to him despite her struggling, until severely smacked for it. "Fresh thing," she said, "'ow are you, Beau—" and shook hands with the Phony one; also with Apricott and the others, lazy of greeting but glad to see her. Mostly they were a young lot; "Rouge" and "Noir," Sally Surrey's assistants in bank-breaking (Sally was not there), hardly older than the two Kids; Edwin Moneypenny's "Canary" boys—so called because they frequented that fashionable restaurant and seemed at home there. Only two had passed thirty—Moneypenny himself, a distinguished-looking, elderly gentleman, with French moustachios and a Southern Colonel's goatee; and Doctor "Tack," a burly Bavarian, with Heidelberg scars. . . . It was apparent from their greetings, even Hastings, the proscribed outlaw, being genial, that the Little One enjoyed their trust and good will.

But, after the habit of those who use opium, taking little general interest in womenkind, having greeted her, they resumed their even low-toned conversation, no voice being raised for fear of those who lay on the next bunk. It was an interesting scene, holding something of the fascination of the

East; the dim lanterns swinging high among the rafters seen through clouds of drifting heavy smoke, faces here and there limned by the lamps—little rafts of light on a sea of smoky darkness.

"You want I should cook for you?" asked Sonia, returning from her visiting. Having no corsets to incommode her, she kicked off her tiny pumps and climbed to the right side of the bunk, which Beau abandoned in her favor, lying down on the other side, his head pillowed on Pink's hip. Pink lay just across from Sonia, so that, when she looked up, their eyes met. A pile of pillows, common to both boys, raised their heads above the lamp's level.

Sonia, with a woman's dainty deftness in small matters, dug out the chocolate-colored opium from a little white jar, a "toey," cooking it over a steady flame of peanut-oil. It bubbled and squeaked and gave out a smell like toasting chocolate. Then she took up the long bamboo pipe, to which, midway along its length, a stone bowl was attached; in this she finished her complicated "cooking," kneading the sticky mass with a long steel needle, a "yen-hok." It changed from golden to dark brown, as the poisonous substances escaped in greasy gases and vaporous moisture; and she broke it into "pills" the size of small peas, reheated one of them, rolled it into conical shape and thrust it into the little round hole in the center of the bowl. It flattened. Quickly she extracted and re-rolled it into a tight little cylinder. This, again reheated and attached to the little hole, was ready for consumption.

She reversed the pipe, handing it to Beau, so that the little cylinder was directly above the flame. Beau put the mouthpiece to his lips and the opium, disintegrating into semiliquid form again, leaped through the little hole, becoming thick blue smoke, as he exhaled it in thin lacy clouds that drifted upward to add atmosphere to their private solar system, of which the lanterns were twin suns. Sonetchka took back the pipe, and, telling of her little white dog and her new resolve, prepared a second pill, which also she handed to Beau, a procedure that aroused the Cagey one's ire.

"Say: I'm just as welcome here as I would be in the street: don't miss one if you can—that the idea?" he asked. "That's what you get for letting a skirt lay around with you, anyway. Everything harmonious—then—bingo!—in drops a dame and everything's crabbed. That's why I let Lily King out. Jealousy? She wrote the book. Tough habit in a woman. Why if I so much as said there was a good-looking woman on a moving-picture screen . . . Hey!—smoke that pill, Beau, and I'll wear out the stem on your nut. . . ."

He snatched away the pipe as it went to his friend for the third time, snatching also the cooking-needle and smoking without assistance. "You'll lie over with your friend, Miss Sonia Americanski Russki Jealousoscovitch, if you don't take off your blinders and notice little Pink's among those present—see?"

Sonetchka gave him a cool impersonal nod as though this speech first made her aware of his presence. Really, the Cagey Kid commanded her intense admiration, but he had a reputation for holding women lightly because of his repeated successes, and she had sworn her admiration of him should never be revealed.

"I had a tumble, myself," he said, handing back the pipe and referring to her narrow escape. "I was hustling the match with Joe Deane, and we took a big Swede from Minneapolis for the works. Well, when I pull the finish on him about going back after the fellow who skinned us, it sounds pretty good to him, but he don't tip me—only follows in case I need assistance, see?—me not jerry. Well, when I meet Joe, at Cleary's corner, Joe spots the Swede coming, and offices me to pull some rough stuff. So I starts calling him divers kinds of sons-of-what-you-call-'ems, and then we sparred for a clinch. At which the Swede unloads a cannon, and gits Joe in the currency kick. A big green harness-bull sees the shooting and drops off'n a passing short and, jest my luck, mitts *me,* while I'm trying to help Joe with his game leg. The Swede beats it, and the big lying copper's gotta make good for the pinch, so he swears he seen *me* pull the gat. That gets me held over night without bail, Joe to the hospital; and, next morning, I'm in the line-up and the Chief tells the dicks to pick me up anywheres they see me loitering and jest bring me in on suspicion. Course I let Mother know and she had a mouthpiece there with the fall money; and he passed the word to Fourteenth Street to forgit the case, but the Chief can't call these coppers up in a body and tell *them* to forgit it—too many dicks stooling for the D. A. So, with a lot of heavy-headed goose-feet on my trail, I'm gunna lay low till they forget my mug."

"W'at you do?" asked Sonetchka, forgetting her recent indifference.

"He's got a job playing pianner in the new room they're opening up-stairs at Sydenham's next Monday night," said Beau eagerly, Pink being occupied. "You know how nuts all these society skirts is about honkatonk stuff, don't you?—cabarets, *they* call 'em—turkey-trots and todolos and grizzly-bears and tangos. Pink starts to bang the box the other night in Cleary's, and one of the head fellows at Sydenham's happened to drop in, and said Pink's playing was the darb—jest the local-color touch they needed. . . ."

Pink, finishing his pill, broke in apologizing for considering any form of employment sanctioned by the law: "Course, I didn't think of taking it, *then,* but after I got this tumble—"

"You oughta thank your rabbit's foot," said the Phony Kid, who was always willing to sacrifice the spectacular for the easy: "Nothing to do but put on the thirteen-and-the-odd and set around with the other performers, all dolled up like regular spenders and have your chuck and your drinks on the house and get paid for it, while it's costing the suckers the entire B. R. Wish I could glom a dame who could dance. I'd get a job there, myself—I wrote the book about trotting when it wasn't no farther north than Chatham Square."

"W'at about me?" asked Sonia eagerly. "Me—I am a *danseuse extraordinaire.* Zat is my meedle name. I dance wiz you, Beau, zen some managers see us and give us somesing beeg. Eh?"

"Some idea," said Pink approvingly. "You can git the job all right. They still want some rough honkatonk workers who kin wear evening clothes. And a guy to wear a powdered wig and silk pants and open the doors, and a telephone-girl—a good-looker. The old geezer that hired me told me so the other night. I told Beau to hunt up a skirt before, but you know these hop-heads—always putting things off—"

"Well, I ain't on the blacklist like you, sucker," said Beau shortly. "I kin still *hustle.* I won't starve if I don't grab the job. But if Sonny here means business—"

"Don't never trust no dame for nothing," said Pink sententiously. "If she happens to wake up wrongside Monda' morning, she'd put a shieve into you just for amusement. That's why I canned Blonde Aileen. She wasn't fit for a dog to associate with in the morning."

"You an' your 'ussies," said Sonetchka fiercely, again transferring her attentions exclusively to Beau, less endowed with a lurid past. "You come weez me to my 'otel," she said to him, "an' you can 'ave somesing I kep' for you. Eet will be 'andy w'en you wear your dress-suit—" Really, she had been keeping this article, a fur-coat, for Pink; but his autobiographical references always enraged her, a fact that bothered Pink not at all, for he had found the surest way to win new girls was to have been greatly desired of others in the past.

"Hetty Hamilton, too," he went on, referring to one whose name now blazed high over vaudeville theaters: who had been carried to popularity by the new craze for dances once confined to the underworld; "she jest worried me to death, that Hamilton. I had to swing on her right from my heel every two or three days. No other way of living with her, there wasn't. Every now and then she jest woke up, saying to herself: 'This is the day I'll have a good time making him feel miserable:' and she'd contradict me even if I said huming beings had two legs and two arms and five fingers and five toes. '*Some* haven't,' she'd say, jest as though they was fashions in such things: 'some have more, some have less. You don't know everything.' Honest! And if I let her get away with that and then I happened to remark: 'Ain't it funny how everybody has to die some day, and nobody ever comes back'— jest something to make conversation and get her out of her sulks—why, she'd up and say: 'Everybody don't!' 'Don't what?' I'd say. 'Don't die,' she'd say. 'Don't talk foolish,' I'd say. 'Who's talking foolish,' she'd say; 'no more foolish than you. You don't know everything.' 'Listen, broad,' I'd say, then, 'you got your roasting clothes on to-day and you better take 'em off quick or I'll slam you one in the kisser, see'—'cause huming nature has its limits. '*You* would,' she'd say: 'I'd like to see the man 'ud lay a finger on me—' And no matter how many times I done it, she'd pull the same thing next time,—'I'd jest like to see the fellow that would—' that's all she'd say, jest aching for it, and if she didn't get it then she'd go on, nasty. 'He wouldn't live long to tell people about it,' she'd say. 'What would *you* do?' I'd say, nasty too, then. 'I'd put powdered glass in his beer, that's what I'd do,' she'd say: 'I'd wait till he fell asleep and I'd cut his heart out, that's what I'd do. I'd—' But by that time, I'd 'a' done it, and I'd start packing my things. Jest about the time I got 'em all packed, she'd come over and put her arms around me and cry and ask was her papa goin' to leave his poor little thing jest because she had a headache and felt bad—"

"Softy," said the infuriated Sonia, "w'at womans! Those 'ussies. I'd like to see ze man w'at would strike me—"

"That's what they all say," returned Pink wearily. "If horses ran to form like women, Beau, I'd be a regular Rockefeller. And then when they get it they say: 'Well, you wouldn't dare do it again.' And when you do, they say: 'I'd like to see some other man do what you did.' And that's the way they go. While, really, they're as proud as Punch. I remember one day, I give Edna Garry an eye like a sunset, red, green and yellow. And when she went into the Owl to have the drug-clerk paint it and he says: 'What's the matter, run into the elevator-shaft?' she says, 'Huh! I guess *not!* The sweetest thing in the world give me that.' He told me—"

"Oh, you make mo seeck," said Sonia excitedly. "You never 'ave no nice womans. All 'ussies. Zat's nuzzing w'at *zey* say—"

"That's what they all say about one another, too," said Pink in a bored tone. "Lily'd always say Blonde Aileen was a tramp, and Aileen said Hetty was a tramp, and Edna said Aileen was a—well, I won't use her exact words, and now Sonia says Edna was a hussy. That's the way it goes."

"Doan' you put *me* een weez your tramps," cried Sonia in irate emotional tones. "Doan' you zeenk, Meester Cagey Keed, zat Sonia fall for you. No. *Net.* Not one time. Jus' like zat. Nevar. I 'ate you."

"I'll get you yet, though," returned Pink, smiling aggravatingly. "They always start hating me. I can tell the signs. Gee! I wonder why those fellas that write books always pull that ancker stuff about women bein' hard to understand. If I had a dollar for every mistake I've made about woman, I couldn't buy the hair on a Mexican hairless dog. I on'y wish there wasn't nothing harder than telling what a woman was gunna do next—that's all."

"Well, 'ere's one you can't tell nuzzing about," said Sonia, stifling her rage.

"Oh, yes, I can," answered Pink, "you're gunna try to make me think you're stuck on Beau. What you're gunna give him you was saving for me. See? I'm jerry." And he laughed at her encrimsoned face.

"You—" spluttered Sonia, and then was silent. An almost unconquerable desire to seize his blond hair and pull it hard lay hold of her. "Conzeited sing," she said, defeated: "some day you get in lofe wiz some girl w'at is somesing and zen you see—she laugh at you. 'W'at—zat,' she say, 'zat funny little mans.' Pooh! 'Ere, Beau."

Then there was silence for a long period; but presently conversation along less personal lines began; and, soon, all three were discussing the possibilities of their new employment.

"You kin grab many a live one dancing in cabarets," said Beau reminiscently. "If they kin get the head waiter to bring 'em over to you, you kin bet the works that guy'll buy *wine*. But jest you always order a different kind from his. Make it two pints 'stead of a quart: and have yours frappé. With a towel around the bottle yours can't be tumbled for cider fizz. There's two-fifty difference in the price and you git it, see?—to encourage business—the house'e profit'e on his'n. Course you don't have to *drink* the stuff: the waiter 'ull fix it so's you pour it out when the guy ain't looking. I know a cabaret girl pulls down ten dollars a night jest in brass-checks. And nothing wrong: her fella wouldn't stand for it. You don't half to know the guy outside. Less'n you managed to git a *good* live one. Then you might jolly him and make up a party after you're through. Show him the sights. You, me, Pink, and some other wise girl, maybe. End up in your apartment for a little bridge-party. By that time he'd be so lit up an old-time Mississippi river-boat cheater could clean him, let alone a couple smart young grifts like us. Split it three ways, with some luck-money to the other girl. . . ."

"Fine," approved Pink. "You donno 'any little gal that's a nice little gal,' do you? Good-looker with a nice voice. Cause I told you they want one at the telephone there. Swell job it is, too. Wear clothes jest like the others, and the switchboard is all done up fancy like a cottage piano—and the boothe made like those old sit-on chairs—"

"See-dan," interrupted Beau, "see-dan, sucker, *see-dan!*"

"Well, those old chairs women used to ride in, two men in the shafts—that's the way the phone booths are, anyhow, and, inside, all pink roses and everything. And when you see the girl sitting at the switchboard, and the chairs and all, it's just like you go in some swell droring-room, with a society dame sitting at her piano. You can't even see it's a switchboard less'n you get behind her. That's why they want a swell looker. And nobody 'ud dare slip her less'n a quarter tip: not to an outfit like that. Better not tip at all. *Some* place, believe me. Got 'em *all* skinned. Why, the waiters has to wear satin knee-pants and silk stockings and long chains around their necks, jest like in Monte Carlo, or some such joint . . ."

An idea seized Sonia. Her black eyes snapping, she interrupted with a question as to when the place would open. "Monday, didn't I tell you?" replied Pink, "and then they got—"

"*Next* Monday?" she broke in again: he nodded impatiently. "And zees is Toosda," she ruminated: "say, Pink, w'at you zink?—could a girl learn w'at to do zere in seex days? I 'ave a fren, a lofely girl, Pink—jus' like zat—oh, lofely, I gif you my word. An' I got some lofely drezzes, too, zat I boost from Vagen'als an' Zunday's—beautiful. I gif zem to 'er—jus' 'er size, zirty-seex. You zink she learns to be telephone girl in seex days—"

"The point is," Pink reminded her, "is she a reg'lar looker? No chips, you know. None of your chewing gum bradies—" Sonia plunged indignantly into a defense of Velvet Voice's charm. "Why, then," said Pink, "I guess that's the ducket. Fine for us, too, 'cause she could tip us off to what she hears over the phone, and that might net us many a piece of change, knowing who's who and what they've got to lose if anybody heard of them cutting up high-jinks. It's always useful in case of a holler about bein' cheated. And it might get us a piece of money for a sorta refined 'badger'—oh, nothing coarse, nothing rough, nothing not classy," he protested, "that ain't our way, Beau's and mine. Strictly class—hey, Mitt-and-a-Half?"

Enoch Apricott, who had seated himself on a corner of the bunk, pressed down the tobacco in his workman's cutty-pipe with the remaining fingers of his maimed hand, and grinned sourly. "Hand it to them the same way they hand it to us," he said harshly. "I've always told you boys that. Go after the respectable ones. They're the worst. The kind that can't squeal because they're ornaments to some little Jersey community. And around there they's deacons and vestrymen. . . . The Lord drives the money-changers out of His temple, His ways are difficult of understanding . . ." He often went off into these Biblical paraphrases seeming for the moment to forget his audience entirely. "And go after the rich men's sons," he went on savagely, "the ones that spend the money they minted outa human flesh and blood. Sting 'em. Sting 'em. The Swarms of Locusts and the Pests of Flies. Make the Kings pay through the Princes—that's the law: 'the sons of the father . . .' "

Again he sat, [illegible] abstractedly, his pipe-embers smoldering no more darkly than his deeply-set eyes. And then he tapped Sonia on her thin little shoulder.

"Don't ever get sentimental over rich young men. Don't feel sorry for taking their last dollar. Remember, you are an Instrument—" He thrust the hand of the missing fingers almost between her eyes. "That about paid for some woman's champagne bath. Take all you can get—give nothing—make 'em *pay*."

He arose abruptly and walked off to his corner, to put on his iron-bound spectacles and to work on some improvements to various burglars' tools. Silently and swiftly he worked, except at rare moments, when he would raise his eyes, surveying his gathered guests, and laughing discordantly. "The Swarm of Locusts: the Pest of Flies," he would mutter.

"He's nuts," said Pink in a low voice; "jest plain nuts. But at that, he has *some* good ideas. The business of getting sentimental over suckers makes my neck tired. 'I just *can't* take his last *dollar*,' Helen Darling used to say, 'he's been *so* good to me.' 'Listen, you poor imbecile broad,' I used to say to her. 'They don't mind taking *our* last dollar, do they, with their trusts and everything? *Course* he's been good to you, 'cause he wants to *get* you,' I'd say. 'And when he *does* get you, he'll drop you any minute he sees another dame he wants. So you make hay while the sun shines and clean him for the works.' But she always *was* a sucker broad, she wouldn't listen, went to live with him, told him she loved *him* not his dough, and he canned her in five months, and grabbed Cleo Darcy who won't let him in unless he's carrying part of Griffony's front window in his mitt and who keeps him waiting in theater lobbies while she has dinner with her fella who hasn't got a nickel. And yet the sucker is wild about her . . ." He went on with similar instances until Sonia interrupted.

"I want that you come weez me to meet my fren," she said, having cleaned the "toey" and risen. "We have dinner togezzer, ze four of us, *hein?* Zen I dress her up in zose clothes from Vagen'als and Zunday's, an' we go to zee ze restaurant man about ze jhob, jus' like zat."

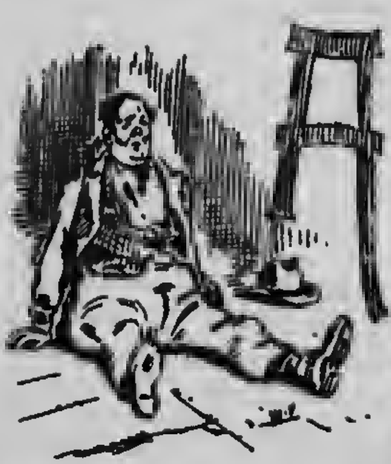
They acceded and got into their street attire.

On the following Monday, at the opening of Sydenham's "Café de Paris Cabaret," Annie Eunice Chasserton made her entrance before the footlights of Advertisement Alley.

CHAPTER THREE

HOW ARNOLD GOT OUT OF JAIL

I. He Meets Nietzsche in Motley



AT TWO o'clock on the afternoon of Arnold's arrest the door to his cell was flung open and another offender was pushed in so violently that he fell to the floor. He arose, and to Arnold's astonishment whistled cheerfully—a peculiar man this, although outwardly distinguished chiefly by an elaborate jewel of a collar-stud, which served as a sort of permanent substitute for necktie. Its owner had too young a face for his bald head and his comfortable round paunch; it was as though a boy's features peeped from a casing of false-face and padded body. His trousers were too tight for his little fat legs and his ancient cutaway coat, parted at the tails to show a patch in their seat, heightened their appearance to riding breeches.

Having surveyed his new quarters with the air of one who has been shown into the royal suite of a fashionable hotel, having nodded cheerily to Arnold as to an old friend, the newcomer fished into his pockets and produced from a cigarette-box the stump of a cigar, which he thrust into a paper holder, all the while whistling in a shrill key, using his teeth for cadenza effects.

"Oh, chuck it," groaned an English voice from a near-by cell; "chuck it, will you?"

The newcomer shook his head mournfully. "Let a little sunshine in, brother," he called back, "don't think you've got to be miserable 'cause you're in jail. . . ."

Receiving fierce remonstrance, he shrugged his shoulders and leaned back luxuriously with each puff of his cigar, eyes closed in blissful anticipation, inhaling so deeply that very little smoke was disgorged. "Jail's the only place to really enjoy a good cigar. You can give your whole mind to it," he suddenly confided in Arnold. "A man actually threw this angel-filled, Heaven-wrapped cigar away half-smoked. When I need good cigars," he added, after a pause, as one who, after deep reflection, is transmitting a matchless secret, "I go hang around the Murray Hill or North Washington Square section—at tea time. It don't do for gentlemen to go calling on a lady armed to the teeth. So I get a fifty-cent smoke for the price of one of these here paper holders—a trey for a jitney—less'n two cents per smoke. They know cigars on Murray Hill. Fifth Avenue's apt to take people's words—too busy coining to git educated, poor devils."

Arnold, head on palm and slanted elbow, stared. Evidently, this oddity was not essaying humor. Wondering about him, Arnold momentarily forgot he was a tragic figure, and only sneered faintly.

"Not educated up to the joys of jail, eh? Sure," returned the newcomer, the sneer unnoticed; "while regular fellows are young they have a hell of a time chippy-chasing—glorious jags Saturday nights with the ladies down the line." He smacked his lips as one whose tongue was rolling delicious morsels. "Those millionaire fellows save, instead. The other fellows learn about women and whisky and good times—*they* don't even know the women they married for money, or that could do the housework and *save.* When they get their millions at forty or fifty what use are they, not knowing how to *enjoy life?* I'm *sorry* for 'em. *I've* lived every second and I haven't done any work to speak of either except work I liked."

"With the result? . . ." suggested Arnold in gentle ellipsis.

The other waited until he had tranquilly blown out some few final strands of smoke, then said philosophically: "Well, it's *winter*. Jail in winter if I ain't been lucky enough to get down South with the birds. . . ." Here he shrugged his shoulders, suggesting worse alternatives. "It was to *get* railroad fare to Mexico that I got myself jammed in here. A six-er, I suppose. Well, it'll be spring then. Saves going South anyway; and I hate railroad traveling. The worst is always the best if you know the answer. . . ."

In the cell next door the self-appointed censor seemed to be sobbing. "Just loves misery," commented the censored one. "Tried to hang himself to his cell-door with his necktie, but it broke—so they were saying up-stairs. Shows there's *some* good in cheap neckties. . . ."

"You don't believe in suicide, then?" asked Arnold; "when a man's got nothing to *live* for?" He was regarded in astonishment.

"Ever in the country in springtime? Trout just hopping out of the streams *begging* to be caught? Or summer nights when watermelons just bust their bellies in the moonlight and their natural protectors is asleep? Or down around the marshes in the fall when the ducks fly so low you can hit 'em with a rock and get a roast one, chestnuts lying plentiful all around on the side? Or along the Long Island shore, where you can unhitch a boat and sneak a lobster out of a trap somebody's kindly set for you—?"

It was Arnold who groaned this time. "You're from Long Island?" asked the motley man. "Well, I needn't say any more about that lobster stuff; *you* know. . . . I've traveled into every country in the world, son, and I ain't et haff the good things yet, nor drunk half the different brews nor won't neither, even if I had a beard I could use for a fishingline. Say, that just makes me sick—a man killing himself when he's at an age when he ain't even et all the food of his own country let alone others. And what fur? Women? Always a dozen to every man—a hundred to every regular guy. Broke? Think of the new things you get to eat and drink chasin' around new countries trying to get solvent again. And the different kinds of women. . . . Suicide? Just plain anarchy of the brain-box. Change your woman, change your job. Change your country. Change your luck. But don't try changing your life until you know what you're drawing to. It's bum poker."

Arnold laughed, rose, stretched himself, and as he came out of his dark corner surveyed his cell-mate plainly for the first time, the light from the outside corridor falling full on their faces. Both immediately began to stare, began those instinctive efforts of recollection semi-familiar features involuntarily impel. And Arnold remembered. A few years before—Christmas holidays—a man minding fences and pig pens in a manner so desultory and deliberate that two fingers were frost-bitten; the work he was to have done, had not the frost-bite intervened, a return for Christmas cheer and an old overcoat. He had grown stouter since then and he no longer wore the parson's overcoat. Arnold wondered now if there had ever been a frost-bite, for this was the sort of man to lie awake planning how to escape any obligations that involved labor. But how had he made his fingers seem purply blue?

"You know me?" asked the suspected one. "Let's see you full face, son;" and, seeing it, guffawed loudly, heightening Arnold's wonder as to how the deceiving color had been achieved.

"Oh, *stow* it," groaned their neighbor plaintively.

"He loves it, loves it, goodness how he loves it," reflected Mr. Quinn, for it was by that name he introduced himself to Arnold, after explaining his curiosity concerning the frost-bite stage-effect by offering to instruct him with a piece of corrugated cord and any one of Arnold's fingers. Arnold took his word for it.

"Quinn—*Harley* Quinn—christened *Harvey* but with one little change of letter, now much more suitable," Mr. Quinn continued. "And so *you're* in jail." He chuckled, forgot the lover of misery, and whistled again. "And that's very apt, too," he added after a few bars. "'This is no place for a minister's son.'" He added a few bars different but equally execrable. "'Breaking the News to Father' is that one" he explained. "Sad little bit but it's got to be done, eh?"

"No," said Arnold shortly; "do me a favor and forget all about Long Island. I don't intend my family name to be disgraced—"

Mr. Quinn lay back, still chuckling. "You might come right out of a book with that speech," he averred. "And Congressman Waldemar a neighbor of yours?—I see his son over to your house that day, don't I?—Though I don't know then who he is, not until I do some odd jobs over to his dad's place. . . . My fingers got well down in the valley—different air—and what leavings from the dinners!—patey-boy-grass and mushrooms and—good God lemme forget it now. . . . I see that Waldemar boy plenty times when I'm opening cab-doors up around Times Square. Some spender he is. I'd like to eat where he does. Ain't you let *him* know?"

Arnold maintained a sullen silence. Since this man had come into the cell, all tragedy had fled. Face downward on the plank, unjustly persecuted and broken of spirit, the last of the L'Hommedieus had at least the gloomy satisfaction of knowing he was the principal figure in a great tragedy: could picture himself condemned—still unjustly—serving his term a silent saturnine figure wrapped in impenetrable mystery: for the end of his term visiting Monte Cristo vengeances on his persecutors. Now, in the astonished question of the motley man's—"Ain't you let *him* know"—Arnold realized his anachronistic conduct. This was a game played with marked cards; the more you marked and could use the greater your success. What else had Mr. Krafft's client used to escape paying his debt for Hans Chasserton's lost wits: to protect himself from the righteous assaults of wronged men: John Waldemar to escape notoriety through Bobbie's little supper party? His own friendship for Hugo had marked *that* card and saved Waldemar Senior the election.

"Marked cards!" he said aloud, "that's about what this whole game is, isn't it? With a pull, *I* can get out. Without one, *you* can stay in. . . ."

Mr. Quinn chuckled. "That's the book way of putting it," he agreed: "but there's not much fun about 'marked cards' and there's a whole lot of fun about life . . . a reg'lar Bowery mellerdram when you're young, but a burlesque-show after you've blown the froth off the beer. . . . Have you got two dollars?" he interpolated suddenly.

Seeing from Arnold's face that he had, he set up an immediate loud bawling, which was answered, louder, as the hall man hurried down swearing. Hypnotized by the man's assertion, Arnold, by the time the official appeared, had enabled Mr. Quinn to thrust one dollar in his hand.

"You get Mr. Waldemar—young Mr. Waldemar—Congressman Waldemar's son—on the phone," said Quinn importantly. "He's probably at his office—the Waldemar office—you'll find it in the phone book—and if you hurry, you'll get the other caser." He held up the second bill tantalizingly. "One of his best friends in trouble down here—say—and he's to come hoppin'—one of his best friends, don't forget. No names—"

"Marked cards again?" asked Arnold gloomily, remembering the push and the harshness of the now almost servile hurrying jailer.

"Value received," corrected Mr. Quinn: "do men work for wages or for love? Maybe they *oughta* work for love; but—they don't. . . . That's the only game: value received. The world's always trying to make you *give* 'value received'; your part's to make 'em think they got it."

"Not *value* received. Double and treble and quadruple value," returned Arnold. 'And for that, they—a few men who've got the game cornered—they kindly permit you to live and work for them—"

"That's where *your* smartness comes in," returned Mr. Quinn, chuckling. "Don't work unless you get paid what's right. They can't *make* you. There's the open country, so mild you can sleep outdoors even up here six months in the year; and then you do a little work and get a ticket South for the other six. Food? There's always food at farmhouses for a Union veteran with his missing arm slipped under his undershirt, due to a Rebel cannon-ball—or for a little wood-chopping if you want a bed and breakfast when the weather's nasty—or there's the barn. Steady honest work—poor but proud?—you can have my part of it—cheerful. Meanwhile look around you for a rough chance that's worth risking seven years in an itchy gray suit. I've had thousands in my time out of country post-offices. Blew 'em in on booze and women, but had a great time while it lasted. Course they nail you sometimes: like this time and for small potatoes too, but that's the part of the game 'at makes things lively. You're dead right about it being a *game;* the greatest in the world. Trouble with most people, they think it's either a picnic or a funeral. Take those titmice down in the ghettos and slums. Their own fault for staying there. Let 'em have sense enough to see nobody can *make* 'em stay, nobody can make 'em *work.* Take to the road—be hoboes, yeggs, anything but being so poor and so proud and so honest they spend all their lives working hard for shed and doughnut money. . . . And if the farmers won't give 'em meals, loot the henhouses and the orchards and truck-gardens; get together in a bunch and hold up some small village—or, if they must be city-folk, then when they're out of a job, heave a brick through a window and say: 'I did it. Now put me in jail and feed and clothe me.' That's what *I* do when things are *awful* tough; and if everybody was like me, the big gees who're running the game 'ud soon get sore on building jails and supporting half the population in 'em, and they'd make it more tempting-like for them to work—they'd have to give 'em something better than the minimum dough and the maximum sweat. Cause the big gees 'ud have to support their families if they didn't. . . . People's own fault for being titmice. 'Poor but respectable;' 'work their fingers to the bone sooner'n go to the workhouse,' 'sooner die than go to jail.' All right. Such saps deserve all they get—no sympathy coming. They won't learn the game, so they gotta be taught. Then they all start at once. They're learning now—fast. More young fellows going in for being yeggs and grafters, more girls going on the town—all good business." He chuckled and licked his lips. "We'll have one of those revolutions here, soon. Glory be!—I only hope I'm alive for it. That 'ud be worth living for. Ha! Ha!" He went off into fits of laughter. "In the shuffle when the present bosses lose their jobs—and their heads—I might grab one of their jobs myself. I know how to talk biggity and that's the main thing with the mob. I can see 'em now knockin' casks of fine old wines open with axes up there on Fifth Avenue, sitting with their arms around swell women's waists after they've croaked the women's husbands—and listening to me talk by torchlight. Me with the swellest lady of the lot. Can't you see her?"

His face had lit up with such sensuous pleasure that Arnold turned away in disgust; yet, looking again, he saw it was only the sensuousness of the wild animal; the man's rotund face had no evil in it. This was his conception of the game. He did not complain of the thorns, therefore why should he not have the roses? . . . It was the face of a Faun, a Satyr, a reversion to Phallic days.

"So that's your idea," he said finally, forcing the recalcitrant disgust. "No love for your fellow men—"

"No bosh," returned Mr. Quinn. "The game always *has* been played that way, it's being played that way now. Any common girl that's extra pretty, the bosses get, nowadays, don't they? Well, just turn the tables on 'em. That's fair, eh? It ought to happened long ago if the titmice had any get up and go about 'em."

II. Justice—a la Cornigan

He ceased abruptly at the sound of many footsteps; in another minute, he, Arnold, the young Englishman next door, various other cell-mates, had been pushed up-stairs into a long low room where stood a camera, a man behind it.

"Here, you!" said one of the plain clothes men in charge, pushing forward the Englishman who thoroughly miserable, sat and stood, in a dull apathetic daze while photographs (to be labeled "suspect" until the prisoner should be convicted and more comprehensively photographed under the Bertillon system) were made . . . the other men also, until it came to the turn of Quinn, who protested mightily, speaking of a citizen's rights.

"Say—you bum," shouted the burliest of the policemen, and buffeted him, staggering, into a chair. Quinn rose immediately, turning his back on the machine and facing the man who had struck him, surveyed him steadily, searchingly.

"I'll get you some day for that," he said, then to Arnold: "*They've* got no right to *make* us guilty. We're *innocent* till a judge and jury decide. I ain't going to have a picture hounding me all over the earth. Not me."

"Nor I," said Arnold, his heart beating high, his breath coming short. "Let's see you make us," he added boldly.

"I told you," said Kirstenbaum, reminded of his apple-lump and feeling it solicitously—he and Wiley were there with the others: "I told you, dangerous guy. . . . I'll fix you, mister, when you come up before the Judge," he added fiercely, taking a stride toward Arnold. "I guess these 'ull look none too well anyhow—" He snapped a pair of steel handcuffs on Arnold's wrists—in that moment and position, the photographer snapped him.

"How do you like *that?*" asked Wiley, palm out, pushing

Arnold's head against the wall; "you tramp, you bum. I on'y wish I had you alone in a cell for one minute. . . ." Arnold stumbled under his pushes and would have lashed out savagely with his boot-toe, had not Quinn restrained him.

"They're looking for that to beat you up and say it was self-defense," he warned. His own captor scowled.

"Go on, you," he said, digging at him with his elbow until Quinn stumbled too. This detective carried tangible evidence against him, various tools with which Quinn had, at the instigation of a café keeper, endeavored to adjust the meter of a beer-pump, so that the great corporation supplying electricity would be mulcted of half profits. These exhibits he thrust beneath the Quinnian nose when the party was seated in the prison omnibus, adding vindictive prophecies as to their "sending up" powers.

"Not at all," returned Mr. Quinn with an air of great purity: "the pump was out of whack. Some lawless individual had done just that shocking thing you refer to, and *I* was trying to undo his villainy. The new owner of that café is an honest man—he's too stupid to be anything else," he added with a grin. The pale young Englishman stared at him sadly.

"Don't say that, my dear fellow," he urged; "I wish I'd never been sent to this blasted country. You get so accustomed to hearing things like that said, and reading about dishonesty and hearing it called 'clever business' that you begin to believe it . . . this bloody America. . . ."

His captor, born in Limerick, interrupted with patriotic profanity. "We don't want none of the like of yees nohow, dirty Englishmen- -"

"Oh, the English, the English, they don't amount to much," sang Mr. Quinn cheerily: "but they're a damn sight better than the Irish."

"Shut it, you," growled the man from Limerick; but Mr. Quinn, greatly pleased with the effect produced, continued, with an air of profound contempt:

"The Irish, what were they when they was free? A lot of savages always scrapping. A king—a rich guy with a potato patch and two pigs. And a thousand English come over and licked all the kings and all the potato patches and all the pigs—human and otherwise. A thousand Englishmen! I'm Irish and that's what I got against my parents—giving me such a lousy start. A thousand Englishmen. . . ."

"*Will* you cut it out?" asked the infuriated Limericker.

"And then," continued Mr. Quinn, shaking his head in sorrow, "then the Irish come to New York and it's never been fit for anything but pigs since. 'Everywhere the Irish go, it's trouble, trouble, trouble,'" he sang in a high clear tenor. "Irish!—if I'd been born a Hunky or a Ginny, or even a Yiddisher boy—but Irish—! !—"

This time his discourse was terminated by a blow on the jaw. "I'll learn ye, ye scut," breathed Limerick heavily, reverting to his aboriginal brogue. "Now tell the Judge why I hit ye, *his* name's *Cornigan.*"

Quinn turned to Arnold, holding his injured jaw. "Think it'll be much trouble for Congressman Waldemar to separate one Harp from one job?" he asked. "Did you say *Cornigan,* copper?—oh, yes—that's the fellow whose picture got printed when they couldn't find one of the educated ape—I remember." Arnold had been on the verge of a protest—it was evident Quinn assumed Hugo's father was to have him released too. But—this business of marked cards meant help your friends, hurt your enemies, let the rest go: Quinn had been his friend, had roused him from despair, had known how to reach Hugo. He owed him a debt.

The wagon rattled up to the rear of Jefferson Market, the prisoners pushed into the "bull-pen"—a huge square room, a stone-floor filthy with tobacco juice, no seats, one side open to the gaze of privileged persons—reporters, friends of the court, political visitors, shyster lawyers—"counsel." Some of these latter came to the iron lattice calling various names taken from the police blotters, names that promised a probable fee: Arnold's pseudonym of Arthur Lomerdoo—Mr. Krafft, who had lost Arnold's slip in the office fight, had given it from memory—among them. Mr. Quinn's also; several more, to which a few responded.

"That hall man didn't dare *say* anything," whispered Quinn, "but he nodded to me when he got a chance, and I slipped him the other caser on the sly. He'll tell your friend where we are. Don't bother with these swine."

"Hats off in the court. Silence! Silence!" they heard from outside. The bull-pen commanded a sectional view of the court: high desks where sat clerks and other officials, a low one for stenographer and newspaper men. The vacant chair in the center was now filled by a man, bald of hair and facial intelligence, in the black gown of the judiciary. His coming had been the signal for the gate-man to proclaim his own importance along with that of the court autocrat.

Cornigan, the descendant of Irish peasants, had received his appointment through a Tammany connection his family enjoyed; had, in fact, been sent to law-school where he had barely qualified for the bar, for the sole purpose of filling this office on which one of his Tammany relatives held a sort of feudal lien. Once appointed, Cornigan had been useful: he seemed to take savage delight in venting a congenital spleen upon weak and defenseless people, this severity equalizing an utter leniency in cases he was directed to quash at all hazards. A cunning faculty for appearing to judge cases solely on their merits made him appear, to the average intelligence, painfully just, but there was hardly a case brought before him that was not weighed and decided long before he came into court. By frequently writing to the newspapers excoriating other judges—who were not party men—or policemen who were in disfavor at Headquarters for unruly officiousness in arresting those who paid tribute or who were powers on election days: and by signing his name to articles written by newspaper men and purporting to be "disclosures"—(sold at good figures to periodicals and magazines)—Cornigan had managed to impress on the public mind a picture of himself as a zealous and efficient justice of the peace.

The young Englishman was the first to come before him on this afternoon of ours: the purloiner of a cheque sent in payment of a moribund account long since crossed off his employer's books; this offense mitigated by a year of scrupulous honesty when he might have stolen a hundred times the amount of the cheque; but, the writer of the cheque turning up, had forced this prosecution. The young Englishman told a story of a girl in serious trouble through him, no money for doctors' bills—temptation too great . . . just the sort of story to please Cornigan immensely, giving him a chance to be virtuous without offense to the Golden Gods.

"You are not ameliorating your offense by confessing connivance of other criminal offenses," he shouted fiercely. "Had you been a decent man you would have married the girl instead of taking advantage of her weakness, after you got her into trouble anyhow. But your sort shifts the responsibility and says you are justified by necessity in taking other people's money. What an excuse! It is as if this court had killed its clerk and complained it did so to kill a fly on the clerk's nose." He smiled broadly, being given to these antique jests and cherishing the belief that he was a wit; since time-serving subordinates felt moved to laugh loudly, as did also shyster lawyers and any prisoners who could catch his eye; all those wretched souls hoping for his favors, which so encouraged him that, at his club, he was nicknamed "Old Leprosy" as a result of the ancient expression "shunned like the plague"—which he was.

The Puritan prosecutor nodded approvingly, but the man of misery, after being adjured to answer the unanswerable, only muttered some nonsense about receiving wages too small to marry on; the girl, a cloak model, needing hers for the family's support, her father earning too little to send the other children to school. "And she'd seen too much of bringing children into the world without enough money to bring them up decently and give them half a chance," he said, moved to sudden bitter self-forgetfulness of his present position: "besides she'd lose her job if she had a child. . . ."

"Enough," thundered Cornigan as an actor on a cue and at a climax. "This court, sir, will teach you to shirk your responsibilities and blame others. Held for the Grand Jury. Two thousand bail."

Before the next name was read out, a man went through the gate and engaged in whispered conversation with Cornigan. Some dim remembrance persisted in Arnold, he could not tell why; but, when his supposed name was called and he was led into the light of the crowded court room, and saw the man more clearly—he wondered if this man was not one of those who had stepped back to give him passage from Krafft's office—a clerk. At all events, it was apparent that what some person had said had prejudiced Cornigan, or perhaps it was the handcuffs; for his watery blue eyes held what their owner doubtless imagined to be judicial severity.

"This court is shocked and surprised to see before it a young man who has committed a crime so cowardly, so mean of motive, so inexcusable, as yours. When the court read the charges against you, it pictured some one old in crime—or driven to insanity by drink," said Cornigan, working himself into righteous indignation as he proceeded. "The least it expected, from your age, was that you would be ashamed to meet its eye, that you would be contrite, repentant. Instead, you have the assurance to stand there as airily and impudently as if you had done no wrong—what is the Nation coming to? . . . Now this court has some knowledge of your case, and . . ."

"You have no right to know anything that is not brought out by official evidence," said Arnold wrathfully, Cornigan's hypocrisy in the case of the young Englishman having sickened him. And now, to assume his guilt without a shred of evidence. . . . "You've forgotten your law, Judge Cornigan, *you* have no right to lecture people who're unfortunate enough to have to come before you, before hearing *their* side. Why, if a *Juryman's* prejudiced, he's *barred*. And you admit you are prejudiced and you a Judge—"

"Silence," shouted Cornigan, striking the desk with his gavel. "Silence, sir, silence. How dare you?"

"How dare I—what?" asked Arnold.

What reply Cornigan was about to make may be easily surmised from those previously made; but a touch on his arm, from a clerk who had just answered a telephone call, a persistent pressure that would take no denial—turned his ear and the whispering that reached it brought a change of expression. Together, the two compared a name on the blotter with a name that had come over the telephone. Then Cornigan, looking past Arnold, beckoned the man Arnold seemed to remember, and the whispering was continued. Presently Cornigan waved both away—the lawyer's clerk to hasten to the telephone booth—and addressed himself to Arnold again, this time without meeting his eye.

"Your tone is—er—amazing, sir," was his softened criticism. "This court is a judge of men, it flatters itself, and it has found that such a tone proceeds from either a hardened criminal or one who is entirely innocent. Now above all things this court is *un*prejudiced. Your tone, to some courts, would inflame personal anger. With this court it conduces thought. Yet you threatened a gentleman with violence. The testimony on that point is irrefragable. But many give way to violent tempers. That is regrettable but not criminal. . . ."

He looked anxiously toward the public telephone booth into which one whisperer had disappeared: then cleared his throat and began afresh:

"Certain personal matters should never be brought into legal circles, however. This court is a believer in the good old Anglo-Saxon fashion of settling personal differences with the fists." Cornigan—with only Celtic blood, not a drop of Jute or Angle. "If this was such an affair, the court is inclined to deplore any reference of it to official quarters. Your attitude, while I must regret it as disrespectful to a representative of your country's laws, may have been inherently justified by a predisposition on the court's part to consider the evidence of the officers making the arrest as final. . . ."

Again he looked anxiously toward the telephone booth. Wiley and Kirstenbaum nudged each other and turned pale anxious faces in the same direction. "It must have come straight from Fourteenth Street for Corny to talk thataway," whispered Wiley.

"Silence in the court," thundered Cornigan, viewing Wiley and Kirstenbaum with a malevolent eye.

"Some of these officers," he said slowly and distinctly, "are only too apt to forget they are *serving* the people, not *ruling* them. This court has often noticed a predilection on their part to justify themselves for arrests at the expense of the accused. It is no crime to have arrested a man without sufficient evidence—cases may seem to have that necessity. The *crime* lies in *manufacturing* evidence when facts have proved the incarceration an error—" As he turned once more to view the telephone booth, Wiley whispered again: "Fourteenth Street sure. Throw Terence overboard, Kirsch, or we'll be over our heads—"

"Officer Wiley," . . . said Cornigan, marking time desperately, but preserving his judicial severity. Wiley, conscious that Cornigan, under orders, was about to make them the scapegoats, approached the stand in fear and trembling, but was saved by the long delayed reappearance of the man from the telephone booth, who pushed him out of the way and begged the court's attention.

Cornigan frowned heavily as one amazed that any one dare interfere with his official procedure. "I represent the complainant, Mr. Lemuel Krafft, Your Honor," said the man hurriedly. "Certain facts regarding the prisoner's family and standing have been laid before him. He—er—he sees the assault was made under a misapprehension. He has no wish, therefore, to be—er—well," he finished lamely, the burden of imitating forensic phraseology proving too heavy for him as he had forgotten the leading noun and verb of his rambling sentence, "he—er—withdraws, Your Honor." Cornigan looked triumphantly about him, as one who has scored heavily, and Wiley took this opportunity swiftly and surreptitiously to remove Arnold's handcuff.

"As usual, this court failed to be deceived by appearances," said Cornigan. "Mr. Lommerdoo, I congratulate you on the courage of your convictions. A guilty man would have feared to address the court as you did; therefore, instantly, I knew you were innocent. The case is dismissed, and you are advised, in the absence of counsel, of a possible damage suit for defamation of character and false imprisonment. . . ."

He beamed, a benefactor, upon Arnold, and also upon the huge young man in the smartly cut and costly fur coat—sable collar notched to correspond with the general bell-frock shape of it, who had pressed close to the railing and caught Arnold's hand, crushing it into numbness.

"Oh, Arnold, old pal: Arnold," Hugo Waldemar whispered. "If you knew how I've missed you, how I've hunted you. . . . It's all fixed now, isn't it? The Governor phoned the parties who can fix anything. . . ." And at Arnold's acquiescence, he tried to hurry him down the aisle: "My car's outside. Let's get out of this."

"Wait," Arnold whispered back. "You'll have to fix it for a friend too." And so they sat in the front row, common folk hastening to make way for favorites of the Golden Gods.

Cornigan was very uneasy under their gaze. His little moral lectures in the next two cases, suffering in conviction thereby, were cut short. Quinn's case was the third to follow. Undoubtedly the man was guilty against the most sacred laws of property. The Electric Light, Gas and Power Company, the holder of all the Manhattan illumination franchises (under various names)—a heavy contributor to Fourteenth

Street campaign funds in the city and to its rival Machine in the state—was anxious that the sinful Harley Quinn should be convicted: therefore Arnold could look as saturnine and comment in as sardonic whispers as he liked, but Cornigan, on safe ground and backed by the majesty of both Machines, was himself again, and loosened, in excoriating the base and hateful nature of Quinn's crime, all the rhetoric he had corked in the two less conspicuous cases.

But Mr. Quinn only smiled broadly, to His Honor's intense chagrin, causing him to wonder nervously if he had miscalculated again, but no! in such a case it was impossible. Yet this prisoner declined the advice or assistance of many hovering counsel, and "had nothing to say."

"Only, Your Honor," he added with a winning smile, "to ask the amount of bail."

Cornigan surveyed his mossy coat, his spatulate trousers, his absence of cravat, all reassuring. "One thousand, real estate only: satisfactory to the court—" That would dispel any possible dreams of release on straw-bail by professional bondsmen. "Take him to the Tombs, officer," he added, sure of victory.

But Mr. Quinn turned a beaming confident face to Arnold. He, however, had already fulfilled expectations. Hugo was within the gate and in conversation with the clerk; a shooting-box and pheasant preserve at Joram Lake, his own personal property, although heavily mortgaged, proffered. But mortgage or not, any bail proffered by the son of a Machine Congressman was satisfactory. The bail-bond was signed, and Mr. Quinn went his way with the rescue-party, Cornigan staring after them in dull dismay. In the remaining cases of the day, he showed a painful effort toward a greater leniency than he had ever imagined himself capable. This was his unlucky day, he must be careful.

In the corridor outside, Arnold stopped the exultant Quinn. "No ticket South, mind you," he said. "Hand over the price of it. Who's your father's lawyer, Hugo. Send this fellow down to see him. Now mind, Quinn, this case is not to be settled by your running away and making Mr. Waldemar pay the bill. Can your father fix it, Hugo?"

"I believe he can 'fix' most anything short of murder," answered Hugo with his heavy boyish laugh. "That's what he calls practical politics. Rather proud to be able to do it, too. Lord! you should see him swagger sometimes." He had been scribbling on a card which he now gave Mr. Quinn. "That's the lawyer, Johnnie," he said.

"And you're to tell him the exact truth, Quinn," said Arnold, pocketing the two yellow twenties that Quinn had reluctantly relinquished—the fare South. "Don't make out you're not guilty. . . . And call up at Mr. Waldemar's and get my address—give him the phone, Hugo—I want to keep in touch with you until your case is off my mind."

"Listen," said Mr. Quinn with deep feeling, "any time *I* throw down a *pal*. . . ." Emotion overcame him: he shook Arnold's hand, then Hugo's, and giving his dented derby a defiant and jaunty slap, he marched off. Sooner spend the night in the streets than confess to Arnold those two yellow bills were his entire capital, incurring the suspicion of mistrusting his benefactor. "There's a swell free lunch down on Courtlandt Street if it ain't closed by the time I walk there," said Mr. Quinn, taking in two holes of his belt. That article, mildewed and rotten through much exposure to night and morning dew, fell apart.

"A good thing too," said this incurable optimist. "I've been hurting my stomach pulling that belt so tight. Maybe I'll get suspenders now."

So casting aside the remnants of the belt he proceeded on his long walk in the best of spirits, whistling as he went.

END OF BOOK II

BOOK III

CHAPTER ONE

THE PINK KIMONO

I. Arnold Investigates Along New Lines

IT IS certain that the former peasant, Ivan Vladimirovitch, knew nothing of the phenomenon that any act, evil or good, is a stone flung into the Lake of Life, that, sinking, sends out circles which spread until they intersect other circles, and still other circles, until they intersect all circles; until all life is better or worse for that one act. No, he knew nothing of this, nor did he realize that his circle had already broadened out to sweep within it the circle of Arnold L'Hommedien. He had been properly grateful for Arnold's aid in winning him the election—as told by a contrite Hugo—was willing to draw on the privileges banked by Fourteenth Street contributions; was willing to ameliorate Arnold's blacklisting by Park Row, and, agreeably to Hugo's suggestion, to make a place for him in the Waldemar office.

"You need a private secretary, Gov.," Hugo had said on the night of Arnold's release; "a fellow you can trust as you do yourself. Who can act for you when you're away. Who can see people—ticklish people—and rub 'em right side up—a gentleman. . . ."

Mr. Waldemar saw the justice of this. A great believer in *personal* justice was the Honorable Mr. Waldemar, as are all such honorable gents. He had robbed Arnold of one job—no matter how inadvertently or unintentionally, and he should therefore find him another. Moreover. . . .

"It ain't even charity, my boy," he said, hugely pleased at this opportunity of combining duty with necessity. "If what I'm thinking of goes through, I'll have to have *somebody* to trust. And there's not one at my office with the intelligence. They'd be faithful enough. But they'd talk. It's too big. . . ."

He had been planning it out for months; ever since the Honorable Noaks de Noailles, the Member for a Louisiana Bayou district had confided a secret necessity, and suggested a personal favor. The terror on the Honorable Noaks' face had set in motion the ponderous machinery of the Waldemar wits. . . . Noaks, Benjamin Hartogensis and some business associates with ready cash were soon to meet at Waldemar House. The clerical work involved memoranda concerning ways and means; private books of expenditures and profits would have been too much for Hugo—yet secrecy was nine-tenths of their capital. . . .

He had decided on Archie Hartogensis. Then he heard that Archie was speculating, and no speculator in need of ready money could be trusted. Young L'Hommedieu came at the right moment. Bound to him by ties of gratitude, Arnold could be trusted; and Arnold's intellectual prowess was assured.

Therefore, when he engaged Arnold as private secretary he advanced him a sufficient sum to rehabilitate himself.

"Pay it back when convenient," he said heartily. "I like you, my boy. I like Hugo to be with you. I like your father. I want you to feel I'm your friend. Your salary 'ull be fifty a week. And, say, take the day off; to-morrow, too, if you like."

"Your Governor is a *brick,*" Arnold told Hugo emphatically. Hugo was waiting in the outer office, his car outside. Mr. Quinn was seated with the driver—a resplendent Mr. Quinn in ready-made, tawny tweeds, smoking his first whole cigar in a year, and suggesting residential districts out-of-the-way, quaint, reasonable. He had tramped over the city and knew its every possibility.

"For a young gentleman like you, there's Beeckman Place. Like a corner of London, it is. Just a quiet little run of a block, back yards right down to the river with landing stages to hook up a boat. And the East River at night—red and green lights on boats and barges. And all sorts of ships. And the lights of Long Island winking at you. You forget you're in New York, so you do. . . . There's a house for rent there—furnished and all, and you could get it for the price of a flat anywhere else. But New York people don't know about enjoying life. . . . We'd be very contented there, you and me, Mr. Arnold—"

Arnold looked at him and laughed; laughed long and loud. He had acquired this man, evidently, as folk acquire stray dogs and cats, who follow so trustfully one can not shut the door in their faces.

"You mean you'll forget your celebrated principles and do the housework?" he asked, still laughing.

". . . And can I cook Virginia ham and eggs a' morning?" asked Mr. Quinn, with sparkling eyes, ". . . and planked shad? Can I? Say. . . ."

They drove across town to Beeckman Place, an odd corner, like London, as he said; on the extreme eastern shore of the Island—Arnold, like many others, had hardly realized New York was an island—a street of plain, quiet, brownstone fronts, with elm trees in a little center square surrounded by iron rails and old-fashioned wrought-iron lamp-posts with oil-lamps. Several scientists lived there, Mr. Quinn informed Arnold. He had done odd jobs for both; the wives of a number of sea-captains; they who owned a large motor-boat among them; some maiden ladies of ancient middle-class families, who had inherited their houses; the widow of that Captain Withers who had gone down with the *Eurasian*, . . . others with histories more or less allied with the sea. It was the house of a retired rigging-maker, recently deceased, a Londoner, who liked to believe he was in Wapping Old Stairs, his birthplace, that was for rent now.

They had picked up Miss Bobbie Beulah at the old Lafayette, where she had waited Hugo's return, and she was wildly enthusiastic over the print curtains, the cretonne hangings, the old prints on the walls. Otherwise, the house had some relation to a ship, was furnished with various nautical furniture that had been originally intended for space-economy, leaving wide blank stretches that corresponded with the lofty ceilings. But it was the view from the rear windows that decided Arnold.

A patch of ground, green in summer and dotted with roses, geraniums, hydrangeas, asters and nasturtiums, now covered with straw and manure, ran its sloping way, along with an asphalt walk, down to a stone breakwater, where was cut a flight of steps directly to the river, the bottom ones green and slimy at low tide. Boats were moored by iron rings near most of these, the rear of each house being a duplicate of this one. And, spread before them, was the life of the river—tugs and ferry-boats scudding and hooting, heavy barges passing under spidery bridges, great ocean-going steamers, sailing craft in tow—what not?—with the green hills of Long Island dim in the distance.

"Oh, you absolutely must. It's too deevy. Think of the top-hole parties you can give. What a ripper! Topping. Something most terribly awful will happen to you if you don't. . . ." Thus Bobbie. While Arnold saw himself seated in one of the broad bay-windows writing cynical commentaries on life. Strange that he could have thought of being cynical with so much beauty before him; but to be cynical was his ambition just then.

"Guess I'm a rotten picker, eh? And all for seventy-five a month. It's like finding that much a month," exclaimed Mr. Quinn. He saw himself seated in a lower but quite as broad window, smoking whole cigars and sending passing ships to visit any enjoyable countries he desired to remember.

A qualm smote Arnold. He could not afford even at his generous wages so much rent with heat and lighting additional. But this unwelcome intruder he dismissed angrily. He would deny himself no pleasure hereafter. If he had not enough money, let others pay. He was through considering his duties as a citizen—and such rot. He had done all that and what had he got for it? Jail. While, for violating those duties, he was out of jail and about to hire a house. His friends and himself, . . . let the others go hang.

"I'll take it, Quinn," he said. "And, say, Bobbie, let's have a party to open it—a house-warming! You know a lot of jolly girls, eh? Pick a pretty one for me and ask her how she'd like me to keep a regular room for her." He laughed recklessly. He'd enjoy life while he had the chance; all that foolishness he had mucked around with before—let other fools try that. For him, one of Bobbie's pretty show-girl friends, . . . a pink kimono hanging in the room next door, . . . her wearing it sometimes with the coffee percolator between them on fine sunny mornings. That was life. . . . If fifty dollars a week was too little, he'd find a way to get more. A clever fellow like himself could get money easily enough in a town where half the fools were rich. To hell with all that foolishness about being given brains to help make a better world. . . .

He laughed again, zestful of life. "Tell you what, Bobbie, we'll get Archie—" There had been a stag reunion of the Three Musketeers the night before. "He's going stale over that girl of his. We'll get him and you get two of your prettiest friends, and we'll have a regular time—a real time. Pick out one for me who isn't 'booked solid' anywhere. Then we'll repeat the operation when I move in here. What say?"

He thought of the pink kimono again and his cheeks took on its color. And at the same moment—pink kimono!—the Little One—Velvet Voice. . . .

"You're not attending," said Bobbie in severe raillery, and with that nice new enunciation she picked up since she had become a lady—queer, hurried, jumbled, choking, affected mannerisms learned from provincial English actors, who pretend to portray sporting aristocrats—"I was telling you about Alberta Arden. . . . Bertie, dear old girl, top-hole she is; perfectly ripping. . . . She'll buck you up a bit; you need it, old dear. You'd get on like billy-o—"

Arnold looked at her in amazement. No wonder these American chorus-girls married English lords. Hugo had had her in training just a year or so and here she was talking what he took for the jargon of St. James.

"Why don't you go back to the stage, Bobbie?" Arnold asked quite honestly. She, so occupied in her pose, failed to see the connection, assuring him radiantly that she intended to. Would be in rehearsal shortly; a real part. At which an harassed look came to Hugo's face and he hurried the talk back to her soubrette friend who was to meet Arnold that night if she was free.

Free! The word took on a different significance applied to his neighbor of the Hotel Tippecanoe. Free? At the machine now, her eyes strained and red. The hanging pink kimono suddenly ceased to be desirable; his proposed party lacked interest. Who shall say what would have happened had she not left the Tippecanoe on the previous night, she and her friend, Miss Smith—"the little lady—foreign," the clerk explained. "No, they didn't give no address." "Was there a man with them—a young fellow?" "Two on 'em—swell dressers—gay birds." The clerk winked. "Spenders, too. Gi' me a good cigar, I kin tell you. . . ."

Something heavy smote Arnold somewhere. He dragged himself up the creaking stairs and packed listlessly. The door to Velvet Voice's room was unlocked. How dirty it was! He couldn't blame her. So the other had been a wrong one, after all. He had suspected it; those kimonos. . . .

Again he saw the pink one hanging in the Beeckman Place house. "Hell," he said aloud. "She's dead right—dead—right." But the word "dead" had an ugly sound. Then, as he stood at her open door, suit-case in hand, he saw some torn and twisted pieces of rubber hose on the floor—the giant nipple—split. He noted dully, as people do when the mind is too stunned for thought and occupies itself with registering, mechanically, infinitesimal details, that the black rubber had a red lining. . . .

It was to have been his persuasions that would cause her to destroy that. Instead it had been a gay bird's, a swell dresser's, a spender's, a giver of good cigars, under whose escort she had departed to something better than this anyhow. And because he was now at the cynical stage, there seemed only one solution.

"She did damn' right," he said, aloud again, "damn—right."

"What did you say the girl's name was, Bobbie?" he asked as he rejoined the waiting motor-party. "Bertie!—that's rather a jolly name, what?" He was mimicking, but only Hugo noticed it.

"Top-hole," agreed Bobbie serenely.

"But has she got a pink kimono—that's what *I* want to know. If she hasn't, let's stop at Van Alstyne's and buy her one, right now. Until a pink kimono hangs in Beeckman Place it'll never be home, sweet home, to me—"

Mr. Quinn, drowsing on the driver's seat, smiled an approving satyr's smile, and thought of the plump-armed aristocrat whose waist he would encircle during the American Commune. And then he tried to fit Arnold's last words to various popular tunes.

"You fancy yourself, don't you? Doesn't he fancy himself, Hugo? You men are all alike. . . ."

Of such fresh original observations, delivered in just such affected voices, was the speech of Arnold's female friends composed for some time to come.

II. THE KIMONO HANGS IN BEECKMAN PLACE

It is as well we do not spy on him for the week that followed, when he came face to face with the possibilities of his nature along lines he had never investigated save on sudden imperative impulses, which had been regretted too bitterly to allow frequent recurrences. But, then, in school and college, he was to have been a parson; his every act must be calculated, not as Arnold's, but as the future incumbent's of the family pulpit. So he had forced an ascetism to amaze Sir Lucas or the Chevalier Etienne, sons of freer sexual ages. And, after the crash, his New York days had been devoted, outside working hours, to the companionship of books of lofty ideals, to preparatory scribbling for the great work he was to do making a better world.

But in that first week of his new life he ran riot; the pink kimono hung where he had wished—there had been no difficulty about that. For the first time he had devoted his mind altogether to the conquest of a woman and had the fierce joy of realizing it was in his power, quite without love on his part, to have a girl, beautiful and desired, cling about his neck with passionate endearments and reproaches for loving her too little, knowing meanwhile that other men provided for her as Hugo for Bobbie, being rewarded only with toleration.

"She'll do for herself with old Gayton if she don't watch out," Bobbie had said. "Hasn't seen the old rotter since she met you. It's a rotten shame, Arnold, if you don't care—"

"Oh, I *care* well enough," he had responded indifferently; and Bobbie had vented a vexed little laugh. How could Bertie go on being her chum if old Gayton ceased to be Bertie's harvest-moon?

It had been with the utmost difficulty that Arnold had persuaded this girl she could not come down to Havre de Grace for the week-end of Waldemar's convention, putting up at a hotel. "Hotel," he had laughed; "at the Inn every bellboy calls me by my first name; they work as a favor to the proprietor—they call *him* 'Henry.' Can you imagine me daring to come up to your room?—and my dad the pastor of the church—yes, and granddad—and great-granddad. Now, don't start that 'This is no Place for a Minister's Son'—"

"They're always the biggest *devils*—ministers' sons," declared the tear-stained beauty. "Oh, Arnold, you haven't got a sweetheart down there? Promise me you won't go to see her if you have. Swear you won't. Oh, but what's the use of swearing. I couldn't believe you. Oh, why did I have to fall in love with you and be miserable all my life—"

Proving that a rollicking life has its reckonings also. She kept him so long that the Waldemar car came near to starting without him. The Honorable Noaks de Noailles was in it, huddled up in a fur coat and traveling rugs, in anticipation of the bitter winter-trip. Mr. Hartogensis was to come over when they arrived, and the other future investors—nonentities, Urquhart and Albee and Arthurs—would catch the four o'clock express.

CHAPTER TWO

CONSPIRACY DE LUX

Arnold Becomes a Good Business Man

WITHIN the city limits the giant car traveled at a discreet law-abiding pace, but after crossing the great bridge and passing through Long Island City—secure in heavy non-skidding tires—the car ceased to be a car and became a purple comet, yet giving its occupants so little shock that they played cards at a folding table.

Before Arnold realized it they had come within sight of familiar hills and houses and were passing down the deep ravine that led into his native town. Lordly, snow-capped heights rising on either side of him, and there just ahead was "Harbor View," old Miss Eastknicky's place, where often his mother had taken him for tea; where he had cinnamon buns, but, better still, could view a panorama of earth and sky—"The End of the World"—which in later years he knew for the Connecticut shore.

What is that strange flavor that childhood gives to the merest commonplaces; that strange ineradicable flavor that is a lifelong remembrance when we recall trifling incidents of childhood days? And how we try to rediscover that fragrance; but it is not to be had even in our triumphs; the time and money we spend to duplicate it, knowing it lies ever behind, but assuring ourselves it is over the next hill. . . .

This fragrance of remembrance poured upon Arnold now with such an unimportant reminiscence as old Miss Eastknicky's cinnamon buns and the far-off sailing ships entering the narrow harbor channel—every one pirates, or returning with musk-scented cargoes from Oriental adventures. . . .

"If I couldn't play a flush better than that, . . ." the senior Waldemar reproved jovially. But Arnold laid down his cards. "Tired of playing," his excuse. He wanted to sit back and watch the snow fly under their wheels and breathe that fantastic fragrance. . . . There was the great swing of the road and the little chalet-like house pierced with Revolutionary bullets, . . . soon the L'Hommedieu cross could be seen atop the tallest trees.

If he could only go on afoot, trudge homeward through the heavy snowfall! The comfortable electric-heat of the car became suddenly distasteful to him, remembering those long voyages of exploration in snow-time; the colder he got the more the great fire at home would overjoy him; when, sprawled with a book, he would read until supper-time, his mother knitting near by, or making her boys shirts, their father emerging from his study as it darkened outside to read the New York morning paper the mail had just brought, and to speak on affairs of the day and the lesson of the newspaper. . . . His present companions had been painted in many of those talks, prophetically recognized from the trend of public opinion.

". . . A new governing class, growing in power, a class made possible by treating money as merchandise—without business honor or any conception of rich men's duty to the country. Our kind of people—the inheritors of honor—must work all the harder to make every man realize the claim every human being has upon the gifts of God, and if one has more

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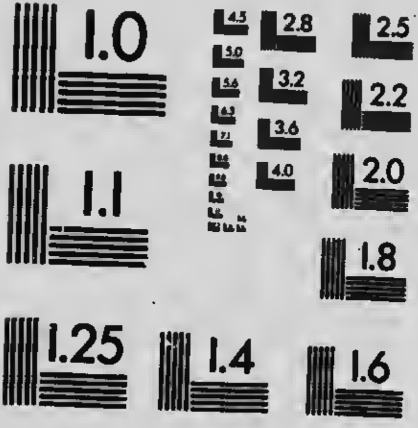
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than one's share, to give with both hands. We must make the new class realize real happiness can never come from self-gratification—in the end. . . ."

Well, the dear old dad had been wrong; but as Harbor and Sound swung into view and the centuries-old cross of his family's crest shone in the snow-glare, Arnold wished his father were right; for, somehow, the fragrance was fading. There was only snow and hills and houses, . . . and so he was glad when the car panted up Sycamore Hill and under the porte-cochère of Waldemar House, where one was in New York again, a man-servant to attend him to his room, to lay out his evening clothes and appurtenances, to draw his bath. The bedroom might have been one in a superior Avenue hotel; only the drifting snow on the oaks, whose gnarled arms seemed grasping at the windows, reminded one New York was miles away, . . . and the shining harbor lights winking through the snow, and once the approach of the Connecticut passenger-boat, swinging broadside on like a glimpse of elf-land in the snowstorm, its lighted port-holes above and below decks crowded with little black people. How he had watched for that elf-ship those winter nights long past, crouched breathless in the library bay-window, peering through a toy telescope, sweeping the Sound about the Green Sands Light for the big boat to appear, crawling like a luminous beetle out of black depths and distances.

