

The Golden House

Charles Dudley Warner

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THE GOLDEN HOUSE

By Charles Dudley Warner

I

It was near midnight: The company gathered in a famous city studio were under the impression, diligently diffused in the world, that the end of the century is a time of license if not of decadence. The situation had its own piquancy, partly in the surprise of some of those assembled at finding themselves in bohemia, partly in a flutter of expectation of seeing something on the border-line of propriety. The hour, the place, the anticipation of the lifting of the veil from an Oriental and ancient art, gave them a titillating feeling of adventure, of a moral hazard bravely incurred in the duty of knowing life, penetrating to its core. Opportunity for this sort of fruitful experience being rare outside the metropolis, students of good and evil had made the pilgrimage to this midnight occasion from less-favored cities. Recondite scholars in the physical beauty of the Greeks, from Boston, were there; fair women from Washington, whose charms make the reputation of many a newspaper

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correspondent; spirited stars of official and diplomatic life, who have moments of longing to shine in some more languorous material paradise, had made a hasty flitting to be present at the ceremony, sustained by a slight feeling of bravado in making this exceptional descent. But the favored hundred spectators were mainly from the city-groups of late diners, who fluttered in under that pleasurable glow which the red Jacqueminot always gets from contiguity with the pale yellow Clicquot; theatre parties, a little jaded, and quite ready for something real and stimulating; men from the clubs and men from studios--representatives of society and of art graciously mingled, since it is discovered that it is easier to make art fashionable than to make fashion artistic.

The vast, dimly lighted apartment was itself mysterious, a temple of luxury quite as much as of art. Shadows lurked in the corners, the ribs of the roof were faintly outlined; on the sombre walls gleams of color, faces of loveliness and faces of pain, studies all of a mood or a passion, bits of shining brass, reflections from lustred ware struggling out of obscurity; hangings from Fez or Tetuan, bits of embroidery, costumes in silk and in velvet, still having the aroma of balls a hundred years ago, the faint perfume of a scented society of ladies and gallants; a skeleton scarcely less fantastic than the draped wooden model near it; heavy rugs of Daghestan and Persia, making the footfalls soundless on the floor; a fountain tinkling in a thicket of japonicas and azaleas; the stems of palmettoes, with their branches waving in the obscurity overhead; points of light here and there where a shaded lamp shone on a single red rose in a blue Granada vase on a toppling stand, or on a mass of jonquils in a barbarous pot of Chanak-Kallessi; tacked here and there on walls and hangings, colored memoranda of Capri and of the North Woods, the armor of knights, trophies of small-arms, crossed swords of the Union and the Confederacy, easels, paints, and palettes, and rows of canvases leaning against the wall--the studied litter, in short, of a successful artist, whose surroundings contribute to the popular conception of his genius.

On the wall at one end of the apartment was stretched a white canvas; in front of it was left a small cleared space, on the edge of which, in the shadow, squatting on the floor, were four swarthy musicians in Oriental garments, with a mandolin, a guitar, a ney, and a darabooka drum. About this cleared space, in a crescent, knelt or sat upon the rugs a couple of rows of men in evening dress; behind them, seated in chairs, a group of ladies, whose white shoulders and arms and animated faces flashed out in the semi-obscurity; and in their rear stood a crowd of spectators--beautiful young gentlemen with vacant faces and the elevated Oxford shoulders, rosy youth already blase to all this world can offer, and gray-headed men young again in the prospect of a new sensation. So they kneel or stand, worshipers before the shrine, expecting the advent of the Goddess of AEsthetic Culture.

The moment has come. There is a tap on the drum, a tuning of the strings, a flash of light from the rear of the room inundates the white canvas, and suddenly a figure is poised in the space, her shadow cast upon the glowing background.

It is the Spanish dancer!

The apparition evokes a flutter of applause. It is a superb figure, clad in a high tight bodice and long skirts simply draped so as to show every motion of the athletic limbs. She seems, in this pose and light, supernaturally tall. Through her parted lips white teeth gleam, and she

smiles. Is it a smile of anticipated, triumph, or of contempt? Is it the smile of the daughter of Herodias, or the invitation of a 'ghazeeyeh'? She pauses. Shall she surprise, or shock, or only please? What shall the art that is older than the pyramids do for these kneeling Christians? The drum taps, the ney pipes, the mandolin twangs, her arms are extended--the castanets clink, a foot is thrust out, the bosom heaves, the waist trembles. What shall it be--the old serpent dance of the Nile, or the posturing of decorous courtship when the olives are purple in the time of the grape harvest? Her head, wreathed with coils of black hair, a red rose behind the left ear, is thrown back. The eyes flash, there is a snakelike movement of the limbs, the music hastens slowly in unison with the quickening pulse, the body palpitates, seems to flash invitation like the eyes, it turns, it twists, the neck is thrust forward, it is drawn in, while the limbs move still slowly, tentatively; suddenly the body from the waist up seems to twist round, with the waist as a pivot, in a flash of athletic vigor, the music quickens, the arms move more rapidly to the click of the heated castanets, the steps are more pronounced, the whole woman is agitated, bounding, pulsing with physical excitement. It is a Maenad in an access of gymnastic energy. Yes, it is gymnastics; it is not grace; it is scarcely alluring. Yet it is a physical triumph. While the spectators are breathless, the fury ceases, the music dies, and the Spaniard sinks into a chair, panting with triumph, and inclines her dark head to the clapping of hands and the bravos. The kneelers rise; the spectators break into chattering groups; the ladies look at the dancer with curious eyes; a young gentleman with the elevated Oxford shoulders leans upon the arm of her chair and fans her. The pose is correct; it is the somewhat awkward tribute of culture to physical beauty.

To be on speaking terms with the phenomenon was for the moment a distinction. The young ladies wondered if it would be proper to go forward and talk with her.

"Why not?" said a wit. "The Duke of Donnycastle always shakes hands with the pugilists at a mill."

"It is not so bad"--the speaker was a Washington beauty in an evening dress that she would have condemned as indecorous for the dancer it is not so bad as I--"

"Expected?" asked her companion, a sedate man of thirty-five, with the cynical air of a student of life.

"As I feared," she added, quickly. "I have always had a curiosity to know what these Oriental dances mean."

"Oh, nothing in particular, now. This was an exhibition dance. Of course its origin, like all dancing, was religious. The fault I find with it is that it lacks seriousness, like the modern exhibition of the dancing dervishes for money."

"Do you think, Mr. Mavick, that the decay of dancing is the reason our religion lacks seriousness? We are in Lent now, you know. Does this seem to you a Lenten performance?"

"Why, yes, to a degree. Anything that keeps you up till three o'clock in the morning has some penitential quality."

"You give me a new view, Mr. Mavick. I confess that I did not expect to

assist at what New Englanders call an 'evening meeting.' I thought Eros was the deity of the dance."

"That, Mrs. Lamon, is a vulgar error. It is an ancient form of worship. Virtue and beauty are the same thing--the two graces."

"What a nice apothegm! It makes religion so easy and agreeable."

"As easy as gravitation."

"Dear me, Mr. Mavick, I thought this was a question of levitation. You are upsetting all my ideas. I shall not have the comfort of repenting of this episode in Lent."

"Oh yes; you can be sorry that the dancing was not more alluring."

Meantime there was heard the popping of corks. Venetian glasses filled with champagne were quaffed under the blessing of sparkling eyes, young girls, almond-eyed for the occasion, in the costume of Tokyo, handed round ices, and the hum of accelerated conversation filled the studio.

"And your wife didn't come?"

"Wouldn't," replied Jack Delancy, with a little bow, before he raised his glass. And then added, "Her taste isn't for this sort of thing."

The girl, already flushed with the wine, blushed a little--Jack thought he had never seen her look so dazzlingly handsome--as she said, "And you think mine is?"

"Bless me, no, I didn't mean that; that is, you know"--Jack didn't exactly see his way out of the dilemma--"Edith is a little old-fashioned; but what's the harm in this, anyway?"

"I did not say there was any," she replied, with a smile at his embarrassment. "Only I think there are half a dozen women in the room who could do it better, with a little practice. It isn't as Oriental as I thought it would be."

"I cannot say as to that. I know Edith thinks I've gone into the depths of the Orient. But, on the whole, I'm glad--" Jack stopped on the verge of speaking out of his better nature.

"Now don't be rude again. I quite understand that she is not here."

The dialogue was cut short by a clapping of hands. The spectators took their places again, the lights were lowered, the illumination was turned on the white canvas, and the dancer, warmed with wine and adulation, took a bolder pose, and, as her limbs began to move, sang a wild Moorish melody in a shrill voice, action and words flowing together into the passion of the daughter of tents in a desert life. It was all vigorous, suggestive, more properly religious, Mavick would have said, and the applause was vociferous.

More wine went about. There was another dance, and then another, a slow languid movement, half melancholy and full of sorrow, if one might say that of a movement, for unrepented sin; a gypsy dance this, accompanied by the mournful song of Boabdil, "The Last Sigh of the Moor." And suddenly, when the feelings of the spectators were melted to tender

regret, a flash out of all this into a joyous defiance, a wooing of pleasure with smiling lips and swift feet, with the clash of cymbals and the quickened throb of the drum. And so an end with the dawn of a new day.

It was not yet dawn, however, for the clocks were only striking three as the assembly, in winter coats and soft wraps, fluttered out to its carriages, chattering and laughing, with endless good-nights in the languages of France, Germany, and Spain.

The streets were as nearly deserted as they ever are; here and there a lumbering market-wagon from Jersey, an occasional street-car with its tinkling bell, rarer still the rush of a trembling train on the elevated, the voice of a belated reveler, a flitting female figure at a street corner, the roll of a livery hack over the ragged pavement. But mainly the noise of the town was hushed, and in the sharp air the stars, far off and uncontaminated, glowed with a pure lustre.

Farther up town it was quite still, and in one of the noble houses in the neighborhood of the Park sat Edith Delancy, married not quite a year, listening for the roll of wheels and the click of a night-key.

II

Everybody liked John Corlear Delancy, and this in spite of himself, for no one ever knew him to make any effort to incur either love or hate. The handsome boy was a favorite without lifting his eyebrows, and he sauntered through the university, picking his easy way along an elective course, winning the affectionate regard of every one with whom he came in contact. And this was not because he lacked quality, or was merely easy-going and negative or effeminate, for the same thing happened to him when he went shooting in the summer in the Rockies. The cowboys and the severe moralists of the plains, whose sedate business in life is to get the drop on offensive persons, regarded him as a brother. It isn't a bad test of personal quality, this power to win the loyalty of men who have few or none of the conventional virtues. These non-moral enforcers of justice--as they understood it liked Jack exactly as his friends in the New York clubs liked him--and perhaps the moral standard of approval of the one was as good as the other.

Jack was a very good shot and a fair rider, and in the climate of England he might have taken first-rate rank in athletics. But he had never taken first-rate rank in anything, except good-fellowship. He had a great many expensive tastes, which he could not afford to indulge, except in imagination. The luxury of a racing-stable, or a yacht, or a library of scarce books bound by Paris craftsmen was denied him. Those who account for failures in life by a man's circumstances, and not by a lack in the man himself, which is always the secret of failure, said that Jack was unfortunate in coming into a certain income of twenty thousand a year. This was just enough to paralyze effort, and not enough to permit a man to expand in any direction. It is true that he was related to millions and moved in a millionaire atmosphere, but these millions might never flow into his bank account. They were not in hand to use, and they also helped to paralyze effort--like black clouds of an impending shower that may pass around, but meantime keeps the watcher indoors.

The best thing that Jack Delancy ever did, for himself, was to marry Edith Fletcher. The wedding, which took place some eight months before the advent of the Spanish dancer, was a surprise to many, for the girl had even less fortune than Jack, and though in and of his society entirely, was supposed to have ideals. Her family, indeed, was an old one on the island, and was prominent long before the building of the stone bridge on Canal Street over the outlet of Collect Pond. Those who knew Edith well detected in her that strain of moral earnestness which made the old Fletchers such staunch and trusty citizens. The wonder was not that Jack, with his easy susceptibility to refined beauty, should have been attracted to her, or have responded to a true instinct of what was best for him, but that Edith should have taken up with such a perfect type of the aimlessness of the society strata of modern life. The wonder, however, was based upon a shallow conception of the nature of woman. It would have been more wonderful if the qualities that endeared Jack to college friends and club men, to the mighty sportsmen who do not hesitate, in the clubs, to devastate Canada and the United States of big game, and to the border ruffians of Dakota, should not have gone straight to the tender heart of a woman of ideals. And when in all history was there a woman who did not believe, when her heart went with respect for certain manly traits, that she could inspire and lift a man into a noble life?

The silver clock in the breakfast-room was striking ten, and Edith was already seated at the coffee-urn, when Jack appeared. She was as fresh as a rose, and greeted him with a bright smile as he came behind her chair and bent over for the morning kiss--a ceremony of affection which, if omitted, would have left a cloud on the day for both of them, and which Jack always declared was simply a necessity, or the coffee would have no flavor. But when a man has picked a rose, it is always a sort of climax which is followed by an awkward moment, and Jack sat down with the air of a man who has another day to get through with.

"Were you amused with the dancing--this morning?"

"So, so," said Jack, sipping his coffee. "It was a stunning place for it, that studio; you'd have liked that. The Lamons and Mavick and a lot of people from the provinces were there. The company was more fun than the dance, especially to a fellow who has seen how good it can be and how bad in its home."

"You have a chance to see the Spanish dancer again, under proper auspices," said Edith, without looking up.

"How's that?"

"We are invited by Mrs. Brown--"

"The mother of the Bible class at St. Philip's?"

"Yes--to attend a charity performance for the benefit of the Female Waifs' Refuge. She is to dance."

"Who? Mrs. Brown?"

Edith paid no attention to this impertinence. "They are to make an artificial evening at eleven o'clock in the morning."

"They must have got hold of Mavick's notion that this dance is religious

in its origin. Do you, know if the exercises will open with prayer?"

"Nonsense, Jack. You know I don't intend to go. I shall send a small check."

"Well, draw it mild. But isn't this what I'm accused of doing--shirking my duty of personal service by a contribution?"

"Perhaps. But you didn't have any of that shirking feeling last night, did you?"

Jack laughed, and ran round to give the only reply possible to such a gibe. These breakfast interludes had not lost piquancy in all these months. "I'm half a mind to go to this thing. I would, if it didn't break up my day so."

"As for instance?"

"Well, this morning I have to go up to the riding-school to see a horse --Storm; I want to try him. And then I have to go down to Twist's and see a lot of Japanese drawings he's got over. Do you know that the birds and other animals those beggars have been drawing, which we thought were caricatures, are the real thing? They have eyes sharp enough to see things in motion--flying birds and moving horses which we never caught till we put the camera on them. Awfully curious. Then I shall step into the club a minute, and--"

"Be in at lunch? Bess is coming."

"Don't wait lunch. I've a lot to do."

Edith followed him with her eyes, a little wistfully; she heard the outer door close, and still sat at the table, turning over the pile of notes at her plate, and thinking of many things--things that it began to dawn upon her mind could not be done, and things of immediate urgency that must be done. Life did not seem quite such a simple problem to her as it had looked a year ago. That there is nothing like experiment to clear the vision is the general idea, but oftener it is experience that perplexes. Indeed, Edith was thinking that some things seemed much easier to her before she had tried them.

As she sat at the table with a faultless morning-gown, with a bunch of English violets in her bosom, an artist could have desired no better subject. Many people thought her eyes her best feature; they were large brown eyes, yet not always brown, green at times, liquid, but never uncertain, apt to have a smile in them, yet their chief appealing characteristic was trustfulness, a pure sort of steadfastness, that always conveyed the impression of a womanly personal interest in the person upon whom they were fixed. They were eyes that haunted one like a remembered strain of music. The lips were full, and the mouth was drawn in such exquisite lines that it needed the clear-cut and emphasized chin to give firmness to its beauty. The broad forehead, with arching eyebrows, gave an intellectual cast to a face the special stamp of which was purity. The nose, with thin open nostrils, a little too strong for beauty, together with the chin, gave the impression of firmness and courage; but the wonderful eyes, the inviting mouth, so modified this that the total impression was that of high spirit and great sweetness of character. It was the sort of face from which one might expect passionate love or unflinching martyrdom. Her voice had a quality the

memory of which lingered longer even than the expression of her eyes; it was low, and, as one might say, a fruity voice, not quite clear, though sweet, as if veiled in femininity. This note of royal womanhood was also in her figure, a little more than medium in height, and full of natural grace. Somehow Edith, with all these good points, had not the reputation of a belle or a beauty--perhaps for want of some artificial splendor--but one could not be long in her company without feeling that she had great charm, without which beauty becomes insipid and even commonplace, and with which the plainest woman is attractive.

Edith's theory of life, if one may so dignify the longings of a young girl, had been very simple, and not at all such as would be selected by the heroine of a romance. She had no mission, nor was she afflicted by that modern form of altruism which is a yearning for notoriety by conspicuous devotion to causes and reforms quite outside her normal sphere of activity. A very sincere person, with strong sympathy for humanity tempered by a keen perception of the humorous side of things, she had a purpose, perhaps not exactly formulated, of making the most out of her own life, not in any outward and shining career, but by a development of herself in the most helpful and harmonious relations to her world. And it seemed to her, though she had never philosophized it, that a marriage such as she believed she had made was the woman's way to the greatest happiness and usefulness. In this she followed the dictates of a clear mind and a warm heart. If she had reasoned about it, considering how brief life is, and how small can be any single contribution to a better social condition, she might have felt more strongly the struggle against nature, and the false position involved in the new idea that marriage is only a kind of occupation, instead of an ordinance decreed in the very constitution of the human race. With the mere instinct of femininity she saw the falseness of the assumption that the higher life for man or woman lies in separate and solitary paths through the wilderness of this world. To an intelligent angel, seated on the arch of the heavens, the spectacle of the latter-day pseudo-philosophic and economic dribble about the doubtful expediency of having a wife, and the failure of marriage, must seem as ludicrous as would a convention of birds or of flowers reasoning that the processes of nature had continued long enough. Edith was simply a natural woman, who felt rather than reasoned that in a marriage such as her heart approved she should make the most of her life.

But as she sat here this morning this did not seem to be so simple a matter as it had appeared. It began to be suspected that in order to make the most of one's self it was necessary to make the most of many other persons and things. The stream in its own channel flowed along not without vexations, friction and foaming and dashings from bank to bank; but it became quite another and a more difficult movement when it was joined to another stream, with its own currents and eddies and impetuositities and sluggishness, constantly liable to be deflected if not put altogether on another course. Edith was not putting it in this form as she turned over her notes of invitation and appointments and engagements, but simply wondering where the time for her life was to come in, and for Jack's life, which occupied a much larger space than it seemed to occupy in the days before it was joined to hers. Very curious this discovery of what another's life really is. Of course the society life must go on, that had always gone on, for what purpose no one could tell, only it was the accepted way of disposing of time; and now there were the dozen ways in which she was solicited to show her interest in those supposed to be less fortunate in life than herself--the alleviation of the miseries of her own city. And with society, and charity, and

sympathy with the working classes, and her own reading, and a little drawing and painting, for which she had some talent, what became of that comradeship with Jack, that union of interests and affections, which was to make her life altogether so high and sweet?

This reverie, which did not last many minutes, and was interrupted by the abrupt moving away of Edith to the writing-desk in her own room, was caused by a moment's vivid realization of what Jack's interests in life were. Could she possibly make them her own? And if she did, what would become of her own ideals?

III

It was indeed a busy day for Jack. Great injustice would be done him if it were supposed that he did not take himself and his occupations seriously. His mind was not disturbed by trifles. He knew that he had on the right sort of four-in-hand necktie, with the appropriate pin of pear-shaped pearl, and that he carried the cane of the season. These things come by a sort of social instinct, are in the air, as it were, and do not much tax the mind. He had to hasten a little to keep his half-past-eleven o'clock appointment at Stalker's stables, and when he arrived several men of his set were already waiting, who were also busy men, and had made a little effort to come round early and assist Jack in making up his mind about the horse.

When Mr. Stalker brought out Storm, and led him around to show his action, the connoisseurs took on a critical attitude, an attitude of judgment, exhibited not less in the poise of the head and the serious face than in the holding of the cane and the planting of legs wide apart. And the attitude had a refined nonchalance which professional horsemen scarcely ever attain. Storm could not have received more critical and serious attention if he had been a cooked terrapin. He could afford to stand this scrutiny, and he seemed to move about with the consciousness that he knew more about being a horse than his judges.

Storm was, in fact, a splendid animal, instinct with life from his thin flaring nostril to his small hoof; black as a raven, his highly groomed skin took the polish of ebony, and showed the play of his powerful muscles, and, one might say, almost the nervous currents that thrilled his fine texture. His large, bold eyes, though not wicked, flamed now and then with an energy and excitement that gave ample notice that he would obey no master who had not stronger will and nerve than his own. It was a tribute to Jack's manliness that, when he mounted him for a turn in the ring, Storm seemed to recognize the fine quality of both seat and hand, and appeared willing to take him on probation.

"He's got good points," said Mr. Herbert Albert Flick, "but I'd like a straighter back."

"I'll be hanged, though, Jack," was Mr. Mowbray Russell's comment, "if I'd ride him in the Park before he's docked. Say what you like about action, a horse has got to have style."

"Moves easy, falls off a little too much to suit me in the quarter," suggested Mr. Pennington Docstater, sucking the head of his cane. "How about his staying quality, Stalker?"

"That's just where he is, Mr. Docstater; take him on the road, he's a stayer for all day. Goes like a bird. He'll take you along at the rate of nine miles in forty-five minutes as long as you want to sit there."

"Jump?" queried little Bobby Simerton, whose strong suit at the club was talking about meets and hunters.

"Never refused anything I put him at," replied Stalker; "takes every fence as if it was the regular thing."

Storm was in this way entirely taken to pieces, praised and disparaged, in a way to give Stalker, it might be inferred from his manner, a high opinion of the knowledge of these young gentlemen. "It takes a gentleman," in fact, Stalker said, "to judge a hoss, for a good hoss is a gentleman himself." It was much discussed whether Storm would do better for the Park or for the country, whether it would be better to put him in the field or keep him for a roadster. It might, indeed, be inferred that Jack had not made up his mind whether he should buy a horse for use in the Park or for country riding. Even more than this might be inferred from the long morning's work, and that was that while Jack's occupation was to buy a horse, if he should buy one his occupation would be gone. He was known at the club to be looking for the right sort of a horse, and that he knew what he wanted, and was not easily satisfied; and as long as he occupied this position he was an object of interest to sellers and to his companions.

Perhaps Mr. Stalker understood this, for when the buyers had gone he remarked to the stable-boy, "Mr. Delancy, he don't want to buy no hoss."

When the inspection of the horse was finished it was time for lunch, and the labors of the morning were felt to justify this indulgence, though each of the party had other engagements, and was too busy to waste the time. They went down to the Knickerbocker.

The lunch was slight, but its ordering took time and consideration, as it ought, for nothing is so destructive of health and mental tone as the snatching of a mid-day meal at a lunch counter from a bill of fare prepared by God knows whom. Mr. Russell said that if it took time to buy a horse, it ought to take at least equal time and care to select the fodder that was to make a human being wretched or happy. Indeed, a man who didn't give his mind to what he ate wouldn't have any mind by-and-by to give to anything. This sentiment had the assent of the table, and was illustrated by varied personal experience; and a deep feeling prevailed, a serious feeling, that in ordering and eating the right sort of lunch a chief duty of a useful day had been discharged.

It must not be imagined from this, however, that the conversation was about trifles. Business men and operators could have learned something about stocks and investments, and politicians about city politics. Mademoiselle Vivienne, the new skirt dancer, might have been surprised at the intimate tone in which she was alluded to, but she could have got some useful hints in effects, for her judges were cosmopolitans who had seen the most suggestive dancing in all parts of the world. It came out incidentally that every one at table had been "over" in the course of the season, not for any general purpose, not as a sightseer, but to look at somebody's stables, or to attend a wedding, or a sale of etchings, or to see his bootmaker, or for a little shooting in Scotland, just as one might run down to Bar Harbor or Tuxedo. It was only an incident in a

busy season; and one of the fruits of it appeared to be as perfect a knowledge of the comparative merits of all the ocean racers and captains as of the English and American stables and the trainers. One not informed of the progress of American life might have been surprised to see that the fad is to be American, with a sort of patronage of things and ways foreign, especially of things British, a large continental kind of attitude, begotten of hearing much about Western roughing it, of Alaska, of horse-breeding and fruit-raising on the Pacific, of the Colorado River Canon. As for stuffs, well yes, London. As for style, you can't mistake a man who is dressed in New York.

The wine was a white Riesling from California. Docstater said his attention had been called to it by Tom Dillingham at the Union, who had a ranch somewhere out there. It was declared to be sound and palatable; you know what you are drinking. This led to a learned discussion of the future of American wines, and a patriotic impulse was given to the trade by repeated orders. It was declared that in American wines lay the solution of the temperance question. Bobby Simerton said that Burgundy was good enough for him, but Russell put him down, as he saw the light yellow through his glass, by the emphatic affirmation that plenty of cheap American well-made wine would knock the bottom out of all the sentimental temperance societies and shut up the saloons, dry up all those not limited to light wines and beer. It was agreed that the saloons would have to go.

This satisfactory conclusion was reached before the coffee came on and the cigarettes, and the sound quality of the Riesling was emphasized by a pony of cognac.

It is fortunate when the youth of a country have an ideal. No nation is truly great without a common ideal, capable of evoking enthusiasm and calling out its energies. And where are we to look for this if not in the youth, and especially in those to whom fortune and leisure give an opportunity of leadership? It is they who can inspire by their example, and by their pursuits attract others to a higher conception of the national life. It may take the form of patriotism, as in this country, pride in the great republic, jealousy of its honor and credit, eagerness for its commanding position among the nations, patriotism which will show itself, in all the ardor of believing youth, in the administration of law, in the purity of politics, in honest local government, and in a noble aspiration for the glory of the country. It may take the form of culture, of a desire that the republic-liable, like all self-made nations, to worship wealth-should be distinguished not so much by a vulgar national display as by an advance in the arts, the sciences, the education that adorns life, in the noble spirit of humanity, and in the nobler spirit of recognition of a higher life, which will be content with no civilization that does not tend to make the country for every citizen a better place to live in today than it was yesterday. Happy is the country, happy the metropolis of that country, whose fortunate young men have this high conception of citizenship!

What is the ideal of their country which these young men cherish? There was a moment--was there not for them?--in the late war for the Union, when the republic was visible to them in its beauty, in its peril, and in a passion of devotion they were eager--were they not?--to follow the flag and to give their brief lives to its imperishable glory. Nothing is impossible to a nation with an ideal like that. It was this flame that ran over Europe in the struggle of France against a world in arms. It was this national ideal that was incarnate in Napoleon, as every great

idea that moves the world is sooner or later incarnated. What was it that we saw in Washington on his knees at Valley Forge, or blazing with wrath at the cowardice on Monmouth? in Lincoln entering Richmond with bowed head and infinite sorrow and yearning in his heart? An embodiment of a great national idea and destiny.

In France this ideal burns yet like a flame, and is still evoked by a name. It is the passion of glory, but the desire of a nation, and Napoleon was the incarnation of passion. They say that he is not dead as others are dead, but that he may come again and ride at the head of his legions, and strike down the enemies of France; that his bugle will call the youth from every hamlet, that the roll of his drum will transform France into a camp, and the grenadiers will live again and ride with him, amid hurrahs, and streaming tears, and shouts of "My Emperor! Oh, my Emperor!" Is it only a legend? But the spirit is there; not a boy but dreams of it, not a girl but knots the thought in with her holiday tricolor. That is to have an abiding ideal, and patiently to hold it, in isolation, in defeat, even in an overripe civilization.

We believe--do we not?--in other triumphs than those of the drum and the sword. Our aspirations for the republic are for a nobler example of human society than the world has yet seen. Happy is the country, and the metropolis of the country, whose youth, gilded only by their virtues, have these aspirations.

When the party broke up, the street lamps were beginning to twinkle here and there, and Jack discovered to his surprise that the Twiss business would have to go over to another day. It was such a hurrying life in New York. There was just time for a cup of tea at Mrs. Trafton's. Everybody dropped in there after five o'clock, when the duties of the day were over, with the latest news, and to catch breath before rushing into the program of the evening.

There were a dozen ladies in the drawing-room when Jack entered, and his first impression was that the scream of conversation would be harder to talk against than a Wagner opera; but he presently got his cup of tea, and found a snug seat in the chimney-corner by Miss Tavish; indeed, they moved to it together, and so got a little out of the babel. Jack thought the girl looked even prettier in her walking-dress than when he saw her at the studio; she had style, there was no doubt about that; and then, while there was no invitation in her manner, one felt that she was a woman to whom one could easily say things, and who was liable at any moment to say things interesting herself.

"Is this your first appearance since last night, Mr. Delancy?"

"Oh no; I've been racing about on errands all day. It is very restful to sit down by a calm person."

"Well, I never shut my eyes till nine o'clock. I kept seeing that Spanish woman whirl around and contort, and--do you mind my telling you? --I couldn't just help it, I" (leaning forward to Jack) "got up and tried it before the glass. There! Are you shocked?"

"Not so much shocked as excluded," Jack dared to say. "But do you think--".

"Yes, I know. There isn't anything that an American girl cannot do. I've made up my mind to try it. You'll see."

"Will I?"

"No, you won't. Don't flatter yourself. Only girls. I don't want men around."

"Neither do I," said Jack, honestly.

Miss Tavish laughed. "You are too forward, Mr. Delancy. Perhaps some time, when we have learned, we will let in a few of you, to look in at the door, fifty dollars a ticket, for some charity. I don't see why dancing isn't just as good an accomplishment as playing the harp in a Greek dress."

"Nor do I; I'd rather see it. Besides, you've got Scripture warrant for dancing off the heads of people. And then it is such a sweet way of doing a charity. Dancing for the East Side is the best thing I have heard yet."

"You needn't mock. You won't when you find out what it costs you."

"What are you two plotting?" asked Mrs. Trafton, coming across to the fireplace.

"Charity," said Jack, meekly.

"Your wife was here this morning to get me to go and see some of her friends in Hester Street."

"You went?"

"Not today. It's awfully interesting, but I've been."

"Edith seems to be devoted to that sort of thing," remarked Miss Tavish.

"Yes," said Jack, slowly, "she's got the idea that sympathy is better than money; she says she wants to try to understand other people's lives."

"Goodness knows, I'd like to understand my own."

"And were you trying, Mr. Delancy, to persuade Miss Tavish into that sort of charity?"

"Oh dear, no," said Jack; "I was trying to interest the East End in something, for the benefit of Miss Tavish."

"You'll find that's one of the most expensive remarks you ever made," retorted Miss Tavish, rising to go.

"I wish Lily Tavish would marry," said Mrs. Trafton, watching the girl's slender figure as it passed through the portiere; "she doesn't know what to do with herself."

Jack shrugged his shoulders. "Yes, she'd be a lovely wife for somebody;" and then he added, as if reminiscently, "if he could afford it. Good-by."

"That's just a fashion of talking. I never knew a time when so many

people afforded to do what they wanted to do. But you men are all alike. Good-by."

When Jack reached home it was only a little after six o'clock, and as they were not to go out to dine till eight, he had a good hour to rest from the fatigues of the day, and run over the evening papers and dip into the foreign periodicals to catch a topic or two for the dinner-table.

"Yes, sir," said the maid, "Mrs. Delancy came in an hour ago."

IV

Edith's day had been as busy as Jack's, notwithstanding she had put aside several things that demanded her attention. She denied herself the morning attendance on the Literature Class that was raking over the eighteenth century. This week Swift was to be arraigned. The last time when Edith was present it was Steele. The judgment, on the whole, had been favorable, and there had been a little stir of tenderness among the bonnets over Thackeray's comments on the Christian soldier. It seemed to bring him near to them. "Poor Dick Steele!" said the essayist. Edith declared afterwards that the large woman who sat next to her, Mrs. Jerry Hollowell, whispered to her that she always thought his name was Bessemer; but this was, no doubt, a pleasantry. It was a beautiful essay, and so stimulating! And then there was bouillon, and time to look about at the toilets. Poor Steele, it would have cheered his life to know that a century after his death so many beautiful women, so exquisitely dressed, would have been concerning themselves about him. The function lasted two hours. Edith made a little calculation. In five minutes she could have got from the encyclopaedia all the facts in the essay, and while her maid was doing her hair she could have read five times as much of Steele as the essayist read. And, somehow, she was not stimulated, for the impression seemed to prevail that now Steele was disposed of. And she had her doubts whether literature would, after all, prove to be a permanent social distraction. But Edith may have been too severe in her judgment. There was probably not a woman in the class that day who did not go away with the knowledge that Steele was an author, and that he lived in the eighteenth century. The hope for the country is in the diffusion of knowledge.

Leaving the class to take care of Swift, Edith went to the managers' meeting at the Women's Hospital, where there was much to do of very practical work, pitiful cases of women and children suffering through no fault of their own, and money more difficult to raise than sympathy. The meeting took time and thought. Dismissing her carriage, and relying on elevated and surface cars, Edith then took a turn on the East Side, in company with a dispensary physician whose daily duty called her into the worst parts of the town. She had a habit of these tours before her marriage, and, though they were discouragingly small in direct results, she gained a knowledge of city life that was of immense service in her general charity work. Jack had suggested the danger of these excursions, but she had told him that a woman was less liable to insult in the East Side than in Fifth Avenue, especially at twilight, not because the East Side was a nice quarter of the city, but because it was accustomed to see women who minded their own business go about unattended, and the prowlers had not the habit of going there. She could even relate cases of

chivalrous protection of "ladies" in some of the worst streets.

What Edith saw this day, open to be seen, was not so much sin as ignorance of how to live, squalor, filthy surroundings acquiesced in as the natural order, wonderful patience in suffering and deprivation, incapacity, ill-paid labor, the kindest spirit of sympathy and helpfulness of the poor for each other. Perhaps that which made the deepest impression on her was the fact that such conditions of living could seem natural to those in them, and that they could get so much enjoyment of life in situations that would have been simple misery to her.

The visitors were in a foreign city. The shop signs were in foreign tongues; in some streets all Hebrew. On chance news-stands were displayed newspapers in Russian, Bohemian, Arabic, Italian, Hebrew, Polish, German--none in English. The theatre bills were in Hebrew or other unreadable type. The sidewalks and the streets swarmed with noisy dealers in every sort of second-hand merchandise--vegetables that had seen a better day, fish in shoals. It was not easy to make one's way through the stands and push-carts and the noisy dickering buyers and sellers, who haggled over trifles and chaffed good-naturedly and were strictly intent on their own affairs. No part of the town is more crowded or more industrious. If youth is the hope of the country, the sight was encouraging, for children were in the gutters, on the house steps, at all the windows. The houses seemed bursting with humanity, and in nearly every room of the packed tenements, whether the inmates were sick or hungry, some sort of industry was carried on. In the damp basements were junk-dealers, rag-pickers, goose-pickers. In one noisome cellar, off an alley, among those sorting rags, was an old woman of eighty-two, who could reply to questions only in a jargon, too proud to beg, clinging to life, earning a few cents a day in this foul occupation. But life is sweet even with poverty and rheumatism and eighty years. Did her dull eyes, turning inward, see the Carpathian Hills, a free girlhood in village drudgery and village sports, then a romance of love, children, hard work, discontent, emigration to a New World of promise? And now a cellar by day, the occupation of cutting rags for carpets, and at night a corner in a close and crowded room on a flock bed not fit for a dog. And this was a woman's life.

Picturesque foreign women going about with shawls over their heads and usually a bit of bright color somewhere, children at their games, hawkers loudly crying their stale wares, the click of sewing-machines heard through a broken window, everywhere animation, life, exchange of rough or kindly banter. Was it altogether so melancholy as it might seem? Not everybody was hopelessly poor, for here were lawyers' signs and doctors' signs--doctors in whom the inhabitants had confidence because they charged all they could get for their services--and thriving pawnbrokers' shops. There were parish schools also--perhaps others; and off some dark alley, in a room on the ground-floor, could be heard the strident noise of education going on in high-voiced study and recitation. Nor were amusements lacking--notices of balls, dancing this evening, and ten-cent shows in palaces of legerdemain and deformity.

It was a relenting day in March; patches of blue sky overhead, and the sun had some quality in its shining. The children and the caged birds at the open windows felt it--and there were notes of music here and there above the traffic and the clamor. Turning down a narrow alley, with a gutter in the centre, attracted by festive sounds, the visitors came into a small stone-paved court with a hydrant in the centre surrounded by tall

tenement-houses, in the windows of which were stuffed the garments that would no longer hold together to adorn the person. Here an Italian girl and boy, with a guitar and violin, were recalling *la bella Napoli*, and a couple of pretty girls from the court were footing it as merrily as if it were the grape harvest. A woman opened a lower room door and sharply called to one of the dancing girls to come in, when Edith and the doctor appeared at the bottom of the alley, but her tone changed when she recognized the doctor, and she said, by way of apology, that she didn't like her daughter to dance before strangers. So the music and the dance went on, even little dots of girls and boys shuffling about in a stiff-legged fashion, with applause from all the windows, and at last a largesse of pennies--as many as five altogether--for the musicians. And the sun fell lovingly upon the pretty scene.

But then there were the sweaters' dens, and the private rooms where half a dozen pale-faced tailors stitched and pressed fourteen and sometimes sixteen hours a day, stifling rooms, smelling of the hot goose and steaming cloth, rooms where they worked, where the cooking was done, where they ate, and late at night, when overpowered with weariness, lay down to sleep. Struggle for life everywhere, and perhaps no more discontent and heart-burning and certainly less ennui than in the palaces on the avenues.

The residence of Karl Mulhaus, one of the doctor's patients, was typical of the homes of the better class of poor. The apartment fronted on a small and not too cleanly court, and was in the third story. As Edith mounted the narrow and dark stairways she saw the plan of the house. Four apartments opened upon each landing, in which was the common hydrant and sink. The Mulhaus apartment consisted of a room large enough to contain a bed, a cook-stove, a bureau, a rocking-chair, and two other chairs, and it had two small windows, which would have more freely admitted the southern sun if they had been washed, and a room adjoining, dark, and nearly filled by a big bed. On the walls of the living room were hung highly colored advertising chromos of steamships and palaces of industry, and on the bureau Edith noticed two illustrated newspapers of the last year, a patent-medicine almanac, and a volume of Schiller. The bureau also held Mr. Mulhaus's bottles of medicine, a comb which needed a dentist, and a broken hair-brush. What gave the room, however, a cheerful aspect were some pots of plants on the window-ledges, and half a dozen canary-bird cages hung wherever there was room for them.

None of the family happened to be at home except Mr. Mulhaus, who occupied the rocking-chair, and two children, a girl of four years and a boy of eight, who were on the floor playing "store" with some blocks of wood, a few tacks, some lumps of coal, some scraps of paper, and a tangle of twine. In their prattle they spoke, the English they had learned from their brother who was in a store.

"I feel some better today," said Mr. Mulhaus, brightening up as the visitors entered, "but the cough hangs on. It's three months since this weather that I haven't been out, but the birds are a good deal of company." He spoke in German, and with effort. He was very thin and sallow, and his large feverish eyes added to the pitiful look of his refined face. The doctor explained to Edith that he had been getting fair wages in a type-foundry until he had become too weak to go any longer to the shop.

It was rather hard to have to sit there all day, he explained to the doctor, but they were getting along. Mrs. Mulhaus had got a job of

cleaning that day; that would be fifty cents. Ally--she was twelve--was learning to sew. That was her afternoon to go to the College Settlement. Jimmy, fourteen, had got a place in a store, and earned two dollars a week.

"And Vicky?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, Vicky," piped up the eight-year-old boy. "Vicky's up to the 'stution"--the hospital was probably the institution referred to--"ever so long now. I seen her there, me and Jim did. Such a bootifer place! 'Nd chicken!" he added. "Sis got hurt by a cart."

Vicky was seventeen, and had been in a fancy store.

"Yes," said Mulhaus, in reply to a question, "it pays pretty well raising canaries, when they turn out singers. I made fifteen dollars last year. I hain't sold much lately. Seems 's if people stopped wanting 'em such weather. I guess it 'll be better in the spring."

"No doubt it will be better for the poor fellow himself before spring," said the doctor as they made their way down the dirty stairways. "Now I'll show you one of my favorites."

They turned into a broader street, one of the busy avenues, and passing under an archway between two tall buildings, entered a court of back buildings. In the third story back lived Aunt Margaret. The room was scarcely as big as a ship's cabin, and its one window gave little light, for it opened upon a narrow well of high brick walls. In the only chair Aunt Margaret was seated close to the window. In front of her was a small work-table, with a kerosene lamp on it, but the side of the room towards which she looked was quite occupied by a narrow couch--ridiculously narrow, for Aunt Margaret was very stout. There was a thin chest of drawers on the other side, and the small coal stove that stood in the centre so nearly filled the remaining space that the two visitors were one too many.

"Oh, come in, come in," said the old lady, cheerfully, when the door opened. "I'm glad to see you."

"And how goes it?" asked the doctor.

"First rate. I'm coming on, doctor. Work's been pretty slack for two weeks now, but yesterday I got work for two days. I guess it will be better now."

The work was finishing pantaloons. It used to be a good business before there was so much cutting in.

"I used to get fifteen cents a pair, then ten; now they don't pay but five. Yes, the shop furnishes the thread."

"And how many pairs can you finish in a day?" asked Edith.

"Three--three pairs, to do 'em nice--and they are very particular--if I work from six in the morning till twelve at night. I could do more, but my sight ain't what it used to be, and I've broken my specs."

"So you earn fifteen cents a day?"

"When I've the luck to get work, my lady. Sometimes there isn't any. And things cost so much. The rent is the worst."

It appeared that the rent was two dollars and a half a month. That must be paid, at any rate. Edith made a little calculation that on a flush average of ninety cents a week earned, and allowing so many cents for coal and so many cents for oil, the margin for bread and tea must be small for the month. She usually bought three cents' worth of tea at a time.

"It is kinder close," said the old lady, with a smile. "The worst is, my feet hurt me so I can't stir out. But the neighbors is real kind. The little boy next room goes over to the shop and fetches my pantaloons and takes 'em back. I can get along if it don't come slack again."

Sitting all day by that dim window, half the night stitching by a kerosene lamp; lying for six hours on that narrow couch! How to account for this old soul's Christian resignation and cheerfulness! "For," said the doctor, "she has seen better days; she has moved in high society; her husband, who died twenty years ago, was a policeman. What the old lady is doing is fighting for her independence. She has only one fear--the almshouse."

It was with such scenes as these in her eyes that Edith went to her dressing-room to make her toilet for the Henderson dinner.

V

It was the first time they had dined with the Hendersons. It was Jack's doings. "Certainly, if you wish it," Edith had said when the invitation came. The unmentioned fact was that Jack had taken a little flier in Oshkosh, and a hint from Henderson one evening at the Union, when the venture looked squally, had let him out of a heavy loss into a small profit, and Jack felt grateful.

"I wonder how Henderson came to do it?" Jack was querying, as he and old Fairfax sipped their five-o'clock "Manhattan."

"Oh, Henderson likes to do a good-natured thing still, now and then. Do you know his wife?"

"No. Who was she?"

"Why, old Eschelle's daughter, Carmen; of course you wouldn't know; that was ten years ago. There was a good deal of talk about it at the time."

"How?"

"Some said they'd been good friends before Mrs. Henderson's death."

"Then Carmen, as you call her, wasn't the first?"

"No, but she was an easy second. She's a social climber; bound to get there from the start."

"Is she pretty?"

"Devilish. She's a little thing. I saw her once at Homburg, on the promenade with her mother.

"The kind of sweet blonde, I said to myself, that would mix a man up in a duel before he knew where he was."

"She must be interesting."

"She was always clever, and she knows enough to play a straight game and when to propitiate. I'll bet a five she tells Henderson whom to be good to when the chance offers."

"Then her influence on him is good?"

"My dear sir, she gets what she wants, and Henderson is going to the.... well, look at the lines in his face. I've known Henderson since he came fresh into the Street. He'd rarely knife a friend when his first wife was living. Now, when you see the old frank smile on his face, it's put on."

It was half-past eight when Mr. Henderson with Mrs. Delancy on his arm led the way to the diningroom. The procession was closed by Mrs. Henderson and Mr. Delancy. The Van Dams were there, and Mrs. Chesney and the Chesney girls, and Miss Tavish, who sat on Jack's right, but the rest of the guests were unknown to Jack, except by name. There was a strong dash of the Street in the mixture, and although the Street was tabooed in the talk, there was such an emanation of aggressive prosperity at the table that Jack said afterwards that he felt as if he had been at a meeting of the board.

If Jack had known the house ten years ago, he would have noticed certain subtle changes in it, rather in the atmosphere than in many alterations. The newness and the glitter of cost had worn off. It might still be called a palace, but the city had now a dozen handsomer houses, and Carmen's idea, as she expressed it, was to make this more like a home. She had made it like herself. There were pictures on the walls that would not have hung there in the late Mrs. Henderson's time; and the prevailing air was that of refined sensuousness. Life, she said, was her idea, life in its utmost expression, untrammelled, and yes, a little Greek. Freedom was perhaps the word, and yet her latest notion was simplicity. The dinner was simple. Her dress was exceedingly simple, save that it had in it somewhere a touch of audacity, revealing in a flash of invitation the hidden nature of the woman. She knew herself better than any one knew her, except Henderson, and even he was forced to laugh when she travestied Browning in saying that she had one soul-side to face the world with, one to show the man she loved, and she declared he was downright coarse when on going out of the door he muttered, "But it needn't be the seamy side." The reported remark of some one who had seen her at church that she looked like a nun made her smile, but she broke into a silvery laugh when she heard Van Dam's comment on it, "Yes, a devil of a nun."

The library was as cozy as ever, but did not appear to be used much as a library. Henderson, indeed, had no time to add to his collection or enjoy it. Most of the books strewn on the tables were French novels or such American tales as had the cachet of social riskiness. But Carmen liked the room above all others. She enjoyed her cigarette there, and had a fancy for pouring her five-o'clock tea in its shelter. Books which

had all sorts of things in them gave somehow an unconventional atmosphere to the place, and one could say things there that one couldn't say in a drawing-room.

Henderson himself, it must be confessed, had grown stout in the ten years, and puffy under the eyes. There were lines of irritation in his face and lines of weariness. He had not kept the freshness of youth so well as Carmen, perhaps because of his New England conscience. To his guest he was courteous, seemed to be making an effort to be so, and listened with well-assumed interest to the story of her day's pilgrimage. At length he said, with a smile, "Life seems to interest you, Mrs. Delancy."

"Yes, indeed," said Edith, looking up brightly; "doesn't it you?"

"Why, yes; not life exactly, but things, doing things--conflict."

"Yes, I can understand that. There is so much to be done for everybody."

Henderson looked amused. "You know in the city the gospel is that everybody is to be done."

"Well," said Edith, not to be diverted, "but, Mr. Henderson, what is it all for--this conflict? Perhaps, however, you are fighting the devil?"

"Yes, that's it; the devil is usually the other fellow. But, Mrs. Delancy," added Henderson, with an accent of seriousness, "I don't know what it's all for. I doubt if there is much in it."

"And yet the world credits you with finding a great deal in it."

"The world is generally wrong. Do you understand poker, Mrs. Delancy? No! Of course you do not. But the interest of the game isn't so much in the cards as in the men."

"I thought it was the stakes."

"Perhaps so. But you want to win for the sake of winning. If I gambled it would be a question of nerve. I suppose that which we all enjoy is the exercise of skill in winning."

"And not for the sake of doing anything--just winning? Don't you get tired of that?" asked Edith, quite simply.

There was something in Edith's sincerity, in her fresh enthusiasm about life, that appeared to strike a reminiscent note in Henderson. Perhaps he remembered another face as sweet as hers, and ideals, faint and long ago, that were once mixed with his ideas of success. At any rate, it was with an accent of increased deference, and with a look she had not seen in his face before, that he said:

"People get tired of everything. I'm not sure but it would interest me to see for a minute how the world looks through your eyes." And then he added, in a different tone, "As to your East Side, Mrs. Henderson tried that some years ago."

"Wasn't she interested?"

"Oh, very much. For a time. But she said there was too much of it."

And Edith could detect no tone of sarcasm in the remark.

Down at the other end of the table, matters were going very smoothly. Jack was charmed with his hostess. That clever woman had felt her way along from the heresy trial, through Tuxedo and the Independent Theatre and the Horse Show, until they were launched in a perfectly free conversation, and Carmen knew that she hadn't to look out for thin ice.

"Were you thinking of going on to the Conventional Club tonight, Mr. Delancy?" she was saying.

"I don't belong," said Jack. "Mrs. Delancy said she didn't care for it."

"Oh, I don't care for it, for myself," replied Carmen.

"I do," struck in Miss Tavish. "It's awfully nice."

"Yes, it does seem to fill a want. Why, what do you do with your evenings, Mr. Delancy?"

"Well, here's one of them."

"Yes, I know, but I mean between twelve o'clock and bedtime."

"Oh," said Jack, laughing out loud, "I go to bed--sometimes."

"Yes, 'there's always that. But you want some place to go to after the theatres and the dinners; after the other places are shut up you want to go somewhere and be amused."

"Yes," said Jack, falling in, "it is a fact that there are not many places of amusement for the rich; I understand. After the theatres you want to be amused. This Conventional Club is--"

"I tell you what it is. It's a sort of Midnight Mission for the rich. They never have had anything of the kind in the city."

"And it's very nice," said Miss Tavish, demurely.

The performers are selected. You can see things there that you want to see at other places to which you can't go. And everybody you know is there."

"Oh, I see," said Jack. "It's what the Independent Theatre is trying to do, and what all the theatrical people say needs to be done, to elevate the character of the audiences, and then the managers can give better plays."

"That's just it. We want to elevate the stage," Carmen explained.

"But," continued Jack, "it seems to me that now the audience is select and elevated, it wants to see the same sort of things it liked to see before it was elevated."

"You may laugh, Mr. Delancy," replied Carmen, throwing an earnest simplicity into her eyes, "but why shouldn't women know what is going on as well as men?"

"And why," Miss Tavish asked, "will the serpentine dances and the London

topical songs do any more harm to women than to men?"

"And besides, Mr. Delancy," Carmen said, chiming in, "isn't it just as proper that women should see women dance and throw somersaults on the stage as that men should see them? And then, you know, women are such a restraining influence."

"I hadn't thought of that," said Jack. "I thought the Conventional was for the benefit of the audience, not for the salvation of the performers."

"It's both. It's life. Don't you think women ought to know life? How are they to take their place in the world unless they know life as men know it?"

"I'm sure I don't know whose place they are to take, the serpentine dancer's or mine," said Jack, as if he were studying a problem. "How does your experiment get on, Miss Tavish?"

Carmen looked up quickly.

"Oh, I haven't any experiment," said Miss Tavish, shaking her head. "It's just Mr. Delancy's nonsense."

"I wish I had an experiment. There is so little for women to do. I wish I knew what was right." And Carmen looked mournfully demure, as if life, after all, were a serious thing with her.

"Whatever Mrs. Henderson does is sure to be right," said Jack, gallantly.

Carmen shot at him a quick sympathetic glance, tempered by a grateful smile. "There are so many points of view."

Jack felt the force of the remark as he did the revealing glance. And he had a swift vision of Miss Tavish leading him a serpentine dance, and of Carmen sweetly beckoning him to a pleasant point of view. After all it doesn't much matter. Everything is in the point of view.

After dinner and cigars and cigarettes in the library, the talk dragged a little in duets. The dinner had been charming, the house was lovely, the company was most agreeable. All said that. It had been so somewhere else the night before that, and would be the next night. And the ennui of it all! No one expressed it, but Henderson could not help looking it, and Carmen saw it. That charming hostess had been devoting herself to Edith since dinner. She was so full of sympathy with the East-Side work, asked a hundred questions about it, and declared that she must take it up again. She would order a cage of canaries from that poor German for her kitchen. It was such a beautiful idea. But Edith did not believe in her one bit. She told Jack afterwards that "Mrs. Henderson cares no more for the poor of New York than she does for--"

"Henderson?" suggested Jack.

"Oh, I don't know anything about that. Henderson has only one idea--to get the better of everybody, and be the money king of New York. But I should not wonder if he had once a soft spot in his heart. He is better than she is."

It was still early, lacked half an hour of midnight, and the night was

before them. Some one proposed the Conventional. "Yes," said Carmen; "all come to our box." The Van Dams would go, Miss Tavish, the Chesneys; the suggestion was a relief to everybody. Only Mr. Henderson pleaded important papers that must have his attention that night. Edith said that she was too tired, but that her desertion must not break up the party.

"Then you will excuse me also," said Jack, a little shade of disappointment in his face.

"No, no," said Edith, quickly; "you can drop me on the way. Go, by all means, Jack."

"Do you really want me to go, dear?" said Jack, aside.

"Why of course; I want you to be happy."

And Jack recalled the loving look that accompanied these words, later on, as he sat in the Henderson box at the Conventional, between Carmen and Miss Tavish, and saw, through the slight haze of smoke, beyond the orchestra, the praiseworthy efforts of the Montana Kicker, who had just returned with the imprimatur of Paris, to relieve the ennui of the modern world.

The complex affair we call the world requires a great variety of people to keep it going. At one o'clock in the morning Carmen and our friend Mr. Delancy and Miss Tavish were doing their part. Edith lay awake listening for Jack's return. And in an alley off Rivington Street a young girl, pretty once, unknown to fortune but not to fame, was about to render the last service she could to the world by leaving it.

The impartial historian scarcely knows how to distribute his pathos. By the electric light (and that is the modern light) gayety is almost as pathetic as suffering. Before the Montana girl hit upon the happy device that gave her notoriety, her feet, whose every twinkle now was worth a gold eagle, had trod a thorny path. There was a fortune now in the whirl of her illusory robes, but any day--such are the whims of fashion--she might be wandering again, sick at heart, about the great city, knocking at the side doors of variety shows for any engagement that would give her a pittance of a few dollars a week. How long had Carmen waited on the social outskirts; and now she had come into her kingdom, was she anything but a tinsel queen? Even Henderson, the great Henderson, did the friends of his youth respect him? had he public esteem? Carmen used to cut out the newspaper paragraphs that extolled Henderson's domestic virtue and his generosity to his family, and show them to her lord, with a queer smile on her face. Miss Tavish, in the nervous consciousness of fleeting years, was she not still waiting, dashing here and there like a bird in a net for the sort of freedom, audacious as she was, that seemed denied her? She was still beautiful, everybody said, and she was sought and flattered, because she was always merry and good-natured. Why should Van Dam, speaking of women, say that there were horses that had been set up, and checked up and trained, that held their heads in an aristocratic fashion, moved elegantly, and showed style, long after the spirit had gone out of them? And Jack himself, happily married, with a comfortable income, why was life getting flat to him? What sort of career was it that needed the aid of Carmen and the serpentine dancer? And why not, since it is absolutely necessary that the world should be amused?

We are in no other world when we enter the mean tenement in the alley off

Rivington Street. Here also is the life of the town. The room is small, but it contains a cook-stove, a chest of drawers, a small table, a couple of chairs, and two narrow beds. On the top of the chest are a looking-glass, some toilet articles, and bottles of medicine. The cracked walls are bare and not clean. In one of the beds are two children, sleeping soundly, and on the foot of it is a middle-aged woman, in a soiled woolen gown with a thin figured shawl drawn about her shoulders, a dirty cap half concealing her frowzy hair; she looks tired and worn and sleepy. On the other bed lies a girl of twenty years, a woman in experience. The kerosene lamp on the stand at the head of the bed casts a spectral light on her flushed face, and the thin arms that are restlessly thrown outside the cover. By the bedside sits the doctor, patient, silent, and watchful. The doctor puts her hand caressingly on that of the girl. It is hot and dry. The girl opens her eyes with a startled look, and says, feebly:

"Do you think he will come?"

"Yes, dear, presently. He never fails."

The girl closed her eyes again, and there was silence. The dim rays of the lamp, falling upon the doctor, revealed the figure of a woman of less than medium size, perhaps of the age of thirty or more, a plain little body, you would have said, who paid the slightest possible attention to her dress, and when she went about the city was not to be distinguished from a working-woman. Her friends, indeed, said that she had not the least care for her personal appearance, and unless she was watched, she was sure to go out in her shabbiest gown and most battered hat. She wore tonight a brown ulster and a nondescript black bonnet drawn close down on her head and tied with black strings. In her lap lay her leathern bag, which she usually carried under her arm, that contained medicines, lint, bandages, smelling-salts, a vial of ammonia, and so on; to her patients it was a sort of conjurer's bag, out of which she could produce anything that an emergency called for.

Dr. Leigh was not in the least nervous or excited. Indeed, an artist would not have painted her as a rapt angelic visitant to this abode of poverty. This contact with poverty and coming death was quite in her ordinary experience. It would never have occurred to her that she was doing anything unusual, any more than it would have occurred to the objects of her ministrations to overwhelm her with thanks. They trusted her, that was all. They met her always with a pleasant recognition. She belonged perhaps to their world. Perhaps they would have said that "Dr. Leigh don't handsome much," but their idea was that her face was good. That was what anybody would have said who saw her tonight, "She has such a good face;" the face of a woman who knew the world, and perhaps was not very sanguine about it, had few illusions and few antipathies, but accepted it, and tried in her humble way to alleviate its hardships, without any consciousness of having a mission or making a sacrifice.

Dr. Leigh--Miss Ruth Leigh--was Edith's friend. She had not come from the country with an exalted notion of being a worker among the poor about whom so much was written; she had not even descended from some high circle in the city into this world, moved by a restless enthusiasm for humanity. She was a woman of the people, to adopt a popular phrase. From her childhood she had known them, their wants, their sympathies, their discouragements; and in her heart--though you would not discover this till you had known her long and well--there was a burning sympathy

with them, a sympathy born in her, and not assumed for the sake of having a career. It was this that had impelled her to get a medical education, which she obtained by hard labor and self-denial. To her this was not a means of livelihood, but simply that she might be of service to those all about her who needed help more than she did. She didn't believe in charity, this stout-hearted, clearheaded little woman; she meant to make everybody pay for her medical services who could pay; but somehow her practice was not lucrative, and the little salary she got as a dispensary doctor melted away with scarcely any perceptible improvement in her own wardrobe. Why, she needed nothing, going about as she did.

She sat--now waiting for the end; and the good face, so full of sympathy for the living, had no hope in it. Just another human being had come to the end of her path--the end literally. It was so everyday. Somebody came to the end, and there was nothing beyond. Only it was the end, and that was peace. One o'clock--half-past one. The door opened softly. The old woman rose from the foot of the bed with a start and a low "Herr! gross Gott." It was Father Damon. The girl opened her eyes with a frightened look at first, and then an eager appeal. Dr. Leigh rose to make room for him at the bedside. They bowed as he came forward, and their eyes met. She shook her head. In her eyes was no expectation, no hope. In his was the glow of faith. But the eyes of the girl rested upon his face with a rapt expression. It was as if an angel had entered the room.

Father Damon was a young man, not yet past thirty, slender, erect. He had removed as he came in his broad-brimmed soft hat. The hair was close-cut, but not tonsured. He wore a brown cassock, falling in straight lines, and confined at the waist with a white cord. From his neck depended from a gold chain a large gold cross. His face was smooth-shaven, thin, intellectual, or rather spiritual; the nose long, the mouth straight, the eyes deep gray, sometimes dreamy and puzzling, again glowing with an inner fervor. A face of long vigils and the schooled calmness of repressed energy. You would say a fanatic of God, with a dash of self-consciousness. Dr. Leigh knew him well. They met often on their diverse errands, and she liked, when she could, to go to vespers in the little mission chapel of St. Anselm, where he ministered. It was not the confessional that attracted her, that was sure; perhaps not altogether the service, though that was soothing in certain moods; but it was the noble personality of Father Damon. He was devoted to the people as she was, he understood them; and for the moment their passion of humanity assumed the same aspect, though she knew that what he saw, or thought he saw, lay beyond her agnostic vision.

Father Damon was an Englishman, a member of a London Anglican order, who had taken the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, who had been for some years in New York, and had finally come to live on the East Side, where his work was. In a way he had identified himself with the people; he attended their clubs; he was a Christian socialist; he spoke on the inequalities of taxation; the strikers were pretty sure of his sympathy; he argued the injustice of the present ownership of land. Some said that he had joined a lodge of the Knights of Labor. Perhaps it was these things, quite as much as his singleness of purpose and his spiritual fervor, that drew Dr. Leigh to him with a feeling that verged on devotion. The ladies up-town, at whose tables Father Damon was an infrequent guest, were as fully in sympathy with this handsome and aristocratic young priest, and thought it beautiful that he should devote himself to the poor and the sinful; but they did not see why he should adopt their views.

It was at the mission that Father Damon had first seen the girl. She had ventured in not long ago at twilight, with her cough and her pale face, in a silk gown and flower-garden of a hat, and crept into one of the confessional boxes, and told him her story.

"Do you think, Father," said the girl, looking up wistfully, "that I can --can be forgiven?"

Father Damon looked down sadly, pitifully. "Yes, my daughter, if you repent. It is all with our Father. He never refuses."

He knelt down, with his cross in his hand, and in a low voice repeated the prayer for the dying. As the sweet, thrilling voice went on in supplication the girl's eyes closed again, and a sweet smile played about her mouth; it was the innocent smile of the little girl long ago, when she might have awakened in the morning and heard the singing of birds at her window.

When Father Damon arose she seemed to be sleeping. They all stood in silence for a moment.

"You will remain?" he asked the doctor.

"Yes," she said, with the faintest wan smile on her face. "It is I, you know, who have care of the body."

At the door he turned and said, quite low, "Peace be to this house!"

VI

Father Damon came dangerously near to being popular. The austerity of his life and his known self-chastening vigils contributed to this effect. His severely formal, simple ecclesiastical dress, coarse in material but perfect in its saintly lines, separated him from the world in which he moved so unostentatiously and humbly, and marked him as one who went about doing good. His life was that of self-absorption and hardship, mortification of the body, denial of the solicitation of the senses, struggling of the spirit for more holiness of purpose--a life of supplication for the perishing souls about him. And yet he was so informed with the modern spirit that he was not content, as a zealot formerly might have been, to snatch souls out of the evil that is in the world, but he strove to lessen the evil. He was a reformer. It was probably this feature of his activity, and not his spiritual mission, that attracted to him the little group of positivists on the East Side, the demagogues of the labor lodges, the practical workers of the working-girls' clubs, and the humanitarian agnostics like Dr. Leigh, who were literally giving their lives without the least expectation of reward. Even the refined ethical-culture groups had no sneer for Father Damon. The little chapel of St. Anselm was well known. It was always open. It was plain, but its plainness was not the barrenness of a non-conformist chapel. There were two confessionals; a great bronze lamp attached to one of the pillars scarcely dispelled the obscurity, but cast an unnatural light upon the gigantic crucifix that hung from a beam in front of the chancel. There were half a dozen rows of backless benches in the centre of the chapel. The bronze lamp, and the candles always burning

upon the altar, rather accented than dissipated the heavy shadows in the vaulted roof. At no hour was it empty, but at morning prayer and at vespers the benches were apt to be filled, and groups of penitents or spectators were kneeling or standing on the floor. At vespers there were sure to be carriages in front of the door, and among the kneeling figures were ladies who brought into these simple services for the poor something of the refinement of grace as it is in the higher circles. Indeed, at the hour set apart for confession, there were in the boxes saints from up-town as well as sinners from the slums. Sometimes the sinners were from up-town and the saints from the slums.