He threw open his window, undressed as he was, breathing the snowy piney air, and thrusting out his head for the sight of that very bay-window; to shock his attendant into horror regarding his health. So he resumed his dressing, donning a perfect dinner-coat from Hugo's tailor, the most expensive tailor in New York.

In the long, low, Gobelin-tapestried dining-hall he saw that the nonentities had arrived—Urquhart, Albee and Arthurs—monotonous duplicates of one another, with stiff single-stud shirts, square white waistcoats, loose dress-coats, untidy, lifeless hair—what there was of it; barring them from the leaping log-fire the portly, red-faced Hartogensis in his velvet waistcoat and amethyst buttons, and the tall Louisianian, De Noailles, in a sloping-shouldered, high-collared dress-coat and narrow tight trousers—ancient aristocrats by comparison. Waldemar was a compromise; his clothes and linen were impeccable, but his neckwear was badly tied, his hair was in a cow-lick.

Arnold suddenly felt the superiority that perfect grooming gives; answered monosyllabically weather prophecies from the nonentities, who, it appeared later, were slightly nervous concerning the nature of certain dishes and the silverware that would not insult their purpose. And so they passed by those dishes that presented the most perplexing problems. Would they, free citizens, betray to those in the livery of servitude their lack of security in negotiating portions from platter to plate? It was plain they were starving in the midst of plenty. Arnold wondered what Waldemar wanted with such proofs of the social inequality of men. He had imagined none was invited to Waldemar House who could not further their host socially. It appeared these were wholesale druggists from near-by cities; Urquhart, an elder of the Presbyterian church, very strict about not taking wine; Albee wearing an Epworth League button in his dress-coat—doubtless it was seldom in use except for such activities; Arthurs, a little, spry sprat, Baltimore Alderman and Unitarian. These affiliations, convictions and details were disclosed as they talked; all three men were of the limited mentalities that can discuss only personal affairs. Arnold was amused to discover that the Presbyterian and the Dutch Reformed gentlemen regarded the Unitarian as little better than an atheist; while De Noailles, a Catholic, whispered scornfully to Arnold of "bourgeois beliefs." What would the lot of them think of the L'Hommedieus who had acknowledged no church, were ordained only by the head of the family? The form seemed to be the important thing in the religion of Waldemar's guests, with Waldemar, too, as a heavy contributor to the expenses of the most fashionable Avenue church—hence, like

Squire Hartogensis, and for the same reason, a devout Episcopalian. . . . Later, when Arnold heard the reason for the gathering it seemed a most sinister, satiric thing that they should have wrangled about religion on this of all nights.

A footman served the coffee in the library—an acre of unhandled volumes, whose rich tooling was the key-panel of a general color-scheme of purple. A butler poured ancient liqueur brandy as one administering a sacred rite. Waldemar rose after the servants' departure and locked the doors. Squire Hartogensis was speaking on the difference between these decadent days and those when a man would have been kicked out of his father's club for applying recent principles to business as then practised. Waldemar waved all this aside.

"Nobody but me and De Noailles knows why this meeting's called, do they? No, nor'd never guess. Jones bring you paper and pencils?" This last to Arnold, who nodded. The others shook their heads, one of the nonentities adding in guileful pleasantry that he had heard there was money in it, and that was good enough for J. A.

"Money!" said Waldemar enthusiastically. "Say. . . . Enough to satisfy Morgan! It's so big and I'm so busy . . . that you're declared in—" he nodded to the nonentities. "Mr. de Noailles gave me the idea; the Squire's my friend and neighbor and I thought he might like to turn the ready into three hundred per cent. . . . I'm putting all my ready in; so's Mr. de Noailles—"

"Three hundred per cent.," gasped a nonentity. "Why, that's *gambling*. . . ." The objection had a religious flavor, but it was really the risk that appalled him. The other nonentities, also of this mind, nodded approval.

"Gambling," jeered Mr. Waldemar jovially. "*You'd* call it gambling to put your money in a savings bank; it might fail. This can't even do that. Inside information, gentlemen, that's it. Wall Street tips come from Congress sometimes. This is one tip the Street don't get. Won't be public in two months. Then we—that is Congress, 'ur goin' to pass some Anti-Opium Laws, smoking-opium. A good, safe, pop-lar-administration measure. Respectable people who use it, thousands of 'em, 'ud be afraid to let anybody know; those that ain't respectable—what's it matter *how* much *they* kick? And the Chinamen, who sell most of it, ain't got any votes. . . . The Administration's been a little too easy on the big businesses and they got to put something over that looks moral as hell, but that don't offend nobody—and this is it. . . . No more smoking-opium to be brought in or made here neither."

"Damned hypoquits," exploded the irascible De Noailles. "Catch 'em pass such a law about whisky that does a thousand times moah ha'hm than hop does. . . ." He was further aroused by dissenting murmurs. "I say it does, suh," he reiterated to Hartogensis, who had murmured the loudest. "But the big whisky people are rich and respected, leading citizen, by Goahd! And ev'eybody drinks it in high-class clubs and bahs. And all the district leaders own saloons or get a piece of the profits somehow. Imagine, a large glass for five cents. Rank poison that rots out yoah guts; wuhss than *that*—sends men out to scrap and murder, to beat up wives and chillen. Look at police coht records; see if most muhders don't come from drunks. . . . Drunks from what?—Whisky!"

He threw out an orator's hand and went on in hoarse anger: "But the United States Government only bahs *absinthe*. No moah *absinthe* to be imported. Why? Deadly drug, they *say*. But the real reason's that it's made in France and Italy and Switzehland and drunk by people whose votes don't count; so it isn't sufficiently profitable to the politicians who keep saloons to make protesting wuth while. That's the soht of mohality we throw to the refohmers—hypoquits, too, most of 'em. What a country—ruled by crazy people all trying to hide something by pointing fingers at the next fellow. . . . And now—*hop*."

He paused to light a cigarette, glaring at the nonentities, whom he took to typify the mob he hated; De Noailles, descendant of French aristocrats.

"Why, just look at the effects of drink. Ef yoah doan' want to punch somebody's nose, or split open his haid, yoah go crazy after women, any kind of women. Half those on the street 'ud be back scrubbing floahs if whisky was ruled out. But hop makes yoah quiet, reflective, philosophical; yoah wouldn't care if all the women died. Of co'se ef you eat it as mo'phine or laudanum or hehoin or codeine it has bad effects, but even then not one-tenth what whisky has. The scientific way to take it without any ill effect, ef yoah use it in moderation, is smoking it. Fiah destroys the dangerous gases, a sort of filteh arrangement catches the heavy mineral residuum that would huht the stomach. . . . It's a sure anodyne for consumption and heart-disease. Why, the doctors gave me up and my Chinese servant saved me. Twenty-five years ago that was, and all that time Ah've smoked."

The three nonentities drew away from him. Arthurs' weak little mouth tightened, Urquhart's grim Presbyterian eyes narrowed, Albee looked his pious horror. Squire Hartogensis cleared his throat as though to make a protest, on behalf of his class, against any such confessions. A gentleman should keep his personal affairs to himself. All of which the thin hawk-faced Southerner noted with grim amusement.

"During that time," he continued triumphantly, "Ah have won a position higheh than that of any one heah; have made a name that everybody down South knows. Ah've been in Congress twelve yeahs. And when Ah went to a great specialist recently he didn't even detect tubercle germs, said physically Ah was sound. . . . And that's the stuff this hypoquitical govehment of ouhs is going to bah out. . . . Ah smoked half an houh befoah dinneh. Do Ah look crazy or dreamy? No! All those lies about wild dreams were invented by doctohs to scare people away from it. Read De-Quincey—you doan' git any dreams unless yoah take too much.

Why, if you took opium away from the doctors they'd be helpless to cuah pain—cocaine doesn't half fill the bill. . . . And look at the distinguished men who've used it—DeQuincey, Wilberforce, Coleridge, Wilkie Collins—Ah could name a hundred. Yes, and theah's millions nobody knows about. Do you realize moah white men use it than Chinese? And that's wheah *ouh* scheme comes in. . . . Mistuh Waldemah will tell you about it."

He sat down. Waldemar arose before the startled listeners could recover.

"More white men than Chinese—you heard the Honorable Mr. de Noailles. And most of them right here in the United States. Over two million, gentlemen. Now, what are they going to do about their law—the law that makes it a crime to import it? Of course, a lot will be smuggled in. Men will always take chances for a three-hundred-per-cent. profit—four and five hundred per cent. on small smuggling deals. But the smuggled stuff won't be enough—not near a thousandth enough. So it 'ull be manufactured here from the crude gum—the kind I import in bales and sell to you, Justns." He addressed Arthurs from Baltimore. "You, Eaton and Andrew," the nonentities from Philadelphia and Pittsburg.

"But," added De Noailles, reminding him, "the congressional committee on this bill put on a devilish ingenious dodger, making it illegal foah any gum opium to pass through the Customs without being fuhst drenched in oil—oil easily removed by the processes you gentlemen use to make yoah mo'phine, codeine and hehoin tablets, but vehy destructive to smoking-opium, becahse it leaves a vehy disagreeable taste and makes it extra inflammable. So that the gum opium impohted afteh the passage of this law will make an infehioh smoking brand."

Waldemar nodded. "Now, I wonder if you understand *our* plan? The passage of this bill will kite the price of smoking-opium. A can of it used to sell for five dollars—five dollars for less than a pound. When the factories in China were closed—"

"Which was to please the Japs, who don't want Chinese to be gentle and peaceful like opium makes them, but to be ready to fight," inserted De Noailles rapidly.

"Why, the price went up," Waldemar continued. "And after this bill is passed and becomes a law it'll go up to forty the can, retail; finally settle around thirty. And there's our three hundred per cent. We buy up all the gum opium we can get—now!"

"But the makking of the smokking-oppium—we knaw nawthing of *that,*" said Andrew Urquhart anxiously in his harsh Yankee-Scotch. He was glad now he had advanced no religious scruples against trafficking in the drug. His companion nonentities assented greedily, hoping the difficulty would be removed. Such a simple, obvious and easy money-making scheme had never before come within their ken.

"We don't *need* to," answered Waldemar, winking. "What's more, we don't *want* to. To have it in your possession is illegal. We might be raided, our stuff might be seized. Anyhow, we'd have to pay rake-offs to those who *could* seize it—police and customs-people." He winked again prodigiously. "You wouldn't suggest we break the law, Andrew?"

The Scotch Presbyterian blushed and blustered and the Unitarian and the Dutch Reformed man hid their greedy smiles and waited.

"*They* will attend to *that,*" said De Noailles, impatient at Waldemar's cunning glances and roguish look; "the people who buy from us—the people who sell to the smokehs themselves—the private manufacturehs—the keepehs of smoking-dens. *They* know how. All we do is sell it to them; have a few such wukking for us in every city and privately spreading the news, making sales on commission. We need only to insist that the people we sell it to regularly have lettah-heads printed 'Thomas Jones, M. D.,' or 'Doctah Smith'—like the peddlehs of mo'phin and cocaine have printed, Waldemah tells me, to protect him and you when yoall sell them stuff. . . ."

The three nonentities frowned. Their religion taught them to believe in those letter-heads—not to imagine that their brothers would stoop to such low deceit. They were sorry Waldemar did not believe, too. "Oh, I dare say many of them *are* doctors," said Albee stiffly. The other nonentities agreed warmly that there was no doubt *many were.* "And how can *we* tell the false ones?" asked Arthurs pathetically. Arnold could hardly resist the temptation to remind them that lists of qualified physicians were published; but he remembered in time he was the employee of the man who wished to gain their support, and so was silent. Let the affair be conducted in the usual hypocritical way. Once solitary, before these pillars of the church were abed that night, each would have persuaded himself he was actually saving souls. Arnold's bitterness against average respectability waxed as he watched them, and he had heard that ancient Scottish fraud say before dinner that he was deep in the secretarial work of a Vice Crusade! Such regret as Arnold had for that unregenerate week just past—regret stirred by the sight of familiar places and by the proximity of father and family church—was rapidly erased as the night's business drew to an end.

He calculated estimates, added up theoretical figures, made notes of ways and means, did the necessary clerical work of a meeting where large sums were pledged and shares and probable divisions of profits must be set down; did all these things without comment, as mechanically as any adding machine. It was as well none of the partners had pyschic gifts; particularly none of the nonentities. . . . Submit as he might in action, Arnold was never to yield anything but contempt for rascals, no matter how high their places; and to sit there calmly and hear Benjamin Hartogensis, Esquire, and the three nonentities persuaded that they might do this thing, yet remain substantial copes and cornices of rectitude, was a nasty draft, nastier when one must pretend it was pleasant.

Squire Hartogensis, even, had the wit to answer his own objections for fear others would find them too difficult; though sighing as usual for the good old days. In his father's club men who went in for such a thing as this would be expelled undoubtedly. But, then, these were not days like those; one could not stem the mighty current of commerce. "No doubt when I leave my cash balances with my Trust Company they do not hesitate to invest them for their own profit in ventures less to my taste than this one. . . ."

"If you depositors only knew how your money *was* invested," said the Honorable Noaks de Noailles significantly, as one well aware of shocking details humanity would not permit him to relate. . . . The nonentities grasped eagerly at this. *They* invested *their* profits like simple godly men; they did not make their wealth a stench in the nostrils, a bad example to the rising generation, with wine-suppers, gambling, Scarlet Women, Babylonish lechery generally, as might those intrusted with their capital on interest. They had heard of those Trust Company officials and young bankers. . . . At least, *their* money went to promote godliness and right living. They were "forward-looking" men!

"They're saving souls already," Arnold thought in savage dismay, suppressing himself with difficulty. They pledged themselves soon after that. John Waldemar, Noaks de Noailles, Benjamin Hartogensis, Andrew Urquhart, Eaton Albee, Justus Arthurs—

"And A. L'Hommedieu, please," said Arnold, rising. Waldemar rose too and stared at him. So successfully had Arnold played machine that his employer had forgotten he, too, might have human cupidity.

"I don't understand," said Waldemar.

"I merely wish to invest my modest share," Arnold answered. "One thousand, gentlemen. Think how much better it is to have no one know our affairs except those financially interested. Have I your permission?"

It was a bold thing to do, but it was in line with the night's proceedings. A hold-up, nothing less, for John Waldemar knew Arnold had no thousand to invest in anything. "So this was his gratitude," was Waldemar's first angry thought; then he grinned. The boy was playing good poker; he had made no private demands upon him, his friend, only upon the company—upon them all! Shrewd business! His opinion of Arnold was heightened.

"Put it down, partner," he guffawed heartily. "Partners all! You have only to send your checks to-morrow and we'll begin scattering orders. India, China, Ceylon, Burma—in all our names. Deliveries to each—except our last young partner. Mr. de Noailles has his warehouses, too—tobacco warehouses. But the tobacco won't kick. Time enough to organize our selling force when the stuff comes. . . . A dock-and-doris all around to our success—" And he began to fill the glasses.

"It'll no be saidd of Andre Urquhart that he everr touched a drapp of the stuff," persisted the Scottish fraud stubbornly when Waldemar tried all persuasions to get him to add native to his Scotch soda. At which Eaton Albee, a prop of the temperance societies of Philadelphia, weakly acquiesced and set down his own glass. But the other nonentity, a secret drinker, derived too much that was exquisite in sensual pleasure at this excuse to give way to his failing in public. His weak eyes watered with anticipated pleasure; he only feared his looks would betray him. So he drank with pretended amateurishness, making a wry face and anxiously scanning for possible suspicion the eyes of his brother wholesalers. In the face of his remark that it was nasty stuff there was nothing for a youthful cynic to do but refill *his* glass and drink slowly, smacking his lips. De Noailles regarded his action sourly.

"Only a nightcap," said Arnold, moved to apology. . . .

"More harm in what you just took than in all I smoke in a day," said De Noailles, then yawned jaw-breakingly, reminded that he needed *his* night-cap. He said good night and hastened off, the nonentities following, Waldemar seeing Hartogensis to the door. The Squire had avoided scrupulously the inclusion of Arnold in his general good night.

"In my father's day," he said to Waldemar outside, "a young man like L'Hommedieu would have found himself *persona non grata* with men of honor. The customs of to-day forbid my cutting him, but there is enough left of my father in me that refuses, at least, to shake him by the hand."

"I'll take your note for three months, partner," said Waldemar, returning to the library and finding Arnold there. Part of the former *moujik's* success had been in making ugly things graceful, and he knew Arnold had lingered to discuss that thousand dollars he did not have. Waldemar clapped his shoulder heartily. "I don't forget my friends," he added. Which slightly shamed Arnold as to his ruse.

"You see, . . ." he began to explain.

"That's *all right*, my lad," said Waldemar. "It was good business. Good night."

Arnold had begun to capitalize his cleverness.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GAY LIFE

I. At Rocamora's Restaurant

IN THE weeks and months that followed Arnold became one of the Silk-Hat brigade, those noble New Yorkers who spend their nights endeavoring to lift our restaurants to the appearance of Parisian ones, our theaters to the appearance of London ones, to companion whom has arisen a race of young women, ex-convent girls, who might have been débutantes but preferred the stage!

The resulting society resembles the real thing so closely that, when those others who had admittance to Newport's Holy of Holies came to dance at the supper-places, it was difficult to tell the varieties apart.

Carol Caton differed in no salient respect from Bobbie Beulah or Bertie Arden. It was the business of both to crack the whip over their males, to urge them to further efforts to pay large bills for lingerie and the latest *modes* generally; and for jewelry, motor-cars, theater-boxes, foreign travel. Both "loved" to dance until daybreak, to parade the Avenue in automobiles. Both talked vivaciously during performances of the "adored" pianola and phonograph ragtime. Neither read much of anything, unless some one had a vogue, except fiction with bon-bon wrappers and contents to match; attending Shavian or Maeterlinckian performances for the same reason that took them to the Opera—the "best people" would be there.

"The only difference between you is that until your kind wears wedding-rings, you aren't allowed the freedom of the city," said Arnold to Carol one night in Rocamora's. When she desired a tango a smart young matron—Mrs. Bruce Pickens—with a habit of divorces and none for babies, accompanied her as chaperon. Her husband was a South Carolina Pickens, which guaranteed her as a social cicerone; but he was generally South attending to the family cotton-mills, so his wife was glad to chaperon one who gave her an excuse to visit the supper-places. Archie Hartogensis paid the bills. Arnold's remark on wedding-rings was made while Archie and Mrs. Pickens taxicabed twenty blocks south to procure that lady's special brand of cigarettes.

"I've heard about you, Arnold," replied Carol in deep sorrow. "I don't expect you to have any respect for women any *more*. I never expected *you* to talk like that—not *you*."

"And I never expected to see you in Rocamora's at midnight either, wearing a skirt so tight that when you dance every bald-headed ruffian or young rascal can see every curve of your body—"

She interrupted him with an angry protest, but he disregarded it. "Don't be prudish in words and *risque* in action, Carol—they don't go together. What else did you wear the dress for?"

"It's the style," she retorted angrily, "as you'd see if you looked in the smart shops once in a while. What have *I* to do with it?"

"You have to *wear* it," he returned, "and you have a mirror. And you know if you stand with a strong light back of you . . ."

Her lips compressed. "If you say another word about it I'll get up and walk right out of this restaurant," was her ultimatum. "That's a man for you. If the right sort of women dress like dowdies, they go hunt up some fast one who wears the last word. And if they're *in style,* they're *indecent.* Not another word."

Arnold smiled. "I'm not blaming you for doing your best to make men crazy about you," he said coolly, "only I resent your criticism of my friends just because they're doing the same. You dress alike and think alike and live alike—except that you're in tho *Social Register* and they're only in the telephone book. You happen to be lucky enough to have fathers and husbands who work overtime to buy you new clothes and jewelry, which their fathers and husbands can't; so they get other people to pay their bills. I'd like to know where the difference lies. . . ."

Carol's eyes were snapping. "If you can't *see* any difference between a—well—much as I hate the word—a lady and a—a—"

"Say it in French," Arnold suggested. "That's one of a lady's pet hypocrisies—to pretend a French word is better bred than an English one—a lady and a *cocotte,* eh? Yes, but these friends of mine aren't *cocottes.* Bobbie has been with Hugo two years. It's as long as Mrs. Pickens, your friend, was with her first husband. As long as a good many of your friends are with their first—or second—or third husbands—I'm not criticizing; I'm only trying to find out the seat of this wonderful superiority. . . ."

Carol shut her eyes and clenched her teeth to avoid answering his exasperating smile in the angry words that suggested themselves to her.

". . . Just as I'd like to find the difference between the average Wall Street broker and Jim Deering, who keeps a pool-room—a gambling-house—around the corner. Or between what Archie's doing and backing a long-shot to win. . . . If you're really fond of Archie, Carol, you shouldn't let him do that wild-cat speculating. Look at the boy! He's aged ten years in ten months."

Archie and Mrs. Pickens had returned with her cigarettes. The wistful eager look of a pet animal was an habitual one in his eyes nowadays, and that Mrs. Pickens should thank him only carelessly for the immense amount of trouble to which he had been to oblige her seemed to him all he should expect. Between them, Mrs. Brooks-Caton and Carol had trained him well, thought Arnold, who imagined Archie was beginning to take on a growing resemblance to The Good Old Rabbit, Carol's father. Arnold wondered if, when they were married, Carol wouldn't call him her "good old" something or other.

"We were just talking about you, Arch," he said when the party became a quartet again. "I've offended Carol by telling her she shouldn't allow you to wild-cat—that you're getting old before your time—"

"Dear old boy," Mrs. Pickens interrupted languidly, "you still smell of the country. You're half-civilized—quite. What's a youngster to do in New York with no money and expensive appetites? It's either buck the double-O, play the big game, or be a piker and commute, carry parcels and have Swedish servant-girls. Have you told Carol it's her duty to educate Scandinavians in cookery?"

"Why not?" asked Arnold. "If that's so terrible—commuting. And the best servants are those you catch at Ellis Island and train yourself. But, of course, neither you nor Carol know enough to train servants in anything. Your educations 've been neglected." He smiled with aggravating irony.

"Hark at him, Carol," said her chaperon in amused tolerance. "*Smells* of the country? He positively *reeks* of it. We've mislaid all those middle-class ideas, you dear old-fashioned thing. They belong to the age of bustles and crinolines."

"On the contrary," replied Arnold: "it's middle-class to object to them. All the old aristocrats pride themselves on knowing things *better* than their servants. It's only the American heiresses and Gaiety girls marrying into the aristocracy who have your ideas, you dear *new*-fashioned thing. And that's just what I was saying to Carol: what's the difference between the average engaged society girl, nowadays, and the show-girl with a banker friend? They dress alike, talk alike, think alike—"

"This passes a joke, Mr. L'Hommedieu," said Mrs. Pickens coldly.

"— and act alike the moment anybody dares to tell them the truth about themselves," finished Arnold, rising to go. "While the first attribute of aristocracy is plain speech, I didn't start to offend anybody. I was just anxious for Archie—"

"Leave me out of it," said that young gentleman hastily. "Personally, I think you can say the rudest things in the world, Arnold. Nobody ever heard of such a thing in all history—comparin' ladies with chorus-girls—"

"And, moreover," added Mrs. Pickens lazily, recovering her pose, "one should like to know where our young friend got all his information about the aristocracy, Archie—"

"One learns from one's parents, usually," returned Arnold, roughly mimicking her tone—a habit of his, this mimicry, which had enraged both Bobbie and Bertie. "If one doesn't, one usually doesn't learn. . . ." He took himself off with that, conscious he had been bad-mannered, regretting it the next moment. But he was the sort who must have excuses for conduct: now he had allied himself with the Bobbie and Bertie sort, he must convince himself no better were to be found.

Besides, he was angry on Archie's account: these women taking for granted all his favors. Archie could not afford expensive supper parties, theater-boxes, ten to twenty-dollar taxicab bills—all of which they had had that evening—had on many previous evenings. Among people assured of their social position, a young engaged couple often dispensed with a chaperon—for theaters and luncheons and teas, at least; but Mrs. Brooks-Caton was a Median law giver with her insistence on this "smart" appendage, playing duenna herself whenever she had nothing of more importance. Archie's weekly pay as his uncle's assistant must be swallowed up in one affair like this one of to-night; and with this sort of life, and one or two reverses in speculation, his mother's legacy would vanish. But Arnold knew Archie too well to think he would give Carol up. It was in the boy's extreme nature to do something desperate. This worried Arnold more than he would admit, in his new character of cynic.

He tried Quinn's remedial whistling, but found it a hollow fraud as an anodyne. It was a dull night for Arnold. . . . Bertie, Bobbie and Hugo away at the American *premiere* of the London comedy, *The Stirrup-Cup,* in which both girls had prominent parts, Bertie because she was clever at impersonating slangy horsy female types; Bobbie—he more than suspected—because Hugo had put money in the show. Arnold's own duties at the office had kept him away from Rochester, the scene of the opening—the shipments of gum from Burma had come in on the Southern Pacific boat from New Orleans the night before, transhipped from the Los Angeles Limited and the Pacific Mail *Altraria*—and Arnold, in sole charge, had his hands full—hundreds of orders had been received on the bare whisper of the promised supply—the underworld wireless had been working amazingly. . . . So, for the first time in several months, he had free evenings.

Arnold was just beginning to know New York. Although he had spent more than a year as a reporter on *The Argus,* his literary gifts had been recognized there, as it had been a chain of pleasant assignments among the best people—the best, literally: interviews with curators of museums, celebrities of scientific or sociological fame, visits to private theatrical performances of Greek plays, open air Shakespearean revivals, concerts, symphonies, opera performances out of the beaten track—special, editorial page, Sunday "stuff."

He had known of the misery of the poor: had, in the abstract, enthusiastically desired to end it; but, after his six months among the under dogs, he knew now how unnecessary that misery was. And he had been virtuously irate over stories he had heard of the prodigal waste of money along Broadway. But he had never imagined that the misery of the poor gave their oppressors such paltry results.

He could forgive the ancient Greeks their helots because of the philosophy, literature and architecture that system helped give the world: the Cæsars their bloody conquests for the sake of the great Roman law, which had taught the world unity and justice in government: the Renaissance tyrants their cruelties for their Sandro Botticellis—the Catholic Church its Inquisition for its encouragement of learning and art. . . . But what excuse had these spenders along Broadway for the thousand and one crimes perpetrated against the Annie Eunices and Hans Chassertons, the helpless folk who must live as in a windowless cellar, not knowing there is sunlight in the world—"crawling up drainpipes until they die" hadn't Wells said? And what was the rest of it?

"It isn't as though they had something to show for the waste they make of us. They are ugly and cowardly and mean." . . . He remembered it all now, *Masterman's* tirade to *Kipps*. His cheeks burned—What *did* they have to show?

Women—he had gone into that to-night.

Art—he grinned painfully at ugly piled up Broadway, the beauty of a winter's night, pale scimitar moon and moonlight blue of sky desecrated by electric advertisements, a huddled mass of varying heights and architecture, the blank walls next a pure Ionic building flattened out with hideous pornographic show-posters.

Increased good taste—a mass of men in ugly clothes made to hang on wires, having no relation to the beauty of the human body, ugly lumps of dusty hard black felt on their heads.

Increased learning and education—crowded under a skyscraper a theater bearing the name of a Bowery Waldemar who had found millions in cheap salacious melodrama. . . . A second crowded to the doors by exhibiting women in various stages of nudity; a third above which blazed in letters five feet high, the name of a girl who had caused a great man to be murdered, a little one to be tried for his life.

While, on side streets, artists who had gained proficiency in the work of great playwrights, acted to handsful of eager sympathetic people who had little more than the price of their seats: great paintings hung unobserved and un-understood in the museums; literature was hidden by bon-bon trade-goods; great men, unless they prostituted their talents and took orders from their inferiors, ate in dairy-lunches and boarding-houses; while, back on the Great Lane again, the ticket-speculator who insulted the timid into paying double prices, ordered champagne for his fat greasy womenfolk.

Gamblers and brainless victims, prostitutes and college-boys, stock-brokers and rural investors, actresses and "angels"—all the head-hunters and heart-breakers and pigeons for the plucking. And all bought champagne, champagne that few wanted and that those few should not have had.

Arnold entered Sydenham's. He had heard of the new cabaret up-stairs but when his party had wanted seats it had always been crowded. Perhaps, to-night, alone, they could crowd him in. He could not have explained why he went; we are all creatures of habit and he had been living that sort of life for some months.

The head waiter shook his head in dignified reproof at the temerity of an unknown person expecting to be seated without a previous reservation. Arnold sighed and reached for his pocket; but, at that moment, a small whirlwind of pink chiffon loosed itself from a male dancer's arms and, turning several circles, bumped the breath from the head waiter and resolved into the Little One, flushed and radiant, a hand on Arnold's arm.

"W'at you tell zhis shentleman, Luigi?" she demanded. "W'at you say—no place? I gif you my word, Luigi, eef you doan' put in a little tiny table—jus' like zat—I go walk out of zhis 'ole and go to Café Abbaye. Now—w'at?"

But Luigi had already acknowledged defeat and sent an omnibus boy to cover a low serving stand, Sonetchka rattling out reproaches and questions meanwhile, and Arnold hastening to explain. The omnibus returned to remind Luigi of the previous requisitioning of that "table."

"Zhis fool Broadway," continued Sonetchka in despair. "Zhey sit out zere half ze night to enjoy zemselves one hour—" She pointed to a row of waiting people who were glaring wickedly at the favored Arnold. "Well, zen, rules or no rules, he sit at ze entertainers' table. Tell ze proprietor he doan' like it, lump it. He doan' lump it get anuzzer dancer. Come —you."

Only Pink and Beau sat at this particular table, so Sonetchka could speak freely and she dashed rapidly into a repetition of Arnold's account of his treatment at the hands of the law. She was violently angry. But Pink only shrugged his shoulders, and spoke in polite scorn.

"Anybody would think you'd just come to the Big Town the way you take it, Sonny." (He was careful to use good English in the presence of a stranger.) "What did you expect—the lawyer to kiss him and the judge to ask him to have a drink? Those fellows all work together. Hit one of 'em and you hit the bunch. They're at the steering-wheel and they've got gats—guns—for anybody who tries to stop their car—what difference does it make if a few common people get run over and killed, it's get out of the way or take your chances. . . . But the *idea*—anybody trying to *stop* 'em—" He turned to Arnold. "It's lucky you had friends with a pull or you'd be on the inside looking out—making little ones out of big ones, old sport—" The strain of good English for a long speech was too much for him, and after surveying and judging Arnold, he thought it safe to relapse into normal expression.

"How did she act when she saw her brother?" asked Arnold anxiously.

Sonetchka winked. "She nev-ver see 'im. I got 'im weez friends. She think he got ze money and run away. Zat ees better zan she see him as he is, *hein?*"

Gazing at the two youths in modish dress-clothes—save for certain eccentricities in the shape of jet buttons and silk cord—with their highly polished finger-nails and hair that seemed to have been subjected to the same process, Arnold's heart leaped. "Was it you—you three—who took her away from the hotel?"

Sonetchka and Beau took the floor again at the beckoning of the acting manager and Pink answered him in the affirmative. A curious lightness took hold of Arnold. "A quart of Paul Roger, waiter," he said, "four glasses. . . . How long before we four can get away to ourselves—a few hours? I'll wait."

Pink, who wished Sonia had been more explicit as to the stranger's views on the question of property, wondered if Arnold had been a gentleman in hard luck then, or a grafter in good luck now.

He determined to investigate and began, somewhat obscurely, it seemed.

"That Cornigan," he said gently—"what a judge. You see him in the joints every night—in Cleary's and The Kid's, sporting-girls at his table and all—and he says he's *investigating.* Nice business—a judge with a sporting-girl on his lap. He got stuck on Kitty Conroy once and she took his dough and give him the ha-ha; and when he heard she fell for a honkatonk box-beater at Billy's, he had Billy's raided just on purpose to send that piano-player to the Island, *vagrancy,* mind you, *vagrancy*—so he could git Kitty back. Ain't it awful to think sich tramps sit around in black Mother Hubbards and look virtuous cause a dame stole a can of milk for the baby? When I was up before him once, I see him give a poor skirt who done that the Bedford and send the kid to St. Vincent's. 'Women like you are not fit to bring up children,' he says in his Sunday-school voice. And having Kitty Conroy on his knee the night before. Gee!"—Pink clenched both hands—"why are we all such a lot of rats that somebody don't brain that guy!"

Arnold nodded assent. "That's just it," he said. "A lot of sheep, not rats; rats are braver than we are. We let people do things to us because somebody says it's legal. As a matter of fact, all our laws ought to be pitched into the fire, and a new bunch made that fit modern conditions. The people who run things do anything they like with the law, use it as a club to make the other people work hard for them."

"They never did it for me," chuckled Pink, gloating. "I was on from the start. I guess I got next the day old Oglethorpe visited our school. They'd been teaching us honesty was the best policy and we, like a lot of saps, believed it. When our Superintendent told us Oglethorpe was coming to spiel us Commencement Day, I thought it was the bunk. I'd read what the papers said about that big yegg-thief and child-murderer—with those poor kids working in his mines. But the Superintendent!! you'd a thought he'd be on his belly any minute asking Oglethorpe to kindly wipe his hoofs on him if he'd thought his clothes were clean enough. And the other teachers!—simperin' and going on like he was God Almighty. . . . And the old yegg had the nerve to look us thousand kids in the eye and tell us to be square and straight and we'd be successful—him that cheated at marbles I bet when he was our age and sneaked to the teacher if somebody licked him for it. . . . The Lord give him his success as a reward for never missing Sunday-school and church and Epworth League in forty years. . . . And all those little suckers and those big stews of teachers jest gaped at him as if to say 'How true' —oh, my God! that made *me* sick. I never went back next year—started shooting craps and hanging around pool-rooms instead. . . . Grow up and be a nice kid, huh?—and get a good job running errands for three per, then in a few years be a clerk at six, and end up at fifty getting twenty-five; they'd run my dad out of business, so I couldn't have the store, and at sixty get fired and git the workhouse, less'n I had some kids to support me. . . . Not me; Not on your life. . . . I played that old yegg's game, instead—in my petty-larceny way."

Sonetchka and Beau had rejoined them during this speech, and they nodded emphatic assent. "Yes, a lot of us guys are getting on," confirmed Beau. "I got a father worked ten hours a day all his life and now *I'm* supporting him. I didn't go into the mills like he wanted me to because I didn't see the sense of working like a dog jest for the privilege of eating Irish stew five times a week and getting drunk every Saturday night to forget what a hell of a thing life was."

"And me," Sonetchka put in, "when I come over here I was maid to a lady—fourteen hours on my feet, me. Zen I make flowers for 'ats. No good. Ze lady I work for, she lie around all day until her 'usband come 'ome, zen she get me to pull her fat waist togezzer and zey go to theaters and restaurants and I sit 'ome waiting to undress 'er. She fire me because I go out one night to pictures and get caught in Subway accident and she undress 'erself. In ze factory, I work nine hours and 'ave to take work 'ome and work nights to get enough to eat. And, sometimes w'en I walk Broadway, I see womans not so pretty nor smart as me come out of beautiful restaurants and theaters and step into taxicabs and limouzines. And I zink about that lazee fat womans I lace up when I am maid. 'Little fool Sonetchka,' I say to myself. 'You go throw yourself in river if you not smart enough to live soft, too.' And zen, when ze man what own ze factory start make love to me, I doan' say, 'Go way; don't dare you touch me.' I make believe I *like* 'im touch me, I get him give me pretty clothes, I get him lend me money—I promise everysing and zen, when I get what I want, I doan' give nuzzing. And once I get pretty clothes and some money from 'im; I find plenty more mens. And I learn tricks. And I live like ladee too—nice and soft."

She laughed and showed her little teeth. "I teach 'er, too—Annie Eunice. I say—doan' be big fools. You 'ave to play tricks—you 'ave to fool people. So she smile and smile instead of looking 'ard and 'arsh, and man zink when she [illegible] out wiz zem she fall for zem. And zey give her big tips—dollar, 'keep ze change'—and when drunk men throw down ten dollars one day I say, 'Doan' give change.' And I make her zat she doan', and now many drunk men throw down money and doan' get change and uzzer men forget how much and she say, ''Ere's your change,' and give zem dollar change for five dollar and all zat sort of sing."

"She's a smart girl, all right," approved Beau. Arnold winced. But what difference between Beau's "smart girl" and Waldemar's "good business"—between Arnold's hold-up and her "hold-out"? Yet, he hated to think of her at such tricks. Some reflection of his thoughts must have shown in his eyes.

"W'ich you t'ink best?" asked Sonetchka, indignantly observing this, "be cripple or go blin'? You make me seeck. W'at *you* do zat so 'onest?"

"I'll bet," said Pink in an assured tone, "that he's doing the public himself if he'd on'y own up. I'd like to see anybody be honest nowadays unless he's very lucky—in these big-time cities anyhow—that is, and live decent."

"That's what *I've* been thinking for a couple of months," returned Arnold reflectively. "Even in the newspaper business we had to print ads for quack medicines, lying real-estate, rotten personals—and had to keep ugly stories about department stores out of the news or they'd take their 'ads' out—and had to wink at Tammany because *it* was Democratic. But my city editor got mighty virtuous when I kept something out for a *Republican* candidate—that's how I lost my job and landed where you found me, Miss Sonetchka."

"And—you're back pencil-pushing now?" asked Pink, who had not been confidential from any love of sociological discussion. This well-groomed, good-looking fellow could assist him in his line—if he chose.

Arnold told of his present occupation. "About *that* you're certainly right," he said. "I guess Waldemar's responsible for more drug fiends than any place in the city. The way they sell it wholesale to these little pedlers. . . . John Waldemar's a Congressman and a millionaire. A few months ago I wouldn't have taken a job there, but now—it was either slaving or starving—"

"Waldemar's—" said Pink slowly.

He had been sunk in deep abstraction. Now he raised his head. "I got you—Waldemar's—don't you remember, Beau—old Mitt-and-a-Half talking?" The light of recognition came to Beau. He leaned eagerly forward:

"What's this whisper about gitting all the gum you want at Waldemar's?"

Arnold needed no glossary this time. "Why?" he asked grimly, pulling down his shirt-cuff; "can I book your order?"

"Wait a minute," returned Pink, as, the orchestra retiring for a rest, his turn at entertaining came. "Beau, phone Mitt-and-a-Half and Mother. You know what they said the other night. . . ."

"Tell Miss Chasserton I'm waiting for her to get off duty, too," added Arnold; but Sonia, evidently considering it her right to impart this news, had hurried ahead; so that Arnold was left alone, listening to the rapid staccato rag-time that the Cagey Kid began to "beat outa the box," as he phrased it.

Pink's piano-playing suggested Hogarthian pictures—full-breasted, short-skirted, ox-eyed females, garish color, loud drunken laughter. Pink's was only a slight improvement on the sort of performance for which such places kept on hand unhealthy-looking youths with cheap Virginia cigarettes permanently attached to their lower lips, glasses of beer within easy reach, a hypodermic syringe in their hip pockets, or a "lay-out" in the basement, and a friend who asked, "Dearie, won't you stake the Professor?"

But those were low dives. This was Sydenham's! There were jungle-beasts; here was Bandar-log with thin features and slender shapely bodies. . . . Yet their faces lighted up with the same barbaric emotions that had inspired such tunes, their bodies swayed to the same sensuous rhythm.

"This is Madman's Lane," thought Arnold soberly.

There was a girl barely sixteen, not of the Blue Book crowd, truly—their conventions *did* save a girl for supper-places until she had been a *débutante*—and they did insist on the shallow safeguard of chaperons—but of decent folk; probably a daughter to a prosperous tradesman or head bookkeeper; and there she danced, a tigerish sensuousness in her half-closed eyes and in those of her almost equally youthful partner. The end of that evening was as plain as if they had shouted their intentions aloud.

As this couple swayed past Arnold he could hear them singing softly the words to Pink's tune. This was the lad who had requested it, the words being quite familiar to everybody; published in this same city that had jailed the performers of the work of one of the world's greatest playwrights.

"But *it* put the blame for immorality where it belongs," thought Arnold; "and that's the last thing hypocrites want—things called by their right names. Give them the off-color suggestion and the snicker up the sleeve. . . ."

Pink plunged on with his brothel classics; his next a great favorite in scarlet society. . . . One who knew could imagine Pink sliding out the words from that corner of the mouth that held the cigarette.

"Frankie and Johnnie were sweethearts. . . ."

The sixteen-year-old girl and her escort seemed to know that one, too, although the rest of it was too unsightly to permit of publication. Arnold tried to forget the possibility of her pupilage in such knowledge, and, turning, observed another girl scarcely older, posing in imitation of a former "parlor girl," now a vaudeville star—and tempting an ingenuous-looking youth, her partner.

Could that woman of forty-five, wife of a celebrated corporation-lawyer, easily recognized from her many published photographs, realize the sort of stuff to which she was dancing? How would she like the words printed with her name in Sunday's "society" column? . . .

He saw her join a party where, disregarding the champagne on the table, another woman in a daring Doucet gown was drinking whisky pegs and lighting fresh cigarettes on the butts of those consumed.

Why should he notice all this to-night, when it had been going on all around him since he began patronizing cabarets? Bertie did the same thing with her cigarettes—a sort of endless chain. There was no good pretending. He knew well enough—Velvet Voice. He resented her presence among such people, Blue Books and ancestry or no. . . .

Pink dashed into another song suggested by a youth with vivid jewelry. Observing the attention of the patrons, he motioned to certain other young Semites, who began to shout hoarsely for the author of that sensational turkey-trot, "I Don't Want to Be Loved, Just Like Me in a Regular Way."

It appeared, curiously enough, that the motioner was he. He bowed and was popularly supposed to blush.

"Song—song," shouted the "boosters," their horny hands colliding with the sound of pistol-shots—undesired publicity. But Pink and the café manager were to he observed urging the famous youth to consider his duty to the public, the horny-handed ones posing as simple melody-loving private citizens.

The song was sung. It suggested that if a "spoony Coney" railroad could only have a tunnel fifty miles long, . . . "my favorite child's name is Matilda," and it was sung with all possible grins and shrugs. The boosters joined in at the second chorus. By the fourth repetition wine-flushed youths shouted it with loud laughs and arch glances at their female companions and emphasizing its most suggestive line.

Leaving them to their chorus, celebrated composer and "boosters" went their way further to advertise genius, and

Beau and Sonetchka returned to give another "refined terpsichorean" entertainment—born on the Barbary Coast.

II. On the Threshold of Subterranea

". . . And you *like* it?" Arnold asked, frowning. Velvet Voice nodded with a certain defiant gaiety. "My God!" he commented—"my God!"—but a "my God" of helpless scorn—no drama in it.

"Why not?" she wished to know.

"You mustn't mind her," said Pink tolerantly. "All these dames are the same when they first hit the bright lights. They go plumb dotty. They're *only women*, you know," he added tolerantly, as if that explained any folly.

"And you—you smart, *hein*—you big smart fellow—know everything?" asked Sonetchka.

"If you don't know that, you don't know anything," answered Pink. "Forty million times over I tell you what a lucky little skirt you are to have me take the trouble to wise you up. I dunno what I do it for, I'm sure—"

The restaurant in which they were having supper was as different as possible from the "Café de Paris"—quiet after Sydenham's noise, and for good reasons—its patrons having learned it was wiser to communicate their sort of conversation in guarded tones that did not reach any not concerned. It was Chinese, the cleanly kitchen in full sight, with its polished copper-pans and brightly shining stove, the restaurant walls hung with tasseled scrolls and Japanese prints of whiskered ogres and oblique-eyed angels. Most of its frequenters, quietly but expensively dressed, and seemingly above the average intelligence, had been pointed out to Arnold and Velvet Voice as well-known specialists in check-raising, wireless wire-tapping, "the match," "the pay-off" and cards—one extremely pretty girl as having been arrested fourteen times and never convicted.

"Just give her a jury—a heavy-headed jury—and she's as safe as if she was in God's hip pocket," Pink had said, proud of the intimacy her greeting of him had implied. "One smart little girl, go bet your shirt."

"Smart," sniffed Sonetchka, "smart womens don't get arrested fourteen times—I never get arrested, me."

"You never had no big ideas—no ambition," explained Pink. Arnold had cut in with Velvet Voice to prevent an embittered answer.

"In a way," Pink went on, referring to the limitations of Velvet Voice (and of women generally), "in a way, women never git more'n haff wise. I've had 'em all—all kinds—and they'll always fall for the front—the show-off—the clothes and the lights and people gettin' an eyeful of their new hat—the admiration stuff. They like restaurants and theaters and crowds because they think one hundred and one out of a hundred men are wishing they knew them, and then go home and look at their wives or girls and say, 'Oh, *hell,*' sure! So they do better on the stage than men—think just standin' there not sayin' nothing is giving a thousand guys a treat and making a thousand dames wish they had their taste in dress, and go home and copy their hat."

"Oh, shut *up,*" said the infuriated Sonia, reaching for the nearest missile; and Pink mssked prudence by loud laughter and the lighting of a cigarette.

"No wonder the little girl likes it," Beau began to explain, winking at Velvet Voice; "who wouldn't, with a little ten-thousand-dollar go-cart sent around every afternoon to ride her around again, Willie. Special flower-shop running just to keep her in roses, too—didn't notice those American beauties on her switchboard? She's got a special room full home. And pipe the hock-rock on the pinky—" Arnold glanced as Beau pointed and saw on her hand a marquise, a pure white triangle edged by tiny flat rubies. Velvet Voice smiled, almost, it seemed, purred.

"Name of Spedden," Beau elucidated. "And I guess she don't hate him any, 'cause when we offered to let him into a little friendly game she put in the saxi."

"Why should I risk having him suspect my friends cheat at cards?" asked Velvet Voice indignantly. "You couldn't win as much in a night as he'd give me freely if I asked him." At which Pink interrupted with a roar. "Our little Eunice—Elsie in the Great City—ho! ha! hee! Rich, ain't it, boy?" he asked Arnold.

"Why shouldn't I have a good time like everybody else?" demanded Velvet Voice angrily. "Didn't I put in ten years not knowing any better? . . . And if you could see what taps on my switchboard with dimes and tries to tell me to get numbers for 'em like they heard some actress say, 'Home, James.' . . . Am I going to take impudence from dressed-up minxes all my life? It isn't as though people respected you more, knowing you could get all the clothes you wanted, but prefer to work. They just think you're a plain fool. And I shouldn't wonder if they're right. It's a girl's own fault if she gets overworked and starved in factories and stores. We've got no right to *be* there. There's only one business we're cut out for, and that's—*men.*"

Several times Arnold had been at the point where he felt he must interrupt savagely, but now she had stated her case, he wondered what he should say. All his remonstrances would sound Sunday-schoolish in such a place, among such people; and, moreover, how they would disagree with the new set of ideas he had himself adopted!

It was only convention that yearned for speech. The old order: man to do as he pleases, women to do as he pleases, too; and if he pleases for her to attain some standard of incredible virtue she must pretend to be attaining it. Recognizing this unfairness, Arnold saw that he should desire nothing of her he did not himself approve; and Quinn's scornful "poor but honest" recurred to him and his own acceptance of the negative. . . . Nevertheless, he did not want her to accept rich men's favors. It was all so highly perplexing he did not remonstrate at all, but left it to the indefatigable Pink.

"That's all right, Annie Eunice," said that young gentleman, "you got the right idea all right and the wrong one, too. Get all you can out of these rich fellows, but don't double-up with none permanently. They ain't our breed any more'n cats are dogs. They're our natural-born enemies—everything *they* think is jest opposite what *we* think. Get his money—all you can—and then hand him his hat."

Velvet Voice went crimson. "If you're suggesting—" she began.

"Now, ain't that like a little sucker broad?" asked Pink wearily; "willing to marry a rich guy for his dough and divorce him soon's ever she gits the chance, but sore at the idea of cutting out the ring stuff—anything so long's it looks respectable. Jest as you said"—he nodded to Arnold—"a lot of sheep willing to let people do anything to 'em 'cause somebody says it's legal. She hates the sight of him, but she tries to kid us she don't so's she can kid herself marriages are made in Heaven. Let's not talk any more about it. This sucker stuff makes my neck tired."

This Cagey Kid seldom misjudged his man. He had been living by judging men—and women—some few years, and though Arnold's talk was not theirs, Pink had recognized a common hatred of hypocrisy and love for rebellion in the last of the L'Hommedieus—instincts that were surely driving him to a life not unlike their own. So Pink had admitted him into his confidences, for he had an instinctive feeling Arnold was to be a highly profitable adviser in those higher forms of larceny to which Pink's ambitious soul yearned. Besides, there was the matter on which Beau had telephoned.

"Tell him what Mother and old Mitt-and-a-Half said," he directed his friends. Beau glanced discreetly at Velvet Voice. "You don't need to mention *what*—he's jerry to that—hand him the proposition."

"A friend of ours—I'll write the name," and having done so, he crumpled up the Japanese crêpe-paper napkin and pocketed it, "wants a thousand pounds. To make the other stuff—you know—and peddle it by the can. The more gum, the more profit—so he'll make it worth *your* while—a dollar on the pound to you, and 'ull be 'round to-morrow and give it to you, if it's all right. Don't forgit the name. You oughtn't to—it's funny enough."

"What a game that's going to be after they put the lid on next week," said Pink, his eyes sparkling. "Some chance for the big money there if a man has a little capital. The Customs'll look fine trying to keep it out all along the Canadian border, the Mexican border, and the East and West coasts—what a chance! And there'll be thousands at it. Think how few of those little cans it takes to make a thousand dollars—thirty or forty at the new price—that's all. I got haff a mind to take a chance myself with that kind of profit—"

"Some game, all right," agreed Beau, his face also alight. As for Arnold, he was thinking of the enormous profits the Waldemar company would make on their new deal—even he with his little thousand stood to quadruple it. If only he had more invested! Suddenly he turned and saw that Velvet Voice was regarding him queerly, wistfully, in a way that hinted to Arnold that she might not consider any millionaire if he were able to give her even one-hundredth the things Mr. Spedden could.

He must begin to make money; he had wasted enough time, and without money the things one wanted one never got. Pink's suggestion of smuggling in the stuff, the high profits, fascinated him. He was in debt for a good half of his winnings, but this thousand dollars Enoch Apricott would give as a bonus for a thousand pounds—Mother Mybus, really, as he was to know—would nearly repair that damage. If he could reinvest at the same figures—a can and a half came from a pound—even at *thirty* dollars the can, he would be on the road to wealth. Then more like investments and more and he could return to Havre de Grace, buy a farm he knew of and be a country gentleman. He salved his conscience by explaining to it that any harm he might do now he would more than repair—then; go to Congress to follow Waldemar; stand for good government in local politics, protective measures against more factory-building . . . what not?

"It isn't a man's fault going wrong in these big cities," he said aloud, wanting the corroboration of others to administer the final opiate to that stubborn conscience; "how *can* he do anything else—unless he wants to see the unscrupulous and ignorant get *everything*, and himself pushed and hustled about by the very damn fools he's trying to help. The only thing to do is to get money enough to get out—that's the one excuse a decent fellow has for being here. . . ."

"Hear, hear," applauded Cagey and Phony Kids. Velvet Voice was silent, viewing him as if she, too, would like to remonstrate, but realizing that her own proceedings did not justify it.

"I on'y wish I was *big* womans," said Sonetchka greedily. "I go make trips to Canada and Mexico and bring back cans hid in my clothes. But—me—zey see a lump as big as a peanut . . . too bad."

III. THE ATTIC HAS HOPE OF ARNOLD

"That young feller is all right," said Pink to Mother Mybus, Nikko and Apricott later that night, Mother and Nikko having lumbered up to the Attic to hear the gossip of the baker's dozen there gathered; "he oughta be pie for you, Mother, once we git him hooked. He's got class—not jest clothes and small-talk like me and Beau—but *real* class. You oughta hear him spiel—Nick, you and Mitt-and-a-Haff 'ur in the cripples' class. . . ."

He repeated, in the vernacular, some of Arnold's revolutionary propaganda. Nikko rubbed his moist hands stealthily. "They ain't clever," he said, "not clever, no! these pig plutocrats. Not even taking care that such smart young fellows of their own class don't join with us. . . ."

"Which is what we need—leaders," growled Enoch Apricott. "Leaders—just that kind. They don't listen to us—watch the difference in the army between the officer out of the ranks and the gentleman born. The soldiers stand for anything the gentleman orders and growl at the simplest ones the other gives. . . . We've got to get the gentlemen, too. They'll teach the flies to sting—sting hard, gentlemen will."

"But steadily, slowly, it grows," chuckled Nikko, polishing his useless spectacles, one of his many little subterfuges for pleasing Mother. "It grows big, and when gentlemen join, the appointed time's shortened by many years. . . . How can we make him our friend, young Pink—one of us—gradually, gently?"

"You don't bring him here, mind you, Mr. Pink, nor Mr. Beau—not until you're sure of him," warned Mother, fondling her huge tabby-cat. "What he do to get poor—drink—cards—girls?"

Pink shook his head. "Reg'lar guy, this," he said scornfully, "reg'lar guys don't fall for sucker games, . . . though he's stuck on young Lipton's sister over there." He nodded toward Hans Chasserton, sitting cross-legged beside the bunk where Doctor Tack was lying. A childlike curiosity concerning the smokers' activities had developed in him and he could watch them unblinkingly by the hour, seemingly fascinated. He did not identify himself by Pink's description.

"And there's another one oughtta come in handy some day—her," said Beau. "You oughta see how she gets away with the soup-and-fish effects—there ain't a dressier dame along the Lane. If her and him ever started working with us we'd buy the City Hall for a brench office. . . . But I told you how she put in the knock when we offered her fifty-fifty to let us take that Spedden guy?"

"Still, she likes *him*," Pink averred. "Arnold—she's just dead sore on those ten years she put in sweating and she'll join us out some day when this Spedden makes a bad break. Jest now he's playing safe; getting her used to taxis every afternoon and charge accounts for clothes and swell kipping at cut rates in the shed he owns. When he thinks she jest can't breathe without a maid to help her, he'll say, ain't he got something coming from *her*? No man with a face like his'n never got into a bank as no philanthropist, less'n he kicked his way in with a jimmy. . . . And then she'll call on us—how kin she git back at him, and we'll show her." He grinned.

"And once she's been shown and sees how easy it is, she'll fall easier next time," supplemented Beau. "The same way with him—Arnold."

"I've got a place like this—yes," they heard Hans Chasserton chuckle shrilly, drowning Mother's comment. "Better'n this, though. Thousand Chinamen fanning a thousand gals. Bought it off a big Chink with specs like his'n." He indicated Nikko. "Ye-es. Wanted me to go to China and run the King's car, but Mr. Quivvers give me a thousand not to. Ye-es. Oh, ye-es. Didn't see my sister when you was out, did you? I got her name written down here. I'll show it to you." He drew nearer the bull-necked Heidelberg doctor of the sword-slashed face, showing him with an air of mystery a dirty envelope, on which Annie Eunice's full name was written. "Ain't she pretty?" asked Hans, touching the name.

"Sit down and keep still," commanded Apricott harshly, and the innocent-eyed Hans obeyed, trembling. "What did he say about the gum—this Arnold—young fellow? Did Mother's dollar a pound fetch him?" Beau explained. Apricott was to have official physician's paper printed in five names—"Doctor Cagey Kid, Doctor Phony Kid, Doctor Mitt-and-a-Haff, Mrs. Doctor Mother Myhus, Herr Doctor Nick Vitchovitchski—any monakers you like, but different addresses. Write for two hundred pounds each. They can't take a chance letting anybody have more than that." Apricott's face fell. To what five addresses could he trust having the precious stuff sent? His expression interpreted by Pink, it was explained that this was but a subterfuge. The thousand pounds would be shipped directly to the Inn. "Those phony letter-heads are only for the Federal gees examining their books. . . ."

"If your Arnold will do that, he will do more," said Nikko, writing furiously with his forefinger a horoscope of Arnold's future; "slowly, surely. Only the excuse is needed. Make friends with him, young Pink, but steadily, certainly; do not shock him. Gradually, cautiously. The dose of poison that kills can be spread over the hours and save. Mother is a woman, I am blind, Apricott was in slavery too long to lead—and all the while the business grows—the rebellion grows—silently, slowly. Apricott has it; only leaders are needed; those in the enemy's confidence. As your Arnold is. If you need money to spend entertaining him, Mother will give it—eh, Catherine Borisovna?"

And Mother, behind her closed eyes seeing a greater business, a monopoly in theft, one so strong it could crush competition, yet allow her to doze by the fire while one greater than she fulfilled her dreams, was willing it should be called a rebellion or anything else, so long as it accomplished those results.

"I was smoking myself," came in Hans' high shrill voice again. "Old Lipton was with us. Ye-es. Oh, ye-es. On board his yacht I was. A thousand cans and forty pipes. Rich, ain't he, to have all that? I drove Mr. Quivvers' motor-boat over to London yestiddy, too. The King was out, and we had to be back for supper. Everything was all greasy and I give the car plenty of oats. But I says to Mr. Quivvers, always treat a car with kindness. I hate oats. . . ."

"Funny how he gits all those things mixed up—oats! They must 'a' fed him on oatmeal up at that joint, I guess.

And that guy Quivvers going abroad; and him telling him before the accident to treat the car right. . . . I wonder what he means, though, when he pulls that 'everything was greasy' stuff."

"Salve and stuff on his broken nut, half-wit," explained Pink with the air of one imparting polite information. "And the Lipton part's easy enough—his one idea was to own a cat-boat and sail it around; they come from down Chesapeake Bay, him and Annie Eunice. . . . Poor sucker! What a rat that fellow Quivvers is. I'd like to get an eyeful of him once. I'd bend a paving-stone over his beezer. . . ." He was going on to further extreme measures, but Apricott broke in upon him excitedly.

"Better than that. Sting him. Do what he done. Take him. Trim him. Hey?" He laughed in his dry, noiseless way. Nikko nodded and put a hand on Pink's knee.

"That's for your Mr. Arnold," said Mother hoarsely. "Eh, my Nicholas," she added in Slavonic. "He loves this girl. Would he not be glad to harm those who harmed her?"

"You see my children," said Nikko, nodding and interpreting, "this man Quivvers comes some day to your restaurant—all New York comes there. And Catherine Borisovna means that you will have your Miss Eunice and your Mr. Arnold both to help you then."

"And then drain him. Suck him dry." Apricott beat his hands together savagely. "No trash about not taking his last dollar. His sort take ours. . . ."

"Yes, yes, we heard all that before," interrupted Pink, irritated, "but I'll hand it to you for your first idea. Taking him's better than beating him up—hurts more. . . ."

"And when your Arnold's helped you once, and sees how much is to gain, . . ." Mother licked her lips, too. "No difficulty after that. And he'll think up better things for you and Mr. Beau to do, Mr. Pink. . . . He'll be one of us then and he can be brought here. I'll give you each something handsome out of stock the day that happens. . . ." And she waddled off down-stairs before she could be committed to anything more definite.

"Guess she's right at that," said Bean, yawning, "but meanwhile I've been talked out of about ten pills 'at belong to me. So jest you knock off serving yourself, sucker, and remember you're among friends."

IV. Arnold Gives Up Velvet Voice and Hears of an Old Friend

Word reached Arnold every day in the shape of sixteen-page letters of *The Stirrup-Cup*, which, for several reasons—one that Bobbie ruined a leading part—had received no very enthusiastic encomiums up state and in the Massachusetts manufacturing towns where it was now playing. But theaters must be filled at any cost in days of warring syndicates, and so long as Messrs. King and Apelheimer had a young man responsible for company losses the theater managers must stand theirs or go dark for the week. And, as New York needed attractions also, a crowd composed of Messrs. K. and G. Marko, the booking-agents, the owner of the Atlantic theater and two bright young writers caught young and put on salary and at dramatic carpentry and repairing, had recently viewed the production, criticized, censored and left the writers behind to correct. It appeared their first suggestion had been to cut down Bobbie's part, since she was incapable of interpreting it correctly, but Bobbie had made Hugo threaten to withdraw if this were done.

"Which is extremely foolish of her," Bertie wrote, "because Hugo is losing pots of money; and if we were only shaped up we might make a hit at the Atlantic and get back what he's lost and more besides. . . ." But of the sixteen pages daily there were very few devoted to the show, many to accusations of misconduct with other women and despairing reiterations of undying love. "Why, I never see anybody but Hugo and Bobbie, and I have no end of friends in all the cities where we're trouping; and they'd be only too glad to have me out to dinner and supper and take me automobiling and send me candy and flowers and all that; and not stop with candy and flowers either. Why, one young chap in this very town, whose father left him a fur-store, wanted to give me a *sable coat*—a *sable one,* mind you, down to my heels. And I suppose you know, since old Gayton came up to Rochester for the opening and I locked my door on him, no check. And he never missed a week for over two years, no matter where I was. So little Bertie will have to give up her cute little flat and sell her car; even if the play's a hit the car will have to go. But don't think I care, dearest boy. So long as I know you're mine, and mine only, I'd live in a hut and scrub floors. . . ."

Which had the effect of making Arnold highly uncomfortable. The chains were tightening, those strongest chains forged by the weakest hands, by absolute submission, by unasking self-sacrifice. Alberta Arden (what her real name was nobody knew) had met, for the first time in her experience with men, one whom she loved deeply, and "there is no difference in women when that happens," wrote Arnold in his diary about this time; "they want nothing except the man they love. But they do not pursue him as artlessly as their sacrifices seem to suggest. They know sacrifices are their strongest hold upon him; if they could come to him in rags, without a place to sleep or the money to buy a meal, and prove conclusively that all this destitution had been incurred for his sake, they would do so gladly, for they know any average honorable man with a conscience would be their bound and helpless slave forever after. . . ."

As may be seen from this Arnold was uneasy. He was beginning to understand that he was in love with Velvet Voice, and yet—curious as it may seem to the uninitiated—he would read Bertie's insane protestations of savage devotion with a sort of half-ashamed pride, taking up one of her numerous photographs afterward and looking at her pictured beauties—hair, eyes, neck, lithe and supple form—with a quickening heart. It heightened his belief in himself to realize that this girl, so madly desired by many, loved him blindly. Thus, when hurt by the refusal of Velvet Voice to accompany him in preference to the Spedden person, he would, on his return to Beeckman Place, gaze long and lovingly at Bertie's pictures and wish her home again. When she returned she should live at Beeckman Place.

But when Velvet Voice denied Spedden, Arnold would lie awake half the night wondering how he could write gracefully the scoundrelly hint that it was better not to neglect any good friends, and wasn't it more sensible to make her peace with old Gayton that the weekly check might once more arrive? But, though he had trained himself to a good style in prose, he could never find the right words in which to write this; so it went unsaid and he faced his shaving mirror of mornings and called himself a coward and a blackguard.

Another thing that combined to worry him, with Archie's speculation, was the draining of Hugo's bank-account; and the fact that women were responsible for both these things gave him a fancied justification for ill-treating Bertie, for coolly refusing to give her his confidence as to how he spent his time nor any assurance of continued devotion. Which made Bertie miserable and increased her mad passion for him.

He was slipping away fast from Archie and Hugo, whose slavish subservience to their women was the sort of thing for which Arnold's new friends had the largest amount of scorn. Even Mr. Quinn, at home, commenting on the comedies of the daily newspaper—he found only comedy, especially in suicides and murders on account of women: "Haff-civilized, that's what I call such men," this sage would pronounce. "With a dozen females to every regular man."

Arnold was living now in the first stages of rebellion, which gave him a vast contempt for the world at large, a frame of mind that had made Sir Lucas a fighting monk, had driven the Chevalier Etienne into the ranks of the Huguenot clergy; which, had his family remained in France for Revolutionary days, would have made of Arnold a Jacobin, a minor Voltaire or a Tom Paine with a splendid but youthful "Age of Reason." But religion no longer a live issue in these days, he must seek other outlets for rebellion; and so found it among those who were turning the tables by preying on the rich. He even forgave Bobbie for her treatment of Hugo. If Waldemar, Senior, had permitted their marriage she would have been a devoted mother by now.

"There is a period between puberty and maternity during which women commit most of their cruelties," he wrote, apropos of this, "during which they give men most of their misery. Something is missing and they seek it in all forms of excesses, in unchecked passion, in useless extravagance. . . . The obvious cure for which is for the man who loves them to see that they have a child." But he never allowed himself to think of a child for Bertie—the bonds would be unbreakable then. And, every night, he was upstairs at Sydenham's, leaning over the switchboard and urging Velvet Voice to throw off Spedden forever.

It was plain the girl was sorely tempted. Arnold did not doubt she cared for him. And when he was with her her icy resolution melted into water. She was saved only by the appearance of G. Alexander Spedden himself, a great bulk of a man, a mine-owner and promoter, who had at the sight of her an eager hungry look. And more and more, in the privacy of her own thoughts and conversation with Sonetchka, she realized that her one safety, where Arnold was concerned, was to bring Spedden to the point of proposing marriage as swiftly as possible.

"W'at he do for you, this Arnold?" Sonetchka would ask. "He got feefty dollar week—and w'at chance for much more? Zen some day he maybe lose his jhob same as when we meet him, and zen w'at? Doan' you get enough to be poor *once?* You want *more?* Zis million-dollar man he marry you and give you beautiful home and money and everything. Zen you can see your Arnold jus' ze same—he be your sweet'eart—"

"Stop, Sonetchka," commanded Velvet Voice, her eyes blazing. "You think I would do a thing like *that!*"

The Little One shrugged her shoulders. "All ze big people *zey* do—kings and queens and million-dollar people and *barins* in my country; zey doan' marry for loof—zey know loof—how long he last? Zey marry for nice 'ome and plenty money. Even peasant people, if zey have little land, zey marry some one have little land, too; zen more land, zen more next time till the family gets rich. Doan' you be beeg fool."

The suggestion that this arrangement was general had persisted with Velvet Voice, and one night, when Arnold was more importunate than ever, she voiced it. What had *he* to give a wife? How could he have what he wanted and give her anything? . . . Whereupon Arnold had stormed out of Sydenham's and home, where he wrote Bertie a surprisingly affectionate letter. *She* didn't think about what he could give *her; she* just gave *herself,* gave up *everything* and only asked for *love.* Well, she should have it, poor girl. Velvet Voice had proved herself base metal; and here, for weeks, his comparison had been unfavorable to poor Bertie, when she was really the superior.

And the next night he telephoned Pink and Beau he would be at the Chinese Restaurant, but that he was not coming to Sydenham's again.

"Good idea," said Pink when they met, "why waste your money in a sucker joint?" Then, mindful of Mother's advice and deeming the time ripe, "I'll take you to a place where you can have some real fun. Just the gang and their girls. It's due to-morrow night—a blow-off one girl's giving who's going across the big ditch—Europe. She and her fellow's just grabbed themselves some important dough. . . . She got one of these respectable married millionaires to write her crazy letters saying he'd frame up on his wife to get a divorce—the rat was gunna have his chauffeur swear he took her to assignation-houses; fine guy—what? Well, this girl's fellow was wise and asked for a hundred grands to get the letters back, but this gee had the nerve to yell 'blackmail' and had him pinched—"

"Blackmail," said Arnold, "is a poor man's attempt to make a rich one pay for being a blackguard. When a rich one makes a poor one pay it's justice or the law taking its course, or protecting the community against criminals."

"Well," grinned Pink, "this girl's fellow was no boob. He knew that kind of gee always hollered for the law; so while he was in a cell downta the 'Front Office,' he got word to his girl to go to the gee's wife—the wife could git a divorce and big money on the strength of those letters, and would, too, after reading how her husband wanted to make a tramp out of her to the whole world. And, sure thing, soon's the wife see one of the letters was the goods she said she'd give the girl what her fellow told her to ask for. And then she sent for her lawyer and when he said that one-third of all her husband had would be a romp home to git with those letters, she had her junk sent down to a guy who lends to rich people and he give her the hundred thousand dollars on it—diamond tararas and stomach thingmajigs and strings of pearls as long as an East Side clothes-line, Nellie says they were—Nellie Noonan's the girl—you musta seen her in these here Broadway shows hiding behind a spear. Some swell-looking dame she is, too; but it jest shows swell looks ain't nothing without brains. Until she met this fellow of hers she was dubbing around with wine-agents and young stock-brokers and all that kind that thinks they're Simon Legree if they pay the board-bill. This fellow of hers, when she gets stuck on him, says to her: 'Can all that stuff; you're on'y gitting a common rep. Wait till one comes along who kin throw Wall Street 'round his head jest for exercise; play *him* to marry you.' Well, she done it. She cut out the all-night life and lived on her little thirty per, and what her feller made—and see what happened. . . . It takes a man every time even in a woman's own business. . . . I pulled that one on Edna Garry when we were doubled-up, and she comes back at me with some high-brow stuff about great women writers—she was educated, that Garry dame—and of course then I was over my head. But next day I go overta the Astor Libr'y and asks for some books about great women writers and blamed if most every one of them ain't wearing men's monakers—George Eliot, George Sand, . . . bunch more, and when I read about 'em I see they ain't women at all, men's brains disguised in women's figgers. . . . And didn't I wallop that Garry dame for making me waste my time rooting around with sucker stuff."

"Oh, say, Pink," protested Arnold, up in arms: "a sucker's one who plays somebody else's game, and you're being the sucker now. Some of the greatest men ever lived have written books. Don't talk like that. . . ."

"Well, I wish you'd put me wise, then," said Pink wistfully. "Every time *I* pick up one of these here magazines or new books, I jest naturally seem to encounter a lot of junk. Everything dead wrong: stuff pulled 'ud make a dog sick. One writer I was steered on to as one of the big fellows of to-day—tells about a gee who goes nutty on five pills of hop and it takes twenty-five for any feeling at all—that's jest an example; but how kin I believe the rest of the story's true when one thing's wrong. . . . Same whenever I read about grifters or guns—always this 'master cracksman' stuff, kin take the Bank of England, but when it comes to blasting an ordinary box I could kick my way into in my stocking feet, I read something like this: 'The burglar leaped lightly over the garden wall'—when he would have sprung the lock of the gate and took no chances; 'ten minutes later, he was kneeling before the open safe . . .' *kneeling before the open safe*—ain't that rich? How'd he get in the house?—the writer guy don't know. How was he jerry to where the pete was—the writer ain't there with a single idea. How'd the pete get open—electric drill?—carbon pencil?—was the 'burglar'—'cracksman' as those suckers call 'em—a tip-top peter-man, a house-sneak, or a rough yegg working with soup and blanket—don't ask that 'underworld' writer. Underworld!—" he was breathless with scorn—"don't talk to me about books— . . . And even when they're writing jest ornery mush, they step all over themselves—I never read about *one woman* in the magazines that wasn't jest a cut-out paper-doll. There was one I see on'y a few days ago. She's supposed to be nuts over a guy, but when she finds out he fell for forging a cheque once, she turns him down cold, sends him away forever, and realizes she really loves some Willie-boy who never fell for nothing more desprit than the Y. M. C. A. Why, that dame 'ud have loved the scratch-man all the more for having took a long chance. . . . Them skirts is got no respeck fer law—even the highest tip-toppers. They encourage a man to the rough stuff—don't tell *me!* . . ."

"You're talking about magazines—they're different," explained Arnold; "they're run to get big circulations so they can charge high for advertising, and they have to print stuff that will please the public—and writers must live, you know, and mighty few men have a big enough reputation to write what they like and make the public like it, too. I'll write down a list of the few like that, so you won't pick any more 'junk.' And a list of real books; there are *some.* But it's just like everything else when the ignorant and uneducated rule, just like a woman goes on the streets because she can't get pretty clothes and hats and good things to eat unless she does. . . . If those White Slavery muckers would only try to remember *that* instead of listening to girls who've quarreled with their men and want to revenge themselves by getting them into jail. . . . But blaming White Slavers relieves the uneasy consciences of the rich."

He smiled sourly: he had profited by Pink's confidences. The hitherto silent Beau, always absorbed when Arnold explained anything, added, scowling:

"And what d'you suppose they think when those Sunday yallers tell about that little French dame or some other woman who's got her start that way: there's always pages about them and how many hock-rocks they've got and how they spend more than the President gits jest on makin' a swell front. So the working-girl, if she's got the nut of a field mouse, jest says to herself: 'Say—why be a sap? To hell with hard work and hall rooms—me for Broadway.'"

Arnold blazed up again. "And people that've good homes and never did a real day's work, speak about 'em as if they were animals in a zoo; but when they get on the stage, pay double prices to see them. It's the same with writers, Pink. A man who knows anything about the world can't read one novel in a hundred without laughing himself to death. . . ."

He paused, out of breath and a trifle vexed: he had expected applause. He understood their attitude better when Pink explained they had heard much the same tirade from Nellie Noonan's "fellow," "one of those writer fellows, a crackerjack," but unable to exist unless catering to cheap and vulgar tastes.

"Which he says be damned if he will and trained Nellie to go after the big money instead. He sure had to wise her up some to get that old gee to put his fist to those frame-up letters. Some guy!—you and him 'ull get on like a pair of Siamese twins. . . ."

"I'll be glad to know him and wish him success," said Arnold warmly.

"He's got that already," returned Pink. "Success? Ain't he got that hundred thousand? Why can't *we* think up some sich big money racket, brother?" he asked boldly, a hand on Arnold's arm, winking at Beau unperceived.

"I wonder," Arnold returned thoughtfully, with half-closed eyes. With a hundred thousand, he need have no fear of Spedden—might marry Velvet Voice. . . . But, immediately hardening, why should he want to marry any such mercenary woman?

"Eh?" asked Pink; "how about it, pal? Set your think-box going and dope out a way for three smart young fellows to grab a chunk of perfectly good green stuff—"

"I'd even be willing to split ten thousand for a starter—" Beau winked this time, and laughed. "But—straight goods—Pink and me's decided notta take no more rough chances till something big breaks. It ain't worth going to the house-gow for petty-larceny pickings; let Mother howl her head off, hey, Beau?"

But Beau's eyes were still on Arnold. "Think you're on the trail of the big idea?" he asked solicitously; for he had noted Arnold's eyes light up at the recent suggestion. Arnold answered him slowly, thoughtfully, as one still considering.

"What it is, exactly, would be hard to say. But I've got a feeling the big money's in this and that you and a lot more are in on it. . . . Strangely enough, I keep dreaming about the place I come from—the harbor there. Last night I dreamed about being on a ship just outside it. And that's got something to do with the idea you've just woke up again, I suppose, and is just about as clear."

"Not smuggling hop?" asked Pink, acutely recalling a previous prophecy of the vistas this inhibition opened up.

Arnold nodded, an eager troubled look in his eyes; such as animals have at earnest efforts of recollection. "But that's nothing, in itself, just the smuggling," he said quickly: "I seem sometimes to be just on the verge of grasping just what I *do* mean—just before I go to sleep—or when I'm half-awake. And then it leaves me. But it's there—not any petty personal thing, either—something big . . . Oh, well," he added, shrugging and rising, "it'll come some day. Shall we go?—"

When they parted outside, Pink reminded him of his engagement for the following night—the place Fifty-eighth Street—one of those mushroom hotels to be found on every side-street off Tenderloin Broadway.

"And ask for Mr. Jouncer's party," said Beau. "Dan Jouncer's Nellie's fellow."

Dan Jouncer!—Arnold repeated the name as he boarded his cross-town car. Jouncer!—Daniel Eadie Jouncer!—to be sure—and at the remembrance Arnold's stick struck the car-floor as it fell from a numbed hand. That defenseless boy—that harmless sweet-tempered little school-fellow whose battles he had fought. . . .

Dan Jouncer was "The Jinx."

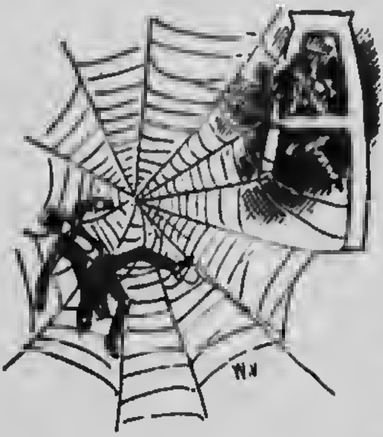
END OF BOOK III

BOOK IV

CHAPTER ONE

IN WHICH ARNOLD GETS A CHEQUE

And Comes Home Again



ARNOLD did not go to The Jinx's party. The thought of that mild-mannered youth in business as a blackmailer was one blow too many. He was stricken with a sudden fear; he saw that he was teetering on the edge of a quag, into which he would soon slip and be engulfed by the mud of easy morals. For one sudden numbing moment, his thoughts had been stripped of sophistries; no matter what the cause, these entertaining companions of his were *thieves;* the atmosphere in which he was spending most of his spare moments was one where robbery, swindling, chicanery of all sorts, were the topics of ordinary conversation. At the Chinese restaurant, all those well-dressed men and women were lawbreakers of some kind, or else contemptible parasites. No matter that poverty and the viciousness of the upper classes were responsible; that was a good enough excuse for the weak. One who was strong could not afford to urge it—it was too contemptible. . . . Strong? *He* had been very *strong* when he lay penniless in the Hotel Tippecanoe; helpless in jail. Had not the arm of wealth and power been outstretched in aid, his address would be Sing-Sing Prison. . . .

He thrust such unwelcome thoughts from him. It had been his own fault; he had been quixotic; what right had one with his advantages to go forth friendless? Part of the strength of the strong people lay in friendships and affiliations inherited, just as was property or wealth. To discard them was as if a medieval knight discarded horse and armor. Now he was on horseback again, he must take care not to be dragged down by foolish sympathy for those less fortunate. He could best aid them by staying where he was.

To his horror, he realized he was thinking along lines of self-deception similar to those with which Waldemar, Senior, and Benjamin Hartogensis tricked their consciences; one through ignorance, the other hypocritically. What was his life now that it was so superior to Pink's, Beau's or Sonia's? The selling of a forbidden drug; an artful circumvention of the law. In what way was that superior?

He shook his fists in rage and despair. Was there no way of circumventing this closing net of circumstance, the net that had already meshed Hugo and Archie—Hugo the cavalier of a chorus-girl; Archie the slave of a selfish woman; himself a tool of dishonesty and greed.

A sort of helpless desperation crushed him. Had it been their fault they were expelled from college and herded to the city? Once there, had it been the desire of any one to fall to low estate? What perverse wind of destiny was driving their frail barks direct for the jagged reefs of disgrace and self-destruction?—for to Arnold, as to all very young men, suicide seemed the necessary concomitant of a lost reputation.

Was he to blame because they called him untrustworthy and unscrupulous in newspaper offices? What could he have done? Other work, honest work—he had tried that once . . . as a result the Hotel Tippecanoe and the jail.

For two nights after Pink had told him of The Jinx, Arnold remained alone in his rooms. By midnight of the second he had come to the consideration of various methods of suicide. It might as well come now as later. What use to go through any more of life the slave of baser men, misery on all sides of him and he unable to lend a hand? In Arnold L'Hommedieu, strive as he might to drown it, the blood of centuries of parsons—the spirit of the fighting monk and the militant Huguenot—was not to be denied. He must battle against evil, he must fight for the helpless, else be eternally miserable. And, being miserable, chafing in impotency, there seemed no reason for existence.

It was during these considerations that he remembered the rubber tube. Velvet Voice!—another bitter memory—this girl who must have gaudy clothes and motor-cars. Again wild with rage, he denied that there was a possible chance he might love such a frail worthless thing. Poor Bertie was far her superior. . . . Yet it was not until he had received Bertie's wire in the midst of these meditations that he began to have sensible thoughts. *The Stirrup-Cup* company would head for New York on the following night, so the wire read. She would soon be here—in this very room. How could he caress her again, answer her affectionately, day after day pretend to care?

There is no simile more true of man in the grip of adverse circumstances than that of the fly in the fast-spinning web of the spider—no matter how he may struggle or where turn another spinneret throws another strand in his way. Bertie! —he had not considered realistically what her return meant. It drove out all thoughts of suicide. Thus the drowning man forgets weariness at the sight of an oncoming shark. He fell asleep over this new problem, and awoke with it.

When he arrived gloomy and dispirited at the office that morning, he found a cheque from John Waldemar for his share in the syndicate's winnings, the accompanying letter informing him that his chief and others of a Congressional Committee were to go West that day on an investigation of certain plans for the preservation and propagation of the few remaining American bison. The cheque was larger by a fifth than Arnold had anticipated; and, after paying his debts, and counting in the thousand he had received from Enoch Apricott, he had, all told, a matter of some thirty-five hundred dollars.

And, as the lightning flash of The Jinx's degradation had shown all things hopeless, there came now a second flash that showed the way of escape. This money would enable him to avoid Bertie, forget Velvet Voice, leave his new-found companions, rid himself of his uncongenial occupation. Back in Havre de Grace, where were honest folk and simple friendships, he would write down what he had seen and learned; would help awaken his slumbering countrymen to their imminent danger.

"I'm going away for a few days—I'm—I'm ill," he told the general manager of the Waldemar warehouses. "If any one comes on personal business postpone it until Waldemar gets back. He'll only be gone a week or so—"

"So he says," returned the other; "where are *you* going, Mr. L'Hommedieu?"

And Arnold replied, keeping the joyousness from his tones only with an effort: "To Havre de Grace—home!"

He would break the news in a letter to Waldemar; Harvey Quinn could dispose of the Beeckman Street lease and join him afterward. He knew of a little cottage he could secure, high on a bluff overlooking the sand-dunes and Havre de Grace breakwater. Here he could watch the homing ducks and sea-gulls, see the ships, almost the Connecticut shore. When Quinn came, he would take that cottage, knock in a great bow-window like that at the Beeckman Place house and there he would write!

But he said nothing of all this to Quinn; indeed could not hurry that person fast enough over packing his bags, lest something happen to keep him a prisoner in a city grown suddenly a dungeon. Quinn endured the hurrying philosophically, nor asked questions; although something of moment was brewing he knew: his quasi-master had never before had those bright shining eyes and eager lips.

By the time the Long Island ferry-boat left Manhattan, Arnold's excitement had brought tears to his eyes. A great thankfulness was in his heart; that of the convict who has won his release. When the train had passed through Jamaica, the last stronghold of the enemy, and fields and forests slid by the car windows, he strained his eyes as might a slum-child on its first outing.

At Havre de Grace station, his father—telegraphed for—waited in the ancient family phaeton, old Julius, snowy of wool, at the reins just as always when Arnold came home for holidays and vacations. Back of the weather-beaten railway offices, fields of early spring flowers, white and yellow and pink, stretched away to meet the forests. Honest homely faces looked up at him from under shabby hats. Even the hideous clap-boarded eating-house on one corner, the dingy saloon on the other, failed to destroy his illusion that here all things were beautiful. His father's face—how serene his mild blue eyes, how fresh and unwrinkled his skin, despite his sixty years.

And then, as they passed old Miss Eastnicky's Harbor View, the sunset on Havre de Grace Harbor, with its rainbow arch of flaming salmon, against which the slim straight masts of sailing ships and a single gull poised above the light-house were etched in the delicate tracery of a thousand growing shadows.

"Wonderful—wonderful—wonderful," breathed Arnold. "How could I have stayed away so long, father?" The old man, to whom such glories were part of his daily life, only smiled tolerantly. "But I'm back now," Arnold added; "back to stay. If I'd had any doubts, all this would have decided it." He waved toward the lofty green-thatched hills that encompassed the Harbor, little white houses clinging to their sides; the masts and spars of shipping below. "I never knew how much it meant to me."

Afar out to sea, heading for the narrow channel, came the Connecticut boat carrying the night-mail, the smoke from its funnels drifting toward the early glimmering harbor light. "Do you remember how I used to watch for that, father?" asked Arnold eagerly. "Did you keep my old brass telescope? Remember how many sermons I copied out for you to get that?—Remember how I used to lie in the big window waiting to see the boat coming, so I could run down to the wharf and get your evening paper before anybody else got there?"

The old man laid his hand on his son's shoulder, then gripped it with a sudden tremor of affection: he did not trust himself to speak.

And, as they went on jogging behind Julius' charge—equally ancient with himself and the phaeton—old dappled Joris, to whom whip or spur had been strangers during all her twenty years—men raised their hats to the Reverend Jorian L'Hommedieu, and, gravely, he returned their salutes in kind.

Just as they were about to turn into Parson's Lane, the beginning of the L'Hommedieu property, a sweatered youth of his own age, his hair crisp, curly and light, hatless—few of the younger men wore headgear here except as protection from the cold—stepped to the pony's head and spoke to Arnold's father concerning his motor-boat on which it appeared he had been working—the boat that carried the Reverend Jorian to his distant parishioners at Green Sands, on the other side of the Harbor. This was one of the mechanics at some garage, Arnold judged from his speech; which was to the effect that his afternoon's work had not remedied the engine's failure to do its duty.

"And, of course, I can come to-morrow morning and worrk on it," the youth admitted ruefully; "but I hate to run up any more time on you, Parson, without doin' any good. I suspect there's watter in her tank; so if you don't have to use the boatt to-morrow, I'll come 'round after hours—Saturday's a half-holiday—and look her over on my own time. . . . I'd *like* to, sir. You've paid for enough time that hasn't done you any good. Why, hello, Arnold," he added, his eyes better-trained to the fading light. And Arnold shook hands with an old public-schoolmate, the mathematician and draftsman of his class.

"And where would you find *that* in New York?" asked Arnold when the youth had gone off whistling.

"New York—ebem! yes," his father replied, in his usual abstracted manner. "He has no right to give me his time that way—I must find him some suitable present. . . . He could have gone there," he went on, without the slightest idea he was not being perfectly clear, "and the people who make the motor-cars Inkermann's agent for wanted him as demonstrator and salesman. Some rich man stopping at the Inn wanted him, too—to take charge—he had four cars and an electric, Tony told me. Lots of offers, that lad has had! But he stays with Inkermann. Seems to enjoy pottering around machinery. And though always complaining about the lack of amusement of nights, he stays. A good boy, Tony—a great friend of Paul's."

That was something like democracy, when a mechanic could be a "great friend" of the heir to the L'Hommedieus—when he could do the Parson a favor, and call his eldest son "Arnold," all without an idea he was being unusual. Arnold smiled grimly at the realization that some of the snobbery of Carol Caton's set had been absorbed by him. Why shouldn't any self-respecting, educated, self-supporting man be Paul's friend and call his eldest brother "Arnold"? Was it because he wore a sweater and shapeless trousers and Arnold a suit from that expensive Avenue tailor?

He was beginning to understand why things were going awry with Americans in the big cities. They had abjured the duties of democracy without achieving the obligations of aristocracy. They had lost admiration for the man who respected himself too much to take money he had not earned; and were giving it to him who respected himself so little that he was proud of never having earned it.

But he had no time for ethics and metaphysics just then: there were too many keen sensations to be felt—the sight of the familiar playgrounds of his youth, the centuries-old house with the moss-covered slate roof that sloped over the long low windows of the first floor, and from which the dormers of the attic story peeped out; the last rays of the sunset finding a thousand sparkling shooting-star jewels in their diamond panes. And, on the long flat slab of slate that had been worn glassy smooth by the feet of the many generations of L'Hommedieus who had used it for a doorstep, Paul L'Hommedieu, his arm linked in his mother's, stood shading his eyes and watching for them.

"Oh, my *boy!*" the small, spry and generally cheerful old lady cried as she put her arms around her eldest son. It was hard to imagine that she and her husband were three-score. A life free of worries (save only Arnold in these later years) and complete absorption in congenial work, had left both younger than many who lacked a score of their years. Only the sobriety of Mrs. L'Hommedieu's black satin dress, the stiffness of her petticoat, and the lace-cap that she wore because she "thought it fitting at *my* age," gave any hint that she was past the middle period of life--while the Reverend Jorian had looked the same for so many years that he had imagined it "due his years" to grow beard and side-whiskers that would disguise his youthful appearance. . . . Paul was destined to be another like him—his face cherubic, his figure chubby, he seemed hardly due to leave grammar-school.

"Where *have* you kept yourself?" he asked, as he linked his arm with his brother's—an affectionate habit—and took him off to his old room. It had been kept as though he still had residence there: his boyhood books—*Ballantynes, Castlemons, Kingstons, Oliver Optics, Hans Andersen, Arabian Nights, Tom Brown*—merry men all, a crew of genial ghosts, that suddenly people the room, crowding upon him with jovial grins and reminding him how ungrateful he had been to think the world a poor place when they had had so many happy times together on those long winter nights before the fire, through those long summer days in the sweet-smelling hay-loft. Arnold hardly heard what his brother was saying.

". . . Why, it's been your first trip in two years . . . You don't know how father and mother were cut up about it. Caught *her* crying, lots of times—and you know she's not one for that. And father sits and stares, doesn't answer you—which isn't like *him*. . . ."

"Oh, I know it—I've been a filthy brute." Arnold closed his eyes and spoke wearily. If they ever knew he had been within a mile of the place and had not even stopped! "What a brute," he added fiercely.

His bat, his telescope, his fishing-rods, his birch-bark canoe swung up among the rafters, even his battered old school-books—all were exactly as he had left them: the pictures he had cut from magazine[illegible]ere still tacked to the whitewashed walls; and, hanging o[illegible]le, the sling-shot fork he had cut from the elm whose branches still encroached upon the windows. And there was his twenty-two caliber rifle and his ducking-gun, the especial pride and joy of his grammar-school days.

"But I'm *back*, Paul," he said finally, choking down an unmanly something in his throat. "Back to *stay*. Not to rob you, kid; no, no! To *write!* To write what I learned while I *was* a selfish brute. . . . It all came over me like a shot this morning—and here I am—*to stay*."

He seized Paul in a bear-hug that even that youth's chubbiness found inimical to the safety of his bones: then dealt him a heavy buffet in the small of the back, and toppled him on the patchwork quilt of the bed, where he was affectionately pummeled. Finally he was forced to defend himself, and a lively scuffle ensued during which chairs were upset, water from the washstand basin was spilled, and a table of books was overturned endangering the plaster of the sitting-room below. From which escapade Arnold emerged minus the years that had separated him from his younger brother, and they answered the dinner-bell by racing each other down the broad winding stairs, half-sliding, half-scampering: then regardless of the maternal lace cap, black silk and stiff petticoat, which should have awed him by their dignity, Arnold lifted the little woman high in air and while he held her, kissed her.

"Oh, *Arnold*, you bad *boy*," she protested, quite as of old; and Belinda, wife of Julius, looked on grinning, and the Reverend Jorian's laugh was almost boisterous.

"He hasn't changed, Mother," said Paul, with a ridiculous attempt to put into his young voice the toleration of age for youth.

"No, he *hasn't*," said she with pretended severity; "the harum-scarum thing he is. Sit down and eat your tea-cakes, sir, or they'll be cold. . . ."

She, herself, could take nothing, so full was her heart, so full would her eyes have been had she at any moment allowed her vigilance to relax. Nor could the elder L'Hommedieu find his appetite. Instead, both aided and abetted their eldest son in stuffing himself with those delicacies of which, in younger days, he had protested never had he had enough. Besides the hot tea-cakes, there were those toothsome crullers and jam doughnuts that weighed a little less than nothing at all, and that nobody but Belinda could make; various spiced preserves—peaches, damsons, yellow tomatoes; grape and crab-apple jams; crisp brook-trout caught only that afternoon and browned with bacon; enormous thin slices of sugar-cured ham—the curing a secret of Julius' smoke-house down by the brook; large strawberries grown under glass by the Reverend Jorian himself and served with cream but an hour divorced from Belinda's namesake, the spotted Alderney that was to be heard giving vent to various rumbling "moos" outside as she, with the others, noisily advertised their dining in the near-by barn.

Arnold, accustomed to the spare measured "portions" of restaurants, swore he had no room for any of the huge joint of browned beef that Belinda, of the continual grin, entrusted to Julius to carve. But when he saw the rare red of slices that curled off under the knife and splashed into their own rich juice, he found room for several; was again recalcitrant and again recalled his refusal when his mother's silver knife slid through the crust of a pumpkin pie as though cutting butter. So, that, finally, the mental helplessness of the overfed seized him, and he slid down in his chair and leaned back to hear the others talk of homelike things as of old, to listen to the crackling of a fire that leaped high in its home of bright blue tiles lighting up the history of Holland pictured thereon, pricking up his ears to the weird crooning of the night-wind that swept up from the Harbor to rock the treetops that waved over the house of the L'Hommedieus. And when the moon rose, church spire and gilded cross were flooded with light as though their good friend of centuries, the Moon, knew, and wished to be remembered to the little boy who had once waited and watched each night for his coming; but whom it had been unable to find over there in the city among so many people who did not care whether it shone or not, so seldom did they lift up their eyes from the mud in which they lived.

CHAPTER TWO

NO-MAN'S LAND

ARNOLD MEETS A PHILOSOPHER

LATE on the following evening, Arnold leaned on his oars while the gray crept up out of the rolling waters, and spread over earth and sky. It had been foggy all day; now the fog-banks were hiding town and harbor; but Arnold was oblivious to the signs that, in other times, would have told him old Mother Cary was brewing broth for her chickens out there on her mysterious island in the gray sea. He was sunk in a sort of rapt retrospection. He was seeing what wise men have seen from the beginning of time: that the evil of man is but a small ill-smelling tallow-dip beside the glory of his inheritance. He came out of his meditations with a start. Not seeing the boat in the mantle of fog, there had swept across his bows, almost brushing his face with their wings, a brace of green-necked, red-footed ducks, in hasty retreat for the shore to join the nesting army in the caves of the cliffs. As he looked after them in their low-lying flight close to the rising wave-tops, he heard, squawking their plaintive "peet-peet," a pair of sea-gulls circling high above him.

Recalled to a realization of the gathering storm by these weather-wise dwellers in the air-currents, Arnold began to row in the direction of the narrow bottle-neck of Havre de Grace Harbor; but a heavy wind had arisen and was capping the waves with white. Moreover, the fog had now grown thick as a Scotchman's porridge and he caught only a glimpse of the blue-black lines of breakwater that indicated the channel and against which the heavy seas were now dashing themselves into thousands of bits of seething white spray; while heavy draperies of sea-mist slowly descended and wrapped them with the color of sky and water. It was now as though he and his boat had been lifted from sea to sky and were floating on heavy banks of cloud. An immensity of grayness stretched about him on all sides hiding all things. The heavy mist muffled the waves so that the long oily swells carried him high into the air without warning, twisting the boat out of its course, no matter how furiously he might paddle. He lost all sense of direction; and when the long searching rays of the channel light were blunted by the surrounding grayness into a blurred incandescence like a light behind a thick and misty window-pane, he saw that his instinct had played him false and that he had been rowing toward Green Sands, the stronger light from which now shot through the fog-banks like a flaming zigzag of heat lightning. But only for a moment: then, Havre de Grace light seemed to have been extinguished and that of Green Sands reduced to pale green mistiness. Meanwhile, the waves rose high—sea-horses shaking white manes threateningly—or came at him in great green rollers sweeping up and over his light craft, or waltzing with it as might a giant with a feather, its direction wholly at the will of the rapid sweeping current. Useless to attempt to turn her now and row against such obstacles—with all his strength it was doubtful if he could keep even the position he held.

He shipped his oars. Fortunately the tide was going high, the current was bearing him shoreward—not to Havre de Grace Harbor, truly, nor to Green Sands, either, but to that long peninsula that stretched between them, a No-Man's Land of dunes and hummocks—sand 'links' of Scotland—untenanted, unclaimed by any, a treacherous coast of shoals and rocks, currents and low tides; a coast that fishers, oystermen and pilots gave the widest possible berth. Cut off from the mainland, at high tide, by water rushing through a wide gully of waving rushes, it was a favorite playground for Arnold and other young adventurers in youth, for there, half-covered by the drifting sand of more than a hundred years, was a spacious single-roomed hut built of sturdy ships timbers—oak and spruce, a tradition among the boys of Havre de Grace being that it had been built by treasure-burying pirates, perhaps even the summering place of the infamous Kidd. . . .

He thought of this hut now: it would keep him dry until the storm blew over, and there was always enough driftwood on the shore to build a fire. So, when the current rapidly bore him in that direction, he gave it no resistance—although he blamed himself for not waiting until Tony should have repaired his father's boat, the motor of which could bid currents defiance. Then suddenly one great roller carried the boat high and dashed it down again to crunch its keel and grind its bottom against stones and sand. Arnold leaped out, painter in hand, into a foot or so of seething white scum and dragged the boat beyond the reach of the next discharge of heavy sea artillery. Artillery, indeed, for the breakers now pounded the beach with the sound and fury of a park of great guns, and the howling wind came through the sea-mist like a charge of shrapnel and grapeshot, whipping up particles of spray that stung Arnold's eyes until they blinked, smarted and wept; that raised red marks on his cheeks. It required some fortitude to persist in dragging the boat beyond high-water mark, after which he stumbled through the fog in what he took to be the direction of the old hut—a difficult progress with such a retarding foothold as wet sand, his feet slipping occasionally as the undermined ground above the burrows of rabbits and moles gave way beneath his weight. Once he caught his foot in a snake-hole, stumbling and falling face downward; another time he kicked his way through a flock of frightened white gulls, hundreds and hundreds huddled in the shadow of scrub pines and gorse-bushes, not seeing them until they rose, their cold wet wings beating against his face, the mother-birds fiercely fighting for their young. This turned him from his path, so that he passed in a circle around the hut and found himself slipping on the gravelly shore again. Starting back patiently, he stumbled into a sand-pit and fell upon something that scurried away—a rabbit probably; and had he not turned to attempt to follow it through the fog with his eyes, he would have gone off at a tangent from the hut that was so near all the while. But, as he looked after the rabbit, he saw another misty patch of light, yellow, this one, and near—some fisherman, no doubt, driven ashore like himself, had sought shelter in the hut. So he pushed on toward the light and came, to his surprise, to panes of glass behind which it shone, but he was too wet and cold to wonder long how the glass came there, only tapped on it with his seal-ring, hallooing loudly the while. Immediately the door was opened and so suddenly that Arnold fell on all fours, in the glare of a roaring fire of driftwood. Rising, he began to warm himself: that was more important than troubling to examine his host, although he mumbled some conventional thanks, and apologized before slipping off his high-laced ducking-boots to dry his stockinged feet.

The man of the hut drew up another chair and sat down beside him—a handsome man with features vaguely familiar, tanned and weather-beaten, his eyes not remarkable for size or color, but deeply set and holding some strange hidden quality that, unconsciously, demanded respectful attention. His dress was simple: a closely fitting jersey-jacket, knickerbockers buttoned over heavy stockings, all of soft gray wool, while he had evidently just discarded the wet hip-boots that stood near the fire for a pair of worn dress-pumps.

He had been giving Arnold careful scrutiny while both sat silent, scrutiny few could have accomplished without the effect of offensive suspicion, or vulgar curiosity.

When he spoke his voice held some quality as vaguely disquieting as that in his eyes. "Very remarkable head, young man. Wonder if you have ever done anything with it?" And, again, despite the apparent rudeness, Arnold felt he had nothing to resent, so only smiled and replied that he doubted he had, but intended he should. Then he surveyed the hut. A list to starboard, effect of a century's wind and piling sand, had been corrected: the walls were now entirely hidden by shelves of well-bound books. On the upper shelves framed prints stood slanted against the oak rafters. Some of these Arnold recognized for photographic portraits of famous iconoclasts, Shaw, Wells, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Bjornson—and lesser lights, Synge, Symonds and Strindberg—all Arnold's own particular Deities. He said as much.

"You're that rare animal—a man who can think, then," was his host's comment. "For which I am duly thankful. Expected an evening of boredom. Happened before. Current circles this peninsula, and drives people ashore stormy days. Had a dozen guests since I came here: one for a week. That was during the blizzard two years ago. He drove me mad. Told me about every blizzard he'd ever heard of, or his grandfather, or his great grandfather, or his friends, or that he'd read about or dreamed about. Spent the rest of the time wondering what the boys were doing in Havre de Grace House bar-room. Jim was playing pool with Bill and giving him twenty balls, and Pete was taking his fourth drink, and Jack was talking politics, and, at home, his wife was just about putting the boy to sleep—in all the time he was here he never uttered a sentence that showed even the intelligence of a marsh-rabbit. . . . If he'd stayed here a day longer I'd have picked a quarrel with him just to escape any more of his imbecile good nature—"

The kettle hissed on the hob, interrupting him: he removed it and infused tea leaves, then brushed off, with a long handled fork, the ashes that covered some potatoes buried in the glowing embers of the hearth. Satisfied with their appearance, he cleansed the fork, sliced several pieces of bacon from a flitch that hung from a rafter, and began broiling them, and as he did so he answered Arnold's questions.

It appeared that the State had owned the peninsula and that he had bought it for next to nothing. He had discovered it years before while cruising the coast and had thought it then the ideal spot for a hermitage. Not that an occasional intelligent guest was not welcome, but he was not likely to meet many strangers whose conversation might be worth the trouble of entertaining them. As he talked the familiarity of his features grew upon Arnold until he could no longer restrain his curiosity.

"I've seen you somewhere, surely," he said at length, busying himself at his host's request, removing the roasted potatoes from their fiery bed. He was not answered; the man professed not to have heard him, even when he repeated his quasi-question as they sat down to dinner together. His cheeks burning, Arnold hastened to turn the talk to those writers whose works lined the walls. But his own ambition to emulate them which presently came out, was met by a shake of the head.

"A pity," said his host briefly. "Too many writers, too few thinkers. Those early writers, who worked for love and the spreading of knowledge, if they could see the trash that pours from printing-houses to-day, they'd be sorry they hadn't left making books to monks. When each letter was made by hand few worthless books got made. And books were beyond any who didn't desire learning mighty earnestly. Of course, the mob had its tale-tellers and minstrels, but their stuff couldn't reach any farther than the sound of their voices. But now every fool can get his foolishness printed and millions of people can read it and confirm their conceit of themselves. So don't write—unless you must."

"I *must,* then," said Arnold seriously.

"Then," returned his new acquaintance, "you should love the truth beyond women or wealth or fame. You should be content to have fools laugh and jeer at you, and rich illiterates and unscrupulous rascals spit in your face and call you 'mad,' 'insane,' 'an anarchist.' Don't expect respect, or love, or friendship. You will be a very lonely man—such as I am."

His voice was careless and matter-of-fact and betrayed no feeling; his loneliness did not seem to weigh on him. "That is," he continued, "if you would find the truth and write the truth. Solitude is necessary for that. One must be alone much of the time to puzzle out the mysteries of love and life and death. There should be no room in your heart for the love of a woman, or the desire for riches, or the hope of fame. The truth will swallow them all up. . . . And it's too soon for you to think of giving up all those things which seem precious as life itself to youth. One must first have lived them all, which you are too young to have done. Go out and *live. Then* come back and write. You can't live and write at the same time."

For the moment his eyes were lit by something that gave Arnold vague alarm; which, perceived in some uncanny fashion, for Arnold was sure he had not shown his feelings, the man made his eyes somber again and his laugh a harsh jarring one. "What nonsense I'm talking—nonsense to *you*. Now, *you* want the women to say, 'How clever.' And the tame critics to say, 'What masterly technique,' and the publishers to put out your book in a gaudy wrapper like that on a box of candy—the monk's frock and the warrior's armor traded for the gaudy dress of the public panderer. And a hack will dramatize it and a 'perfectly sweet' actress will play in it for 'two hundred nights in New York.' . . ."

He pushed back his chair and strode across the hut to stare out at the driving spray and sleet, in the wildness of which he seemed to find kinship. There was silence, Arnold surveying the bare room with its hard pallet-bed, its rough chairs and table, its absence of luxuries. Was this bearded stranger with the odd disquieting eyes some famous iconoclast, such as those whose works crowded the walls? That would account for the vague familiarity of his face.

He filled a long clay pipe and offered Arnold another. He had become calm, self-detached. "You don't believe me? You *do* understand *life?* You know the whys and wherefores? You have a philosophy that will explain the world's apparent paradoxes and inconsistencies?" Arnold stared at him, suddenly alarmed. "I see that you don't—and haven't," continued his mentor; "the lines coming in your forehead show bewilderment, and around your eyes fear, about your mouth bitterness. You have seen things out there"—he waved his hand in the direction of the cities—"and you are anxious to put them down that other people may be horrified, too. Don't! Life holds enough misery without books being written about it, . . . unless the things you saw have taught you how misery may be mitigated. Which they have not by the troubled look that just came into your eyes. . . . Therefore, go out and learn more. You haven't seen enough. It took forty years to teach me. What do you know? Only that life is not what copy-books and Sunday-schools taught you. That, when men and women get to a great city where they are free of watching neighbors they often lose even the semblance of virtue. . . . But how does that help anybody? The cities must be peopled. Where is the error, then? Who is to blame? You don't know."

He drew on his pipe; he was quite placid now. "You *will* know, though," he said presently; "men with heads like yours are put into the world to know—and to teach. But the head must gain many hard bumps first. Then . . ." He paused and crossed to the window. "It is clearing," he said; "you will be able to go soon." Once more he was without offense even as the author of so inhospitable a speech.

"Won't you tell me your name, sir?" asked Arnold, his voice respectful.

"Any name will do," the man responded. "They call me

Tobinson around here. It is as good as any other to figure on tax-reports, and that's the only use I have for a name. We should all have numbers, not names. Then all this striving to impress the public with the superiority of a certain arrangement of letters would cease and much destructive waste of energy would be eliminated. . . . Yes, the stars are coming out. You won't have any difficulty in getting home now."

Arnold followed his pointing finger and saw clear and bright a dark blue belt of sky set with many pointed jewels of light, while the darkness in one place seemed thrust forth on either side and a misty patch, larger and brighter than any dozen light-house lamps, was shining through—the moon. He began drawing on his boots, his mind in a turmoil of dissatisfaction, curiosity, wounded pride. But for the moment this was dissipated by the man speaking again.

"Whenever you can't decide for yourself and want me to decide for you, come again," he said. Arnold hesitated. Should he confide in his inhospitable host the fact that he did not intend to take his advice?—that he would remain and write, regardless of the other's dictum? This fellow underrated him because of his youth. He did not know, youth or no, that Arnold's experiences were those most elderly men never had. As for women—had he not given up both Bertie and Velvet Voice? He crowded out and crushed down the sudden yearning for Velvet Voice that always came with the thought of her. Was she dining somewhere at this very moment with the unspeakable Spedden?

"With all due respect to you," said Arnold, "I think I know best about my particular situation. If I'd stayed any longer in New York I'd have ended up like most of them my age do. That is, if they aren't born to the purple. I'd gone far enough as it was: taken money I would have spit on when I first struck town. And the only excuse for taking it is to try to make myself a better man with it. Put it that way: even if my writing won't be valuable to anybody else, it will be to me."

The man who was called Tobinson shook his head. "You're dodging the issue. You're running away from the fight. You'll never forgive yourself if you give up before you've learned the answer to the Big Problem—*Why?*—And you won't learn that down here."

"Then I don't want to know it," retorted Arnold, his anger stirred. "*Why?*—You may well say it. Why do the hypocrites and the ignorant and the rascals hold most of the power? Why is everything good in life, in business, in politics, in literature, in art, subordinated to the desire of a few thousands to get more money? Why are the fools raised up and the wise men kicked down?—the selfish rewarded and the unselfish beaten? . . ."

"That is just it—*why?*" interrupted the other coolly: "You don't know. That's why I advise you to go back and find out, not moon away your brains down here worrying over it—"

"You are here, aren't you?" asked Arnold savagely.

"I know the answer," was Tobinson's quiet reply. "There's no 'why' about it—to *me*. I lived forty years in the fighting and found out, and now I'm going to try to use my knowledge to help keep the ignorant from making more mistakes. I may influence a few hundred thinkers who will influence a few hundred more—and the ball will grow and grow. But what can you do? Just increase the despair and befuddlement of the average man by pointing out wrongdoing that you can't tell him how to stop. Everybody knows there's too much misery and injustice in life—do you know the result of giving the public the details? It merely gives them an excuse for being crooked themselves. Everybody else is doing it—why not I? That's all the good that comes of exposure without enlightenment. And the answer is not in your eyes. If it were, they would be confident and serene. For me there is no 'Why.'"

"No?" asked Arnold sardonically: "then maybe you can tell me why two of my friends and myself who had intended to live decent lives and be some help to our fellows—why we have been forced into shoddy practises and shady lives? For exposing a rascal, I was expelled from college. For shielding a friend, I was reduced to the worst kind of poverty. For trying to get justice for a helpless woman, I got into jail. By using influence with the most corrupt kind of politicians I got out. To get back to my former kind of life, I had to accept a position with a man who is a wholesale poisoner. To get the little money I've saved, I had to blackmail my employer. . . . And with my two friends matters are much the same—the things they are doing were forced on them as they were forced on me.—Why? *Why?*—No, I don't know the answer and I don't want to, if I have to be entirely destroyed to learn it."

"The answer is perfectly plain," returned the other gravely. "But there's no use telling you now—you wouldn't believe, nor understand. But think on this, and apply it to yourself and your friends. We are not so free as we think. A gigantic Purpose is behind all we are forced to do—a Purpose that has never abated, never despaired, never relaxed, never been unsuccessful—in the end. For all those who can read between the lines, the world's history is only the fulfilment of that Purpose. And knowing something of It, knowing It wastes no energy, I'll tell you something. You haven't had all those bitter experiences merely to come down here and live out the rest of your life with an unanswered question in your eyes. My advice was needless. You will go back."

"To-night," said Arnold defiantly, "I write to resign my position and lease my house—" But, nevertheless, he was chilled by the man's assurance, by his steady gaze that now held something of compassion.

"Such men as you and I—we are the sacrifices," he said, so low Arnold hardly heard him—he seemed to be looking past the walls of the hut into strange wild voids. "Our youth, our hopes, our loves—they all go to learn the answer whether we will it or not. The Cross is the symbol of that sacrifice. Our lives are lost that others may be saved; our identities merged into the Purpose. And the Resurrection is the symbol of the answer: only after we have been crucified can we know that all has not been lost. All has been gained." He started to his feet, his eyes alight. "And then and then only can we teach."

He caught at Arnold's shoulders and stared at him steadily. "I knew you were one of us when I first saw that head of yours. Do you think I'd have wasted time on a mere scribbler? It's not writing with us: it's teaching. The world can *only* know from us. Writing is nothing: scribble and be damned. That's what I'd have said to your tale-writer, your stylist, your scholar. . . . But *you*—when *you* write, it must be with your life's blood. And your time hasn't come yet—nor your Calvary!"

His intensity chilled; it was as if the hands on Arnold's shoulders were tons of ice. The boy sank into a chair, still staring into the unfathomable eyes that blazed with strange fires, hinted at strange secrets. And, for the first time, began to understand dimly that his way through the shades of the unknown jungle called Life was lit by some dancing will-o'-the-wisp that must be followed, even though it led through the pit of destruction. But it lead *through*. . . .

His mentor had sunk into an abstraction even more profound, hardly seeming to hear the younger man stammer out his good-by. And though Arnold repeated it several times, this strange fellow only nodded, staring vacantly. So Arnold strode off toward his boat, stumbling through the wet sand again. The new stars were spangling the deep blue arch, the ladder to the moon lay lightly upon the smooth waters. Near the land a crow, rising toward the trees, was etched in the frosted light; in which Havre de Grace far beyond, with its outlying clusters of white houses on the harbor slopes, seemed like a Mediterranean town of Roman days built on hills of silver olive trees. A fearsome sense of all this beauty caused

Arnold to gulp: to realize how far a man must yet go to make himself worthy of his inheritance.

Moodily he threw his strength into thrusting down his boat from high-water mark, into getting afloat on the shining mirror-like water. His oars, as they washed it, set up little trails of phosphorescent flame. . . .

It was not until he had left the peninsula well behind, that he heard a halloo from the shore, and turning saw on the shelving shingle of the shore white as the whitest of bones, the elongated shadow of a man, its head decapitated by the rising tide—behind it the stranger calling:

"Remember—call on me when you need me." The certainty of his tone chilled Arnold again. Neither answering nor giving any sign he had heard, he bent his back at his rowing, to put between him and this disquieting one all possible distance. But look back he must, and, in that light, he could see when a mile had been covered that the black figure still stood on the white sands. It was not until he had rounded Havre de Grace Harbor that he lost sight of it.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTRABAND

ENTER CAPTAIN DANNY OF THE "CORMORANT"

IT WAS in the late afternoon of the same day that Arnold met the philosopher of the peninsula that Harbor Inn—the shelter of those who came by sea—gained another patron, a bronzed sea-faring man, with teeth as white as his skin was dark, and a small flat head, its shape not unlike that of a diamond-back terrapin's; small of body, too, but with as distended a chest and as swaggering a gait as though he were six feet tall: a sailor by every known mark; although he came by land, on the Havre de Grace Express as the natives somewhat egotistically denominated the one fast North Shore train. Alighting, this person took his place in the ancient tally-ho, to drive which had once been an aristocratic pastime.

The stranger seated himself beside the driver, a tanned and grizzled old coachman, with many marks that at once betray a follower of the sea. He introduced himself to the stranger as Captain Sallust of the S. S. *Oak City;* which, in summer, plied between the Long Island and the Connecticut shores. He owned both steamer and bus, taking his driver's place occasionally for want of other occupation.

"Are you now, mate?" returned the other, seemingly disappointed. "I thought from the cut of you, you were at the old trade, so I did. But there's not a many of us left, Captain. Drumm, my name is, Dan Drumm, captain of the finest clipper-ship that ever weathered a sou'wester off Hatteras. One of the Van Vhroon coffee clippers, so she is. Ever hear of her? —she's made some records for fast sailing." The other captain (neither of them had a captain's ticket, Drumm a first mate's, Sallust only a pilot's) responded with some polite mendacities, which seemed to gratify his fellow seaman.

"And you're thinking of dockin' her here in Port?" he asked, growing enthusiastic in praise of a certain dockyard owned and controlled by his sons and relatives. But it was time wasted—the stranger shook his head. He was looking for a gentleman his owner wanted him to see about some shipments. A Mr. Lommydoo. Did Captain Sallust know him?

"Lommy*doo?*—Lommy*der,*" corrected Captain Sallust instructively. "Do I know north if I look at the compass? You can't steer a course in these waters without runnin' a Lommyder down. O' course, there's the Parson, and then there's Doctor Will, and Lawyer John, and Judge Lommyder, that's J. P., and there's Billy, that's in with *my* son in . . ." He remembered his enthusiastic and seemingly unprejudiced praise of the dockyard and checked himself. "You couldn't toss a biscuit anywhere between here and the Harbor, and not hit a Lommyder," he concluded. Captain Drumm explained that the one he sought was a resident of Manhattan, home for a visit.

"Parson's son, Arnold, I guess he means," said the man who was holding the horses, now that all passengers had disembarked save the stranger. "He's home: I see him last night." Captain Sallust frowned on his officious assistant, and pointed toward the spire of the L'Hommedieu church, aloft the hill.

"They'll jest be setting down to supper, I reckon," he said. "So you better wait less'n you know 'em pretty well. Steer for the Harbor Inn, friend. They have grub there that suits a shell-back."

Which again was not pure disinterestedness for the captain received a commission on all passengers sent there from boat or coach.

At the Inn Captain Daniel Drumm, learning there was no train back that night, engaged a room in which many other captains had slept; and, having finished his supper in the taproom, which bore all possible resemblance to a ship's cabin, barring its size and its great log fire, he set out for L'Hommedieu's house—to be rewarded for his steep climb in the wind and rain that had come up since his supper, only by the information that the gentleman he sought had not yet returned from a trip out in the Sound. This information was given by the Parson himself, who cast troubled looks at the weather. Captain Drumm declined the offer to wait—the communication he had come to make was not one to be heard by a Parson—and stumbled out into darkness and storm again, leaving the request that, when the son of the house returned, he should seek out his visitor at his Inn. It was a most important matter that could not wait until the morrow.

"It would be a fine piece of sail-making if that young man got grabbed by Davy Jones after I took this trouble for him," grumbled the maritime gentleman. "A fine piece of keel-laying that would be, wouldn't it? And it's a dirty night. I'll lay he'll not be far from shore, though. . . ."

With which he consoled himself as he picked his way back to the narrow little lane where of the two hexagonal lanterns swinging before the Inn one had lost its light from the wind. The disagreeable nature of the night had kept the usual crowd of old cronies from venturing out to their favorite taproom; so the captain, after changing his shoes for carpet slippers borrowed from the landlord, disposed himself in a high-backed chair inside the great bricked fireplace, and finally fell asleep.

It was close to eleven when he was awakened by the landlord, who was about to extinguish the lights and lock up for the night. The captain was voicing his disappointment when the beamed oak door swung open from the street, and Arnold entered. Captain Danny saw him, but so juvenile was his appearance in golf trousers, soft rolling collar and plaid cap, that the captain failed to identify him with that important agent of a great firm whose absence from New York had necessitated this journey into the outlands. The host, however, showed the late visitor that deference due a L'Hommedieu, lord of the soil (as was his inherited English way) and pointed out the drowsy Danny, whom Arnold regarded questioningly. Coming on top of the peninsula philosopher's prophecy, the news that some one from New York had been inquiring for him had increased that sense of fatality that had laid hold of him in the little hut: so Arnold had hastened out again, not waiting to change his damp clothes.

Captain Danny could not repress altogether the look of disappointment that Arnold's youth had caused—a parson's son was bad enough; that meant foolish scruples to overcome; but a mere boy—could he be trusted with a secret likely to cost Captain Danny property and liberty? Yet, from the accounts received such business as he had must be transacted either with Mr. Waldemar or his confidential secretary, Mr. L'Hommedieu.

"How d'you do, sir?" He gave Arnold an ingratiating smile. "I'm very glad to see you, sir, so I am: Drumm, Dan Drumm's my name, Captain Danny they call me, and the fact is, I am—Captain of the *Cormorant* coffee clipper, Mr. Lommydoo. Ever hear of her—she's made record runs between here and Rio. A fine ship, Mr. Lommydoo, as fine as ever had her keel laid in this land of the free—which means the finest in the world."

"Go awn," put in the landlord unpatriotically, reverting to his grandfather's view-points: "the best boats come out of the Clyde—everybody knows that as knows anything."

"Not to contradict you any, mate," returned Captain Danny with a velvety snarl, "but this here conversation happens to be private, so it does, and you'll oblige me by sheering off to the windward, if you ain't any objections. . . . I come from your office, Mr. Lommydoo. Your boy tells me you've steered for home, so I follows you. And here I am, begging this here fresh-water gent's pardon for venturing to request privacy jest because I pay for it."

The landlord, who had grown rosier of gills since the first intimation of his intrusion, now advanced, choking with the intention of ordering forth from his inheritance this impudent stranger. But Arnold laid a pacifying hand on his arm, and the two were left alone with the great smoldering logs, the Inn being now shuttered and lightless along its lower floor. When the landlord's last footstep resounded on the creaking stairway, Captain Danny wasted no further time.

"I've got two hundred cans to sell—the pure stuff," said he rapidly, "for which I want twenty dollars gold apiece and I'd like the money right away, sir." This information, transmitted in a thrilling whisper, failed to stir Arnold.

"You'll have to wait until Mr. Waldemar gets back from the West," he returned. . . .

"Now, mister," pleaded the other feverishly, "don't tell me that. That would be a fine piece of docking, that would. Daniel Drumm's as sharp as a steel trap, a regular old gray-whiskered water-rat. I got friends in Yucatan that's done business with you, mister, and that's got cheques with A. L. H. signed on 'em under owner's name. And these here friends they says: 'Go hunt up A. L. H. and if you find his name's Lommydoo don't be surprised none.' And I ain't, 'cause I'm a regular old shark for never being surprised none. And if I gets a cheque for four thousand dollars signed A. L. H., don't *you* be surprised none if you gits a present from an unknown admirer, just like barlyque queens get bookays: *see?*" he winked.

"I don't know any one in Yucatan," said Arnold, becoming tense and suspicious, and lying coolly. The government might have wind of the syndicate's operations and have sent this man to offer him the interdicted smoking-opium; it would prove their traffic was illegal if he accepted it.

"Not Don Guillerme Gomey Pereira?" asked Captain Danny with a decided Latin-American accent. "Takes my meals on his *hacienda* homeward bound from Rio: ginseng, he grows, which is in demand among the New York Chinks. A little private venture of my own." He winked so prodigiously this time that Arnold was quite sure this particular ginseng was a euphemism for the forbidden *pen-yen*. "This time," Captain Danny went on, "he says to me the Don does: 'Danielo, my boy,' he says, 'you do like I done and do business with A. L. H. Shipped him two hundredweight of gum I did and got my cheque prompt, and I'd ship him something what's in that warehouse over there,' says he—speaking Spanish he was, of course, and dignified like all those Dons, but may I drop dead at my wheel or fall out of my crows-nest next trip if it don't mean just what I'm telling you. And then he steers me over his poppy fields and there's a big shack with a lot of *peons* stirrin' and pourin' and cookin' and sweatin', and a big Manchu Chink, six foot three with a pair of big horn spectacles on him, bossing the job. 'Tell *el capitano* where you worked one time,' says the Don, and the Chink answers in English as good as what I talk myself: 'Li-un factory, Shanghai'—not Fak-Lung: *Li-un*." Danny interpolated triumphantly. "Then the Chink says: 'I make 'um all same Li-un here. You smoke?' 'No,' I told the heathen devil. 'Too bad, I show you better,' he says; and takes us into his own hut where there's a pipe and lies down and cooks himself a pill. 'Smoke?' says he, holding it under my nose. And then I says: 'Danny, here's the real thing, so it is. Thousands would like to be in your shoes, so they would.' Well, the long and short of it's this, Mr. Lommydoo: just when the Señor Don's got a fortune in hop, the United States up and passes that law about no *pen-yen* being brought in. Which is a fine piece of sail-making. And the Señor's got to sell it to those that've got the nerve to dodge United States Customs sharks. Old Danny done it: he's a long-nosed ferret when it comes to dodging. And here's two hundred cans of pure Li-un offered at half of what you kin git for it. I could peddle it myself but there's Custom spies all over Chinatown and they might keel-haul me before I unshipped a quarter of my cargo. With your crew and discipline and no suspicion, you ought to get fifty a can for it, so you ought."

"*I* ought to," said Arnold mechanically.

"So you ought," agreed Captain Danny eagerly. "Why—what's the matter, Mr. Lommydoo?"

The use of the personal pronoun had electrified Arnold. His eyes shone, his hands trembled, his body shook. "You didn't tell anybody at the office what you came to see me about?" he demanded fiercely, clutching at the old fellow's knee. A look of scorn answered him. Arnold breathed free. Why not a personal deal? This came as no response to an order from Waldemar: he had ordered only gum. This was a windfall into his own lap. He saw now by seizing on such lucky chances as this how men made fortunes. Waldemar was away. Arnold could utilize the warehouse force to ship the stuff to various people whom he knew would be eager to receive it. That is, if Enoch Apricott and his patron, Mother Mybus, would not want the lot—which, in all probability, they would. He knew, from the tales of Pink and Beau, that Apricott sold the inferior stuff of his own manufacture for thirty dollars the can. This would bring at least a third more, therefore Apricott should be willing to pay twenty-five at least—five thousand dollars. . . .

"Give me half a dozen of the cans to examine to-morrow and I'll give you my cheque for three thousand if I find them right," Arnold said, recovering his composure. A wail from Captain Danny rent the air. Mr. Lommydoo would get more than double that. . . . Sooner would he take chances and peddle it himself. It was a fine piece of marlin-spiking, so it was.

"Then good night," said Arnold, rising. He had learned well the rôle of business man since his Waldemar employment: had chaffered with too many buyers and sellers not to know the tricks of the game.

"And a lick and a promise for all my risk and trouble?" whined the diminutive captain: "that's a fine piece of—"

"Don't be absurd," returned Arnold in a weary tone. "You never paid that Mexican more than six or seven dollars apiece. And did you pay duty?—or freight?—No! Then you're doubling your money. I'm not even doing that. . . . Take it or leave it." His heart was bounding high: this sly little seaman would not refuse.

"The way that Señor Don spoke to me of Mr. A. L. H., I never thought he'd drive a Scotch-Jew's trade with a poor simple old sailor man," grumbled the apparently grieved and disappointed mariner.

"Well?" asked Arnold sharply.

"All right, I give in," said Captain Danny. "Thirty-five hundred!"

Arnold turned away and reached the door. "Thirty-two-fifty," screamed the other, catching his arm: and, when Arnold threw off his hold: "Have it your own way, sir. But it's a fine piece of—"

"Of what?" demanded Arnold, and Captain Danny grinned.

"Have a cigar, sir," he said soothingly; "best they make on the Yucatan coast, which is to Cuba like a captain to a cabin-boy."

"There's a train to-morrow at eight-ten," said Arnold, the cigar directing attention to this information on a wall time-table. "I'll meet you at the station. Be prompt, now, because

I want to get the business over, and be back here by nightfall."

He spoke defiantly, as though the peninsula philosopher heard him. How little that pretended sage knew, after all, with his Purposes, and Sacrifices, and Whys—and what nots! Here, like a ripe apple, there was about to fall into his hands sufficient extra money for more than another year of uninterrupted work at Havre de Grace. By the time five thousand was spent, he could have won honor and respect with what he had to write. He wished the philosopher were here to witness his triumph—he and his "fights." . . .

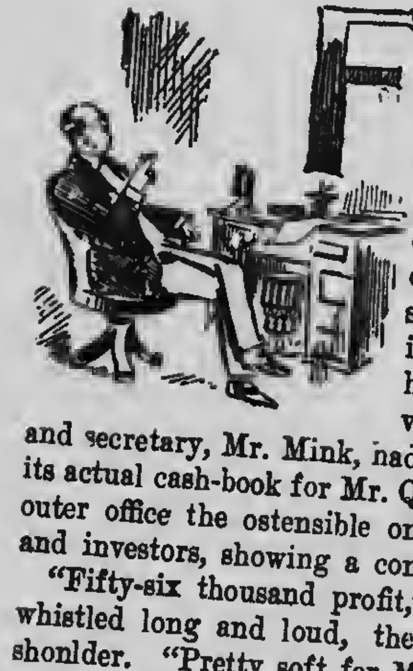
"I'll be there, don't you never fear, Mr. A. L. H.," said the owner of contraband. "You can go to sleep on that: you kin set your alarm-clock by Captain Danny. Good night, sir, and all the harm I wish you is that you sleep like a sailor on watch when the mate's groggy—good night, Mr. Lommydco."

And after Arnold had gone, the sailor-man soliloquized: "Think you've done something clever, I suppose. And I'd been glad to git twenty-five hundred." On which he grinned delightedly and sought the ancient room where so many captains had slept before him.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HAPPENINGS OF A SINGLE DAY

I. Quentin Quivvers—Benefactor



FIFTY-SIX thousand, six hundred dollars, net profit," repeated Mr. Peter Quimby Quivvers, the "P. Quentin" of his own manufacture whose name did not in any way figure upon the stationery, or in the gold lettering on doors and windows, of the "Instantaneous Boiler Company, Limited," in the private office of which he sat undoubted master. Its vice-president, general manager and secretary, Mr. Mink, had just completed the balancing of its actual cash-book for Mr. Quivvers' benefit—although in the outer office the ostensible one was on view for stockholders and investors, showing a considerable net loss.

"Fifty-six thousand profit," Mr. Quivvers again repeated; whistled long and loud, then smiled, patting Mr. Mink's shoulder. "Pretty soft for Minky, eh? a dub who was playing paper-weight to a park bench a year ago. The five thousand that's coming to you 'ull put you so firmly on your pins an ice-wagon couldn't knock you off again."

But Mr. Mink only scowled his dislike for his patron. "That kind of money's got the curse of God on it," he said sourly.

"I don't expect any luck with my bit of it, I tell you that. It'll be a lucky thing for me if something don't happen to the kid or friend wife for mixing into a thing like this. . . ." He continued in a like strain to the great amusement of his benefactor, who whistled in gentle forgiveness as though humoring an amiable lunatic.

But one type of man uses the expression "friend wife." One passes a thousand Mr. Minks at the noon hour when from skyscraper rabbit-warrens multitudinous rabbits come forth, and nibble in crowded lunch-rooms, shedding office-coats of alpaca, paper cuff-guards like gauntlets without gloves, green eye-shades—daylight being as rare in the warrens of the human rabbits as in their animal prototypes. Thus is the clerk type developed: entry-clerk, bill-clerk, file-clerk, bond-clerk, stenographic clerk, copying clerk—all manner of clerks; as similar in appearance as in tastes and opinions—or lack of them. As great businesses become gigantic machines, creative skill and initiative become concentrated in the lords of the dynamos: the rabbits do but oil wheels and keep belts in order.

Such an oiler and order-keeper, then, was Mr. Mink. You might pass him in the rabbit swarm multi-million times yet see him not, so colorless was he, as characterless as a drink of water—and as necessary. Yet, as human rabbits do, he imagined he had a "strong" face, "not handsome but strong," as Mrs. Rabbit had learned to say to friends and neighbors and to expect in response: "Like my Ed"—or "Hen"—or "Willie." And because each rabbit has found one person who thinks him a strong man, each Mrs. Rabbit is loved devotedly despite eternal bickering: this indeed, constituting their chief, almost their only, relaxation. Dear to the rabbits is that bit of doggerel that enables them to exchange knowing grins and, when drinking, to shout with wild laughter: "My wife's gone to the country, *hooray*—Hoo—Ray;" but each is lonely when she does seek the sylvan solitudes taking "the children with her;" and she is sure to be welcomed back with frantic endearments.

The reference of Mr. Quivvers to the park bench was not totally justified. . . . Mr. Mink had, indeed, so sat a year since, and had seen Quivvers loom up in the apparent rôle of angel of light. But a perfectly good hall-room held Mr. Mink's inherited hair-trunk containing his Sunday clothes and stiff shirts; and enough was in his pockets for said hall-room to go on holding them for a week or so longer. But then there would be an ignominious return to Parsonville and a pitiful plea for his old place in the Emporium. Wags and wits would refer for the remainder of his life to "that city fellow, Paul Mink," howling with glee. He had left Parsonville in some pomp to take a place secured for him by the correspondence school that had taught him stenography.

But his lack of fundamentals had rendered his proficiency in pot-hooks a useless accomplishment: his spelling and punctuation made the value of his speed negligible. . . . And the correspondence school had to fulfil their promises to other graduates: they had done what they promised, he could expect no more. . . . Then the usual story of a man of minor value engaged in competition with a whole city-full. He complained luck had not been with him, until Quivvers—who had Mink's acquaintance from the days when Quivvers sold scented soap "on the road"—began to portray the before mentioned angel.

To Quivvers, Mink's very defects were abnormal virtues. Out of the wise East comes the saying that most difficult of all is to find an honest partner for a swindle: it might well have been written *impossible*—save when honesty is in direct relation to density. Even now, when the cataclysm was upon him, Mr. Mink sought to convince himself that, actually, the angel of light had also been deceived, endeavored to explain away the duplicate cash-books. . . . "You give me your word you thought Mr. Marchanter's invention was on the level?" he now asked. An affirmation would greatly assist in his moral whitewashing.

Mr. Marchanter was the president and secretary of the company, the inventor of the Instantaneous Boiler, a device that when attached to a spigot and to an electric plug, yielded boiling water within the minute. Mr. Quivvers had found the capital to form a limited corporation to market his dear friend's patent; Marchanter, president, and Mink, treasurer, holding all the other offices. Quantities of stock had been sold. For a brief period, the article had been manufactured and, for one month, had been widely advertised. There was no doubt it could do precisely what it claimed: the demonstrations proved it. Electrical and mechanical engineers had examined the network of tiny wires within each metal cap, pronouncing the invention excellent; and the brief advertising campaign had showered Instantaneous Boilers in all sections where hot water was a luxury: in districts where farmhouses had been built before the days of plumbing; even among city-dwellers who let fires lapse of nights. Many were bought in hospitals and in other places where drinking water is boiled. Its success was complete.

Then the electric bills came in, and it was discovered that the Instantaneous Boiler was almost as costly in upkeep as was a motor-car. The actual cost of one fluid drachm of water boiled by Instantaneous methods was almost equal to the same amount of radium. Only the companies of electric power supply had a good word for the inventor . . . so that indignant letters had begun to reach the company's offices, enraged owners of Instantaneous Boilers resident in Manhattan and its environs made violent calls on its inventor, whose artistic temperament was so annoyed, after a week or more of such insults, that he had decamped—to all appearances—for Europe, taking with him one-half the cash on hand: claiming this as his share in the letter he left behind.

As a matter of fact Mr. Marchanter was no inventor at all. Mr. Quivvers had long since discovered that by studying the reports of the Patent Office, he could find many impractical patents that could be purchased for next to nothing. In this way he came to know all manner of inventors, some of whom often brought him their models before sending them to be registered. The Instantaneous Boiler had come to him in this way, and he had bought the sole rights for a small sum, which would permit that crack-brained enthusiast, its originator, to continue work on his masterpiece—an aluminum motor for aeroplanes.

So, "My dear Mink," said Mr. Quivvers, shaking his head, "I am surprised as you that Marchanter's invention has not been a gold-mine for all of us. . . ." But he said it negligently, flippantly. No longer under the necessity of humoring this nonentity, Quivvers was deriving some amusement from his qualms of conscience.