When the organ sounded, and through a low door in the chancel the priest entered, preceded by a couple of acolytes, and advanced swiftly to the reading-desk, there was an awed hush in the congregation. One would not dare to say that there was a sentimental feeling for the pale face and rapt expression of the devotee. It was more than that. He had just come from some scene of suffering, from the bed of one dying; he was weary with watching. He was faint with lonely vigils; he was visibly carrying the load of the poor and the despised. Even Ruth Leigh, who had dropped in for half an hour in one of her daily rounds--even Ruth Leigh, who had in her stanch, practical mind a contempt for forms and rituals, and no faith in anything that she could not touch, and who at times was indignant at the efforts wasted over the future of souls concerning which no one knew anything, when there were so many bodies, which had inherited disease and poverty and shame, going to worldly wreck before so-called Christian eyes--even she could scarcely keep herself from adoring this self-sacrificing spirit. The woes of humanity grieved him as they grieved her, and she used to say she did not care what he believed so long as he gave his life for the needy.

It was when he advanced to the altar-rail to speak that the man best appeared. His voice, which was usually low and full of melody, could be something terrible when it rose in denunciation of sin. Those who had traveled said that he had the manner of a preaching friar--the simple language, so refined and yet so homely and direct, the real, the inspired word, the occasional hastening torrent of words. When he had occasion to address one of the societies of ladies for the promotion of something among the poor, his style and manner were simplicity itself. One might have said there was a shade of contempt in his familiar and not seldom slightly humorous remarks upon society and its aims and aspirations, about which he spoke plainly and vigorously. And this was what the ladies liked. Especially when he referred to the pitifulness of class distinctions, in the light of the example of our Lord, in our short pilgrimage in this world. This unveiling and denunciation made them somehow feel nearer to their work, and, indeed, while they sat there, co-workers with this apostle of righteousness.

Perhaps there was something in the priestly dress that affected not only the congregation in the chapel, but all the neighborhood in which Father Damon lived. There was in the long robe, with its feminine lines, an assurance to the women that he was set apart and not as others were; and, on the other hand, the semi-feminine suggestion of the straight-falling garment may have had for the men a sort of appeal for defense and even protection. It is certain, at any rate, that Father Damon had the confidence of high and low, rich and poor. The forsaken sought him out, the hungry went to him, the dying sent for him, the criminal knocked at the door of his little room, even the rich reprobate would have opened his bad heart to him sooner than to any one else. It is evident, therefore, that Father Damon was dangerously near to being popular.

Human vanity will feed on anything within its reach, and there has been discovered yet no situation that will not minister to its growth. Suffering perhaps it prefers, and contumely and persecution. Are not opposition, spiteful anger, slander even, rejection of men, stripes even, if such there could be in these days, manna to the devout soul consciously set apart for a mission? But success, obsequiousness, applause, the love of women, the concurrent good opinion of all humanitarians, are these not almost as dangerous as persecution? Father Damon, though exalted in his calling, and filled with a burning zeal, was a sincere man, and even his eccentricities of saintly conduct expressed to his mind only the high purpose of self-sacrifice. Yet he saw, he could not but see, the spiritual danger in this rising tide of adulation. He fought against its influence, he prayed against it, he tried to humiliate himself, and his very humiliations increased the adulation. He was perplexed, almost ashamed, and examined himself to see how it was that he himself seemed to be thwarting his own work. Sometimes he withdrew from it for a week together, and buried himself in a retreat in the upper part of the island. Alas! did ever a man escape himself in a retreat? It made him calm for the moment. But why was it, he asked himself, that he had so many followers, his religion so few? Why was it, he said, that all the humanitarians, the reformers, the guilds, the ethical groups, the agnostics, the male and female knights, sustained him, and only a few of the poor and friendless knocked, by his sollicitation, at the supernatural door of life? How was it that a woman whom he encountered so often, a very angel of mercy, could do the things he was doing, tramping about in the misery and squalor of the great city day and night, her path unilluminated by a ray from the future life?

Perhaps he had been remiss in his duty. Perhaps he was letting a vague philanthropy take the place of a personal solicitude for individual souls. The elevation of the race! What had the land question to do with the salvation of man? Suppose everybody on the East Side should become as industrious, as self-denying, as unselfish as Ruth Leigh, and yet without belief, without hope! He had accepted the humanitarian situation with her, and never had spoken to her of the eternal life. What unfaithfulness to his mission and to her! It should be so no longer.

It was after one of his weeks of retreat, at the close of vesper service, that Dr. Leigh came to him. He had been saying in his little talk that poverty is no excuse for irreligion, and that all aid in the hardship of this world was vain and worthless unless the sinner laid hold on eternal life. Dr. Leigh, who was laboring with a serious practical problem, heard this coldly, and with a certain contempt for what seemed to her a vague sort of consolation.

"Well," he said, when she came to him in the vestry, with a drop from the rather austere manner in which he had spoken, "what can I do for you?"

"For me, nothing, Father Damon. I thought perhaps you would go round with me to see a pretty bad case. It is in your parish."

"Ah, did they send for me? Do they want spiritual help?"

"First the natural, then the spiritual," she replied, with a slight tone of sarcasm in her voice. "That's just like a priest," she was thinking. "I do not know what to do, and something must be done."

"Did you report to the Associated Charities?"

"Yes. But there's a hitch somewhere. The machine doesn't take hold. The man says he doesn't want any charity, any association, treating him like a pauper. He's off peddling; but trade is bad, and he's been away a week. I'm afraid he drinks a little."

"Well?"

"The mother is sick in bed. I found her trying to do some fine stitching, but she was too weak to hold up the muslin. There are five young children. The family never has had help before."

Father Damon put on his hat, and they went out together, and for some time picked their way along the muddy streets in silence.

At length he asked, in a softened voice, "Is the mother a Christian?"

"I didn't ask," she replied shortly. "I found her crying because the children were hungry."

Father Damon, still under the impression of his neglect of duty, did not heed her warning tone, but persisted, "You have so many opportunities, Dr. Leigh, in your visits of speaking a word."

"About what?" she asked, refusing to understand, and hardened at the slightest sign of what she called cant.

"About the necessity of repentance and preparation for another life," he answered, softly but firmly. "You surely do not think human beings are created just for this miserable little experience here?"

"I don't know. I have too much to do with the want and suffering I see to raise anxieties about a world of which no one can possibly know anything."

"Pardon me," he persisted, "have you no sense of incompleteness in this life, in your own life? no inward consciousness of an undying personality?"

The doctor was angry for a moment at this intrusion. It had seemed natural enough for Father Damon to address his exhortations to the poor and sinful of his mission. She admired his spirit, she had a certain sympathy with him; for who could say that ministering to minds diseased might not have a physical influence to lift these people into a more decent and prosperous way of living? She had thought of herself as working with him to a common end. But for him now to turn upon her, absolutely ignoring the solid, rational, and scientific ground on which he knew, or should know, she stood, and to speak to her as one of the "lost," startled her, and filled her with indignation. She had on her lips a sarcastic reply to the effect that even if she had a soul, she had not taken up her work in the city as a means of saving it; but she was not given to sarcasm, and before she spoke she looked at her companion, and saw in the eyes a look of such genuine humble feeling, contradicting the otherwise austere expression of his face, that her momentary bitterness passed away.

"I think, Father Damon," she said, gently, "we had better not talk of that. I don't have much time for theorizing, you know, nor much inclination," she added.

The priest saw that for the present he could make no progress, and after a little silence the conversation went back to the family they were about to visit.

They found the woman better--at least, more cheerful. Father Damon noticed that there were medicines upon the stand, and that there were the remains of a meal which the children had been eating. He turned to the doctor. "I see that you have been providing for them."

"Oh, the eldest boy had already been out and begged a piece of bread when I came. Of course they had to have something more at once. But it is very little that I can do."

He sat down by the bed, and talked with the mother, getting her story, while the doctor tidied up the room a bit, and then, taking the youngest child in her lap and drawing the others about her, began to tell a story in a low voice. Presently she was aware that the priest was on his knees and saying a prayer. She stopped in her story, and looked out through the dirty window into the chill and dark area.

"What is he doing?" whispered one of the children.

"I don't know," she said, and a sort of chill came over her heart. It all seemed a mockery, in these surroundings.

When he rose he said to the woman, "We will see that you do not want till your husband comes back."

"And I will look in tomorrow," said the doctor.

When they were in the street, Father Damon thanked her for calling his attention to the case, thanked her a little formally, and said that he would make inquiries and have it properly attended to. And then he asked: "Is your work ended for the day? You must be tired."

"Oh, no; I have several visits to make. I'm not tired. I rather think it is good for me, being out-of-doors so much." She thanked him, and said good-by.

For a moment he stood and watched the plain, resolute little woman threading her way through the crowded and unclean street, and then slowly walked away to his apartment, filled with sadness and perplexity.

The apartment which he occupied was not far from the mission chapel, and it was the one clean spot among the ill-kept tenements; but as to comfort, it was not much better than the cell of an anchorite. Of this, however, he was not thinking as he stretched himself out on his pallet to rest a little from the exhausting labors of the day. Probably it did not occur to him that his self-imposed privations lessened his strength for his work.

He was thinking of Ruth Leigh. What a rare soul! And yet apparently she did not think or care whether she had a soul. What could be the spring of her incessant devotion? If ever woman went about doing good in an unselfish spirit it was she. Yet she confessed her work hopeless. She had no faith, no belief in immortality, no expectation of any reward, nothing to offer to anybody beyond this poor life. Was this the enthusiasm of humanity, of which he heard so much? But she did not seem to have any illusions, or to be burned up by enthusiasm. She just kept

on. Ah, he thought, what a woman she would be if she were touched by the fire of faith!

Meantime, Ruth Leigh went on her round. One day was like another, except that every day the kaleidoscope of misery showed new combinations, new phases of suffering and incompetence, and there was always a fresh interest in that. For years now this had been her life, in the chill of winter and the heat of summer, without rest or vacation. The amusements, the social duties, the allurements of dress and society, that so much occupied the thoughts of other women, did not seem to come into her life. For books she had little time, except the books of her specialty. The most exciting novels were pale compared with her daily experiences of real life. Almost her only recreation was a meeting of the working-girls, a session of her labor lodge, or an assembly at the Cooper Union, where some fiery orator, perhaps a priest, or a clever agitator, a working-man glib of speech, who had a mass of statistics at the end of his tongue, who read and discussed, in some private club of zealots of humanity, metaphysics, psychology, and was familiar with the whole literature of labor and socialism, awoke the enthusiasm of the discontented or the unemployed, and where men and women, in clear but homely speech, told their individual experiences of wrong and injustice. There was evidence in all these demonstrations and organizations that the world was moving, and that the old order must change.

Years and years the little woman had gone on with her work, and she frankly confessed to Edith, one day when they were together going her rounds, that she could see no result from it all. The problem of poverty and helplessness and incapacity seemed to her more hopeless than when she began. There might be a little enlightenment here and there, but there was certainly not less misery. The state of things was worse than she thought at first; but one thing cheered her: the people were better than she thought. They might be dull and suspicious in the mass, but she found so much patience, unselfishness, so many people of good hearts and warm affections.

"They are the people," she said, "I should choose for friends. They are natural, unsophisticated. And do you know," she went on, "that what most surprises me is the number of reading, thoughtful people among those who do manual labor. I doubt if on your side of town the, best books, the real fundamental and abstruse books, are so read and discussed, or the philosophy of life is so seriously considered, as in certain little circles of what you call the working-classes."

"Isn't it all very revolutionary?" asked Edith.

"Perhaps," replied the doctor, dryly. "But they have no more fads than other people. Their theories seem to them not only practical, but they try to apply them to actual legislation; at any rate, they discriminate in vagaries. You would have been amused the other night in a small circle at the lamentations over a member--he was a car-driver--who was the authoritative expositor of Schopenhauer, because he had gone off into Theosophy. It showed such weakness."

"I have heard that the members of that circle were Nihilists."

"The club has not that name, but probably the members would not care to repudiate the title, or deny that they were Nihilists theoretically--that is, if Nihilism means an absolute social and political overturning in order that something better may be built up. And, indeed, if you see

what a hopeless tangle our present situation is, where else can the mind logically go?"

"It is pitiful enough," Edith admitted. "But all this movement you speak of seems to me a vague agitation."

"I don't think," the doctor said, after a moment, "that you appreciate the intellectual force that is in it all, or allow for the fermenting power in the great discontented mass of these radical theories on the problem of life."

This was a specimen of the sort of talk that Edith and the doctor often drifted into in their mission work. As Ruth Leigh tramped along late this afternoon in the slush of the streets, from one house of sickness and poverty to another, a sense of her puny efforts in this great mass of suffering and injustice came over her anew. Her indignation rose against the state of things. And Father Damon, who was trying to save souls, was he accomplishing anything more than she? Why had he been so curt with her when she went to him for help this afternoon? Was he just a narrow-minded, bigoted priest? A few nights before she had heard him speak on the single tax at a labor meeting. She recalled his eloquence, his profound sympathy with the cause of the people, the thrilling, pathetic voice, the illumination of his countenance, the authority, the consecration in his attitude and dress; and he was transfigured to her then, as he was now in her thought, into an apostle of humanity. Alas! she thought, what a leader he would be if he would break loose from his superstitious traditions!

VII

The acquaintance between the house of Henderson and the house of Delancy was not permitted to languish. Jack had his reasons for it, which may have been financial, and Carmen had her reasons, which were probably purely social. What was the good of money if it did not bring social position? and what, on the other hand, was the good of social position if you could not use it to get money?

In his recent association with the newly rich, Jack's twenty thousand a year began to seem small. In fact, in the lowering of the rate of interest and the shrinkage of securities, it was no longer twenty thousand a year. This would have been a matter of little consequence in the old order. His lot was not cast among the poor; most of his relations had solid fortunes, and many of them were millionaires, or what was equivalent to that, before the term was invented. But they made little display; none at all merely for the purpose of exhibition, or to gain or keep social place. In this atmosphere in which he was born Jack floated along without effort, with no demand upon him to keep up with a rising standard of living. Even impecuniosity, though inconvenient, would not have made him lose caste.

All this was changing now. Since the introduction of a new element even the conservative old millions had begun to feel the stir of uneasiness, and to launch out into extravagance in rivalry with the new millions. Even with his relations Jack began to feel that he was poor. It did not spur him to do anything, to follow the example, for instance, of the young fellows from the country, who were throwing themselves into Wall

Street with the single purpose of becoming suddenly rich, but it made him uneasy. And when he was with the Hendersons, or Miss Tavish, whose father, though not newly rich, was one of the most aggressive of speculators, and saw how easily every luxurious desire glided into fulfillment, he felt for the first time in his life the emotion of envy. It seemed then that only unlimited money could make the world attractive. Why, even to keep up with the unthinking whims of Miss Tavish would bankrupt him in six months. That little spread at Wherry's for the theatre party the other night, though he made light of it to Edith, was almost the price he couldn't afford to pay for Storm. He had a grim thought that midwinter flowers made dining as expensive as dying. Carmen, whom nothing escaped, complimented him on his taste, quite aware that he couldn't afford it, and, apropos, told him of a lady in Chicago who, hearing that the fashion had changed, wrote on her dinner cards, "No flowers." It was only a matter of course for these people to build a new country-house in any spot that fashion for the moment indicated, to equip their yachts for a Mediterranean voyage or for loitering down the Southern coast, to give a ball that was the talk of the town, to make up a special train of luxurious private cars for Mexico or California. Even at the clubs the talk was about these things and the opportunities for getting them.

There was a rumor about town that Henderson was a good deal extended. It alarmed a hundred people, not on Henderson's account, but their own. When one of them consulted Uncle Jerry, that veteran smiled.

"Oh, I guess Henderson's all right. But I wouldn't wonder if it meant a squeeze. Of course if he's extended, it's an excuse for settling up, and the shorts will squeal. I've seen Henderson extended a good many times," and the old man laughed. "Don't you worry about him."

This opinion, when reported, did not seem to quiet Jack's fears, who saw his own little venture at the mercy of a sweeping Street game. It occurred to him that he possibly might get a little light on the matter by dropping in that afternoon and taking a quiet cup of tea with Mrs. Henderson.

He found her in the library. Outdoors winter was slouching into spring with a cold drizzle, with a coating of ice on the pavements-animating weather for the medical profession. Within, there was the glow of warmth and color that Carmen liked to create for herself. In an entrancing tea-gown, she sat by a hickory fire, with a fresh magazine in one hand and a big paper-cutter in the other. She rose at Jack's entrance, and, extending her hand, greeted him with a most cordial smile. It was so good of him! She was so lonesome! He could himself see that the lonesomeness was dissipated, as she seated him in a comfortable chair by the fire, and then stood a moment looking at him, as if studying his comfort. She was such a domestic woman!

"You look tired, monsieur," she said, as she passed behind his chair and rested the tip of her forefinger for a second on his head. "I shall make you a cup of tea at once."

"Not tired, but bothered," said Jack, stretching out his legs.

"I know," she replied; "it's a bothering world." She was still behind him, and spoke low, but with sympathy. "I remember, it's only one lump."

He could feel her presence, so womanly and friendly. "I don't care what

people say," he was thinking, "she's a good-hearted little thing, and understands men." He felt that he could tell her anything, almost anything that he could tell a man. She was sympathetic and not squeamish.

"There," she said, handing him the tea and looking down on him.

The cup was dainty, the fragrance of the tea delicious, the woman exquisite.

"I'm better already," said Jack, with a laugh.

She made a cup for herself, handed him the cigarettes, lit one for herself, and sat on a low stool not far from him.

"Now what is it?"

"Oh, nothing--a little business worry. Have you heard any Street rumor?"

"Rumor?" she repeated, with a little start. And then, leaning forward, "Do you mean that about Mr. Henderson in the morning papers?"

"Yes."

Carmen, relieved, gave a liquid little laugh, and then said, with a change to earnestness: "I'm going to trust you, my friend. Henderson put it in himself! He told me so this morning when I asked him about it. This is just between ourselves."

Jack said, "Of course," but he did not look relieved. The clever creature divined the situation without another word, for there was no turn in the Street that she was not familiar with. But there was no apparent recognition of it, except in her sympathetic tone, when she said: "Well, the world is full of annoyances. I'm bothered myself--and such a little thing."

"What is it?"

"Oh nothing, not even a rumor. You cannot do anything about it. I don't know why I should tell you. But I will." And she paused a moment, looking down in an innocent perplexity. "It's just this: I am on the Foundlings' Board with Mrs. Schuyler Blunt, and I don't know her, and you can't think how awkward it is having to meet her every week in that stiff kind of way." She did not go on to confide to Jack how she had intrigued to get on the board, and how Mrs. Schuyler Blunt, in the most well-bred manner, had practically ignored her.

"She's an old friend of mine."

"Indeed! She's a charming woman."

"Yes. We were great cronies when she was Sadie Mack. She isn't a genius, but she is good-hearted. I suppose she is on all the charity boards in the city. She patronizes everything," Jack continued, with a smile.

"I'm sure she is," said Carmen, thinking that however good-hearted she might be she was very "snubby." "And it makes it all the more awkward, for I am interested in so many things myself."

"I can arrange all that," Jack said, in an off-hand way. Carmen's look of gratitude could hardly be distinguished from affection. "That's easy enough. We are just as good friends as ever, though I fancy she doesn't altogether approve of me lately. It's rather nice for a fellow, Mrs. Henderson, to have a lot of women keeping him straight, isn't it?" asked Jack, in the tone of a bad boy.

"Yes. Between us all we will make a model of you. I am so glad now that I told you."

Jack protested that it was nothing. Why shouldn't friends help each other? Why not, indeed, said Carmen, and the talk went on a good deal about friendship, and the possibility of it between a man and a woman. This sort of talk is considered serious and even deep, not to say philosophic. Carmen was a great philosopher in it. She didn't know, but she believed, it seemed natural, that every woman should have one man friend. Jack rose to go.

"So soon?" And it did seem pathetically soon. She gave him her hand, and then by an impulse she put her left hand over his, and looked up to him in quite a business way.

"Mr. Delancy, don't you be troubled about that rumor we were speaking of. It will be all right. Trust me."

He understood perfectly, and expressed both his understanding and his gratitude by bending over and kissing the little hand that lay in his.

When he had gone, Carmen sat a long time by the fire reflecting. It would be sweet to humiliate the Delancy and Schuyler Blunt set, as Henderson could. But what would she gain by that? It would be sweeter still to put them under obligations, and profit by that. She had endured a good many social rebuffs in her day, this tolerant little woman, and the sting of their memory could only be removed when the people who had ignored her had to seek social favors she could give. If Henderson only cared as much for such things as she did! But he was at times actually brutal about it. He seemed to have only one passion. She herself liked money, but only for what it would bring. Henderson was like an old Pharaoh, who was bound to build the biggest pyramid ever built to his memory; he hated to waste a block. But what was the good of that when one had passed beyond the reach of envy?

Revolving these deep things in her mind, she went to her dressing-room and made an elaborate toilet for dinner. Yet it was elaborately simple. That sort needed more study than the other. She would like to be the Carmen of ten years ago in Henderson's eyes.

Her lord came home late, and did not dress for dinner. It was often so, and the omission was usually not allowed to pass by Carmen without notice, to which Henderson was sure to growl that he didn't care to be always on dress parade. Tonight Carmen was all graciousness and warmth. Henderson did not seem to notice it. He ate his dinner abstractedly, and responded only in monosyllables to her sweet attempts at conversation. The fact was that the day had been a perplexing one; he was engaged in one of his big fights, a scheme that aroused all his pugnacity and taxed all his resources. He would win--of course; he would smash everybody, but he would win. When he was in this mood Carmen felt that she was like a daisy in the path of a cyclone. In the first year of their marriage he

used to consult her about all his schemes, and value her keen understanding. She wondered why he did not now. Did he distrust even her, as he did everybody else? Tonight she asked no questions. She was unruffled by his short responses to her conversational attempts; by her subtle, wifely manner she simply put herself on his side, whatever the side was.

In the library she brought him his cigar, and lighted it. She saw that his coffee was just as he liked it. As she moved about, making things homelike, Henderson noticed that she was more Carmenish than he had seen her in a long time. The sweet ways and the simple toilet must be by intention. And he knew her so well. He began to be amused and softened. At length he said, in his ordinary tone, "Well, what is it?"

"What is what, dear?"

"What do you want?"

Carmen looked perplexed and sweetly surprised. There is nothing so pitiful about habitual hypocrisy as that it never deceives anybody. It was not the less painful now that Carmen knew that Henderson knew her to the least fibre of her self-seeking soul, and that she felt that there were currents in his life that she could not calculate. A man is so much more difficult to understand than a woman, she reflected. And yet he is so susceptible that he can be managed even when he knows he is being managed. Carmen was not disconcerted for a moment. She replied, with her old candor:

"What an idea! You give me everything I want before I know what it is."

"And before I know it either," he responded, with a grim smile. "Well, what is the news today?"

"Just the same old round. The Foundlings' Board, for one thing."

"Are you interested in foundlings?"

"Not much," said Carmen, frankly. "I'm interested in those that find them. I told you how hateful that Mrs. Schuyler Blunt is."

"Why don't you cut her? Why don't you make it uncomfortable for her?"

"I can't find out," she said, with a laugh, dropping into the language of the Street, "anything she is short in, or I would."

"And you want me to get a twist on old Blunt?" and Henderson roared with laughter at the idea.

"No, indeed. Dear, you are just a goose, socially. It is nothing to you, but you don't understand what we women have to go through. You don't know how hard it is--that woman!"

"What has she done?"

"Nothing. That's just it. What do you say in the Street--freeze? Well, she is trying to freeze me out."

Henderson laughed again. "Oh, I'll back you against the field."

"I don't want to be backed," said Carmen; "I want some sympathy."

"Well, what is your idea?"

"I was going to tell you. Mr. Delancy dropped in this afternoon for a cup of tea--"

"Oh!"

"Yes, and he knows Mrs. Schuyler Blunt well; they are old friends, and he is going to arrange it."

"Arrange what?"

"Why, smooth everything out, don't you know. But, Rodney, I do want you to do something for me; not for me exactly, but about this. Won't you look out for Mr. Delancy in this deal?"

"Seems to me you are a good deal interested in Jack Delancy," said Henderson, in a sneering tone. The remark was a mistake, for it gave Carmen the advantage, and he did not believe it was just. He knew that Carmen was as passionless as a diamond, whatever even she might pretend for a purpose.

"Aren't you ashamed!" she cried, with indignation, and her eyes flared for an instant and then filled with tears. "And I try so hard."

"But I can't look out for all the lame ducks."

"He isn't a duck," said Carmen, using her handkerchief; "I'd hate him for a duck. It's just to help me, when you know, when you know--and it is so hard," and the tears came again.

Did Henderson believe? After all, what did it matter? Perhaps, after all, the woman had a right to her game, as he had to his.

"Oh, well," he said, "don't take on about it. I'll fix it. I'll make a memorandum this minute. Only don't you bother me in the future with too many private kites."

Carmen dried her eyes. She did not look triumphant; she just looked sweet and grateful, like a person who had been helped. She went over and kissed her lord on the forehead, and sat on the arm of his chair, not too long, and then patted him on the shoulder, and said he was a good fellow, and she was a little bother, and so went away like a dutiful little wife.

And Henderson sat looking into the fire and musing, with the feeling that he had been at the theatre, and that the comedy had been beautifully played.

His part of the play was carried out next day in good faith. One of the secrets of Henderson's success was that he always did what he said he would do. This attracted men to him personally, and besides he found, as Bismarck did, that it was more serviceable to him than lying, for the crafty world usually banks upon insincerity and indirectness. But while he kept his word he also kept his schemes to himself, and executed them with a single regard to his own interest and a Napoleonic selfishness. He did not lie to enemy or friend, but he did not spare either when either was in his way. He knew how to appeal to the self-interest of his

fellows, and in time those who had most to do with him trusted him least when he seemed most generous in his offers.

When, the next day, his secretary reported to him briefly that Delancy was greatly elated with the turn things had taken for him, and was going in again, Henderson smiled sardonically, and said, "It was the worst thing I could have done for him."

Jack, who did not understand the irony of his temporary rescue, and had little experience of commercial integrity, so called, was intent on fulfilling his part of the understanding with Carmen. This could best be effected by a return dinner to the Hendersons. The subject was broached at breakfast in an off-hand manner to Edith.

It was not an agreeable subject to Edith, that was evident; but it was not easy for her to raise objections to the dinner. She had gone to the Hendersons' to please Jack, in her policy of yielding in order to influence him; but having accepted the hospitality, she could not object to returning it. The trouble was in making the list.

"I do not know," said Edith, "who are the Hendersons' friends."

"Oh, that doesn't matter. Ask our friends. If we are going to do a thing to please them, no use in doing it half-way, so as to offend them, by drawing social lines against them."

"Well, suggest."

"There's Mavick; he'll be over from Washington next week."

"That's good; and, oh, I'll ask Father Damon."

"Yes; he'll give a kind of flavor to it. I shouldn't wonder if he would like to meet such a man as Henderson."

"And then the Van Dams and Miss Tavish; they were at Henderson's, and would help to make it easy."

"Yes; well, let's see. The Schuyler Blunts?"

"Oh, they wouldn't do at all. They wouldn't come. She wouldn't think of going to the Hendersons'."

"But she would come to us. I don't think she would mind once in a way."

"But why do you want them?"

"I don't want them particularly; but it would no doubt please the Hendersons more than any other thing we could do-and, well, I don't want to offend Henderson just now. It's a little thing, anyway. What's the use of all this social nonsense? We are not responsible for either the Hendersons or the Blunts being in the world. No harm done if they don't come. You invite them, and I'll take the responsibility."

So it was settled, against Edith's instinct of propriety, and the dinner was made up by the addition of the elder Miss Chesney. And Jack did persuade Mrs. Blunt to accept. In fact, she had a little curiosity to see the man whose name was in the newspapers more prominently than that of the President.

It was a bright thought to secure Mr. Mavick. Mr. Thomas Mavick was socially one of the most desirable young men of the day. Matrimonially he was not a prize, for he was without fortune and without powerful connections. He had a position in the State Department. Originally he came from somewhere in the West, it was said, but he had early obtained one or two minor diplomatic places; he had lived a good deal abroad; he had traveled a little--a good deal, it would seem, from his occasional Oriental allusions. He threw over his past a slight mystery, not too much; and he always took himself seriously. His salary was sufficient to set up a bachelor very comfortably who always dined out; he dressed in the severity of the fashion; he belonged only to the best clubs, where he unbent more than anywhere else; he was credited with knowing a good deal more than he would tell. It was believed, in fact, that he had a great deal of influence. The President had been known to send for him on delicate personal business with regard to appointments, and there were certain ticklish diplomatic transactions that he was known to have managed most cleverly. His friends could see his hand in state papers. This he disclaimed, but he never denied that he knew the inside of whatever was going on in Washington. Even those who thought him a snob said he was clever. He had perfectly the diplomatic manner, and the reserve of one charged with grave secrets. Whatever he disclosed was always in confidence, so that he had the reputation of being as discreet as he was knowing. With women he was of course a favorite, for he knew how to be confidential without disclosing anything, and the hints he dropped about persons in power simply showed that he was secretly manoeuvring important affairs, and could make the most interesting revelations if he chose. His smile and the shake of his head at the club when talk was personal conveyed a world of meaning. Tom Mavick was, in short, a most accomplished fellow. It was evident that he carried on the State Department, and the wonder to many was that he was not in a position to do it openly. His social prestige was as mysterious as his diplomatic, but it was now unquestioned, and he might be considered as one of the first of a class who are to reconcile social and political life in this country.

VIII

Looking back upon this dinner of the Delancys, the student of human affairs can see how Providence uses small means for the accomplishment of its purposes. Of all our social contrivances, the formal dinner is probably the cause of more anxiety in the arrangement, of more weariness in the performance, and usually of less satisfaction in the retrospect than any other social function. However carefully the guests are selected, it lacks the spontaneity that gives intellectual zest to the chance dining together of friends. This Delancy party was made up for reasons which are well understood, and it seemed to have been admirably well selected; and yet the moment it assembled it was evident that it could not be very brilliant or very enjoyable. Doubtless you, madam, would have arranged it differently, and not made it up of such incongruous elements.

As a matter of fact, scarcely one of those present would not have had more enjoyment somewhere else. Father Damon, whose theory was that the rich needed saving quite as much as the poor, would nevertheless have been in better spirits sitting down to a collation with the working-women

in Clinton Place. It was a good occasion for the cynical observation of Mr. Mavick, but it was not a company that he could take in hand and impress with his mysterious influence in public affairs. Henderson was not in the mood, and would have had much more ease over a chop and a bottle of half-and-half with Uncle Jerry. Carmen, socially triumphant, would have been much more in her element at a petit souper of a not too fastidious four. Mrs. Schuyler Blunt was in the unaccustomed position of having to maintain a not too familiar and not too distant line of deportment. Edith and Jack felt the responsibility of having put an incongruous company on thin conventional ice. It was only the easy-going Miss Tavish and two or three others who carried along their own animal spirits and love of amusement who enjoyed the chance of a possible contretemps.

And yet the dinner was providentially arranged. If these people had not met socially, this history would have been different from what it must be. The lives of several of them were appreciably modified by this meeting. It is too much to say that Father Damon's notion of the means by which such men as Henderson succeed was changed, but personal contact with the man may have modified his utterances about him, and he may have turned his mind to the uses to which his wealth might be applied rather than to the means by which he obtained it. Carmen's ingenuous interest in his work may have encouraged the hope that at least a portion of this fortune might be rescued to charitable uses. For Carmen, dining with Mrs. Schuyler Blunt was a distinct gain, and indirectly opened many other hitherto exclusive doors. That lady may not have changed her opinion about Carmen, but she was good-natured and infected by the incoming social tolerance; and as to Henderson, she declared that he was an exceedingly well-bred man, and she did not believe half the stories about him. Henderson himself at once appreciated the talents of Mavick, gauged him perfectly, and saw what services he might be capable of rendering at Washington. Mr. Mavick appreciated the advantage of a connection with such a capitalist, and of having open to him another luxurious house in New York. At the dinner-table Carmen and Mr. Mavick had not exchanged a dozen remarks before these clever people felt that they were congenial spirits. It was in the smoking-room that Henderson and Mavick fell into an interesting conversation, which resulted in an invitation for Mavick to drop in at Henderson's office in the morning. The dinner had not been a brilliant one. Henderson found it not easy to select topics equally interesting to Mrs. Delancy and Mrs. Blunt, and finally fell into geographical information to the latter about Mexico and Honduras. For Edith, the sole relief of the evening was an exchange of sympathy with Father Damon, and she was too much preoccupied to enjoy that. As for Carmen, placed between Jack and Mr. Mavick, and conscious that the eyes of Mrs. Blunt were on her, she was taking a subdued role, which Jack found much less attractive than her common mood. But this was not her only self-sacrifice of the evening. She went without her usual cigarette.

To Edith the dinner was a revelation of new difficulties in the life she proposed for herself, though they were rather felt than distinctly reasoned about. The social atmosphere was distasteful; its elements were out of harmony with her ideals. Not that this society was new to her, but that she saw it in a new light. Before her marriage all these things had been indifferent to this high-spirited girl. They were merely incidents of the social state into which she was born, and she pursued her way among them, having a tolerably clear conception of what her own life should be, with little recognition of their tendencies. Were only her own life concerned, they would still be indifferent to her. But

something had happened. That which is counted the best thing in life had come to her, that best thing which is the touchstone of character as it is of all conditions, and which so often introduces inextricable complications. She had fallen in love with Jack Delancy and married him.

The first effect of this was to awake and enlarge what philosophers would call her enthusiasm of humanity. The second effect was to show her--and this was what this little dinner emphasized--that she had put limitations upon herself and taken on unthought-of responsibilities. To put this sort of life one side, or make it secondary to her own idea of a useful and happy life, would have been easy but for one thing--she loved Jack. This philosophic reasoning about it does her injustice. It did not occur to her that she could go her way and let him go his way. Nor must it be supposed that the problem seemed as grave to her as it really was--the danger of frittering away her own higher nature in faithfulness to one of the noblest impulses of that nature. Yet this is the way that so many trials of life come, and it is the greatest test of character. She felt --as many women do feel--that if she retained her husband's love all would be well, and the danger involved to herself probably did not cross her mind.

But what did cross her mind was that these associations meant only evil for Jack, and that to be absorbed in the sort of life that seemed to please him was for her to drift away from all her ideals.

A confused notion of all this was in her thoughts when she talked with Father Damon, while the gentlemen were in the smoking-room. She asked him about his mission.

"The interest continues," he replied; "but your East Side, Mrs. Delancy, is a puzzling place."

"How so?"

"Perhaps you'll laugh if I say there is too much intelligence."

Edith did laugh, and then said: "Then you'd better move your mission over to this side. Here is a field of good, unadulterated worldliness. But what, exactly, do you mean?"

"Well, the attempt of science to solve the problem of sin and wretchedness. What can you expect when the people are socialists and their leaders agnostics?"

"But I thought you were something of a socialist yourself!"

"So I am," he said, frankly, "when I see the present injustice, the iniquitous laws and combinations that leave these people so little chance. They are ignorant, and expect the impossible; but they are right in many things, and I go with them. But my motive is not theirs. I hope not. There is no hope except in a spiritual life. Materialism down at the bottom of society is no better than materialism at the top. Do you know," he went on, with increased warmth, "that pessimism is rather the rule over that side, and that many of those who labor most among the poor have the least hope of ever making things substantially better?"

"But such unselfish people as Dr. Leigh do a great deal of good," Edith suggested.

"Yes," he said reflecting--"yes, I have no doubt. I don't understand it. She is not hopeful. She sees nothing beyond. I don't know what keeps her up."

"Love of humanity, perhaps."

"I wish the phrase had never been invented. Religion of humanity! The work is to save the souls of those people."

"But," said Edith, with a flush of earnestness "but, Father Damon, isn't human love the greatest power to save?"

The priest looked at the girl. His face softened, and he said, more gently, "I don't know. Of the soul, yes. But human love is so apt to stand in the way of the higher life."

In her soul Edith resented this as an ascetic and priestly view; but she knew his devotion to that humanity which he in vain tried to eliminate from his austere life, and she turned the talk lightly by saying, "Ah, that is your theory. But I am coming over soon, and shall expect you and Dr. Leigh to take me about."

The next morning Mr. Mavick's card gave him instant admission to the inner office of Mr. Henderson, the approach to whom was more carefully guarded than that to the President of the United States. This was not merely necessary to save him from the importunities of cranks who might carry concealed dynamite arguments, but as well to protect him from hundreds of business men with whom he was indirectly dealing, and with whom he wished to evade explanations. He thoroughly understood the advantages of delay. He also understood the value of the mystery that attends inaccessibility. Even Mr. Mavick himself was impressed by the show of ceremony, by the army of clerks, and by the signs of complete organization. He knew that the visitor was specially favored who penetrated these precincts so far as to get an interview, usually fruitless, with Henderson's confidential man. This confidential man was a very grave and confidence-begetting person, who dealt out dubious hints and promises, and did not at all mind when Henderson found it necessary to repudiate as unauthorized anything that had been apparently said in his name. To be sure, this gave a general impression that Henderson was an inscrutable man to deal with, but at the same time it was confessed that his spoken word could be depended on. Anything written might, it is true, lead to litigation, and this gave rise to a saying in the Street that Henderson's word was better than his bond.

Henderson was not a politician, but he was a friend of politicians. It was said that he contributed about equally to both sides in a political campaign, and that this showed patriotism more than partisanship. It was for his interest to have friends on both sides in Congress, and friends in the Cabinet, and it was even hinted that he was concerned to have men whose economic and financial theories accorded with his own on the Supreme Bench. He had unlimited confidence in the power of money. His visitor of the morning was not unlike him in many respects. He also was not a politician. He would have described himself as a governmental man, and had a theory of running the government with as little popular interference as possible. He regarded himself as belonging to the governing class.

Between these two men, who each had his own interests in view, there was

naturally an apparent putting aside of reserve.

"I was very glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Mavick," said Henderson, cordially. "I have known of you for a long time."

"Yes? I've been in the employ of the government for some time."

"And I suppose it pays pretty well," said Henderson, smilingly.

"Oh, extravagantly," Mavick rejoined, in the same spirit. "You just about get your board and clothes out of government. Your washing is another thing. You are expected, you know, to have your washing done where you vote."

"Well, it's a sure thing."

"Yes, till you are turned out. You know the theory at Washington is that virtue is its own reward. Tom Fakeltree says it's enough."

"I wonder how he knows?"

"Observation, probably. Tom startled a dinner table the other day with the remark that when a man once gives himself up to the full enjoyment of a virtuous life, it seems strange to him that more people do not follow his example."

"The trouble with the virtue of Washington is that it always wants to interfere with other people's business. Fellows like Tom are always hunting up mares' nests in order to be paid for breaking them up."

"I can't say about Tom," rejoined Mavick. "I suppose it is necessary to live."

"I suppose so. And that goes along with another proposition--that the successful have no rights which the unsuccessful are bound to respect. As soon as a man gets ahead," Henderson continued, with a tone of bitterness, "the whole pack are trying to pull him down. A capitalist is a public enemy. Why, look at that Hodge bill! Strikes directly at the ability of the railways to develop the country. Have you seen it?"

"Yes," Mavick admitted; "the drawer of it was good enough to consult me on its constitutionality. It's a mighty queer bill."

"It can't get through the Senate," said Henderson; "but it's a bother. Such schemes are coming up all the time, and they unsettle business. These fellows need watching."

"And managing," added Mavick.

"Exactly. I can't be in Washington all the time. And I need to know what is going on every twenty-four hours from the inside. I can't rely on politicians or lobbyists."

"Well," said Mr. Mavick, in his easiest manner, "that's easy enough. You want a disinterested friend."

Henderson nodded, but did not even smile, and the talk went on about other measures, and confidentially about certain men in Washington, until, after twenty minutes' conversation, the two men came to a perfect

understanding. When Mavick arose to go they shook hands even more cordially than at first, and Henderson said:

"Well, I expect to hear from you, and remember that our house will always be your home in the city."

IX

It seemed very fortunate to Jack Delancy that he should have such a clever woman as Carmen for his confidante, a man so powerful as Henderson as his backer, and a person so omniscient as Mavick for his friend.

No combination could be more desirable for a young man who proposed to himself a career of getting money by adroit management and spending it in pure and simple self-indulgence. There are plenty of men who have taken advantage of like conditions to climb from one position to another, and have then kicked down the ladders behind them as fast as they attained a new footing. It was Jack's fault that he was not one of these. You could scarcely dignify his character by saying that he had an aim, except to saunter through life with as little personal inconvenience as possible. His selfishness was boneless. It was not by any means negative, for no part of his amiable nature was better developed than regard for his own care and comfort; but it was not strong enough to give him Henderson's capacity for hard work and even self-denial, nor Mavick's cool, persevering skill in making a way for himself in the world.

Why was not Edith his confidante? His respect for her was undoubted; his love for her was unquestioned; his trust in her was absolute. And yet with either Carmen or Miss Tavish he fell into confidential revelations of himself which instinctively he did not make to Edith. The explanation of this is on the surface, and it is the key to half the unhappiness in domestic life. He felt that Edith was not in sympathy with the associations and the life he was leading. The pitiful and hopeless part of it is that if she had been in sympathy with them, Jack would have gone on in his frivolous career at an accelerated pace. It was not absence of love, it was not unfaithfulness, that made Jack enjoy the hours he spent with Carmen, or with the pleasing and not too fastidious Miss Tavish, with a zest that was wanting to his hours at home. If he had been upon a sinking steamboat with the three women, and could have saved only one of them, he would not have had a moment's hesitation in rescuing Edith and letting the other two sink out of his life. The character is not unusual, nor the situation uncommon. What is a woman to do? Her very virtues are enemies of her peace; if she appears as a constant check and monitor, she repels; if she weakly acquiesces, the stream will flow over both of them. The dilemma seems hopeless.

It would be a mistake to suppose that either Edith or Jack put their relations in any such definite shape as this. He was unthinking. She was too high-spirited, too confident of her position, to be assailed by such fears. And it must be said, since she was a woman, that she had the consciousness of power which goes along with the possession of loveliness and keen wit. Those who knew her best knew that under her serenity was a gay temperament, inherited from the original settlers of Manhattan, an abounding enjoyment of life, and capacity for passion. It was early discovered in her childhood that little Edith had a will of her own.

Lent was over. It was the time of the twittering of sparrows, of the opening of windows, of putting in order the little sentimental spots

called "squares," where the poor children get their idea of forests, and the rich renew their faint recollections of innocence and country life; when the hawkers go about the streets, and the hand-organs celebrate the return of spring and the possibility of love. Even the idle felt that it was a time for relaxation and quiet.

"Have you answered Miss Tavish's invitation?" asked Jack one morning at the breakfast-table.

"Not yet. I shall decline today for myself."

"Why? It's for charity."

"Well, my charity extends to Miss Tavish. I don't want to see her dance."

"That leaves me in a nice hole. I said I'd go."

"And why not? You go to a good many places you don't take me--the clubs, brokers' offices, Stalker's, the Conventional, and--"

"Oh, go on. Why do you object to my going to see this dance?"

"My dear Jack," said Edith, "I haven't objected the least in the world;" and her animated face sparkled with a smile, which seemed to irritate Jack more than a frown would have done.

"I don't see why you set yourself up. I'll bet Miss Tavish will raise more money for the Baxter Street Guild, yes, and do more good, than you and the priest and that woman doctor slopping about on the East Side in six months."

"Very likely," replied Edith, still with the same good-humored smile. "But, Jack, it's delightful to see your philanthropic spirit stirred up in this way. You ought to be encouraged. Why don't you join Miss Tavish in this charity? I have no doubt that if it was advertised that Miss Tavish and Mr. Jack Delancy would dance for the benefit of an East Side guild in the biggest hall in the city, there wouldn't be standing room."

"Oh, bosh!" said Jack, getting up from his chair and striding about the room, with more irritation than he had ever shown to Edith before. "I wouldn't be a prude."

Edith's eyes flashed and her face flushed, but her smile came back in a moment, and she was serene again. "Come here, Jack. Now, old fellow, look me straight in the eyes, and tell me if you would like to have me dance the serpentine dance before a drawing-room full of gossiping women, with, as you say, just a few men peeping in at the doors."

Jack did look, and the serene eyes, yet dancing with amusement at the incongruous picture, seemed to take a warmer glow of love and pleading.

"Oh, hang it! that's different," and he stooped and gave her an awkward kiss.

"I'm glad you know it's different," she said, with a laugh that had not a trace of mockery in it; "and since you do, you'd better go along and do your charity, and I'll stay at home, and try to be--different when you come back."

And Jack went; with a little feeling of sheepishness that he would not have acknowledged at the time, and he found himself in a company where he was entirely at his ease. He admired the dancing of the blithe, graceful girl, he applauded her as the rest did with hand-clapping and bravas, and said it was ravishing. It all suited him perfectly. And somehow, in the midst of it all, in the sensuous abandon of this electric-light eccentricity at mid-day, he had a fleeting vision of something very different, of a womanhood of another sort, and a flush came to his face for a moment as he imagined Edith in a skirt dance under the gaze of this sensation-loving society. But this was only for a moment. When he congratulated Miss Tavish his admiration was entirely sincere; and the girl, excited with her physical triumph, seemed to him as one emancipated out of acquired prudishness into the Greek enjoyment of life. Miss Tavish, who would not for the world have violated one of the social conventions of her set, longed, as many women do, for the sort of freedom and the sort of applause which belongs to women who succeed upon the stage. Not that she would have forfeited her position by dancing at a theatre for money; but, within limits, she craved the excitement, the abandon, the admiration, that her grace and passion could win. This was not at all the ambition which led the Egyptian queen Hatshepsu to assume the dress of a man, but rather that more famous aspiration which led the daughter of Herodias, in a pleasure-loving court, to imitate and excel the professional dancing-girls. If in this inclination of the women of the day, which is not new, but has characterized all societies to which wealth has brought idleness, there was a note of demoralization, it did not seem so to Jack, who found the world day by day more pleasing and more complaisant.

As the months went by, everything prospered with him on his drifting voyage. Of all voyages, that is the easiest to make which has no port in view, that depends upon the varying winds, if the winds happen to be soft and the chance harbors agreeable. Jack was envied, thanks to Henderson. He was lucky in whatever he touched. Without any change in his idle habits, and with no more attention to business than formerly, money came to him so freely that he not only had a complacent notion that he was a favorite of fortune, but the idea of his own importance in the financial world increased enormously, much to the amusement of Mavick, when he was occasionally in the city, to whom he talked somewhat largely of his operations, and who knew that he had no more comprehension of the sweep of Henderson's schemes than a baby has of the stock exchange when he claps his hands with delight at the click of the ticker.

His prosperity was visible. It showed in the increase of his accounts at the Union, in his indifference to limits in the game of poker, in a handsome pair of horses which he insisted on Edith's accepting for her own use, in an increased scale of living at home, in the hundred ways that a man of fashion can squander money in a luxurious city. If he did not haunt the second-hand book-shops or the stalls of dealers in engravings, or bring home as much bric-a-brac as he once had done, it was because his mind was otherwise engaged; his tailor's bills were longer, and there were more expensive lunches at the clubs, at which there was a great deal of sage talk about stocks and combinations, and much wisdom exhibited in regard to wines; and then there were the little suppers at Wherry's after the theatres, which a bird could have eaten and a fish have drunken, and only a spendthrift have paid for.

"It is absurd," Edith had said one night after their return. "It makes us ridiculous in the eyes of anybody but fools." And Jack had flared up

about it, and declared that he knew what he could afford, and she had retorted that as for her she would not countenance it. And Jack had attempted to pass it off lightly, at last, by saying, "Very well then, dear, if you won't back me, I shall have to rely upon my bankers." At any rate, neither Carmen nor Miss Tavish took him to task. They complimented him on his taste, and Carmen made him feel that she appreciated his independence and his courage in living the life that suited him. She knew, indeed, how much he made in his speculations, how much he lost at cards; she knew through him the gossip of the clubs, and venturing herself not too far at sea, liked to watch the undertow of fashionable life. And she liked Jack, and was not incapable of throwing him a rope when the hour came that he was likely to be swept away by that undertow.

It was remarked at the Union, and by the men in the Street who knew him, that Jack was getting rapid. But no one thought the less of him for his pace--that is, no one appeared to, for this sort of estimate of a man is only tested by his misfortunes, when the day comes that he must seek financial backing. In these days he was generally in an expansive mood, and his free hand and good-humor increased his popularity. There were those who said that there were millions of family money back of Jack, and that he had recently come in for something handsome.

But this story did not deceive Major Fairfax, whose business it was to know to a dot the standing of everybody in society, in which he was a sort of oracle and privileged favorite. No one could tell exactly how the Major lived; no one knew the rigid economy that he practiced; no one had ever seen his small dingy chamber in a cheap lodging-house. The name of Fairfax was as good as a letter of introduction in the metropolis, and the Major had lived on it for years, on that and a carefully nursed little income--an habitue of the club, and a methodical cultivator of the art of dining out. A most agreeable man, and perhaps the wisest man in his generation in those things about which it would be as well not to know anything.

Seated one afternoon in his favorite corner for street observation, by the open window, with the evening paper in his hand, in the attitude of one expecting the usual five o'clock cocktail, he hailed Jack, who was just coming down-stairs from a protracted lunch.

"I say, Delancy, what's this I hear?"

"About what?" said Jack, sauntering along to a seat opposite the Major, and touching a bell on the little table as he sat down. Jack's face was flushed, but he talked with unusual slowness and distinctness. "What have you heard, Major?"

"That you have bought Benham's yacht."

"No, I haven't; but I was turning the thing over in my mind," Jack replied, with the air of a man declining an appointment in the Cabinet. "He offers it cheap."

"My dear boy, there is no such thing as a cheap yacht, any more than there is a cheap elephant."

"It's better to buy than build," Jack insisted. "A man's got to have some recreation."

"Recreation! Why don't you charter a Fifth Avenue stage and take your friends on a voyage to the Battery? That'll make 'em sick enough." It was a misery of the Major's life that, in order to keep in with necessary friends, he had to accept invitations for cruises on yachts, and pretend he liked it. Though he had the gout, he vowed he would rather walk to Newport than go round Point Judith in one of those tipping tubs. He had tried it, and, as he said afterwards, "The devil of it was that Mrs. Henderson and Miss Tavish sympathized with me. Gad! it takes away a person's manhood, that sort of thing."

The Major sipped his bitters, and then added: "Or I'll tell you what; if you must do something, start a newspaper--the drama, society, and letters, that sort of thing, with pictures. I heard Miss Tavish say she wished she had a newspaper."

"But," said Jack, with gravity, "I'm not buying a yacht for Miss Tavish."

"I didn't suppose you were. Devilish fine girl, though. I don't care who you buy it for if you don't buy it for yourself. Why don't you buy it for Henderson? He can afford it."

"I'd like to know what you mean, Major Fairfax!" cried Jack. "What business--"

"There!" exclaimed the Major, sinking back in his chair, with a softened expression in his society beaten face. "It's no use of nonsense, Jack. I'm an average old sinner, and I'm not old enough yet to like a milksop. But I've known you since you were so high, and I knew your father; he used to stay weeks on my plantation when we were both younger. And your mother--that was a woman!--did me a kindness once when I was in a d---d tight place, and I never forgot it. See here, Jack, if I had money enough I'd buy a yacht and put Carmen and Miss Tavish on it, and send them off on the longest voyage there is."

"Who's been talking?" exclaimed Jack, touched a little, but very much offended.

"The town, Jack. Don't mind the talk. People always talk. I suppose people talk about me: At your age I should have been angry too at a hint even from an old friend. But I've learned. It doesn't pay. I don't get angry any more. Now there's Henderson--"

"What have you got against Henderson?"

"Nothing. He is a very good fellow, for that sort of man. But, Lord! Henderson is a big machine. You might as well try to stand in with a combination of gang-saws, or to make friends with the Department of the Interior. Look at the men who have gone in with Henderson from time to time. The ground is strewn with them. He's got no more feeling in business than a reaper-and-binder."

"I don't know what Henderson's got to do with my having a yacht."

"I beg your pardon, Jack; it's none of my business. Only I do not put my investments"--Jack smiled faintly, as if the conversation were taking a humorous turn--"at the mercy of Henderson's schemes. If I did, I wouldn't try to run a yacht at the same time. I should be afraid that some day when I got to sea I should find myself out of coal. You know, my boy, that the good book says you cannot serve two masters."

"Nobody ever accused you of that, Major," retorted Jack, with a laugh. "But what two have you in mind?"

"Oh, I don't mean anything personal. I just use names as typical. Say Henderson and Carmen." And the Major leaned back and tapped his fingers together, as if he were putting a general proposition.

Jack flushed, and then thought a moment--it would be ridiculous to get angry with old Fairfax--and then said: "Major, if I were you, I wouldn't have anything to do with either of them. You'll spoil your digestion."

"Umph!" the Major grunted, as he rose from his chair. "This is an age of impudence. There's no more respect for gray hair than if it were dyed. I cannot waste any more time on you. I've got an early dinner. Devilish uphill work trying to encourage people who dine at seven. But, my boy, think on these things, as the saint says."

And the old fellow limped away. There was one good thing about the Major. He stood up in church every Sunday and read his prayers, like a faithful old sinner as he was.

Jack, sobered by the talk, walked home in a very irritated mood, blaming everybody except himself. For old Fairfax's opinion he didn't care, but evidently the old fellow represented a lot of gossip. He wished people would mind their own business. His irritation was a little appeased by Edith's gay and loving greeting; but she, who knew every shade of his face, saw it.

"Have you had a worrying day?"

"No; not specially. I've had an hour of old Fairfax, who hasn't any business of his own to attend to."

"Oh, nobody minds the Major," Edith said, as she gave him a shake and another kiss; but a sharp pang went through her heart, for she guessed what had happened, since she had had a visit that afternoon from another plain-speaking person.

They were staying late in town. Edith, who did not care to travel far, was going presently to a little cottage by the sea, and Mrs. Schuyler Blunt had looked in for a moment to say good-by before she went up to her Lenox house.

"It's only an old farmhouse made over," Mrs. Blunt was saying; "hardly smart enough to ask anybody to, but we hope to have you and Jack there some time."

"That would be very nice. I hear Lenox is more beautiful than ever."

"Yes, it is, and about as difficult to get into as the kingdom of heaven. It's being spoiled for moderate people. The Hendersons and the Van Dams and that sort are in a race to see who shall build houses with the biggest rooms, and give the most expensive entertainments. It's all show. The old flavor has gone."

"But they cannot spoil the scenery."

"My child, they are the scenery. You can't see anything else. It

doesn't bother me, but some of my old neighbors are just ruining themselves trying to keep the pace. I do think the Americans are the biggest fools on earth."

"Father Damon says the trouble is we haven't any middle class for a balance."

"Yes, that's the English of it. But it's a pity that fashion has got hold of the country, and is turning our summers into a worry and a burden. I thought years ago when we went to Lenox that it was a good thing the country was getting to be the fashion; but now it's fashionable, and before we know it every desirable spot will be what they call syndicated. Miss Tavish says she is coming to visit the Hendersons there."

"I thought she went to Bar Harbor."

"But she is coming down for part of the season. These people don't stay anywhere. Just long enough in one place to upset everything with their extravagance. That's the reason I didn't ask you and Jack up this summer."

"Thank you, we couldn't go, you know," said Edith, simply, and then, with curiosity in her eyes, asked; "but I don't quite understand what's the reason."

"Well," said Mrs. Blunt, as if nerving herself up to say what must be said, "I thought perhaps you wouldn't like to be where they are."

"I don't know why I should or why I should not," Edith replied.

"Nor have Jack with them," continued Mrs. Blunt, stoutly.

"What do you mean, Mrs. Blunt?" cried Edith, her brown eyes flaming.

"Don't turn on me, Edith dear. I oughtn't to have said anything. But I thought it was my duty. Of course it is only talk."

"Well?"

"That Jack is always with one or the other of those women."

"It is false!" cried Edith, starting up, with tears now in her eyes; "it's a cruel lie if it means anything wrong in Jack. So am I with those women; so are you. It's a shame. If you hear any one say such things, you can tell them for me that I despise them."

"I said it was a shame, all such talk. I said it was nonsense. But, dear, as a friend, oughtn't I to tell you?" And the kind-hearted gossip put her arm round Edith, and kept saying that she perfectly understood it, and that nobody really meant anything. But Edith was crying now, with a heart both hurt and indignant.

"It's a most hateful world, I know," Mrs. Blunt answered; "but it's the best we have, and it's no use to fret about it."

When the visitor had gone, Edith sat a long time in misery. It was the first real shock of her married life. And in her heart she prayed. For Jack? Oh no. The dear girl prayed for herself, that suspicions might

not enter her heart. She could not endure that the world should talk thus of him. That was all. And when she had thought it all over and grown calm, she went to her desk and wrote a note to Carmen. It asked Mrs. Henderson, as they were so soon to leave town, to do her the favor to come round informally and lunch with her the next day, and afterwards perhaps a little drive in the Park.

X

Jack was grateful for Edith's intervention. He comprehended that she had stepped forward as a shield to him in the gossip about Carmen. He showed his appreciation in certain lover-like attentions and in a gayety of manner, but it was not in his nature to feel the sacrifice she had made or its full magnanimity; he was relieved, and in a manner absolved. Another sort of woman might have made him very uncomfortable. Instead of being rebuked he had a new sense of freedom.

"Not one woman in a thousand would have done it," was the comment of Major Fairfax when he heard of the drive in the Park. "Gad! most of 'em would have cut Carmen dead and put Jack in Coventry, and then there would have been the devil to pay. It takes quality, though; she's such a woman as Jack's mother. If there were not one of them now and then society would deliquesce." And the Major knew, for his principal experience had been with a deliquescent society.

Whether Carmen admired Mrs. Delancy or thought her weak it is impossible to say, but she understood the advances made and responded to them, for they fell in perfectly with her social plans. She even had the face to eulogize Mrs. Delancy to Jack, her breadth of view, her lack of prejudice, and she had even dared to say, "My dear friend, she is too good for us," and Jack had not protested, but with a laugh had accepted the implication of his position on a lower moral level. Perhaps he did not see exactly what it meant, this being on confidential terms about his wife with another woman; all he cared for at the moment was that the comradeship of Miss Tavish and Carmen was agreeable to him. They were no restraint upon him. So long as they remained in town the exchange of civilities was kept up. Carmen and Miss Tavish were often at his house, and there was something reassuring to Jack in the openness with which affairs went on.

Early in June Edith went down to their rented cottage on the south Long Island shore. In her delicate health the doctor had recommended the seaside, and this locality as quiet and restful, and not too far from the whirl of the city. The place had a charm of its own, the charm, namely, of a wide sky, illimitable, flashing, changing sea, rolling in from the far tropical South with its message of romance to the barren Northern shore, and the pure sand dunes, the product of the whippings of tempests and wild weather. The cottage was in fact an old farmhouse, not an impertinent, gay, painted piece of architecture set on the sand like a tent for a month, but a solid, ugly, fascinating habitation, with barns and outhouses, and shrubs, and an old garden--a place with a salty air friendly to delicate spring blossoms and summer fruits and foliage. If it was a farmhouse, the sea was an important part of the farm, and the low-ceiled rooms suggested cabins; it required little imagination to fancy that an East-Indian ship had some time come ashore and settled in the sand, that it had been remodeled and roofed over, and its sides

pierced with casement windows, over which roses had climbed in order to bind the wanderer to the soil. It had been painted by the sun and the wind and the salt air, so that its color depended upon the day, and it was sometimes dull and almost black, or blue-black, under a lowering sky, and again a golden brown, especially at sunset, and Edith, feeling its character rather than its appearance to ordinary eyes, had named it the Golden House. Nature is such a beautiful painter of wood.

With Edith went one of her Baltimore cousins, a young kindergarten teacher of fine intelligence and sympathetic manner, who brought to her work a long tradition of gentle breeding and gayety and simplicity --qualities which all children are sure to recognize. What a hopeful thing it is, by-the-way, in the world, that all conditions of people know a lady at sight! Jack found the place delightful. He liked its quaintness, the primitiveness of the farmer-fisherman neighbors, he liked the sea. And then he could run up to the city any morning and back at night. He spent the summer with Edith at the Golden House. This was his theory. When he went to town in the morning he expected to return at night. But often he telegraphed in the afternoon that he was detained by business; he had to see Henderson, or Mavick was over from Washington. Occasionally, but not often, he missed the train. He had too keen a sense of the ridiculous to miss the train often. When he was detained over for two or three days, or the better part of the week, he wrote Edith dashing, hurried letters, speaking of ever so many places he had been to and ever so many people he had seen--yes, Carmen and Miss Tavish and everybody who was in town, and he did not say too much about the hot city and its discomforts.

Henderson's affairs kept him in town, Miss Tavish still postponed Bar Harbor, and Carmen willingly remained. She knew the comfort of a big New York house when the season is over, when no social duties are required, and one is at leisure to lounge about in cool costumes, to read or dream, to open the windows at night for the salt breeze from the bay, to take little excursions by boat or rail, to dine al fresco in the garden of some semi-foreign hotel, to taste the unconventional pleasures of the town, as if one were in some foreign city. She used to say that New York in matting and hollands was almost as nice as Buda-Pesth. These were really summer nights, operatic sorts of nights, with music floating in the air, gay groups in the streets, a stage imitation of nature in the squares with the thick foliage and the heavy shadows cast on the asphalt by the electric lights, the brilliant shops, the nonsense of the summer theatres, where no one expected anything, and no one was disappointed, the general air of enjoyment, and the suggestion of intrigue. Sometimes, when Mavick was over, a party was made up for the East Side, to see the foreign costumes, the picturesque street markets, the dime museums, and the serious, tragical theatres of the people. The East Side was left pretty much to itself, now that the winter philanthropists had gone away, and was enjoying its summer nights and its irresponsible poverty.

They even looked in at Father Damon's chapel, the dimly lighted fragrant refuge from the world and from sin. Why not? They were interested in the morals of the region. Had not Miss Tavish danced for one of the guilds; and had not Carmen given Father Damon a handsome check in support of his mission? It was so satisfactory to go into such a place and see the penitents kneeling here and there, the little group of very plainly dressed sinners attracted by Father Damon's spiritual face and unselfish enthusiasm. Carmen said she felt like kneeling at one of the little boxes and confessing--the sins of her neighbors. And then the four --Carmen, Miss Tavish, Mavick, and Jack--had a little supper at Wherry's,

which they enjoyed all the more for the good action of visiting the East Side--a little supper which lasted very late, and was more and more enjoyed as it went on, and was, in fact, so gay that when the ladies were set down at their houses, Jack insisted on dragging Mavick off to the Beefsteak Club and having something manly to drink; and while they drank he analyzed the comparative attractions of Carmen and Miss Tavish; he liked that kind of women, no nonsense in them; and presently he wandered a little and lost the cue of his analysis, and, seizing Mavick by the arm, and regarding him earnestly, in a burst of confidence declared that, notwithstanding all appearances, Edith was the dearest girl in the world.

It was at this supper that the famous society was formed, which the newspapers ridiculed, and which deceived so many excellent people in New York because it seemed to be in harmony with the philanthropic endeavor of the time, but which was only an expression of the Mephistophelian spirit of Carmen--the Society for Supplying Two Suspenders to Those who have only One.

By the end of June there was no more doubt about the heat of the town than about its odors. The fashionable residence part was dismantled and deserted. At least miles and miles of houses seemed to be closed. Few carriages were seen in this quarter, the throngs of fashion had disappeared, comparatively few women were about, and those that appeared in the Sunday promenade were evidently sight-seers and idlers from other quarters; the throng of devotees was gone from the churches, and indeed in many of them services were suspended till a more convenient season. The hotels, to be sure, were full of travelers, and the club-houses had more habits than usual, and were more needed by the members whose families had gone into the country.