"I don't believe you," said Mink, suddenly moved to wrath. "And I don't intend to do what you say at all. My good name is involved. I won't be thought a cheat and a rascal. I—"

"*Your* good name?" murmured Mr. Quivvers, smiling broadly. "Why, whoever heard of *you*, Mink? Quite a clever little clown, ain't you? Go on, you scalawag!" And he nudged him with an elegant elbow.

"You meant to cheat all along," continued Mink wildly. "That's why you wouldn't have your name mentioned in connection with the Instantaneous—you and your brokerage firm not being allowed to float stocks and sell 'em, too. . . . And listen, I'll put the police on to that villain Marchanter. They'll get him before he *gets* to Europe. I'll see the people who invested in any stock *my* name is mixed up with get a square deal. I—"

"Quit it, old pal," commanded Quivvers, rising. "Quit it and behave. You can't do it any more than I can dive off the Singer Building into a bottle of ink. Behave yourself, you little rascal." And he grinned at Mr. Mink. "Don't you know when you signed that cheque with Marchanter for the twenty-five thousand that you were aiding and abetting a felony? Why did you sign it?"

"Why," faltered Mr. Mink, "why, he said it was for expenses of installing machinery for our factory, and I called you up on the phone and you said it was all right. . . ."

"Did you have any witnesses to that call?" Quivvers was still grinning. He knew very well only Marchanter had been present.

"So you see," he summed up for the benumbed Mink, "you see you're just a little comedian, 'cause only a comedian would send for the police to arrest himself. . . . If you hadn't put your name to that cheque along with Marchanter's he couldn't have gone off with the goods. The court would probably compel you to give up the part he gave you for helping him. Swindle the company, would you? Ah, you little laughing rascal, you—" Mr. Mink interrupted with a flow of profane protestations.

"*I know,* old pal," acknowledged Mr. Quivvers; "but the court *won't.* As for mixing *me* into it, not a chance. All the papers you've got to show prove I was one of the comeons; bought stock myself—"

"Yes, and sold it before you sold any of the company's," returned Mink bitterly. "Got it for next to nothing and used our advertising to sell it at par. Why, you must have made a fortune out of this swindle."

"And you, dear old pal, how about your salary? About five times what you ever got or ever will get. And five thousand, five more than you'd ever saved. So considering the amount of brains invested, you're five times better off than me. . . . Stop that blubbering and hire yourself out with a circus where your talents as a clown 'ull be worth a fortune to you—"

For Mink had put his head between his hands and was endeavoring to conceal evidences of internal conflict and consternation. "A dark wet cell for yours," Quivvers went on; "never nobody to talk to and bugs running around the floor that never were in any encyclopedia. Think of being alone with all kinds of bugs. Not *alone.* You'd have a cell-mate —a cockroach you could put a saddle on."

He laughed so heartily that he must put up a fleshy jeweled hand to a thick throat to loosen his collar; for Master Quivvers had become bulky since his college days. Then he pushed the telephone receiver toward Mink. "Go on, phone the police, why don't you? Marchanter's getting ten minutes' more start of you."

He gazed idly out of the window at the forest of shaftlike buildings below; coolly he awaited his companion's composure. "As it is," he went on when that person's short sobs no longer annoyed him, "you go home to Parsonville, set up a little place of your own; have everybody imagining you made a monkey out of old Manhattan; had it jumping through *that*. . . . The wife 'ull think you're a hero, you get to be one of Parsonville's leading lodge-members and teach your children to bless the name of your best friend, P. Quentin Quivvers, Esquire. Get me, old scout? . . . Now we'd better have a dress-rehearsal of what you'll tell the stockholders at the meeting. I'll leave six thousand for cash on hand—wouldn't do to make a clean sweep. The remainder, the authentic cash-book shows, was paid out for experimental purposes and new machinery. The bills are all O. K.—" he touched a bundle of receipts from the Columbia Iron and Molding Company, organized under the presidency of other men of straw in Quivvers' employ, their offices occupying one small room in an inexpensive building. "And you've got the lease on our proposed factory—" (This was a ramshackle building on a piece of waste land, bought up by Quivvers—six months' advance rental from the Instantaneous Boiler Company immediately indemnifying him.) "Then there's the office furniture and safe and the boilers on hand,—all assets. Be sure and list everything down to the fountain-pens to prove you, the vice-president and treasurer, are a strictly honest man, and meanwhile be kind enough to add your name to this perfectly good blank cheque Marchanter left with me some time ago lest we be embarrassed by his leave-taking." He grinned again. "It's dated two months ago. I give you my cheque for your five thousand, old pal, when you put your neat little John Hancock along with March's."

Mr. Mink took the extended pen and traced his name, not raising his dull eyes, and Mr. Quivvers, after scrutinizing it, made a calculation and directed him to fill in the cheque for the company's balance less the six thousand cash to be left to the creditors. "And here's your cheque, my little clown," he said in the winning tone of a friend of humanity. "Now, I should advise you to set everything in order and notify the stockholders of the terribly sad news. It's the only thing left for an honorable man to do."

Quivvers, as he spoke, was glancing at the list of those same stockholders; and, his gaze fixed on the name of Archibald Hartogensis, laughed aloud. "I'd sooner see his there than any ten others," he said, "sooner than anybody's else except that big burly Hugo, or that white rat, Arnold L'Hommedieu. Three smart fellows!" he snarled. . . . It was seldom he permitted his face to assume any save a jovial humorous expression, had long schooled his features to that end. Well that he had, for, as he gloated over Archie's rage when he should discover his great loss—he was by far the largest stockholder—Quivvers snapped his teeth savagely, and his heavy chin hung in ugly folds over his high collar, his small sharp eyes narrowed, his whole appearance was one to fear and to distrust.

Presently he aroused himself from this pleasant carnival of gratified spite. "Come on, Minky," he said, struggling back to his usual air of amused contempt, "I must rehearse you in what you've got to say to them. Your cue's the honest man grieved and hurt at false human nature. You've been victimized along with them. Lucky you've got the kind of face grafters pick out to sell the Flatiron Building to. . . . Now, suppose I'm the stockholders and you're going to break the bad news. I'll storm and rave and ask furious questions and you'll storm and rave and answer them. Now get what you call your brain ready. I'm going to begin. . . ."

All through the afternoon they continued, actor and stage-director. And before he went Mr. Quivvers dictated the letter Mr. Mink was to send out, and Mr. Mink took it down rapidly and incorrectly. After which Mr. Quivvers slipped into his bell-shaped frock overcoat, on one sleeve of which swung his walking-stick, and taking from a gold case, monogramed in diamonds, a fifty-cent cigar, lighted it and called for a taxi to drive him to his club, where, as P. Quentin Quivvers, dealer in unlisted securities, "bucket-shop" keeper in the parlance of the curb, he had the admiration and esteem of many minor lights of the stage, to whom his appearance was the equivalent of a good dinner, washed down by a respectably aged wine.

Conscious of his worthiness, he smiled pleasantly upon a newsboy, giving him a dollar for a paper, the boy's perfervid thanks and those of the taxicab driver, whom he bade keep a quantity of change, absolving his conscience from any sins; indeed, giving him the pleasant feeling of a philanthropist. Besides had he not been generous to Marchanter and poor little Minky—had saved both, in fact, from an untimely end, restoring them, solvent, to their overjoyed families. But he did not expect gratitude. This world was an unappreciative sort of place—the consciousness of having done good must suffice.

He entered his west of Sixth Avenue Club, cheery and bright, hailing all within sight cordially, inviting them to refreshment, bringing more joy into the world. How could any accuse him of being a power for evil? Yet if Minky ever broke down. . . . He took a number of drinks to banish the unpleasant thought.

II. On Forty-Seventh Street

At about the time Mr. Mink was having his first portent of bankruptcy Arnold, a package under his arm, accompanied by the Phony one—whom he had uprooted from his bed at that unseemly hour which most of the world called noon and Pink "midnight"—made his way across Broadway toward a street in the upper forties. Since taking on the duties of dancer at Sydenham's Café de Paris Cabaret, Pink and Beau, no longer needing a place where they could at any moment seek safety in seclusion, had removed themselves from the Yew Tree Inn, and from the indignant contempt of Mother Mybus. So that when Arnold appeared at the small apartment hotel where they were in residence and in bed, Pink had frowned on the idea of going below Fourteenth Street to test the quality of Captain Danny's sample, having no mind for Mother's cunning arguments regarding the chances for wealth he had deliberately abandoned in turning "square." If he refused to listen the vials of wrath would be outpoured upon him for an ingrate, an upstart puppy—this from Mother. For a traitor, a condemned Judas—this from Nikko; and a pestilential coward—this from Old Mitt-and-a-Half. . . . These reproaches would be redoubled because he had also led Beau and Sonetchka astray, according to the Inn's light, robbing Nikko's "rebellion" of two sturdy soldiers, and even worse, decreasing Mother's revenues.

At first the Sydenham employment had seemed to the Inn but a subterfuge that would for the moment deceive the police, furnishing as it did evidence of lawful occupation. As for Sonetchka and Beau—being free to choose—the Inn had not imagined that they could endure for long the dulness of honest pursuits—theirs was a mere divertisement.

But it had not proved so. The novelty of sleeping of nights without fear of the law, of awakening of mornings facing no necessity of taking new chances which, for all they knew would put them to bed in a cell—this had not worn off.

"I tell you a guy's got a nut of pure ivory when he's a grift," Pink concluded, explaining this to Arnold; "that is, if he kin grab himself shed and doughnut sugar by a regular job that don't ask a man to be a nigger slave. . . . 'Cause grifting ain't what it used to be. Fourteenth Street's got

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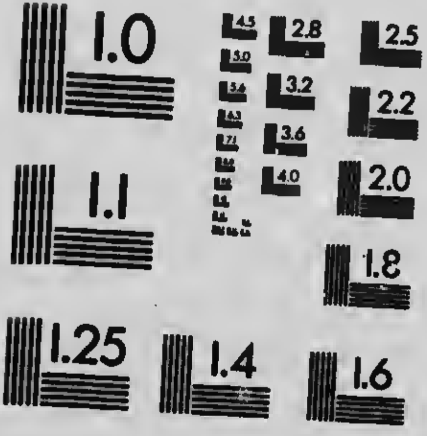
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protection down to a system—a regular underworld tariff on larceny. What's more, it's got stools and coppers keeping tab on you and knowing how much you snatch to the last jit. It's getting like bringing junk from Yurrup. You'd sooner give it up than pay the duty. I was jest a little sucker to keep on the gun when there was jobs like this one laying around loose. I'm wise to the layout now. Getting dough is like playing cards. If they catch you cheating they not only take what you've won away but kick you out of the game besides. The thing to do is to find out some way of *beating* the game. Same way with the law. It's a game. You bluff around it somehow and that's 'good poker.' Like that Waldemar you work for, buying up all the *pen-yen* and not selling it unless you've got a doctor's letter-head. . . . Catch me working for coppers snd politicians any more. Which is sure what you do when you grift. *You* take the chances and *they* git the dough. Not in your Uncle Pink's. . . . That's why I'm passing Mother up. This place I'm taking you is where I smoke nowadays—one great joint, believe me—and the fellow who runs it has a brother who's got about a thousand votes in his pocket, the best bunch of 'colonists' and 'repeaters' in New York. So he ain't troubled none by nobody even asking for their 'envelope' Saturday nights, and the captain 'ud as soon think of pulling a church. . . . Here we are."

The entrance was not impressive. It was one of a row of high brownstone fronts in one of those neighborhoods once occupied by small merchants, head salesmen, superintendents of factories, . . . others enjoying a comfortable affluence. But since the day of modern apartment-houses and their many inducements these abandoned villsges have become the lairs of lodging-house keepers, and interspersed among them are places even more decorous in appearance, their shades never admitting the sunlight. These yield a rich revenue to the collectors of "protection"—houses of chance and houses of greater chances still; occasionally among them such a one as that to which Arnold was now admitted—once the Chinese attendant had peered through a corner of one of the glass panels and had seen him in company with Master Pink.

"By the bye," that inquisitive young person had inquired while they awaited the answering of the bell, "you say you've picked up some real Li-un? Gee!" And he smacked his lips. "I'll soon tell you—though if you did you've got Christopher Columbus lashed to the mast. There won't be enough of it left in a year to make a polo-cap for a flea. . . . How'd you gi—get it?" The opening of the door had postponed the explanation, and Pink now led Arnold up the soft-carpeted stairs. "There ain't many places like this left, go bet your shirt on that, boy," he explained. "Though the town used to be full of them twenty years back, the old-timers tell me. Nowadays it's one guy in a one hall-room with one layout, one customer at a time. Since this new law you can gi-*get*—say, kick me in the pants every time I start pulling that rough-neck pronounciation, will you? I'm trying to learn to talk the way you educated ginks do—there's only small potatoes for the fellow that crooly massacrees the English langwitch the way I done. Did, I mean. . . . Since this new law you can *get* a two-years' bit at the least jest fa—*just* for *selling* the stuff. And if they catch you *making* it, they throw the book at you and tell you to add up the sentences. . . . So the only people who've got the nerve are those that're so broke most of the time they haven't got a bean. As for fitting up a joint like *this,* nobody 'ud dare do it that didn't have a pull as long as an East Side clothes-line. . . . The down-stairs floor is a kind of a Chink restaurant—strictly private for the people who come here. You get awful hungry after smoking, and thirsty, too. The second floor's the joint and the private rooms. There're some swell people come here, you bet. The third floor's private rooms, too, and the fourth's where the Chinks sleep—he won't have anybody but Chinks, thinks they're the greatest people on earth—don't know a thing they hadn't ought to know when people start asking questions. He don't live here—got a swell flat on the Drive, they tell me, and his wife rides around in the prettiest little runabout you ever laid eyes on. It's all right, Sam."

Pink had knocked on a door at the head of the stairs, the Chinese who had admitted them to the house having vanished. Arnold now heard a faint rattle which, had he been better informed on such matters, he would have known for the closing of a tiny shutter, their presence having been already announced. When they stepped upon the last stone but one they rang a bell, the attachment of which lay under the carpeting; thus they were viewed before they knocked. Such precautions were necessary, even to one with extraordinary political influence, in a city that swarmed with societies for the prevention of this, that and the other, whose agents were everywhere in search of evidence and whose activities and accusations reaching the newspapers necessitated the closing of such places to save the Police Department's "face," which meant a week or so without business.

The ante-room to which another Chinese now admitted them was fitted up plainly like a physician's or dentist's, magazines scattered on a center-table. At an open escritoire in a corner sat the proprietor in consultation with his Boy Number One, checking up the sales of the previous night, calculating profits, piles of silver and bills before them. Boy Number One, a neat little person in blue serge, black tie, low-cut patent-leather shoes, immaculate collar and cuffs, was running swift fingers over the strung beads of his counting-box, the ancient *abacus,* which seemed to give results much quicker than the proprietor's double-entry bookkeeping, the Chinese announcing his totals first. With his *queue* deleted and his thick blue-black hair parted and brushed into glossy smoothness, he seemed in that dim light to resemble more nearly a Portuguese, a Sicilian or a swarthy Greek.

The Chinese who had opened the door and who, like all the other minor servants, wore the long blue cotton robe, tightankled breeches and felt shoes of his native land, signed the visitors to wait, and the proprietor nodded and grunted at Pink but went on with his work. He was an English Jew, fair-haired, fair-skinned, with no Hebraic features, only an Oriental something of sensual eyes and lips. He was attired as are thousands of prosperous members of that vague company that lies between lower and upper middle class, which betrays its origin by wearing the sort of clothes shown in shop-windows, which never happens until the upper class have ceased to wear them. Mr. Clabber's collar and tie were too stiffly correct, his waistcoat too low (it would have been too high if that happened to be current), his jewelry too florid—several solitaire diamonds adorned his fingers, a huge triangular one his tie,—while he wore buttoned patent-leather boots with attention-compelling tops of light lavender kid. His face seemed very youthful and guiltless for one in such a trade, and his manner, when he laid down his pen and nodded to his head servant, was one of frank friendship.

"Mr. Clabber, Mr. L'Hommedieu," said Pink, his phonetics of Arnold's surname defying any printed reproduction. "Mr. L'Hommedieu's got some of the real stuff under his arm there. He wants to give it a try-out and I told him your boy, Tom Lee, could give him the real dope on it. Mind if he lies down with us a while?" And as Pink was a steady customer and, moreover, brought others, Mr. Clabber assented. But he scoffed at the genuineness of the article.

"Weal stuff—thay, you make me laff. What d'you mean, you lost your dawg! I've got the on'y weal stuff peddled here nowadays; bought up evwy can I could get my hands on when I see this famine coming. You got bats in your belfwy, Pink; you got wheels in you head. Hey, Tom?" Boy Number One nodded a grinning assent.

"I didn't say it *was* real," put in Arnold, annoyed. "I only said I was told so. If it is, I've got the chance to buy all I want of it pretty cheap—"

"That's enough to prove it ain't Li-un," interrupted the lisping proprietor. "If it wath weal stuff it wouldn't go cheap. They thell it for fifty dollarth a can--"

"Would *you* give fifty?" asked Arnold quickly.

The lisping man was visibly disconcerted. "I—I—got plenty," he stammered. "I—I couldn't make no profits if *I* paid that much. Even my customerth wouldn't pay it, and I've got the swellest in town. Pink can tell you. . . . Some of them might pay for pure stuff, but I'd lose half my twade. . . . I tell you what, though," he added, as he thought that perhaps the stranger might have fallen upon such treasure after all, "I pay as much as anybody elseth give you and I take all you got—if it'sth Li-un. But it ain't! Hey, Tom?" Boy Number One again gave grinning assent, this time from within the folding-doors that shut off the anteroom from the divan. He had removed his coat and waistcoat and was lying on one of the bunks built close to the wall; there was a number of these in two tiers not unlike Pullman berths, but wide enough to accommodate two people lying full length with a space that would have served a third between them, this for the filigreed tray which held the various articles necessary for preparing the opium.

It was both too early and too late for customers, the last of the night's crew always leaving before noon, the afternoon rush seldom beginning until close upon tea-time. So that the place was empty; even most of the Chinese "cooks" were still asleep in the attic. This main room had swallowed up a former drawing-room and library, and had evidently been furnished by an Oriental in imitation of similar places in China, Japan and India. No heavy draperies or curtains of cloth caught the smell and held it, no carpets, no rugs; on the floor a clean rice-matting, to the bunks hangings of some woodenish, fibrous stuff painted in gay colors; while the head-rests were piles of round mats; the folded bunk covers alone were of woven stuff, something like Turkish toweling.

The room was lit dimly by strings of Chinese lanterns, in which low-powered electric arcs were concealed; very gay lanterns shaped like the lily and the lotus, the dragon and the hawk, especial importations of Boy Number One. On the walls were tacked many long strips of red paper covered with Chinese idiographs. Tabourets of teak and tall kakalmono jars for spent cigarettes were scattered about. There was no other furniture. Hence, the room gave that sense of cleanliness and spaciousness usual to Chinese houses. Without expense an effect was achieved that no amount of money could have increased; one suddenly felt and smelt the East, and New York seemed very far away.

"Lie down," Pink directed Arnold. He had removed coat and collar, resting his head on the pile of mats. "Come on. I want to enjoy this if it's Li-un; I don't want to have to turn my head around to you every minute. It kills the effect, moving all the time. Come on. Take your collar off, too, and put your head right above my hip and sorta curl up your yams. That's the trick—" and Arnold lay watching the deft swift fingers of Boy Number One as he dipped into one of Captain Danny's cans with a long, thin cooking needle, stirring and kneading and drawing up the golden stuff that was like sirup both in appearance and odor.

It was not evident whether Boy Number One was pleased or disappointed; his placid yellow face gave no hint; but both Pink and Clabber, who sat on a tabouret near by, watched eagerly.

"Bubbles like Li-un," Pink asserted.

"They all bubble," returned Clabber shortly, but, as the Chinese took some on the point of the yen-hok and began to toast it over the filigreed lamp, Clabber sniffed as appreciatively as did Pink.

"Belony all some good Li-un smell," asserted Boy Number One, despite his master's frown, which he did not look up to see. The cooking continued. The first draw at the pipe was taken by the cook, who inhaled and exhaled it with satisfaction. "Him all light," he asserted as he blew out the final lacy cloud. "Li-un all light." Now he looked up and for the first time saw Clabber's portentous frown. "Well—mebbe—" he began, but Pink, suspicious, turned swiftly and he, too, saw the frown.

"Oh, forget it, Midge," he growled. "Don't pull any of that stuff to try and git it cheaper. Tom said it was the goods the first time, and you can't get away with it. Tom knows too much about the scammish to make any mistakes." He took the pipe and smoked. "Well, I should say," he continued. "Like candy, it is. Gee! What a difference. And you call that stuff of *yours* Li-un, Midge. A pound of Li-un to a pound of seconds, you mean. You might save the good stuff for the private rooms, but you don't give us any like this down here." He silenced the diminutive Jew with a: "Well, bring out some of your stuff and let me smoke it pill for pill with *this*. I'll gamble you don't dare."

Mr. Clabber fell into whining. "Well, what you expect, Pink?" he asked, spreading his palms. "You wouldn't pay Li-un priceeth. And if I give you lessth you don't come no more. . . . But don't you say nothink to your friends, Pink, and I give you Li-un for yourself. You hear, Tom?" Tom grinned. "And you sure this is Li-un, Tom?" Tom grinned again rather uneasily.

"Go on, tell him," urged Pink, and Clabber nodded.

"Him Li-un all light," said Tom. "All same Shanghai. Plenty good, master. You buy."

"I give you thirty a can for hundred cans," said Clabber quickly. "Cash down on the nail."

"Why, you little burglar," protested Pink, "didn't you just say it was worth fifty?"

"I *saidth,*" emphasized Clabber, "that they thell it for fifty—retail. And look at the money tied up—look at the wisks—look at—evvything," he finished with a flourish. "Three thousand, Mister, and a good bargainth for you, too. Cash on delivery. *Cash.*"

"Thirty-five and done," said Arnold. "No haggling—thirty-five does it. I could say forty-five and come down to that, but I don't work that way—thirty-five; take or leave it." His heart was thumping madly. Here was a vast increase on what he had expected; he would more than double his money.

But the lisping proprietor said he could not believe that any one would have the temerity to ask forty-five hundred; that was absurd. Even four thousand; as for thirty-five hundred, Arnold might get it in some places, but *he* could not afford it, so he could do just what he pleased. But Pink moved his knee gently and Arnold only shrugged his shoulders. Yet still Mr. Clabber talked on of interest forfeited, of the likelihood of Federal government intervention and probable confiscation of his stock. . . . Why, even *if* they changed captains in this district it was ruin for him. Almost, he shed tears upon his unfeeling listener.

"We won't haggle, like you saidth," he concluded; "split the differenceth—thirty-two-fifty and not a centh more."

"Very well, Mr. Clabber," rejoined Arnold. "I'm not asking you to take it. There are too many want this sort of stuff. . . ." And Clabber capitulated.

"When'll you bring it?" he asked. Arnold thought, probably, to-morrow. "Telephone me first," said the lisping man, "and I'll go to the bank. But I've got the wight to pick out half a dozenth cans and open them before I pay!" Arnold nodded and Clabber retired to his ante-room jubilant. At the prices he charged for small amounts he stood to gain much by the transaction; and so Pink told Arnold.

"But so would anybody else who had the dough to take a hundred cans off your hands." He eyed the Chinese uneasily, then fished up a thick gold-plated pencil by a trousers pocket chain, discovered an old letter in a hip-pocket and wrote a question as to how Arnold had secured so large an amount of stuff, and couldn't he get in on it? Which Arnold promised to explain when they were alone.

"Here, here, Tom Leo," said Pink, scowling as that amiable Oriental took advantage of his position as *chef* to accommodate himself with another long draw.

"Don't catcham ploper Li-un many time," explained Tom. "All same Shanghai when I smokum. Velly much 'bliged," and he nodded suave thanks to Arnold, helping himself to more of his property. "All same Shanghai," he said again, sighing. "How much you sellum one can to poor China boy, hey, master?"

"Why," said Arnold, "yon and my friend can have this can between you—three-quarters to him." He had been moved to this generosity by the look of wistful desire on Boy Number One's face. He realized that with such the matter of smoking was less of a luxury than a necessity, and that such stuff as this once tasted, it was like asking a man to return to a diet of boiled bones after an existence on excellent marrows. As for Pink, he was too much elated by this unexpected gift to quarrel with sharing it, and a look of doglike respect came into Boy Number One's eyes.

"Mebbe you like tly youself, master?" he asked. "I cookum velly fine, you see; velly small, too." He held out the pipe to Arnold enticingly.

"Go on, Sir Reginal Vere de Voo," Pink urged. "You oughta *try* it once, anyhow, if you're going to peddle it. How'll you ever know the goods from the bunk? Just get a taste of that and nobody 'ull ever be able to pass the phony article on you. Yon can't tell jest—just from the smell. Go on." And, as the pipe was prodding him in the chest, Arnold took it.

When one desires, or is curious, any excuse will serve, and Pink's seemed well put. Captain Danny might have a consignment of bad stuff with only a few picked cans for samples. He mnst test it to-morrow himself.

"You're sure—it—it won't—" he began, and Tom Lee's grin returned.

"Won't give you a horrible habit if yon smoke it once?"

jeered Pink. "Why, sure! You'll wake up to-morrow clutching the sheets and shrieking for the deadly drug, and if some kind friends don't bring it to you in ten minutes you'll just die for want of it—and you'll see green elephants and purple rats—I see 'em now. . . . And you'll hear the little goldfish singing *Home, Sweet Home.* . . . Sure! it's terrible stuff." But Arnold had already permitted the Chinese boy to steer the bowl over the flame and now drew on the mouthpiece as he had seen Pink do.

He lay back, surprised despite Pink's jeers, that he felt nothing. Nor had there been any effort or strangling in inhaling the smoke; thick, it was mild, far milder than the cigarette that he hastily lit to banish the taste, which, though not nauseous, yet in its sweetish way was reminiscent of medicine. . . . And then silence fell, while the Chinese boy passed the long bamboo stem from one to the other. Arnold handled it more than a dozen times before it achieved any result.

Then he felt constrained to talk. To his surprise he had some difficulty in keeping back the tale of Captain Danny and his Yucatan treasure-trove. A burning conviction that these two men were his best friends and that he was justified in telling them anything overpowered him. And he told them of almost everything else. Of his bitter dislike of New York, his retirement to his birthplace, his determination to devote the remainder of his life to the writing of books that would benefit the world. Never had he loved his fellow men so dearly; never had he throbbed so indignantly to their wrongs. A great desire to be known for a philanthropist was upon him. How could he help this deserving Chinese, for instance? In his mind he reached the heights of self-abnegation and understood the lonely philosopher of No-Man's Land who talked of wealth and fame so contemptuously. Arnold spoke to his companions of this man as one speaks of a national hero.

And still the rush of ideas came so rapidly his speech could not keep pace with them. He lay back and closed his eyes. The tenor of his thought changed from sentimental to practical. He forgot he was in New York for only a day. He saw the possibilities of Captain Danny's treasure-trove. They were unlimited. The next time Danny sailed he, Arnold, would entrust him with some of the profits of this deal, which would mean many more thousands when more stuff was brought back and sold. And—so on—voyage after voyage—until he became rich. . . .

And then he remembered his dreams, the ship standing off Havre de Grace Harbor, and in a flash came a gay and gorgeous venture—not a shoddy bit of personal smuggling, with minor profits each voyage, but one memorable voyage that would win everything. He would give up the entire present profits and borrow more from Hugo and from Archie. Hugo had plenty and would be glad to lend for the sake of the debt he owed him; Archie was always speculating and would be eager for a fifty-per-cent. profit. Let in a few others, Enoch Apricott and this Clabber, who knew how and where to sell it, retail. That, then, was the significance of his dream. The ship should stand off Havre de Grace Harbor some night and he and his partners should tranship the cargo to a smaller boat and carry it ashore; the *Cormorant* could then proceed on its journey next morning into New York Harbor.

As for chances of detection, it could be done at night. Captain Danny himself should promise each one of his men a bonus for keeping his mouth shut. Anyway, they would never know who received the stuff, so even if they talked they could prove nothing against anybody but Captain Danny, who would be well enough paid as a partner to run the risk. As for revenue-cutters! Arnold knew the habits of those coast-guard folk. They cruised off that part of the Island for a few hours once a week, and usually on schedule time; and there was no Port Officer at Havre de Grace any more. Besides the town was almost hidden by the high hills that protected the Harbor—and between Green Sands and Havre de

Grace was that No-Man's Land where only the unknown philosopher dwelt—all others were miles from the shore—there were only ducks and wild geese and sea-gulls and porpoises to look on; and the keepers of the two lights, five miles apart, always slept from dinner until dawn save when they must attend to the fog-bells. And if it was foggy they could see nothing anyhow. . . . As for passing ships, after the Connecticut night-mail none passed within miles of the Island; those bound for Boston or New York keeping to the Connecticut shore, twenty miles away. . . . In fact an objection had only to be propounded to be answered instantly and favorably. He wondered that more smuggling was not done. Perhaps it *was;* naturally, *he* would not know; smugglers did not advertise their successes.

Now he saw why it was that those tales were told of opium giving dreams of wealth. It sharpened the brain, as De Noailles had said; showed men chances they were too indolent and ambitionless to grasp. . . . He could understand that indolent part of it, too. As he lay there, his eyes closed, it was as if the whole world came to him, its picked inhabitants performing for his benefit. He saw things clearly, yet not cynically; felt rather as a father to naughty children.

With these thoughts his benevolence returned, granting excuses for broken laws and such. With wealth what a power of good he could be; independent of timid publishers who feared not to make profit on his burning books; of "practical" politicians who would not help him in his work of reformation, fearing loss of perquisites—his money could beat their campaign funds. . . . Yet, withal, he seemed to dream practically; it was as if two souls were within him, one bringing forward all possible objections. What the Musketeers had planned in college should yet take place—they would be without their Aramis, true; Carol Caton held Archie too firmly—but he could coax Hugo down to help him, he felt sure.

And so his thoughts raced on until, exhausted, Arnold dozed, while Tom Lee continued steadily to feed the insatiable Pink.

III. WHAT ARNOLD HEARD IN HIS ALCOVE

His reflections, added to his slumber, had consumed most of the afternoon; the patrons of Mr. Clabber had long since begun to gather, as more normal folk (though Clabber's people would have claimed the opposite) were beginning to gather for tea. Nor must it be imagined that Mr. Clabber's people in any radical wise lacked resemblance to the tea-drinkers. It was the profession of a majority of these Clabberites to make their presences personable. Chiefly the difference between them and the tea-drinkers was in the matter of ostentation; each emphasized different details. There was a greater display of jewelry here where the other sort kept jewelry for special occasions. Here with the men was too much insistence upon silken haberdashery, watch-fobs, solitaires.

But all were quiet vocally if not sartorially. Clabber admitted no others twice. Besides, his prices, including an assurance of safety and the amount of exclusiveness one was willing to pay for, were too high for any who were not of Subterranea's aristocracy. As for the others, theatrical folk and such, this being what the tea-drinkers would have called the "smartest" of its sort, was the Mecca of many with names long and favorably known to the public, some of whom, coming late and unable to secure private rooms, were so imbued with the unconscious freemasonry their habit entailed that they took places in the common room. Peeping through the gaps in his fiber-curtains, Arnold saw a woman take her place in a bunk opposite him, a woman whose name blazed every night in electric letters; her escort, through frequently published photographs, was almost as widely known. Upon these Boy Number One, who had long left Arnold and Pink, was dancing an eager and apologetic attendance.

"You see? . . ." whispered Pink in a strained but triumphal whisper. . . .

Almost before the famous pair had drawn their curtains a slender girl in an ultra-fashionable costume appeared; following her a youth, in clothes he fondly imagined to be of aristocratic English lineage, was roundly denouncing Clabber, who stood apologetically near by, for a lack of more extended accommodations.

"Every time I come here and tell people they can get *absolute privacy* you're on hand with a stall. What've you got in those private rooms? Bank-presidents? Bank *burglars* more likely. Never again do I patronize this joint if I got to take a stall, hear me? Swell when steady customers like me have to . . ."

"Look who's here," came from behind a pair of curtains, and the girl instinctively reached up to cover a face already heavily veiled. "Why didn't you tip us His Nobs was coming, Clabber, and we'd all be standing in a row singing *God Save the Queen*. Oh, mercy!"

"Rich, ain't it, boy?" Pink whispered to Arnold. "What's good enough for a couple of Broadway princes don't suit that Little Joker that 'ud need assistance to roll a peanut. . . . I knew him when he couldn't get the ham and eggs out of hock, the shrimp! . . ."

The shrimp was now disclaiming bitterly any intention of compelling any "lady friend *he* brought there" to mount any ladder to any upper bunk—the only vacant one being that just above Arnold's. But here the cause of the shrimp's solicitude proved more tractable than he and surmounted the elevation by way of a pair of sliding steps that a Chinese servant had brought.

"Burglars are polished gentlemen compared to a heel like that," murmured Pink. "Know what he is, don't you? He's got all the earmarks—little head and little hat, a coffee-cup 'ud make a sunbonnet for him. Ssh! Listen!" But there was no sound from the bunk above. The lamp once alight, the youth, having discarded the upper portion of his near-English attire, was too occupied in putting an end to the terrific yawns that were racking him, the protests of a body deprived too long of its daily drug.

"Be still, can't you?" they heard him snarl between two gigantic gapes.

"You'll hear something rich if you go on listening," Pink murmured into Arnold's ear. "Wait till Petty Boy starts bullying that skirt. Why do these frails fall for such a louse? He gets the finest, too. Women with swell clothes and apartments and automobiles—half-a-dozen on the string all the time. And, all together, they don't ever seem to let him have enough to blow to a round of drinks or a card of stuff. He wouldn't give the Lord a prayer."

Ordinarily disgust would have clouded Arnold's eyes; as it was he was only amused; it seemed but a corollary of the universal militancy that such men as Petty Boy should exist. The women on whom they preyed in turn preyed on rich men, who preyed upon poor men, who begot sons who preyed on the women again. And if he was to be shocked at Petty Boy he must be shocked by the whole system, and he had not the time. "Fleas have smaller fleas to bite 'em, and so proceed *ad infinitum,*" he quoted more or less correctly.

"Well?" they heard the girl above say.

"Oh, I don't *know,*" was the sulky reply. "I've told you a dozen things to do, but you won't *do* 'em."

"I tell you, Artie, he hasn't got the *money,*" fretfully. Instinctively Arnold bristled—the voice was familiar.

"He'll do everything he can, but he's already doing *that,*" she continued in the same petulant tone. "And now this beastly, rotten old show's taken every last penny his father will give. . . ."

"There you go," cut in the man, "cheap chippy vanity. Whoever told *you* you could act? Just slipped a cool ten thousand to some canny kikes. Easy money. You ought to have your head examined and get that nest of titmice taken out of it. . . . His father's got plenty of sugar, though, hey?" There followed some exasperated reply, the truth of which the man hastened to admit. "*That's* all right. He's the heir, ain't he? He can raise all kinds of dough on his *prospects.* Some of these Jews down-town make a business of *that.* Fifty and a hundred per cent. stuff. But what does *he* care if he'll get *millions?* . . . You do what I say. Tell him either he's got to *marry* you or *settle* something on you so's the best years of your life won't be wasted like a lot of your friends' were—all that kind of rag-time. It always goes with suckers. If he don't do one or the other you'll walk out of his door never to return. That 'walk out the door never to return' is a sure-fire. Wonder if they think you'd walk out the window or down the dumbwaiter if you didn't put that 'door' in? . . ."

"Dear old boy," the girl began, and at the affected mannerism Arnold started, suspicions confirmed.

"Chop the dear old Piccadilly stuff," growled the man. "You're among friends where you can tell your right name. You have to do enough of that stalling when you're outa your class—don't pull it here." Again an indistinguishable reply. Then, "Don't answer me back like that, you little tramp, or you'll be wearing a heavy veil for a week after I get through with you. Don't get *me* mixed up with those Fifth Avenue saps. And don't start cracking you'd like to *see* the man who'd lift a hand to you, 'cause if you do you'll get your wish all right. . . ."

A long silence followed, broken only by occasional sobs, then:

"Artie, how can you be so brutal when you know how much I love you—" A growl. "I'll do whatever you say."

"That's right, then." He seemed suddenly to regain his good humor.

"Let's go," whispered Arnold. "I've had enough of this." Now, indeed, was he sick at heart. Boy Number One, whose lynx-like ears caught the sound of their going, hurried after them, promising to keep intact Pink's share of Arnold's gift after weighing out his own. "How much we owe you, Midge?" asked Pink.

"Well," lisped the little man, "I'm not sure I oughtn't chargeth you as much as if you thmoked my stuff; you took up valuableth room. But—half-priceth then," he hastened to add, noting a stormy look. As Arnold opened the door he reminded him he was to telephone before he came next day to deliver his merchandise—that the cash might be ready. Arnold nodded. It was the old Arnold again; self-interest swallowed by unselfish concern when affairs were not as they should be with one closely allied. For a long cross-town block his teeth were set, his hat pulled savagely over scowling brows.

"What's on your mind?" demanded Pink, as they reached Broadway. "You look as happy as a cripple at the cross. Old Colonel R. E. Morse sittin' on the shoulder? Was it a wicked little rascal to dally with the Oriental Pleasure? Or is the Common Enemy—the law—on your trail?"

Arnold settled his hat at a more usual angle, but the scowl remained unaltered. "What would *you* do if the fellow those two were talking about happened to be your friend?" he asked suddenly, at which Master Pink whistled shrilly.

"A *pal,*" he asked. "He *is*. Well—" and considered. "Badly stuck?" he asked again.

"Thinks the sun rises and sets in her," said Arnold with an oath.

"Then don't *you* mix in," advised Pink solemnly. "I remember when I was doubled up with Helen Darling, she tells me the Harmony Kid's gal—*girl* (I beat you to it)—was running around under cover with Pewee Pratt. Harmony's girl musta fell for his looks, jes—*just* like *this* skirt—for he hadn't anything else. But when I hears it I run bellering to Harmony and he mitts me and says he thanks Gawd he's got *one* pal. Then he takes a shiove out of a drawer and says he's going to furnish some hospital with a lot of nice huming organs—heart and liver and everything. Well, I grapples with him and grabs the shieve away and cut a gash in my pants that cost me the price of a new set of scenery. And I stick around with him all that night, gettin' him so soused that when he wakes up next day his head 'ull hurt too much for to go carving up anybody. Stood me back a sawbuck doing it, for that Kid's only started after he's drunk up the Hudson and took the East River for a chaser. . . . Counting the new clothes, I'm out a couple weeks' profit. . . . Well, when he gets over his headache the girl sees him and *explains everything,* and the next time he sees *me* he looks up to see what kind of weather we're going to have. And now he tells everybody I got him loaded and lifted his souper—he lost his watch somewhere that night. Me—cross a *friend!* Gee! You keep out of any sich mix-ups, Lord Montmorency de Villyers. Take a tip from a gink who has played 'em through."

"It's a pretty selfish tip," returned Arnold sourly.

"Trouble with you," commented Pink, "you keep thinking how things *ought* to be instead of how they *are*. This friend of yours is probably a damn sight happier with this frail than eithor of *us* could be with a dame 'cause *we* know too much. . . . Say, I was standing shivering on a street corner last winter, me and Beau, not a bean to get the ham-an'-eggs outa hock, not even to grab a short and trolley ourselves down to Mother's. Ten above zero, too. And along comes a guy in a regular bang-up sleigh, the nicest kind of a sable collar to his coat, and a piece of ice in his tie that made Tiffany's front window look like a hardware exhibit. But Beau and me had beat him out of half-a-century at the 'match' one night when he was drunk, a month before. So that little sap Beau says: 'Look at that little *sucker! Sucker!* Poor sucker!—nice and warm and rich and *riding,* and us *wise guys*—nice and cold and poor and *walking.* . . .' Don't be so sorry for those 'suckers.' Gi' me that lad's money and any skirt that can get away with it can trim *me* out of it; if they don't I'll *give* it to them. The proudest day of my life's gunna be when all the dames along this Lane point me out as a good thing. Them's my sentiments, as the poet says, Sir Marquis de Mortimer Montague. . . ."

But as they parted, Pink to go in the direction of his hotel to change into his "uniform," as he called his dress-clothes, he added one proviso: "Course it's up to you to see he don't fall for that Petty Boy's frame-up. Kinda suggest to him it's a bad business to let women have much cash. I never let any girl I was doubled up with have more'n half a dollar at a time. A dame with a whole dollar's too damn' independent. Or else she comes home with some truck she bought 'cause it was marked down two cents—a skirt figures if she buys a thing at one dollar and ninety-eight cents instead of two dollars she's saved a dollar. They oughtn't to be trusted with dough at all." And so saying, went his way.

IV. In Which Velvet Voice Does Not Wait for Arnold to Cast Her Off

After Pink had left him Arnold, moody and wrathful, backed against an angle of a great theater that covered a Broadway block and watched the street pass into the exclusive possession of the sex he was engaged in hating.

"Surely this is Madman's Lane—Madwomen's, rather," he swore sulkily, several *toilettes* more than usually blatant having offended him beyond reason, one a sheath-skirt with narrow-shouldered, tight-hipped coat, a bright purple ensemble, the hat pulled so low that even its owner's mouth was in shadow as she hobbled along on stilt-like heels, waddling sidewise, in lame duck fashion. Another, . . . but to remember the absurdities would be to catalogue as many as Homer's ships, that endless number. And, worst of all, these displays of costly cloths, silks, satins and millinery seldom served their object. Their men-folk had been bankrupted to prosper *modistes,* tailors and milliners, who forced upon work-minded women fashions so radical, so bifurcated and truncated, biased and diagonaled, as to serve only for the current cut—to endeavor to remake them in accordance with new edicts was to take apart a number of small bits that would serve no purpose other than a crazy-quilt.

This technical trickery, however, was not what enraged Arnold. It was that these styles suited only one woman in a score, the majority appealing to only one's sense of humor—tight skirts on stout women, slashed skirts on angular ones, small hats on bucket-like heads, large hats on tiny bird-like ones, high-heeled slippers bent sidewise from carrying double weight, short-vamped shoes on squat broad feet that, far from disguising their size, only gave them the appearance of tortured bunions yearning to burst through. Verily the birds and the silkworms had been slaughtered in vain, and men worked overtime to no purpose.

"The waste of it all," Arnold thought bitterly. "Men like Archie Hartogensis worrying themselves sick to buy things that, nine times out of ten, don't even have the excuse of pleasing the eye. . . . And the self-sufficiency of these women!"

He turned away in the direction of a cab-stand. But he paused before reaching it: he was at that stage where he felt he must vent his ill-humor with the world on some one deserving verbal castigation—what use to go to Beeckman Place and waste rhetoric on Harley Quinn, the original of all misogynists: to him Arnold's opinions would be those of one just graduated from kindergarten. . . . Some guilty one was wanted, to whom his words would be insulting iconoclasms. . . . And, so bitter was he, the thought of Velvet Voice produced no softening effect. . . . He strode back toward Eighth Avenue, between which and upper Longacre, on several streets, new apartments had replaced the brownstone fronts.

Here then that Mecca of the Broadway habitant, a furnished apartment, sitting- and bedrooms, kitchenette and bath, in one of them Velvet Voice and the Little One with their dolls-housekeeping.

Arnold could hardly wait for the slowly rising elevator. Her door was opened by a maid in the sort of cap and apron once chiefly associated with musical-comedy but transferred to real life by the actresses therein. Their wearer, who seemed too dainty to be of practical use, announced Arnold in a thin affected voice, and showed him into the sitting-room. He had never visited the place before. Now he saw, everywhere, the hand of the obnoxious Spedden—heavily gilded picture frames surrounding mediocre landscapes, hunting-scenes and still-life, tapestry hangings to doors and windows, white furniture of the Trianon sort, all commonplace but expensive—and on mantel, tables, and on the top of the little white cottage-piano, a profusion of bric-a-brac and numberless photographs in silver and silver-gilt frames. On the music-rack an ambitious composition by a Russian symphonist—one no one could execute without years of study. Part of her pose, he supposed.

The heavy scent of many cut flowers, an odorous semi-decay, hung over and weighed down his spirit with its sickly sweetness. Flowers were everywhere: in long stemmed Bohemian glasses, in high slender holders of chased silver, in bowls of china and cut-glass, and banked up and beribboned were pots and wicker-baskets of them hiding the fireplace. No taste was displayed in their indiscriminate arrangement, so that for all their individual beauty, the effect produced was, to the sensitive, much like the striking of rich but false chords. And Velvet Voice, entering, seemed like one of her own hardy chaste Northern roses set amidst sickly but luxuriant hothouse growths, a nymph of the greenwood, in the artificial fragrance of an Oriental harem. For she was in a heavy rich robe of quilted silk that was shot with golden traceries and with silver threaded dragons, her feet in red-heeled gilt-toed Turkish slippers, her hair, fresh from the ministrations of her maid—a masterpiece of artifice, trimmed and crowned by false curls, and raised and interwoven with false switches. He noticed, angrily, that she, too, had come to the use of rouge: a hasty dab of it on either cheek only accentuated the pallor that was the result of nights spent in tobacco-fouled air and days of sleep in a bedroom shut off from light by drawn blinds and heavy draperies.

Yet, despite his anger, the old thrill returned at the sight of her: that unaccountable thrill that was not passion—and therein lay its strength. Alberta Arden appealed far more to him physically, with her long sinuous lines and dark fringed eyes, half-closed at the sight of him. With this Velvet Voice it was some cursed obsession, he told himself angrily: her soft voice welcoming him, he could not but answer tenderly. What was it, this love?—hypnotism? What absurd nonsense to attempt to explain it as mere passion. Why, if this were Bertie, they would have flown immediately into each other's arms; he would have clung to her, his eager lips on hers. But, afterward, there was nothing. Through this girl's eyes he saw visions, dreamed conquests, was lifted upward and onward, damn her.

"I'm glad you finally decided to come," she said. No word of their quarrel, of his determination never to see her again. Maybe she thought that was all nonsense: that he was unable to live without sight of her, and would accept any terms—would even take Spedden seriously. The thought drove out the welling tenderness: he would show her what a real man was like.

"I was going to write you," she went on. . . . Fool! why hadn't he waited: she would have capitulated. (Thus his traitor heart against his masterful head.) "Yes, I wanted you to understand, and show you're a true friend by coming to my wedding. It will be just a small affair."

Numbed by the shock though he was, his sense of humor caught the readiness with which these women acquired the "good form" patter—"only a small affair"—and a few months before working in a factory!—"just a few friends."—There it was again: the society novelists' jargon—"You'll come, won't you?" . . . And then, in shrill alarm: "What's the matter with you, Arnold. . . . Don't touch me—you forget yourself—" Still quoting from the novels.

He had risen with a white awful face, and had caught her wrists, hurting them sorely. Then he grinned, a ghastly sort of grin it was; and slowly but with irresistible pressure, drew her to him until their eyes met: when, releasing her wrists, he forced back her head, and kissed her cold tightly-closed lips. His own were colder, tighter: the action had nothing of the caress in it. It was merely one of ownership; of one who, having his property, could use it at his will. Then he pushed her away. She caught at the little white piano for support, and stared at him with frightened eyes.

"You *are* going to get married, my *dear*," he said savagely. "I'm ready. Take off that trash you've got on, put on your street clothes, and come on. I've stood all the foolishness from you I'm going to. I've got a little money and we'll get married now—right now. D'you hear, Eunice? . . . Well, aren't you going to do what I tell you to?"

He paused, the look in his eyes was just as terrifying, but it no longer seemed to discompose the girl.

"You've been drinking," she said contemptuously. "You wouldn't act this way if you hadn't been. What right have you? I've got my chance to be somebody and nobody's going to take it away from me. What do you know about being poor? Six months. Is that ten years? I've got to have a lot of pleasure to make up for that. D'you think you or any other man can take the place of Paris clothes and motor-cars and servants to wait on you day and night, and everything made pleasant for you? Give all that up for love? Not before you've *had* it, had the pleasure that goes with it. . . . I tell you I want to *live!* I want to see the world, all the wonderful places and people and cities and boulevards and—everything! I want to be *somebody:* to know the big people of the world and have the little people respectful to me. I want to sit in opera-boxes and wear clothes and jewels that'll make people stare. I want to lie back in my motor-car and watch people get out of the way. I want all the things I've never had. I want—everything"— she made a wide sweep of her hand —"money can buy. And, my dear boy"—she was at the novels again now, the bored duchess manner—"do you really think the difference between you and Mr. Spedden is worth giving up all those things? If you do, you must be insane. 'Money can't buy love,' you hear all the fools say. Who wants love when they can have everything else: one hasn't time for it. When the time comes, I dare say love will come with it. Apply then, my dear Arnold. At present, I'm not to let."

She made him a low curtesy, her eyes satirical. "That caveman display of yours was quite well done, though," she added. "It gave me a real thrill. I wanted for a moment to let myself go. If it's any consolation to you, Arnold, believe me I'd sooner marry you with half of Spedden's money, even a quarter, I guess. But can't you understand?—if anybody can you ought to, considering what poverty drove you to—" She was referring to the suicide she supposed he had attempted: he had never thought to undeceive her. "Remember, I would have done the same thing in a few days—only I knew how better than you." He remembered the rubber-tube with its red lining, that evidence of cold-blooded preparation that had made him shudder, and he recognized in her voice the same note she had used then. And the sudden fire that had flared up into savagery gave its last flicker at the realization of a determination just as coldly logical, just as incapable of being shaken, as that one of yesteryear.

Something in his despairing look softened her. She crossed to him, sat on the arm of his chair, caressed his hair. "Arnold, dear," she said softly. "In the struggle to support me, to give me what you want the woman you love to have, you'd have to give up all you want yourself. You wouldn't be a clever boy any more, you wouldn't be able to make your mark. You'd just be a married man, with hard work to keep up the life-insurance and pay the doctor for bringing your children into the world. And you'd hate me in a year or so for ruining your career. All this talk about *love*, Arnold, is childishness: pure childishness. One woman's not much different from another after you get used to having her around. That idea of the 'only one'—it's been responsible for half the trouble in the world: hatred and jealousy and murder. It's always the toy that's hardest to get that looks the prettiest, dear Arnold. . . . We're such a young country. I've been reading lots lately and I'm beginning to understand human nature better. The older races marry their boys and girls before they see one another—and they have more happy marriages than we do. It's all a question of suitability, indeed it is: that's what brings happiness in marriage. Marry and have your romance afterward, the French say—your *romances*—but marriage's an important business matter. You want to be sure your partner's bringing her share into the firm—and what would I bring you? You couldn't let me go on taking tips as a telephone girl and jollying men to get them. And, to support me, you'd have to give up the things that make you happy. . . . Can't you see?"

He had never loved her more than then, but he nodded. "When does it take place?" he asked, his coolness surprising him.

She shook her head. "I'm hoping he'll let me go abroad first and get a sort of polishing-off in one of those French convents where the rich Americans go to mix with the English girls and learn their tricky ways of talking and all the little mannerisms a fashionable woman ought to know. . . . For I'm going to be a very fashionable woman, Arnold, dear, and it's all up to me—I must get rid of that kind of talk, by the way—not 'up to me' but—well I can't think of anything else—I mean I'll have to do all the work because he's one of those self-made millionaires who wears ready-made clothes and can't talk about anything except things that bore fashionable people. . . . How I've studied them and their ways and their talk since I've been at Sydenham's. . . . So I hope he'll let me do that first. Then we can be married abroad and I'll know some smart girls and they'll come to the wedding with their people, and it will amount to something—instead of being a vulgar newspaper story about 'Western Millionaire Marries Telephone Girl.' A thing like that would take years to get over. I hope I can make him see it my way. Less than a year's all I ask for. . . . I think"—she meditated—"that I'll try that trick of saying: 'If you don't love me enough to wait a year for me, here's your ring'—that generally works, I'm told. But, one way or another, I'm leaving America in a week. So, if he insists, I'll be married next Monday, the day before the *Chartic* sails—I'm booked on her—"

Arnold never remembered how he made his adieux and got to the street. He was conscious of answering questions, of breaking these long speeches of hers with appropriate comments and suggestions: but he remembered none of them. Only there danced before him an ugly picture of the unspeakable Spedden bursting out of a smart morning-coat and white gloves, a lily-of-the-valley in his straining buttonhole, a pair of perspiring red ears—he had never before seen *ears* perspire. And opposite Spedden was Annie Eunice . . . while, like a drowsy honey-glutted bee, a fashionable rector in smart priestly garb intoned a service, each syllable a living horror, implying as it did unalienable possession of her by that red-eared minotaur. . . .

But the effect of Captain Danny's drug had spent itself now, leaving him weak; for the thoughts and impressions of many hours had been crowded into two, and the hours following must be bankrupt. A profound listlessness had set in even while the girl still spoke: now he no longer saw even the picture at the altar. He was conscious only of a desire to rest: he wished he were in Havre de Grace, where no sound save the waves' lullaby reached his little whitewashed bedroom. . . . But it was almost as still at Beeckman Place.

"I feel a little faint," he had said, without apology, cutting her short as she spoke of her coming journey. "Would you telephone Quinn that I'm coming home—East River 200 it is—and then ask the office to get a taxicab. . . ." His voice sounded far away; he was almost on the point of looking around to see who had entered the room. A surging, as of a great sea, sounded in his ears. The shock of her announcement, of his own violent outbreak, of her cool planning which destroyed the last vestige of his hope, added to his angry concern for Hugo caused by the whispering in the alcove—all combined to wear off the drug effect quickly, and leave him almost inert.

She gave a little cry of alarm. "Arnold, dear boy"—but he repulsed her feebly: he did not want one to touch him who could so calmly consider an alliance with that red-eared monster. He was again puzzled that he could ever have desired her. He remembered he had come there to make an end between them forever. "Just as well she did it," he muttered gruffly but in an exhausted tone, "or I'd have done it myself." He was not conscious of the absurdity of this from one who had so recently turned Berserker for love of her.

"Dear, dear, dear boy," she murmured distractedly, and began to bathe his forehead with some pungent preparation, directing the musical-comedy maid to do the telephoning he had requested. Her fingers, the necessity for hard labor over, seemed to have gained the velvet qualities of her voice. But Arnold accepted the purely physical pleasure of the contact: it kindled no flame. And still she murmured over him like a mother over a favorite child, hurt through some maternal remissness. In a dull apathetic way, Arnold had a feeling that, if he were to urge his helplessness as strongly as he had urged his strength, her remorse would force consent, for all logic flies from a woman who has been made to feel. And, at this moment, Velvet Voice was stirred to her depths. Off guard, the genuine affection she had for him rose up, almost overpowering her. Her fingers moved slower, rested longer upon his skin. What soft skin he had for a man, not moist and sticky like Spedden's, nor unpleasantly dry like other men's—soft but firm, and so white and clear . . . and warm. A desire to voice soft cooing endearments almost choked her: a tenderness that strained tears to her eyes swept over her. . . . To inspire love in a woman is to combine the fear of a faithful dog with the maternal desire to cradle and to rock. To win a woman wholly one must be both master and child: master enough to cause her to thrill at his touch, child enough to rest helpless upon her breast. Both of these Arnold had been in that hour. And so it was the moment for him to stretch up his hands, drawing her down until his head was pillowed upon her. But he was too tired to want anything.

Then, so complex is life, so many the strings, so tiny the keys—the telephone rang, and she, who might not have waited for his desire but have acted on her own, must answer it. And, at the mention of the waiting cab, Arnold was on his feet, bidding her good-by, was evidently eager to depart.

Long after he had gone, she lay in the gathering dusk, hating the heavy odor of the dying flowers, clasping tightly a soft pillow of eiderdown. Once the maid thought she heard her moan.

V. CONCERNING DULNESS IN THE COFFEE TRADE

To Mr. Quinn—christened Harvey, from which the penultimate letter had been deleted and in its stead one substituted that carried out his grotesque humor in nomenclature—the countries, counties and cities of his wanderings, existed only as names for various local dishes, delectable or otherwise. He only regretted that from his occasional funds there must be deducted the price of clothes sufficiently presentable to admit him to the restaurants where these dainties, with suitable liquid accessories, flourished at their best. Therefore, the anxious Captain Danny having arrived before his time and speaking of Yucatan, Mr. Quinn was moved to execute some masterpieces of *frijoles, chili con carne,* and some weird *dulce* compounded with citron sirup, rum and flour paste, the ingredients for most of which he despatched the willing Danny some fourteen blocks: therefore was as crestfallen as a painter rejected of Academy or Salon when Arnold merely sampled these achievements of artistry and put down knife, fork and spoon.

"Women?" diagnosed Mr. Quinn accurately and disgustedly for Captain Danny's benefit: he knew his quasi-master neither heeded nor heard him when in downcast moods—which were often lately. "Just loves misery, the boss does—eats it alive. If he hasn't it for breakfast, he keeps it on ice for dinner. Misery's always fresh in this house. . . . If it's women, boss, I see the prettiest little peach down to the corner. I was hoping you'd be back, so's I could get your word to buy some candles—we need 'em case the electric lights blow out some day. Not that they're going to but why take chances, and anyway I gotta have an excuse for speaking to her. She works behind the counter in that lamp store over on Elm Street. Never let a woman think you go outa your way to meet her: it swells her all up. She gets to think too durned well of herself. This one's the flirty kind and would fall for a fellow like *you easy.* . . . I see her give the eye to one of those jacks-in-uniform visiting this hyer captain's widow next door—I was going to make a play for her myself, but—" and he sighed but struggled nobly to preserve an appearance of having done so only because short of breath—"anything to get you out of the dumps, boss. Think of all the things you've got to be glad of. Anywhere you look. You don't look like him for instance"— indicating Captain Danny—"or me, and can grab all the females that you want. Fellows that look like us 'uve got some *reason* to look grumpy. We gotta pick them that'll have *us.* Why, if I thought all I had to do would be to walk around the corner and get that girl in the lamp store, I'd sing little songs all the time—until they locked me up—"

But noticing that Arnold's chin was sinking lower on his collar, he despaired and clattered off with the dishes. Captain Danny, thinking of roseate Fourteenth Street and time wasted that might be profitably employed in laying the corner-stone of a magnificent edifice of intoxication, coughed deprecatorily; hemmed and hawed, and, with an apologetic gesture, touched Arnold's arm. "Found the stuff A No. 1, didn't you, Mr. A. L. H.?" he asked a little tremulously. "Don't tell me no, 'cause that would be a fine piece of sail-making if you didn't, after all that greaser Don and his Chink said—*swore*, by Jimminy. Hard on an old shell-back that sweated blood to lay up savings for a safe harbor and good docking after the last cruise. Swing the couple of 'em up in my own rigging if they steered me wrong, so I would, Mr. A. L. H." And the little brown turtle face looked uncommonly fierce, like that of a diminutive pirate who made up in ferocity for what he lacked in size. "Even if I swing myself up afterward. What 'ud I do in my old age when nobody 'ud give me a ship?" He would have gone on indefinitely had not Arnold stopped him by calling Quinn to fetch his cheque-book; at which the bronzed face lit up and the flexible turtle neck drew back into the huge white turnover collar that in the city was evidently his concession to fashion, along with a suit of hard shiny cloth so stiff that it seemed to be cut from the same wood-fiber that Clabber used for curtains.

"I'll post-date it a day," Arnold explained, when he had sent Quinn back to his kitchen. "You can't cash it until Wednesday, I mean." And as a perplexed frown came to Captain Danny's face, "The stuff we opened was first-rate. We're going to select half-a-dozen more to try out to-morrow, and if they're the same, don't bother about your cheque not being cashed Wednesday." Captain Danny's face cleared. "If they're *inferior*, we'll have to make another deal. That's fair, isn't it? You don't need cash right this minute, do you?"

"No, sir; no, Mr. A. L. H.," returned Captain Danny, bridling. "No, sir; a captain's wages at the end of a cruise don't leave him precisely a derelict, no, sir. . . . As for the stuff, if one can was A No. 1, they'll all be the same or the *Cormorant's* a low-down freighter. And God knows she's beat all records for clipper-ships. Did I tell you about her run from Rio when the owner, old Mr. Archibald, was aboard? . . ." He went maundering on while Arnold wrote the cheque and filled in the stub. "There," he said, cutting him short, and Captain Danny rose to go.

"By the way," asked Arnold. "When does the *Cormorant* go out again?" The question seemed involuntary, a mere piece of politeness, that would atone for lack of interest in his story. At least so Arnold told himself. That foolish plan which in all its comprehensive details had flashed upon him at Clabber's had nothing to do with it—he should say *not.* Yet he had an uneasy consciousness that, after all, it *might.* "Nonsense," he said aloud.

"No, sir; not nonsense, though it sounds so to say the finest clipper-built ship afloat 'ull be idle for months," protested Captain Danny, and Arnold saw that the sailor had been answering his question. "The firm has just got more Rio in its warehouses than it has orders for and till it sells half it's got anyway, what's the sense of loading up with more—which is a fine piece of keel-hauling as I said myself to old Mr. Archibald, Esquire, my owner—a fine piece of barratry and mutiny, says I, when the firm of A. V. V. & Co., oldest in the coffee trade, ain't even got one ship afloat—for the two others is hired out to Mastersons, guano trade. But not the *Cormorant.* Mr. A. V. V., Esquire, ain't going to have the finest clipper-ship afloat stunk up by guano, not him, not if she gets barnacles on her bottom as big as a bunch of bananas. And, showing what it is to work for *gentlemen,* he gi'es me half-pay all the time she's idle sooner'n lose his oldest skipper. . . . 'Cause I was in the trade when the coffee clipper fleet outa Baltimore—the Leverings and the Stewarts and all them old-time merchantses—was as big as the U. S. Navy. We had times them days, Mr. A. L. H., owners betting almost as much as what their cargo was worth on what their skippers and ships could do, and the skippers getting bonuses every time they won a bet. I was apprentice then, and I thought when I got to be skipper I'd be regular rich. But steamers got to sell too cheap since then. Nasty dirty boats all covered with soot, they are, the kind in the coffee trade; old worn-out scrap-engines. And as my old captain always said, 'Dirty ship, dirty cargo.' You ought to see the *Cormorant*. Eat your dinner off her deck any time. Cleanliness, says I to my boys, is next to godliness, leastwise so they say, but I ain't sure for a sailorman that churches got holystoning beat much at that. . . ."

Arnold heard very little of these reminiscences and opinions. His mind's eye held a picture of the peninsula philosopher talking of his Fights and Purposes. . . . Was it truth after all, or was it only coincidence that things were being made so fatally easy for him to do what he knew he should not do? And yet—why not? If it was written that he should do this, what was the use to struggle? Some fresh exigency would arise to compel him if he were not content to obey. Who was he to say that it was evil if circumstances so persistently drove him to its execution? . . . He roused himself to hear the last of Danny's harangue.

"You think she could be hired, then?" he asked idly. The sailor burst into an eulogy of his ship calculated to strengthen any wavering idea of such hire. "I was just thinking," Arnold remarked, as though the matter was of small moment, "that if Don Gomez had much of such stuff as I tried to-day it would be worth a fortune if it was brought to New York—by a man who was willing to take big chances for big profits," he added meaningly. "No need to tell the owners what for. Or you might say—let's see—that I was going down there for some newspaper that wanted to investigate the truth of the revolution we hear is coming off. . . . I don't say I've got any intention of *doing* it, but you might cable Don

Gomez in some words the telegraph people wouldn't understand and ask him how much he could have ready, working day and night shifts, in the next month or so. And you might find out how much the *Cormorant* could be hired for, cost of running her down there and back, and how much would have to be paid your men to keep quiet. I'll pay any expenses you go to to give me these figures. . . . But, mind, I don't say I'd ever *do* it. I'd have to lay it before some capitalists. Just see you don't let it out, that's all, or I wouldn't touch it with fire-tongs. . . . By the bye, Mr. Van Vhroon's nephew—you know him?" He cut short Captain Danny's usual verbosity. "He's one of my best friends. That's all the reference you need." Another fatally easy detail, he thought grimly. "And, mind you, a *newspaper cruise.* No mention of the Waldemar Company or my connection with it, understand? Just a newspaper man on a trip of investigation—"

Captain Danny's small turtle neck was lengthening and contracting, his little eyes gleamed and glittered, his hands trembled. "It's a fortune, sir," he managed to breathe; "the easiest fortune ever was made since they dug gold out in California. If you're thinking of it, you go on thinking, take my word. It's a chance I'd take myself if I had the scads; I often thought of it. It 'ud put old Mr. A. V. V., Esquire, on his feet if he'd listen to me and do it, but he's one of the old-fashioned sort—old school, he is," said Captain Danny pityingly. "Sich ideas don't get you nowhere nowadays. Which is why he's going to shut up shop one of these here fine days and file his petition, so he is. Wouldn't listen to his best friend—a fine piece of sail-making, that is. . . . I'm glad you're known to young Mr. Archie, 'cause old Mr. A. V. V., Esquire, might think I'd gone somewhere else with my scheme if you was a stranger to him. . . . But," and his face became suddenly overcast, "he knows you're at Waldemar's, don't he? That settles it, Mr. A. L. H. He wouldn't hire you the *Cormorant* if it saved him from bankruptcy, not the old gentleman. . . ." Captain Danny sank down, dispirited.

"He doesn't know me at all," said Arnold wearily. If only he did; if something would only intervene to make the project impossible, to lessen this damning feeling of being propelled from behind. "And I'll see that his nephew doesn't tell him. But cable Don Gomez first—see if it's worth while. That's all, Captain. I'm very tired. Good night."

When his visitor was gone he sat a long time before the fire, watching it intently yet seeing neither coal nor flame, instead only the scornfully wise face of the peninsula philosopher, as he told him one did not suffer so much only to moon away his life with an unanswered question in his eyes. "Why?" And he had replied he did not wish to know. But it had been a lie; he wanted to know more than he wanted wealth or women or fame. Why—why—why—why was he driving toward the rocks of cynicism and crime? Or was it cynicism? Perhaps it was truth. Was it crime? Crime was only a word; like morals, as many wise men had said, a matter of geography. Was it not rather that he should acquire wealth, he who would use it so well, who thus would be enabled to help the weak in their losing battle against the strong?

He thrust these sophistries from him angrily—they were the Hartogensis brand, a type of hypocrisy, grown all too familiar of late. . . . The strong must always be the victors. It was they who must be helped, must be taught that happiness did not lie on the side of selfishness. The weak—the rabble—must first become strong before *they* could be taught *anything*. They were only what they were because they feared; give them power and they were more merciless than the strong—as are a pack of wolves than a single lordly lion. If the lions could only be taught to help instead of harm, not for any moral reason but because that way led to the most and best in life. When strong men learned this, then, like the Crusader Lucas and the Chevalier Etienne, things happened that were worth while.

Their faces looked up at him out of the fire. For all the Crusader's cap of chain-male and the Chevalier's steel bonnet, they seemed singularly kind—and singularly like his own. He thrilled at the thought. And there was the name L'Hommedieu—"God's Man." That was the answer. Evil was piled in his way that he might conquer it. And the figures of his childhood's *Pilgrim's Progress,* creatures of quaint eighteenth-century wood-cuts, peopled the flames.