Notwithstanding the silence and vacation aspect of up-town, the public conveyances were still thronged, and a census would have shown no such diminution of population as seemed. Indeed, while nobody was in town, except accidentally, the greater portion of it presented a more animated appearance than usual, especially at night, on account of the open windows, the groups on door-steps and curb-stones, and the restless throng in the streets-buyers and sellers and idlers. To most this outdoor life was a great enjoyment, and to them the unclean streets with the odors and exhalations of decay were homelike and congenial. Nor did they seem surprised that a new country should so completely reproduce the evil smells and nastiness of the old civilization. It was all familiar and picturesque. Work still went on in the crowded tenement-houses, and sickness simply changed its character, death showing an increased friendliness to young children. Some impression was of course made by the agents of various charities, the guilds and settlements bravely strove at their posts, some of the churches kept their flags flying on the borders of the industrial districts, the Good Samaritans of the Fresh-air Fund were active, the public dispensaries did a thriving business, and the little band of self-sacrificing doctors, most of them women, went their rounds among the poor, the sick, and the friendless.

Among them Ruth Leigh was one who never took a vacation. There was no time for it. The greater the heat, the more noisome the town, the more people became ill from decaying food and bad air and bad habits, the more people were hungry from improvidence or lack of work, the more were her daily visits a necessity; and though she was weary of her monotonous work, and heart-sick at its small result in such a mass, there never came a day when she could quit it. She made no reputation in her profession by this course; perhaps she awoke little gratitude from those she served,

and certainly had not so much of their confidence as the quacks who imposed upon them and took their money; and she was not heartened much by hope of anything better in this world or any other; and as for pay, if there was enough of that to clothe her decently, she apparently did not spend it on herself.

It was, in short, wholly inexplicable that this little woman should simply go about doing good, without any ulterior purpose whatever, not even notoriety. Did she love these people? She did not ever say anything about that. In the Knights of Labor circle, and in the little clubs for the study of social questions, which she could only get leisure to attend infrequently, she was not at all demonstrative about any religion of humanity. Perhaps she simply felt that she was a part of these people, and that whether they rejected her or received her, there was nothing for her to do but to give herself to them. She would probably have been surprised if Father Damon had told her that she was in this following a great example, and there might have been a tang of agnostic bitterness in her reply. When she thought of it the condition seemed to her hopeless, and the attitude of what was called civilization towards it so remorseless and indifferent, and that of Christianity so pharisaical. If she ever lost her temper, it was when she let her mind run in this nihilistic channel, in bitterness against the whole social organization, and the total outcome of civilization so far as the mass of humanity is concerned.

One day Father Damon climbed up to the top of a wretched tenement in Baxter Street in search of a German girl, an impulsive and pretty girl of fifteen, whom he had missed for several days at the chapel services. He had been in the room before. It was not one of the worst, for though small and containing a cook-stove, a large bed, and a chest of drawers, there was an attempt to make it tidy. In a dark closet opening out from it was another large bed. As he knocked and opened the door, he saw that Gretchen was not at home. Her father sat in a rocking-chair by an open window, on the sill of which stood a pot of carnations, the Easter gift of St. George's, a wax-faced, hollow-eyed man of gentle manners, who looked round wearily at the priest. The mother was washing clothes in a tub in one corner; in another corner was a half-finished garment from a slop-shop. The woman alternated the needle at night and the tub in the daytime. Seated on the bed, with a thin, sick child in her arms, was Dr. Leigh. As she looked up a perfectly radiant smile illuminated her usually plain face, an unworldly expression of such purity and happiness that she seemed actually beautiful to the priest, who stopped, hesitating, upon the threshold.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid to come in, Father Damon," she cried out; "it isn't contagious--only rash."

Father Damon, who would as readily have walked through a pestilence as in a flower-garden, only smiled at this banter, and replied, after speaking to the sick man, and returning in German the greeting of the woman, who had turned from the tub, "I've no doubt you are disappointed that it isn't contagious!" And then, to the mother: "Where is Gretchen? She doesn't come to the chapel."

"Nein," replied the woman, in a mixture of German and English, "it don't come any more in dot place; it be in a shtore now; it be good girl."

"What, all day?"

"Yaas, by six o'clock, and abends so spate. Not much it get, but my man can't earn nothing any more." And the woman, as she looked at him, wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"But, on Sunday?" Father Damon asked, still further.

"Vell, it be so tired, and goed up by de Park with Dick Loosing and dem oder girls."

"Don't you think it better, Father Damon," Dr. Leigh interposed, "that Gretchen should have fresh air and some recreation on Sunday?"

"Und such bootiful tings by de Museum," added the mother.

"Perhaps," said he, with something like a frown on his face, and then changed the subject to the sick child. He did not care to argue the matter when Dr. Leigh was present, but he resolved to come again and explain to the mother that her daughter needed some restraining power other than her own impulse, and that without religious guidance she was pretty certain to drift into frivolous and vulgar if not positively bad ways. The father was a free-thinker; but Father Damon thought he had some hold on the mother, who was of the Lutheran communion, but had followed her husband so far as to become indifferent to anything but their daily struggle for life. Yet she had a mother's instinct about the danger to her daughter, and had been pleased to have her go to Father Damon's chapel.

And, besides, he could not bring himself in that presence to seem to rebuke Ruth Leigh. Was she not practically doing what his Lord did --going about healing the sick, sympathizing with the poor and the discouraged, taking upon herself the burden of the disconsolate, literally, without thought of self, sharing, as it were, the misery and sin of this awful city? And today, for the first time, he seemed to have seen the woman in her--or was it the saint? and he recalled that wonderful illumination of her plain face that made her actually beautiful as she looked up from the little waif of humanity she held in her arms. It had startled him, and struck a new chord in his heart, and planted a new pang there that she had no belief in a future life.

It did not occur to him that the sudden joy in her face might have been evoked by seeing him, for it was a long time since she had seen him. Nor did he think that the pang at his heart had another cause than religious anxiety. Ah, priest and worldly saint, how subtle and enduring are the primal instincts of human nature!

"Yes," he said, as they walked away, in reply to her inquiry as to his absence, "I have been in retreat a couple of weeks."

"I suppose," she said, softly, "you needed the rest; though," and she looked at him professionally, "if you will allow me to say it, it seems to me that you have not rested enough."

"I needed strength"--and it was the priest that spoke--"in meditation and prayer to draw upon resources not my own."

"And in fasting, too, I dare say," she added, with a little smile.

"And why not?" he asked.

"Pardon me," she said; "I don't pretend to know what you need. I need to eat, though Heaven knows it's hard enough to keep up an appetite down here. But it is physical endurance you need for the work here. Do you think fasting strengthens you to go through your work night and day?"

"I know I couldn't do it on my own strength." And Dr. Leigh recalled times when she had seen him officiating in the chapel apparently sustained by nothing but zeal and pure spirit, and wondered that he did not faint and fall. And faint and fall he did, she was sure, when the service was over.

"Well, it may be necessary to you, but not as an example to these people. I see enough involuntary fasting."

"We look at these people from different points of view, I fear." And after a moment he said: "But, doctor, I wanted to ask you about Gretchen. You see her?"

"Occasionally. She works too many hours, but she seems to be getting on very well, and brings her mother all she earns."

"Do you think she is able to stand alone?"

Dr. Leigh winced a little at this searching question, for no one knew better than she the vulgarizing influence of street life and chance associations upon a young girl, and the temptations. She was even forced to admit the value in the way of restraint, as a sort of police force, of the church and priestly influence, especially upon girls at the susceptible age. But she knew that Father Damon meant something more than this, and so she answered:

"But people have got to stand alone. She might as well begin."

"But she is so young."

"Yes, I know. She is in the way of temptation, but so long as she works industriously, and loves her mother, and feels the obligation, which the poor very easily feel, of doing her share for the family, she is not in so much moral danger as other girls of her age who lead idle and self-indulgent lives. The working-girls of the city learn to protect themselves."

"And you think this is enough, without any sort of religion--that this East Side can go on without any spiritual life?"

Ruth Leigh made a gesture of impatience. In view of the actual struggle for existence she saw around her, this talk seemed like cant. And she said:

"I don't know that anything can go on. Let me ask you a question, Father Damon. Do you think there is any more spirituality, any more of the essentials of what you call Christianity, in the society of the other side than there is on the East Side?"

"It is a deep question, this of spirituality," replied Father Damon, who was in the depths of his proselyting action a democrat and in sympathy with the people, and rated quite at its full value the conventional fashion in religion. "I shouldn't like to judge, but there is a great body of Christian men and women in this city who are doing noble work."

"Yes," replied the little doctor, bitterly, "trying to save themselves. How many are trying to save others--others except the distant and foreign sinners?"

"You surely cannot ignore," replied the father, still speaking mildly, "the immense amount of charitable work done by the churches!"

"Yes, I know; charity, charity, the condescension of the rich to the poor. What we want are understanding, fellowship, and we get alms! If there is so much spirituality as you say, and Christianity is what you say it is today, how happens it that this side is left in filth and misery and physical wretchedness? You know what it is, and you know the luxury elsewhere. And you think to bridge over the chasm between classes with flowers, in pots, yes, and Bible-readers and fashionable visitors and little aid societies--little palliatives for an awful state of things. Why, look at it! Last winter the city authorities hauled off the snow and the refuse from the fashionable avenues, and dumped it down in the already blockaded and filthy side streets, and left us to struggle with the increased pneumonia and diphtheria, and general unsanitary conditions. And you wonder that the little nihilist groups and labor organizations and associations of agnostics, as you call them, meeting to study political economy and philosophy, say that the existing state of things has got to be overturned violently, if those who have the power and the money continue indifferent."

"I do not wonder," replied Father Damon, sadly. "The world is evil, and I should be as despairing as you are if I did not know there was another life and another world. I couldn't bear it. Nobody could."

"And all you've got to offer, then, to this mass of wretchedness, poverty, ignorance, at close quarters with hunger and disease, is to grin and bear it, in hope of a reward somewhere else!"

"I think you don't quite--"

The doctor looked up and saw a look of pain on the priest's face.

"Oh," she hastened to say, almost as impetuously as she had spoken before, "I don't mean you--I don't mean you. I know what you do. Pardon me for speaking so. I get so discouraged sometimes." They stood still a moment, looking up and down the hot, crowded, odorful street they were in, with its flaunting rags of poverty and inefficiency. "I see so little result of what I can do, and there is so little help."

"I know," said the father, as they moved along. "I don't see how you can bear it alone."

This touched a sore spot, and aroused Ruth Leigh's combativeness. It seemed to her to approach the verge of cant again. But she knew the father's absolute sincerity; she felt she had already said too much; and she only murmured, as if to herself, "If we could only know." And then, after a moment, she asked, "Do you, Father Damon, see any sign of anything better here?"

"Yes, today." And he spoke very slowly and hesitatingly. "If you will excuse the personality of it. When I entered that room today, and saw you with that sick child in your arms, and comprehended what it all meant, I had a great wave of hope, and I knew, just then, that there is

coming virtue enough in the world to redeem it."

Ruth was confounded. Her heart seemed to stand still, and then the hot blood flowed into her face in a crimson flood. "Ah," escaped from her lips, and she walked on more swiftly, not daring to look up. This from him! This recognition from the ascetic father! If one of her dispensary comrades had said it, would she have been so moved?

And afterwards, when she had parted from him, and gone to her little room, the hot flush again came to her neck and brow, and she saw his pale, spiritual face, and could hear the unwonted tenderness of his voice. Yes, Father Damon had said it of her.

XI

The question has been very much discussed whether the devil, in temperate latitudes, is busier in the summer or in the winter. When Congress and the various State legislatures are in session, and the stock and grain exchanges are most active, and society is gayest, and the churches and benevolent and reformatory associations are most aggressive--at this season, which is the cool season, he seems to be most animated and powerful.

But is not this because he is then most opposed? The stream may not flow any faster because it is dammed, but it exhibits at the obstructed points greater appearance of agitation. Many people are under the impression that when they stop fighting there is a general truce: There is reason to believe that the arch enemy is pleased with this impression, that he likes a truce, and that it is his best opportunity, just as the weeds in the garden, after a tempest, welcome the sun and the placidity of the elements. It is well known that in summer virtue suffers from inertia, and that it is difficult to assemble the members of any vigilant organization, especially in cities, where the flag of the enemy is never lowered. But wherever the devil is there is always a quorum present for business. It is not his plan to seek an open fight, and many observers say that he gains more ground in summer than in any other season, and this notwithstanding people are more apt to lose their tempers, and even become profane, in the aggravations of what is known as spring than at any other time. The subject cannot be pursued here, but there is ground for supposing that the devil prefers a country where the temperature is high and pretty uniform.

At any rate, it is true that the development of character is not arrested by any geniality or languor of nature. By midsummer the Hendersons were settled in Lenox, where the Blunts had long been, and Miss Tavish and her party of friends were at Bar Harbor. Henderson was compelled to be in the city most of the time, and Jack Delancy fancied that business required his presence there also; but he had bought a yacht, and contemplated a voyage, with several of the club men, up the Maine coast. "No, I thank you," Major Fairfax had said; "I know an easier way to get to Bar Harbor."

Jack was irritable and restless, to be sure, in the absence of the sort of female society he had become accustomed to; but there were many compensations in his free-and-easy bachelor life, in his pretense of business, which consisted in watching the ticker, as it is called,

in an occasional interview with Henderson, and in the floating summer amusements of the relaxed city. There was nothing unusual in this life except that he needed a little more stimulation, but this was not strange in the summer, and that he devoted more time to poker--but everybody knows that a person comes out about even in the game of poker if he keeps at it long enough--there was nothing unusual in this, only it was giving Jack a distaste for the quiet and it seemed to him the restraint of the Golden House down by the sea. And he was more irritable there than elsewhere. It is so difficult to estimate an interior deterioration of this sort, for Jack was just as popular with his comrades as ever, and apparently more prosperous.

It is true that Jack had had other ideas when he was courting Edith Fletcher, and at moments, at any rate, different aspirations from any he had now. With her at that time there had been nobler aspirations about life. But now she was his wife. That was settled. And not only that, but she was the best woman he knew; and if she were not his wife, he would spare no effort to win her. He felt sure of that. He did not put it to himself in the way an Oriental would do, "That is finished"; but it was an act done--a good act--and here was his world again, with a hundred interests, and there were people besides Edith to be thought of, other women and men, and affairs. Because a man was married, was he to be shut up to one little narrow career, that of husband? Probably it did not occur to him that women take a different view of this in the singleness of their purpose and faith. Edith, for instance, knew or guessed that Jack had no purpose in life that was twenty-four hours old; but she had faith--and no amount of observation destroys this faith in women--that marriage would inspire him with energy and ambition to take a man's place in the world.

With most men marriage is un fait accompli. Jack had been lucky, but there was, no doubt, truth in an observation of Mavick's. One night as they sat at the club Jack had asked him a leading question, apropos of Henderson's successful career: "Mavick, why don't you get married?" "I have never," he replied, with his usual cynical deliberation, "been obliged to. The fact is, marriage is a curb-bit. Some horses show off better with it, and some are enraged and kick over the traces. I cannot decide which I would be."

"That's true enough," said Jack, "from a bachelor's point of view of independence, but it's really a question of matching."

"The most difficult thing in the world--in horses. Just about impossible in temperament and movement, let alone looks. Most men are lucky if they get, like Henderson, a running mate."

"I see," said Jack, who knew something about the Henderson household, "your idea of a pair is that they should go single."

Mavick laughed, and said something about the ideas of women changing so much lately that nobody could tell what the relation of marriage would become, and Jack, who began to feel that he was disloyal, changed the subject. To do him justice, he would have been ashamed for Edith to hear this sort of flippant and shallow talk, which wouldn't have been at all out of place with Carmen or Miss Tavish.

"I wanted to ask you, Mavick, as a friend, do you think Henderson is square?"

"How square?"

"Well, safe?"

"Nobody is safe. Henderson is as safe as anybody. You can rely on what he says. But there's a good deal he doesn't say. Anything wrong?"

"Not that I know. I've been pretty lucky. But the fact is, I've gone in rather deep."

"Well, it's a game. Henderson plays it, as everybody does, for himself. I like Henderson. He plays to win, and generally does. But, you know, if one man wins, somebody else has got to lose in this kind of industry."

"But Henderson looks out for his friends?"

"Yes--when it doesn't cost too much. Times may come when a man has to look out for himself. Wealth isn't made out of nothing. There must be streams into the reservoir. These great accumulations of one--you can see that--must be made up of countless other men's small savings. There's Uncle Jerry. He operates a good deal with Henderson, and they'd incline to help each other out. But Uncle Jerry says he's got a small pond of his own, and he's careful not to connect it with Henderson's reservoir."

"What do you think of Missouri?"

"What do I think of the Milky Way? It doesn't much matter to me what becomes of Missouri, unless Henderson should happen to get smashed in it, and that isn't what he is there for. But when you look at the combinations, and the dropping-off of roads that have been drained, and the scaling down in refunding, and the rearranging, and the strikes, how much chance do you think the small fry stand? I don't doubt that Henderson will make a big thing out of it, and there will be lots of howling by those who were not so smart, and the newspapers will say that Henderson was too strong for them. What we respect nowadays are adroitness and strength."

"It's an exciting game," Mavick continued, after a moment's pause. "Let me know if you get uneasy. But I'll tell you what it is, Jack; if I had a comfortable income, I wouldn't risk it in any speculation. There is a good deal that is interesting going on in this world, and I like to be in it; but the best plan for a man who has anything is, as Uncle Jerry says, to sail close and salt down."

The fact was that Mavick's connection with Henderson was an appreciable addition to his income, and it was not a bad thing for Henderson. Mavick's reputation for knowing the inside of everything and being close-mouthed actually brought him confidences; that which at first was a clever assumption became a reality, and his reputation was so established for being behind the scenes that he was not believed when he honestly professed ignorance of anything. His modest disclaimer merely increased the impression that he was deep. Henderson himself had something of the Bismarck trait of brutal, contemptuous frankness. Mavick was never brutal and never contemptuous, but he had a cynical sort of frankness, which is a good deal more effectual in a business way than the oily, plausible manner which on 'Change, as well as in politics, is distrusted as hypocrisy. Now Uncle Jerry Hollowell was neither oily nor frank; he was long-headed and cautious, and had a reputation for shrewdness and

just enough of plasticity of conscience to remove him out of the list of the impracticable and over-scrupulous. This reputation that business men and politicians acquire would be a very curious study. The world is very complacent, and apparently worships success and votes for smartness, but it would surprise some of our most successful men to know what a real respect there is in the community, after all, for downright integrity.

Even Jack, who fell into the current notion of his generation of young men that the Henderson sort of morality was best adapted to quick success, evinced a consciousness of want of nobility in the course he was pursuing by not making Edith his confidante. He would have said, of course, that she knew nothing about business, but what he meant was that she had a very clear conception of what was honest. All the evidences of his prosperity, shown in his greater freedom of living, were sore trials to her. She belonged to that old class of New-Yorkers who made trade honorable, like the merchants of Holland and Venice, and she knew also that Jack's little fortune had come out of honest toil and strict business integrity. Could there be any happiness in life in any other course?

It seemed cruel to put such a problem as this upon a young woman hardly yet out of girlhood, in the first flush of a new life, which she had dreamed should be so noble and high and so happy, in the period which is consecrated by the sweetest and loveliest visions and hopes that ever come into a woman's life.

As the summer wore on to its maximum of heat and discomfort in the city, Edith, who never forgot to measure the hardships of others by her own more fortunate circumstances, urged Dr. Leigh to come away from her labors and rest a few days by the sea. The reply was a refusal, but there was no complaint in the brief business-like note. One might have supposed that it was the harvest-time of the doctor, if he had not known that she gathered nothing for herself. There had never been so much sickness, she wrote, and such an opportunity for her. She was learning a great deal, especially about some disputed contagious diseases. She would like to see Mrs. Delancy, and she wouldn't mind a breath of air that was more easily to be analyzed than that she existed in, but nothing could induce her to give up her cases. All that appeared in her letter was her interest in her profession.

Father Damon, who had been persuaded by Edith's urgency to go down with Jack for a few days to the Golden House, seemed uncommonly interested in the reasons of Dr. Leigh's refusal to come.

"I never saw her," he said, "so cheerful. The more sickness there is, the more radiant she is. I don't mean," he added, laughing, "in apparel. Apparently she never thinks of herself, and positively she seems to take no time to eat or sleep. I encounter her everywhere. I doubt if she ever sits down, except when she drops in at the mission chapel now and then, and sits quite unmoved on a bench by the door during vespers."

"Then she does go there?" said Edith.

"That is a queer thing. She would promptly repudiate any religious interest. But I tell her she is a bit of a humbug. When I speak about her philanthropic zeal, she says her interest is purely scientific."

"Anyway, I believe," Jack put in, "that women doctors are less mercenary than men. I dare say they will get over that when the novelty of coming

into the profession has worn off."

"That is possible," said Father Damon; "but that which drives women into professions now is the desire to do something rather than the desire to make something. Besides, it is seldom, in their minds, a finality; marriage is always a possibility."

"Yes," replied Edith, "and the probability of having to support a husband and family; then they may be as mercenary as men are."

"Still, the enthusiasm of women," Father Damon insisted, "in hospital and outdoor practice, the singleness of their devotion to it, is in contrast to that of the young men-doctors. And I notice another thing in the city: they take more interest in philanthropic movements, in the condition of the poor, in the labor questions; they dive eagerly into philosophic speculations, and they are more aggressively agnostics. And they are not afraid of any social theories. I have one friend, a skillful practitioner they tell me, a linguist, and a metaphysician, a most agreeable and accomplished woman, who is in theory an extreme nihilist, and looks to see the present social and political order upset."

"I don't see," Jack remarked, "what women especially are to gain by such a revolution."

"Perhaps independence, Jack," replied Edith. "You should hear my club of working-girls, who read and think much on these topics, talk of these things."

"Yes," said Father Damon, "you toss these topics about, and discuss them in the magazines, and fancy you are interested in socialistic movements. But you have no idea how real and vital they are, and how the dumb discontent of the working classes is being formulated into ideas. It is time we tried to understand each other."

Not all the talk was of this sort at the Golden House. There were three worlds here--that of Jack, to which Edith belonged by birth and tradition and habit; that of which we have spoken, to which she belonged by profound sympathy; and that of Father Damon, to which she belonged by undefined aspiration. In him was the spiritual element asserting itself in a mediaeval form, in a struggle to mortify and deny the flesh and yet take part in modern life. Imagine a celibate and ascetic of the fifteenth century, who knew that Paradise must be gained through poverty and privation and suffering, interesting himself in the tenement-house question, in labor leagues, and the single tax.

Yet, hour after hour, in those idle summer days, when nature was in a mood that suggested grace and peace, when the waves lapsed along the shore and the cicada sang in the hedge, did Father Damon unfold to Edith his ideas of the spiritualization of modern life through a conviction of its pettiness and transitoriness. How much more content there would be if the poor could only believe that it matters little what happens here if the heart is only pure and fixed on the endless life.

"Oh, Father Damon," replied Edith, with a grave smile, "I think your mission ought to be to the rich."

"Yes," he replied, for he also knew his world, "if I wanted to make my ideas fashionable; but I want to make them operative. By-and-by," he added, also with a smile, "we will organize some fishermen and carpenters

and tailors on a mission to the rich."

Father Damon's visit was necessarily short, for his work called him back to town, and perhaps his conscience smote him a little for indulging in this sort of retreat. By the middle of August Jack's yacht was ready, and he went with Mavick and the Van Dams and some other men of the club on a cruise up the coast. Edith was left alone with her Baltimore friend.

And yet not alone. As she lay in her hammock in those dreamy days a new world opened to her. It was not described in the chance romance she took up, nor in the volume of poems she sometimes held in her hand, with a finger inserted in the leaves. Of this world she felt herself the centre and the creator, and as she mused upon its mysteries, life took a new, strange meaning to her. It was apt to be a little hazy off there in the watery horizon, and out of the mist would glide occasionally a boat, and the sun would silver its sails, and it would dip and toss for half an hour in the blue, laughing sea, and then disappear through the mysterious curtain. Whence did it come? Whither had it gone? Was life like that? Was she on the shore of such a sea, and was this new world into which she was drifting only a dream? By her smile, by the momentary illumination that her sweet thoughts made in her lovely, hopeful face, you knew that it was not. Who can guess the thoughts of a woman at such a time? Are the trees glad in the spring, when the sap leaps in their trunks, and the buds begin to swell, and the leaves unfold in soft response to the creative impulse? The miracle is never old nor commonplace to them, nor to any of the human family. The anticipation of life is eternal. The singing of the birds, the blowing of the south wind, the sparkle of the waves, all found a response in Edith's heart, which leaped with joy. And yet there was a touch of melancholy in it all, the horizon was so vast, and the mist of uncertainty lay along it. Literature, society, charities, all that she had read and experienced and thought, was nothing to this, this great unknown anxiety and bliss, this saddest and sweetest of all human experiences. She prayed that she might be worthy of this great distinction, this responsibility and blessing.

And Jack, dear Jack, would he love her more?

XII

Although Father Damon had been absent from his charge only ten days, it was time for him to return. If he had not a large personal following, he had a wide influence. If comparatively few found their way to his chapel, he found his way to many homes; his figure was a familiar one in the streets, and his absence was felt by hundreds who had no personal relations with him, but who had become accustomed to seeing him go about on his errands of encouragement, and probably had never realized how much the daily sight of him had touched them. The priestly dress, which may once have provoked a sneer at his effeminacy, had now a suggestion of refinement, of unselfish devotion, of consecration to the service of the unfortunate, his spiritual face appealed to their better natures, and the visible heroism that carried his frail figure through labors that would have worn out the stoutest physique stirred in the hearts of the rudest some comprehension of the reality of the spirit.

It may not have occurred to them that he was of finer clay than they

--perhaps he was not--but his presence was in their minds a subtle connection and not a condescending one, rather a confession of brotherhood, with another world and another view of life. They may not have known that their hearts were stirred because he had the gift of sympathy.

And was it an unmanly trait that he evoked in men that sentiment of chivalry which is never wanting in the roughest community for a pure woman? Wherever Father Damon went there was respect for his purity and his unselfishness, even among those who would have been shamefaced if surprised in any exhibition of softness.

And many loved him, and many depended on him. Perhaps those who most depended on him were the least worthy, and those who loved him most were least inclined to sacrifice their own reasonable view of life to his own sublimated spiritual conception. It was the spirit of the man they loved, and not the creed of the priest. The little chapel in its subdued lights and shadows, with confessionals and crosses and candles and incense, was as restful a refuge as ever to the tired and the dependent; but wanting his inspiring face and voice, it was not the same thing, and the attendance always fell away when he was absent. There was needed there more than elsewhere the living presence.

He was missed, and the little world that missed him was astray. The first day of his return his heart was smitten by the thinness of the congregation. Had he, then, accomplished nothing; had he made no impression, established in his shifting flock no habit of continuance in well-doing that could survive even his temporary withdrawal? The fault must be his. He had not sufficiently humiliated and consecrated himself, and put under all strength of the flesh and trust in worldly instrumentalities. There must be more prayer, more vigils, more fasting, before the power would come back to him to draw these wandering minds to the light. And so in the heat of this exhausting August, at the time when his body most needed re-enforcement for the toil he required of it, he was more rigid in his spiritual tyranny and contempt of it.

Ruth Leigh was not dependent upon Father Damon, but she also learned how long ten days could be without a sight of him. When she looked into his chapel occasionally she realized, as never before, how much in the air his ceremonies and his creed were. There was nothing there for her except his memory. And she knew when she stepped in there, for her cool, reasoning mind was honest, that it was the thought of him that drew her to the place, and that going there was a sentimental indulgence. What she would have said was that she admired, loved Father Damon on account of his love for humanity. It was a common saying of all the professional women in her set, and of the working-girls, that they loved Father Damon. It is a comfort to women to be able to give their affection freely where conventionalities and circumstances make the return of it in degree unlikely.

At the close of a debilitating day Dr. Leigh found herself in the neighborhood of the mission chapel. She was tired and needed to rest somewhere. She knew that Father Damon had returned, but she had not seen him, and a double motive drew her steps. The attendance was larger than it had been recently, and she found a stool in a dark corner, and listened, with a weary sort of consciousness of the prayers and the singing, but not without a deeper feeling of peace in the tones of a voice every inflection of which she knew so well. It seemed to her that the reading cost him an effort, and there was a note of pathos in the

voice that thrilled her. Presently he advanced towards the altar rail --he was accustomed to do this with his little flock--and placing one hand on the lectern, began to speak.

At first, and this was not usual, he spoke about himself in a strain of sincere humility, taking blame upon himself for his inability to do effectively the great service his Master had set him to do. He meant to have given himself more entirely to the dear people among whom he labored; he hoped to show himself more worthy of the trust they had given him; he was grateful for the success of his mission, but no one knew so well as he how far short it came of being what he ought to have made it. He knew indeed how weak he was, and he asked the aid of their sympathy and encouragement. It seemed to be with difficulty that he said this, and to Ruth's sympathetic ear there was an evidence of physical exhaustion in his tone. There was in it, also, for her, a confession of failure, the cry of the preacher, in sorrow and entreaty, that says, "I have called so long, and ye would not listen."

As he went on, still with an effort and feebly, there came over the little group a feeling of awe and wonderment, and the silence was profound. Still steadying himself by the reading-desk, he went on to speak of other things, of those of his followers who listened, of the great mass swirling about them in the streets who did not listen and did not care; of the little life that now is so full of pain and hardship and disappointment, of good intentions frustrated, of hopes that deceive, and of fair prospects that turn to ashes, of good lives that go wrong, of sweet natures turned to bitterness in the unaided struggle. His voice grew stronger and clearer, as his body responded to the kindling theme in his soul. He stepped away from the desk nearer the rail, the bowed head was raised. "What does it matter?" he said. "It is only for a little while, my children." Those who heard him that day say that his face shone like that of an angel, and that his voice was like a victorious clarion, so clear, so sweet, so inspiring, as he spoke of the life that is to come, and the fair certainty of that City where he with them all wished to be.

As he closed, some were kneeling, many were crying; all, profoundly moved, watched him as, with the benediction and the sign of the cross, he turned and walked swiftly to the door of the sacristy. It opened, and then Ruth Leigh heard a cry, "Father Damon! Father Damon!" and there was a rush into the chancel. Hastening through the throng, which promptly made way for the doctor, she found Father Damon lying across the threshold, as he had fallen, colorless and unconscious. She at once took command of the situation. The body was lifted to the plain couch in the room, a hasty examination was made of pulse and heart, a vial of brandy was produced from her satchel, and messengers were despatched for things needed, and especially for beef-tea.

"Is he dead, Dr. Leigh? Is he any better, doctor? What is the matter, doctor?"

"Want of nourishment," replied Dr. Leigh, savagely.

The room was cleared of all except a couple of stout lads and a friendly German woman whom the doctor knew. The news of the father's sudden illness had spread rapidly, with the report that he had fallen dead while standing at the altar; and the church was thronged, and the street rapidly blocked up with a hushed crowd, eager for news and eager to give aid. So great was the press that the police had to interfere, and push

back the throng from the door. It was useless to attempt to disperse it with the assurance that Father Damon was better; it patiently waited to see for itself. The sympathy of the neighborhood was most impressive, and perhaps the thing that the public best remembers about this incident is the pathetic solicitude of the people among whom Father Damon labored at the rumor of his illness, a matter which was greatly elaborated by the reporters from the city journals and the purveyors of telegraphic news for the country.

With the application of restoratives the patient revived. When he opened his eyes he saw figures in the room as in a dream, and his mind struggled to remember where he was and what had happened; but one thing was not a dream: Dr. Leigh stood by his bedside, with her left hand on his brow and the right grasping his own right hand, as if to pull him back to life. He saw her face, and then he lost it again in sheer weariness at the effort. After a few moments, in a recurring wave of strength, he looked up again, still bewildered, and said, faintly:

"Where am I?"

"With friends," said the doctor. "You were a little faint, that is all; you will be all right presently."

She quickly prepared some nourishment, which was what he most needed, and fed him from time to time, as he was able to receive it. Gradually he could feel a little vigor coming into his frame; and regaining control of himself, he was able to hear what had happened. Very gently the doctor told him, making light of his temporary weakness.

"The fact is, Father Damon," she said, "you've got a disease common in this neighborhood--hunger."

The father smiled, but did not reply. It might be so. For the time he felt his dependence, and he did not argue the point. This dependence upon a woman--a sort of Sister of Charity, was she not?--was not altogether unpleasant. When he attempted to rise, but found that he was too weak, and she said "Not yet," he submitted, with the feeling that to be commanded with such gentleness was a sort of luxury.

But in an hour's time he declared that he was almost himself again, and it was decided that he was well enough to be removed to his own apartments in the neighborhood. A carriage was sent for, and the transfer was made, and made through a crowd in the streets, which stood silent and uncovered as his carriage passed through it. Dr. Leigh remained with him for an hour longer, and then left him in charge of a young gentleman from the Neighborhood Guild, who gladly volunteered to watch for the night.

Ruth walked slowly home, weary now that the excitement was over, and revolving many things in her mind, as is the custom of women. She heard again that voice, she saw again that inspired face; but the impression most indelible with her was the prostrate form, the pallid countenance, the helplessness of this man whose will had before been strong enough to compel the obedience of his despised body. She had admired his strength; but it was his weakness that drew upon her woman's heart, and evolved a tenderness dangerous to her peace of mind. Yet it was the doctor and not the woman that replied to the inquiries at the dispensary.

"Yes, it was fasting and overwork. Men are so stupid; they think they

can defy all the laws of nature, especially priests." And she determined to be quite plain with him next day.

And Father Damon, lying weary in his bed, before he fell asleep, saw the faces in the dim chapel turned to him in strained eagerness the moment before he lost consciousness; but the most vivid image was that of a woman bending over him, with eyes of tenderness and pity, and the smile with which she greeted his awakening. He could feel yet her hand upon his brow.

When Dr. Leigh called next day, on her morning rounds, she found a brother of the celibate order, Father Monies, in charge. He was sitting by the window reading, and when the doctor came up the steps he told her in a low voice to enter without knocking. Father Damon was better, much better; but he had advised him not to leave his bed, and the patient had been dozing all the morning. The doctor asked if he had eaten anything, and how much. The apartment was small and scantily furnished--a sort of anchorite cell. Through the drawn doors of the next room the bed was in sight. As they were talking in low voices there came from this room a cheerful:

"Good-morning, doctor."

"I hope you ate a good breakfast," she said, as she arose and went to his bedside.

"I suppose you mean better than usual," he replied, with a faint attempt at a smile. "No doubt you and Father Monies are satisfied, now you've got me laid up."

"That depends upon your intentions."

"Oh, I intend to get up tomorrow."

"If you do, without other change in your intentions, I am going to report you to the Organized Charity as a person who has no visible means of support."

She had brought a bunch of violets, and as they talked she had filled a glass with water and put them on a stand by the head of the bed. Then--oh, quite professionally--she smoothed out his pillows and straightened the bedclothes, and, talking all the time, and as if quite unconscious of what she was doing, moved about the room, putting things to rights, and saying, in answer to his protest, that perhaps she should lose her reputation as a physician in his eyes by appearing to be a professional nurse.

There was a timid knock at the door, and a forlorn little figure, clad in a rumpled calico, with an old shawl over her head, half concealing an eager and pretty face, stood in the doorway, and hesitatingly came in.

"Meine Mutter sent me to see how Father Damon is," she explained; "she could not come, because she washes."

She had a bunch of flowers in her hand, and encouraged by the greeting of the invalid, she came to the bedside and placed them in his outstretched hand--a faded blossom of scarlet geranium, a bachelor's button, and a sprig of parsley, probably begged of a street dealer as she came along. "Some blooms," she said.

"Bless you, my dear," said Father Damon; "they are very pretty."

"Dey smells nice," the child exclaimed, her eyes dancing with pleasure at the reception of her gift. She stood staring at him, and then, her eye catching the violets, she added, "Dose is pooty, too."

"If you can stay half an hour or so, I should like to step round to the chapel," Father Monies said to the doctor in the front room, taking up his hat.

The doctor could stay. The little girl had moved a chair up to the bedside, and sat quite silent, her grimy little hand grasped in the father's. Ruth, saying that she hoped the father wouldn't mind, began to put in order the front room, which the incidents of the night had somewhat disturbed. Father Damon, holding fast by that little hand to the world of poverty to which he had devoted his life, could not refrain from watching her, as she moved about with the quick, noiseless way that a woman has when she is putting things to rights. This was indeed a novel invasion of his life. He was still too weak to reason about it much. How good she was, how womanly! And what a sense of peace and repose she brought into his apartment! The presence of Brother Monies was peaceful also, but hers was somehow different. His eyes had not cared to follow the brother about the room. He knew that she was unselfish, but he had not noticed before that her ways were so graceful. As she turned her face towards him from time to time he thought its expression beautiful. Ruth Leigh would have smiled grimly if any one had called her beautiful, but then she did not know how she looked sometimes when her feelings were touched. It is said that the lamp of love can illumine into beauty any features of clay through which it shines. As he gazed, letting himself drift as in a dream, suddenly a thought shot through his mind that made him close his eyes, and such a severe priestly look came upon his face that the little girl, who had never taken her eyes off him, exclaimed:

"It is worse?"

"No, my dear," he replied, with a reassuring smile; "at least, I hope not."

But when the doctor, finishing her work, drew a chair into the doorway, and sat by the foot of his bed, the stern look still remained on his pale face. And the doctor, she also was the doctor again, as matter of fact as in any professional visit.

"You are very kind," he said.

There was a shade of impatience on her face as she replied, "But you must be a little kind to yourself."

"It doesn't matter."

"But it does matter. You defeat the very work you want to do. I'm going to report you to your order." And then she added, more lightly, "Don't you know it is wrong to commit suicide?"

"You don't understand," he replied. "There is more than one kind of suicide; you don't believe in the suicide of the soul. Ah, me!" And a shade of pain passed over his face.

She was quick to see this. "I beg your pardon, Father Damon. It is none of my business, but we are all so anxious to have you speedily well again."

Just then Father Monies returned, and the doctor rose to go. She took the little girl by the hand and said, "Come, I was just going round to see your father. Good-by. I shall look in again tomorrow."

"Thank you--thank you a thousand times. But you have so much to do that you must not bother about me."

Whether he said this to quiet his own conscience, secretly hoping that he might see her again on the morrow, perhaps he himself could not have decided.

Late the next afternoon, after an unusually weary round of visits, made in the extreme heat and in a sort of hopeless faithfulness, Dr. Leigh reached the tenement in which Father Damon lodged: In all the miserable scenes of the day it had been in her mind, giving to her work a pleasure that she did not openly acknowledge even to herself, that she should see him.

The curtains were down, and there was no response to her knock, except from a door in the passage opposite. A woman opened the door wide enough to show her head and to make it evident that she was not sufficiently dressed to come out, and said that Father Damon had gone. He was very much better, and his friend had taken him up-town. Dr. Leigh thanked her, and said she was very glad.

She was so glad that, as she walked away, scarcely heeding her steps or conscious of the chaffing, chattering crowd, all interest in her work and in that quarter of the city seemed dead.

XIII

It is well that there is pleasure somewhere in the world. It is possible for those who have a fresh-air fund of their own to steam away in a yacht, out of the midsummer ennui and the weary gayety of the land. It is a costly pleasure, and probably all the more enjoyed on that account, for if everybody had a yacht there would be no more feeling of distinction in sailing one than in going to any of the second-rate resorts on the coast. There is, to be sure, some ennui in yachting on a rainy coast, and it might be dull but for the sensation created by arrivals at watering-places and the telegraphic reports of these sensations.

If there was any dullness on the Delancy yacht, means were taken to dispel it. While still in the Sound a society was formed for the suppression of total abstinence, and so successful was this that Point Judith was passed, in a rain and a high and chopping sea, with a kind of hilarious enjoyment of the commotion, which is one of the things desired at sea. When the party came round to Newport it declared that it had had a lovely voyage, and inquiry brought out the great general principle, applicable to most coast navigation for pleasure, that the enjoyable way to pass Point Judith is not to know you are passing Point Judith.

Except when you land, and even after you have got your sea-legs on, there is a certain monotony in yachting, unless the weather is very bad, and unless there are women aboard. A party of lively women make even the sea fresh and entertaining. Otherwise, the game of poker is much what it is on land, and the constant consulting of charts and reckoning of speed evince the general desire to get somewhere--that is, to arrive at a harbor. In the recollections of this voyage, even in Jack's recollections of it after he had paid the bills, it seemed that it had been simply glorious, free from care, generally a physical setting-up performance, and a lark of enormous magnitude. And everybody envied the fortunate sailors.

Mavick actually did enjoy it, for he had that brooding sort of nature, that self-satisfied attitude, that is able to appropriate to its own uses whatever comes. And being an unemotional and very tolerable sailor,

he was able to be as cynical at sea as on land, and as much of an oracle, in his wholly unobtrusive way. The perfect personal poise of Mavick, which gave him an air of patronizing the ocean, and his lightly held skeptical view of life, made his company as full of flavor on ship as it was on shore. He didn't know anything more about the weather than the Weather Bureau knows, yet the helmsman of the yacht used to consult him about the appearances of the sky and a change of wind with a confidence in his opinion that he gave to no one else on board. And Mavick never forfeited this respect by being too positive. It was so with everything; he evidently knew a great deal more than he cared to tell. It is pleasing to notice how much credit such men as Mavick obtain in the world by circumspect reticence and a knowing manner. Jack, blundering along in his free-hearted, emotional way, and never concealing his opinion, was really right twice where Mavick was right once, but he never had the least credit for wisdom.

It was late in August that the Delancy yacht steamed into the splendid Bar Harbor, making its way slowly through one of the rare fogs which are sometimes seen by people who do not own real estate there. Even before they could see an island those on board felt the combination of mountain and sea air that makes this favored place at once a tonic and a sedative to the fashionable world.

The party were expected at Bar Harbor. It had been announced that the yacht was on its way, and some of the projected gayeties were awaiting its coming, for the society reinforcement of the half-dozen men on board was not to be despised. The news went speedily round that Captain Delancy's flag was flying at the anchorage off the landing.

Among the first to welcome them as they landed and strolled up to the hotel was Major Fairfax.

"Oh yes," he said; "we are all here--that is, all who know where they ought to be at the right moment."

To the new-comers the scene was animated. The exotic shops sparkled with cheap specialties; landaus, pony-phaetons, and elaborate buckboards dashed through the streets; aquatic and lawn-tennis costumes abounded. If there was not much rowing and lawn-tennis, there was a great deal of becoming morning dressing for these sports, and in all the rather aimless idleness there was an air of determined enjoyment. Even here it was evident that there was a surplus of women. These lovers of nature, in

the summer season, who had retired to this wild place to be free from the importunities of society, betrayed, Mavick thought, the common instinct of curiosity over the new arrival, and he was glad to take it as an evidence that they loved not nature less but man more. Jack tripped up this ungallant speech by remarking that if Mavick was in this mood he did not know why he came ashore. And Van Dam said that sooner or later all men went ashore. This thin sort of talk was perhaps pardonable after the weariness of a sea voyage, but the Major promptly said it wouldn't do. And the Major seemed to be in charge of the place.

"No epigrams are permitted. We are here to enjoy ourselves. I'm ordered to bring the whole crew of you to tea at the Tavish cottage."

"Anybody else there?" asked Jack, carelessly.

"Well, it's the most curious coincidence, but Mrs. Henderson arrived last night; Henderson has gone to Missouri."

"Yes, he wrote me to look out for his wife on this coast," said Mavick.

"You kept mighty still about it," said Jack.

"So did you," retorted Mavick.

"It is very curious," the Major explained, "how fashionable intelligence runs along this coast, apparently independent of the telegraph; everybody knows where everybody else is."

The Tavish cottage was a summer palace of the present fashion, but there was one good thing about it: it had no tower, nor any make-believe balconies hung on the outside like bird-cages. The rooms were spacious, and had big fireplaces, and ample piazzas all round, so that the sun could be courted or the wind be avoided at all hours of the day. It was, in short, not a house for retirement and privacy, but for entertainment. It was furnished luxuriously but gayly, and with its rugs and portieres and divans it reminded Mavick of an Oriental marquee. Miss Tavish called it her tepee, an evolution of the aboriginal dwelling. She liked to entertain, and she never appeared to better advantage than when her house was full, and something was going on continually-lively breakfasts and dinners, dances, theatricals, or the usual flowing in and out of callers and guests, chattering groups, and flirtatious couples. It was her idea of repose from the winter's gayety, and in it she sustained the role of the non-fatigueable society girl. It is a performance that many working-girls regard with amazement.

There was quite a flutter in the cottage, as there always is when those who know each other well meet under new circumstances after a short separation.

"We are very glad to see you," Miss Tavish said, cordially; "we have been awfully dull."

"That is complimentary to me," said the Major.

"You can judge the depths we have been in when even the Major couldn't pull us out," she retorted. "Without him we should have simply died."

"And it would have been the liveliest obsequies I ever attended."

Carmen was not effusive in her greeting; she left that role to Miss Tavish, taking for herself that of confidential friend. She was almost retiring in her manner, but she made Jack feel that she had a strong personal interest in his welfare, and she asked a hundred questions about the voyage and about town and about Edith.

"I'm going to chaperon you up here," she said, "for Miss Tavish will lead you into all sorts of wild adventures."

There was that in the manner of the demure little woman when she made this proposal that convinced Jack that under her care he would be perfectly safe--from Miss Tavish.

After cigarettes were lighted she contrived to draw Mavick away to the piazza. She was very anxious to know what Henderson's latest moves were. Mavick was very communicative, and told her nothing that he knew she did not already know. And she was clever enough to see, without any apparent distrust, that whatever she got from him must be in what he did not say. As to Jack's speculations, she made little more progress. Jack gave every sign of being prosperous; he entertained royally on his yacht.

Mavick himself was puzzled to know whether Carmen really cared for Jack, or whether she was only interested as in a game, one of the things that amused her life to play, to see how far he would go, and to watch his ascension or his tumble. Mavick would have been surprised if he had known that as a result of this wholly agreeable and confidential talk, Carmen wrote that night in a letter to her husband:

"Your friend Mavick is here. What a very clever man he is! If I were you I would keep an eye on him."

A dozen plans were started at the tea for relieving the tedium of the daily drives and the regulation teas and receptions. For one thing, weather permitting, they would all breakfast at twelve on the yacht, and then sail about the harbor, and come home in the sunset.

The day was indeed charming, so stimulating as to raise the value of real estate, and incite everybody to go off in search of adventure, in wagons, in walking parties, in boats. There is no happiness like the anticipation of pleasure begot by such a morning. Those who live there said it was regular Bar Harbor weather.

Captain Delancy was on deck to receive his guests, who came out in small boats, chattering and fluttering and "ship-ahoying," as gay in spirits as in apparel. Anything but high spirits and nonsense would be unpardonable on such a morning. Breakfast was served on deck, under an awning, in sight of the mountains, the green islands, the fringe of breaking sea in the distant opening, the shimmer and sparkle of the harbor, the white sails of pleasure-boats, the painted canoes, the schooners and coal-boats and steamers swinging at anchor just enough to make all the scene alive. "This is my idea," said the Major, "of going to sea in a yacht; it would be perfect if we were tied up at the dock."

"I move that we throw the Major overboard," cried Miss Tavish.

"No," Jack exclaimed; "it is against the law to throw anything into the harbor."

"Oh, I expected Miss Tavish would throw me overboard when Mavick

appeared."

Mavick raised his glass and proposed the health of Miss Tavish.

"With all my heart," the Major said; "my life is passed in returning good for evil."

"I never knew before," and Miss Tavish bowed her acknowledgments, "the secret of the Major's attractions."

"Yes," said Carmen, sweetly, "he is all things to all women."

"You don't appear to have a friend here, Major," Mavick suggested.

"No; my friends are all foul-weather friends; come a bright day, they are all off like butterflies. That comes of being constant."

"That's no distinction," Carmen exclaimed; "all men are that till they get what they want."

"Alas! that women also in these days here become cynical! It was not so when I was young. Here's to the ever young," and he bowed to Carmen and Miss Tavish.

"He's been with Ponce de Leon!" cried Miss Tavish.

"He's the dearest man living, except a few," echoed Carmen. "The Major's health."

The yellow wine sparkled in the glasses like the sparkling sea, the wind blew softly from the south, the sails in the bay darkened and flashed, and the breakfast, it seemed to go along of itself, and ere long the convives were eating ambrosia and sipping nectar. Van Dam told a shark story. Mavick demonstrated its innate improbability. The Major sang a song--a song of the forties, with a touch of sentiment. Jack, whose cheerful voice was a little of the cider-cellar order, and who never sang when he was sad, struck up the latest vaudeville ditty, and Carmen and Miss Tavish joined in the chorus.

"I like the sea," the Major declared. They all liked it. The breakfast lasted a long time, and when they rose from the table Jack said that presently they would take a course round the harbor. The Major remarked that that would suit him. He appeared to be ready to go round the world.

While they were preparing to start, Carmen and Jack strolled away to the bow, where she perched herself, holding on by the rigging. He thought he had never seen her look so pretty as at that moment, in her trim nautical costume, sitting up there, swinging her feet like a girl, and regarding him with half-mocking, half-admiring eyes.

What were they saying? Heaven only knows. What nonsense do people so situated usually talk? Perhaps she was warning him against Miss Tavish. Perhaps she was protesting that Julia Tavish was a very, very old friend. To an observer this admirable woman seemed to be on the defensive--her most alluring attitude. It was not, one could hear, exactly sober talk; there was laughter and raillery and earnestness mingled. It might be said that they were good comrades. Carmen professed to like good comradeship and no nonsense. But she liked to be confidential.

Till late in the afternoon they cruised about among the islands, getting different points of view of the coast, and especially different points of view of each other, in the freedom of talk and repartee permitted on an excursion. Before sunset they were out in the open, and could feel the long ocean swell. The wind had risen a little, and there was a low band of clouds in the south. The skipper told Mr. Delancy that it would be much fresher with the sinking of the sun, but Jack replied that it wouldn't amount to anything; the glass was all right.

"Now the great winds shoreward blow;
Now the salt tides seaward flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray."

Miss Tavish was in the wheel-house, and had taken the wheel. This clever girl knew her right hand from her left, instantly, without having to stop and think and look at her rings, and she knew what port and starboard meant, as orders, and exactly how to meet a wave with a turn of the wheel.

"I say, Captain Delancy," she cried out, "the steamer is about due. Let's go down and meet her, and race in."

"All right," replied Jack. "We can run round her three times and then beat her in."

The steamer's smoke was seen at that instant, and the yacht was headed for it. The wind was a little fresher, but the tight little craft took the waves like a duck, and all on board enjoyed the excitement of the change, except the Major, who said he didn't mind, but he didn't believe the steamer needed any escort.

By the time the steamer was reached the sun was going down in a band of clouds. There was no gale, but the wind increased in occasional puffs of spite, and the waves were getting up. The skipper took the wheel to turn the yacht in a circle to her homeward course. As this operation created strange motions, and did not interest the Major, he said he would go below and reflect.

In turning, the yacht came round on the seaward side of the steamer, but far behind. But the little craft speedily showed her breeding and overhauled her big rival, and began to forge ahead. The little group on the yacht waved their handkerchiefs as if in good-by, and the passengers on the steamer cheered. As the wind was every moment increasing, the skipper sheered away to allow plenty of sea-room between the boats. The race appeared to be over.

"It's a pity," said Miss Tavish.

"Let's go round her," said Jack; "eh, skipper?"

"If you like, sir," responded the skipper. "She can do it."

The yacht was well ahead, but the change in the direction brought the vessels nearer together. But there was no danger. The speed they were going would easily bring her round away ahead of the steamer.

But just then something happened. The yacht would not answer to her helm. The wheel flew around without resistance. The wind, hauled now

into the east, struck her with violence and drove her sideways. The little thing was like a chip on the sea. The rudder-chain had broken. The yacht seemed to fly towards the long, hulking steamer. The danger was seen there, and her helm was put hard down, and her nose began to turn towards the shore. But it was too late. It seemed all over in an instant. The yacht dashed bow on to the side of the steamer, quivered an instant, and then dropped away. At the same moment the steamer slowed down and began to turn to assist the wounded.

The skipper of the yacht and a couple of hands rushed below. A part of the bow had been carried away and a small hole made just above the waterline, through which the water spurted whenever she encountered a large wave. It was enough to waterlog her and sink her in such a sea. The two seamen grasped whatever bedding was in reach below, rammed it into the opening, and held it there. The skipper ran on deck, and by the aid of the men hauled out a couple of sails and dropped them over the bow. These would aid in keeping out the water. They could float now, but where were they going? "Going ashore," said Mavick, grimly. And so they were.

"Was there a panic on board?" it was asked afterwards. Not exactly. Among well-bred people a panic is never good form. But there were white faces and trembling knees and anxious looks. The steamer was coming towards them, and all eyes were fixed on that rather than on the rocks of the still distant shore.

The most striking incident of the moment--it seemed so to some of those who looked back upon it--was a singular test of character, or rather of woman's divination of character. Carmen instinctively flew to Jack and grasped and held his arm. She knew, without stopping to reason about it, that he would unhesitatingly imperil his life to save that of any woman. Whatever judgment is passed upon Jack, this should not be forgotten. And Miss Tavish; to whom did she fly in this peril? To the gallant Major? No. To the cool and imperturbable Mavick, who was as strong and sinewy as he was cool? No. She ran without hesitation to Van Dam, and clung to him, recognizing instinctively, with the woman's feeling, the same quality that Jack had. There are such men, who may have no great gifts, but who will always fight rather than run under fire, and who will always protect a woman.

Mavick saw all this, and understood it perfectly, and didn't object to it at the time--but he did not forget it.

The task of rescue was not easy in that sea and wind, but it was dexterously done. The steamer approached and kept at a certain distance on the windward side. A boat was lowered, and a line was brought to the yacht, which was soon in tow with a stout cable hitched to the steamer's anchor windlass.

It was all done with much less excitement than appeared from the telegraphic accounts, and while the party were being towed home the peril seemed to have been exaggerated, and the affair to look like an ordinary sea incident. But the skipper said that it was one escape in a hundred.

The captain of the steamer raised his hat gravely in reply to the little cheer from the yacht, when Carmen and Miss Tavish fluttered their handkerchiefs towards him. The only chaff from the steamer was roared out by a fat Boston man, who made a funnel of his hands and shouted, "The race is not always to the swift."

As soon as Jack stepped ashore he telegraphed to Edith that the yacht had had an accident in the harbor, but that no one was hurt. When he reached the hotel he found a letter from Edith of such a tenor that he sent another despatch, saying that she might expect him at once, leaving the yacht behind. There was a buzz of excitement in the town, and there were a hundred rumors, which the sight of the yacht and its passengers landed in safety scarcely sufficed to allay.

When Jack called at the Tavish cottage to say good-by, both the ladies were too upset to see him. He took a night train, and as he was whirled away in the darkness the events of the preceding forty-eight hours seemed like a dream. Even the voyage up the coast was a little unreal--an insubstantial episode in life. And the summer city by the sea, with its gayety and gossip and busy idleness, sank out of sight like a phantom. He drew his cap over his eyes, and was impatient that the rattling train did not go faster, for Edith, waiting there in the Golden House, seemed to stretch out her arms for him to come. Still behind him rose a picture of that bacchanalian breakfast--the Major and Carmen and Mavick and Miss Tavish dancing a reel on the sloping deck, then the rising wind, the reckless daring of the race, and a vision of sudden death. He shuddered for the first time in a quick realization of how nearly it came to being all over with life and its pleasures.

XIV

Edith had made no appeal to Jack to come home. His going, therefore, had the merit in his eyes of being a voluntary response to the promptings of his better nature. Perhaps but for the accident at Mount Desert he might have felt that his summer pleasure was needlessly interfered with, but the little shock of that was a real, if still temporary, moral turning-point for him. For the moment his inclination seemed to run with his duty, and he had his reward in Edith's happiness at his coming, the loving hunger in her eyes, the sweet trust that animated her face, the delightful appropriation of him that could scarcely brook a moment's absence from her sight. There could not be a stronger appeal to his manhood and his fidelity.

"Yes, Jack dear, it was a little lonesome." She was swinging in her hammock on the veranda in sight of the sea, and Jack sat by her with his cigar. "I don't mind telling you now that there were times when I longed for you dreadfully, but I was glad, all the same, that you were enjoying yourself, for it is tiresome down here for a man with nothing to do but to wait."

"You dear thing!" said Jack, with his hand on her head, smoothing her glossy hair and pushing it back from her forehead, to make her look more intellectual--a thing which she hated. "Yes, dear, I was a brute to go off at all."

"But you wanted to comeback?" And there was a wistful look in her eyes.

"Indeed I did," he answered, fervently, as he leaned over the hammock to kiss the sweet eyes into content; and he was quite honest in the expression of a desire that was nearly forty-eight hours old, and by a singular mental reaction seemed to have been always present with him.

"It was so good of you to telegraph me before I could see the newspaper."

"Of course I knew the account would be greatly exaggerated," and he made light of the whole affair, knowing that the facts would still be capable of shocking her, giving a comic picture of the Major's seafaring qualities, and Carmen's and Miss Tavish's chaff of the gallant old beau.

Even with this light sketching of the event she could not avoid a retrospective pang of apprehension, and the tightened grasp of his hand was as if she were holding him fast from that and all other peril.

The days went by in content, on the whole, shaded a little by anxiety and made grave by a new interest. It could not well be but that the prospect of the near future, with its increase of responsibility, should create a little uneasiness in Jack's mind as to his own career. Of this future they talked much, and in Jack's attitude towards her Edith saw, for the first time since her marriage, a lever of suggestion, and it came naturally in the contemplation of their future life that she should encourage his discontent at having no occupation. Facing, in this waiting-time of quiet, certain responsibilities, it was impressed upon him that the collecting of bric-a-brac was scarcely an occupation, and that idling in clubs and studios and dangling about at the beck of society women was scarcely a career that could save him from ultimate ennui. To be sure, he had plenty of comrades, young fellows of fortune, who never intended to do anything except to use it for their personal satisfaction; but they did not seem to be of much account except in the little circle that they ornamented. Speaking of one of them one day, Father Damon had said that it seemed a pity a fellow of such family and capacity and fortune should go to the devil merely for the lack of an object in life. In this closer communion with Edith, whose ideas he began to comprehend, Jack dimly apprehended this view, and for the moment impulsively accepted it.

"I'm half sorry," he said one day, "that I didn't go in for a profession. But it is late now. Law, medicine, engineering, architecture, would take years of study."

"There was Armstrong," Edith suggested, "who studied law after he was married."

"But it looks sort of silly for a fellow who has a wife to go to school, unless," said Jack, with a laugh, "he goes to school to his wife. Then there's politics. You wouldn't like to see me in that."

"I rather think, Jack"--she spoke musingly--"if I were a man I should go into politics."

"You would have nice company!"

"But it's the noblest career--government, legislation, trying to do something to make the world better. Jack, I don't see how the men of New York can stand it to be governed by the very worst elements."

"My dear, you have no idea what practical politics is."

"I've an idea what I'd make it. What is the good of young men of leisure if they don't do anything for the country? Too fine to do what Hamilton did and Jay did! I wish you could have heard my father talk about it."

Abdicate their birthright for a four-in-hand!"

"Or a yacht," suggested Jack.

"Well, I don't see why a man cannot own a yacht and still care something about the decent management of his city."

"There's Mavick in politics."

"Not exactly. Mavick is in office for what he can make. No, I will not say that. No doubt he is a good civil servant, and we can't expect everybody to be unselfish. At any rate, he is intelligent. Do you remember what Mr. Morgan said last winter?" And Edith lifted herself up on her elbow, as if to add the weight of her attitude to her words, as Jack was still smiling at her earnestness.

"No; you said he was a delightful sort of pessimist."

"Mr. Morgan said that the trouble with the governing and legislation now in the United States is that everybody is superficially educated, and that the people are putting their superficial knowledge into laws, and that we are going to have a nice time with all these wild theories and crudities on the statute-book. And then educated people say that politics is so corrupt and absurd that they cannot have anything to do with it."

"And how far do you think we could get, my dear, in the crusade you propose?"

"I don't know that you would get anywhere. Yet I should think the young men of New York could organize its intelligence and do something. But you think I'm nothing but a woman." And Edith sank back, as if abandoning the field.

"I had thought that; but it is hard to tell, these days. Never mind, when we go back to town I'll stir round; you'll see."

This was an unusual sort of talk. Jack had never heard Edith break out in this direction before, and he wondered if many women were beginning to think of men in this way, as cowardly about their public duties. Not many in his set, he was sure. If Edith had urged him to go into Neighborhood Guild work, he could have understood that. Women and ethical cranks were interested in that. And women were getting queerer every day, beginning, as Mavick said, to take notice. However, it was odd, when you thought over it, that the city should be ruled by the slums.

It was easy to talk about these things; in fact, Jack talked a great deal about them in the clubs, and occasionally with a knot of men after dinner in a knowing, pessimistic sort of way. Sometimes the discussions were very animated and even noisy between these young citizens. It seemed, sometimes, about midnight, that something might be done; but the resolution vanished next morning when another day, to be lived through, confronted them. They illustrated the great philosophic observation that it is practically impossible for an idle man who has nothing to do to begin anything today.

To do Jack justice, this enforced detention in the country he did not find dull exactly. To be sure it was vacation-time, and his whole life

was a vacation, and summer was rather more difficult to dispose of than winter, for one had to make more of an effort to amuse himself. But Edith was never more charming than in this new dependence, and all his love and loyalty were evoked in caring for her. This was occupation enough, even if he had been the busiest man in the world—to watch over her, to read to her, to anticipate her fancies, to live with her in that dream of the future which made life seem almost ideal. There came a time when he looked back upon this month at the Golden House as the happiest in his life.

The talk about an occupation was not again referred to. Edith seemed entirely happy to have Jack with her, more entirely her own than he had ever been, and to have him just as he was. And yet he knew, by a sure instinct, that she saw him as she thought he would be, with some aim and purpose in life. And he made many good resolutions.

That which was nearest him attracted him most, and very feeble now were the allurements of the life and the company he had just left. Not that he would break with it exactly; it was not necessary to do that; but he would find something to do, something worth a man's doing, or, at any rate, some occupation that should tax his time and his energies. That, he knew, would make Edith happy, and to make her happy seemed now very much like a worthy object in life. She was so magnanimous, so unsuspecting, so full of all nobility. He knew she would stand by him whatever happened. Down here her attitude to life was no longer a rebuke to him nor a restraint upon him. Everything seemed natural and wholesome. Perhaps his vanity was touched, for there must be something in him if such a woman could love him. And probably there was, though he himself had never yet had a chance to find it out. Brought up in the expectation of a fortune, bred to idleness as others are to industry, his highest ambition having been to amuse himself creditably and to take life easily, what was to hinder his being one of the multitude of "good-for-nothings" in our modern life? If there had been war, he had spirit enough to carry him into it, and it would have surprised no one to hear that Jack had joined an exploring expedition to the North Pole or the highlands of Central Asia. Something uncommon he might do if opportunity offered.

About his operations with Henderson he had never told Edith, and he did not tell her now. Perhaps she divined it, and he rather wondered that she had never asked him about his increased expenditures, his yacht, and all that. He used to look at her steadily at times, as if he were trying to read the secrets of her heart.

"What are you looking at, Jack?"

"To see if I can find out how much you know, you look so wise."

"Do I? I was just thinking about you. I suppose that made me look so."

"No; about life and the world generally."

"Mighty little, Jack, except--well, I study you."

"Do you? Then you'll presently lose your mind:"

Jack and most men have little idea that they are windows through which their wives see the world; and how much more of the world they know in that way than men usually suspect or wives ever tell!