"Christian" had obstacles to surmount, battles to fight, foes to slay, that weaker souls might pass in safety. That was indeed the answer. . . . Christian. . . . "God's Man"—God's Knight—God's Chevalier. And what was their descendant?

Picked out in the blue gases and deep reds of the grate, he saw a prisoner in clanking chains. Leering evil shapes were about him and foul spawn were at his feet. Glaring up at him from dark desperate eyes, a monstrous ogre with a knotted club sat ready to fell him to earth should he cease to observe the filth at his feet—for he had only to look overhead to see a way of escape, and just beyond the shepherds of the Delectable Mountains. . . . "Christian in the Power of Giant Despair," the old wood-cut had been captioned. Instinctively Arnold squared his shoulders. Quinn, entering at the sound of his chair grating back, was gratified at the sight of his smiling face.

"Remember when you worked for my Dad—or rather got first aid to the injured? How'd you like to live down there all the time—there instead of here? Matter to you, Quinny?"

"With ducks flying so thick you can bring 'em down with a bean-shooter and sturgeon and black bass and all kinds of small fish hopping around as sassy and as many as May-flies, and reed-birds in clouds and snipses and quailses in armies and as many lobster-pots as there is buoys in the harbor that somebuddy set to save you trouble! Matter! And beds so soft the oysters get as fat and juicy as oranges, and bushels of clams and shell-fish at every low-tide. And—but what's the use? It only makes me hungry. Matter! I should say it does matter. Why, I was willing to *work* to stick around your place. Didn't I do odd jobs at Waldemar's after I left you? But after that the floating population seemed to ha' grabbed every other job and after I got so tired havin' my right arm so numb from being tied up 'cause I lost it in the war and was therefore deserving of free pie, I quit. . . . But that's my ideas of dying and goin' to Heaven, Boss. I dare you to turn me loose among all that food. I'll bet you if anybody ever stayed to our house a week they'd bust right out laughing every time anybody ever talked about the Caffy de Parry or Mr. Plaza's. I dare and double-dare you."

"You're on," said Arnold, still smiling, and held out his hand.

What a fool he had been to pay any attention to that nonsense of the peninsula philosopher. Down there, with a beneficent Nature outside and absorbing work within, life was as it should be. He had been back here less than a day and was reduced to melancholy brooding already, had taken opium, had hatched a nefarious scheme while under its influence, had learned of Hugo's regrettable waste of affection, Bobbie Beulah's cheap infatuation and pitiful treachery, had been enraged by a street full of painted, half-dressed peafowl women, had seen the girl he loved turn sordid and mercenary. . . .

Fight? What was there to fight up here? These people were unredeemable. Let them go the way they liked. If he remained too long among them he would be the same. His message was to others than these. . . .

"Yes—to-morrow night," he told Quinn. "See that trunk the Captain brought? Make two equal consignments of what's in it. Mark one for 'M. Clabber, 47th Street,' the other for 'E. Apricott, Rupert Passage.' Use a couple of those grocery boxes in the cellar. Be sure and nail 'em up tight. . . . I'm going back home to-morrow. You can come as soon as you arrange everything here."

VI. The Pink Kimono Comes Back to Beeckman Place

His foot was light upon the stair as he bounded up to his room. The very thought of Havre de Grace was like opening a window in a close room and seeing the smoke and the vapors incontinently driven forth. He would get Clabber's money in the early afternoon; but, before that, he would have closed with Enoch Apricott for the balance of the stuff. He knew from Pink and Beau that were the bargain worth the trouble Mother Mybus could raise any reasonable amount of cash on demand. If he got less from her than from Clabber—well—the Clabber sale was a stroke of luck, anyway. . . . And he could be aboard the Havre de Grace Express and home in time for dinner.

As he stumbled about on the upper landing, fumbling for the hall gas, a pungent odor attracted his attention. Bertie's favorite perfume. How it lingered. And that reminded him he must have Quinn pack her things, notably her silver toilet-set—a mark of progress, that set—a present from her first admirer. At her own place she had a gold one, Gayton's donation. Poor Bertie! He would write and explain. Perhaps "old Gayton" could be won back if Arnold made her understand how hopeless *their* affair was. . . . He hated himself for such thoughts. It was another proof of Manhattan's ill influence that he could calmly think of her in the arms of a man she hated. But, after all, why blink matters? What was the difference between Velvet Voice marrying Spedden and Bertie accepting Gayton's "protection"? She would soon begin the little battles of her craft again, sending him away, seeing him only when her bank-account was in jeopardy. Perhaps, if Gayton really cared for her and Bertie was clever, she could arrange it so that he would settle something on her. Arnold would arrange for some one to suggest this. Pink, for instance. Maybe she might find consolation in Pink. Then she might have both money and love.

Arnold laughed. Then his eyes hardened. A nice set of thoughts, truly! A year before he would have seen no comedy in Pink's oblique view-point, indeed would have scorned such an acquaintance. But it was difficult to scorn Pink when he knew his outlook, actions, avocations and occupations were but the result of example and environment. He had seen life so lived, had neither created nor desired, only accepted it. And his quaint, vivid, often picturesque speech denoted such accurate observation and felicity of expression that, had he had the proper training, these gifts might have made him a "star-reporter," a highly-paid writer of advertisements, even of fiction. It was not by choice he was what he was. How gladly he had availed himself of the opportunity to "turn square," even though the reward was less.

There was that confounded puzzle, that iniquitous philosopher's *why—why—why*. And of all the "why's" why could not *he* cease from troubling himself about other people's affairs? . . . He smiled grimly; that was easily answered. That was his work, his future. His brow wrinkled again; once more the unanswered question was in his eyes, and he was struggling against a belief in what the philosopher had prophesied. . . . Joy fled him, and he felt it fleeing. Was this sort of thing to go on forever? In that case small pleasure was in store for him, home or anywhere. . . .

A sound in the next room startled him. Recollecting he had failed to direct Quinn to call him early, he was about to lift his voice for his retainer, when the sound was repeated. It was as though some one dropped a shoe from a bedside. And then he knew that Bertie had entered with her latch-key while he had sat before the fire. He knew he should be alarmed and angry, should lock his door; at any sign of intrusion should make bold to say what he had intended to write.

But—such is human nature—he was conscious of far different emotions. Nor was he angry that it should be so. He remembered only that Bertie was very, very pretty, very, very much desired, and that she loved him very, very much. All of which, coming on Velvet Voice's rejection of him, filled him with a fierce satisfaction. To his qualms of disturbed conscience he made angry replies. Had he sought Bertie out? Would it not be brutal to reject her without warning after her long absence, just when she thought to give him a pleasant surprise? Was he stone that he could endure the sound of sobbing all night? Had he given her the latch-key; had she not had it made herself?

At the third sound, that of a window opening, he found himself trembling. A pleasurable tremor it was, too, and it brought him to his feet and took him toward the door. He was hardly conscious of his actions; he submitted them to the approval of neither brain nor conscience. His exit into the hall was almost involuntary. Then came the opening of *her* door, the quick closing of it, behind him. . . . At the sight of the room's many little feminine touches his trembling became violent, his voice, when he tried to find it, was simply nowhere.

The little fringed pink shades of the candles on her dressing table threw the light downward on her polished silver brushes, on her cut-glass bottles. How little a woman's touch changes a room, yet how much. The cretonne hangings to the windows, the soft furry mat on the floor by the bed, the lace doily under another pink-handed candle on the night-table, and in its light her long jeweled bar-pin, her rings, her golden vanity-case and mesh-bag studded with brilliants, the gold baby-pins that had fastened her blouse, all lay in a sparkling, shiny mass—all was as before, and over all the delicate odor of iris, so much her own particular perfume that it was a part of her. . . . Everything as before. She might never have gone away. . . .

A curious sense of the naturalness of the situation gave him no chance to think. He was soothed and lulled by habit, habit the traitor that bids the brain not bother about matters unworthy its attention; and, while it rests, infringes upon its prerogatives. Unconsciously, then, Arnold's eyes sought a familiar object that was missing—the pink kimono that should hang on the closet door. Slowly he turned and saw her wrapped in its filmy folds. What a beautiful thing she was! so soft and appealing, what a childish neck and shoulders, with just the faintest indication of shoulder-blades under her rosy flesh, flesh that seemed so alive; even her hands—not like the cold, unresponsive hands of most women, the result of calculating hearts that beat out just enough blood for practical purposes. She was warm, vivid, like a tropical flower on a long slender stem.

Later that night he was puzzled to know what persuasions she had used to break down his defenses. What had brought this affair back to where it had been when she went away? He could remember nothing; could not tell, even, how he had persuaded *himself*. He had thought it would be brutal to lock his door against her—he recalled that. But between such a negative and the affirmative of kisses and caresses there was only a blank. . . .

Actually when their eyes met she had put out two small fluttering hands, and he had come forward to take them just as he had always done. And then the scent of the iris became mingled with another, subtler and sweeter—that "perfume of her presence" one reads of. It overpowered Arnold, as always. He drew her to him and breathed her deeply, the soft lace and diaphanous silk of the pink kimono pressed against his face.

And then she seemed to be seized by a sudden wildness. It thrilled him and warmed the lips and arms that held her. It was wonderful to know that she was fragile and that he was crushing her in his fierce embrace.

"You still love me, Arnold? You haven't been untrue to me? Oh, Arnold! Have you?" The loose sleeves of the kimono fell back from her soft arms as they wound themselves around his neck. And he lied—his voice thick, his eyes humid.

"I love you," he choked out; "I love you. What did you want to go away for? I've wanted you so much. . . . So much. . . ."

That had been it, he told himself with heart beating high. If she had not gone Velvet Voice wouldn't have mattered. It was the same thing, only he had been a sentimental ass, had called it by sanctified names. Yes, he loved Bertie! The word meant just this and nothing more. It meant thoughts of soft fragrant arms, of a beautiful body dimly outlined through sweet-smelling silks and lace; it meant eyes half-closed, cheeks blazing high, and burning red lips to kiss and kiss again. . . .

END OF BOOK IV

BOOK V

CHAPTER ONE

THE BLOW FALLS

I. "Van Vhroon, Coffee"

OF THE two rivers that Manhattan separates and which it allows to meet only when both have reached the open sea, one is spanned by networks of cobwebby steel, over which fly trolleys, motor-propelled vehicles and wagons, on their way to Long Island. Both are crowded with ferries crowded with people, and ships crowded with cargoes, ships leaving or reaching the many piers and docks—docks that, near the coast line's center, are as gigantic as the great ocean greyhounds whose kennels they are; docks that grow smaller as the river rushes on toward the sea, for nearer the Battery and almost in sight of a certain satiric Statue are the homes of the older ships built in those days when Americans actually pretended to enjoy wasting a week or more of valuable time crossing so stupid an arrangement as an ocean.

Down among these antiquated devices of commerce lay the *Cormorant*, "coffee clipper," her slim masts slanting toward her stern, like the very latest thing in transatlantic liners' funnels; indeed, so scanty of beam was she, so sharp of bow hollowed out toward the water line, and so elliptical of stern, as to appear remarkably and jauntily long. She had been the pride of her Philadelphia yard at her launching, and although that dated back a quarter of a century, she still remained the latest model of her type. Since then she had been hauled into dry dock many times; she had been given a new keel and a new bottom; her plates had been renewed; while as for masts, sails, spars, rigging and gear in general, their name was, if not legion, at least cohort.

Below decks it would have been the same, but, as for example, her main-cabin had been originally finished in bird's-eye maple, with "skeleton linings" of the best Bessemer steel, its "lunatic" owner—as Archibald Van Vhroon was called by a newer type of merchant—had found little excuse for expenditure here. Nevertheless, he had installed some recent plumbing to remove an odor usual and expected by all who sailed in such ships. Save only for a lack of modern heating, officers and crew might have found no more comfortable quarters in the greyhounds themselves; indeed, less so, for her quarters were never crowded; and, as for heat, there was a fire-place in the main-cabin for officers, and the galley-fire served sufficiently for the crew.

Altogether, she was the pride of old Archibald's heart; never was he happier than when he was on the pier watching her warp in or stand out, returning from or going on that cause which she had covered times without number. Until recently she had had company; as near as the nineties there had been four clippers in the Van Vhroon fleet, one or two of which were always in the slips. But they had been sold or hired out now and the extra slip (there were two to the Van Vhroon establishment) had been leased to another firm that sent out a large number of barges on the Long Island trade. One of them lay there now, ready to be towed away, her decks heaped up with coal and wood. Her huge clumsy build, stem and stern alike, her dirty, coal-covered strips of deck, were the greatest possible contrast to the slim, clean

Cormorant, with her holystoned decks and polished brasswork shining in the sun.

The Van Vhroon establishment, besides the long broad pier and the two harbor slips, consisted of a large, rambling wooden structure that rose over the pier archway and extended half-way down toward the green water-stained piles, roofing half the pier. In the old days this covered space had usually been crowded; on one side of the iron truck-tracks consignments just unshipped and waiting to be warehoused, on the other bales and boxes marked in packing ink for delivery within the city or to be sent out North and South, by train or boat. One side led into the warehouses, the other into the offices. On the lower floor of this latter was the Captain's room, where those officers and their mates and boatswains might gather over their pipes and their drinks; back of this a larger room for the crews. Above, reached by a dark and narrow flight of stairs resembling a companionway, was what old Mr. Archibald insisted on calling his "counting-room." It had once held a dozen clerks on high-stools, separate cages for head-bookkeeper and cashier. Leading off this and facing the river—the counting-room itself was dark and lighted by green-shaded fixtures—were two smaller rooms, one utilized for correspondence, containing a stenographer, a file clerk and Mr. Archibald's private secretary—who, of later years, had been young Mr. Archibald, as the clerks called him—Archie Hartogensis.

The other room bore little resemblance to a modern business office. It had Turkey-red carpeting, handsome mahogany furniture, pleasant fire of sea-coal reposing in a bed of ornamental iron-work, a cradle-grate, on the head of which was pictured, in dull black iron, lighted brilliantly by the flames, a wood-cutter's hut set in a German forest. The fireplace itself was of the "Adam-and-Eve" variety, cunningly carved with fruits, flowers and fig-leaves, its mantel cut outward with rounded corners; above it a long, narrow, old-fashioned gilt-framed mirror. On the walls were various oil-paintings and water-colors of departed Van Vhroons, their captains and their ships. In a dark corner the glass doors of a high curio-closet caught an occasional fire-gleam; behind them were curious objects from all quarters of the globe, presents from the Van Vhroon mariners.

In the exact center of the room, under a chandelier with many cut-glass prisms of the "dew-drop" sort, was a long carved table with curved bellying legs, a broad table with many drawers, its basket of papers, files, inkstands and other implements giving the only hint that business was conducted here. And, with the spars and funnels of ships passing beyond the windows, one had a curious feeling of being in a London office overlooking the Thames Embankment—an effect increased by the sight of the Lunstic who sat at the table and who, in frock-coat, poke-collar and broad-banded black ascot, seemed to have stepped directly from the pages of Charles Dickens.

You doubt he was a lunatic? What other sort of American would have continually overhauled his vessels before the Government Inspectors demanded it? If it had been a matter of insurance, now. . . . But the Lunatic was thinking of the safety of captains and crews. Who else but a lunatic would have retained in service nine clerks when every one knew the business warranted only six? Lucky for him three others had died else he'd have had a dozen, as in the old days.

And who but a lunatic would have held out against Combination Coffee? If he had sold when he had the chance he might have retired with a snug little fortune—the Van Vhroons had been for nearly two hundred years the first of the coffee firms. But, with his stupid sailing-ships and antiquated ideas of distribution, how could he compete with a combination that had trade-marks almost as old, had steamers, had retail stores all over the country that could sell at prices impossible to any single firm? True, old-fashioned grocers with old-fashioned customers still dealt with the Lunatic, but they were dying off, grocers and customers alike, and their sons or other successors were doing business with the smart young salesmen of Combination Coffee. The Lunatic's one salesman, who made a yearly trip, was as out-of-date as his braided cutaway and square-top derby.

Yet, even now, for the name and the trade-mark, the kindly Combination was willing to take over his amusingly absurd business and pay well therefor. Would any one but a lunatic refuse? . . . And there were many little touches of idiocy unknown to the world-at-large, such as refusing the rehabilitation offered by Captain Denny's great scheme. To which the Lunatic was now referring when that astute mariner had put forward the offer of a private gentleman to take over the *Cormorant,* which would not only keep that bird from "eating her head off"—*vide* Captain Denny—but pay office expenses and return some profit.

"I knowed you'd say I was up to my little games, so I did," said Denny aggrievedly, squirming under injustice in one of the Heppelwhite chairs. "But you've got me wrong as usual, Mr. Archibald, sir, which your nephew, young Mr. Archibald, kin testify to if you'll be so kind as to call him." The head of the firm pressed a button. "No, sir, Mr. Archibald, that was for *you,* that idea. If you don't want it, why should an old sailorman take the risk? No, *sir.*"

His voice was one of strenuous honesty, of rectitude misjudged; and when the summoned young Archibald appeared and had heard the name of his friend, Arnold L'Hommedieu, Captain Danny looked expectantly for justice to be done him.

Early that morning, before Archie had left the house, he had received a telephone message from Arnold, urging him not to mention his connection with the Weldemer Drug Company. If Mr. Van Vhroon wanted to know why Mr. L'Hommedieu wished to hire a clipper ship, let it be explained that Arnold was commissioned—secretly, of course—to investigate the threatened revolt of the Mexicans. . . . Newspapers were known to expend large sums on such trifling details, and did they wish to toss money about, should Mr. Van Vhroon object? All of which Archie now retailed faithfully when asked to vouch for his friend.

". . . And he's the son of Parson L'Hommedieu down at Havre de Grace. You ought to know him, Uncle Archibald," he concluded. "You two were such great friends when you were down that way and you know he's the honestest man in the county, . . . in the whole world. And so's Arnold. There never was such a chap. I only wish I were going with him. But you're not to let any one know. That would be a terrible thing for him, . . . his newspaper would throw him out like *that!*"

"I'll consider it, then," said his uncle gruffly. "You may go, Archibald. . . . And so for once you told the truth, Daniel. I am surprised. I am indeed. I must be careful or I shall begin to believe you and thereby lose much money." Which was his way, that gruffness and that appearance of suspicion, of proving to the world his stern and acute business methods. "I will investigate the matter and let you know tomorrow. . . ."

Captain Danny knew the battle was won. No one investigated less than old Mr. Van Vhroon; none had a firmer belief in the integrity of human nature; but to speak gruffly of investigation was part of the duty of a business man whose slogan was "no nonsense." . . . On Captain Danny's exit Mr. Archibald called Gunnison, his head-clerk, and directed him to make out an average monthly statement, founded on her record for the past year, of the expense of the *Cormorant's* upkeep, charges of loading and unloading to be deducted. And the ancient clerk viewed him with watery rheumy eyes.

"You don't think of disposing of the *Cormorant,* Mr. Archibald, sir?" he reproached. "I don't think I could stand it if she should go, too. I've stood the *Melinda* going and the *Osprey* and the putting out of our handsome *Coot* into that filthy guano trade." . . . He spoko as though he had permitted these unreasonable outrages as an especial favor, but that it was best not to try him too far, he might resign and save the firm a few hundreds a year.

"Now, you let me hear no more from you, Gunnison," said his employer severely, "or I will discharge you forthwith. Your length of service counts nothing with me. Sentiment can't be allowed to interfere with business, and when we have clerks dictating to their employers it is time for them to part. . . . No nonsense of that sort goes in this office." These modern business men could be no harsher than that, he thought, chuckling; and Gunnison, properly chastened—in the past decade he had faced thirty threats of discharge a month—retreated meekly from his position, and said he hoped Mr. Archibald would understand he had spoken only because of his long association with the firm.

"Don't presume on it agsin, Gunnison," said old Mr. Archibald. "Sentiment counts for nothing here. You remain in my employ only because you are useful to me. I hope you remember that. If I could get a man to do your work cheaper I'd have got him long ago. If he turns up any day out you go. And there'll be no use in your talking about your long association. This chair I'm sitting on has had just as long an association, but I'd sell it to-morrow if I could get a better one. The same with the *Cormorant*. Let me hear no more such nonsense."

Gunnison having departed, the Lunatic coughed somewhat importantly as one who has incontrovertibly proved himself, as usual, a master logician. While Gunnison's rheumy old eyes were more than usually clouded. Even if the Lunatic deceived himself, he deceived no one else.

"Discharged again, Gunnison?" asked Archie, grinning as the old clerk came out. Gunnison sighed heavily and stared at the *Cormorant's* slim spars outside Archie's window.

"He didn't used to be like that, Mr. Archie, sir," he explained apologetically. "He began when he heard they'd made fun of his keeping old Timothy Larkins on. Timmy was a cripple, you know. He was before your time here. Mr.

Archibald swore he'd discharge Timmy as soon as he could find somebody to take his place—but he always said nobody could. He'd grumble about Timmy and say his days in the office were numbered. He would have a new man in the very next day. But Timmy was here until he died. . . ."

Archie was not listening to Gunnison. All of his uncle's eccentricities were long familiar to him; all Gunnison's reminiscences, too; the old clerk was likely to forget and repeat the same story on the following day. To him the peculiarities of his employer were as novel each morning as the latest news. He passed on to re-tell his reminiscences and his recent interview to a more appreciative audience, and Archie continued his sightless staring and his wonder as to Arnold's use for the *Cormorant*. It signified the possession of money, that was certain, much money.

He was glad, for old Arnold's sake, that he had come out of his trance at last, had begun to use his brains to some purpose instead of mooning them away on that writing of his that would never bring in enough to live like a gentleman. And what was the use of living, else? But Arnold had such queer ideas. He had had them, too, when he was younger (one might have imagined he was looking back from a ripe old age), but thank Heaven, he had met the right sort of a little girl, and she had shown him what was what. . . . Look at The Good Old Rabbit, her father, how rich he had become through putting his little brains to the proper use. While Arnold, with forty times as many, had nothing to show. But since old Waldemar had taken him up, he must have seen how silly he'd been or the Old Geezer wouldn't have such great faith in him as to let him go about hiring full-rigged ships. . . . Again he wondered for what the *Cormorant* was wanted. At all events, Arnold must have "some salary" to be trusted that much. No doubt he had saved money. Too bad he had not realized this a few months before. There never would be another chance like Instantaneous Boiler. Now, of course, there was no great profit in buying it—although, if it kept on, who could tell?

There were few moments in the day when Archie did not think of Instantaneous Boiler. It meant his whole future. Carol, poor dear girl, was tired of waiting forever; who could blame her! She wanted a home of her own, where she could do as she pleased; where she would not be dragged about and shown off to every eligible young man. She had a right to be impatient with him. Look at The Good Old Rabbit! He didn't take years to find the Big Thing. And there were hundreds of Big Things if Archie would only bestir himself instead of spending so much time in that stupid office of his uncle's which would never yield sufficient to permit marriage even though they lived in Harlem, out in the suburbs or in some other *impossible* place. Archie should be down in the Street looking out for Big Things. He *had* been looking, in his leisure, but that was not enough; he should resign from his uncle's and devote his entire time to it. The Good Old Rabbit would take him into his office. True, he would not pay him much, but he would be on the spot. Archie had continual difficulty in making Carol understand that he was not an only son. And in a country without laws of entail what would prevent a displeased father from disinheriting his eldest son? Some younger brother would be Hartogensis of Exmoor should he venture to flout Squire Hartogensis' wishes.

However, he had been dabbling. The Good Old Rabbit had given him several minor tips, cautioning him, however, not to invest too heavily. He had lost on one and gained on the other. But Carol was a luxury, as Arnold had observed—restaurant bills for herself and chaperon, taxi-bills, flower-bills, bills for hired motors to take them down on Long Island to various "Chateaux" and into Westchester to divers "Inns"; costliest of all, losses at bridge and huge tips to servants at week-end parties among richer friends. To refuse to play bridge was worse than not being able to turkey-trot—one was never invited again. All these expenses of keeping Carol in sight had placed an extremely large minus sign where his winnings on that one tip should have been—a minus sign that took in a large share of his puny capital. . . . So when Instantaneous Boiler had shown its dazzling head on his horizon Archie had not hesitated. "One" must not hesitate when the Big Thing came along; "one" never got another chance if "one" did, and if "one" did not believe this, "one" insulted Carol.

So that, on this particular mornng when the second post brought an envelope with the name by which his Big Thing was known to the public, Archie thought again of old Arnold and what he had missed. No doubt this was to advise him of a ten-point rise in the public estimation of The Wonderful Lamp. Archie and other Aladdins had received numbers of such notifications and had found more money to invest. His poor old lunatic uncle disbelieved in such things; but he should be assisted whether he willed it or not and the firm tided over its present difficulties. Presently, when Instantaneous Boiler reached par, he would sell and become the benefactor of the firm. Then his underrating father, hearing of this great success, would admit that such financial genius was smothered in so unprogressive a firm.

And so smiling he opened Mr. Mink's plaintive wail to the stockholders of Instantaneous Boiler. . . .

II. Arnold Gives up the Fight

It was past noon the next day before Arnold found himself alone and free to set out for Clabber's, half of Captain Danny's smuggled goods in the box beside the taxi-driver. When it had been lugged up-stairs by grinning Boy Number One and a blue-robed menial, Clabber, true to his word, but not until a number of cans had been sampled and approved, passed over the money. It was in hundred-dollar bills.

"Whenever you get more of the sameth," he said, "you know where to cometh, hey? And I pay you as much as anybody, and take more. . . .”

Arnold repressed with difficulty the inclination to sound him concerning Captain Danny's scheme. But why raise expectations that could not be realized? Had he not definitely abandoned that iniquitous idea? He went off hurriedly, deposited his money and returned to Beeckman Place to carry the second consignment to Apricott.

There he found, awaiting him, a note from Captain Danny. It told briefly of his success in securing the *Cormorant* for the cruise—as for the probable terms, he gave them, adding that he would be around again at the dinner-hour. “He won't find me,” thought Arnold, feeling grimly victorious. He would be dining in Havre de Grace to-night. . . . But, as he tore up the note, he heard the whir of a taxi outside, and through the hall curtains saw Hugo pay the driver, Archie standing by limp and despondent.

Arnold opened the door. “Don't let your taxi go, boys,” he warned. “I can't be with you more than ten minutes. Important business. That's my taxi—the other one.”

Hugo looked up: something sinister in his glance alarmed Arnold. “You'd better let *him* go, then,” said Hugo. “You've got no business as important as we've got. Here”—he addressed Arnold's driver—“how much is it?”—and gave him a bill. The two taxis backed and barked and birred away. “Come on, Arch,” said Hugo kindly, putting an affectionate arm about his friend. “Come on, old boy.” The big fellow had all the tenderness of a woman in his voice.

Arnold, conscious of impending disaster, led them into a room overlooking the river, his lounge and library. Outside the sky was dark and threatening: the tide ran high and boats strained at their moorings. True, it had been gloomy and threatening all day, but when one seeks for dismal signs, it is not hard to find them.

Again Arnold had that queer helpless feeling of one who must combat circumstances. The face of the peninsula philosopher seemed to rise up again and mock him. . . . He turned, his look somber, and saw Hugo lock the door; nor did he say anything to console the miserable Archie who had dropped into a chair, head on hands, elbows on knees, face dark and despairing. Hugo cleared his throat, lit a cigar, tossed it away, and took down one of Arnold's pipes.

"Oh—go on, Arch," he said suddenly, "tell him." But the heap of misery in the chair only groaned. "Oh—*hell,*" said Hugo. "Well—look here, Arnold—Archie. . . ."

He plunged into the wretched story of Instantaneous Boiler, Archie punctuating it with occasional oaths, groans and desires for death. When the tale was told, Arnold turned from Archie, his look one of terror, dismay, anger, hatred. A gull! —the easiest sort of a gull; so greedy for wealth he could not earn, that he had been taken in by the most transparent of fakes. And all to gratify a silly chit of a girl, snobbish, ignorant, worthless—far inferior to the girl whom Arnold had sent away that morning and to whom, probably, she would consider herself vastly superior because of a purely technical virtue—and this was the price of that virtue: the ruin of him who could not afford to buy it. . . . Worst of all, there was nothing to be done. The swindlers back of Instantaneous Boiler knew the law, knew how to circumvent it, had given their swindling that farcical legal aspect which would prevent any criminal action being taken. And Hugo had no money. . . .

"You see, Arnold," he added, uneasy under Arnold's chilly stare. "My Gov.'s shut down. I'm in his black books. Drew bills against him for that damned show I backed, and he's published me in the papers saying he's not responsible for any more of my debts. Look here!"—and he drew some clippings from his pockets. "And here's his letter. I'm 'to keep within my allowance'—'not a cent over'—and if I'm not at the office hereafter, I'll be docked for every day I stay away more than two hours! A pretty go, ain't it?—why, Bobbie owes Madame

Judith nearly seven thousand for hats and frocks and furs. Her bill ain't been paid for nearly two years and she's threatenin' to sue—that's only one. If he'd only let me marry her," he groaned; "she was *so* careful not to run into debt when she thought we were going to be married! Wanted to begin saving for the kid. Poor old Bobs!—of course we couldn't have any when we weren't regularly doubled up. And, say, you've got no idea how she wanted a kid, marriage or not. But I put my foot down on *that.* 'Twouldn't be *fair* to the *kid,* I said—"

For the first time, Archie showed some animation. "To hell with *you,*" he interrupted violently. "Are you looking suicide in the face? Well, then, shut up—I *am.* Look here, Arnold, I've *got* to have that money. If the Dad has to sell property to make good to Uncle Archie, it's good-by to my ever having Exmoor. If Mr. Waldemar trusts you so much he lets you go about hiring ships, you can get all the money you want on trust. And there won't be a chance of me not paying it *back.* The Dad's *got* to die *some* day. And it'll be a good investment. Mr. Waldemar can't get a hundred per cent. every day, can he? I'll pay it. I'll pay *anything*—only get it for me, Arnold, get it for me. . . . It's only five thousand and I'll kill myself if I don't get it—I might just as well. I've lost Carol—she won't wait forever. I've lost my mother's ten thousand. Now if I lose Exmoor, what've I got to live for? Just stay here and be a clerk all my life? I won't do it, Arnold, I'll kill myself! I will I tell you, I will!"

"I can raise two or three thousand, Arnold," said Hugo. "There's my pearls—studs and waist-coat buttons and links. And my sapphire—pin and links, and this ring with two big stones. And this watch cost fifteen hundred"— he took it out, a thing as thin as the half of a soda-biscuit. "I'd ask Bobbie to let me use her junk, too, just for the time, but it's going to be tough enough when she hears about the Governor shutting down, poor old Bobs. . . ."

"A—w," snarled Archie. "Why don't you *make* her? A fine girl, won't help you out when you're in trouble." . . . Which angered even the peaceable Hugo.

"Well, then, how about your *own* girl?" he shot back angrily. "*She's* got jewelry, hasn't she?—and her father's got *money*, ain't he? Why shouldn't *she* help you?"

"I'll tell you why," said Arnold coldly. "Because Carol Caton would throw him down one minute after she thought there was no chance of him making good." He snapped his fingers and pushed Archie back in his chair. "Don't try to *act*," he advised, his tone frigid. "Carol's the last person in the world you'd ask and you know it. You've ruined yourself over her; but that's what American men are made for. If they can't cheat or steal enough to make money, they aren't worthy of our pure American women," he added savagely, thinking, to tell the truth, far more of Velvet Voice than Carol. "What starts most of this graft and dishonesty? '*Dearie*' wants a motor-car like Mrs. Blank's. '*Dearie*' wants to move into a better neighborhood. '*Dearie*' must dress like Mrs. Dash, must go to Europe like Mrs. Dot, must take a summer-place like Mrs. Dumb. '*Dearie*'—damn *Dearie*—the whipping-post for '*Dearie*.' And then they talk about the coarse men who do the coarse work that gets the coarse money that buys their delicate refined good-breeding! Why, we're a *joke*, we American men! . . . Now—shut up!" he warned Archie again. "We don't want to hear anything from you about how unworthy we men are of sweet lovely womanhood. It's a lie. We're their superiors, always have been, always will be. It's men like you who give them their fool ideas, you and the cheap novels and 'thoughtful' plays. When women get real men, they're willing enough to acknowledge it—"

He paused for want of breath. He was violently angry. Ever since he had first conceived his smuggling scheme in Clabber's bunk, he had felt instinctively that somehow, he would be forced into it. Now he looked back, it seemed that his life for the last five years had been planned toward that end. He was like a pawn in the clutch of an automatic chess-player.

The whole thing had the semblance of a Greek tragedy in its disregard for human desires.

Ever since their expulsion from Old King's University some malign influence had driven each one of them into lives foreign to those they had planned, alien to their natures; until Archie was now a betrayer of trust; Hugo was pointed out as an unenviable example of gilded youth, advertised by his father as a prodigal; Arnold, the employee of a wholesale poisoner, himself a potential criminal. And The Jinx, in whose cause they had interfered, had turned out a blackmailer for all their pains!

The silly waste of it! "Purpose?"—and his thoughts turned to the peninsula philosopher again—a fine one truly. At this rate, the "Purpose" would not be satisfied until they were all three in the electric-chair. A mad recklessness seized him. What use to combat it, then? Have the worst over. Evidently, if there was such a "Purpose," if the Orientals were right about their "Kismet," it did not intend he should be decent. Had it not checked all his attempts in that direction? And, now, when he had deliberately rejected an easy road to wealth sooner than follow in the wake of Waldemar's poisoning—rejected it knowing it might bring him, perhaps, all his heart desired—along came this catastrophe, this cataclysm! And the good and great "Purpose" had seen to it that Hugo should be penniless when it came—an unprecedented thing!

Now if he still continued in his rejection, the least that could happen was Archie's suicide. Why not, if the boy lost everything—good name, girl, inheritance? And Arnold would know he could have saved him—and at the cost of what?—a few silly scruples! It was nonsense to say Waldemar was a poisoner: if *he* didn't do it, *some one would.* People sold poisons and adulterated food, grafted, stole franchises, bought legislators, paid gunmen to repeat at elections, floated "phony" stocks, made politics and business filthy, and life a menace to the honest man, a cruel taskmaster to the poor one—all because somebody else would if they wouldn't.

Well, let them. He couldn't change it—the concomitant to that first bit of self-deceit as he knew well enough. But why make one's self miserable? The big financiers had the right idea: they made their millions, then built libraries, endowed hospitals and colleges, gave great sums to science to improve conditions. That was the only way. The fools that suffered had the remedy in their own hands, but *they* preferred to be slapped on the back, to be bought drinks, given picnics and free beer—their foolish ideas of equality encouraged. Support an honest man who told them the truth?—a snob who thought he was "better than they"? Why should *he* bother about such cattle when *they* didn't bother about themselves?

Guiltily, he knew he was repeating now every one of the sophistries. Arnold, now, was like the man in an icy sea who, although upheld by a life-preserver, deliberately drowns rather than endure the intolerable cold—or one hanging above an abyss who finds the thought of death less painful than lacerated hands and straining muscles. Like them, Arnold had reached the limit of endurance. Archie might not kill himself, *might* not; but Arnold knew such excitable, hysterical natures too well. And Arnold's own life was not tolerable enough to add to it the thought that he had permitted his friend to pass out when he might have saved him.

He raised his eyes, realizing that the gaze of Archie and Hugo was fixed upon him, just as in the old days when some important question had been left to his decision. He had always taken responsibility seriously, had Arnold.

But what a different Archie from those days: eyes sunken and bloodshot, strained face that seemed thin for all its plump cheeks, so drawn was it about eyes and mouth, while his hands twitched abominably. And Hugo was as earnest and as anxious, as sorrowful and as pitying, as some great St. Bernard dog viewing a frozen wayfarer too heavy for his aid.

"When must you have the money?" asked Arnold. Archie began to babble of bills due, possible extensions. . . . Arnold cut him short. "The last possible minute before anybody knows—your uncle even—three months?" he demanded coldly. "Come on, Archie, speak up. Can you manage without it for three months? You say you handle all the cash."

But Archie seemed dazed by the prospect of salvation. He began incoherent rhapsodies. He sold himself into eternal slavery to Arnold, ceased to be except as his appanage, catalogued the incredible services he would perform for this superman friend of his. Hugo, too, stuttered out a sort of dog-like wondering gratitude.

"Come," said Arnold impatiently. "Can you hold out for three months, Archie? Answer me. . . . You can? Good." He unlocked the door, raised his voice and called for Quinn to telephone for another taxicab: "And put that Apricott box on it when it comes. . . ."

"While we're waiting for it," he said to the two anxious ones, closing the door as he spoke, "I'll tell you why I need three months. And why I'm going to let you pawn your jewelry, Hugo. But don't be afraid: you'll be able to redeem it and to pay your half toward getting Archie out of this trouble besides. No gamble, no speculation"—he looked coldly at Archie—"no *chance*—for *me*. This is *certain*—*sure*. That is unless you let the cat out. And so, before I tell you, you'll have to swear by everything sacred you won't tell anybody—not *anybody*. . . ."

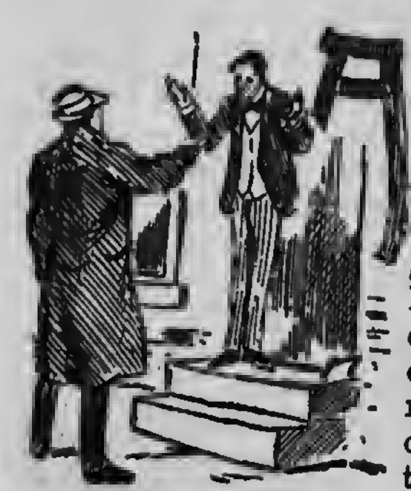
Alas for drama!—here was the most dramatic situation, so far, in the lives of any of them; yet the best words Arnold could summon up to impose secrecy were equally suited to some boyish trifle. Nor had Archie maintained his tragic attitude—his burden now rested on Arnold's shoulders, and he was only keenly curious—while Arnold felt strangely elated and thrilled, such is the unruly instinct in all of us. Once we have stilled, or definitely disregarded, customs, conventions and conscience, we are, for the moment, as those drunk with heady wine. . . .

And so his eyes sparkled as he told them of the fortune that lay waiting in far-off Yucatan. . . .

CHAPTER TWO

REBELLION

THE INN CLAIMS ARNOLD FOR ITS OWN



A CHILLY night, a foretaste of winter, might have made advisable the heavy rough great-coat Arnold donned before setting out for the Inn. But aside from any question of warmth, Arnold was glad of an excuse to turn up that huge storm-collar; and to turn down that soft felt hat. Many of his father's friends, and his mother's relatives, held to their old-fashioned homes in Washington Square; their rear walls overlooking Rupert Passage. And, possibly, policemen might wonder how one might be reputable and still visit so disreputable a place.

Hence he came into the Inn courtyard, skulking and scowling: hesitating at the flat marble stoop, and squeaking out his address to the high-collared young Hebrew; who, whereupon, gave himself some languidity of demeanor.

"Mr. E. Apricott," repeated Arnold more confidently. "Mr. Waldemar's secretary—the Waldemar Manufacturing Company, *you* know."

"Not me," returned he of the very high-collar, virtuously.

And began to smooth down the very low vest, and the very loud shirt, and to readjust the very thin tie—all faithful copies of Fourteenth Street window-dressers' models for "natty men." "Sure you got the right place?"

Arnold was impatiently sure.

"Wait a minute," soothed Jacob Faithful.

He turned to the *grille*, the shutter of which had been up ever since the hideous ringing of the shop-bell; Mother's bead-like eyes unblinkingly and unfavorably regarding her satellite.

"Never heard of no such person," he said. Desiring, however, to extend his study of the long slender knot and broad flowing folds of a Spitalsfield scarf—revealed by the unfastening of Arnold's coat, the high-collared young Hebrew assumed a benevolent but bepuzzled expression.

"Jest spell it, will ya? Maybe ya pull it wrong!"

"Why—" began Arnold in high exasperation, then laughed, understandingly. "It's all *right*," his tone the tone of one who has decided to allow a noisy insect to live a little longer. "You take that in to Mr. Apricott."

He had searched for and had found his card-case, on the plain flat surface of which were initials in dark blue enamel. On these the eyes of Sir High-Collar feasted greedily.

"No more of these here fancy monograms, hey?" he asked and assured himself—to himself. But what he said aloud was: "No such person I ever heard of, ain't I telling you," mechanically.

He found what he considered an artful outlet for sartorial excitement in a continuous performance with the now-despised wispy tie. To the searching eye, this was absolute proof of nerves. No mathematical calculation, no square and compass, could have placed it in a position more truly central.

Arnold, noticing the oblique and almost clinical examination of the blue enamel—but misunderstanding the motive, produced, swiftly, pencil and seal combined, cigarette-holder, and other golden reminders of past Christmases—indicating the initials on each, again indicating the card.

"A. L. H.—A. L. H. . . . Arnold L'Hommedieu—now take it in, will you?"

The shutter was raised an inch or so; the beady eyes behind it beamed.

"Gimme, then," said the walking clinic, loftily reconsidering: "*I* don't *know*, Mis' *Mybus* might, though." He took the card and disappeared, first, however, eying wistfully a cigarette-holder Arnold was shaking from a little gold box, in such a way as to elongate it, one like a miniature drinking-cup. The fitting-in and lighting served to steady Arnold's nerves, so that, when a head in a high collar emerged from the hutch, nodding solemnly, our hero made a more effective entrance into its interior than into the Inn itself. At their accustomed posts, needles flashing in the firelight—a forefinger flagellating his knee—fawning, frowning, were the fat woman and her endless knitting, the blind man and his endless prophecies.

"Sit down, young man," said Mother Mybus, and studied him for the profit she had prophesied he was to bring some day.

What a face and figure for the "boats";—what a "steerer" for the "pay-off"—or the "wire." She brought her bright black beads to bear on an expected weakness but found none.

Then Apricott entered pulling down his cuffs, plainly attired in some haste; plainly puzzling over Arnold's presence—the young gentleman had only to write and old Mitt-and-a-Half would have been glad to call . . . voicing this, abating the usual banalaties; the while drawing together his brows until their apex was as pointed as the sharpest yen-hok in his attic.

"You can speak out before Mother, and this is Mr. Nicholas Tremkin, sir. And he's all right, too" . . . the "sir" slipping out, a candid concession; valuable because old Mitt-and-a-Half seldom made it.

Still Arnold hesitated.

"They're all *right,* ain't I telling you. Anyhow, there's nowhere *else* to talk. . . ." "Good Fellow" or not, no stranger entered the Attic unimplicated.

Arnold's mind seemed benumbed, incapable or unwilling to do more than sense the color and count the number of red ocher bricks in the Antwerp flooring, the brown and tawny panels of the old oak walls, the blue and white tiling of the Amsterdam fireplace. And to wonder at their association with such folks as he of the Cubist face, triangular, hard, sour, he whose hand of the missing fingers twitched on a black cheviot knee. And diagonally opposite, him of the sightless eyes and useless lenses framed in expensive tortoise-shell—whose hand of the long black premier digit wrote on a brown serge knee. But he wondered most about that human sack which, uncorded, would send the *Cormorant* south—her of the fat rat face, with eyes like an ancient mouse—her very appearance was a misdemeanor!

Arnold's hesitancy, however, had been due to no fear of betrayal: his listeners were too greedy not to be trustworthy. It was another qualm, another thought of that family name to be jeopardized for the first time in two centuries or more. Allied with that of the wickedest old woman in New York. Was it worth while? Was he justified?

But what was to become of Archie if he did *not?* How was he, Arnold, to win Velvet Voice? At such times, one is shorn of self-deception. Arnold knew, now, that all the time, and, even at her own valuation, he had wanted Velvet Voice. Had wanted her so much that he was willing to *buy* her. He knew, too, what he was: a hypocrite like all the rest—Waldemar, the Squire, yes, even Quivvers—wasn't he glad of an excuse to get her price: somehow—anyhow? And at the cost of his self-respect. . . . Archie, eh? Archie, *hell*—Arnold, *Arnold!* ARNOLD!

"I've got some thousands of dollars' worth of opium outside," he suddenly affirmed with startling calm. Apricott intervened, snarling and snapping over the recklessness that left unguarded so much virgin gold. Disregarding the bill Arnold held out to pay the driver, Apricott hastily quitted the room; returning presently, an incompetent expressman, staggering under an incomparable box. But, unlike an expressman, he deposited it gently and approached the prying-off of its lid almost prayerfully.

Meanwhile, Mother touched Nikko's knee. The blind man burst into weird mirth.

"Growing, growing—always growing," he chuckled. "Slowly, but surely. Ha!—Petra Borisovna," and he rubbed his thin fingers together, swearing the Slavonic calendar out of saints, and concluding with a masterpiece:

". . . by St. Nicholas and the skull of Christ. He hates the filthy money-swine too, an aristocrat, a leader. Leaders are all we need. Mobs obey aristocrats . . . have I not always told you officers must be noble? Animals need trainers—but kind trainers, Petra—not cruel knouters. Blind folk have the best eyes! They see inside. . . ."

"Blind?—you?" she returned sharply. "And yesterday beheld the Doctor's dark purple scarf? Thou wouldst lose the blessed Sophia her sanctity. With a *boyar's* eyeshells, glossy as a blackbird." . . .

The simile was sheer animalism, nothing more. Just as she had poetized greedily over sweetmeats when younger, she now seemed able to find similar lip-smacking qualities in any object of cost—and like Hugo—like all interminably inarticulate races—Slavs certainly could symbolize crudely but ecstatically.

"Listen!"—interrupted Apricott, indicating Arnold and his polite but strained silence.

"Well." . . . Arnold began.

Revolutionists and rebel and rogue, all were equally attentive to this manifestly likable young gentleman; so attractively appareled, too. Mother's eyes glistened with malice and moisture, Apricott ceased burrowing in the opened box and began to fondle something. Nikko smiled contentedly. Since "Mr. Arnold" had accepted Apricott's thousand-dollar bonus—we had hoped he would array himself—profitably—against the law—openly rebel, Nikko put it.

Now that this had happened, their expectations were more than fulfilled. No empty boasts. "The goods!"

"I think you know what you talk about, Mr. Arnold," said Mother slowly. "I *think* you know. But *I* don't know. I hear much of you from Mr. Pink and Mr. Beau and that Bad Little Frog! they think you know too. . . . But *they* don't know. . . . Why you come to ignorant low peasant peoples, Mr. Arnold? Why not to your rich friends?"

"Because it's against the law," returned Arnold, too heavy of heart to be epigrammatically satirical. "And my rich friends don't do things against the law. They may *change* it or cheat it or get poorer people to take the chances. And I'm not taking chances for the fun of it, Mrs. Mybus. I can offer *you* half the profits for all the expenses; without getting a laugh. My inside information against your illegitimate cash. Which gives me my own illegitimate profits clear. I'm only going to invest the money you pay me for what's there. . . ."

He indicated the box—or, rather, a sunken barge in a sea of excelsior, amid which squatted the connoisseur, his Cubistical features contorted like some good-natured ghoul—and, adding his own two thousand to the price expected from Mother, plus that of the other Musketeers, continued— ". . . a very dear friend's—Then the ship-captain's is fifteen hundred dollars' worth. All the rest that Señor Gomez has is yours, Mrs. Mybus. If that should happen to be less than I've guaranteed you, here is a fair return for so much risk."

He tapped some sheets.

"Why, we'll divide the entire cargo evenly—between me, my friend and the captain. Ten thousand invested between us and we'll sell for over a hundred thousand, not counting your extra profit retailing to your customers."

"Not *my* customers, Mr. Arnold," disclaimed Mother promptly. "Mr. Enoch, he has customers, though."

"Well, Mr. Enoch, then," said Arnold with an air of indifference. "He makes about one hundred per cent. extra profit, anyhow, doesn't he?"

"One hundred per cent.?" she screamed. "Not half, Mr. Arnold. Not a quarter. What about his valuable time? Just *think* of his valuable *time!* And his valuable *rent*—"

Apricott, having filled his pockets with valuable "cans" from various parts of the valuable box, now slid stealthily from the room, his eyes telling Mother to keep Arnold's turned in her direction so that their valuable visitor might not be disturbed by so valuable a departure.

"Have it your own way," said Arnold irritably. "It's no concern of mine, what you people do with yours. Your profits —or his—that's your own business. The point is that the profits are big enough even without your retail profits; big enough to make your paying the expenses worth your while—"

He took out Captain Danny's note of that afternoon; stated approximately—hypotheses—calculations. . . .

She held up both hands frequently and emitted a squeal like an animal in pain. It was her established way of making bargains and she could not depart from it even when she knew it was useless, saw that Arnold disregarded her.

"That will provide for emergencies—damage from possible storms and so forth. Then there are bonuses to the crew to keep quiet, insurance to pay. The actual *rental* will be around a hundred a week, all expenses borne by us of course. . . . The insurance covers total loss. Not that the round trip is *bound* to *be* three months—that's an outside limit. You'll get some of your expense money back—a great deal of it—but I wouldn't go into the thing unless you were willing to put up the whole three thousand. The owner of the ship can't afford to wait for his money. If he *could*, he wouldn't be renting it. And he happens to be too decent an old gentleman to go into bankruptcy because you aren't willing to do what anybody else would *expect* to do—"

He was playing safe, was Arnold, for Archie's sake; for although Archie had, in the first flash of gratitude to his savior, granted the possibility of holding off for three months, he also admitted that some bills must be met before that time and could be extended only with difficulty.

But Mother's cheque for the expenses, held to the credit of Van Vhroon and Company under the united signatures of Arnold and Archie, would suffice for the more pressing bills in case of bad weather, protracted calms, or delays in general.

Here Apricott returned from his Attic.

"The Doc tried it," quoth he. "I hadda jest wrench the can away from him after his first long draw. He's offering double prices for a toey of it. . . ."

Arnold, observing Mother's darkening brows, and remembering a similar look directed by Clabber to Boy Number One, laughed aloud. "No use, Mrs. Mybus," he said almost gaily. "I know the value of the stuff, and I've got a fixed price on it. I'd have sold it all to Clabber, but I wanted to be fair to my future partner—partners," he added, for he saw she would again insist upon Apricott's sole responsibility. . . . "Just take this as a sample of the truth of the rest of it. Of course, you must take my *word*. But you don't need to hand me any money except the expenses and the payment for the present box. Mr. Apricott can sail on the ship and have full charge of your money for investment. All I want is a chance to invest my own and my friend's. Together, we'll only have what you'll have. And out of ours we've got a dead loss of five thousand—more than your expenses—I mean what goes to my friend—the young man who invested in Instantaneous Boiler. I don't really believe I'd have gone into this at all if it hadn't been for him. But, since I *am* in it, I want something for myself, personally. And that'll be much less than what you'll get. . . . So I can't see where I'm asking for anything unfair—"

"What of the ship-captain? Does he take his pay in buying the stuff, himself?" asked Apricott sharply. Arnold nodded.

"And glad enough to do it, I should think," growled Mother, annoyed at the thought that one so unintelligent as to spend a lifetime at honest sailing-craft should receive so large a reward. For the moment, she considered Captain Danny—whose name she did not know. Once the honest mariner came into his profits, he might be worthy the attention of some one of her Horde.

The sham and cunning of the old woman amused Arnold. Having cast scruples aside, he no longer permitted himself to hold the scales of moral judgment. Mother Mybus then, considered aside from her occupation and vicious influence, was to him only a character, and he enjoyed her resemblance to Waldemar, the "good business man"; all the more when she protested her poverty, her inability to raise the sum needed without finding a mortgage for her "little stock," her lack of connection with Apricott—who could raise more of the money than she could, twice as quickly too.

"I've put up his rent twice and still he goes on making ten times more," she said, pretending to be dolorous over it. "Hundreds of dollars to my one, that Mr. Enoch. Eh?" And Apricott smiled sourly. "So, as he's the man who'll get most of the profit, he must sign papers with you, Mr. Arnold," she said finally, Arnold's terms having been accepted only after he had twice taken up his hat and threatened to go to Clabber.

"I made the best terms I could for you, Mr. Enoch," she added, simpering. "But Mr. Arnold is sharper than an old woman. Maybe you could have done better yourself. . . . The paper and ink is on the second shelf under the blue cups," she added, pointing. Apricott put them before the somewhat startled Arnold. Not that he gave signs of being startled: that might arouse suspicion. He reflected that he had been a fool to suppose that such an astute old customer as Mother, always alert for the chance to cheat, would enter into any scheme involving a stranger's handling of her beloved money without some assurance that her interests would be protected.

She had been searching Arnold's face for signs of possible duplicity ever since his arrival. But a paper signed with his name was better than any character-reading; such a one would be clever enough to feign anything. The paper, she made up her mind, must be a practical confession of a conspiracy against the law, one that she could use to put him into jail if she caught him at any games. Of course, she could not send him there without sending Apricott, too; but who was Apricott that she should hesitate between his imprisonment and revenge for the loss of her money?

"Now, Mr. Arnold," she dictated, "say that you and Mr. Enoch make a partnership to buy Mexican opium. He pays the expenses, you find the stuff, and each of you takes equal shares. Put that in lawyer's language, Mr. Arnold."

Not without some misgivings, Arnold re-phrased this as directed, and showed her the result. "You haven't *dated* it, Mr. Arnold," she objected, returning it—an oversight only. But now that she seemed concerned about it, Arnold realized that the date alone was damning should the paper ever find its way into a law-court—for the new law especially forbade any such trading without a Federal license.

"I'll date it when I sign it," he returned curtly. "And I'll sign it when I have the money, Mrs. Mybus." She shot him a keen glance, then smiled—if the contortion of her crooked mouth full of crooked teeth might be so termed.

"I think you should agree to that, Mr. Enoch," she said, passing on the paper. "When can you have this money? To-morrow morning by ten o'clock?"

"I dare say," rejoined Apricott, sulky at the scorn in Arnold's eyes and at being forced to play a part so ridiculously transparent.

Nikko took off his spectacles and polished them carefully with a handkerchief of red silk. He was maliciously pleased, and some sort of approving noise escaped him as he blew upon the lenses. Arnold turned to look at him, shifted his gaze to observe the malignity of Apricott's eyes and the satisfied cunning of Mother's. Suddenly he felt sick of the whole business. Archie had messed up his own life; why should he, Arnold, let so weak and useless a creature mess up his life, too, the life of one worth twenty Archies?

Some words of Nietzsche's recurred to him. "Slave ethics—the strong can never raise the weak—can only be pulled down by them"—perhaps not the exact words, but that was what the mad philosopher had meant. *Was* he mad, though? Was he not, rather, looking at the facts unsentimentally. How of Arnold's own misfortunes? The Jinx, Hugo, Hans Chasserton, all three had been weaklings. And had his attempt to succor them raised them up? As Nietzsche said, they had only dragged him down—each one a little farther down, until, only by invoking the aid of another strong man, the elder Waldemar, and his "dirty politics," had he got up again.

Now here was a fourth weakling—Archie. Should he take the chance for such a one?—the chance of going down permanently. For what? Had a boy who had shown himself so little able to manage himself any *right* to a large property? Better let him remain poor where he could hurt only himself. Archie, married to Carol and in possession of Exmoor, was a menace, another one to make property hateful. And the progeny of a weakling and a female snob—were they fit to inherit? Above all, to achieve such paltry results had he, Arnold L'Hommedieu, a man with the power to make the world better for having lived in it, the right to negative all possible future influence by the scandal of an arrest and conviction for opium-smuggling? Who would listen after he had been arraigned in the dock with such outcasts from civilization as this blind Russian fanatic, this malignant man with the missing fingers and this vicious old woman.

It was then that he trembled on the verge of repudiating the scheme, of abandoning Archie to the results of his own folly. Had it been written that he should be given the time at that moment to consider his position in terms of positivist philosophy it is probable that the undated paper would have been destroyed rather than signed; for, so complex is the mind of man, that the same statistics may prove equally to its satisfaction the truth of two philosophies, directly antithetical; that the life of any man may be accepted as evidence of either a Divine or a Diabolic theory—this being the imperfection of the thing called metaphysics. And, at that time, Arnold had found no enlightening proof to maintain his belief that the solar system was operated on any other principle than the survival of the fittest. Men had come out of their trees and caves on that principle, and their empires and civilizations had been built and destroyed on that principle.

But it so happened that he got no further in his argument along these lines. Co-ordinate the interrupting incident with those other incidents that had brought him to the Inn; then call it what you will. But in face of such incidents the weightiest mustering of facts, the most powerfully presented systems of logic, . . . all go down like regiments of well-trained soldiers before the fire of a hidden machine-gun. . . .

Thus it happened then that as Arnold stood by the bay-window whose flowers called him to the country and to home a door opened and at the head of the three little steps below it Arnold saw one of those weaklings for whom he had already endured so much—Hans Chasserton, apron about waist, broom in hand, his face all silly, simpering smile and vacant eyes. . . . Yet, far from causing regret for his sacrifice, in that instant Arnold was on fire with rage and rebellion; and once more he regretted nothing. If to be strong was to endure the sight of human beings brought so low through the cunning and greed of their self-proclaimed masters, he, Arnold, was content to be on the side of the weaklings. Returned to him all his hatred of a social system that yielded respect to such as Quivvers; that, despite the ugly facts of their career gave them wealth and honor. If to be strong was to ally himself with them, then let all his friends be such as Archie; let him sink lower than the lowest, yet he could never reach the

Quivvers depth; no, not even the depth of Ivan Waldemar, or the depth of Benjamin Hartogensis.

"I swept up the first forty-two rooms. I'm going to do the next forty-two to-morrow," said Hans Chasserton, closing the door and standing the broom in a corner. He hung up his apron, then came, curiously, toward Arnold. "I know you, too," he said, "you took a trip with me in my trunk once, didn't you? *They* won't believe it has forty-two rooms," he complained, requesting verification from Arnold. "You tell 'em. It ought to. I paid forty-two hundred dollars for it and it was worth it, 'cause I beat old Lipton with it. But Mr. Quivvers took my medal and give me a bang on the head, and when I woke up I didn't know nobody. But you and me know, don't we?"

"Yes, we know," agreed Arnold dully. The boy, nodding his triumph, sank down on an ottoman beside Nikko's chair, and the blind man put a protecting arm about him.

By that single action and the boy's presence, the whole group was transfigured. No longer was Nikko to be blamed for being malicious, Apricott for his malignancy, Mother Mybus for her viciousness; no more than was the boy for his idiocy. They were not as Nature had made them; but as the cruelty of their conquerors had caused them to be. It was better to be allied with the victims than with those who had made them what they were; better to break laws that gave power to such as Waldemar than to give them approval by advantaging himself through Waldemar's connivance. And so, eyes burning and hand trembling, he snatched the paper and signed it, a defiant flourish under his name, a carefully executed bit of scrollwork beneath the date; both proofs that he lacked any regret for standing committed to break those laws. For he saw only their result—the vacant-eyed, blankly cheerful idiot-boy; the maimed man of the mills with the missing fingers, and the sightless eyes of old Nikko, a prophecy of what such laws could be did their enforcement remain long in despotic hands. And as the shrewd cunning in the fat woman's eyes was replaced by a sort of rough tenderness as she looked on the old man, Arnold forgot his dislike for her. She could not be thoroughly bad, for she had not forgotten how to pity. Suddenly he took her hand and shook it warmly. All the lawlessness in him surged up and sent the blood rushing to his head. He extended his other hand to Apricott and as the three stood there in the glow of the fire, a grotesque group, two gargoyles surrounding a sculptured marble, he laughed loudly, glorying in his reckless rebellion.

"We'll show 'em a thing or two about making money, eh?" he said.

END OF BOOK V

BOOK VI

CHAPTER ONE

THE VIKING SHIP

I. She Goes

LATE in May the *Cormorant* sailed; cruising papers signed by her usual captain but by a new "owner," one "E. Apricott"—to the sailors an eccentric "self-made" millionaire; to old Mr. Van Vhroon young Mr. L'Hommedieu's valet.

"Arnold's afraid some other newspaper men 'ull come aboard, Uncle Arch, . . . and if we use his *name*—or they see *him*—good night, nurse!"

"What, sir? . . ."

"So Hugo and I 'ull go down to Havre to see him off. Danny 'ull pick him up there. His dad's got an Alco—"

"And he has, I believe, a certain knowledge of the English language, sir—which you do not share—and, . . ."

But Archie was off—the same old ebullient Archie. Arnold was worrying. Why should he worry, too? That, at least, was what his subconsciousness must have said, for, although sufficiently lugubrious in Arnold's presence, he added several highly expensive articles to Carol's future Circassian ménage. . . .

Why not? Harvey Quinn was to carry a plethora of gold and notes in a snakeskin belt about his waist—enough to . . . But any account of Archie's wool gatherings is out of place save in a penny book of dreams. . . .

Once out of Hell's Gate, the clipper was not headed S. S. E.—as for Havre de Grace, but N. N. E.—as for . . . Nowhere. Off the Middle Ground Light she became as bare-masted as a barge, as listless as Sir Lackadaisical, keeper of said light, who, after half-a-day's debate with himself—sundown approaching and those cursed lamps demanding attention, anyhow—reached for his Goetz lenses to discover the reason for an equal amount of inactivity on the part of that black blotch beyond.

But he was too late. The sailors had ceased to dot the crosstrees, the carpenter no longer ornamented the bowsprit. And, bravely begilt anew, said sprit of the temporarily christened *Hardicanute* swung athwart the watcher's line of vision—the leggy sheep's sail overhead listless no longer, but straining even that poetic license, the ". . . mutton" metaphor. And many heads above her and many times as big and obeying the first command of the coming Connecticut nor'easter—spars and blocks creaking—her mainyard swung free.

How the wind hammered at her canvas, the lightkeeper could conjecture from the imminent peril of his own laundry outside. This rescued, the sun had turned the Goetz lenses into burning-glasses, and he saw nothing of a certain broadside maneuver—the approach of a tiny *Alco,* the transfer of one Quinn (alias L'Hommedieu) by means of a starboard rope-ladder. . . . And the return of the tiny *Alco* to the shore, where, after climbing the bluff to where the chalet stood, its crew of three passed another Goetz from hand to hand—and while, a veritable Viking ship off on a veritable Viking venture, the *Cormorant* dipped her newly-gilded nose into boiling scum and seething spray, . . . a brave little speck of white slipping over the edge of the world. . . .

II. Arnold Stays

Four months passed, Archie alternately anxious, insouciant, suicidal. Bitter months for Hugo. The reason soon to be made clear. Weary with work and worry for Arnold; for since coming to the house on the bluff his writing that was to have given him so much had given just nothing at all. He had remained at Waldemar's only a few weeks after the *Cormorant's* departure. There had been a suddenly increased demand for the Syndicate's gum-opium, as other supplies failed the secret manufacturer of the Apricott type. What remained had been sold, by the beginning of June, each invoice at an increased price, each partner sharing unlooked-for profits; Arnold's several hundred more than the maximum anticipated.

What a difference between these and his *Cormorant* partners! Nothing risked, nothing to fear, not even a lost reputation. Continuing their "I-am-holier," . . . none might say them nay. Yet for the very same thing he and his fellow smugglers would soon risk not only reputations but liberty—maybe life. . . .

Waldemar, highly pleased, gave Arnold a *bonus,* complimenting his systematic bookkeeping and prompt shipments.

"If Hugo had *your* head—or, . . . *habits.* . . . Women, my boy, are the ruin of you young fellows. . . . That little hussy. . . ."

He clenched his fists. "Hugo's been a great disappointment to me, Arnold."

"I'm mighty glad of it if he has been," Arnold would have liked to say savagely, forgetting his friendship for the son in his deep dislike of the father, whom he had come to know too well.

Few weeks passed that he had not requested Arnold to re-write for him in decent English some speech he was to deliver at a public dinner or political meeting, while, as for "commencements"—no Suffolk County school, public or private, seemed satisfied unless the "Honnible Johnnie" enlightened and encouraged its embryo citizens concerning and toward honesty, private and public, concluding with an appeal to their Anglo-Saxon virtues—wherever native Americans abounded, or with ecstatic encomiums of the immigrant races. In frenzied disgust Arnold often turned these into rhetoric so florid, so full of bombastic periods that he was sure some one would have sufficient humor to recognize the hand of a burlesquer. . . . When no one did Arnold's doubts as to the wisdom of universal suffrage became absolute antagonism.

Waldemar had been alarmed when Arnold had suggested leaving his employment. He had long since realized the commercial value of the younger man's intellect. . . . And now that Hugo had failed him, "an honest partner for a swindle" was, as always, the hardest man on earth to find. . . . Hence promises of future preferment: Arnold should be a partner; in time a partner with Hugo. . . .

". . . Besides the use you are to me, you're the only one *he* listens to. His poor old father that made a gentleman of him and a fortune for him—*he* don't count a-tall. Not a-tall. You think it's right he should disgrace his poor old father who's worked so hard to give him a name to be proud of? Here . . . for instance" . . . and he displayed a goodly puff from an upstate paper, by a reporter richer through the "Honnible Johnnie"—"as his loving constituents addressed him, affectionately, one and all—"

Waldemar, "The People's Man," had a special photograph as such: shirt-sleeved, coat on arm, hand in that of a grimy laborer. More dignified journalism told the tale of the son of the Russian *boyar*, the landed proprietor who had quarreled with his father because he would not marry a rich girl he did not love.

"Poverty and Liberty," was one Sunday "head."

For the time, as we have said, so great was Arnold's dislike for Hugo's father, he forgot his friendship and was glad that young man was disappointing the honorable gentleman. The carefully built-up business in poisons would smash when it got into Hugo's hands—a very good thing for everybody concerned. So perhaps Bobbie Beulah was not an unmixed evil after all—otherwise Hugo might have developed into an unwieldy unknowing elephant who destroyed not in malice but in ignorance.

"Try an' wean him away," Waldemar had continued. "Wean him and I'll make it worth your while. Get him to go to Europe: I'll pay the bills. . . ."

Arnold said he needed the summer. If Waldemar would give him until after the "rush" season . . . for which he would return, he would see.

Waldemar had acceded, grudgingly, rather than lose him altogether.

But, though he convinced with a show of firmness, Arnold would not have dared an open break with Waldemar. The Honnible Johnnie's elaborate business system was necessary to the success of the smuggling scheme. When the *Cormorant's* cargo was brought to the city, the distributing facilities of the Waldemar company would be needed to market the stuff, to distribute it throughout the country to the same people who had bought from the "Syndicate." To start a new firm which, suddenly, would begin to ship a suspiciously large number of express packages—a firm unincorporated and unknown—was to awaken the attention of the Federal agents, who, hawk-like, watched the express companies, the only agents of distribution. The Treasury Department (the official overlord of the Customs) maintained a set of examiners who did nothing much except pay weekly visits to express offices keeping their books under close surveillance. Others kept track of the drivers and paid them for information. Arnold needed the Waldemar label on his shipments,—a label with which even the Federals would hesitate to tamper, bearing as it did the name of a Congressman high in favor with the administration, a word from whom would mean official decapitation for minor officials. And why should they suspect a firm so long established?