He did not tell her about Henderson, but he almost resolved that when his present venture was over he would let stocks alone as speculations, and go into something that he could talk about to his wife as he talked about stocks to Carmen.

From the stranded mariners at Bar Harbor Captain Jack had many and facetious letters. They wanted to know if his idea was that they should stick by the yacht until he got leisure to resume the voyage, or if he expected them to walk home. He had already given orders to the skipper to patch it up and bring it to New York if possible, and he advised his correspondents to stay by the yacht as long as there was anything in the larder, but if they were impatient, he offered them transportation on any vessel that would take able-bodied seamen. He must be excused from commanding, because he had been assigned to shore duty. Carmen and Miss Tavish wrote that it was unfair to leave them to sustain all the popularity and notoriety of the shipwreck, and that he owed it to the public to publish a statement, in reply to the insinuations of the newspapers, in regard to the sea-worthiness of the yacht and the object of this voyage. Jack replied that the only object of the voyage was to relieve the tedium of Bar Harbor, and, having accomplished this, he would present the vessel to Miss Tavish if she would navigate it back to the city.

The golden autumn days by the sea were little disturbed by these echoes of another life, which seemed at the moment to be a very shallow one. Yet the time was not without its undertone of anxieties, of grave perils that seemed to sanctify it and heighten its pleasures of hope. Jack saw and comprehended for the first time in his life the real nature of a pure woman, the depths of tenderness and self-abnegation, the heroism and calm trust and the nobility of an unworldly life. No wonder that he stood a little in awe of it, and days when he wandered down on the beach, with only the waves for company, or sat smoking in the arbor, with an unread book in his hand, his own career seemed petty and empty. Such moods, however, are not uncommon in any life, and are not of necessity fruitful. It need not be supposed that Jack took it too seriously, on the one hand, or, on the other, that a vision of such a woman's soul is ever without influence.

By the end of October they returned to town, Jack, and Edith with a new and delicate attractiveness, and young Fletcher Delancy the most wonderful and important personage probably who came to town that season. It seemed to Edith that his advent would be universally remarked, and Jack felt relieved when the boy was safely housed out of the public gaze. Yes, to Edith's inexpressible joy it was a boy, and while Jack gallantly said that a girl would have suited him just as well, he was conscious of an increased pride when he announced the sex to his friends. This undervaluation of women at the start is one of the mysteries of life. And until women themselves change their point of view, it is to be feared that legislation will not accomplish all that many of them wish.

"So it is a boy. I congratulate you," was the exclamation of Major Fairfax the first time Jack went down to the Union.

"I'm glad, Major, to have your approval."

"Oh, it's what is expected, that's all. For my part, I prefer girls. The announcement of boys is more expensive."

Jack understood, and it turned out in all the clubs that he had hit upon the most expensive sex in the view of responding to congratulations.

"It used to seem to me," said the Major, "that I must have a male heir to my estates. But, somehow, as the years go on, I feel more like being an heir myself. If I had married and had a boy, he would have crowded me out by this time; whereas, if it had been a girl, I should no doubt have been staying at her place in Lenox this summer instead of being shipwrecked on that desert island. There is nothing, my dear boy, like a girl well invested."

"You speak with the feelings of a father."

"I speak, sir, from observation. I look at society as it is, not as it would be if we had primogeniture and a landed aristocracy. A daughter under our arrangements is more likely to be a comfort to her parent in his declining years than a son."

"But you seem, Major, to have preferred a single life?"

"Circumstances--thank you, just a drop more--we are the creatures of circumstances. It is a long story. There were misrepresentation and misunderstanding. It is true, sir, that at that time my property was encumbered, but it was not unproductive. She died long ago. I have reason to believe that her married life was not happy. I was hot-blooded in those days, and my honor was touched, but I never blamed her. She was, at twenty, the most beautiful woman in Virginia. I have never seen her equal."

This was more than the Major had ever revealed about his private life before. He had created an illusion about himself which society accepted, and in which he lived in apparent enjoyment of metropolitan existence. This was due to a sanguine temperament and a large imagination. And he had one quality that made him a favorite--a hearty enjoyment of the prosperity of others. With regard to himself, his imagination was creative, and Jack could not now tell whether this "most beautiful woman of Virginia" was not evoked by the third glass, about which the Major remarked, as he emptied it, that only this extraordinary occasion could justify such an indulgence at this time of day.

The courtly old gentleman had inquired about madam--indeed, the second glass had been dedicated to "mother and child"--and he exhibited a friendly and almost paternal interest, as he always did, in Jack.

"By-the-way," he said, after a silence, "is Henderson in town?"

"I haven't heard. Why?"

"There's been a good deal of uneasiness in the Street as to what he is doing. I hope you haven't got anything depending on him."

"I've got something in his stocks, if that is what you mean; but I don't mind telling you I have made something."

"Well, it's none of my business, only the Henderson stocks have gone off a little, as you know."

Jack knew, and he asked the Major a little nervously if he knew anything further. The Major knew nothing except Street rumors. Jack was uneasy,

for the Major was a sort of weathercock, and before he left the club he wrote to Mavick.

He carried home with him a certain disquiet, to which he had been for months a stranger. Even the sight of Edith, who met him with a happy face, and dragged him away at once to see how lovely the baby looked asleep, could not remove this. It seemed strange that such a little thing should make a change, introduce an alien element into this domestic peace. Jack was like some other men who lose heart not when they are doing a doubtful thing, but when they have to face the consequences --cases of misplaced conscience. The peace and content that he had left in the house in the morning seemed to have gone out of it when he returned at night.

Next day came a reassuring letter from Mavick.

Henderson was going on as usual. It was only a little bear movement, which wouldn't amount to anything. Still, day after day, the bears kept clawing down, and Jack watched the stock-list with increasing eagerness. He couldn't decide to sacrifice anything as long as he had a margin of profit.

In this state of mind it was impossible to consider any of the plans he had talked over with Edith before the baby was born. Inquiries he did make about some sort of position or regular occupation, and these he reported to Edith; but his heart was not in it.

As the days went by there was a little improvement in his stocks, and his spirits rose. But this mood was no more favorable than the other for beginning a new life, nor did there seem to be, as he went along, any need of it. He had an appearance of being busy every day; he rose late and went late to bed. It was the old life. Stocks down, there was a necessity of bracing up with whomever he met at any of the three or four clubs in which he lounged in the afternoon; and stocks up, there was reason for celebrating that fact in the same way.

It was odd how soon he became accustomed to consider himself and to be regarded as the father of a family. That, also, like his marriage, seemed something done, and in a manner behind him. There was a commonplaceness about the situation. To Edith it was a great event. To Jack it was a milestone in life. He was proud of the boy; he was proud of Edith. "I tell you, fellows," he would say at the club, "it's a great thing," and so on, in a burst of confidence, and he was quite sincere in this. But he preferred to be at the club and say these things rather than pass the same hours with his adorable family. He liked to think what he would do for that family--what luxuries he could procure for them, how they should travel and see the world. There wasn't a better father anywhere than Jack at this period. And why shouldn't a man of family amuse himself? Because he was happy in his family he needn't change all the habits of his life.

Presently he intended to look about him for something to do that would satisfy Edith and fill up his time; but meantime he drifted on, alternately anxious and elated, until the season opened. The Blunts and the Van Dams and the Chesneys and the Tavishes and Mrs. Henderson had called, invitations had poured in, subscriptions were asked, studies and gayeties were projected, and the real business of life was under way.

To the nurse of the Delancy boy and to his mother he was by no means an old story or merely an incident of the year. He was an increasing wonder--new every morning, and exciting every evening. He was the centre of a world of solicitude and adoration. It would be scarcely too much to say that his coming into the world promised a new era, and his traits, his likes and dislikes, set a new standard in his court. If he had apprehended his position his vanity would have outgrown his curiosity about the world, but he displayed no more consciousness of his royalty than a kicking Infanta of Spain. This was greatly to his credit in the opinion of the nurse, who devoted herself to the baby with that enthusiasm of women for infants which fortunately never fails, and won the heart of Edith by her worship. And how much they found to say about this marvel! To hear from the nurse, over and over again, what the baby had done and had not done, in a given hour, was to Edith like a fresh chapter out of an exciting romance.

And the boy's biographer is inclined to think that he had rare powers of discrimination, for one day when Carmen had called and begged to be permitted to go up into the nursery, and had asked to take him in her arms just for a moment, notwithstanding her soft dress and her caressing manner, Fletcher had made a wry face and set up a howl. "How much he looks like his father" (he didn't look like anything), Carmen said, handing him over to the nurse. What she thought was that in manner and disposition he was totally unlike Jack Delancy.

When they came down-stairs, Mrs. Schuyler Blunt was in the drawing-room. "I've had such a privilege, Mrs. Blunt, seeing the baby!" cried Carmen, in her sweetest manner.

"It must have been," that lady rejoined, stiffly.

Carmen, who hated to be seen through, of all things, did not know whether to resent this or not. But Edith hastened to the rescue of her guest.

"I think it's a privilege."

"And you know, Mrs. Blunt," said Carmen, recovering herself and smiling, "that I must have some excitement this dull season."

"I see," said Mrs. Blunt, with no relaxation of her manner; "we are all grateful to Mrs. Delancy."

"Mrs. Henderson does herself injustice," Edith again interposed. "I can assure you she has a great talent for domesticity."

Carmen did not much fancy this apology for her, but she rejoined: "Yes, indeed. I'm going to cultivate it."

"How is this privileged person?" Mrs. Blunt asked.

"You shall see," said Edith. "I am glad you came, for I wanted very much to consult you. I was going to send for you."

"Well, here I am. But I didn't come about the baby. I wanted to consult you. We miss you, dear, every day." And then Mrs. Blunt began to speak

about some social and charitable arrangements, but stopped suddenly." "I'll see the baby first. Good-morning, Mrs. Henderson." And she left the room.

Carmen felt as much left out socially as about the baby, and she also rose to go.

"Don't go," said Edith. "What kind of a summer have you had?"

"Oh, very good. Some shipwrecks."

"And Mr. Henderson? Is he well?"

"Perfectly. He is away now. Husbands, you know, haven't so much talent for domesticity as we have."

"That depends," Edith replied, simply, but with that spirit and air of breeding before which Carmen always inwardly felt defeat--"that depends very much upon ourselves."

Naturally, with this absorption in the baby, Edith was slow to resume her old interests. Of course she knew of the illness of Father Damon, and the nurse, who was from the training-school in which Dr. Leigh was an instructor, and had been selected for this important distinction by the doctor, told her from time to time of affairs on the East Side. Over there the season had opened quite as usual; indeed, it was always open; work must go on every day, because every day food must be obtained and rent-money earned, and the change from summer to winter was only a climatic increase of hardships. Even an epidemic scare does not essentially vary the daily monotony, which is accepted with a dogged fatality:

There had been no vacation for Ruth Leigh, and she jokingly said, when at length she got a half-hour for a visit to Edith, that she would hardly know what to do with one if she had it.

"We have got through very well," she added. "We always dread the summer, and we always dread the winter. Science has not yet decided which is the more fatal, decayed vegetables or unventilated rooms. City residence gives both a fair chance at the poor."

"Are not the people learning anything?" Edith asked.

"Not much, except to bear it, I am sorry to say. Even Father Damon--"

"Is he at work again? Do you see him often?"

"Yes, occasionally."

"I should so like to see him. But I interrupted you."

"Well, Father Damon has come to see that nothing can be done without organization. The masses"--and there was an accent of bitterness in her use of the phrase--"must organize and fight for anything they want."

"Does Father Damon join in this?"

"Oh, he has always been a member of the Labor League. Now he has been at work with the Episcopal churches of the city, and got them to agree, when

they want workmen for any purpose, to employ only union men."

"Isn't that," Edith exclaimed, "a surrender of individual rights and a great injustice to men not in the unions?"

"You would see it differently if you were in the struggle. If the working-men do not stand by each other, where are they to look for help? What have the Christians of this city done?" and the little doctor got up and began to pace the room. "Charities? Yes, little condescending charities. And look at the East Side! Is its condition any better? I tell you, Mrs. Delancy, I don't believe in charities--in any charities."

"It seems to me," said Edith, with a smile calculated to mollify this vehemence, "that you are a standing refutation of your own theory."

"Me? No, indeed. I'm paid by the dispensary. And I make my patients pay--when they are able."

"So I have heard," Edith retorted. "Your bills must be a terror to the neighborhood."

"You may laugh. But I'm establishing a reputation over there as a working-woman, and if I have any influence, or do any little good, it's owing to that fact. Do you think they care anything about Father Damon's gospel?"

"I should be sorry to think they did not," Edith said, gravely.

"Well, very little they care. They like the man because they think he shares their feelings, and does not sympathize with them because they are different from him. That is the only kind of gospel that is good for anything over there."

"I don't think Father Damon would agree with you in that."

"Of course he would not. He's as mediaeval as any monk. But then he is not blind. He sees that it is never anything but personal influence that counts. Poor fellow," and the doctor's voice softened, "he'll kill himself with his ascetic notions. He is trying to take up the burden of this life while struggling under the terror of another."

"But he must be doing a great deal of good."

"Oh, I don't know. Nothing seems to do much good. But his presence is a great comfort. That is something. And I'm glad he is going about now rousing opposition to what is, rather than all the time preaching submission to the lot of this life for the sake of a reward somewhere else. That's a gospel for the rich."

Edith was accustomed to hear Ruth Leigh talk in this bitter strain when this subject was introduced, and she contrived to turn the conversation upon what she called practical work, and then to ask some particulars of Father Damon's sudden illness.

"He did rest," the doctor said, "for a little, in his way. But he will not spare himself, and he cannot stand it. I wish you could induce him to come here often--to do anything for diversion. He looks so worn."

There was in the appeal to Edith a note of personal interest which her quick heart did not fail to notice. And the thought came to her with a painful apprehension. Poor thing! Poor Father Damon!

Does not each of them have to encounter misery enough without this?

Doesn't life spare anybody?

She told her apprehension to Jack when he came home.

Jack gave a long whistle. "That is a deadlock!"

"His vows, and her absolute materialism! Both of them would go to the stake for what they believe, or don't believe. It troubles me very much."

"But," said Jack, "it's interesting. It's what they call a situation. There. I didn't mean to make light of it. I don't believe there is anything in it. But it would be comical, right here in New York."

"It would be tragical."

"Comedy usually is. I suppose it's the human nature in it. That is so difficult to get rid of. But I thought the missionary business was safe. Though, do you know, Edith, I should think better of both of them for having some human feeling. By-the-way, did Dr. Leigh say anything about Henderson?"

"No. What?"

"He has given Father Damon ten thousand dollars. It's in strict secrecy, but Father Damon said I might tell you. He said it was providential."

"I thought Mr. Henderson was wholly unscrupulous and cold as ice."

"Yes, he's got a reputation for freeze-outs. If the Street knew this it would say it was insurance money. And he is so cynical that he wouldn't care what the Street said."

"Do you think it came about through Mrs. Henderson?"

"I don't think so. She was speaking of Father Damon this morning in the Loan Exhibition. I don't believe she knows anything about it. Henderson is a good deal shut up in himself. They say at the Union that years ago he used to do a good many generous things--that he is a great deal harder than he used to be."

This talk was before dinner. She did not ask anything now about Carmen, though she knew that Jack had fallen into his old habit of seeing much of her. He was less and less at home, except at dinner-time, and he was often restless, and, she saw, often annoyed. When he was at home he tried to make up for his absence by extra tenderness and consideration for Edith and the boy. And this effort, and its evidence of a double if not divided life, wounded her more than the neglect. One night, when he came home late, he had been so demonstrative about the baby that Edith had sent the nurse out of the room until she could coax Jack to go into his own apartment. His fits of alternate good-humor and depression she tried to attribute to his business, to which he occasionally alluded without confiding in her.

The next morning Father Damon came in about luncheon-time. He apologized for not coming before since her return, but he had been a little upset, and his work was more and more interesting. His eyes were bright and his manner had quite the usual calm, but he looked pale and thinner, and so exhausted that Edith ran immediately for a glass of wine, and began to upbraid him for not taking better care of himself.

"I take too much care of myself. We all do. The only thing I've got to give is myself."

"But you will not last."

"That is of little moment; long or short, a man can only give himself. Our Lord was not here very long." And then Father Damon smiled, and said "My dear friend, I'm really doing very well. Of course I get tired. Then I come up again. And every now and then I get a lift. Did Jack tell you about Henderson?"

"Yes. Wasn't it strange?"

"I never was more surprised. He sent for me to come to his office. Without any circumlocution, he asked me how I was getting on, and, before I could answer, he said, in the driest business way, that he had been thinking over a little plan, and perhaps I could help him. He had a little money he wanted to invest--

"In our mission chapel?" I asked.

"No," he said, without moving a muscle. "Not that. I don't know much about chapels, Father Damon. But I've been hearing what you are doing, and it occurred to me that you must come across a good many cases not in the regular charities that you could help judiciously, get them over hard spots, without encouraging dependence. I'm going to put ten thousand dollars into your hands, if you'll be bothered with it, to use at your discretion."

"I was taken aback, and I suppose I showed it, and I said that was a great deal of money to intrust to one man.

"Henderson showed a little impatience. It depended upon the man. That was his lookout. The money would be deposited, he said, in bank to my order, and he asked me for my signature that he could send with the deposit.

"Of course I thanked him warmly, and said I hoped I could do some good with it. He did not seem to pay much attention to what I was saying. He was looking out of the window to the bare trees in the court back of his office, and his hands were moving the papers on his table aimlessly about.

"I shall know," he said, "when you have drawn this out. I've got a fancy for keeping a little fund of this sort there." And then he added, still not looking at me, but at the dead branches, "You might call it the Margaret Fund."

"That was the name of his first wife!" Edith exclaimed.

"Yes, I remember. I said I would, and began to thank him again as I rose

from my chair. He was still looking away, and saying, as if to himself, 'I think she would like that.' And then he turned, and, in his usual abrupt office manner, said: 'Good-morning, good-morning. I am very much obliged to you.'"

"Wasn't it all very strange!" Edith spoke, after a moment. "I didn't suppose he cared. Do you think it was just sentiment?"

"I shouldn't wonder. Men like Henderson do queer things. In the hearts of such hardened men there are sometimes roots of sentiment that you wouldn't suspect. But I don't know. The Lord somehow looks out for his poor."

Notwithstanding this windfall of charity, Father Damon seemed somewhat depressed. "I wish," he said, after a pause, "he had given it to the mission. We are so poor, and modern philanthropy all runs in other directions. The relief of temporary suffering has taken the place of the care of souls."

"But Dr. Leigh said that you were interesting the churches in the labor unions."

"Yes. It is an effort to do something. The church must put herself into sympathetic relations with these people, or she will accomplish nothing. To get them into the church we must take up their burdens. But it is a long way round. It is not the old method of applying the gospel to men's sins."

"And yet," Edith insisted, "you must admit that such people as Dr. Leigh are doing a good work."

Father Damon did not reply immediately. Presently he asked: "Do you think, Mrs. Delancy, that Dr. Leigh has any sympathy with the higher life, with spiritual things? I wish I could think so."

"With the higher life of humanity, certainly."

"Ah, that is too vague. I sometimes feel that she and those like her are the worst opponents to our work. They substitute humanitarianism for the gospel."

"Yet I know of no one who works more than Ruth Leigh in the self-sacrificing spirit of the Master."

"Whom she denies!" The quick reply came with a flush in his pale face, and he instantly arose and walked away to the window and stood for some moments in silence. When he turned there was another expression in his eyes and a note of tenderness in his voice that contradicted the severity of the priest. It was the man that spoke. "Yes, she is the best woman I ever knew. God help me! I fear I am not fit for my work."

This outburst of Father Damon to her, so unlike his calm and trained manner, surprised Edith, although she had already some suspicion of his state of mind. But it would not have surprised her if she had known more of men, the necessity of the repressed and tortured soul for sympathy, and that it is more surely to be found in the heart of a pure woman than elsewhere.

But there was nothing that she could say, as she took his hand to bid him

good-by, except the commonplace that Dr. Leigh had expressed anxiety that he was overworking, and that for the sake of his work he must be more prudent. Yet her eyes expressed the sympathy she did not put in words.

Father Damon understood this, and he went away profoundly grateful for her forbearance of verbal expression as much as for her sympathy. But he did not suspect that she needed sympathy quite as much as he did, and consequently he did not guess the extent of her self-control. It would have been an immense relief to have opened her heart to him--and to whom could she more safely do this than to a priest set apart from all human entanglements?--and to have asked his advice. But Edith's peculiar strength--or was it the highest womanly instinct?--lay in her discernment of the truth that in one relation of life no confidences are possible outside of that relation except to its injury, and that to ask interference is pretty sure to seal its failure. As its highest joys cannot be participated in, so its estrangements cannot be healed by any influence outside of its sacred compact. To give confidence outside is to destroy the mutual confidence upon which the relation rests, and though interference may patch up livable compromises, the bloom of love and the joy of life are not in them. Edith knew that if she could not win her own battle, no human aid could win it for her.

And it was all the more difficult because it was vague and indefinite, as the greater part of domestic tragedies are. For the most part life goes on with external smoothness, and the public always professes surprise when some accident, a suit at law, a sudden death, a contested will, a slip from apparent integrity, or family greed or feminine revenge, turns the light of publicity upon a household, to find how hollow the life has been; in the light of forgotten letters, revealing check-books, servants' gossip, and long-established habits of aversion or forbearance, how much sordidness and meanness!

Was not everything going on as usual in the Delancy house and in the little world of which it was a part? If there had been any open neglect or jealousy, any quarrel or rupture, or any scene, these could be described. These would have an interest to the biographer and perhaps to the public. But at this period there was nothing of this sort to tell. There were no scenes. There were no protests or remonstrances or accusations, nor to the world was there any change in the daily life of these two.

It was more pitiful even than that. Here was a woman who had set her heart in all the passionate love of a pure ideal, and day by day she felt that the world, the frivolous world, with its low and selfish aims, was too strong for her, and that the stream was wrecking her life because it was bearing Jack away from her. What could one woman do against the accepted demoralizations of her social life? To go with them, not to care, to accept Jack's idle, good-natured, easy philosophy of life and conduct, would not that have insured a peaceful life? Why shouldn't she conform and float, and not mind?

To be sure, a wise woman, who has been blessed or cursed with a long experience of life, would have known that such a course could not forever, or for long, secure happiness, and that a man's love ultimately must rest upon a profound respect for his wife and a belief in her nobility. Perhaps Edith did not reason in this way. Probably it was her instinct for what was pure and true--showing, indeed, the quality of her love--that guided her.

To Jack's friends he was much the same as usual. He simply went on in his ante-marriage ways. Perhaps he drank a little more, perhaps he was a little more reckless at cards, and it was certain that his taste for amusing himself in second-hand book-shops and antiquity collections had weakened. His talked-of project for some regular occupation seemed to have been postponed, although he said to himself that it was only postponed until his speculations, which kept him in a perpetual fever, should put him in a position to command a business.

Meantime he did not neglect social life--that is, the easy, tolerant company which lived as he liked to live. There was at first some pretense of declining invitations which Edith could not accept, but he soon fell into the habit of a man whose family has temporarily gone abroad, with the privileges of a married man, without the responsibilities of a bachelor. Edith could see that he took great credit to himself for any evenings he spent at home, and perhaps he had a sort of support in the idea that he was sacrificing himself to his family. Major Fairfax, whom Edith distrusted as a misleader of youth, did not venture to interfere with Jack again, but he said to himself that it was a blank shame that with such a wife he should go dangling about with women like Carmen and Miss Tavish, not that the Major himself had any objection to their society, but, hang it all, that was no reason why Jack should be a fool.

In midwinter Jack went to Washington on business. It was necessary to see Mavick, and Mr. Henderson, who was also there. To spend a few weeks at the capital, in preparation for Lent, has become a part of the program of fashion. There can be met people like-minded from all parts of the Union, and there is gayety, and the entertainment to be had in new acquaintances, without incurring any of the responsibilities of social continuance. They meet there on neutral ground. Half Jack's set had gone over or were going. Young Van Dam would go with him. It will be only for a few days, Jack had said, gayly, when he bade Edith good-by, and she must be careful not to let the boy forget him.

It was quite by accident, apparently, that in the same train were the Chesneys, Miss Tavish, and Carmen going over to join her husband. This gave the business expedition the air of an excursion. And indeed at the hotel where they stayed this New York contingent made something of an impression, promising an addition to the gayety of the season, and contributing to the importance of the house as a centre of fashion. Henderson's least movements were always chronicled and speculated on, and for years he had been one of the stock subjects, out of which even the dullest interviewers, who watch the hotel registers in all parts of the country, felt sure that they could make an acceptable paragraph. The arrival of his wife, therefore, was a newspaper event.

They said in Washington at the time that Mrs. Henderson was one of the most fascinating of women, amiable, desirous to please, approachable, and devoted to the interests of her husband. If some of the women, residents in established society, were a little shy of her, if some, indeed, thought her dangerous--women are always thinking this of each other, and surely they ought to know--nothing of this appeared in the reports. The men liked her. She had so much vivacity, such esprit, she understood men so well, and the world, and could make allowances, and was always an entertaining companion. More than one Senator paid marked court to her, more than one brilliant young fellow of the House thought himself fortunate if he sat next her at dinner, and even cabinet officers waited on her at supper. It could not be doubted that a smile and a

confidential or a witty remark from Mrs. Henderson brightened many an evening. Wherever she went her charming toilets were fully described, and the public knew as well as her jewelers the number and cost of her diamonds, her necklaces, her tiaras. But this was for the world and for state occasions. At home she liked simplicity. And this was what impressed the reporters when, in the line of their public duty, they were admitted to her presence. With them she was very affable, and she made them feel that they could almost be classed with her friends, and that they were her guardians against the vulgar publicity, which she disliked and shrank from.

There went abroad, therefore, an impression of her amiability, her fabulous wealth in jewels and apparel, her graciousness and her cleverness and her domesticity. Her manners seemed to the reporters those of a "lady," and of this both her wit and freedom from prudishness and her courteous treatment of them convinced them. And the best of all this was that while it was said that Henderson was one of the boldest and shrewdest of operators, and a man to be feared in the Street, he was in his family relations one of the most generous and kind-hearted of men.

Henderson himself had not much time for the frivolities of the season, and he evaded all but the more conspicuous social occasions, at which Carmen, sometimes with a little temper, insisted that he should accompany her. "You would come here," he once said, "when you knew I was immersed in most perplexing business."

"And now I am here," she had replied, in a tone equally wanting in softness, "you have got to make the best of me."

Was Jack happy in the whirl he was in? Some days exceedingly so. Some days he sulked, and some days he threw himself with recklessness born of artificial stimulants into the always gay and rattling moods of Miss Tavish. Somehow he could get no nearer to Henderson or to Mavick than when he was in New York. Not that he could accuse Mavick of trying to conceal anything; Mavick bore to him always the open, "all right" attitude, but there were things that he did not understand.

And then Carmen? Was she a little less dependent on him, in this wide horizon, than in New York? And had he noticed a little disposition to patronize on two or three occasions? It was absurd. He laughed at himself for such an idea. Old Eschelle's daughter patronize him! And yet there was something. She was very confidential with Mavick. They seemed to have a great deal in common. It so happened that even in the little expeditions of sightseeing these two were thrown much together, and at times when the former relations of Jack and Carmen should have made them comrades. They had a good deal to say to each other, and momentarily evidently serious things, and at receptions Jack had interrupted their glances of intelligence. But what stuff this was! He jealous of the attentions of his friend to another man's wife! If she was a coquette, what did it matter to him? Certainly he was not jealous. But he was irritated.

One day after a round of receptions, in which Jack had been specially disgruntled, and when he was alone in the drawing-room of the hotel with Carmen, his manner was so positively rude to her that she could not but notice it. There was this trait of boyishness in Jack, and it was one of the weaknesses that made him loved, that he always cried out when he was hurt.

Did Carmen resent this? Did she upbraid him for his manner? Did she apologize, as if she had done anything to provoke it? She sank down wearily in a chair and said:

"I'm so tired. I wish I were back in New York."

"You don't act like it," Jack replied, gruffly.

"No. You don't understand. And now you want to make me more miserable. See here, Mr. Delancy," and she started up in her seat and turned to him, "you are a man of honor. Would you advise me to make an enemy of Mr. Mavick, knowing all that he does know about Mr. Henderson's affairs?"

"I don't see what that has got to do with it," said Jack, wavering.
"Lately your manner--"

"Nonsense!" cried Carmen, springing up and approaching Jack with a smile of animation and trust, and laying her hand on his shoulder. "We are old, old friends. And I have just confided to you what I wouldn't to any other living being. There!" And looking around at the door, she tapped him lightly on the cheek and ran out of the room.

Whatever you might say of Carmen, she had this quality of a wise person, that she never cut herself loose from one situation until she was entirely sure of a better position.

For one reason or another Jack's absence was prolonged. He wrote often, he made bright comments on the characters and peculiarities of the capital, and he said that he was tired to death of the everlasting whirl and scuffle. People plunged in the social whirlpool always say they are weary of it, and they complain bitterly of its exactions and its tax on their time and strength. Edith judged, especially from the complaints, that her husband was enjoying himself. She felt also that his letters were in a sense perfunctory, and gave her only the surface of his life. She sought in vain in them for those evidences of spontaneous love, of delight in writing to her of all persons in the world, the eagerness of the lover that she recalled in letters written in other days. However affectionate in expression, these were duty letters. Edith was not alone. She had no lack of friends, who came and went in the common round of social exchange, and for many of them she had a sincere affection. And there were plenty of relatives on the father's and on the mother's side. But for the most part they were old-fashioned, home-keeping New-Yorkers, who were sufficient to themselves, and cared little for the set into which Edith's marriage had more definitely placed her. In any real trouble she would not have lacked support. She was deemed fortunate in her marriage, and in her apparent serene prosperity it was believed that she was happy. If she had had mother or sister or brother, it is doubtful if she would have made either a confidant of her anxieties, but high-spirited and self-reliant as she was, there were days when she longed with intolerable heartache for the silent sympathy of a mother's presence.

It is singular how lonely a woman of this nature can be in a gay and friendly world. She had her interests, to be sure. As she regained her strength she took up her social duties, and she tried to resume her studies, her music, her reading, and she occupied herself more and more with the charities and the fortunes of her friends who were giving their lives to altruistic work. But there was a sense of unreality in all this. The real thing was the soul within, the longing, loving woman

whose heart was heavy and unsatisfied. Jack was so lovable, he had in his nature so much nobility, if the world did not kill it, her life might be so sweet, and so completely fulfill her girlish dreams. All these schemes of a helpful, altruistic life had been in her dream, but how empty it was without the mutual confidence, the repose in the one human love for which she cared.

Though she was not alone, she had no confidant. She could have none. What was there to confide? There was nothing to be done. There was no flagrant wrong or open injustice. Some women in like circumstances become bitter and cynical. Others take their revenge in a career reckless, but within social conventions, going their own way in a sort of matrimonial truce. These are not noticeable tragedies. They are things borne with a dumb ache of the heart. There are lives into which the show of spring comes, but without the song of birds or the scent of flowers. They are endured bravely, with a heroism for which the world does not often give them credit. Heaven only knows how many noble women--noble in this if in nothing else--carry through life this burden of an unsatisfied heart, mocked by the outward convention of love.

But Edith had one confidant--the boy. And he was perfectly safe; he would reveal nothing. There were times when he seemed to understand, and whether he did or not she poured out her heart to him. Often in the twilight she sat by him in this silent communion. If he were asleep--and he was not troubled with insomnia--he was still company. And when he was awake, his efforts to communicate the dawning ideas of the queer world into which he had come were a never-failing delight. He wanted so many more things than he could ask for, which it was his mother's pleasure to divine; later on he would ask for so many things he could not get. The nurse said that he had uncommon strength of will.

These were happy hours, imagining what the boy would be, planning what she would make his life, hours enjoyed as a traveler enjoys wayside flowers, snatched before an approaching storm. It is a pity, the nurse would say, that his father cannot see him now. And at the thought Edith could only see the child through tears, and a great weight rested on her heart in all this happiness.