Separate sheds had been hired for the syndicate stores and shipments. Although the Waldemar label had been used, the work had no connection with the great Waldemar warehouses on Bleecker Street, nor had the Superintendent thereof any suzerainty over Arnold's work. He had merely viséd the younger man's telephone requests for trucks and delivery wagons, being so ordered by his employer. Now that the syndicate was abolished, Waldemar would have terminated his tenancy, but the Christopher Street property had been leased for a twelfth-month so the sheds remained, for all to see, the leasehold of "The Waldemar Drug Company,"—the name in white letters upon black barn-like doors which, locked and mudsplashed, now awaited the *Cormorant's* cargo.

Meanwhile, Arnold, down in the country, also awaiting it, was endeavoring to put upon paper, in scornful satire, the world as it was—or as it seemed to him to be: a place of useless striving and trumpery rewards. He lived alone in the house on the bluff, a place not unlike a small Swiss chalet, built by a New York broker, now bankrupt, for the "duck-shooting" season—a season again approaching, these early September days. For the hearts of the leaves showed red against the green, the bobolinks had begun their flight southward to the Carolina rice-fields, the crows were squawking above seas of golden corn, the bluebirds and purple martins were yielding their long-contested nests to their noisy enemies, the sparrows.

III. On the Spanish Main

Arnold was a lover of birds. The old L'Hommedieu farm during his boyhood had been their favorite Mecca. And now, since he had taken up residence in the Swiss chalet, he again gave them much of his spare time, making them attractive homes in hollow-trees, on poles, in boxes suspended from branches, or under the low overhanging eaves of the house itself. . . . But, the nesting season over, he began to miss the good-natured notes of the robins: from being home bodies, they had turned to adventurous gipsies, taking up temporary residence wherever wild-cherries or cedar-berries were to be found. He seldom heard the bubbling notes of the wren, the rosebreast, not at all; that child of the hot sun had betaken itself farther south at the first chill breeze from the Connecticut shore. There came to him only the shrill call of the bob-white and the drumming of the ruffled grouse, birds with good reason for disbelief in human friendship. These, with the ever-present rooks and ravens, haunted every copse and dell and drove out even the fighting blue-jay.

Autumn and the time for the return of the *Cormorant* were drawing near. As to the latter, there had been most vexatious delays. Arnold's first news of her had been at Charleston: a fight with a Hatteras gale had carried away her topsails and had blown one of her boats down on the wheelhouse, smashing it and the helmsman's arm. From Key West came news of a second delay: she had put in there to escape a terrific Gulf storm that raged for days from the Carolinas to the Keys. . . . Finally sighting the coast of Yucatan, she must, to disguise her destination, cruise about aimlessly: a Mexican destroyer on the watch for gunrunners and filibusters persisting in keeping her sighted until, disgusted, Captain Danny sailed off toward Honduras. This had cost them nearly a fortnight. When at last they reached the narrow creek that wound through these swamplands that surrounded the fields of rice and poppies owned by the Señor Don Guillermo Gomez of Pereira, they had gone aground in mud and ooze.

Thus it was more than six weeks since sailing-time before they reached the lagoon of the Hacienda del Torros, towed by the Señor Don's little trading-tug. On making their business known to their host, they were disconcerted to discover that just before receiving Danny's telegram two months previous, Don Guillermo had sold a large consignment of his refined gum to border smugglers who operated far to the north, near El Paso. He had plenty of the raw stuff in his warehouses and the new crop of poppies promised well. But the *Cormorant* must wait until all this could be converted by his Chinese into the precious Li-un.

All in all, the return journey was not begun until early in August. In the letter that told of it—written by Quinn—while they were towed down the creek of the Seven Sins—Captain Danny was also reported as prophesying a lengthy Northern trip. They must expect the summer calms off the Gulf coast; calms during which a sailing-ship rocked on the waves like a baby in its cradle, when one could but lash the wheel and let the men have their liberty. Such calms endured for days, sometimes for whole weeks. . . .

With ordinary good fortune, however, they should reach Long Island about the first week in September. Quinn's letter advised those in the secret to take up residence in the Swiss chalet about that time and to keep a "weather eye" oceanward, night and day.

Thus also had Apricott written, as Arnold learned on his visit to town to apprise Mother Mybus of the progress of their plan. Both letters had been long delayed in consequence of the isolation of El Hacienda del Torros, from which the Gomez trading-tug went to the nearest town only weekly. Letters must then await the next mail-steamer, the town being far away from any railroad. So that it was the twenty-eighth of August before Arnold and Mother Mybus had been notified.

Since then Arnold wondered why he did not live in feverish anticipation, considering that his chance for wealth was now so near at hand. But he seemed to have found far more excitement in the mere rescue of a young crow, wounded in a battle with two gulls and flapping feebly in the underbrush, had found more interest in teaching it to talk—having first taken it to town to be etherized by his cousin, Doctor Will, for that tongue-slitting supposed to make speech possible; had far more anticipation in watching the ebon bird stalk about the house, and wondering what next it would gravely mimic. Arnold had not laughed so heartily in years as when, on the day after he received Quinn's letter, the crow had begun to chant *Onward, Christian Soldiers.*

The first few bars (all it had ever heard) appeared to have been selected as its favorite expression, following the example of a drunken carpenter, who had repeated them in its presence many times, and in what to Arnold was interminable monotony.

Of the many closely-written pages which should have made at least one-half of his great revolutionary novel, Arnold destroyed at night more than three-quarters of what he wrote during the day. Yet, altogether, he was not unhappy. As August passed out he became accustomed to his solitude and began to discontinue his daily dinners at the Parsonage. When he had spent two days without hearing any human voice but his own and no thought of Velvet Voice had intruded upon his abstract speculations, he had the satisfaction of knowing that he no longer needed Bertie or any other woman to soothe his wounded pride.

Man is not necessarily a tribal animal. Association with his fellows, he found, was only civilization's habit—a habit that gives too little time for observation of countless other of life's recompenses. Alone, Arnold could realize that life among men is but a small and perhaps unimportant portion of life in all. In his new frame of mind he found pleasure in the thought that so little had been revealed to man, so much remained to be learned. As does the recluse who retires from the world embittered but mentally unimpaired, he began to understand what Balzac meant by the human *comedy,* to see the super-man as a naturalist upon an ant-hill, as a critic at a melodrama too cheap for serious consideration.

It was not the consciousness of his inferiority to greater writers that stayed his pencil. He had known of that inferiority too long. It was his helpless wonder as to whether there was any use in trying to teach human beings at all.

As well spend weary days and sleepless nights endeavoring to prevent a world of clumsy feet and careless hands from treading down the cities of the ants, tearing away the labyrinths of the spiders. How if he began to consider the millions of guns that carried sudden death to his beloved birds? To the end of time the work of nations of ants would be destroyed by the first malicious foot that came their way. Yet no doubt wise ants counseled against building by the roadways or in the open spaces; counseled, worried and wore themselves out for their ungrateful fellows. As for birds—the warning notes of the wiser ones had never prevented the decimation of their tribes.

Were foolish human beings any more to be regarded than spiders, ants or birds in the eyes of the Almighty? Did it not rather depend on how successful the exceptional ones were in capturing some spark of the Divine, sparks struck off in so many different ways if one had only the wit to know them; sparks that, if captured, set death at defiance? What strange secrets were held within the rise of the sun and its setting? Why was it that he could not look upon such phenomena unmoved, but must dumbly crave the permanence of some of this beauty? What strange stories were told by the cold blasts that withered the flowers, the South winds that resurrected them from the earth again? Were the leaves that rustled in the wind trying to reveal the secret? Was that the reason their rustling filled him with such strange unrest? . . . .

He would waken from such abstractions to call himself a fanciful fool, a zany whom solitude was threatening with softening of the brain. Then he would go striding off into the forest, head bent, brows knit, trying to force his wandering wits to concentrate upon his grimly realistic tale of harlots and thieves—harlots and thieves of all sorts from Fifth

Avenue to Wall Street down, or up—which constituted the warning tale of "grim, relentless, significant life," which he wanted to write.

Perhaps he would return to write it, doggedly and in a frenzy of disgust—a modified disgust compared to that which he experienced when he read what he had written and hurled his note-book across the room, awakening the young crow, who would begin his *Onward, Christian Soldiers* until Arnold threw the table-cloth over the offending head. . . . And then, silent and supine, Arnold would stare at the stars and listen to the lapping of the surf, and his eyes, grown fanciful as his brain in the solitude and darkness, saw moving shapes outside. Sometimes, like Joan of Domremy, he seemed to hear voices in the trees. . . . Often it seemed he had grasped something tangible, something he understood quite well, but that he must learn to translate so that others might understand. And he was vaguely uplifted until he attempted an expression of it; then it was nothing.

He would be a trifle comforted, however, when he read the books of other men, his former idols; the Russian realists and their French imitators, the novels of "life." Each was like a dish delicately cooked with one ingredient missing, the one that should blend the flavors into an appetizing whole—or the house of a master architect who had gone mad and had forgotten to put in the staircase. . . . These details of unhappy men and sordid women, this was not life. Like red glass lit from beneath, that on the stage pretends to be a fire, they lacked warmth. One admired the near-perfect construction of the house, the skill of the chef, but went away with no desire to dwell within nor to have the dish for dinner.

And this was what he had, boastfully, come into the country to do; this was to justify his rebellion against the law, his adoption of the tactics of those he despised, . . . this paltry achievement that, when done, meant nothing save to a crew of one-sided enthusiasts who endeavored to atone for lack of life, of warmth, of influence upon humanity, by calling the achievement "art" and denying that "art" had to do with humanity.

Along with other illusions went his desire for the title of "artist"—a vainglorious thing not of nature nor of the Divine, but a poor human ennoblement that was no more ennobling than the accolade upon the shoulder of a brewer. An artist—a tender of dying fires, blowing his breath on them and bidding all observe how they outshone the feeble sun in the heavens; and, even as the tenders turned, the fires died down and new ones must be built on new altars—the old despised. Art was anathema since it had become a thing of human rules, of dogma—what did they know of "art," those great inspired ones whose works the little people explained in terms of mystery—of *rationale*—*rapprochement*—static and plastic values. . . . . And then, having followed all of the rules, the little people had no power to give the breath of life.

Art! He wanted Prometheus' fire to blaze out so the whole world would see, not feeble, flickering temple lights that warmed only the high priests and them not truly. . . .

CHAPTER TWO

THE WIRELESS MESSAGE

Pink Turns Philosopher

IT WAS on the afternoon of the sixteenth that quiet fled the house on the bluff, that the invasion of the Horde began. Arnold's first knowledge of it came when, returning from a trip beyond Green Sands in the motor-boat, he saw floating on the outgoing tide something dark and indistinct. He pulled a switch, reversing the engine and backing the boat and salvaged this flotsam. It was a dead duck, its magnificent expanse of white breast disfigured by an ugly hole. As Arnold gripped its neck to bring it in a small fish was ejected from its bill.

The incident seemed peculiarly and hatefully typical of the wastefulness, the savagery of life. Less than an hour before—for the bird's body was still warm—that fish was alive and disporting itself among its fellows. Then the duck had dived and snatched him to sudden death. But, before it could be swallowed, even as the duck's head came above the water, a shot had killed the killer. Two perfectly useless deaths, for the duck—the coot—for all its beauty of breast, was fishy, leathery and worthless for food. Its killing had been merely to gratify some whim—perhaps only as a trial of skill, a piece of human vanity—for, evidently, there had been no attempt to retrieve it. Just so were human beings slaughtered to no end save to give gratification to others, who, in their turn, died without having been advantaged in the slightest. And they called that Life!

He cast back bird and fish, and continued on his way, trying to think again of the ant-hill, the beehive, the spiderwebs, to regain his view of life as the human comedy. But the homely incident had, for the moment, demolished such theories—death itself was too actual to be brushed away with a laugh. And death was the one thing he, nor any other human being, could not understand. It was not the fate of those two inarticulate things that moved him to a certain undefined terror and dismay. It was the thought that, though his own life was better protected, he lived in a world of death rather than life. For death, unlike life, was in the hands of all—the careless, the stupid, the malicious, the suddenly enraged. It lurked on every side, in the bushes where a snake could suddenly uprear and strike, where an inexpert or a drunken hunter might discharge a gun, on the city pavements, where from above a stone or a bit of iron might fall upon any passer-by, in the streets, in the caprice of an unruly horse or a careless chauffeur; on the seas, with a speed-driven captain, or a sleepy officer on the bridge. . . . Everywhere, anywhere, this Jove-like power was shared by all living things—even to the birds carrying the germs of disease, the insects heavy with dread bacteria. And there was no way to guard against it. Some passed unscathed on many battlefields to die only after they had drunk deep of joy and sorrow. Others, infants never a foot from their homes, met it in the first unclean milk-can. . . .

His mind had a surcease from such gloomy reflections when it dwelt for an instant on the extraordinarily large wound in the coot's breast. That was caused by no shotgun, nor even a rifle. It was a revolver-shot. And it occurred to him that people roundabout Havre de Grace did not carry revolvers, there being a stern enforcement of the law against concealed weapons since a street-duel in his boyhood when several innocent onlookers had been killed, among them a child. Moreover, the Havre de Gravians were good sportsmen, who would as soon shoot through the windows of the Parsonage as kill birds in the nesting season. Therefore, the shooting must have been done by some visitor. . . .

Perhaps, in his three hours' absence, some one from the city had arrived at the Swiss chalet. True, they did not expect the *Cormorant;* she could arrive at this time only under the most favorable circumstances. And, as Captain Danny had prophesied, these were unlikely in that season. But, even so, Arnold knew of Archie's fretful worry, the overdue bills he was having difficulty in keeping from his uncle. Then there was the greedy impatience of Mother Mybus as evidenced in certain guarded scrawls received at the village post-office. Archie, however, was a native and would not be guilty of shooting out of season, and Mother was not likely to be a marksman, nor blind Nikko. So he dismissed that idea.

But, when he had moored the cruiser in Rocky Cove, rowing ashore in the dingey, he heard a shot from the bluff above, and as he neared the top saw two city-dressed men sitting at ease on his little porch. Their feet were on the rail, one was loading an automatic revolver. He ran at them enraged—and looked upon M. M. Cagey and the Phony Kid, attired in the very latest "nobby" styles for men.

"We've been waitin' a couple of hours for you, me lord," said Pink, putting the revolver into a hip-pocket. "And I was showing the sucker here what would happen if any bright little guy got it into his head to try an' stop us from landing our black mud from our little ship-ahoy!" He shook hands, as did Beau.

Arnold was too amazed at their presence and their knowledge of the secret to notice that Pink's pronunciation had vastly improved and that he had begun to enunciate his words instead of letting them rattle against the roof of his mouth. Pink had lost none of his ambition since deprived of the educating example of Arnold; rather through his new association at the Sydenham had been goaded to concentration and self-control in the matter of speech and conduct. There remained to be remedied only his scanty vocabulary.

He did not trust to this to answer the many questions summed up in Arnold's amazement, but handed him a thumb-marked envelope. This was addressed in Mother's scanty scrawl, one that robbed letters of all save labored outlines. A knowledge of etiquette not to be expected of the proprietor of such hieroglyphics,—the envelope was sealed. As Arnold ripped it with thumb and forefinger a whitish paper dropped therefrom. Pink picked it up while Arnold read the other inclosure, a note that informed him that Messrs. Frank Nolan and B. Markowitz were to act as Mother's representatives in "he knew what." They would explain and the inclosed message would do the rest. As he looked up Pink put the whitish slip into his hand:

Wireless company. Twenty dollars and eighty cents collect. Red Reef, Delaware, from S. S. Imranduna.

"*Cormorant,* clipper yacht, alters course to approach and megaphone as follows: 'Favorable winds, should arrive Nantucket twentieth latest. Please forward to *Albatross, New York.*'"

This latter was a cable address registered by Arnold and given to Captain Danny before leaving. On his visit to Mother Mybus a few days before Arnold had advised sending a messenger each morning to inquire at the cable-office for possible telegrams. Evidently she had done so.

"This Nantucket's near Boston?" half-stated, half-inquired Beau as Arnold looked up again. Arnold nodded, then went within, wheeled out the telescope on its stand and pointed it to sweep the Sound in the direction of the ocean.

"I was right as usual, Saphead," commented Pink, further excoriating Beau with some allusions to his general lack of comprehension and intelligence. "For, as I said to the old dame, why in hell should he want to go to Nantucket?

" 'There was a young man of Nantucket,
Who had a head shaped like a bucket,
Like a bucket is good,
For his head was of wood,
If you asked him to think, he would muck it.'

"That's Beau, all right. I made that up coming down in the train. First I had—

" 'Like a bucket, again,
He had water for brain,'

"But I think the other's better. Some poet, hey? I used to make up little pomes when I was grabbing Helen Darling. She was one of those sentimental broads and she fell for it. . . . Could a poor but honest lad make any money writing pomes?"

"You think the Captain on'y put in that Nantucket for a blind steer, Mr. Arnold," asked Beau, disregarding him; "sorta throw anybody off the track if they suspicioned anything? And he's coming right here like was arranged? That's what Pink thinks."

"That's what anybody thinks who's got a nut on him instead of a cold-storage tank," returned Pink rudely. "The Captain probably figured he took a long chance wirelessing, anyway. Nantucket's two days' sailing from here, I found out," he added, addressing Arnold. "That means he oughta

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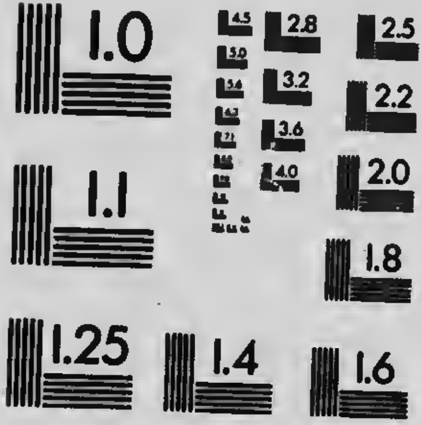
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show by the eighteenth. But he says 'twentieth, the *latest*'—so he might be here to-night or to-morrow or any time. The Old One said something about signaling—"

"Yes," returned Arnold shortly. He resented the intrusion of this pair into his quiet and peace and the unpleasant reverie that their dead coot had cost him. Pink's conversation had amused him in the city, but it was as out of place here as his ignorance of the game-laws.

Nor was the news that he brought agreeable. That sense of burning injustice done him by circumstances; that desire to rebel, to smash hypocritical laws that protected only the rich, had faded from Arnold. In his solitude, in his nights at the Parsonage, in his few dealings with the simple, homely folk about Havre de Grace, his rage with humanity had found little to feed on. He was removed from the exposition of demagogic ignorance and oppression, plutocratic ostentation and greed, the hypocrisy of respectability and religion. There was very little fault to find with the simple social system of his native heath—he could evoke his former righteous rage only by remembering civic indignities; and as one does not willingly recall unpleasant memories, this is why he could not write in the fine frenzy he had planned. There had been no crystallization; he could see only the segregated incidents, not the reason for them; could only rage unwittingly. As the peninsular philosopher had said, he did not know Why. . . . Therefore he had taken the path of evasion, what another has called the Great White Logic. It did not matter; nothing mattered. . . .

But, without that fine frenzy, he saw the whole affair of the *Cormorant* not as a justified rebellion, not as an equalizing of opportunity by disregarding the law, but as the sordid sneaking business it was—worthy a penniless Waldemar or Hartogensis, but unworthy a L'Hommedieu, penniless or even starving. And the pitiful excuse of saving Archie! For what? So that a shallow, petty, overdressed girl might play Lady of the Manor.

"Looks like he burned down without any insurance," commented Pink, as Arnold, moody and downcast, went within to telephone to Hugo and Archie in the city. "We're just as welcome here as we'd be in the street. Get down and let him wipe his tootsies on you, Beau, and be sure and apologize for not having had your clothes dry-cleaned before you had the nerve to want to be his door-mat. . . . For a man who stands to win ten grands or more as soon as we get that much marketed, he acts as funny as a funeral. Wonder if he'll let us go on living if we ask him pretty-pretty?" All of which was intended for Arnold's ears as he sat at his writing-table by the open window, waiting for the long-distance operator to connect him.

He looked up and smiled, albeit with an effort.

"The sun's coming out late to-day, Beau—look," said the irrepressible Pink, pointing. "That friendly look's just about an hour overdue, Sir Lionel de Launcelot. What's eating you, anyway? Have they stolen your best child and hidden it in the naughty forest? Or—curses—has Beatrix betrayed you?" This time Arnold's smile was less mechanical, and he was about to add to it, when he was connected with Beulah Roberts' apartment. The maid answered for her mistress, who evidently sat near, that Mr. Waldemar was not expected for an hour.

"I must speak to him this afternoon. It's very important. . . . Tell him Havre de Grace, Number 81. We've got to get hold of the two of them," he added to his visitors, as he hung up. Then, "Stuyvesant 481—J," when he again got the ear of the town operator.

"You mean that friend of yours with the [illegible]?" asked Pink. It was in Hugo's machine that the *Cormorant's* cargo was to be transferred to New York, a matter of many trips, even to that car, an 80-90 French tourer.

Arnold nodded, while he asked the hall man at Hugo's apartment-house to connect him with that young gentleman. From his expression the listeners imagined he had been fortunate, which was confirmed by hurried directions given almost immediately after.

"You're to get Archie and be down here before dark. . . . (Yes, of course it's Arnold.) The car?—certainly! Well, we can't wait for *that* this trip. Come down in the touring body. You've got a good top with side and back curtains, haven't you? . . . Well, that'll do for the first trip. It'll *have* to do. . . . Oh, Hugo, don't be a silly goat! Of *course*, you're not to bring the chauffeur. You know as much about a car as he does. Let him stay and run the hired car for *her*, if her highness can't get along with humble taxicabs. . . . Too bad about her. I'd hate to try to carry all the nickels she spent on trolley-rides before she met you. But I'm wasting time. You don't seem to realize how *important* this is. Never mind, that's enough. Remember, you're talking on the phone. Now go get Archie right away. Don't tell your father you're coming—no! Yes, I heard he was down here for a rest. . . . Archie either. Hurry now. Don't argue. I'll explain when you get here. Good-*by*." He hung up in a rage.

"Wish I was him," said Pink in pretended wistfulness. "When I was broke I could go hire myself out in one of those side-shows where you throw three cocoanuts for a nickel at the nigger's head. They'd be glad to get a head like his. Wouldn't have to keep repainting it all the time or anything. . . . '*Can he bring his chauffeur*'—oh, Mother, Mother, pin a rose on me, for I'm just as dev'lish as I—can—be!"

"I wouldn't advise you to let him hear you. He's only about six feet three and weighs two hundred and ten," said Arnold. "And now, since you fellows are here, I suppose you want something to eat. . . . It's getting late—" for, although the days were long, the sun was low in the west and the hour was five or more. "I always eat about six, and dinners don't leap out of the oven already cooked, you know—especially for three people."

"Say," commented Beau, in admiration not unmixed with a little awe. "You take it cool, I'm a son-of-a-gun if you don't. Anybody 'ud think he'd been a burglar all his life, hey, sucker?"

"Just a natural-born tendency to larceny," agreed Pink. "As full of it as a Fifth Avenue church vestry. And, speaking of churches, I'm as empty as one. That is, the average New York church; they're turning most of 'em into garages and moving-picture shows, except on the Avenue, where all the Captain Kidds of Wall Street try to kid the Almighty, too—Kidd—kid—pretty good—what?"

"Stop trifling with suicide, sucker," said Beau wearily.

"You gotta hand it to me—I'm full of pomes and wit today," continued Pink vivaciously. "Guess it's the country air. I feel as good as a cat that's just cleaned up the ice-box. . . . Say, Duke, I dropped in among those Fifth Avenue burglars once, just to see if I couldn't cop a little of their classy work—sort of on the up-and-up, you know, showing I'm as ambitious a little fellow as ever sung a hymn. I wanted to see how the guys who, when they got in the heavenly line-up on Judgment Day, will have to answer to every crime including arson and mayhem, try to get away with that pious stuff, too. And, sure enough, I don't set there ten minutes—I come late—but what a hoary-headed old pirate prods me in the stomach with one of those boxes that's got a handle like a roulette-rake, and as I look up who do I see but Mr. J. B. Ramsbotham, Esquire.

"Only the day before the papers were full of how he grabbed that Montana mine away from two brothers that sweat ten years for it—forecloses, or calls a loan or something—and sells it to the Copper Trust for 'steen millions. And there he is trying to collect the Lord's money, too. And then people wonder why they're closing the churches down-town?" Pink spat disgustedly. "Him with the poor-box. It 'ud give me a laugh if it didn't make me so durned mad.

"But," he grinned, "I give some of the others a laugh at that. I took out half a caser and looked him in the eye.

'If I give you this four bits,' I says, 'will you promise not to get away with forty-nine cents of it between here and the altar?' Say, you oughta seen the sexton—or whatever he was—run me out. I bet he was a copper dressed up. Sure! One of Ramsbotham's private bulls. He don't dare move a step without a brace of 'em at his back."

The impudence and cynicism of the young rogue reawaked in Arnold something missing for the last months, something of his old indignation. He frowned, smiled, seemed about to say something, changed his mind and led them to one of the rooms he had kept in reserve for visitors. It contained four camp-beds, folded and propped against the wall, a pile of blankets on a closet-shelf, some shaving mirrors hung near the windows, a clothes-press, a washstand; most of which had been donated by his mother from the excess at the Parsonage.

"The bathroom's next door," said Arnold, "and these beds aren't uncomfortable. I see you brought dressing-bags. . . ."

"Yes," grumbled Beau, "and some job it was lugging them 'cross lots from the town. We didn't want anybody to know where we were aiming for, so we couldn't hire a team or anything. I didn't see the use of it; it was the sucker's idear—"

"You poor simp," returned Pink, who was shedding his city clothes in favor of khaki riding-trousers and a flannel shirt. "Don't you realize you've got a chance to be a regular hero like you read about? Do you want to spoil it all with your comic Forty-second Street clothes, you jay?" He had added to his new attire a pair of English puttees that were turning his slim legs into a pair of olive-tinted cylinders. "Suppose we got nailed by the Customs people or those Revenue officers in their jim-dandy uniforms? What would the public think of a desperate smuggler in a Dunlop cady and a wing collar and a loud vest and light cloth-top patent leathers? Why, you'd crab the whole business. Nobody has any sympathy for that kind of lice. . . ."

He smoothed down the Byronic collar of his flannel shirt and knotted the attached cord so that its tassels became a substitute for a necktie. A soft hat of Italian make pulled down over his brows, he surveyed his mirrored likeness with approval.

"*There's* a gink that looks like he might be something besides a ribbon clerk," he said educatively. He was so thoroughly in earnest about it that Arnold smothered his laughter and went off to prepare their meal. Presently they joined him, Beau's attire now a replica of Pink's, except for the puttees. Beau wore canvas leggings. Arnold set them paring potatoes and shelling peas; he himself ground the coffee and prepared the meat. . . . It was not until they sat down to dinner that he asked the question uppermost in his mind.

"Aren't you at Sydenham's any more—and little Miss Sonia?"

"You are wondering how we happen to be cut in on this deal, ain't that it?" returned Pink. "Tell him, Beau." And he attacked the steak and lyonnaise potatoes, filling his mouth to incapacitate him for narration. Beau was too glad of the chance to take stage center to note the trick that was to defraud him of a large portion of his dinner.

"You might know the coppers wouldn't let us stay square, Mr. Arnold," he complained, putting down knife and fork. "There we were getting forty a week apiece, only Sonny got fifty. And private lessons to these society dames and Broadway frails were just starting to get us some important dough. It looked too good to last and I told Pink so—"

"You mean I told *you* so," murmured Pink out of a full mouth. "Don't try to convince anybody you're one of the wise ones. Because your map tips you off. . . ." And he went on eating.

"Well, maybe *you* told *me*, too," granted Beau indulgently. "Anyway, we wasn't surprised when the pavement flew up and hit us in the face, 'cause we were looking for it. One day a big burly in a Tux is standing around givin' the joint the once-over, and I made him for a State's Evidence louse that's got a bunch of good fellows jammed into the song-factory up the river. So I sends a waiter for the manager—"

"He means *I* sent for him," interposed Pink, incensed. "If that's the way you're going to tell it—"

"Well, *you* sent for him, then," agreed Beau, and galloped on: "'That guy over there is a gun—a crook,' I said to the manager. 'And you better git him out of here before he puts a diamond tarara in his pocket or steals an automobile,' we says. . . . 'Why, that's the new house-detective,' says the manager. 'Mr. Pettigrew sent him here'—"

"This Pettigrew," interpolated Pink, gulping coffee, "is the society man whose backing the joint because he's stuck on the star turkey-trotter—a pretty little piece of goods she is, too, but stuck on another guy, though Pettigrew don't know it, being a fresh-water oyster that emits pearls at every gasp. And being that kind of a simp, he's likewise in one of these White Slave Investigating Committees, and it appears this stool-pigeon in the dinner-coat—only Harlem stews say 'Tuxedo,' eh, Sir Launcelot?—has been makin' soft money swearing to White-Slave charges against all the madams that ever staked him to the eats in the back-kitchen. That's how he got in with Pettigrew and got this house-detective job. And from what the manager says Pettigrew thinks he's got wings under the Moe Levy padding in his shoulders—"

"Say—*you* finish it," said Beau irritably.

"No," said Pink, with a magnanimous gesture, "go ahead, my boy," and started on the cheese.

"Well, this Gammage—that's the stool's name—it ain't very long before he gets wise to us tipping him off. Anyhow, whenever we happened to be near him in a crowd Pink would cop his souper. That's how they came to call him 'Pink,' copping Pinkerton bulls' watches on the race-track and sending 'em to the managers to show 'em how 'The Eye that Never Sleeps' took forty winks now and then. Well, when a crowd of waiters were around at closing time we'd say to him:

'Oh, Mr. Detective, some ornery thief stole your watch, but we got it back for you, so we did. Why don't you complain to the police about those sassy devils? . . .' And of course that made him sore. So one day, when some dame lost her ring, he swears he saw us turn the trick. Then he gets somo harness coppers to identify us as thieves—all but Sonny, who he's kinda stuck on. And that gets us fired by this Pettigrew guy, who reads us a lecture along with it, and won't listen to nothing against Gammage. We pretty near got in the hoose-gow over it 'cause we couldn't kick back the hock-rock. But Pettigrew's too soft-hearted a gink to let us do time, so he squares the squeal by buying her a new one. . . . Of course, we laid for Gammage," he added virtuously. . . .

"And, of course, we gave him the walloping of his life. I bent this cannon of mine into a 'Z' on the front of his face and straightened it out on the back of his head. He won't smile in a hurry," said Pink, with a vicious grin. "Not until the dentist puts in four front tusks, he won't. . . . And of course there was nothing to it then but to tear down to the old dame and head off the rap from headquarters. We knew what was coming from a guy like Gammage—assault with intent to kill and a couple of cannon planted on us by the coppers who made the arrest so's to be sure we'd get a two-years' bit under that new concealed weapons law. . . . Great thing for coppers that law is. If they want to settle somebody, all they got to do is drop a cannon in his kick. It's better than dropping watches, 'cause you might have an alibi about where you was when the watch was stolen. But a gun—bingo! You're gone."

All doubts as to the justification of the *Cormorant* venture fled Arnold. "And so I suppose you 'planned a little burglary or forged a little check or slew a little baby for the coral round its neck' since you met so much encouragement in your attempt to be honest," he invited. He was surprised to have his question met by a silence of some duration, which from the volatile Beau and the voluble Pink was unprecedented.

Presently Pink arose and walked to the open window to stare at the sunlit waters rolling like molten metal under the great round ball of Japanese red and dashing up showers of sparks on the pebbles of the beach below. Beau seemed interested in the glowing tip of his cigarette and the nail of his forefinger.

"I suppose old Nikko's got the right idea," said Pink presently, apparently addressing the pale horns of a tiny crescent that was riding the northern cloud-banks at a furious gallop to arrive in time to bid the red ball au revoir. "Yes, I suppose old Nikko's right with that talk of his about rebellion. I used to kid him a lot about it at first. Thought he was nuts. I was saying that to Beau only the other day, wasn't I, son?" It was the first time Arnold had seen the two betray any tenderness toward each other. Beau nodded in a way to suggest that if he were nearer he would put a hand on Pink's shoulder. "Yes, sir, I said to Beau that it about looked like we grifters had a damn good right to nick a front or peel a poke so long as Wall Street and Washington were picking everybody's pockets. Not that we care so long as they leave something for somebody else. But they don't. And when they come to us and say, 'Now, be good boys and work hard all day, and we'll let you go on working hard all your life so when you die you can go to Heaven and be rewarded'—when they pull that stuff it gets my goat. If I'd been honest all my life I might be married to some little woman with wrinkles from doing her own washing and ironing and minding the house and sitting up nights to cut down my clothes so the kid 'ull have something to go to school in. And after sitting in the shop all day and almost all night, selling goods and making cigars, what would I be at fifty? Just fixed so the landlord can run me out 'cause my rent ain't been paid for three months, and so the butcher could get an attachment on my stock. . . . That's what happened to *my* old man after thirty-five years of *honest* work. I'm supporting him now, have been for years. He thinks I am a jewelry salesman. And I've got two kid brothers learning a trade they couldn't afford to learn if I was *honest*. And another in college, studying civil-engineering, and my sister, 'stead of going into some sweatshop and losing her looks, or into some store and losing her sweet little ways, or into some chorus and losing her virtue—well, I give her an education and she grabbed a good guy for herself—son of a big wholesale baker and general manager. Yes, sir, Sis is married two years now and got one grand little kid. Named after me, whadda you know about that?—Frank Nolan Middenkoff—German, her fellow's father is. . . . Now I suppose somebody's going to tell me I oughta gone and been an A. D. T. kid or a bundle-boy in a department-store, and now I'd be driving a wagon like a gentleman and getting twelve per, and the other kids—gee!—I hate to think what 'ud happened to *them!* I got *some* advantages being the eldest and in the eighth grade at school before we bust up—burst, damn it, burst, burst, burst: kick me, Beau, will you, boy?"

And Beau, gravely arose and kicked him, not violently nor wildly but judicially and accurately. "That 'burst' is the worse," he confided to Arnold, who was amused at this climax to his sociology. "I slip up on 'burst' every time. And it's got to stop. . . . Anyway, as I said to Beau, if those pirates who're running things expect us fellows to harness up like horses for no pay except a stall to sleep in and about half the hay we need to work on, they've got the wrong dope."

"And the worst of it, the stall ain't even clean, let alone big," confirmed Beau. "And the hay's the lousiest the law allows. . . . You ought to seen *my* home, Mr. Arnold. Pink had more'n me. My mother cooked in the bedroom, and we didn't get a bath more'n once a month 'cause there never was enough heat to give you hot water—and before you got into the tub, you had to throw about a million water-roaches out of it. I was glad to go to school in winter 'cause it was warm—that's why those East-side schools are so crowded—no place like home—thank God! And people say: 'Why don't they go live in the country.' Listen: they never have two dollars ahead, let alone enough to pay car fare and keep 'em while they git a job. And suppose you're a certain kind of worker and there's no work for that kind of worker in the country? A hired man on a farm—a green hand—d'you think *he's* going to be allowed to have a wife and child? . . . Ain't I heard my old man and my mother talk about the country for hours? Gee!" . . . His look expressed unutterable disgust.

"You give half of 'em a chance to live in the country and they'll go so fast it'll make your head swim. But they blow over from Europe in those cattleships at a sawbuck a head sometimes and with jest about enough to land. And it's to the employers' interests to give 'em a job quick and keep 'em in the city so the price for unskilled labor won't go up. Look at the Swedes and Germans. They've got immigrant organizations and bureaus back of them. *They* don't stop in New York—they go on out to Wisconsin and the Middle West, where farm jobs are waitin' for 'em—or little farms, or truck-gardens. . . . People ain't so crazy to stick in the town of the Big Noise—which is sure a False Alarm. It's like Monte Carlo. They go there to make money and don't." . . .

Arnold listened while Pink took up the attack again; listened, head in hand, while the two youths in the khaki suits, presenting the strange anomaly of being in earnest, told of the adventures of their strictly honest parents in their attempts to find food and shelter for their families—which had resulted in giving both boys a hearty distaste for honest toil and a sorrowful contempt for their forebears' lack of intelligence in continuing in ways that promised so little of either profit or pleasure—a promise faithfully fulfilled. . . .

And, as he listened, he saw the tragedy of America unroll in all its pitiful comedy—for comedy is only the dwarf of tragedy, and these little people who hoped so much were dwarfs—dwarfs in mind—that they could go on hoping against such odds. And being dwarfs, the stupid giants—giants only because the others *were* dwarfs—could slay them.

Then the sun went down and the moon came up: the songbirds sang and the crickets chirped: all the million members of the insect orchestra tuned up their tiny instruments and made a long sweet song. And the wind and the trees joined in and the surf on the beach contributed its minor chord. And while a world of radiant darkness sang to the sheen of the moon and the shine of the stars, that other world, that dark-lighted world, quarreled and killed—killed because it knew no better, no better than when a Voice on Calvary had cried to His Father to forgive them for they know not what they do.

CHAPTER THREE

DENOUNCED

I. Outside the Pale

BACK in that same lighted world, the person both loathed and loved as "Petty"—as Arnold could bear personal witness after eavesdropping at Clabber's—came out of Miss Bobbie Beulah's apartment in Devonshire Mansions, a grin on his face and a crafty look in his eyes. He hailed a hansom, taking it by the hour when he found that Mr. Eugene McKiss of Police Headquarters was not holding court in his favorite hotel; visiting in turn every other hotel restaurant, each café and cabaret of any importance, in Manhattan's Montmartre. . . .

Mr. Roy Schmucke, from having been "Petty" to so many female admirers, was "Petty Schmucke" even to the manly loungers who hailed him jovially on his entrance to each bar and café on this night that he searched for the elusive McKiss. The nickname should have been enough to damn him.

As he passed from Curate's Restaurant on this night of September sixteenth, a policeman in uniform, new to the city, who had overheard one of Master Petty's sidewalk conversations that afternoon, pointed him out in an excited whisper to the traffic officer at the corner, suggesting that they recommend to Headquarters that this dangerous offender be kept under surveillance.

The sophisticated son of the city regarded the guileless son of the soil in scornful amaze. "Ain't you wise to that kind of a gink yet?" he asked, almost sadly. "Don't you know nine-tenths of these so-called 'guns' and 'grifts' couldn't steal anything from a chloroformed cat? Ever hear of a gambler's ace in his sleeve—'ace in the hole,' they call it. Well, that goes double for a fellow like the one you just saw. Find the skirt, kid, find the skirt." . . .

It is not difficult to explain the hold of such a young reptile on the women of the class of Miss Beulah Roberts—though it may seem so in the case of other women, her superiors as well as inferiors—for the activities of the Petties take in the "Avenue" as well as the "Lane." It is a fact familiar to all scientists, and all who deal in feminine psychology, that the morals of women, the average woman of any class, granted a semi-normal prenatal condition—are known to be only what their menfolk make them: the reflection of their fathers' morals or those of their husbands. If the first is sufficiently edifying, the second ordinarily so, high-mindedness is produced. Let the father inspire contempt, and the husband's hand must be firm on the helm: otherwise unless anchored by early children she drifts with the first winds of environment and opportunity.

Thus Miss Beulah Roberts. The crimes of womanhood are mostly committed between the time when maid merges into potential mother and the birth of the first child. The gratification of the aroused maternal instinct being denied them because of poverty or policy, the Bobbies grope blindly for a substitute. The pain of the gnawing instincts of motherhood must be smothered, the pillows piled higher at each muffled cry of the thing they are murdering. Woman is an extremist: if she drinks, she usually drinks too much; doctors will tell you that men may take drugs in moderate quantities for a lifetime, but never a woman. She veers between total abstention and sensational indulgence.

But there is the natural anodyne of fierce affection which no drug or drink, nor any other sensation may equal. In that heady intoxication of physical passion the man becomes both lover and child. But Hugo had, at best, won only Bobbie's gratitude: and as his passion for her increased by daily proximity—his mind having no other occupation since his hope of becoming a scientist had been shattered—her calm friendship of the days when there was no physical bond between them must take refuge in pretense lest she lose the luxury she had learned to love. Now pretense if continued for any length of time develops irritation in which soon inheres dislike—that love "pardons all" and does not require pretense is its strongest claim to duration.

Had Bobbie loved Hugo, when he embraced her at an inopportune moment, she would not have feared to push him away, knowing instinctively that in another mood she could make up for this seeming coldness. Growing to dislike him, she could do no more than endure his caresses at any time since all times were equally distasteful. Yet, like most women who are slaves of habit and custom, rather the loss of her freedom than of her luxuries: therefore the discovery of her dislike for Hugo made her clutch for an anchor—and vaguely she understood that flesh of her flesh would so satisfy her need for something *to* love that she could endure *being* loved. Marriage or no, let her have a child. But poor Hugo was too chivalrous to gratify himself at what convention claimed was her ignominy and the child's shame: he had read too many sentimental novels, seen too many pathetic plays. . . . And then, she began to dream of a *man* she could love, to look for him everywhere—although she was unconscious of either her desire or of her search.

Nor had she ever imagined that this Fairy Prince, when met, would be unable, least of all *unwilling,* to give her luxury as well as love. Had Roy Schmucke been so unwise as to present himself as a prospective lover, how scornfully would she have sent him about his business. But he and his kind knew their little book—and how little it was!

At first he had been merely the companion, the confidant, the unobtrusive escort to places where Hugo considered she should not go; all the while making himself more and more a part of her daily life, breaking the monotony of its boredom, going to her primed with the latest gossip. Like an actor in the wings re-reading his part, he rehearsed the cynical jests he would tell her, the scornful scandal: particularly endearing himself because he was never amorous, never seized the chance of propinquity to force unwelcome endearments. . . .

Curious to see how far this repression could be trusted, for she never doubted it *was* repression, she began to receive him in tempting *deshabille,* would pretend the taxi had jolted her against him, would give him an occasional chance to scent the "perfume of her presence" (four dollars a bottle) . . . and, rough homage once rendered, she could bewail that he has "spoiled everything," that "all men are alike after all," can mourn aloud the lost paradise of their friendship.

Should the indifference continue in face of all assaults, she forgets everything else in the horrible suspicion that her former success may have been but luck.

So many and so strenuous do her efforts to subdue him then become, that there begins an interest resembling infatuation so closely that experts can not distinguish between them. Her mind is so centered on ways and means to bring him to book, that there is room for no other thought. He occupies her entirely. She is forging a two-edged sword.

Bobbie was already miserable at the thought of her inefficiency. Her self-conceit had sustained too stunning a blow. She was humble in his presence, willing to make concessions to keep him away from superior attractions. Then, and then only, the male scalp-hunter evinced a condescending interest in her; finally admitted after her tearful tragic questioning that there was no hated and haughty rival; but that he cared for her as much (he meant as little) as he cared for other women. But he is slow to love any one—he admits it freely. He is suspicious by nature. A woman must do more than say she loves him: she must *prove* it—thus, by his own almost feminine intuition, turning on her the very guns her sex has used on his from time immemorial. . . . And by this and other mendacities, too numerous to catalogue, succeeded in fanning her self-love into a fiery flame, the very counterpart of furious affection.

She thought only of how she might hold this wonderful creature whom so many superior women desired. She saw no reason why they should not. Such a man knows instinctively how to supply in himself those things she most craves; permitting her for example, to fondle him just as she would that child she has so long desired: immediately after becoming harsh of word, ready of blow, counterfeiting that primitive manliness that thrills such women with an ages-old fear.

Then again, being idle themselves, the Petties have nothing to prevent them from being available as constant companions. And, caring nothing for women, they prescribe no vice, no dissipation. Men who love may forbid many things for fear of the future; but young untrained women, acting on impulse, see only that they have been denied a delectable or thrilling experience, and despise nothing quite so much as the miserable excuse that the deprivation "is for their own good." . . .

It is always an ungrateful task to attempt to explain the unexplained. To the ready-made moralists who tolerantly class women as good or bad Miss Beulah Roberts must have been naturally vicious or she could not have become infatuated with a naturally vicious man. Then Hugo must have been naturally vicious to love a naturally vicious woman; and Arnold must have been naturally vicious to have a naturally vicious friend.

And so the whole fabric of this history goes to pieces. For not one of them was naturally vicious, not even the intolerable Mr. Schmucke himself. . . .

II. Detective McKiss Has a Caller

Back in that dark lighted world, then, while Arnold listened in the radiant darkness, Mr. Roy Schmucke ran to earth Eugene McKiss, Detective Lieutenant assigned to the "Tenderloin," in the Café Rochefort, one of those new establishments, all gilt and glitter, which make favorable arrangements with semi-celebrities of the Nightless Lane that their friends may be drawn from better-known resorts. Therefore, Mr. McKiss had champagne before him, the check for which would be conveniently lost. With him sat his partner, Burly Jones.

Neither looked on the advent of Mr. Schmucke with any favor; but as the pale-eyed auburn-haired parasite was useful to them in the matter of information—the Petties are allowed to exist to serve as spies—"stools"—they bade him be seated and, as the wine cost them nothing, the waiter was directed to bring a third glass and then to "beat it from the back of that chair."

"You'll strain your ear-drums some day, young fellow, and then they'll burst, that's what'll happen to you," prophesied Mr. McKiss cheerfully. "Go out in the kitchen and drown yourself in the sink." The waiter, grinning, went off. "Well now, young fellow," said McKiss, addressing his visitor. "What do *you* want? Because I ain't just stuck on being with you in public, Petty, and that's no airy persiflage. What's new, little one? Some rough guy give you a belt in the eye, and you come to swear you seen him trample on an old lady? Or do you want to get your mother arrested for not remitting regular?"

"That's a case for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," put in Mr. Jones, the burly, a heavy shouldered gentleman with arms like a gorilla, light green eyes, dogged fidelity to his friends. He was much averse to the use of such creatures as Petty: what *he* liked was to go, single-handed, into a house full of desperadoes, starting to shoot as his shoulder broke down the door. His partner shared his aversion and was his match in courage if not in strength—a slender, bright-eyed, tall young man, this McKiss, a man whose friendly smile gave him wide popularity among all classes. But both men realized that they must use the weapons of their profession. If they did otherwise, they would be badly beaten on their cases.

"You needn't get so fresh," returned Petty, his little eyes snapping with malice; "because if you do, I'll just go over and see Martin O'Grady and give *him* what I've got. And it's no chicken-feed, either. It's important dough, you just believe me when I tell you. Yes, *sir,* one great chance to grab ourselves about a hundred grands—*grands,* I said, *grands.* . . . You needn't smile like that, neither, Billy Jones." . . .

"I told you what always happened to these little hop-fiends if they kept on lying on their side," said the burly one, addressing his partner. It was half unbelief, half system. Such people as Petty could be angered into unguarded confidences.

"Sure, sure," agreed Mr. McKiss pityingly. "You better can that black smoke, young fellow, or it'll have you in the funny-house. I know one guy saved up his pennies to buy an airship to go pick daisies in the moon. They've got him down at Kings Park now in a room with extra heavy bars so he can't fly outa the window. He sees sunflowers up there now as big as a man's hat. . . ."

"Wall, if you ain't the grocery-store comics," said Petty, sneering. "Come off with that small-time humor. It even gets the hook in burlycue." . . .

"Never mind about our humor, young fellow," returned McKiss, grinning. "You go on and give us some good excuse why you should be sitting at the table with a couple of regular guys. And you got to do better than bring Grimm's *Fairy Tales* up to date. Whadda you been doing?—sleigh-riding? Stick to the long bamboo, Charley—that snow's awful bad for the imagination. I see a cocaine-drunk the other day trying to walk right through a plate-glass window and draw a glass of beer outa a keg in a lithograph."

The exasperated Petty interrupted him by rising. "Well, I guess Mart O'Grady 'ull listen to a chance to grab himself from ten to twenty thousand. Maybe he ain't as rich as you fellows with your fourteen-hundred a year." . . .

"Oh, *ten* thousand—that's getting to listen like a human being: it was a hundred a minute ago. Sit down and spill it, young fellow, and look slippery because we got a date for a little bracelet-party at eight-thirty—a smart young fellow who thought he could break back into New York just because there was a change of Administration. Come on, now!"

"I can't talk here," said Petty sulkily. "You'll have to come up to my room or get a private one here. I'm not going to take any chances of any bunny-eared by-stander getting wise to my dope. It's too important. . . ." McKiss, convinced that somehow the little red-haired reptile had learned something of importance, signaled the head waiter who led the way to one of the Rochefort's advertised "*cabinets particular,*" all of which opened off the balcony overhead. McKiss asked for vichy and milk now they were out of the public eye and for Mr. Jones grape-juice and lemon. Petty's possible wants were disregarded.

"Well, satisfied now, young fellow?" asked the younger sleuth while his senior growled. Petty opened the door communicating with the next room, locked it.

"He's been to see some play," commented McKiss. "Why don't you listen at the keyhole first; you've got no technique. Then you ought to draw your chair close, look mysteriously about you and begin. 'I was the only child of wealthy parents, and accustomed to every luxury, when—' "

"Oh, *hell,*" almost shouted Petty. "Are you going to *listen?* Just tell me, yes or no. . . ."

"I'll tell you one thing," snarled Jones: "I'll give you a poke in the puss if you pull any more cracks like that. You're pretty lucky you're allowed to take up our time, Mr. Rat. Now *sit down* and get to business. Go on!"

Petty, subdued, obeyed. "I ain't sore only you're hammer-ing me all the time and me trying to get you some money," he whined. "It ain't right, fellows. I never did anything to you: always been your friend: come to you right away I heard this—come to you first. . . . Some parties are smuggling in a hundred-thousand-worth of hop maybe right now, maybe to-morrow—as soon as a certain yacht comes in. . . .

"Yes, sir," he continued, encouraged by their exchange of glances. "One hundred-thousand, *at least*. And I'm the only one knows it outside the people mixed up in it. None of the gang. Silk-stockinged guys. I got it from my girl. That's why I don't want to mention any names. If one of those fellows got in wrong, she'd be up against it. His father's got plenty of dough. He just went into this to help a friend. . . . But you don't *need* to know any names. I can tell you where they're going to pull this off and then all *you've* got to do is stick around till they get it all landed and then step in and grab it. They won't dare put up a holler. They're all good families and can't stand the notoriety. And when you flash your shields and arrest 'em, they'll be only too glad to make their getaways. You could fix it so they could beat it after you arrested them. Have 'em think it was all their own smartness, fooling you. Then all you'd have to do would be to hire a couple of trucks and drive the stuff to town. I know a hundred places where I can peddle it. And so do you! . . ."

Their stony silence began to worry him; his eyes wavered, his hands trembled. "You see we get the stuff and no holler. They won't dare squeal on us. Don't smuggling it mean a five-year stretch in a Federal prison? I've looked everything up over there."

Above the sylvan tracery of Bryant Park, the Corinthian columns of the new library supported a roof that might have sheltered a temple to Aphrodite. He waved toward it. "And believe *me*," he bragged as he reviewed the thoroughness of his researches and his iniquitous ingenuity, "we *can't* lose.

You oughta be mighty grateful to me for cutting you in with it considering the rotten way you treat me all the time."

Mr. McKiss reached for his vichy and milk, regarding it thoughtfully. Mr. Jones, who, in matters requiring more wit than muscle, yielded the initiative, reached for his grape-juice and tried to regard it thoughtfully, failing of anything but a scowl. Petty's confidence deserted him, nervousness took its place.

"Say, I didn't make a mistake and invite you to a funeral, did I?" he had meant to ask, satirically, evidence that he was in no way impressed. But before he had half the words out, strong fingers fastened on his reedy wrist and jerked his face directly under the light of a shaded candle.

"No stalling, young fellow," McKiss said, suddenly stern and sinister. "You just tell us how you found out about this. Smugglers don't go spilling their insides out to girls. Come through with the whole story or I'll give an extra twist to that pretty little paw. You don't think Billy and I are going off on any wild-goose chase, do you? How did you get wise? . . ."

Petty almost wept. "A fine way to treat a friend that comes to you with a fortune; a fine way. . . . I won't tell you any names, not a name. Think I'm going to hand you a bunch of easy money and a guy to blackmail on top of it? Think I'm going to see *her* crabbed? . . ." He squirmed and twisted. "Let go, 'Gene. Whadda you wanta act this way for?"

"Tell us how you found out," answered McKiss. "Come on. Then we'll know how much to believe and whether you've got some spitework up your sleeve. You don't expect us to trust you, do you? Come on: tell the truth or we'll take you down and lock you up as a suspicious character and get you thirty days on the Island. We'll vag you, so help me!" He eyed him steadily, then flung him back with such violence that his head struck the back of the chair. "If you *will* come kidding public officials and wasting the city's time, we'll make you pay for it." . . .

"Oh, all *right,*" he grumbled. "One of these fellow's got a girl. And—" he grinned, but immediately repented it: he had had previous experience with what he called their "narrow-mindedness"—they were "just jealous" that was all, they and their make-believe morals.

"Well," he broke off sulkily, altering the original intention of his narrative, "I guess she likes me pretty well. . . . Now, *he's* been up against it a little, lately, in bad with the old man; so when I asked her to loan me a coupla centuries th' other day, she stalled. 'You've got your *junk,*' I said to her. That sort of stuff makes me sore with a dame. 'Well,' I said, 'why can't you soak some of it?' She said she could and would. But she kept putting me off, making first one excuse, then another. When I noticed she wasn't wearing much of the junk, I got suspicious. But when I asked her 'Why' she always said only chorus-girls wore expensive junk in the day-time." . . .

He paused, for any attempt to gloss over his discreditable methods would have been a strain on one possessed of a genuine felicity of phrase. But these jealous humbugs would pretend to be disgusted and possibly kick him if he told the thing exactly as it had happened. "Well, anyway," he went on, with labored gaiety. "I'd never been at her apartment: the live one was liable to bust in any time. But this afternoon, when she phoned me she told me he'd gone to the country for a few days. Now, I says to myself, now's the time to find out about that junk. So I said I'd come over instead of her coming out. . . . When I get there I ask if she's done what I want. No, she hasn't, and another bum excuse. 'And I know why, too,' I said and made her think I'm dead sore. 'You don't care for me any more. Well, I'm not going to waste my time with a girl that don't care for me. . . .'"

Again he suppressed a grin evoked by his superlative cunning. "Of course I knew she was wild about me and wouldn't let me go—not an inch. But I stalled. I was trying to get out and she hung on and hollered. . . . I tried to push her off—of course I could have done it if I'd really wanted to—."

"You can cut out the rest of it," interrupted McKiss, with an ugly look which Petty knew from experience was the fore-runner of a cruel kick. Mr. Jones's eyes held something of the same. Petty threw away his Virginia cigarette.

"Well, you *made* me tell you, didn't you?" he demanded of McKiss.

"I suppose, when she persuaded you to stay, you said you would if she proved she still loved you by handing over the jewelry for you to hock," said McKiss with a savage sneer. "And once you got your hands on it, it would have been good-by, baby, see you later maybe. Maybe *not*. Well, she didn't have it to give you, I suppose?" Petty sullenly assented. "Well, why?" asked McKiss.

"He took it and hocked it himself about four months ago—and her stringing me all the time. Oh, she raised *hell* with him all right. And she raised ten times more hell when she couldn't get me that loan. He told her he'd invested the money so he'd get from ten to twenty times as much for it. She thought he meant speculated and started to pack her things, she was so sore. So he lost his head and told her, that's all. . . . First, a friend of his got into trouble, forged a note or something from the way she told it, and had to make good. Well, he didn't have any money for his friend, being in bad with his old man, so he hocked his own jewelry and put the money in this smuggling scheme. Then I guess he thought it 'ud be pretty nice to get some soft money for himself. So one night while she's asleep, he takes her key from around her neck and swipes the junk. . . . And *now* are you satisfied?"

McKiss looked at Jones: neither betrayed any enthusiasm, but the pilot-fish knew that his whales were hooked. "He's been worrying himself sick. His friend's been threatening to shoot himself every day he don't hear the boat's back from

Mexico with the stuff. . . . But to-day they got a message from the other fellow in with it—he lives down near the place on Long Island where the stuff's to be landed. Didn't give any particulars but I guess the ship's in sight or something and the stuff's going to be landed to-night. . . . They've hired a house right out on the Sound, and I've got the phone number. The maid wrote it down on the pad that hangs alongside Bobbie's"—he checked himself—"alongside her phone. All you've got to do is to call up the Long Island telephone headquarters and they'll tell you where the house that has that phone is—"

"Why don't you start a school for detectives?" suggested McKiss. "Lot's of fellows who've only been on the force fifteen years or so 'ud be glad to get your valuable instruction. On behalf of Mr. Jones and myself, I beg to state we are most grateful for your kind assistance. Wouldn't know what to do without him, would we, Billy?"

But Petty, watching anxiously, knew he had them. "There's a train at nine o'clock; I looked that up, too."

"Train to where?" demanded Jones roughly.

Petty, his assurance recovered, put a finger to his nose. "Fifty-fifty?" he asked.

"Whadda you mean, fifty-fifty, young fellow?" asked McKiss savagely.

"Half for me, half for you," Petty had the temerity to reply. He expected no such division but he feared, did he begin by suggesting thirds, that he would end with a quarter. "Well, split it three ways then," he said as they looked threateningly at him. "But don't waste any more time. Suppose that ship came in to-night and they got the stuff out and started it up to town as soon as they landed it. He took his big touring car with him, this fellow did. And if you miss the nine train that's the last that goes any farther than Huntington to-night, and that's less'n half-way. You'd have to trolley to Northport, and spend a sawbuck on an automobile to take you the rest of the way. . . . And it 'ud be daylight maybe before you made it—it's over a two-hours' trip by train just to the station. Lord knows how far the house is from there. . . . Well, is it all right? Do I get my third?" He knew they would keep their word once it was passed; which was why they had won the confidence of the underworld and received so much outside assistance.

"If this is some kind of a frame-up for us, I'll get you, Mr. Rat, and mark you up so you'll never grab another dame," commented the burly one, fixing Petty with a suspicious eye. There was a new Police Commissioner at Headquarters and their detail was a plum that nine-tenths of their brother plain clothes men coveted. Petty shrank before Jones' menacing eye, viewing the long gorilla-like arms and heavy clenched hands.

"Why, *Billy,*" he protested. "Whadda I do that for? You know I'm your *friend.*" Jones growled something indistinguishable and resumed his staring at the sea of light below.

"Well—all right," said McKiss finally. "Where is it—Shoreham—or Port Jefferson—or Havre de Grace?—they're the only three places on the North Shore where anybody would try to smuggle anything—and they're all around two hours from Jamaica."

"Havre de Grace," answered Petty, "and the phone number is Havre de Grace 81. . . . I suppose you *could* find out who's rented it easy enough by asking around the village. But it wouldn't do you any good and it might make 'em suspicious, hearing somebody was asking. . . ."

McKiss replaced his watch, an ornate affair, a present from a grateful thief who had erased its serial numbers. "What would we want to know for?" he asked in a tired sort of way. "If they knew we knew we'd have to get them even if they escaped. As for hiring trucks and getting the stuff taken to town, that's all in your eye. If I find out you're telling the truth, I'll wire Billy to come down in a big car same as this other fellow. And I'll put off making the pinch till he comes. Hey, Billy?" The burly one nodded. "Just tell 'em down to

Headquarters I got a tip that Benny Broun's hiding over in Jersey and so I beat it over there." The burly one nodded again. "You be here in this private room to-morrow night at dinner-time, young fellow, and Billy'll have some news for you. You better stick in the hotel to-morrow morning till I phone you, Bill. Well, so-long." . . .

Pulling his soft hat half-way down to his eyes, Mr. McKiss rolled a cigarette from the loose "makings" in his pocket, lit it and went his way, a slim, quiet, unobtrusive, rather attractive-looking citizen. At the corner drug-store he bought a toothbrush, a pocket-comb, a tiny nailbrush and an orange-stick, for, whatever the obliquity of his ethics, his physical code was scrupulously correct. In the Arcade under the great arch of the gate to Long Island, he invested an American shilling in two new collars. Then, equipped for any adventure, for he had filled his lower left coat-pocket with tobacco only that afternoon—he descended deep into the dark places of the earth.

Here, in caverns hewn out of the solid rock, red and green lamps glowed somberly in dark subterranean passages. A hundred feet below the city's cellars, the Jamaica express chugged and chirred impatiently. Soon after he entered it, it plunged into the darkness, singing a song of steel and sparks to the depths of the conquered river overhead. It came upward into a land of lights, myriad lights, lights of stations and signals, of towers and town-clocks, of trains and motors and carriages, all gleaming and glimmering, winking and wagging, halting and hurrying—the lights of Long Island.

Behind, in the last car was Mr. Schmucke. He knew McKiss, knew he could not endure a half-hour without cigarettes, therefore had known he was safe from observation so long as he avoided the smoking-car. In the dusky half-light of the Jamaica station, he stood behind an iron girder until the plain clothes man had taken his seat in a "local" that would bear them to Havre de Grace; then hurried on by the back platform of the rear car. . . .

It was not every day a man got a chance to make his fortune. He was going to see that "damn dick" didn't try to "put anything over on him." If he did, he could look out for himself. He would make some kind of a deal with young Waldemar. He'd get *his*. . . .

He was about to justify his existence. All that life of evil had been permitted him only that he might now serve to bring swiftly to a head the dark brew that had long been upon the unseen fire.

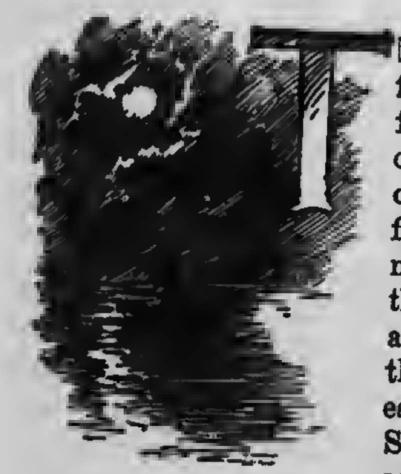
END OF BOOK VI

BOOK VII

CHAPTER ONE

THE NIGHT OF THE SEVENTEENTH

I. "Onward, Christian Soldiers"



THE night of the sixteenth was a fine one, long remembered for its full moon. It was so light that one could see for miles around and count each ship at sea. It was so fine it apparently tired out the elements; for on the seventeenth, there was no moon; and although a heavy September gale scudded the clouds along, the Island, and especially our part,—the North Shore from Huntington to the ocean,—was shrouded in impenetrable mystery.

The seventeenth had been a dreary day for all concerned with the *Cormorant's* coming; every one having watched until dawn: McKiss in the beach underbrush; Petty, racing-glasses in shaking hands, shivering on Harbor Hill; Arnold, himself, hitherto quite calm, too excited to sleep and at his bedroom window most of the early morning.

Archie who, alone, had slept as one pink with spiritual perfection, was a perfect pest with calculations of latitude and longitude, average speeds, possible meteorological disturbances, continual demands for listeners and verification. He babbled of bills; bills, or ruin, to be met. When he spoke of what that young gentleman he knew as Mr. Nolan called "doing the Dutch,"—Archie's favorite topic during the past few months,—Pink could contain himself no longer.

"We can help you; please let us," he urged icily. "Every cloudy Monday, we help send a few Dutch hats to float in the East River;—hey, sucker?" Then: "Go on up, Beau. I got some poison in my grip, nicest you ever ate; couple of spoonfuls and, oh, joy!! Go on,—sap! Bump this guy off quick!"

Darkness began to close in. From the fringed and scanty strip of breakwater,—the edge of the world now,—faint streamers of white rose out of a gray bleak universe. Like smoky snakes they crept along the beach, twined the trees and eddied about Havre de Grace light.

The watchers in the chalet felt the cold breath of the sea-fog; hair and eyebrows were sticky with salty moisture.

"Old Mother Cary brewing for her chickens again."

Arnold was trying hard to be cheerful. Soon he saw the great eye of the Connecticut Cyclops wink dimly;—those powerful reflectors! He had a sickly foreboding that, if this kept up, the *Cormorant* might come and go, signal and blaze, for all any one on the Cliffs could see. To confirm him, the sad slow voice of the great Green Sands fog-horn began to warn, Havre de Grace bell-buoy to chill.

"Looks like a night out for some of us," Arnold said, coming inside. "So whoever's going, Pink?—Better get some sleep, then! I've *got* to, that beastly motor! Look after the dinner, Beau;—you'll stay. I'm off; forty winks."

"Let's eat at nine: that'll hold us until morning," suggested Hugo.

Arnold assented; then, from the kitchen: "Cheese; crackers; water to boil for tea; 'case anybody's hungry now. Potted stuff in the pantry, too. . . . It'll be eleven before Danny'll dare signal. Say *we* start at ten. What say?"

"Boat-Stuff, hey?" Pink reflected. "Me for that poison *myself*." Then sang:

"If you've got to be out in the cold and wet,
Get a dollar shell of hop,
And you'll think you're with your pet."

"Chorus!" he shouted; Beau carolled, too.

"Oh, the hop, the hop,—jolly good guys and fancy ladies,
Bound for Hades, bound for Cadiz,—any old place that's
nice and hot"—

They disappeared singing, returning with amber mouthpiece, gaudily colored Turkish water-pipe hose, bowl, cylindrical brass cup. The latter revealed a filigreed lamp; the glass shade to fit this was unwrapped from tissue-paper. There was also a cooking-needle, a bowl-scraper,—(yen-shi-gow), etc.

"Traveling layout," Pink explained; Arnold recognized the little white "toey."

"Forgot . . . and hadda stop at Blackie Burns'—looks like he handed us a lime—" Pink was sniffing.

Arnold recognized the name, too: as agent of the syndicate, he had sold Burns twenty-five thousand fen,—crude.

"Ought to be good," said he shortly. "It's some of your governor's,—governors-es." He told Hugo and Archie of the sale. "So we're in distinguished company as wholesale opium dealers—a Congressman and a Justice of the Peace."

Only Pink observed his bitter sarcasm. Hugo looked on curiously, Archie with eager interest. Even Arnold's young crow hopped down from his perch and poked his bill through the bars of his cage. Beau placed the various articles on a small silver tray from the buffet, put the tray upon a piano stool,—and placed the stool close to a willow lounge chair. This, when extended, would permit one to lie almost at length. Pink drew up another chair so that the stool was between them. Then the two laid themselves down, Beau cooking; the amber mouthpiece at the end of the long hose passing back and fourth between them.

But when Arnold descended from his room, some hours later, he found the situation changed. The chairs had been abandoned, traveling rugs from the car were piled on the floor. Archie's head was on Hugo's hip, as all four reclined about the tiny lamp, his eyes as wild and excited as Hugo's were dull and heavy. Arnold, standing on the stairs, saw Archie seize, eagerly, a proffered "pill" which Hugo had sleepily refused. The crow slept heavily in his cage, overpowered by the fumes.

Pink was the first to discover Arnold's reappearance; and leaping up, blushed guiltily. "The dinner's all right," he said, with an attempt to carry off the situation. "I've got everything fixed up fine,—the chickens only need another ten minutes to be brown enough to pass for Cuban patriots. And, believe *me*, I mixed a salad dressing that would make a milk-weed taste like head lettuce. You never tasted any cawfee, did you? Well, that's a hop-fighter's dinner you know,—piece of pie and a cup of cawfee. And my Java has made me the particular kid in such circles. . . . That's what *I've* been doing while the other members of this club have been lying on their sides—"

Still ill at ease under Arnold's reproachful gaze, Pink sat down at the piano. Like many with uncultivated musical gifts,—especially in *his* world,—he had, besides his showy talent for syncopated melodies, the ability to strike chords; which, although known by a tonsorial nickname, had nevertheless, a genuine appeal to the emotions.

Pink was a past-master at these lachrymose melodies. Sentimental like most of his class (although he concealed it deep down where he kept his respect for age and "square girls," love for home and mother, and various other unworldly affections) he now thought of the Little One, whom he had been unable to persuade to "double-up," although convinced she was wildly, though secretly, devoted to him. At Mother's on the preceding afternoon, hadn't she proved it by breaking down before he left, clinging to him and begging him to be careful, to come back safe to her.

This scene recreated itself as he played and sang; and, though the words offered little scope for sentiment, he managed somehow to imbue both voice and chords with a wistfulness that sent chills to Hugo's spine, the usual warning of moisture to his eyes; while Archie stared fixedly into space.

"Come lie on your side with me, old pal,
Come lie 'round and join in the fun;
With the aid of 'the gong,'
We will quit the mad throng
For the Land of the Pure Li-un.
This magical bamboo stem, old pal,
From worry will set you free.
So, pal, don't be sad,
I'll make your heart glad,
If you'll lie on your side with me."

"He wrote it himself," Beau said, as proudly as if it were the *Traumerei*. But, though it is easy to jeer at such primitive appeals, the music affected Arnold, music-scholar and opera-lover, as much as his less enlightened companions. And when Pink, forgetting why he had begun to play, wandered off into other airs where the words gave him a better sentimental opportunity, Arnold's reproaches remained unuttered and he sank down into one of the wicker chairs, head on hand.

"I want to go back to the orchard,
The orchard that used to be mine:
I want to stand deep in the woodland,
The woodland the color of wine.
I want to go back to the meadow,

I w to go back to the barn;
To the rocks and the rills,
And the whip-whip-poor-wills,
I want to go back to the farm" . . .

"For God's sake stop it," cried Archie, the tears streaming. Pink came to his feet with a start. Hugo was blinking, too. Arnold remembered a scene in a café: a half-drunken woman and *The Rosary*. He had sneered then; the situation was much the same, yet he did not sneer now. Not even when Archie demanded more of the opium as mental anodyne and trembled visibly while Beau prepared it. Just so had the woman trembled while the waiter went for more whisky.

Nor did Arnold interfere, as he had first intended. In the rush of reverie that came with Pink's playing, he realized why at such a time, a soul should fiercely desire that which would blur and blot the memory of unkept promises to the God within us all, of broken faith and bankrupt hopes, of hell on earth and ill-will toward men.

The room was silent save for the bubble-bubble of the pipe, the roar of the wind, the surge of the surf. Arnold looked at his watch: the awaited hour approached. If the *Cormorant* was to arrive that night, she was nearly due. . . .

The young crow, awakened by Archie's passionate protest, surveyed the scene with one sleepy eye. Ever since the arrival of the first two strangers, it had been in a fit of jealous sulks, causing a temporary relapse into barbarism. Its resentful caw had been loud but inarticulate, its back pointedly turned when speech was requested, if pressed its head was tucked under its wing. But now, only half-awake,—the music having intruded on its dreams,—the crow was stirred to unexpected emulation: *Onward, Christian Soldiers* it cawed. Pink's elbow slipped to the key-board and a clangor of dissonances shocked the ragged nerves of all. The pipe fell from Beau's hands shattering the lamp-globe: the light went out. Archie started up with a shriek.

The crow, gratified by this belated tribute to personality, fell into the usual error of the artist and repeated the performance. *Onward, Christian Soldiers,* it cawed again. The silence, tremulous with shock, had held for a quivering second. Then a galvanized jack-in-box that was Archie, sprang at the cage, tore at its door, and reached for its occupant, mechanical fingers fastened on its gullet. But, now, another also sprang and Arnold's fist caught Archie's chin and tumbled him over backward. He fell, striking his head against a table corner. In the consequent confusion and the efforts to revive him,—one running for water, and another opening the window for air,—the frightened bird flew off to the freedom of the fog.

Too late the panting and pursuing owner saw the loss of his beloved pet. The sole companion of his loneliness fled, all penitence fled with it. Looking down at his fallen friend, Arnold cursed him, cursed Pink, cursed Beau, cursed Hugo. They stared at him in frightened surprise: this raging hard-eyed fighting-man was not the Arnold they knew. Nor did he know himself; only that he most desired to feel his clenched fist against human flesh, and that he hoped one of them would answer him angrily and yield a second opportunity.

But none did: only, "You've hurt him, Arnold," said Hugo.

"I wish I'd hurt him a damn' sight worse," Arnold returned viciously. "*He* got me into this filthy business; yes, he and you, and your damn' father. Yesterday, I was beginning to feel decent again. Now I'm just what I was before I left your rotten city,—a crook, a beast, a brute. And it's beginning to show. Are you surprised?"

He nodded toward Pink and to Hugo while he pulled on his hip-boots. "Let Mr. Hop-Cook stay and look after him, since he was the one who gave him the stuff that did it. No. I'm wrong. Your father's the one, Hugo, but we haven't time to get him. And *that's* the kind of business we're going into to-night. To bring in more stuff that turns men into that kind of hysterical loons."

"Ah, dry up," growled Pink. "It's not the stuff: it's the man. It never hurt me. Weak-minded guys like that 'uve got no right to smoke or drink or anything."

" 'Weak-minded guys, eh?' " asked Arnold. He got up and, as he slipped his belt through the loops of his thigh-high boots, he sneered. " 'Weak-minded guys!' And what is three-quarters of the world,—strong 'guys'? 'It never hurt you,' eh? How many are like you? How many can take a few drinks of whisky every day without it hurting them? Not enough to make up for the alcoholic wards in every hospital, the lonely wives waiting until daybreak, the hungry children, the broken homes! And for one Frank Nolan, there's two opium-wrecks living in Chinatown, three who'd sell their wife's wedding-rings for a pound of *yen-shi*, and four unidentified morphine-fiends in the morgue."

He was very pale, his lips dry, his eyes wild. Pink watched him abashed and disquieted, Hugo alarmed and remorseful. "Let's not kid ourselves any longer, fellows," he resumed bitterly. "Gentlemen like Mr. John Waldemar go up every rung of the ladder with their foot on somebody's life. And we're going out now to put ourselves in the same class. If you didn't know it before, it's only because you never troubled yourselves to think. I've troubled *not* to think. I've said all the things John Waldemar says, all the things *you* say, Pink. But we had our warning just now. We saw what it does to weaklings. Archie Hartogensis wouldn't harm a fly. We saw him first crying like a girl, then yelling like a madman and trying to wring a helpless bird's neck. We've had our warning, so don't blame the Almighty if we are lost in that fog and are never found. Warning! Do you people believe in God?"

There was an embarrassed silence. "I don't know whether I do myself, any more," said Arnold. "But if I do, I've got to believe that only something supernormal arranged that terrible irony—'*Onward, Christian Soldiers!*' "

He shuddered and looked fearfully at the open window. The sea-fog was rolling in, sepulchral swirls and whorls, ghosts in gray winding sheets, with cold and clammy fingers to faces, each vanishing to take up watch within the room, invisible doomsmen,—or so the inchoate imagery of the moment might be inadequately translated. The others sat, stony still, staring at the window, all three fiend-ridden, unconscious mystics: Beau sprang up.

"You don't catch me sticking around here, alone," he said fiercely. But Pink, grateful for a foe he could combat, pushed him back with the flat of his hand.

"Baby," he jeered, then tossed him his automatic pistol: "Keep off the bogies with that. Wake up the other baby and rehearse your act together." He, too, had donned oilskins, silken oilskins these, from Hugo's car, and with their owner similarly arrayed, stalked out after Arnold. The next moment their voices, wafted on an air languid with heavy sea-salt, seemed far away: in another briefer lapse, they were so faintly audible that had Beau done other than strain his ears, he must have heard only mournful fog-horn and tolling bell-buoy.

Then the whispering began—or seemed to; a whispering that froze him. He sat, motionless by the open window, and, fearless as he had been hitherto, was too terrified even to tremble. He roused himself with an effort beside which all previous calls on his will-power were as willing yieldings. "Archie! Archie!! Archie!!! Archie!!!!" He dragged him to a chair, he rubbed his wrists, he chafed his ankles, calling loudly whenever he had the breath. Presently Archie groaned and never was sound sweeter to mortal.

"Here,—have a drink," urged Beau; but then, remembering, returned the whisky to the decanter. "No. You'd be sick. They don't mix,—hop and whisky." He found arnica and bandaged the bruise, soothing the excited and enraged victim of Arnold's wrath. Soon they had resumed their positions on the floor, the window closed, the curtains drawn, more wood piled upon the fire so that its blaze banished Beau's temporary fear of the intangible.

No doubt he had forgotten Arnold's accusation; or had not believed it at the time. Arnold had played on his fears. But, now that he had a companion again and the cold sea-fog no longer rolled in the window and the moaning of fog-horn and tolling of bell-buoy were so faint as to be almost inaudible, he only remembered that his nerves were severely shaken and that the "lay-out" held balm for such infelicity. He was of Pink's mind, save that, lacking Pink's plastic quality, he was impervious to logic not in accord with personal experience. "It" had never harmed *him;* therefore Archie's condition had been due to natural excitement. With a fortune almost in his grasp, "who wouldn't be off his nut?" Therefore, when Archie sullenly demanded his share of the cookery, Pink yielded. A little more would act as a soporific, he argued again, although, of course, in no such words.

"You'll drop off to sleep. Best thing for you," said this complaisant "cook." But he was wrong. There are no anodynes for such neurotics as Archie, only anæsthetics: nor in lesser quantities do they act as mental stimulants, only as excitants, increasing hysteria until it becomes ultimate, and sheer exhaustion alone brings surcease. As in a thermometer placed over the fire, the mercury must find its zenith before its nadir, must rise highest before falling lowest, thus Archie,—mercurial enough in all sooth. And, as he lay and smoked, while Beau relapsed into euphoria Archie brooded over his wrongs; his shrill voice rising oftener than pleased Pink's partner.

"Can it, can it," the latter urged. "Ain't you got a chance to cut in on some important dough, *now?* Think of our pals out in the cold and wet just bringing it in and all we gotta do is take it. Nice and warm and full of the poppy, and you're beefing! You wouldn't be satisfied if a stranger handed you a million. Look at all the trouble of carrying it home! Why—"

"Listen," whispered Archie. Then suddenly, but with exaggerated caution, he rose and, seizing Pink's pistol where it had fallen, tiptoed to the door and flung it open. "Who's there?"

he challenged in his high shrill voice. "Who's there. I'll shoot if you don't answer." Silence only.

"Don't be a goat, sucker," protested Beau. "That's a cold wind you're letting in and it ain't welcome. I'm in on this shack and I don't want no visitors like that. Shut the door."

The wind had risen. One wondered how it could rack trees and bang shutters and roar at large without dispersing those fog-banks; and at times it seemed to shriek as though their obduracy annoyed it, then returned to wreak its rage upon the trees and shutters as before. It had stilled for a moment as though taking on extra strength and then it was that Archie had imagined he heard a stealthy footfall close to the bay-window. Now he seized the shaded student's-lamp from the table and bore it, held aloft, to the door, but before it could do more than fringe with yellow the inner shadows, a mighty sea-gust roared over it and all was dark again.

"Come on in," shouted Beau impatiently. "You make me tired, sap-head. Come on, I tell you, or I'll bend the pipe over your nut. Come *on*, now." The chill blast had sent him shivering to the fire. Archie reluctantly closed the door and replaced the lamp.

"I heard somebody just outside," he asserted excitedly. "If I didn't, may I never see daylight again. I hope to die if I didn't hear somebody as plain as I hear you, somebody sneaking around right under that window."

Beau expostulated in his usual idiom; then crossed to the door and locked it, pocketing the key. "You'll do well if you hear it again," he chuckled. "If you think I'm going to be froze outa house and home, you want to go to thinking school and begin life all over agen. Now I gotta have a few more puffs to take the chill outa my system. But no more for you, sucker. You'll be hearing the little whales singing in the ocean if I give *you* any more."

But Beau, for all his wisdom, had been wrong. Archie's hearing was too acute to be at fault. When he heard them McKiss and Jones had decided that the time had come for them to take action. Therefore, they had wriggled out from beneath the chalet, which, built on piles, afforded excellent concealment, if poor shelter from the chilly air. Out they wriggled and stealthily crept away. Gaining the woods, they proceeded, by intermittent flashes of a pocket torch, toward the residence of the Honnible Johnnie.

II. "MARCHING AS TO WAR"

Dinner was over, but Waldemar and the Squire still sat in the glow of the shaded candles that decorated the Hartogensis mahogany, when, to quote Pink: "instead of a rock and rope and finding the nearest river and jumping in, they're doing it with a bomb and taking some rich guy along to carry their grip" . . . Particularly, "rich guys" of Waldemar's sort when discovered in such plots against the public peace as the Yew Tree "proposition":—which he was now prepared to put into operation.

As per certain papers spread out on the Hartogensis mahogany and truncating the long witch faces of a handful of Hartogensis candles,—the Squire clung to candles, whether for a commendable reason or as part of his pose . . . is not weighty enough to detain us. Doilies, too,—Cluny lace over Japanese mats. And a burglar's sackful of shining Sheffield and silverware, held the first and held down on the second. Dinner was over when Jones and McKiss learned that Waldemar, while in residence was not in presence, and started for the Squire's.

Butler (this dignified servant, by a freak of nomenclature having that for surname as well as occupation) was dismissed about that time, too.

"Here y'are, partner," quoth the Honnible Johnnie, and grinned. The Squire, frowning slightly, examined the half-sheet of scribbling. Scribbling, it seemed, but, really, it was the best Waldemar could do: his slight decrease in illiteracy had come too late for any grace of outline.

"There's the proposition, and here's my offer on it." Certain sums and rates of interest, percentages representing rents and shares in his business, along with the ratios of probable increases consequent on the new investment, were set forth so plainly that even an outsider could have understood that what was proposed was genuine.

"Well, partner?" Waldemar inquired softly, having consumed the contents of two pipes and several glasses.

The Squire came out of his pleasant reverie with a start. He had ceased to see figures on the paper, was looking on fairer fancies: Exmoor, his pet and pride, ornamented and adorned, added to in acreage and improved out of all present appearance. He sat up, concealing his amazement, and unthinkingly combed his neat whiskers with his pencil. "It seems a fair offer, Waldemar," he said, striving for his usual judicial calm. "It seems a very fair offer. It seems—" He checked himself, realizing his speech was mechanical, but finding no words suited to his dignity and to his acumen as a business man, only nodded.

"You said your grandson 'ud be a big man in these here parts," chuckled Waldemar. "Well: looks like he'll be a bigger one, don't it? I've got some idears about my own grandson, Squire. Many a time I remember how I used to see these here big Russian landowners sorta snaking their whip to warn the *moujiks* to get out of the way." In his enthusiasm, he forgot his claim that he was the son of such a whip-snaker. Neither man noticed the discrepancy now.

"Yes, *sir,*" he continued: "And I often think: America's a young country; give her time and she'll be thataway, herself. In the end, it's the land. Those that own the land own the country. Trusts can go bust and banks can blow up, but *you've* got the only right idear. They can't take the *land* away from you. And I was thinking:—what's to prevent us two from owning *all* the land hereabouts. You show me where you want to spread out, and I'll spread out the other way. And by the time our grandsons are *our* age,—just as you say—

we'll about own all of this here Havre de Grace. Then we ca elect anybody we like; jest run the whole shooting-match suit ourselves. People living on your land, getting their brea and butter out of you, ain't a-going to vote agen you, is they?

Squire Hartogensis appeared to share his belief; but wit the mental reservation that he would have preferred the sen timent to emanate from one better equipped in vocabulary So precious a thought should be couched in dignity of phrase He was about to remedy the deficiency of his fellow reactionary, incidentally emphasizing his own priority in the idea when his butler made an annoying entrance after an equally annoying knock.

"Two men, Squire Hartogensis, sir," said the butler impassively, "insist on seeing Mr. Waldemar, sir. Not my fault Squire. They simply refuse to go. They say Mr. Waldemar will be glad to see them when he hears what they have to tell him. . . . Yes, they *seem* respectable, Mr. Waldemar. . . . No names, no, sir. . . . Not natives, no, Squire. City folk I judge. Said to show you this, Mr. Waldemar, and you would surely see them."

He brought forward the silver card-tray, to which his white-gloved thumb held tightly a scrap of paper evidently torn from the edge of a magazine advertising page, and on which was written a word in Latin. The word was *"Papaver,"* printed rudely in pencil, followed by a written phrase quite as illegible and mysterious to one with no previous suspicion of its meaning: "ALIAS THE POPPY."

Waldemar looked up sharply. "Can you make this out, Butler?" he asked. Butler, the impressive, shook his head impressively.

"It was not for me to attempt to decipher it, sir?" he rebuked; an answer and an attitude that pleased his master mightily.

"Neither can I," lied the Honnible Johnnie. It was not his scholarship that made it possible for him to be mendacious, but for a reason of which McKiss had been well aware: the labels pasted on his jars by his better informed chemists bore the name "Papaver."

He glanced slyly at the Squire. "But I think it's some important business from town,—syndicate business, partner. I may have to leave you and take these men over to my place. What time will you be ready to go up in the morning? I'll have the car start at any time you say?"

"At any time *you* say," corrected the Squire. His eyes had never really left that sheet of figures whose cold fragments, like bits of a jigsaw puzzle, made such a warm ensemble:—a transfigured Exmoor, an Exmoor like Lord What's-His-Name or that of Sir Moses Norfolk, money-lender to the British nation—and others. . . .

Waldemar named an early hour, suppressing his impatience, and the Squire mechanically agreed. They parted, each shaking hands with the past, equally unaware of the present that awaited outside, and the future that waited beyond in the Swiss chalet.

III. THE AWAKENING OF MR. MCKISS

At the sight of the earnest Eugene, the Honnible Johnnie congratulated himself on his acumen. City fellows didn't travel so far from home and send in such messages without having matters of import to discuss. He thanked God that, for all his success, he had not grown haughty like Old Man Hartogensis.

"How did you know I was down here?" he asked McKiss when he and the worthy pair were within his touring limousine, the same that had taken Arnold to his graduation as a "good business man."

"Just plain accident, young fel—Congressman, I mean," returned McKiss jovially. "Heard you'd be here to-night. Sitting around at our hotel when your house phoned for something, and mentioned you were coming down, and that you said you'd drop in to-morrow and pass the time of day. Always making yourself solid with the voters, hey, Congressman?"

McKiss knew his man; knew his record, business and political; had once visited him as the emissary of a metropolitan weekly, of no particular importance, politically, hence unaffiliated and selling its silence to those able to afford it, or unable to, socially speaking. In spite of its notorious corruption, it was influential, socially. McKiss, whose particular brand of honesty was to stay bought, was their "investigation expert." Unable to shake down luscious plums like "city advertising" it appealed, first to Cæsarean pursss, then to lovers of sensational scandal. Either increased its advertising rates. . . . For instance, Mr. Waldemar, thinking of his son's social future and of the iniquitous activities of private Uplifts, had advertised his business uselessly, unusually, expensively—but amicably.

Hence the sight of McKiss was no unmixed joy; it might mean a further bulling of the blackmail market. The detective was not apt to force an interview unless warranted. It was likely, however, that McKiss came for more friendly reasons. Waldemar could recall nothing at the moment with which he could be threatened.

Wisely, he contained himself while the car took the hilly roads from Hartogensis Hall to Waldemar House. One must speak loudly to overcome the noise of the engine, the grinding of the wheels, the hissing of the exhaust—only a thin partition separated them from the chauffeur.

"We never had any idea of taking you in with this at all, Congressman," McKiss ventured, as they came to a level stretch where a whisper might be heard. "We come down here all on our little lonelies. That is *I* come down, and this young fellow, friend of mine and side-kicker, come down tonight bringing a car. But when I heard about you at the hotel I said to myself: 'There's our man! Burly thinks so, too. Shake hands with the Congressman, Burly,—Mr. Jones, Congressman Waldemar—Don't you, Burly? . . ."

He waited for a reassuring nod. "Well, then," continued McKiss, "as soon as we made sure the deal was to be pulled off to-night we come right to your house—your people sent us to the Squire's.—Does that Squire mean the same here as in the city?"

"Meaning is he a judge? Yes, son," agreed Waldemar, puffing at his cigar to conceal his delight at what, if he read the oracle aright, was happy augury. "Least," he went on, killing time, "what they *call* a judge. But he never had anything worse than wife-beaters and chicken-stealers to do any judgin' on, so maybe 'tain't the same as in the city after all. Leastways, speaking financially, it don't offer the same inducements."

He grinned. Mr. McKiss also found something humorous in the existence of such graceless disfigures of the judiciary: the Honorable Mr. Cornigan, for instance. . . .

The car at last quivered to a standstill under the stone archway of the Waldemar House porte-cochère, and the great doors were flung wide by a sleepy footman semi-Orientally liveried. Once within McKiss observed with the curiosity that had yielded him an approach to an education, the stained glass let into the arches above the doors of the squat Gothic vestibule, studies from a Khudyakof *skazka.**

McKiss stared not because they were artistic, but because they were horrible.

The key-window represented the Kashoube Viezscy, a sexless Vampire, seated in a coffin and gnawing at his own arm. All were the work of a never-to-be-sung Beardsley, a nightmare colorist of some "Futurist" school, who had discovered how to paint three dimensions. But, what was more important, he had persuaded Waldemar to accept these ghastly caricatures.

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*Note—Skazka is saga, practically.

“. . . Not as a connoisseur, but as a Russian, sir. T subject is Slavonic, typically Slavonic, Mr. Waldemar.”

Impressed by the way people stared, the Slavonic one ha learned to admire this cycle of ghoulish jests for their attention-compelling qualities. Even so uncultivated a man as New York plain clothes man was captivated. Temporarily dismissing his own curiosity to pander to that of his guests, h explained his Penates with the naif pride of ownership.

“Russian, sure. You've heard of the *Vampire*. That's him He's chewing at his own arm so's his wife and children wil die, see? Then in the next picture they're dying and there *he* is peeking in the winder outside. . . . Laughin', the old devil. Some idear, hey?”

As he turned off to give some directions to the sleepy footman, McKiss, an inherently religious young man, crossed himself devoutly and muttered something strictly Hibernian, heard in his cradle-days, or soon after, from his Galway mother.

“No good luck 'ull come from flyin' in the face of Providence like that,” he whispered in an awed tone, to the stolid Jones. McKiss feared no man, but where were the saints without demons to triumph over?

For the first time in their acquaintance, Jones was conscious that cowardice was possible to McKiss. He had undoubtedly shuddered.

“I wish I was well out of this,” he added. “I wish I hadn't been so bright, young fellow. I wish Waldemar was in hell with his Vampires as any devil desarves to be that has pictures like that, for a sacrilege it is and nothing else, the brass av him!”

McKiss had the habit during excitement, or stress, of returning to his early pronunciations and inflections—which also came direct from Galway.

“What I mean, Burly, the idea of these stained-glass windows is sorta stolen from the Church,” he said, quieting down and resuming his American idioms. “It's a sort of *religious* idea. And then to put a blood-sucking devil digging up graves on one of 'em!—"

Emotion overcame him. Jones, disgusted with his partner's puerility, left him to whisper to himself.

In the high stone-walled library Waldemar was overseeing the selection of certain whiskies and liquors, the footman having wheeled in a portable cellaret.

"Pucker can get you some chicken and salad and champagne," he further suggested. Hospitality, the offering of food and drink, especially drink, was a second nature with the Honnible Johnnie. For his liberality, men gave him their lives to order as he willed, he and his fellows, those foolish sheep.

But these were birds of the night, not sheep; rather giant hawks, sheep devourers also. Jones was twiddling his thumbs and refusing refreshment, and showing no gratitude toward the profferer. "Send him away, Congressman," he growled. Waldemar nodded and Pucker went.

"Now, Mac," said Jones, exasperated.

Mac needed to see a doctor,—Jones was trying to be charitable. "McKiss afraid! Afraid of *what?*"

"See here, Congressman," Jones broke in roughly. "I ain't a man to talk. But the fact is—well—I guess my pal over there must a hurt his head. And there's about a hundred thousand dollars' worth of opium gunna be landed to-night not two miles from here."

The announcement coming so unexpectedly, the Honnible Johnnie had no time to prepare his face with a look of indifference, but gaped like any schoolboy.

"How do you know?" came out involuntarily.

"Because three people left to land it off'n a ship out there"—Jones waved toward the Sound—"not haff'n hour ago. My pal, here, could put all this more delicate than me, Congressman. This ain't my end of the deal. But,—you'll have to excuse me sayin' so,—you'll have to decide quick. We're gunna make a bluff at pinching these guys and then let 'em get away—there's only about half-a-dozen of 'em; then we'll cop the stuff and bring it over to your snare. I come down in a Packthread tourer,—holds eight passengers—and we oughta be able to do it in ten or fifteen loads—meanin' by daybreak. Now if we do, is it fifty-fifty?

"If you won't," he added, rising, seeing that Waldemar made no sign. "All we ask you to do is to forget it and we'll do what we intended to before we saw you; cart it along the cliffs or out in the woods somewheres and hide it. That is, hide all over what we can take up to town our first trip. Then come back for the rest as we sell it. It's up to you. There's a lot of work, thataway, and a lot of risk, so when my pal, here, saw you 'safternoon. . . ."

He went back laboriously to his premise, and began again his many repetitions. Like most strong simple men, he conceived it an easy matter to be direct in narrative. Few laymen know that a complex tale told lucidly is an art-form that even master-craftsmen achieve only after long and arduous apprenticeship. Mr. Jones became more obscure with every clause and correlation, finally compelling McKiss to intervene.

"It's like this, Congressman" . . . he began mechanically. If his explanation lacked Jones' obscurity, in part, it lacked his enthusiasm altogether. The same black dog was on his back, as had been on Arnold's earlier in the evening—the same curious apprehension weighed him down.

Had some Rochefort Café reveler suddenly spat at a crucifix or trampled on a rosary, the same apprehension would have come to him, and—the alembic of habit shattered—he would have examined his life and found it evil. But those who do physical evil have violent revulsions to spiritual good; the lawless folk he knew best respected religious symbols; religion yielding many exquisite emotions. Agnosticism was much more likely to be found in the sturdier Welsh type of Jones; one without sufficient sophistry to reconcile repentance with continued relapses. As for atheism that was part and parcel of the ruthless type, represented by the Waldemars, the business buccaneer.

No one but an atheist, McKiss knew, could have that horrible stained-glass in his house. As he explained what Jones had failed to make clear, a violent hatred for his host welled up in McKiss. Yet half an hour earlier, he had chuckled over Waldemar's joke about a corrupt judiciary.

Now, by the mere sight of a disgruntled artist's *diablerie*, had been accomplished one of those modern miracles that happen every day everywhere; a miracle of the mind, more supernormal than any of the flesh, a sudden straightening of distorted vision due to a violent blow,—between the eyes!

The religion of Eugene McKiss was real enough; only its application had been at fault. Now, dimly apprehending, Eugene's sense of sin became oppressive. He was weighed down with it, weary-eyed, weary of soul.

"And you don't even know who these fellows are?" asked Waldemar; too rapt in the narrative to observe the narrator.

"It's all a piece of the same dirty washing," McKiss found himself saying, hardly less to the surprise of his own conscious self than to the slowly dawning rage of Jones. "You see one of these young fellows is supporting a girl. And *she's* supporting the little rat who told *us*. Maybe she don't *know* she's supporting him. . . ."

Waldemar nodded. Petty's kind had been profitable "sleigh-riders" when he provided "snow" on Seventh Avenue.

"Well, the rat's afraid to let us know the name of her particular young fellow," McKiss continued. "He thinks we'll get some more easy money, blackmailing him—"

Burly Jones leaped up. "See here, Mac," he shouted, his eyes wicked. "*Blackmail!*—are you crazy?"

"The rat's reserved the blackmail privilege as part of *his* share," McKiss went on, unheeding. "It's part of our bargain not to try to find out any names. Anyway, we don't want to.

If they knew *we* knew, they could blackmail *us!* An awfully dirty lot of laundry, all around, all right. But I started and I'll go through. What's the answer?"

"Good boy!" said Waldemar; and, trying to laugh away this ugly language, guffawed loudly. "If it *is* dirty, it's time it did some *clean* fellows some good! Hey? Of course *I* don't know anything about it, though, do I?"

He winked. "But if I was to find a lot of valuable stuff in my stables to-morrow. And if a coupla friends said it was a *present*, I couldn't accept it without giving something in return, could I? Course they might *insist* on not taking more than *half* what it was worth, and the best I could do then would be to leave them the other half in my will."

His ostensible hearty habit of guffawing made McKiss hate him more than ever.

Beckoning them to the main hall, Waldemar bade the tired Pucker be off to bed. "I'll lock up, my boy," he said genially. When the footman had disappeared by a servant's hallway under the stairs, Waldemar opened a paneled door, disclosing an electric switchboard and a key-rack, and selecting two keys, the larger for a hasp padlock, the other for a chain, he laughed unrestrainedly. Waldemar's decision surprised Jones as well as increased the hatred of McKiss, who feared he would commit some violence if not soon rid of the sight of him. Slipping into a short walking-coat of heavy frieze, Waldemar announced, patronizingly, he would go with them part of the way.

"I've got an idea I know what house that is," he chuckled. "I wonder if *that's* what his 'important business' was. The young rogue! Takin' a leaf out of somebody's book, eh? He'll be all the more valuable to somebody after this. Lots of good experience, but no money to make him cocky. If it's the one I think it is, McKiss, you're quite right about his not affording the notoriety. His father's a very respected man in these parts, the only one they take their hats off to. They don't do it to the Squire or me, who could buy and sell *him* fifty times over. . . . What did you hear while you were hiding under that house? Any names or anything?"

McKiss answered shortly that they had not. There had been some kind of a fight and some piano-playing. That was all they could make out. Then three men had come out, wearing oilskins and fishermen's boots. They had heard them say enough, outside, to know they were off in a motor-boat to cruise around until they picked up some ship. One of them had asked how many trips they would have to make before the cargo was landed and another had replied, "Probably four." He thought he knew one of the voices, a Tenderloin voice certainly. But it had been too dark to see any one.

And now they were going back to lie in wait for the return of this trio.

"But I don't advise *you* to come along, Congressman," McKiss said sourly. "You walk too heavy, for one thing. You'll give us away. They're suspicious enough as it is. One of the young fellows they left behind heard us crawling out from under and came to the door. And if the wind hadn't blown out his lamp, *he* mighta blown out somebody's brains. Anyway he was shouting he'd shoot if we didn't produce regular passports."

"Much chance *him* shootin' if it's who I think it is!" Waldemar was all genial scorn.

"But, of course, it mightn't be. There's five of those shootin'-boxes, as they call 'em, though they're pretty large boxes, along the cliffs, and all a few miles from here. What does it look like exactly."

"Considering we've never been there except at night, sorry not to be able to oblige you," returned McKiss, exasperated. "We called up the phone exchange, but the directions they gave us wasn't worth the trouble. So we had to waste our time scouting around three of 'em before we found the right one. The others were all boarded up. Each one's on a hill, each one's surrounded by trees so the ducks can't see it,—or you either. And at night you're liable to walk right off the earth if you ain't careful. Specially a dark night like this. wouldn't go if I were you, Mr. Waldemar; what good'll it d you?"

"Oh, let him alone, Mac," said Jones irritably.

McKiss relapsed into gloom and walked on ahead, occasionally flashing the pocket torch enclosed in his palm. The chalet's telephone number yielding Waldemar no further information, he too fell silent; only the possibility of it being Arnold's scheme that was to be circumvented, produced, now and again, a ruminative chuckle.

"I always said he'd make a good business man," reflected the Honnible Johnnie. And guffawed loudly.

"I wish you wouldn't do that," urged McKiss pathetically. Whenever Waldemar chuckled, McKiss seemed to see the stained-glass Vampire grinning. He felt he would go mad if that infernal chuckle came again. To one suffering from a sense of guilt, yet pursuing his guilty way, the sighing of the trees, the occasional hoots of owls and wails of whip-poor-wills, and the fact that the fog made it well nigh impossible to distinguish objects a hand's breadth beyond, meant sinister visioning to one of a superstitious race, seeing with the eye of an awakened conscience.

Jones, recognizing in his friend's voice a note to be feared, fell back. "Don't mind him," he whispered as he pressed Waldemar's arm. "He's all worked up, the crazy Harp . . ."

The fog was thicker by the time they left the Waldemar estate for the open field, part of the little property retained by the Indian-negroes over Snake Hollow way, bisected by a foot-path leading to their village.

McKiss, cautiously inspecting his surroundings by the aid of flashes from his shielded pocket-torch, announced that they had lost their way.

Waldemar, more familiar with the country, proffered assistance. "If it's the place I think it is," he affirmed, after a similar investigation, "we've come half a mile we needn't have."

Under his guidance, they crawled back through his barbed wire fence and plunged into his woods again. The tolling of the bell on the channel-buoy, and the mournful mooing of the Middle-Ground fog-horn, proved he knew whither he led them, proved the final undoing of McKiss' nerves. So much so that, when they sank knee-deep into a gully full of leaves and a flock of pheasants rose about them with shrill and discordant screams, cold sweat stood out on his forehead. His heart began beating wildly.

He was all nerves. To him the forest was alive with the creatures of Irish legend and Roman myth, the good spirits bidding him beware "ere it was too late," the demons cackling over his fast approaching destruction. He seemed to hear light footfalls on the forest floor, lighter whisperings overhead. He wanted to shriek, to run wildly back toward lights and civilization. But the courage of cowardice, the lack of moral courage, kept him on his predestined way.

And then a sullen desperation settled on him, a new hypothesis presenting itself. Did he think that sudden repentance, without penance, sufficed to wipe out the wrong he had done in the last five years? . . .

Suddenly, out of nowhere, was limned for him the meeting of a shabby curly-haired boy and a cherry-hatted girl whose hard eyes softened at the sight of him; limned in the light of a ghostly carbon-candle crackling and sputtering in a great elliptical glass-bubble, high overhead.

Against its pole, he leaned and listened. But suddenly and almost with a snarl, he broke and ran most of the way home. . . .

Such had McKiss been. Long afterward, some one had brought him news of Father Collins. The old priest had begged his bishop to transfer him from the city; he had lost faith when his best-loved altar-boy had gone the accepted New York way.

A thought shaped itself somehow, in McKiss's mind; he was to begin doing penance for all the ill he had wrought since then. He passed from fear to desperation, from desperation to a sort of fierce frenzy. Let God have it over and done with. Then he might begin living it down. He remembered that the Canton Street Parish-House wanted some one as big of heart as of biceps to salvage human flotsam. The offer had been made to one of his Catholic confrères who had retold it to the Central Office as a rare jest. (McKiss recalled, roaring, too.)

Now he was conscious of a desperate hope that perhaps the size of his heart might be condoned—not the diminished size of it—it was large enough, but bloated; fattened, rich with unhealthy fat as any Strasburg goose—but of sentimental substance. McKiss would have sobbed more loudly than Archie at Pink's pianissimo pathos; he had trained himself to sob just as he had trained himself to give dimes to army lassies—then, conscious of his rectitude, he could collect the dollars of the lassies of the larger army. He knew why now; but he did not know why he knew. Nor would any one have known. But the seed of all this had been sown when alone and camped beneath the stars, the unwelcome conviction had then come that he was little better than Schmucke. And that seed had been forced to flower tonight in the orchid hothouse of the emotions. Thus were the pseudo-art of an otherwise useless charlatan and his own existence justified. Petty's too. Reptile? Not at all. Unrefined phosphorus that was being shaped into a pencil with which to scrawl *Mene, tekie upharsin*—again!

IV. THE SHOTS IN THE DARK

In the chalet, Beau had long since dropped off to sleep, an arm thrown over his eyes to hide the steady glare of the little lamp on the floor. They hardly needed that protection now; the oil was low and much of the opium, spoiled by Archie's efforts to cook it, having fallen into the flame, the wick was reduced to a sullen red cinder, which, with the dying fire, gave so little light that even Archie's excited face, bending over the lamp, was in shadow.

Yet he persisted in his attempt to cook.

In his highly excited state, he must do something. Even though the pupils of his eyes were narrowed to needle-pointa by over-indulgence in the drug, he imagined that more would bring surcease. So he continued, swearing extravagantly as each successive effort failed. "Cooking" had looked so easy in the experienced hands of Beau, that Archie could not realize it was a highly complicated process having to do with stages of heat and cold—a process that, if varied by a tenth of a degree, meant failure.

Three hours of Arnold's absence had passed. Frequently Archie took out his watch and worried it, spinning it around on its chain, aimlessly; squirting it out from between thumb and forefinger and letting it fall, dangling, much to its inner detriment. He would lie thus engaged, his blue eyes, glassy from the drug, fixed steadily on something until they saw nothing, his mind, the while, equally a blank. Then some anarchistic muscle would discover that the brain was no longer supreme and would declare its independence, causing an involuntary jerk of arm or leg, and Archie would come out of his mental coma and, while the brain was rallying its forces, seize on one of the cooking-needles and dig vigorously into the contents of the white China "toey." The early stages of the cooking, the transmutation of the brown mass into golden flakes and bubbles, was easily enough accomplished. But when he would have kneaded this residue, it fired up and fell into the flame, or else flaked off and fell on the tray. Furiously he would jab at it until he had bent all the yen-hoks. Then he must desist and make them red-hot to straighten them again.

Finally a destructive idea occurred to him: he would not knead the stuff, but roll it, raw; and thus he managed to affix to the bowl a number of rudely shaped cones, which, being charred and nauseous, made him cough and choke to swallow their smoke. But, though it made him feel ill, so elated was he with his success that he rolled half a dozen or more, until Nature rebelled and gagged him. When he opened his eyes, after fighting off this state, he saw the wick begin to waver, the flame sink rapidly until, incontinently, it was extinguished in a column of blue spirals very unpleasant to smell. The oil was out!

Voicing shrilly his disappointment, he awakened Beau, who blinked at the dying blaze of the hearth-fire and sniffed. "Lamp's out," he stated peacefully.

"And just when I was beginning to cook all right," Archie complained in head tones, high and querulous. "Just when I was getting to know *how*. I'm the unluckiest person in the whole *world*. There's nobody I ever heard of has *my* rotten luck."

"You had enough long ago, sucker," yawned Beau, preparing to sleep again and purposely omitting the information as to the oil's whereabouts. He was a little afraid of Arnold's anger should Archie be entirely incapacitated.

"Wake me up when you hear him coming. Better clear that junk away." Taking his pillows, he rolled nearer the fire, for cover drawing down a near-by overcoat. Shortly he was snoring, but the crackling of the fire—Archie had thrown on more wood—as the wind came down the chimney, reduced his nasal noises to a sort of humming. Archie again aroused by the involuntary action of a leg muscle, arose and began to put the room to rights, but quite mechanically. When he had carried the lay-out to the kitchen, nausea overwhelmed him and he sat down, heavily and unhappily; the griping pains in his stomach, superinduced by the raw opium he had forced down, doubled him up in agony. Several times he essayed to inform Beau that he was poisoned. Each time Beau buried his face deeper in the overcoat.

It was then that Archie's abnormally sharpened senses became aware of a second noise: a distinctly stealthy footfall.

The wind had died down into that sort of ominous calm when the barometer can almost be heard in its steady fall. After a long lapse Archie heard the noise again. And now his skin was stretched as tight as his teeth were clenched; his eyeballs bulged; for not only did he hear, but his mind's eye visualized.

That something out there; that something taking long steps, and raising each foot, and gauging the extreme length of each step, and putting down the foot gingerly; that something he now saw as a satyr.

If the black dog bestrode McKiss' back, it rode rampant on Archie's. His was the same consciousness of evil done. His effort to allay it with a drug had but increased its power, that power that forced him to see a ghoulish specter out there, something more horrible than the stained-glass man-eater—the memory of which still weighed down the soul of the approaching McKiss.

The steps were nearer now, a third, a fourth. As hapless folk in nightmares, who try to shriek aloud but only gurgle, who try to flee but find the brain can no longer control the body, Archie sat, his horror-stricken gaze fastened on the drawn window-blinds. Presently these would be pushed aside, and a face would grin at him. His heart told him that when that happened, he would die.

If only it would hasten, would have done. But no! those long deliberate steps continued; between each a stabbing pain of memory—of what might have been. For Archie was the sentimentalist led astray. His respect, nay reverence, for good had ever remained unchanged. Sinners of his sort, slaves of circumstance, die shrieking for forgiveness. Such as he seek refuge in strong drink, in a state of soddenness, because they are afraid to think, afraid to face the issue; therefore, of all profligates, go most swiftly down the path that leadeth to destruction.

Thus, then, Archie sat, for what seemed hours—a few seconds in fact—until the great back-log fell with its shower of sparks. The sound awoke Beau, also, and even reached the cautiously approaching Petty Schmucke; the satyr of th stealthy footsteps—whose retreating patter was, in turn, carried to the startled Beau.

"By God! you're right. There *is* somebody out there; somebody spyin' on us. Come on, quick."

The shock of a tension too suddenly released was such that it snapped the thin bowstring of Archie's sanity. Blood streamed from his lips; he was wild with pain. His peasant body, ceasing to have the guidance of his patroon's brain, was, for a brief space, swayed only by fierce sensations.

Beau, taking the key from his pocket, ran to the door and flung it wide. "Hands up there, whoever you are," he yelled. "We've got a gun. We'll shoot." At the very words he felt behind him something like the rushing of wind, and saw an automatic whirled high in air.

Of such swift moments, one remembers later what, at the time, one merely apprehends. To Beau, Archie seemed like some giant; his body bulked so big that there was room for only one within the doorway.

Beau stepped down; so, at least, his conceit said. Really he sprawled. Thus the first shots seemed only the echoes of what was, to him, the most important happening of the moment.

He sat up dazed, and turned to Archie, framed by the firelit doorway. To some, he might have seemed to sway like a drunken man, but not to Bean, who was a child of the Bowery where physique is not and gun-play is. He knew that Archie was pivoting on his heel, head and hand thrown high, his arm a compass leg, its point the pistol.

As this described a deadly semicircle, pink flowers of flame were born. . .

Cautiously Bean crawled across the porch. He knew it meant death for somebody. His blood was water. And so . . . Bean reached Archie and gripped him. But the shots had come more swiftly than he—and, now, the automatic snapped futilely. That Bean was unaware of this was evident from his clenched teeth, clenched as tight as were his arms about Archie's ankles.

In a last berserk paroxysm, Archie beat down at the other boy's head. But the new-born Beau was too precious to die in infancy, and Archie stumbled, the weapon flying far, falling —somewhere. Archie swinging back pendulum-like fell too, but there was a long wicker chair at his back to receive him.

Here he sat, half-sprawled, his eyes unseeing, and as querulous as some tormented child's. Collapse, at last, utter, absolute. The eyes closed; interlocked, rather. His mouth fell wide. How weak it was, that mouth!

"He's a baby. A poor little baby," sobbed the new-born Beau, forgetting to pity himself in the presence of one so transcendently in need of protection.

A great sigh shook Archie, a long-drawn shudder followed. Then, sleep; if sleep can be so ill a thing.

Then silence once more, out of which came toll of bell and sob of fog-horn.

Footsteps again. Not stealthy now. Nor frightened. Nor fleeing.

Beau stood beside the stricken Archie, dazed. A streamer of light fell athwart the fog-wreathed trunks of the trees outside. Traveling slowly along the September sward, it passed the door, irradiating porch and fretted woodwork railing, pausing at its dwarfed stoop.

Then the sound of other feet—irresolute—unwilling—feebly afraid. Whispering followed, and the lighting up of the window blind. Then on the flickering patch of firelight on the floor, . . . a shadow as of a giant forefinger—too thick to be a man's forefinger, at all. . . . Beau recognized it for what it was. (Anybody would, nowadays; advertisements of just such a finger in just such an attitude being numerous.) As it appeared, it disappeared, the firelit floor, too; for the spotlight had been centered on the standing Beau, the sprawling Archie.

Beau had thrown up both hands immediately on the menace of the shadow. But it needed more than shadows and spotlights to disturb Archie; his arms hung limply, finger-tips touching the floor.

"He's all in, can't you see?" squeaked Beau. His words seemed to convince, for the spotlight faded out, and in swept a pair of shadows so big as to blot out the firelit patch again; their human prototypes following as swiftly. . . . one of them tigerishly, too—finger trembling on the trigger of a great ugly navy revolver.

Was that a human face? The blood-lusting lion was as a king to a slave, compared to Burly Jones, baring dog-teeth, grinding molars.

"Go to hell, Burly," shrieked Beau; one outflung arm protected the helpless Archie, the other gripped Archie's chair, the knuckles straining out every drop of blood, every atom of warmth.

"Come on," said Jones savagely. "Get out of this, you damned ——!"

McKiss intervened. His face was drawn with pain, his eyes gloomy, his left arm helpless. Clotted blood streaked his wrist; it was black and coagulated where his sleeve was burned.

"I'm sorry you're mixed up in this, young fellow," he managed to say to Beau. Jones meanwhile had handcuffed Beau; to whom the sight and sound of snapping handcuffs were bitter reminders that, as usual, appearances were against him.

"Hey," he blustered, albeit feebly. "What's'matter with you fellows? Crazy, ain't you?"

Jones paid him no attention. "Come to earth, Mac," he screamed, adding obliquities.

Archie's wrists were braceleted. "Quit stalling, will you? Stand up, can't you?"

"Give him your shoulder, Markowitz," suggested McKiss.

"March, now," commanded Jones; and with his automatic's muzzle in the small of Archie's back, he marched them from the house.

"I'm sorry about that arm of yours, Mac," he remembered to say—ungraciously enough. "But you'll have to lead the way. *I* can't do it *all*. . . . Would you?—is *that* so?"

He brought his heavy weapon down between Archie's shoulder-blades. Archie's steel-encircled wrists had shot up above his head, but at the deadening blow, they dangled helpless as before. . . .

"Get on," Jones warned ferociously. "Make another move and I'll brain you." . . .

Beau had tried to ask a question, and Jones had pushed him back with a flattened palm. "Get *on!* I tell you," he shouted. . . .

His black company moved out into the all-embracing fog. A pale shaft of light marking their progress—a black company indeed: one bandaging his arm with his handkerchief, knotting his necktie over it, with his teeth; for he must hold the torch with his uninjured arm; the other held two handcuffed prisoners; and blacker than the Black Man himself, gun for goad, herding them like sheep for the slaughter.

In the darkness they passed two others whose faces were buried deep in the sweet September wild-flowers. . . . Petty Schmucke had learned to lie log-like in the best of schools.

The other man—not even a log could lie quieter. And when the "flash" fell on the hand that clutched his throat, four wavy parallel lines of red showed between tight-clenched fingers.

Then the light went out and left the dead man lying there.

V. HARTOGENSIS HALL AGAIN

Soon after Waldemar had left him, the Squire had fallen asleep before the fire; but, scowling as he slept, had caused Butler to fear his wrath should he be awakened, so noiselessly feeding the fire with a few logs, the servant had betaken himself to bed. He would not have feared a little later, for the scowl was of short duration; representing a minor incident in an otherwise pleasant dream; one of convicting an insolent peasant to long imprisonment, he having abated the deference due one of high degree.

All save the four candles in the candelabrum nearest the Squire had been extinguished; and by now these were guttering out into blue flame. He roused himself, surprised: he must have been asleep for hours. Then the booming of the door-knocker shook the house with echoes and reverberations, and, for once, the Squire regretted that he had not the usual door-bell in its stead. That, ringing in the pantry, would have permitted him his sleep undisturbed. But as the servants' quarters were over the garage, he must himself answer the door or pretermit that awful noise. He was alone in the big house, Archie being in New York, Archie's brothers at boarding-school.

Once more some one banged the heavy bronze lion against its metal frame. Again the echoes ran riot. The Squire arose, somewhat laboriously; went grumbling to the door. After all, it must be a matter of some grave import if people made such clack and clatter about it at such an hour. He stumbled through the darkness and opened the door.

"Well?" he growled, pushing at the black button of the porchway's electric switch. The great Flemish lantern was immediately irradiated, the rays from the giant bulb within it beating down upon the group outside. He saw the flash of nickel-plated handcuffs, the drawn revolver, the bloody sleeve. One of the prisoners had hidden his face in the hollow of his arm.

"What's this?" the Squire tried to growl. McKiss, his face twitching with pain, pushed past him. "Where's your telephone?" he groaned. "Quick!—if I don't get a doctor, I'll go mad!" The instrument was shining in the reflected light, standing in an alcove by the footman's seat. Catching at it, McKiss pushed down the hook, then saw the handle of the bell and cranked it. "Hello! Give me the nearest doctor, please. Be quick about it, too. It's serious."

"It's pretty important, Squire," said Burly Jones. "We heard Mr. Waldemar say you were a J. P., and we didn't know where else to go." Throwing back a coat-lapel, he jerked his waistcoat backward from an armhole, showing a badge pinned to his braces. "Get on, you!" he said, roughly pushing the two prisoners forward, one of whom, the man with his face hidden, moaned as he stumbled over the threshold. Within, this man fell prone upon the cushioned window seat, face still hidden.

"Come right away, Doctor—a shattered elbow, I'm afraid. Terrible agony. Happened half-an-hour ago. Pistol-shot—pistol-shot. Yes! Hurry, please hurry. The Squire's house, Squire Hartogensis's,"—McKiss hung up. "You haven't got some whisky, have you, Squire. A slug of that might hold me till the doctor comes."

Squire Hartogensis, dazed by his sudden wakening and the strange experience of the moment, pointed dumbly toward the open door beyond which candles sputtered. McKiss, holding his arm stiffly, lit another file of them, and looked about him fiercely. In the silence, the moaning of him upon the couch was plainly heard. "Shut up, will you!" threatened Jones. "A pair of gunmen, Squire. Yes, sir; a pair of thieving killers."

McKiss had found the decanter, filled a goblet almost to the brim, gulped it clean again, staggered back and sat down, passing a hand across his eyes. "You'll have to send for somebody, Squire," said Jones. "Can't you get the sheriff on the phone? Or had I better call up the Congressman's house and have his servants bring him home. May I have a drink of that stuff, too? Thanks!"

"Bring who home?" stammered the Squire. He had not had time to recover the dignity dear to him: the shock of this armed invasion had followed too suddenly upon his rude awakening. Jones let his automatic clank down upon the long carved center-table as he poured.

"Mr. Waldemar," he replied, drank and pointed. "These murderers shot him half an hour ago." A louder moan broke from the man whose face was hidden. "Yes, he's dead all right, Squire," Jones continued. "His body's lying a couple of miles from here. *We* couldn't bring him: had our hands full getting these killers here. They shot my friend, too. Notice his arm."

The Squire sat stark and silent. Waldemar dead! It was some time before the full extent of this calamity became clear to him. It was too incredible for belief. All they had planned to-night done with forever? No more easy profits? No, it was impossible. Only an hour ago talking here and now dead. "Yes, it's impossible," he muttered aloud. "Dead? Impossible!"

"If you think so, you had better send somebody up there to that place they call Bluff Road," Jones answered, wagging his head and shaking his finger. "He and my friend and I went for a stroll to talk over some business and—" He paused, alarmed by the contempt openly shown on the torture-racked face of his companion. "Anyway, these fellows shot him," Jones reiterated doggedly, frowning McKisa down. "And we haven't got anything to do with crimes committed in this country—we're New York Central-Office men. But we weren't going to let these guys make any getaway while we were around and maybe have the killing charged to *us* by these jays around here. So we brought 'em along to you. We'll stick till your Sheriff comes and locks 'em up, though. And we'll come back for the Coroner; or stay overnight, just as you say. But it's all up to you, Squire,—the rest of it."

"I don't *quite* understand," said Hartogensis, beginning to collect the scattered remnants of his self-possession. "Not *quite*," he added, resuming something of his dignity, his tone meant as an encouragement to Jones to express himself more clearly; to endeavor to ascend somewhere near to that Parnassian altitude of clarity where he, the Squire, dwelt habitually, and from which it was difficult for him to descend.

"You understand the Congressman is dead, don't you?"

McKiss asked sharply, his eyes luminous with pain. Though the drink had thickened his speech, his agony was too acute for any amount of alcohol to affect his brain.

"Now, Mac," protested Jones, in great uneasiness. "Keep out o' this, now. Will you? You ain't fit to talk nur to do nothin' with that arm of yourn." Jones was plainly taken aback by his partner's attitude. As he turned away his face darkened with a look of positive dislike.

"Well, Squire," he said harshly. "Why don't you phone for the Sheriff, or somebody. Or are you gunna handle these guys single-handed? One of 'em's a desperit bad boy, I tell you. Guess it was him that croaked the Congressman, though you can't git a line on neither of 'em. Won't talk. But that other one's too much of a big boob to *shoot* anybody." He indicated him of the hidden face, and scowled at the other, who, upright and impudent, sat in a straight-backed chair.

"I'd like to have a cigarette, sucker," said this one calmly.

Jones eyed him in baffled despair. "If I had you at Headquarters, Mr. B. Markowitz, I'd soon take that freshness outa you. . . . Look here, Squire, ain't you gunna do anything?"

"Mr. Waldemar is shot, you say?—shot by these young hoodlums? And probably dead?" questioned the Squire in those judicial tones he most admired, the tones of one who weighs words, whose speech is slow and distinct so that not a precious syllable shall be lost to the court-stenographer and to an admiring posterity. "Probably dead." He nodded his head sagely.

"No probably about it," McKiss broke in again. "I felt his heart on the way back here. He's dead, dead, dead." His voice rose with each syllable. "So what are you going to do? —what are you going to do? Are you going to let him lie out there? Let him lie out there? Or are you going to send somebody to get his body? Going to send somebody to—"

"Oh, *God,*—don't!" The words followed a muffled scream from the man, face downward. The Squire was startled, he did not know just why. Really it was because of his familiarity with the voice; but (such creatures of habit are we) to connect the sound of his son's voice with that of a manacled murderer was quite out of the question; besides Archie was in New York. Therefore, vexed at his inability to identify the curious sensation, he vented his irritation on the original cause thereof.

"How dare you be insolent, sir?" he demanded, swelling up, and fixing McKiss with his little puffy eyes. "In my grandfather's day, young man—" He got no further. An hysterical laugh, muffled like the scream, came from the man on the padded window-seat. A laugh?—it was a harsh shrill cackle containing no more mirth than the gibbering of a maniac. Again that uncomfortable sensation. Again, failing to identify it, anger. "By God, what does this mean?" the Squire said loudly and smote the oak center-table as though his fist were his gavel.

Matters had gone beyond his modicum of brain. There was something sinister about the whole of the present business. And he was here alone. Swayed by the psychic currents that swept in circles around the room—the superstitious fear of McKiss, the material fear of Jones lest his companion tell too much, the tragic fear of Archie—the Squire had a subconscious foreboding of disaster. This, translated into the consciousness of an unimaginative man, became the fear of bodily harm. The insane asylum at King's Park was not far distant. The Squire controlled a shudder as he remembered one escaped and murderous lunatic who had been caught, years ago, hiding in his shrubbery. What had happened once. . . . And lunatics had delusions that they were kings and presidents and conquerors—why not detectives?

He breathed a prayer of devout gratitude as he heard the wheels of some light vehicle grinding down the pebbled pathway to the porte-cochère. So great was his relief he forgot his dignity, and went to the doorway to greet the welcome stranger. It was the doctor, a tall thin, gray-haired fellow with bright bird-like eyes and a habit of whistling under his breath; from which he paused now only long enough to return the greeting; then went on attending to his horse—hitching him, covering his steaming sides with a woolen blanket, accommodating him with a nose-bag full of oats. Then, patting the animal's neck, the gangling doctor came up the wide stone steps two at a time, his lips pursed in his eternal silent whistle.

"Where's my man! Well, well! Arm, eh? Horrible pain, you said. Elbow smashed! Tut, tut! Elbows don't smash so easily. Shot? Oh, well, a *shot!*"

He looked around, eying the scene curiously; then decided it was none of his business. Whipping out a case of glittering scalpels, he selected one and slit the bloodied sleeve with the precise accuracy of an expert, yet so swiftly that it seemed he had hardly begun before he was done. McKiss wondered why such an accomplished surgeon should live in a village: he was yet to realize that some men lived for other things than money; this was the doctor's birthplace and he found it too comfortable to leave—that was all.

"Heart strong?" he asked abruptly.

"As an ox," McKiss returned between set teeth.

The doctor pursed his lips again and exhaled a whistled whisper that even in his agony the detective remembered for a ballad of his youth, *Sweet Marie*. But, somehow, far from being irritating, the sound of it was soothing, its double-quick *tempo* an indication of the celerity with which relief approached. Into a tiny measuring-glass, the doctor poured part of a spoonful of boiled water, dropped into it two one-quarter-grain tablets of morphia and a hundredth of a grain of atropine. Then, in doubt, he felt his patient's pulse; doubly assuring himself by kneeling, putting aside McKiss's shirt and undervest, and listening to his heart, which encouraged him to add another quarter grain and an additional hundredth. This mixture, in a shining syringe, he shot beneath the skin of the uninjured arm, having first had McKiss stretch out at length upon the other window-seat, some pillows under his head.

"Relax. Keep your eyes closed. I'll do the rest. You lie still. And don't ask questions." He had opened his black bag and was beginning to lay out other shining instruments, along with bottles, medicated cotton, rolls of bandages and adhesive plaster. As he worked at it, whistling noiselessly the while, the Squire had crossed to the telephone and had bidden the Deputy-Sheriff, Hugh Legaré, hasten to him; then had awakened the sleepy Pucker over at Waldemar House, repeating mechanically the tragic information. At his every word, Archie in his dark corner shivered and shook convulsively; but the doctor's shocked surprise made itself evident only in the diminished *tempo* of his suppressed whistling—until he had it down to the muffled drums of Chopin's *Dead March*.

For a moment there was silence. McKiss, grateful for the soft repose that had begun to permeate his being,—the obdurate brain-cells being conquered for the moment and bidding the body "Peace,"—gave himself up to luxuriating in his momentary release from torture. One could hear only the doctor's soft whistling and Archie's choked breathing. Beau sat sullen, craving a cigarette. In the realization that he must do without something he so much desired, his first horror of the imprisonment he faced smote him. His fear that Archie would not confess faded into a fear that he would. What was death, death so sudden as to be painless, compared with wanting cigarettes for a lifetime? Worse than that, for terror had beset him at the sight of the medico's syringe: suppose he, Beaulieu Markowitz, should have formed a habit for the opium? If so, in a few hours (thirty, he had heard), a craving would begin compared to which the present craving for cigarettes was as slight as the difference between an epicure's desire for caviar and a starving man's stern need for anything that could be eaten. But Beau's contempt for the police, plus the knowledge that Jones knew almost all of his associates and would glory in telling of it, should he weaken—combined to keep up his apparent stoicism. Actually, however, the fear that now beset him made him weak as water.

The doctor's whistling came to a sudden stop, and, as he did not utilize his lapse for conversation, this was indeed a phenomenon. The reason might have been read in the rounding of his eyes as he listened while Jones gave to the Squire, to transmit to Pucker at the other end of the telephone wire, a detailed description of where the fallen Waldemar would be found. Now, as the Squire hung up, the doctor wondered aloud: it seemed a necessity to convince himself.

“The Pinckney property? Why, young L'Hommedieu's living there! Arnold L'Hommedieu! Arnold.” And then he turned, fiercely, and shook Beau's shoulder. “What have you done with him, you little blackguard? Have you murdered him, too? Have you murdered Arnold L'Hommedieu?”

“Never heard of no such person,” returned Beau resentfully, all the ethics of his profession in mind; for Beau, little as he suspected it, was an idealist in his way—the way of so many professional lawbreakers. Let the ignorant scoff, the Robin Hood legend lives, in all ages, in the persons of some of its imitators.

“But you were in his *house!*” half-questioned, half-stated the alarmed doctor, who, married to the daughter of Doctor Will L'Hommedieu, had known Arnold since the younger man's childhood, had helped train his budding mind, loved him, as one alert mind in the midst of its duller brothers loves another.

“Never *heard* of him, I tell you,” Beau repeated in the same sulky manner. “We got lost in that damn fog—and the door was unlocked. Wasn't anybody there, so we went in to warm ourselves.”

“That's a lie, and you know it,” said McKiss, opening his eyes. “Who's this you say, this Arnold L'Hommedieu, Doctor? Hired the house, did he? He's a party to all this. Not the murder, I don't mean—the rest of it. The smuggling—" But McKiss was checked in further revelations by the leaping up of Jones; who, standing over his wounded companion, now regarded him, sternly, threateningly, even going as far as to cough loudly. But the effort of speech had broken the spell of the morphine and had brought McKiss back to the realization of other things besides his pain. "I wouldn't say anything, young fellow," he said, disregarding Jones, addressing Beau. "There's been enough damage done already by me meddling. But it's a warning! A warning! I knew it was comin': I knew. And when that shot struck me and I heard the Honnible Johnnie cryin' out that he was hit, it was jest like I seen me mother's face in the flashes out of the gun. Yes, and then I hear her say, clost to me: ''Tis the last chance for ye, Michael, oh, my Michael.' She wouldn't call me Eugene like me father, but always by the name that was to guard me, come Communion. And it was like she told me to lie clost to the ground and I wasn't hit no more at all. Bullets kept singing around and hitting trees, but I knew she'd interceded for me and it was for me to show now it was worthy I was. Then I swore to the Blessed Mother that I'd never bate an inch of going through for penance and to show me thankfulness, besides."

For the second time in a night, his emotion had overcome him and he had gone back again to childhood's Galway brogue. "I ain't goin' to spare myself none, Markowitz," he added, resuming his Americanese. "You needn't look at me like that. I know all *I've* done, better'n you. I know I've been a rat, a dirty dog—anything you feel like calling me. And if you go on up river, I'll be right there by your side a-makin' big ones inta little ones just like you—" He paused, exhausted. He had spoken without thought, without respect to his recently acquired grammar. He was as little aware of his solecisms as he had been of his reaction to the Celtic idioms of his yesteryears. His eyes, again luminous with pain, were as wild as they were bright; the drug had only diminished the size of the pupils without dulling them.

"And so I've got to see your friends don't land that opium," he said, turning from the sight of his partner's brutal rage. "If I let 'em land it, I won't be keepin' to what I swore, won't be worthy of havin' my blessed Mother intercede for me. I'm a rat, all right, and I've got hell shrieking for me being so long coming home. But I ain't a goin' to be a rat any more, young fellow, not any more—"

"Come, my man; you're delirious," said the doctor gently. "I'm all ready for you now." He had been in the dining-room and had returned with a silver pitcher, some of the water from which he put to boil over a spirit lamp in an aluminum basin—both collapsible, both from one of his cases. He had certain theories about colytics and used in his surgical work nothing he, himself, had not unwrapped from medicated gauze a moment before.

As he had passed into the darkened dining-room and was about to strike a match to find what he wanted—the candles lit by McKiss having guttered out—the fire also fallen low—the long mahogany table had been for a moment illumined as if by a sudden sunbeam; and, looking up, he saw that a long shaft of light had fallen through the open oriel window. It faded as he laid hands on the pitcher; but now, as his water boiled, the light was explained by the birr of an approaching motor. McKiss, reduced by his pain to mumbling, opened his eyes at the sound. "Tut, tut, now," said the doctor. "Keep quiet. Got to keep quiet." He had begun to spray the wounded arm with cocaine. As a temporary numbness set in, he began to bathe away coagulated blood, cleansing the blackened flesh, but pausing every minute to spray again.

The search-lights of the approaching car had found the windows of Hartogensis Hall again and now the motor chugged and hissed outside. Resting as it did on an upward slant of the road, its lights illumined the drawn white blinds of one of the great bay-windows—so that Archie, his face still hidden, lay in a pool of lambent light. Following this illumination came a sudden thumping of the bronze lion, and when the Squire opened the door which continued to quiver from the knocker's impact, there entered a very Magog of a man, one Hugh Legaré, Sheriff's Deputy for Havre de Grace, descendant of another Hugh, a zealous Huguenot and faithful body squire (reputed gigantic also), who had followed the fortunes of the founder of Havre de Grace, the Chevalier L'Hommedieu. But, gigantic or not, he could have been no finer figure of a man than Sheriff Hugh, who, single-handed, could see to it that any ordinary half-dozen roysterers kept the peace.

"How did it happen?" burst perplexedly from this Colossus as he entered. He was followed by the two Havre de Grace constables, Tom Bowne and Tom Heaney, both strapping sizable fellows, handy with their "fives"; though neither seemed of more than ordinary proportions measured alongside the Colossus. These two Toms stood guard, one on each side of the great oaken door; while Legaré (pronounced Legree in Havre de Grace) strode toward the center-table, and from that point of vantage, scrutinized the strangers. "I say: how did it happen, Squire?" he asked again.

But Benjamin Hartogensis was too occupied in experiencing the relief Legaré's appearance induced in him; so that McKiss, for all the added pain of the doctor's efforts, seized the opportunity to snarl out: "Smuggling; that's how. And there's more of 'em, all bringing a shipload of opium ashore. They're at it this very minute, if they haven't done it already. Send your men quick, Mr. Sheriff. The doctor here knows where." McKiss had spoken every word through clenched teeth; now he relapsed, gritting them. Any outward exhibition of his agony might seem unmanly to the stoic Beau—for, equally with thieves, thief-takers desire their enemies shall believe them dauntless. "They've got a motor-car and they'll have the first load half-way up the Jericho Turnpike if you don't hurry," he managed to add, faintly, then closed his eyes.

Burly Jones had listened holding his breath, the hatred of a chained wild beast shining in his pale-green eyes; so much of it in fact that, when McKiss ceased speaking and failed to restrain a groan as the doctor's extractor probe brought out the bloody bullet, Jones failed to restrain a malicious grin—which directed the Sheriff's scrutiny to him. The doctor hastened to prepare another injection lest his patient leap up unable longer to withstand the torture.

"Too bad they held me up on that chloroform," the doctor muttered. "Damn this rotten Long Island railroad service. . . ."

"What kind of a doctor *are* you, anyway?" sneered Jones. "Nobody but a fool would let him talk and excite himself."

"Shall I *gag* him?" returned the doctor, with some acerbity; he did not like Jones' eyes, anyway. "Or will you?" His almost noiseless whistling, resumed, was nearly tuneless now, his entire mentality being concentrated on the hardy sufferer.

The Colossus eyed the sullen Beau, then the prostrate Archie, limned in the search-lights of the motor-car outside. A frown came to Legaré's huge face, growing darkness to his eyes. The two Toms, never before called on to serve in any exploit more hazardous than the arrest of speeding motorists or brawling revelers, stood stiffly erect, ready to resent any offensive comparisons between themselves and the metropolitan constabulary, hoping their frowns and compressed lips gave detectives and criminals alike to understand that here were two stern officers, perilous men.

The Colossus continued to stare, rubbing his palm along a corrugated patch in his oilskin coat (the fog had turned to rain before he had been awakened), which disturbed pocket surface denoted a heavy old-fashioned Colt's revolver underneath. "But what about the Honnible Johnnie?" he asked slowly. "Mr. Waldemar, I mean, Squire. They shot him?

That fellow?" He indicated Beau. "And *him?*" He hesitated before pointing to Jones, wondering that he wore no handcuffs.

"*Me?*" choked Jones. "*Me!!* Holy Jumping— Me!!!" Strange weird oaths rattled in his throat, but for the moment, he was too enraged to articulate at all. "Why, you big stupid *jay!* You poor ruben!! You—why, damn your—why—look here!" Realizing his inability to do the situation oral justice, he choked again, displayed his badge. "There's the other fellow." He indicated Archie.

"*Him!*" Legaré gasped unbelievingly. Not only was his sight keener than the Squire's, but that worthy had not glanced in Archie's direction since the Sheriff's search-lights had illumined the window-blinds. Had he done so, he could not have failed to recognize the high round shoulders, the tight collar forcing up two fleshy creases amid the closely-clipped hair—though in truth the collar was now soiled beyond belief for the immaculate Aramis of the Musketeers.

But the Squire was now too busy to look; he was filling out John Doe warrants for the apprehension of "three parties, unknown," together with orders for their incarceration—pending instructions from the County Court-House—together with that of the two prisoners then present. Knowing little of law and less of its procedure in criminal cases, he was concerned only to conceal his ignorance. Then, too, he wrote under the only light in the hall, and his eyes, short-sighted enough without his glasses (which were somewhere in his study), were further dimmed by its glare.

"We went walking—with the Congressman," McKiss had continued, meanwhile. "I suppose these two here were left behind on watch. The others went out in the boat to land the stuff. . . . All of a sudden (you know how dark it is to-night), I see a door flung open about a block away and then this shooting began. It was all over before we unloaded our own cannisters. They got the Congressman with the first shot. I was potted next. Then the shooting stopped just as sudden as it began, and my pal and me scouted around and nailed 'em. Neither one of 'em had a cannon on him, and they won't say which one done the shootin'. I guess both of 'em did. Well it just means life for both 'stid of the chair for one, that's all." He closed his eyes.

"But—*him!*" said Legaré. "*Him*—what was *he* doing there?" He pointed to Archie. "There must be some mistake." . . .

"You see it, too?" the doctor asked quietly, but not turning or ceasing in his work. "I thought I was right. It's terrible, Legree. It's terrible!"

The Squire finished filling out his warrants. "If you know either of these men, I'll put his name here instead of 'John Doe.'"

"Put down 'B. Markowitz' for that fellow there," growled Jones. "These gentlemen seem to know the other one; he's a stranger to me."

"Here, I can't stand this," said the Colossus, as the doctor broke into a fit of coughing. "Take those fellows out of here—quick," he added to the two Toms; then, under pretense of reading the warrants under the single hall light, he planted his huge bulk between the Squire and the sight of the door. "Get a move on, you idiots," he yelled. "Go on. Get 'em out, I tell you. . . . Now, Squire. About this smuggling. . . ."

Continuing his pretense with what little ingenuity his slow wits could muster, the Colossus leaned over, still standing, planting both elbows on the table and compelling the Squire's gaze by sheer concentration and strength of will. "About this smuggling," he repeated in a firm clear voice, but alas! Hugh Legaré's brain lacked the bigness of his heart. Further duplicity failed him.

The Squire eyed him importantly, having regained his usual portentous dignity by the written exercise of his official powers. "About that *name*, first, Legree," he said patronizingly, tapping the warrant withheld. "You say you recognized the other murderer?" He held his pen poised.

In the silence, the Colossus stared at him in helpless dismay; listening in vain for the opening and closing of the door which would render unnecessary his own witnessing of a domestic tragedy. The Squire made an impatient gesture. "Well, Sheriff, well, well," he demanded fussily. Came only the sound of the sputtering spirit-lamp and the bubbling song of the boiling water in the basin. The doctor's noiseless whistling might have been heard in that silence had his lips not been unable to form even so slight a sound. Then the hard breathing of the two Toms reached the ear of the Colossus. His heavy fists clenched until the knuckles seemed about to pop forth from them like ripe gooseberries from their skins.

"You God-damned fools," he yelled suddenly; then turned, but still his bulk was between the Squire and the door.

"He's fainted dead away," whined Heaney, such Colossal rage routing all remembrance of his own stern perilous nature.

And even as he spoke, at the touch of Heaney's hand, Archie's senseless body rolled from the narrow window-seat and tumbled heavily to the floor. The Squire, annoyed at Legaré's apparent disrespect, pushed him aside, with what would have been pettishness in a younger man. "What's this?" he demanded, additionally annoyed by the sudden shock the noise of Archie's fall had given him. He shook off Legaré's hand and came forward. "What does all this *mean*, I say?"

And then he saw. For that part of the Persian rug where Archie had fallen was just within the radius of the Sheriff's search-lights. And in that patch of brightness, his face upturned, his eyes blue-lidded, Squire Hartogensis saw the father of that grandson before whom peasants were to bend the knee and stand, with heads uncovered, as before a king.

Had the Colossus not been quick, father and son would have lain there side by side.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HUE AND CRY

I. Arnold Returns

OUT at sea, it was as dark as it was silent. Even when the little motor-boat throbbed and thumped its way from Havre de Grace to within shouting distance of the Green Sands Light, the fog had so muffled the sound of the whirling iron wheel that had the black rocks that girdled the lighthouse been inhabited by the penguins, who were said to have been seen there at other times, these solemn fowl would scarcely have heard the boat's approach. Now, after what seemed to its crew to be interminable repetitions of this voyage, the boat lay anchored as near to the place agreed upon as Arnold's rough reckoning allowed.

The tide tugging at the bell-shaped anchor, buried deep in the sand twenty feet below, playing fast and loose with the anchor-rope, the rudder occasionally slapping against the stern, and a sort of soft slushing when the boat swung broadside, then back again,—such slight sounds as these seemed a part of the great silence, and went unheard by the boat's occupants; and, anyhow, Pink and Hugo were fast asleep on the sodden canvas spread out in the stern-sheets while Arnold, stretched out in the bow, was drowsing.

So silent was it that he was awakened by sounds that, though soft enough, steadily increased on all sides, until from every direction came what seemed the patter of many tiny feet, thousands of them, racing faster each minute. Or perhaps it was their cold impact on his face. Or, again, the steady dripping from the peak of his oilskin cap. When, shivering, he started up, it had been raining some time and had ceased to sound like footsteps from Elf-Land. This beating down of heavy drops was more as if some giant overhead were throwing handsful of pebbles on the water.

The wind had risen, too. Some other giant seemed to be standing, waist-high and blowing his breath against the long glassy swells, now flaked and fleeced with foam. "Hel-lo," said Arnold involuntarily as he pressed a black button and the "finder's" long lance-like light described a circle, stabbing the fog. This was no longer a difficult achievement, however: with the rising of the wind, the spell of blackness was broken, and the "finder" revealed more troubled waters than thick vapors.

Far distant, a faint glimmer from the Green Sands light broke through the gloom; and, when Arnold snapped off his own, he thought he could distinguish, dimly, a speck of radiance over Middle Ground way. Behind him Havre de Grace channel-tower winked a misty yellow welcome; and, as Arnold reached for his watch and held the dial close to his eyes, he made out "two o'clock" by a pale cold light from overhead. Gusts of wind had begun to chase the clouds over a faintly phosphorescent surface where the moon should have been.

The anchor-rope gave a sudden tug, as a roving white-cap came over the port side. A gust heeled the boat over and passed on, after trying to take Arnold's oilskin cap with it. But it was fastened under his chin with strings; and so the wind could only lift it high enough for its owner to feel a cold sticky breath against his bare head.

It was sufficient warning even for one not weather-wise. Arnold stirred the sleepers with his boot-toe. "Pink! get out of the way," he said. "Hugo—steer!!" They scrambled up, each holding to a side of the boat; Hugo catching at the steering spokes. Arnold threw over the iron wheel; it began to revolve as a spark flashed up unseen; increasing its speed until it whirled; and whirling, the propeller thrashed about and the oil began to sing in the cylinder.

"Which way?" asked Hugo.

"Have you sighted her?" Pink, giving up after several attempts to strike matches in that wind, shoved the face of his watch under the "finder," the button to which he pushed.

"Don't do that," said Arnold sharply. "Do you want people to know we're out here at this hour? There's a storm coming up—*fast!* The lighthouse keepers will be awake. Sit back by the rudder, Hugo, and help me when I have to turn the boat. These waves are getting pretty bad."

"What about the ship?" asked Hugo,—or, rather, shouted. The wind's whistling had waxed, was now a-shrieking. The oily peaceful swells were hills and valleys of black water. Hugo shouted his question again.

"Sit down, you poor nut," advised Pink. "Do you think he'd be lookin' as though he burned out 'thout any insurance if it *had* come? Come on back here where your solid ivory nut is no knock to you, and help hold this rudder straight. It's got me faded. . . . Wow!—that was a hummer!"

The boat had shot up to a great height, then, some cross-current intervening, had met only vacancy, had dropped flat into a churning valley below, quivering, vibrating, shipping gallons. But the next wave swept her up again, this time to race down at motor-car speed. Which brought her to Havre de Grace channel. Here the current, coursing out of the Harbor, caught her and would have spun her around; but Hugo, in compliance with Arnold's shout, bore down heavily on the rudder and held her nose straight.

Despite his assistance, they were in some danger. The storm was breaking fierce and fast and that channel was no spot to choose for a pleasure-cruise even on calm days. Now every eddy was awhirl with spume and spindrift, a hundred cross-currents were whipping savagely one across the trail of another, and the outgoing tide meeting them, roared up white with a great lashing mane.

A moment of suspense!— The boat stood stock-still, her propeller high out of water. Another current caught her, whirled her up then, meeting the tide, she would have spun around and around until overwhelmed had not Hugo held on grimly, although the rudder was almost torn from his hands. But Arnold, seeing his chance between two great swells, the boat shot out of the channel, raced up hill and down dale again, and was soon swinging around a bend in the shore that hid the channel light. And there, almost abreast them, were three lanterns, ruby red and emerald green with bright orange between; the three hung out to advise the *Cormorant* of the landing place should other arrangements miscarry.

Secure from the spying of any one in the lighthouse, Arnold released the "finder" and manipulated it until the light showed him their rowboat, tossing up and down at her moorings. "Ease her down, Pink. Get ready to throw off the switch. . . . *Now!*"—and a bright green spark glowed, the iron wheel flopped, and two pairs of gloved hands shot out and gripped the rowboat. Its buffers rebounded against the sides of the moving motor-boat. Then: "Hold on, boys." It was a command not easily obeyed in that troubled water without wrenching of arms. But Hugo's strength prevailed. Pink hove one anchor down, another up. Arnold capped the engine with its canvas covering. The boats rocked precariously as they clambered aboard and all three put their strength into pushing off; for they could not row, or scull, or paddle among those waves, could only punt along with the butt ends of their oars. Finally Hugo leaped out, painter in hand and breast-high in water, and dragged the boat into the shallows and underneath the boat-house arch. "Go on up to the house and get dry," said Arnold. "I'll lock up, and fill the lanterns again in case we should be unfortunate enough to have the *Cormorant* blow in with this storm. But I guess we're in for another night on the water. So get to bed and get all the sleep you can. Hurry and change those wet things, Hugo."

"Unfortunate!" commented Hugo, stretching his big body and venting a tremendous yawn. Arnold nodded and pointed.

"There's where the wind's coming from. Have you forgotten all you ever knew about storms?" The smoky light of the lantern on the boat-house "float" revealed Arnold pointing to the northeast.

"But I guess Danny's safe and sound in some secluded harbor now. He knows better than to skirt the North Shore during a storm. Especially when he daren't ship a pilot. It's a perfect belt of rocks and shoals, Pink, from Port Jefferson to Montauk. . . . Go ahead, Hugo. Don't wait for me. Take this pocket-light: *I* don't need it."

Arnold locked the boat-house water-gate, unlocked the rear entrance letting them out, took up a long pole, a hook at one end. In the middle of their steep ascent, the path was suddenly darkened, for Arnold had used that pole to fetch down the three lanterns swung at the boat-house peak—at which Pink cursed lustily, before remembering the little pocket-light. When he made ready to ascend, himself, having refilled and replaced the lanterns, Arnold heard Pink curse, though faintly, at some distance. He had stumbled again, probably.

Because of the long occupancy of the house on the bluff, Arnold had a greater proficiency in climbing hills in general, this one in particular; and climbed so rapidly as almost to overtake the others. But nearing the top, he again heard Pink at his profane best;—no novelty to any one well acquainted with that young gentleman. Yet the peculiarity attendant upon this brought Arnold to a halt. Just what that peculiarity was Arnold could not say; perhaps there was none and it was only his instinct that made him stand stony and still, straining his ears.

Now it seemed that some one was gurgling; was endeavoring to become vocal by sheer gutturals, was indulging in exercise of the throat muscles, or attempting a sort of choked Chinese. This soon ceased. Whispering began.

At such a time, especially when one combines a troublesome conscience with a vivid imagination and uncertain nerves and knows these may combine to bring about delusions or hallucinations, anything is better than uncertainty. Arnold could endure a statue-like pose physically but not mentally.

He raised a tentative foot and listened as he lowered it; it seemed noiseless enough. Fortunately, the rain, now descending in torrents and driven by the wind, made inaudible any movements as light and certain as his. Better, the gravel and loose stones would not now rattle and roll at every footstep; the clayey soil was becoming moist red mud.

Needing no light like the others, Arnold's approach went unheard; though three men were above and listening almost as intently as he. But, having more at stake, he knew of their presence before they had any notion of his; so again he stood silent and stony.

Some one has stated—too aptly to admit of any paraphrase,—that when any bodily function ceases to be unconscious it ceases to be correct. Those three men at the head of the path were doing their best to prevent their breathing from betraying them, which only resolved itself into a series of seconds when they did not breathe at all, followed by a shorter series when they breathed too hard. Having detected their presence through this idiosyncrasy, Arnold took care not to do likewise; continuing to breathe as naturally as short breaths at frequent intervals would allow, a sound too soft to equal the combination of wind and rain. Yet even he paid for his consciousness, and could only stand there, stupidly wondering who his probable enemies might be, being quite unable to use his brain for any purpose other than compassing an imitation of regular breathing.

The next moment, however, he had no need to simulate. The new sound that he heard—such a sound as might result from a giant flounder flopping about on a muddy shore—made him forget not to breathe regularly. Followed straining and snapping—seams were bursting, cloth was ripping as the muscles of strong men pitted against one another swelled to the breaking point. Then a choked anguished yelp, was fairly driven out of some sufferer; the result of the sudden impact of something very hard and something very soft.

To construct the situation for the mind's eye was not difficult after such sounds. Had the darkness suddenly revealed the facts, Arnold could not have seen the struggle more clearly. One man had been on his back in the mud,—hence the sound of the flopping flounder. A second man had been endeavoring to gag the first, while sitting on his chest,—hence the straining and snapping and bursting and ripping. Then the man in the mud had suddenly relaxed and driven an upward elbow into the other's abdomen,—hence the yelp. Now, as Arnold listened, he heard muffled groans and fierce whispers. Then a heavy fall.

Instinctively, Arnold swerved from the path; and none too soon. In a wild embrace, a bundle of arms and legs came rolling over and over down the steep hill. From above, some one relaxed his vigilance and a voice rose high and shrill.

"Beat it, Lord Chesterfield. Hoof it, Sir Mortimer. Ge-gug-gug-gug." There was no gagging this time: it was a plain case of throttling. Louder than the noise made by the fighting men below, rose the harsh notes of a stranger's voice—a stranger's to Arnold, at least, but well enough known to Pink: that of Burly Jones'.

"No use trying to be quiet now. Get down that hill, one of you, and help the Sheriff. You other fellows take that far path and head him off if he tries to go that way. I'll take the other side as soon as I . . ."

There was a horrible menace in his unspoken words. Pink, his consciousness fading out, rallied for one last attempt to warn the as yet uncaptured Arnold. With a strength Jones had never guessed Pink possessed, he wriggled free.

"New York coppers, Duke. Beat it. You can't help us. We're gone. We—" This time he was cut short in so silent and sinister a fashion,—a blow from the butt-end of a revolver was not likely to be heard in the noise made below—that Arnold shuddered.

"New York coppers" . . . Arnold, dazed, wondered how that might be. "New York coppers" . . . That meant everything was known. But how? . . . Arnold rocked and swayed as he stood. A man came rushing past him to the assistance of one of the combatants down below. The man who had silenced Pink was running toward the path that led to Harbor Hill, a third man in the opposite direction. This was to surround him whom they supposed to be on the beach. Arnold crouched down behind some scrubby furze bushes, too dazed to determine what to do.

There was a yell of triumph below. "Sit on his feet, Tom," came hoarsely in a well-remembered voice. Hugh Legaré! Arnold winced, bit his lip, clenched his teeth, closed his eyes. But he could not shut out the mental picture. Hugh Legaré!! Then Havre de Grace knew that their dearly beloved Parson's eldest son was a . . .

"If the other fellow can fight like this one. . . . A thousand pounds of wildcats, Tom! Sit on his feet I tell you. I've got to get my breath. . . . I don't believe young Arnold L'Hommedieu's mixed up in this, do you? This ain't him, that's sure. And why would he be? Let's have a look at this fellow. He must be a prize-fighter."

Arnold crouched lower, hugging the ragged furze bushes, until he squatted close to the ground. His eyes were closed, but he felt the little flash ten feet below, felt it as if it were a blow. And a second blow seemed to have been dealt him, when the Sheriff's shout of intermingled amazement and fear assaulted him so harshly, so loudly, that, for a moment, his ears rang. Legaré's emotion had not been couched in words,—it was too strong for that,—it was the snarl of a trapped animal.

Nor did he become articulate for some little time; only stood staring stupidly. Then, out of the darkness, for not even sufficient strength had remained in his great frame to keep the button of the pocket-light pressed, and in an almost unrecognizable voice so still and small was it,—he addressed Tom Heaney:

"Here! L-l-look at him and tell me who it is. I've gone crazy I think, dead crazy."

Arnold peered through the bushes and saw the two men, their giant shadows decapitated by the circumference of the ragged circle of light on the diameter of which Hugo lay. Tom Heaney was kneeling over and peering into his face. "It's Hugo Waldemar," he said presently, having been unable to answer immediately because of his amazement.

At the sound of his name, Hugo groaned and half raised himself. This time, he met no angry opposition. Instead, with clumsy tenderness, the Colossus raised him up and supported him, Heaney still holding the light. "Hugo! Hugo Waldemar," the Colossus said quite blankly. Hugo's stare was equally blank.

There was more than a similarity of name and size between Hugh and Hugo: both had the same slow wits, the same tenacity of purpose. Hugh in Hugo's place would have done as Hugo had done: Hugo in Hugh's, would have done what Hugh was about to do. Despite a difference of twenty years in their ages the man and the boy had been better friends than most. The Colossus figured next to Arnold and Archie in Hugo's affections. As for Hugh it is doubtful if he could have sacrificed for any person other than his wife and mother, half so much as he now proposed to sacrifice for Hugo. He came of that sort of stock; was of the type of the Great Dane or mastiff, like that paternal progenitor and namesake the faithful follower of the Chevalier L'Hommedieu; a type America lost long ago in vain striving for social "equality."

"Git back to that other fellow and see what the New Yorker's done to him to keep him quiet," said Legaré to Tom Heaney; and, as Tom lingered: "Git, I told you. I can look after *him.*" He was breathing hard. Tom thought it best to go. The Colossus gulped, but managed to address Hugo quietly, very quietly:

"It ain't true what these New York policemen say?—is it? About this opium smuggling? Say 'No,' Hugo! You've just *got* to say 'No.' Say it, and I'll let you walk off as free as air—and won't tell a soul."

He was pleading as he would never have done to save himself. And when Hugo, silent and sullen, withdrew himself from Hugh's protecting arm, the Colossus vented another of his inarticulate snarls. It was not, however, directed at his friend, but at fate.

"It can't *be,* Hugo! It's *impossible,* boy. You don't understand." Then, hoarsely: "Run off to'ards Snake Hollow. I'll see that Tom Heaney keeps his mouth shut. And I'll tell the New Yorker you were too many for me. Go on, now! Go on, Hugo!! He's liable to be back any minute and then it's all up. Go *on!!*"

It is said that men, real men, do not shed tears. Well for them these Colossi were not small nor even of average size. Well for them their brawn and their lack of extraordinary brains brought them within the specifications of "red-blooded" writers for "man's men." Both were grateful for the darkness that precluded a sight of their faces; and Hugo, feeling for his friend, Hugh's huge hand met his.

"Old pal," the younger man whispered. "Gee! but you're a great old pal! D'you think I'd *do* it? And get *you* in bad? Maybe get you in *jail?* Heaney tells everything he knows when he's drunk. . . . I guess you'll have to lock me up, Hugh. I'm not going to let them lock *you* up."

His arm slipped about the colossal shoulder and squeezed it tight. "You're the whitest man I know," he said. But the Colossus shook off his embrace impatiently,—ashamed of his emotion and angry at Hugo for abetting it.

"You don't understand," he said in the same hoarse whisper. But whispering is not the best thing a leather-lunged Colossus does and Arnold heard him. "I tell you you've *got* to go. I'm going to walk off and *leave* you. You do what I tell you: Heaney's all right. Get on with you, Hugo." But the other again refused him, gruffly.

"Oh! you damn' fool!—listen! I didn't want to tell you, but I've got to. It's the only way to make you see you've *got* to go. Brace yourself. It's pretty bad news. About the worst, I guess. I'm sorry you make *me* tell it. Wasn't it enough for one night I had to see Archie Hartogensis lying on the floor in his own house and his own father making out a warrant for him without knowing. . . ."

"Archie!" gasped Hugo. "His father! They got *Archie?* Archie! Good God! . . ." He held his breath. "Now I *have* got to go with you, Hugh. I can't let Arch stand for the whole thing—"

"Wait," said the Colossus sternly. "D'you know what Archie was arrested *for?*—him and the other fellow? Not for smuggling opium: we didn't find out about *that* till after. No, Hugo. . . . and here's why you'll have to keep out of this. Murder! Yes! . . . I dunno *which* one *did* it —neither one 'ull tell. But they heard somebody outside while they were up there in the Hopkins house waiting for you to come back, and—and—well, they shot at him—and—and—" he paused. "I don't see why I've got to tell you, Hugo. Won't you take my word for it you've got to get *away?*" . . .

Silence; then, from between dry lips: "Who was it? Who was it, Hugh?"

The Colossus reached for him. "You sure you can stand it?" He gripped both his shoulders. "It's some one very *dear* to you," he said weakly. "Some one—"

"Oh, for God's sake," Hugo broke in fiercely—fiercely for him, the gentlest of men. "Who?"

"Your father," said Hugh, so low that the wind and rain drowned his answer for Arnold.

Hugo stiffened. *"My father!"* he croaked. "My *father!!! My* father." And Arnold heard this time, and heard no more until the sound of his name brought him out of his daze.

". . . It's bad *enough* for Arnold L'Hommedieu to be mixed up in it, without *you!* Now, you'll go, won't you, Hugo?"

Silence again; then the sound of the two men squashing clayey mud under their boots as they came up the hill. Arnold's eyes, accustomed, now, even to the Stygian blackness the storm had brought, made out the two figures close together. Hugo did not draw away from Hugh's support now.

Silence once more; some muttering above, . . . voices . . . a wild shouting . . . the simultaneous bang-bang of two revolvers. . . . Shooting and shouting continued apace. The Sheriff and Tom Heaney were covering Hugo's escape. Arnold saw that the pink puffs of the revolver shots ascended directly upward.

II. ARNOLD ESCAPES

Under cover of this noise, Arnold ran rapidly in an opposite direction, ran through bushes and clumps of young trees, not even seeking a path, but finding one as unconsciously as he had realized that now was the time for him to escape. His instinct—subconsciousness, what you will—was entirely responsible. That part of his brain had taken charge, had noted Jones and the other Tom on the beach, the Colossus and Tom Heancy running beyond the house. And that part of him guided his footsteps, was aware of a place where he might lie hidden—and, what was as important, fed—though his pursuers searched the surrounding country. None other than the hut of ancient timbers on No-Man's Land, the residence of the peninsula philosopher.

Unconsciously, be it repeated. As yet, his conscious brain had not recovered from the shock administered by the Sheriff. It was not that Arnold cared whether Waldemar lived or died, so fiercely did he dislike the man. The horror that animated him was the same that had caused the Colossus to insist on Hugo's flight. Hugo's father killed by Hugo's best friend and while acting as Hugo's partner in a venture, but for which the father would still be alive.

Waldemar—the Squire—Hugo—Archie! Archie, yes! It was never Beau,—the pacific Beau who had often boasted that he abhorred weapons, that true "grifters" needed none, only amateurs. Arnold remembered Archie's rage at the crow, his intention to throttle it. Archie, yes! Archie! And Archie was a prisoner, the prisoner of his own father. . . . Truly Arnold's conscious mind had enough to occupy it: it was necessary that instinct protect him.

But how had Waldemar come there? How had the New York police become aware of the smuggling conspiracy? What would happen to the *Cormorant?* To Archie? To Pink? To Beau? Wearily Arnold's mind refused to consider these matters, settled down to a dull apathetic consideration of his own position.

Having reached a part of the woods far distant from the Swiss chalet, he dropped down amid the wet leaves and listened for sounds of pursuit. There was none. Having listened, he began to remember why it was he had come in that direction, and soon arose wearily and hastened on, for he had still a long way to go. Taking his bearings, he doubled back toward the bluff road, the easiest road; but reaching the part of the woods skirting it, he paused and listened again. Then he went forward cautiously lest he be precipitated over the edge of the bluff; and, hearing the roar of the sea very near, he threw himself down and crawled the remainder of the distance.

Face downward, he peered over the edge, endeavoring to survey the scene below and beyond. In the darkness and driving rain his gaze met only vague black tree and rock forms, he heard only the wind's soughing and the rain's pattering; that is, when sudden gusts did not shriek and whistle and drive the rain against his oilskins with a clatter like hail. Down below the breakers were roaring, and such roaring as he could not remember having heard. Truly, he could not, for under average circumstances he would have remained indoors when a storm like this one was raging. If before he had likened to heavy artillery the angry pounding of the beach, he was now reduced to a realization of the feebleness of human comparisons when Nature is at her worst or best.

One steady roaring crash was in bis ears, and even when thunder shook the sky, had not the accompanying lightning gilded great rifts in it, the added crashing would be gone almost unheard in that war of winds and waves.

As these steely silver rifts were revealed like the illumined veins of some bloodless Atlas, Arnold strained his eyes. His two enemies on the beach half a mile beyond seemed two small black bundles rolling along in some mysterious fashion; the beach a white strip at the foot of the cliffs and rapidly diminishing as the inky breakers came rolling and pitching ashore. The next flash revealed the two black bundles rolled together, the next showed them separate again and half-way up the path, like spiders on a sticky ceiling. Evidently they had failed to find one of the two paths or had feared to wait to find one; for when Arnold saw them for the fourth time, he judged from strained positions that they were hauling themselves up by means of bushes too small for him, at that distance, to see.

At their heels the breakers roared. The white strip had wholly disappeared. The black mountains, hurled up out of the sea, were breaking into spray and foam that, in the lightning flashes was like millions of glittering uptossed stars.

Well, he had nothing to fear from two of his pursuers for some time to come. He got to his feet, albeit more slowly than usual, for, now the excitement had passed, he had begun to feel exhausted. Luckily his oilskin coat, hooked tight about his throat, in conjunction with his fisherman's boots, had kept him dry. He gave weary thanks for that. Had sodden clothes and half-frozen feet been added to his other miseries, he doubted he would have found escape a sufficient inducement to endure the trials and perils of the journey ahead of him. After all, escape, or capture, it mattered very little now. He had lost everything, even his good name, the name that had been kept stainless by so many generations only for him to tarnish. And his father, after sixty years of self-sacrifice. . . .

Arnold's groan was cut short. A wild hope had thrilled him. . . . Why not? Hugo had his father's fortune. Money could do anything, nowadays. Archie and Beau and Pink would keep silent about Hugo, and Hugo would see that they went free. And silence about Hugo included silence about Arnold. His house? He could claim to have been away for the night with the peninsular philosopher. Archie would not be harmed any the more by saying that Arnold had loaned him the house for that night. Anyhow, no opium had been landed, no infraction of the law had been committed by any one save Archie; (he did not doubt it was Archie)—therefore why should Archie not shoulder all responsibility?

A wave of relief swept over Arnold. He quickened his pace to a run. Turning a bend in the path along the bluff, he saw the lighthouse dead ahead. Across the channel lay the sand-dunes; beyond, the philosopher's peninsula.

Arnold teetered along the strip of road, grasping at young trees, bushes and overhanging boughs to steady himself against the fierce blasts. Once he was hurled against a great pine and stood there, back to the roaring gale, getting his

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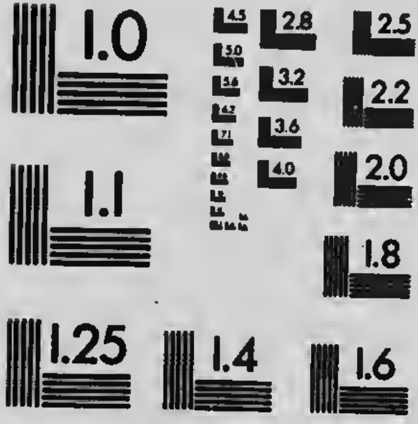
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breath; continuing with a comparatively light heart, so effectual is contrast.

Five hours before he had been in unquestioned possession of a reputation that he must now struggle hard to retain; and then he had been gloomy. Now, with only a fighting chance, he was almost gay. He forgot Hugo's tragedy and Archie's, forgot the *Cormorant*. Given the greatest danger, the greatest sorrow, man needs only the slightest hope to rally; and if he must concentrate upon difficulties besetting the fulfilment of that hope, he becomes as single-minded as any woman. It was not that Arnold had become hardened of heart; it was only that, in the event of a tragedy that personally involves any person, the mind is so weakened by the shock that the primitive instincts easily overcome it—and as the greatest of these is self-preservation, that is the one immediately uppermost.

Besides, Arnold had little time for speculation. In that great gale, he could barely keep on his feet; and in the continual daze in which the stinging salt wind and whipping rain kept him, it was a miracle he did not stumble over the bluff and roll down, to be swept away under one of those inky mountains below. And now that his path widened and began to slope downward toward the sea-wall on which the lighthouse was reared, Arnold must advance with superlative caution. Undoubtedly the keeper had been awakened by the storm, and, as Arnold wished to preserve his *alibi,* and, besides, intended to cross the channel in the lighthouse keeper's dory, —a desperate project, but he saw no other way—it behooved him to avoid its owner's notice. So, whenever the bright reflectors swung around in his direction, washing with yellow a quarter-mile of the black country before him, Arnold flung himself flat, face downward.

Even in the days of his renowned ancestor, the Chevalier Etienne, the Harbor of Havre de Grace had the shape of a square case-bottle, its entrance, the neck thereof, the repository of a swiftly moving current that continued some way out to sea. Here, meeting some cross-currents, it became that dangerous swirl we have had occasion to remark before. But within the bottle-neck it was not particularly perilous,—save on a night like this when a mill-pond would have become a whirlpool.

The bottle-neck had been, originally, only twenty yards wide. Now that it had been strengthened by a sea-wall,—a dyke of granite and cement sunk in the water and raised above it to a height of twenty feet on each side,—the bottle-neck had lost several yards. Thus Arnold's voyage, unless he was swept out to sea (which was unlikely as the tide was coming in) would be a short one. There was a probability that the boat would be overturned when first launched; it was a certainty that he would be helpless in such a sea; and would be swept along, the oars—if he attempted to use them—torn out of his hands.

But Arnold knew that the current circled the opposite shore and that, during storms, even the Connecticut mail-steamer had some ado to prevent being beached there. It was on this that he based his hope of reaching the peninsula.

The sea-wall reached its highest point on the Sound side. At right-angles to this, at the junction of Sound and channel, it began, gradually, to slope until, where the lighthouse keeper's boat lay, the height was less than twenty feet. Here, some ingenious Treasury engineer, familiar with medieval architecture, had fitted an archway modeled on the water-gates found in the majority of castles and "moated granges" of the middle ages; and when the water reached the topmost red lines on either side, indicating high-water mark, the arch just cleared the head of the seated boatman. On extraordinary occasions it had been known to carry away his hat; hence, in a storm like this, it was possible that there would be barely room enough for the boat itself to pass through even though Arnold lay flat in the bottom.

He found this possibility a fact when, after much reconnoitering to reach the lower extremity of the sea-wall unseen, he discovered that the little dory had been dragged out of its artificial channel and was resting slantwise against a sand-barrow. The light-keeper must have moved it within the last hour, for scarcely more than that had elapsed since Arnold had felt the first raindrops on his face.

He crouched in the shelter of the boat and dared push it only when the rays of the light traveled out to sea. This meant he could be occupied only half his time: the remainder was spent in shivering; for now that the light had revealed the swollen channel, Arnold had begun to realize the risk he was about to run. No boat could live out there among those menacing hills of pale green water, amid those dangerous valleys of boiling white foam. Even the sheltered waters of the little channel angrily assaulted the shore and spat out spume and spindrift.

"It's do it, or do worse," Arnold said defiantly. "It's a *chance*, anyhow. And it's the *only* chance."

The sound of his voice helped to convince, to confirm, him in his resolution. The boat, after many pushes, begun to slide so easily that he knew it was on the shelving shore. Then it gave a surprisingly sudden movement, as though it would wrench itself away from him. He sprang for the stern and lay spraddling it, then threw his weight forward and came down on his flattened palms in the bottom of the boat.

His weight gave the little craft an added impetus, drove it against the right bank of its little basin. It vibrated from the shock of impact with solid granite, veered around and struck the opposite wall with its stern. This suddenly straightened its course, and threw it in the direct center. Then, caught on the crest of a retracting wave, the boat was driven forward, and so hard and high that it struck the center of the arch.

The shock of this broke Arnold's finger-nails and drove the boat around broadside. Drawn forward again by the suction following the retreating wave, a valley of swirling water replacing the hill, the boat would have passed *under* the arch, had the arch been of sufficient width. But it had been no intention of its builder that boats should pass through broadside, so the boat's nose struck one of the archway pillars. This righted it again,—but with its stern outward. In this position, it was swept out into the channel.

Arnold was immediately made conscious of this by feeling that the boat had dropped from under him, had left him hanging in space;—a feeling familiar to occupants of an express elevator when it swoops down from some great height without warning;—and also to aviators caught in a sudden upward swoop of the wind.

But the sickening sensation was the one that followed. Reaching the crest of a great green hill, the boat hung there for a second absolutely motionless, though it creaked and quivered and all its timbers groaned in unison. Then, swifter than the down-flight of an eagle, the boat shot into the churning valley below.

It seemed as if hands weighing hundred weights suddenly began to pound Arnold's back, knocking his head from side to side; and, when the light swung that way, he saw that he was heading straight for a great ghastly green cavern. The next instant, the boat struck, and he, hurled aside, began to spin around as if in a maelstrom. Then the green waters roared over him, but before his teeth could chatter at the terrible chill, a heavy blow descended on his head.

His last conscious thought was the hope that they would find his body. If he was never heard of again, people would believe him a guilty fugitive and his father would have, besides the disgrace, the sorrow of having begotten an Ishmael for whom he could only pray and hope to the end. And for that unselfish thought, had Arnold died then, much would have been forgiven him. It is only at such a time that men are known for what they are.

III. Arnold Despairs

But Arnold was not to die at the very time when the purpose for which he had served and suffered was so nearly achieved. The same great breaker that had crashed him down, now hurled him up and on the opposite shore. Another great breaker would have borne him back had he remained senseless, but a chill attacked him and a violent retching, and between them they so racked him, tearing at his heart and lungs, that he was brought back to consciousness, the blood pouring from his nose and mouth.

He heard the hissing fall of another great green mountain, and, instinctively, rolled over and over until he no longer felt its stinging spray on his face. Then he lay like a log. He was too weak even to crawl,—he had set his teeth and squirmed out of the breakers' reach with the false strength of frenzied terror. Even now he clutched about wildly for some protection and, his fingers fastening upon the needles of a scrub-pine, he held to them tightly regardless of the pain of their pricking.

There was no need for this self-infliction, but so unreasoning was his terror after his encounter with that great monster, so conscious was he of his own helplessness, that the possibility of his safety seemed remote. He wss tense, taut, rallying his forces for the blow that any instant he expected to fall, preparing to do battle again. His mind was a blank on which was scrawled over and over again: "Danger," "Danger," . . . scrawled vertically, horizontally, diagonally,—everywhere, so that there was room for nothing more. . . . If a mental shock leaves the majority of one's reasoning powers in abeyance, a physical shock of the same caliber suspends them altogether,—sometimes, in the cases of unfortunates such as Hans Chasserton, permanently.

But Arnold's was an exceptionally strong mind and, in his case, the suspension was brief. The second shock failing to materialize, he relaxed, and relaxing realized that he was beyond the breakers' reach. Still weak, however, he waited until his body should make the same recovery as his mind. Which was not for long, for the channel light by revealing his new surroundings, gave him a thrill that was worth more than the accumulated strength of an hour of resting—especially now that he was wet and cold. He realized that he was on the opposite shore.

He sprang up without further thought of weakness, only slapping at his drenched body. But the sea-water squashing in his boots sorely deterred him: the way to the peninsula was difficult enough over wet sand that deadened all springiness of step; so when he stumbled over his first hillock, he sat down upon it, removed and poured forth gallons from the boots, and squeezed some extra quarts from the golf-stockings underneath, also from his knickerbockers and the skirts of his jacket. Having lost a number of pounds thereby, he continued his journey at an increased pace.

He was now on a wide tract of marsh and moor, hillocks and hummocks; a vast area of sheer waste-land, the result of ages of sand and shells and stones thrown up by the sea; fertilized and colonized by the sea-birds, save where the old hut stood, the only human habitation between Havre de Grace channel and Green Sands, seven miles away. For three miles this waste-land hemmed in Havre de Grace Harbor; and, had Arnold chosen to pick his way over the long stretch of salt marsh and sand-pits that joined the desert to the left bank of the Harbor, eventually he would have reached the town, passing his father's house on the way.

Occasionally, therefore, he blinked misty eyes under sticky wet eyebrows and saw, or thought he saw, a misty blur of lights. One of these might be that well-remembered one on L'Hommedieu Church steeple, a Gothic lantern hoisted by steel halliards; and on stormy nights always lighted by the Parson himself; a beacon for harbor shipping for more than a century. It had been one of Arnold's great treats, as a boy, to be allowed to accompany his father on this exciting trip to the belfry. On such nights as this, the wind had an eerie whistle—which, of course, was witches riding around the bell-ringer's loft on their broomsticks. And the rats scuttled headlong into their holes—for fear of the wicked black cats which, as everybody knew (even rats) always rode with witches. . . . And the Reverend Jorian had never failed to bid Arnold observe how the lantern was lit, and in what manner the halliards worked; for: ". . . this will be your duty in a few years, my son."

Arnold tried to put remembrance away from him; turning his gaze toward the blackness of the tempest again. But, worse! Young Paul had lighted the lantern to-night: it was *his* duty now. An hour ago, while Arnold crouched in hate or fled in fear, Paul, in his neat cleric's garb (he had been ordained curate during the summer) had ascended to the belfry on his errand of "peace and good-will toward all men." . . .

A cry escaped him whose errand this should have been. Arnold stood for a moment under that black sky,—his clenched hands upraised,—a tiny impotent speck in an immensity of space—sky and sea all one in that great void of the storm. And, as he stood there, he personified helpless humanity protesting against the remorseless cruelty of the Infinite.

"Why?—why?—why? Oh, my God, why?"

Unknowingly he was voicing his anguished question as the peninsula philosopher had said he would some day.

"Why?—Why?— What am I punished for? Is it never to end?"

A fit of terrible rage seized him. "Oh, you—up—there," he shouted. "You!—you!!—you!!!—Ah!" He ground his teeth. "You—*merciful!!* You! Ha! Merciful! Oh, yes!" He burst into fierce wild laughter.

It was a long and weary way he had yet to go. But, now, he hardly knew when he stumbled, no longer felt weariness. Those two simple pictures obsessed him: that child of long ago and that serene-faced youth who had taken that child's place—obsessed him, yes, and brought thoughts more painful than any physical exhaustion. And once when a fall of more than usual severity sprawled him headlong, momentarily bringing back the present, it only served to remind him, bitterly, that this sightless journey through the darkness and the storm—when, try as he might to walk carefully and well, he could not guard against a single fall or injury—was symbolical of his life since his first unexpected tumble—that expulsion from Old King's University. Since then . . . Yes, it had been very like indeed.

IV. ARNOLD LEARNS WHY

Dawn was close at hand before Arnold came within sight of the little hut. Hardly within sight, however;—as little as within sound, had there been any; for neither the blackness nor the roaring of the storm had abated. But this shore had been a favorite camping-ground for the Havre de Gravian youngsters during Arnold's boyhood, and he was too familiar with every curve and twist of it not to be able to steer a true course and at any time to determine his position with something close to accuracy.

But, so wrapped was he in gloom, he had struck off inland sooner than he had intended; therefore was recalled not only by the cold chill of water about his waist but by the shock thereof to his stomach—which amounted to nausea. Recovering, he remembered that the current that was endeavoring to sweep him off his feet, could be caused by nothing save the flooding of those lowlands whose existence was responsible for the quasi-peninsula. Therefore he was separated from his destination by no more than a few yards, plus whatever extra width the invading waters had managed to tear away from the higher ground on either side.

He had clutched out for the tall tough sea-grasses he knew to be there, and, even before he had ceased to consider his new plight, had, with their assistance, drawn himself safely ashore again without encountering any greater depth than at first.

Arnold had lived through many hard winters, during which the maritime portion of Havre's business had been done by ice-boats, one of which the Connecticut mail-steamer carried in her bows and often used to complete her contracts when herself unable to enter the frozen Harbor. But Arnold never remembered having been so cold as he was now. Since ten o'clock he had been in the chilly air. Since two, he had encountered the storm. For a period nearly as long, and in the same steady driving rain, he had striven across the wastes, already drenched by his channel catastrophe. Now, after this second icy ducking, and in that unearthly chill that precedes the dawn, his teeth jarred together with all the force of his jaws, his face ached, and, worse, he was nauseated. . . .

These were good excuses for bating something of usual courtesy and beginning as loud a bawling as his chattering teeth permitted. Without a light, he felt that, before his blind groping for the hut brought results, he would have expired from the cold.

"Holloa—hol-loa—hol-l-o-a!" he bawled at the top of his voice. "Show—a—light! A light!! Show—a li-ight!!!" This over and over again, stumbling and running the while. Only for a moment, however,—although it did not seem so soon to him,—and then a little pointed yellow light pierced the darkness, wavered, stood erect, and there was the philosopher in his doorway, the skirts of a flannel dressing-gown flung over his shoulder like a cloak, and in his hand a small bronze night-light shaped like the widow's cruse, its spout aflame.

Arnold exhausted his remaining strength in redoubling his speed and, reaching the doorway, pushed past his host and into the dark room beyond, dark save for a few remaining embers in the fireplace. To these Arnold pointed in bitter disappointment, babbling almost incoherently.

"A fire! I thought you'd have a fire. Light one—quick. I'm nearly dead. Hurry! Oh, please hurry! Can't you see? . . ."

It was as little an apology as it was an explanation; although an invasion of any other man's house in the small hours would have required something more than both. But the necessity of either did not occur to Arnold now any more than to a son returning in like stress to a forgiving father; and the recluse accepted the situation without comment, spoken or facial. Almost as on the occasion of Arnold's previous visit, he seemed wholly occupied in making his guest comfortable. This time, he raked together the few embers, added newspapers and kindling, and drenched the lot with coal-oil. As the resulting flare lit up blackened bricks and shining hearth, he threw on heavier wood and genuine heat replaced that fictitious one of the first flames.

Crossing to an ancient press he hastened to throw out a huge Turkish towel, following it a pair of woolen pajamas; then, putting aside Arnold's semi-protesting palms, the Samaritan stripped the wet garments from the shiverer, and, enveloping him from shoulders to shins in the blanket-like towel, began to bring back the blood to the skin by a manipulation that was not unworthy those muscles peculiar to Oriental bath-attendants. So little unworthy in fact that he soon had his patient wincing with pain. It seemed he would never cease; but when he did, and Arnold felt the soothing soft flannel of the pajamas caress his now feverish skin, and was buttoned up to his neck in a fur-lined coat and thrust into a capacious soft-seated basket-chair on the hearth, he stretched out his limbs in an ecstasy of sheer physical contentment, relaxing every muscle, luxuriating in a sensation so sybaritic that it seemed—for the moment—as if exposure to all sorts of inclemencies and hardships was not too great a price to pay for turning the faculties of enjoyment to so ineffable a pitch.

Before familiarity should dull his senses, he scented the aroma of coffee, and the thrill of anticipation was added. His host, during Arnold's brief rapture, had crossed to the fire and busied himself with the copper kettle from which the hiss of boiling water had [illegible] since the relighting of the fire. Fragrant steam now [illegible] water and ground Mocha met.

Some milk having been heated, the compound was soon handed to Arnold in a cup like an egg-shell, on which were quaint Georgian figures.

Arnold burned his lips in his greedy gulping. But what was that compared with retarding even for a moment the glow that followed? When his cup had been twice refilled—old cognac added the third time—his host placed near him a carved box containing thick Oriental cigarettes, for one of which he held out a light; and Arnold, after lacing the firelight with the first cloud of feathery smoke, incontinently forgot everything except that, for the moment, he had never experienced a sensation of happiness so absolute. As he closed his eyes, he felt in entire sympathy with the doctrines of Hedonism.

"You needn't talk until you're all right again," said his benefactor, breaking his long silence to prevent the thanks he saw about to be spoken. He returned to his pallet-bed and resumed his blankets. Arnold bowed his head in grateful acknowledgment. . . . Presently, having luxuriated long enough, he surveyed the room through half-closed eyes, discovering beauties that he had hitherto overlooked. And beauties they really were, although Arnold in so rapt a state, found it necessary to be enthusiastic over something, and hardly needed real beauties to arouse his admiration.

The physical comfort, and now the mental stimulation of the man's speech, had taken Arnold so far away from the cold and misery of the last few hours that he laughed. But the sound of it fell heavily on his ears. He closed his eyes again, as if he hoped to shut out the sight of the night's horrors.

The keen-eyed man on the bed noticed his suddenly altered demeanor and closed his own eyes; so that, should his guest turn, he might imagine his host had seen nothing.

"I suppose you wonder why I'm here?" asked Arnold presently, his tone sullen.

"No," the other replied.

Arnold eyed him aghast. "How can *you* know—already?" he faltered.

"You asked me if I wondered why you were here," his host replied; "and I said 'No.' I know well enough why you're here. You're in trouble and you think I can help you. Well, I can. But will I, that's the point?"

He paused, but only slightly. "I will," he went on. "When I'm interested (which is seldom) I know the man who interests me should be a force in the world if he gets the right handling. But for good or ill? It's my duty to discover. In your case it *must* be for good. You haven't any evil instincts. If *you* are in trouble, it is not because you have *wanted* to be evil. That's easy for any one to see if he has learned to read what Nature prints on every man's face. . . . So, if you are in trouble, I'll do my best to get you out. And I have helped to get a good many people out of trouble in my time." . . . His tone was calm, conversational, no hint of boastfulness or arrogance in it. But whoever listened must be convinced that he spoke in the security of great strength.

Something snapped in Arnold. Tears stood in his eyes. His host puffed at a brier pipe and stared at the ceiling. "People don't come through the worst storm in years to pay a friendly call," he resumed lightly. "Especially on a person half-a-dozen miles from anywhere. Serious trouble is obvious. When you feel disposed,—or able,—tell me about it. I think you'd better have a sleep first, though."

Arnold laughed again,—a far different laugh from the last. "Sleep!" he said. The other knew he was answered.

"Well, then . . ." he invited, and placed his pillows higher, so that he could look directly into Arnold's eyes. And Arnold, faltering again, began . . . began the story of the past few months and ended with that of the last few hours. . . .

When he had concluded, his listener still maintained his expectant attitude. But now his eyes were eager. "That is not all," he said.

"Not all?" Arnold echoed bitterly.

The other shook his head. "The most important part is missing; the reason why three people like your friends—the sons of the two wealthiest men hereabouts,—and yourself—a man meant, by birth and brains and early education, to follow in his father's ways—happened to be smuggling opium? That's the *important* part of the story."

"I—I—can't see why," Arnold said weakly. This man's odd eerie eyes chilled him. There was something about the fellow . . . a weird triumph—

"Do you remember what you asked me when you were here before?" the man inquired. "I haven't forgotten. 'Why have two of my friends and myself been forced into shoddy shady lives, when we intended to be decent?' I said that the answer was perfectly plain, but that there was no use telling you—then! And to prove there wasn't, I told you anyhow. . . . Do you remember what I said?"

The same disquieting voice, the same strange hidden quality, somber, almost uncanny. "The Purpose," Arnold said, his voice so still and small it did not seem to be his own. "The world's history is only the fulfilment of that Purpose. . . ."

Arnold was almost afraid to think, so terrifying was the thought of realization. Like the faint graying of the eastern sky outside, betokening the approaching dawn, understanding had begun to blot out the black clouds that hung thick and heavy about his soul.

"And I told you you would not remain here and write, but would go back to the city. I told you you had not had so much bitterness only to live out your life with an unanswered question in your eyes. And I told you that men like us were the Sacrifices, that our loves and even our lives must be lost that others might be saved. The Cross is the symbol of the Question, the Resurrection of the Answer."

Again, as before, his eyes blazed with strange fires. But to Arnold they no longer held strange secrets. "'Only after we have been Crucified can we know that all has not been lost: all has been gained. And then, and then only, can we teach.'"

Arnold had repeated the other's words as a child repeats a lesson over and over before its meaning is begun to be understood.

"And are *you* ready to be crucified," he heard the other thunder in his ears,—thunder it seemed although the man spoke quietly enough; "so far you have only been scourged. To-night is your Gethsemane. You can escape, continue to have the world'e respect. Or you can have—Calvary! Choose!"

Arnold could not answer. His throat was choked, the beating of his heart was suspended. His eyes were blinded, too, for the first rays of the rising sun had shot, lance-like, through the open windows and his head was in a glory of light. No miracle. Merely the dawn. But what *are* miracles? . . .

Arnold only knew that at last there was no "Why" any more. He was not in that room, but seemed to soar high above the earth, and in a single second he saw the whole world spread out beneath him. All his bitterness against mankind, stupid, ignorant mankind, fled. A great pity overpowered him, then a great love—a love beside which the love of woman, or wealth, or even of fame, was as a candle-light in the splendor of the sun. And that splendor now irradiated him as he sat with head upraised and eager lips, though it could add no light to that already in his shining eyes. And when he answered the other man, it seemed that some one else was listening.

"I know now," Arnold said. "I understand."

They sat silent as the sunlight grew and grew until it filled the whole room. "I understand," Arnold said again. "Yes. And only an hour ago, I meant to have Hugo make Archie swear that I had loaned *him* the house. I was even going to get *you* to swear that I had spent the night here. . . ."

"I'll do it if you still want me to," said the other in his strange voice. But Arnold did not seem to hear him.

". . . I was going to make all that suffering and misery useless; all that so many have had to endure to bring things to this pass,—when the answer to all the 'Whys' can be given to the world."

"It has been given before," said the other man, without expression. "Long before your time. Millions have suffered and thousands have sacrificed—just as you will do—to teach the world the answer. And all have failed."

"No," said Arnold slowly. "There were always some who listened. That is not failure. . . ."

A curious heaviness was on him; and, although he recalled the existence of certain evolutions of Nature that explained his meaning better than any words of his—for instance, the quadrillions and quintillions of little blind coral insects that, working in darkness for a millennium, give their bodies to build a reef—he could not find the energy to make even so simple a statement. His tongue seemed swollen, his speech thick.

Alas, for those misguided authors who would expand the great moments of life into hours and days; sustaining the exaltations and transfigurations of their heroes through long chapters and longer acts. They seem to forget that man, if first of the spirit, is last and not least—for his earthly span—of the flesh. Even the greatest can not sustain the thrill of such moments; and, when the imprisonment of the flesh galls most, they summon up memories of the time, when like a long-imprisoned bird released from its cage to soar in the sunlight, they were free.

But the bird must soon return, having been caged too long to survive in the great spaces. So with Arnold. His exaltation was too great for his physical endurance: his heart could not pump blood fast enough to keep pace with its rapid beating, nor could such swift breathing furnish air sufficient for his lungs. Had his exalted state endured too long, he must have died as he sat there, and, as many have died, from too great a gladness. For the body demands for each exaltation a corresponding depression; and luckily so, since the converse is also true.

Hence Arnold's temporary loss of articulation, the thickness of his tongue, his leaden eyelids. Coming after a sleepless night, a night of weariness and stress, the great moment had sapped, not his remaining strength, for he had none, but strength as yet unborn. And so even as his thoughts struggled for expression he fell asleep with the warm bright sunlight in his eyes; and the rise and fall of his breast was not the regular rise and fall of deep-chested breathing, but the shuddering intensity of scanty breath and the hammer of intermittent heart-throbs. But for all that, there was a smile on his lips: he was truly at rest—at last!

CHAPTER THREE

WRECK ASHORE

ARNOLD'S DECISION RATIFIED

WHILE Arnold slept, one curtain of mist was drawn, then another and another.

Suddenly one saw the Connecticut shore, hills and houses a serried line of blue, background red and gold, sun the color of a Japanese rose, sapphire Sound, an enchanted lake of ruby wine, basin bright blue crystal.

Breath of the dawn? Sea-breeze? Elixir of life, rather, if anything.

Whatever it was it swept in once the curtains were drawn, and in the resulting trinity of sight, smell and sound, all things were bright and crystal clear. Not bright blue alone, but bright gold, bright white, and where the intermittent evergreens on the Green Sands Hills stood out, bright green, too.

Crystal bright, of course. The end of the world was the sort of a place one wanted to go to this morning. The coats of the gulls were dazzling white, the pinions of the crows lustrous black, purple black.

When the peninsula philosopher opened his door, the gulls were circling so near the waves that the tips of their wings were rosy. A foolish young gull flaunted a very fat fish. A flock of hungry crows arrived. Followed a sudden flight, a noisy flurry, and out of a cloud of feathers, the fish flopped down, the gull flapped up, and squawking, circled seaward. During the battle, a bluejay seized upon the prize, screaming derision.

"Poor Archie Hartogensis," said the man in the doorway, staring after the terror-stricken gull. "You and your fat fish. Poor John Waldemar! Poor Benjamin Hartogensis. While you were fighting for it, the bluejays got it, didn't they?"

He had turned to watch the jay who, with his fat fish, had careened off to the farthest fastness of the peninsula; was now about to alight upon some long black object imbedded in the sand. As grace before meat, Master Blue-Coat again indulged his cynical sense of humor. His harsh and noisy mirth seemed sufficiently expressive of a similar state of mind in his human prototype.

"Ha! Ha! Gull, indeed! Well-named, well-named! But how did Blackie Crow get a reputation for being wise? Ha! Ha! Ha!"

So accustomed was the man to the ways of birds and smaller beasts, so often had he observed them, that, when the jay's note changed, and he further postponed his stolen breakfast to make an investigatory flight around that unusually long black object on which he had alighted, the man thought it worth while to reach within for his marine-glasses.

The jay again stood guard over his fat fish, but stood it on one foot, the other scratching beneath his wing. "Oh, yes. A boat. Didn't recognize it at first upside down. Anyhow it's a wretched boat. Respectable boats are made with some regard for the comfort of jays. And how can any jay be comfortable on a sharp slippery keel? Some crazy new fashion of those crazy humans, I suppose." Having settled the matter, he began his belated breakfast.

Not so the man. He had deciphered the letters on the long boat's stern. Long-boat it was, and of the centuries-old sort used by sailing-ships. The man's hands dropped to his sides.

Evidently he was oppressed by strong excitement. He turned toward his sleeping guest. One might have read in his sidelong glance a debate as to the advisability of Arnold's awakening.

Deciding rather dubiously in the negative, he stripped and went seaward for his accustomed morning-plunge. On his return, his unquietness continued and there were frequent repetitions of his oblique glance. He began to prepare his morning meal, hoping its delectable odors might awaken the other. Not so. And the smoking-hot food untasted, the pity of a great heart and a great brain gave that glance such concentration that it brought about the result desired.

Arnold awoke. "Just in time for breakfast," said his host, forcing a note of cheer. And, then, answering: "I'm glad you liked the coffee. Here's a fresh brew."

Both men were embarrassed. Products of Anglo-Saxon training, they had been taught to be ashamed of any display of emotion. Now that Arnold's exaltation had passed, he was afraid he had been theatric; and his host, knowing this, must yet recall the incident to his guest's memory. Indeed, he could hardly wait to eat before he plunged. So awkward a silence must not be allowed to endure: it was destructive.

"You realize, of course, that you may stroll into town this morning and prove to people you have been here all night, and that no one will suspect you seriously of being connected with either the shooting or the smuggling? Your friend, young Waldemar, is very wealthy. He can use his money and his influence to get Hartogensis off. And if *he's* that sort, —your friend, I mean,—big-hearted, loyal,—as you say,—he will. And there's the Squire to influence the 'respectable element.' They'll only hold the other boys as accessories. Keep them jailed until the trial. Witnesses really. . . . None of the three is likely to be malicious because his friends were lucky enough to escape. Neither you nor young Waldemar need to be implicated. You haven't committed any crime, anyhow. You haven't even *witnessed* any crime."

"There's the *Cormorant,*" said Arnold painfully. "They'll be on the lookout for her, now. And—then,—don't you see? It's in my name and all—I explained that, didn't I? When she arrives—"

"You mean that as you'll be arrested anyhow when the *Cormorant* comes, you might as well save your face by surrendering now?" But he got no further. Arnold had dashed off the covers and now stood erect and angry.

"Give me my clothes," he said. "You'll be sorry for that some day—"

The other put a hand on his shoulder. "Sometimes people are carried away by their emotions. But you're quite normal now. And I wanted you to understand that you could go free if you wished to. I know you have your parents to consider,—and that they are very old. And then there's their pride in their unstained family-name. Centuries of unselfish service and good works. And—now—"

Arnold was very pale; his hands trembled; he turned away. But when he faced his host again, his eyes were untroubled. "I believe they'll understand," he said quietly. "I've been such a sorrow to them already that, when my father realizes that all this that happened had to be,—that I had to go through all this for a purpose—why, I believe he'll go down on his knees and thank God."

"Wait," the other broke in, his strange eyes glowing. Arnold had a sensation of helplessness. "The *Cormorant* won't arrive. Now, or next week, or any other time. D'you understand? Won't! Can't! She's done for!"

He gave Arnold the glasses. "That's a captain's boat. Do you think he'd lower it until he'd lost all hope of saving his ship? And part owner of an uninsured cargo besides! But there she is, a hole in her bottom big enough for a door. Green Sands signs its name that way in a storm, my friend."

The glasses he had thrust into Arnold's hands would have been shattered on the floor had he not caught them. Arnold was again among the hills and valleys of hissing green. But now Harvey Quinn was near by, struggling, too, his face turned up to the gray awful sky. And Captain Danny's little turtle head was bobbing, his arms real flappers now,—and, as useless. . . . Atop the highest white-capped hill, a man's maimed hand was thrust, three fingers missing, holding aloft a money-bag. . . .

Arnold, choking, threw himself face downward on the cot. A clock marked off some silent moments. . . . Then he raised white set face, lax wet lips, hot dry eyes.

"This God of ours is all they say He is,—cruel, cruel, cruel. The waste of it, the cruel waste. If there *was* any lesson, it was taught when Waldemar died. There was no need for those others to die too—"

"Taught,—to *you!* Yes! But there must be a great tragedy before those others will listen. Each one of those deaths you call needless will save a thousand lives, my friend.

A shudder shook him. "Exaggeration? I tell you that the so-called civilization that gives men like John Waldemar millions, destroys a thousand others every day. Waste! Listen to me! It took a million years, maybe, for that strange hybrid,—to perfect his body. Then it was the survival of the fittest,—that long terrible night when the only good was strength, the only evil, weakness. Another million, maybe, and man reached the perfection of the mind. . . .

"After the night, the dawn. But first the false dawn, my friend. Then the sky seems clear, daylight on the wing. But only seems . . .

"The perfection of the mind! That was three thousand years ago. Mere mentality can go no further than it did in the days of those old Greeks,—the Golden Age. . . . With the weapon they forged for man, he has freed himself of the fear of brute strength, of superstition, thrown down false priests and tyrant kings, conquered disease and pain. . . . He has even dared to fight Death and conquer,—sometimes. . . . He has made the earth his servant, the sea, the air. But for all his science and his machinery, he is still a slave.

With his hand on the door of freedom, greed and hate bar the way. . . .

"False dawn! Will the daylight never come? Will men never learn that perfection of the mind is not enough? For it can not do away with greed and hate. The greed of the rich,—without rhyme or reason,—there is enough for all. The hate of the poor—how can poor men learn not to hate when the weak and the ignorant are murdered or brutalized by unceasing ugly toil? And for what?—to make vicious women and degenerate men. There is no need for the John Waldemars to be cunning and ruthless, nor for the Benjamin Hartogensises to be hypocritical and tricky; nor for the men of bigger brains and greater hearts to be caught in this maelstrom of commerce and finance that takes all and gives nothing. It is whirling our civilization around and around until we are so dizzy and dazed that we can not see that it is also driving us upon the rocks as rapidly as last night's storm drove your *Cormorant.*

"It was too late after she struck; it did not matter then whether her crew saw the reef or not. They could only look on helplessly while the great gale tore her apart."

He bowed his head, and it seemed that he prayed silently. But he still continued to speak although so low that his lips seemed scarcely to move; and his eyes, still alight, seemed fixed upon something too far away for Arnold's to follow them.

"Rocks, yes! Greed and hate! And for what? John Waldemar dead by his own hand as surely as if he had pulled the trigger. Benjamin Hartogensis crazy with grief for the disgrace he made for himself. It is so plain, so plain. They must listen this time, they must. And they will, surely they will. The boy is right. It would be needlessly cruel for him to have suffered so much, otherwise. And all those others! But for him, especially, who had no desire to do evil; whose people have served so long, so unselfishly, and so well. And that was why. It needed some one such as he before they would believe. They can not in this case soothe their uneasy consciences with the apology of inherited vice. They must believe the real reason for once."

"The real reason," Arnold heard himself stammer. It was his own voice, but it seemed the speaker was very far away.

"The real reason is that our so-called 'civilization' is our Menace. And will be our Destroyer. Unless, like Frankenstein, man who created it, destroys it. . . . This is only another of God's warnings. He is very tired of these human folk who will not be men. . . . And He is very tired of warning them, too. Unless they listen soon, *He* will destroy.

"That is why You had to be sacrificed. It was necessary that so-called Civilization should drag down a man meant to be good and force him to do evil. A man whose antecedents would defy all such petty little excuses as heredity, environment, original sin . . . a man whose ancestry was stainless and whose mind and body were clean and strong; a man who might have been a minister of the gospel; had he been let alone,—or a millionaire; had he desired to do things for himself and let the world go hang.

"But too many of the weak and helpless and ignorant and hungry had been sacrificed in previous warnings,—and to what end? It was too easy for them to fall, too brutally easy for so-called Civilization to kick them while they were down. And to satisfy its virtuous Self it was doing the virtuous thing.

"So somebody had to be sacrificed who hadn't any of the mob's ugly little reasons for rebellion? Who wasn't hungry or poor or envious,—who wasn't any of the ugly little things that make hate.

"And it had to be a man who didn't need money for himself. Who didn't want money at all if he must get it in the ugly little 'honest' ways a virtuous civilization applauds. A man who believed that when he wasn't helping, he was hurting.

"And, above all, a man who would finally come before the Law, and stand his trial, and show that it was helping that brought him there, not hurting. Can't you see? From the very first God meant it that way. That was why every time you helped another, you hurt yourself. That was the lesson that must be brought out when you were tried for offenses against Civilization. Instance after instance has been piled up to prove that the [illegible] was Guilty, not the Man.

"Take each incident [illegible] see how true this is. You were forced out of college for helping. You were forced from your chosen work,—for helping. You were sent to jail,—for helping . . . and, now you are going to jail of your own free will. And again,—*for helping*."

Arnold started. But the other's gaze was steady.

"Yes," Arnold said slowly. "I'm going to jail of my own free will."

"To prove it was all for helping," the other resumed. "For if you did not—if you shirked the last test—what good would all the rest have been? You are going to surrender *yourself*, and you are going to make Waldemar's son surrender *himself*. And when you do, you are going to tell why. And, also, that you had only to comply with what Civilization' taught to win the world's respect and share its riches.

"Just as those other L'Hommedieus had only to comply,—that Sir Lucas, that Chevalier [illegible]nne,—to win high places. But, like you, both preferred to be rebels and exiles. Because they were God'e Men.

"That is why you need no longer be ashamed of anything you have done. You have neither disgraced your name, nor been unworthy of your ancestors. They served their fellowmen unselfishly, yes! But you will be remembered as one who suffered and sacrificed besides. And on the day when your foot touches the prisoner's dock, and you make answer to Civilization's indictment, I doubt if any one of your race will have had as good a right as you to be called 'God's Man'."

THE END