XVI

When Father Damon parted from Edith he seemed to himself strengthened in his spirit. His momentary outburst had shown him where he stood--the strength of his fearful temptation. To see it was to be able to conquer it. He would humiliate himself; he would scourge himself; he would fast and pray; he would throw himself more unreservedly into the service of his Master. He had been too compromising with sin and sinners, and with his own weakness and sin, the worst of all.

The priest walked swiftly through the wintry streets, welcoming as a sort of penance the biting frost which burned his face and penetrated his garments. He little heeded the passers in the streets, those who hurried or those who loitered, only, if he met or passed a woman or a group of girls, he instinctively drew himself away and walked more rapidly. He strode on uncompromisingly, and his clean-shaven face was set in rigid lines. Those who saw him pass would have said that there went an ascetic bent on judgment. Many who did know him, and who ordinarily would have

saluted him, sure of a friendly greeting, were repelled by his stern face and determined air, and made no sign. The father had something on his mind.

As he turned into Rivington Street there approached him from the opposite direction a girl, walking slowly and undecidedly. When he came near her she looked up, with an appealing recognition. In a flash of the quick passing he thought he knew her--a girl who had attended his mission and whom he had not seen for several months-but he made no sign and passed on.

"Father Damon!"

He turned about short at the sound of the weak, pleading voice, but with no relaxation of his severe, introverted mood. "Well?"

It was the girl he remembered. She wore a dress of silk that had once been fine, and over it an ample cloak that had quite lost its freshness, and a hat still gay with cheap flowers. Her face, which had a sweet and almost innocent expression, was drawn and anxious. The eyes were those of a troubled and hunted animal.

"I thought," she said, hesitatingly, "you didn't know me."

"Yes, I know you. Why haven't you been at the mission lately?"

"I couldn't come. I--"

"I'm afraid you have fallen into bad ways."

She did not answer immediately. She looked away, and, still avoiding his gaze, said, timidly: "I thought I would tell you, Father Damon, that I'm --that I'm in trouble. I don't know what to do."

"Have you repented of your sin?" asked he, with a little softening of his tone. "Did you want to come to me for help?"

"He's deserted me," said the girl, looking down, absorbed in her own misery, and not heeding his question.

"Ah, so that is what you are sorry for?" The severe, reproofing tone had come back to his voice.

"And they don't want me in the shop any more."

The priest hesitated. Was he always to preach against sin, to strive to extirpate it, and yet always to make it easy for the sinner? This girl must realize her guilt before he could do her any good. "Are you sorry for what you have done?"

"Yes, I'm sorry," she replied. Wasn't to be in deep trouble to be sorry? And then she looked up, and continued with the thought in her mind, "I didn't know who else to go to."

"Well, my child, if you are sorry, and want to lead a different life, come to me at the mission and I will try to help you."

The priest, with a not unkindly good-by, passed on. The girl stood a moment irresolute, and then went on her way heavily and despondent.

What good would it do her to go to the mission now?

Three days later Dr. Leigh was waiting at the mission chapel to speak with the rector after the vesper service. He came out pale and weary, and the doctor hesitated to make known her errand when she saw how exhausted he was.

"Did you wish me for anything?" he asked, after the rather forced greeting.

"If you feel able. There is a girl at the Woman's Hospital who wants to see you."

"Who is it?"

"It is the girl you saw on the street the other afternoon; she said she had spoken to you."

"She promised to come to the mission."

"She couldn't. I met the poor thing the same afternoon. She looked so aimless and forlorn that, though I did not remember her at first, I thought she might be ill, and spoke to her, and asked her what was the matter. At first she said nothing except that she was out of work and felt miserable; but the next moment she broke down completely, and said she hadn't a friend in the world."

"Poor thing!" said the priest, with a pang of self-reproach.

"There was nothing to do but to take her to the hospital, and there she has been."

"Is she very ill?"

"She may live, the house surgeon says. But she was very weak for such a trial."

Little more was said as they walked along, and when they reached the hospital, Father Damon was shown without delay into the ward where the sick girl lay. Dr. Leigh turned back from the door, and the nurse took him to the bedside. She lay quite still in her cot, wan and feeble, with every sign of having encountered a supreme peril.

She turned her head on the low pillow as Father Damon spoke, saying he was very glad he could come to her, and hoped she was feeling better.

"I knew you would come," she said, feebly. "The nurse says I'm better. But I wanted to tell you--" And she stopped.

"Yes, I know," he said. "The Lord is very good. He will forgive all your sins now, if you repent and trust Him."

"I hope--" she began. "I'm so weak. If I don't live I want him to know."

"Want whom to know?" asked the father, bending over her.

She signed for him to come closer, and then whispered a name.

"Only if I never see him again, if you see him, you will tell him that I

was always true to him. He said such hard words. I was always true."

"I promise," said the father, much moved. "But now, my child, you ought to think of yourself, of your--"

"He is dead. Didn't they tell you? There is nothing any more."

The nurse approached with a warning gesture that the interview was too prolonged.

Father Damon knelt for a moment by the bedside, uttering a hardly articulate prayer. The girl's eyes were closed. When he rose she opened them with a look of gratitude, and with the sign of blessing he turned away.

He intended to hasten from the house. He wanted to be alone. His trouble seemed to him greater than that of the suffering girl. What had he done? What was he in thought better than she? Was this intruding human element always to cross the purpose of his spiritual life?

As he was passing through the wide hallway the door of the reception-room was open, and he saw Dr. Leigh seated at the table, with a piece of work in her hands. She looked up, and stopped him with an unspoken inquiry in her face. It was only civil to pause a moment and tell her about the patient, and as he stepped within the room she rose.

"You should rest a moment, Father Damon. I know what these scenes are."

Yielding weakly, as he knew, he took the offered chair. But he raised his hand in refusal of the glass of wine which she had ready for him on the table, and offered before he could speak.

"But you must," she said, with a smile. "It is the doctor's prescription."

She did not look like a doctor. She had laid aside the dusty walking-dress, the business-jacket, the ugly little hat of felt, the battered reticule. In her simple house costume she was the woman, homelike, sympathetic, gentle, with the everlasting appeal of the strong feminine nature. It was not a temptress who stood before him, but a helpful woman, in whose kind eyes--how beautiful they were in this moment of sympathy--there was trust--and rest--and peace.

"So," she said, when he had taken the much-needed draught; "in the hospital you must obey the rules, one of which is to let no one sink in exhaustion."

She had taken her seat now, and resumed her work. Father Damon was looking at her, seeing the woman, perhaps, as he never had seen her before, a certain charm in her quiet figure and modest self-possession, while the thought of her life, of her labors, as he had seen her now for months and months of entire sacrifice of self, surged through his brain in a whirl of emotion that seemed sweeping him away. But when he spoke it was of the girl, and as if to himself.

"I was sorry to let her go that day. Friendless, I should have known. I did know. I should have felt. You--"

"No," she said, gently, interrupting him; "that was my business. You

should not accuse yourself. It was a physician's business."

"Yes, a physician--the great Physician. The Master never let the sin hinder his compassion for the sinner."

To this she could make no reply. Presently she looked up and said: "But I am sure your visit was a great comfort to the poor girl! She was very eager to see you."

"I do not know."

His air was still abstracted. He was hardly thinking of the girl, after all, but of himself, of the woman who sat before him. It seemed to him that he would have given the world to escape--to fly from her, to fly from himself. Some invisible force held him--a strong, new, and yet not new, emotion, a power that seemed to clutch his very life. He could not think clearly about it. In all his discipline, in his consecration, in his vows of separation from the world, there seemed to have been no shield prepared for this. The human asserted itself, and came in, overwhelming his guards and his barriers like a strong flood in the spring-time of the year, breaking down all artificial contrivances. "They reckon ill who leave me out," is the everlasting cry of the human heart, the great passion of life, incarnate in the first man and the first woman.

With a supreme effort of his iron will--is the Will, after all, stronger than Love?--Father Damona rose. He stretched out his hand to say farewell. She also stood, and she felt the hand tremble that held hers.

"God bless you!" he said. "You are so good."

He was going. He took her other hand, and was looking down upon her face. She looked up, and their eyes met. It was for an instant, a flash, glance for glance, as swift as the stab of daggers.

All the power of heaven and earth could not recall that glance nor undo its revelations. The man and the woman stood face to face revealed.

He bent down towards her face. Affrighted by his passion, scarcely able to stand in her sudden emotion, she started back. The action, the instant of time, recalled him to himself. He dropped her hands, and was gone. And the woman, her knees refusing any longer to support her, sank into a chair, helpless, and saw him go, and knew in that moment the height of a woman's joy, the depth of a woman's despair.

It had come to her! Steeled by her science, shielded by her philanthropy, schooled in indifference to love, it had come to her! And it was hopeless. Hopeless? It was absurd. Her life was determined. In no event could it be in harmony with his opinions, with his religion, which was dearer to him than life. There was a great gulf between them which she could not pass unless she ceased to be herself. And he? A severe priest! Vowed and consecrated against human passion! What a government of the world--if there were any government--that could permit such a thing! It was terrible.

And yet she was loved! That sang in her heart with all the pain, with all the despair. And with it all was a great pity for him, alone, gone into the wilderness, as it would seem to him, to struggle with his fierce temptation.

It had come on darker as she sat there. The lamps were lighted, and she was reminded of some visits she must make. She went, mechanically, to her room to prepare for going. The old jacket, which she took up, did look rather rusty. She went to the press--it was not much of a wardrobe --and put on the one that was reserved for holidays. And the hat? Her friends had often joked her about the hat, but now for the first time she seemed to see it as it might appear to others. As she held it in her hand, and then put it on before the mirror, she smiled a little, faintly, at its appearance. And then she laid it aside for her better hat. She never had been so long in dressing before. And in the evening, too, when it could make no difference! It might, after all, be a little more cheerful for her forlorn patients. Perhaps she was not conscious that she was making selections, that she was paying a little more attention to her toilet than usual. Perhaps it was only the woman who was conscious that she was loved.

It would be difficult to say what emotion was uppermost in the mind of Father Damon as he left the house--mortification, contempt of himself, or horror. But there was a sense of escape, of physical escape, and the imperative need of it, that quickened his steps almost into a run. In the increasing dark, at this hour, in this quarter of the town, there were comparatively few whose observation of him would recall him to himself. He thought only of escape, and of escape from that quarter of the city that was the witness of his labors and his failure. For the moment to get away from this was the one necessity, and without reasoning in the matter, only feeling, he was hurrying, stumbling in his haste, northward. Before he went to the hospital he had been tired, physically weary. He was scarcely conscious of it now; indeed, his body, his hated body, seemed lighter, and the dominant spirit now awakened to contempt of it had a certain pleasure in testing it, in drawing upon its vitality, to the point of exhaustion if possible. It should be seen which was master. His rapid pace presently brought him into one of the great avenues leading to Harlem. That was the direction he wished to go. That was where he knew, without making any decision, he must go, to the haven of the house of his order, on the heights beyond Harlem. A train was just clattering along on the elevated road above him. He could see the faces at the windows, the black masses crowding the platforms. It went pounding by as if it were freight from another world. He was in haste, but haste to escape from himself. That way, bearing him along with other people, and in the moving world, was to bring him in touch with humanity again, and so with what was most hateful in himself. He must be alone. But there was a deeper psychological reason than that for walking, instead of availing himself of the swiftest method of escape. He was not fleeing from justice or pursuit. When the mind is in torture and the spirit is torn, the instinctive effort is to bodily activity, to force physical exertion, as if there must be compensation for the mental strain in the weariness of nature. The priest obeyed this instinct, as if it were possible to walk away from himself, and went on, at first with almost no sense of weariness.

And the shame! He could not bear to be observed. It seemed to him that every one would see in his face that he was a recreant priest, perjured and forsworn. And so great had been his spiritual pride! So removed he had deemed himself from the weakness of humanity! And he had yielded at the first temptation, and the commonest of all temptations! Thank God, he had not quite yielded. He had fled. And yet, how would it have been if Ruth Leigh had not had a moment of reserve, of prudent repulsion! He groaned in anguish. The sin was in the intention. It was no merit of

his that he had not with a kiss of passion broken his word to his Lord and lost his soul.

It was remorse that was driving him along the avenue; no room for any other thought yet, or feeling. Perhaps it is true in these days that the old-fashioned torture known as remorse is rarely experienced except under the name of detection. But it was a reality with this highly sensitive nature, with this conscience educated to the finest edge of feeling. The world need never know his moment's weakness; Ruth Leigh he could trust as he would have trusted his own sister to guard his honor--that was all over--never, he was sure, would she even by a look recall the past; but he knew how he had fallen, and the awful measure of his lapse from loyalty to his Master. And how could he ever again stand before erring, sinful men and women and speak about that purity which he had violated? Could repentance, confession, penitence, wipe away this stain?

As he went on, his mind in a whirl of humiliation, self-accusation, and contempt, at length he began to be conscious of physical weariness. Except the biscuit and the glass of wine at the hospital, he had taken nothing since his light luncheon. When he came to the Harlem Bridge he was compelled to rest. Leaning against one of the timbers and half seated, with the softened roar of the city in his ears, the lights gleaming on the heights, the river flowing dark and silent, he began to be conscious of his situation. Yes, he was very tired. It seemed difficult to go on without help of some sort. At length he crossed the bridge. Lights were gleaming from the saloons along the street. He paused in front of one, irresolute. Food he could not taste, but something he must have to carry him on. But no, that would not do; he could not enter that in his priest's garb. He dragged himself along until he came to a drug-shop, the modern saloon of the respectably virtuous. That he entered, and sat down on a stool by the soda-water counter. The expectant clerk stared at him while waiting the order, his hand tentatively seeking one of the faucets of refreshment.

"I feel a little feverish," said the father. "You may give me five grains of quinine in whisky."

"That'll put you all right," said the boy as he handed him the mixture. "It's all the go now."

It seemed to revive him, and he went out and walked on towards the heights. Somehow, seeing this boy, coming back to common life, perhaps the strong and unaccustomed stimulant, gave a new shade to his thoughts. He was safe. Presently he would be at the Retreat. He would rest, and then gird up his loins and face life again. The mood lasted for some time. And when the sense of physical weariness came back, that seemed to dull the acuteness of his spiritual torment. It was late when he reached the house and rang the night-bell. No one of the brothers was up except Father Monies, and it was he who came to the door.

"You! So late! Is anything the matter?"

"I needed to come," the father said, simply, and he grasped the door-post, steadying himself as he came in.

"You look like a ghost."

"Yes. I'm tired. I walked."

"Walked? From Rivington Street?"

"Nearly. I felt like it."

"It's most imprudent. You dined first?"

"I wasn't hungry."

"But you must have something at once." And Father Monies hurried away, heated some bouillon by a spirit-lamp, and brought it, with bread, and set it before his unexpected guest.

"There, eat that, and get to bed as soon as you can. It was great nonsense."

And Father Damon obeyed. Indeed, he was too exhausted to talk.

XVII

Father Damon slept the sleep of exhaustion. In this for a time the mind joined in the lethargy of the body. But presently, as the vital currents were aroused, the mind began to play its fantastic tricks. He was a seminary student, he was ordained, he was taking his vows before the bishop, he was a robust and consecrated priest performing his first service, shining, it seemed to him, before the congregation in the purity of his separation from the world. How strong he felt. And then came perplexities, difficulties, interests, and conflicting passions in life that he had not suspected, good that looked like evil, and evil that had an alloy of virtue, and the way was confused. And then there was a vision of a sort of sister of charity working with him in the evil and the good, drawing near to him, and yet repelling him with a cold, scientific skepticism that chilled him like blasphemy; but so patient was she, so unconscious of self, that gradually he lost this feeling of repulsion and saw only the woman, that wonderful creation, tender, pitiful comrade, the other self. And then there was darkness and blindness, and he stood once more before his congregation, speaking words that sounded hollow, hearing responses that mocked him, stared at by accusing eyes that knew him for a hypocrite. And he rushed away and left them, hearing their laughter as he went, and so into the street--plainly it was Rivington Street--and faces that he knew had a smile and a sneer,

and he heard comments as he passed "Hulloa, Father Damon, come in and have a drink." "I say, Father Damon, I seen her going round into Grand Street."

When Father Monies looked in, just before daylight, Father Damon was still sleeping, but tossing restlessly and muttering incoherently; and he did not arouse him for the early devotions.

It was very late when he awoke, and opened his eyes to a confused sense of some great calamity. Father Monies was standing by the bedside with a cup of coffee.

"You have had a good sleep. Now take this, and then you may get up. The breakfast will wait for you."

Father Damon started up. "Why didn't you call me? I am late for the mission."

"Oh, Bendes has gone down long ago. You must take it easy; rest today. You'll be all right. You haven't a bit of fever."

"But," still declining the coffee, "before I break my fast, I have something to say to you. I--"

"Get some strength first. Besides, I have an engagement. I cannot wait. Pull yourself together; I may not be back before evening."

So it was fated that he should be left still with himself. After his coffee he dressed slowly, as if it were not he, but some one else going through this familiar duty, as if it were scarcely worth while to do anything any more. And then, before attempting his breakfast, he went into the little oratory, and remained long in the attitude of prayer, trying to realize what he was and what he had done. He prayed for himself, for help, for humility, and he prayed for her; he had been used of late to pray for her guidance, now he prayed that she might be sustained.

When he came forth it was in a calmer frame of mind. It was all clear now. When Father Monies returned he would confess, and take his penance, and resolutely resume his life. He understood life better now. Perhaps this blow was needed for his spiritual pride.

It was a mild winter day, bright, and with a touch of summer, such as sometimes gets shuffled into our winter calendar. The book that he took up did not interest him; he was in no mood for the quiet meditation that it usually suggested to him, and he put it down and strolled out, directing his steps farther up the height, and away from the suburban stir. As he went on there was something consonant with his feelings in the bare wintry landscape, and when he passed the ridge and walked along the top of the river slope, he saw, as it seemed to him he had not seen it before, that lovely reach of river, the opposite wooded heights, the noble pass above, the peacefulness and invitation of nature. Had he a new sense to see all this? There was a softness in the distant outline, villas peeped out here and there, carriages were passing in the road below, there was a cheerful life in the stream--there was a harmony in the aspect of nature and humanity from this height. Was not the world beautiful? and human emotion, affection, love, were they alien to the Divine intention?

She loved beauty; she was fond of flowers; often she had spoken to him of her childish delight in her little excursions, rarely made, into the country. He could see her now standing just there and feasting her eyes on this noble panorama, and he could see her face all aglow, as she might turn to him and say, "Isn't it beautiful, Father Damon?" And she was down in those reeking streets, climbing about in the foul tenement-houses, taking a sick child in her arms, speaking a word of cheer--a good physician going about doing good!

And it might have been! Why was it that this peace of nature should bring up her image, and that they should seem in harmony? Was not the love of beauty and of goodness the same thing? Did God require in His service the atrophy of the affections? As long as he was in the world was it right that he should isolate himself from any of its sympathies

and trials? Why was it not a higher life to enter into the common lot, and suffer, if need be, in the struggle to purify and ennoble all? He remembered the days he had once passed in the Trappist monastery of Gethsemane. The perfect peace of mind of the monks was purchased at the expense of the extirpation of every want, all will, every human interest. Were these men anything but specimens in a Museum of Failures? And yet, for the time being, it had seemed attractive to him, this simple vegetable existence, whose only object was preparation for death by the extinction of all passion and desire. No, these were not soldiers of the Lord, but the fainthearted, who had slunk into the hospital.

All this afternoon he was drifting in thought, arraigning his past life, excusing it, condemning it, and trying to forecast its future. Was this a trial of his constancy and faith, or had he made a mistake, entered upon a slavish career, from which he ought to extricate himself at any cost of the world's opinion? But presently he was aware that in all these debates with himself her image appeared. He was trying to fit his life to the thought of her. And when this became clearer in his tortured mind, the woman appeared as a temptation. It was not, then, the love of beauty, not even the love of humanity, and very far from being the service of his Master, that he was discussing, but only his desire for one person. It was that, then, that made him, for that fatal instant, forget his vow, and yield to the impulse of human passion. The thought of that moment stung him with confusion and shame. There had been moments in this afternoon wandering--when it had seemed possible for him to ask for release, and to take up a human, sympathetic life with her, in mutual consecration in the service of the Lord's poor. Yes, and by love to lead her into a higher conception of the Divine love. But this breaking a solemn vow at the dictates of passion was a mortal sin--there was no other name for it--a sin demanding repentance and expiation.

As he at last turned homeward, facing the great city and his life there, this became more clear to him. He walked rapidly. The lines of his face became set in a hard judgment of himself. He thought no more of escaping from himself, but of subduing himself, stamping out the appeals of his lower nature. It was in this mood that he returned.

Father Monies was awaiting him, and welcomed him with that look of affection, of more than brotherly love, which the good man had for the younger priest.

"I hope your walk has done you good."

"Perhaps," Father Damon replied, without any leniency in his face; "but that does not matter. I must tell you what I could not last night. Can you hear me?"

They went together into the oratory. Father Damon did not spare himself. He kept nothing back that could heighten the enormity of his offense.

And Father Monies did not attempt to lessen the impression upon himself of the seriousness of the scandal. He was shocked. He was exceedingly grave, but he was even more pitiful. His experience of life had been longer than that of the penitent. He better knew its temptations. His own peace had only been won by long crucifixion of the natural desires.

"I have nothing to say as to your own discipline. That you know. But there is one thing. You must face this temptation, and subdue it."

"You mean that I must go back to my labor in the city?"

"Yes. You can rest here a few days if you feel too weak physically."

"No; I am well enough." He hesitated. "I thought perhaps some other field, for a time?"

"There is no other field for you. It is not for the moment the question of where you can do most good. You are to reinstate yourself. You are a soldier of the Lord Jesus, and you are to go where the battle is most dangerous."

That was the substance of it all. There was much affectionate counsel and loving sympathy mingled with all the inflexible orders of obedience, but the sin must be faced and extirpated in presence of the enemy.

On the morrow Father Damon went back to his solitary rooms, to his chapel, to the round of visitations, to his work with the poor, the sinful, the hopeless. He did not seek her; he tried not to seem to avoid her, or to seem to shun the streets where he was most likely to meet her, and the neighborhoods she frequented. Perhaps he did avoid them a little, and he despised himself for doing it. Almost involuntarily he looked to the bench by the chapel door which she occasionally occupied at vespers. She was never there, and he condemned himself for thinking that she might be; but yet wherever he walked there was always the expectation that he might encounter her. As the days went by and she did not appear, his expectation became a kind of torture. Was she ill, perhaps? It could not be that she had deserted her work.

And then he began to examine himself with a morbid introspection. Had the hope that he should see her occasionally influenced him at all in his obedience to Father Monies? Had he, in fact, a longing to be in the streets where she had walked, among the scenes that had witnessed her beautiful devotion? Had his willingness to take up this work again been because it brought him nearer to her in spirit?

No, she could not be ill. He heard her spoken of, here and there, in his calls and ministrations to the sick and dying. Evidently she was going about her work as usual. Perhaps she was avoiding him. Or perhaps she did not care, after all, and had lost her respect for him when he discovered to her his weakness. And he had put himself on a plane so high above her.

There was no conscious wavering in his purpose. But from much dwelling upon the thought, from much effort rather to put it away, his desire only to see her grew stronger day by day. He had no fear. He longed to test himself. He was sure that he would be impassive, and be all the stronger for the test. He was more devoted than ever in his Work. He was more severe with himself, more charitable to others, and he could not doubt that he was gaining a hold--yes, a real hold--upon the lives of many about him. The attendance was better at the chapel; more of the penitent and forlorn came to him for help. And how alone he was! My God, never even to see her!

In fact, Ruth Leigh was avoiding him. It was partly from a womanly reserve--called into expression in this form for the first time--and partly from a wish to spare him pain. She had been under no illusion from the first about the hopelessness of the attachment. She comprehended his character so thoroughly that she knew that for him any

fall from his ideal would mean his ruin. He was one of the rare spirits of faith astray in a skeptical age. For a time she had studied curiously his efforts to adapt himself to his surroundings. One of these was joining a Knights of Labor lodge. Another was his approach to the ethical-culture movement of some of the leaders in the Neighborhood Guild. Another was his interest in the philanthropic work of agnostics like herself. She could see that he, burning with zeal to save the souls of men, and believing that there was no hope for the world except in the renunciation of the world, instinctively shrank from these contacts, which, nevertheless, he sought in the spirit of a Jesuit missionary to a barbarous tribe.

It was possible for such a man to be for a time overmastered by human passion; it was possible even that he might reason himself temporarily into conduct that this natural passion seemed to justify; yet she never doubted that there would follow an awakening from that state of mind as from a horrible delusion. It was simply because Ruth Leigh was guided by the exercise of reason, and had built up her scheme of life upon facts that she believed she could demonstrate, that she saw so clearly their relations, and felt that the faith, which was to her only a vagary of the material brain, was to him an integral part of his life.

Love, to be sure, was as unexpected in her scheme of life as it was in his; but there was on her part no reason why she should not yield to it. There was every reason in her nature and in her theory why she should, for, bounded as her vision of life was by this existence, love was the highest conceivable good in life. It had been with a great shout of joy that the consciousness had come to her that she loved and was loved. Though she might never see him again, this supreme experience for man or woman, this unsealing of the sacred fountain of life, would be for her an enduring sweetness in her lonely and laborious pilgrimage. How strong love is they best know to whom it is offered and denied.

And why, so far as she was concerned, should she deny it? An ordinary woman probably would not. Love is reason enough. Why should artificial conventions defeat it? Why should she sacrifice herself, if he were willing to brave the opinion of the world for her sake? Was it any new thing for good men to do this? But Ruth Leigh was not an ordinary woman. Perhaps if her intellect had not been so long dominant over her heart it would have been different. But the habit of being guided by reason was second nature. She knew that not only his vow, but the habit of life engendered by the vow, was an insuperable barrier. And besides, and this was the touchstone of her conception of life and duty, she felt that if he were to break his vow, though she might love him, her respect for him would be impaired.

It was a singular phenomenon--very much remarked at the time--that the women who did not in the least share Father Damon's spiritual faith, and would have called themselves in contradistinction materialists, were those who admired him most, were in a way his followers, loved to attend his services, were inspired by his personality, and drawn to him in a loving loyalty. The attraction to these very women was his unworldliness, his separateness, his devotion to an ideal which in their reason seemed a delusion. And no women would have been more sensitive than they to his fall from his spiritual pinnacle.

It was easy with a little contrivance to avoid meeting him. She did not go to the chapel or in its neighborhood when he was likely to be going to or from service. She let others send for him when in her calls his

ministration was required, and she was careful not to linger where he was likely to come. A little change in the time of her rounds was made without neglecting her work, for that she would not do, and she trusted that if accident threw him in her way, circumstances would make it natural and not embarrassing. And yet his image was never long absent from her thoughts; she wondered if he were dejected, if he were ill, if he were lonely, and mostly there was for him a great pity in her heart, a pity born, alas! of her own sense of loneliness.

How much she was repressing her own emotions she knew one evening when she returned from her visits and found a letter in his handwriting. The sight of it was a momentary rapture, and then the expectation of what it might contain gave her a feeling of faintness. The letter was long. Its coming needs a word of explanation.

Father Damon had begun to use the Margaret Fund. He found that its judicious use was more perplexing than he had supposed. He needed advice, the advice of those who had more knowledge than he had of the merits of relief cases. And then there might be many sufferers whom he in his limited field neglected. It occurred to him that Dr. Leigh would be a most helpful co-almoner. No sooner did this idea come to him than he was spurred to put it into effect. This common labor would be a sort of bond between them, a bond of charity purified from all personal alloy. He went at once to Mr. Henderson's office and told him his difficulties, and about Dr. Leigh's work, and the opportunities she would have. Would it not be possible for Dr. Leigh to draw from the fund on her own checks independent of him? Mr. Henderson thought not. Dr. Leigh was no doubt a good woman, but he didn't know much about woman visitors and that sort; their sympathies were apt to run away with them, and he should prefer at present to have the fund wholly under Father Damon's control. Some time, he intimated, he might make more lasting provisions with trustees. It would be better for Father Damon to give Dr. Leigh money as he saw she needed it.

The letter recited this at length; it had a check endorsed, and the writer asked the doctor to be his almoner. He dwelt very much upon the relief this would be to him, and the opportunity it would give her in many emergencies, and the absolute confidence he had in her discretion, as well as in her quick sympathy with the suffering about them. And also it would be a great satisfaction to him to feel that he was associated with her in such a work.

In its length, in its tone of kindness, of personal confidence, especially in its length, it was evident that the writing of it had been a pleasure, if not a relief, to the sender. Ruth read it and reread it. It was as if Father Damon were there speaking to her. She could hear the tones of his voice. And the glance of love--that last overmastering appeal and cry thrilled through her soul.

But in the letter there was no love; to any third person it would have read like an ordinary friendly philanthropic request. And her reply, accepting gratefully his trust, was almost formal, only the writer felt that she was writing out of her heart.

The Roman poet Martial reckons among the elements of a happy life "an income left, not earned by toil," and also "a wife discreet, yet blythe and bright." Felicity in the possession of these, the epigrammatist might have added, depends upon content in the one and full appreciation of the other.

Jack Delancy returned from Washington more discontented than when he went. His speculation hung fire in a most tantalizing way; more than that, it had absorbed nearly all the "income not earned by toil," which was at the hazard of operations he could neither control nor comprehend. And besides, this little fortune had come to seem contemptibly inadequate. In his associations of the past year his spendthrift habits had increased, and he had been humiliated by his inability to keep pace with the prodigality of those with whom he was most intimate. Miss Tavish was an heiress in her own right, who never seemed to give a thought to the cost of anything she desired; the Hendersons, for any whim, drew upon a reservoir of unknown capacity; and even Mavick began to talk as if he owned a flock of geese that laid golden eggs.

To be sure, it was pleasant coming home into an atmosphere of sincerity, of worship--was it not? It was very flattering to his self-esteem. The master had come! The house was in commotion. Edith flew to meet him, hugged him, shook him, criticised his appearance, rallied him for a recreant father. How well she looked--buoyant, full of vivacity, running over with joy, asking a dozen questions before he could answer one, testifying her delight, her affection, in a hundred ways. And the boy! He was so eager to see his papa. He could converse now--that is, in his way. And that prodigy, when Jack was dragged into his presence, and also fell down with Edith and worshiped him in his crib, did actually smile, and appear to know that this man belonged to him, was a part of his worldly possessions.

"Do you know," said Edith, looking at the boy critically, "I think of making Fletcher a present, if you approve."

"What's that?"

"He'll want some place to go to in the summer. I want to buy that old place where he was born and give it to him. Don't you think it would be a good investment?"

"Yes, permanent," replied Jack, laughing at such a mite of a real-estate owner.

"I know he would like it. And you don't object?"

"Not in the least. It's next to an ancestral feeling to be the father of a land-owner."

They were standing close to the crib, his arm resting lightly across her shoulders. He drew her closer to him, and kissed her tenderly. "The little chap has a golden-hearted mother. I don't know why he should not have a Golden House."

Her eyes filled with sudden tears. She could not speak. But both arms were clasped round his neck now. She was too happy for words. And the baby, looking on with large eyes, seemed to find nothing unusual in the proceeding. He was used to a great deal of this sort of nonsense himself.

It was a happy evening. In truth, after the first surprise, Jack was pleased with this contemplated purchase. It was something removed beyond temptation. Edith's property was secure to her, and it was his honorable purpose never to draw it into his risks. But he knew her generosity, and he could not answer for himself if she should offer it, as he was sure she would do, to save him from ruin.

There was all the news to tell, the harmless gossip of daily life, which Edith had a rare faculty of making dramatically entertaining, with her insight and her feeling for comedy. There had been a musicale at the Blunts'--oh, strictly amateur--and Edith ran to the piano and imitated the singers and took off the players, until Jack declared that it beat the Conventional Club out of sight. And she had been to a parlor mind-cure lecture, and to a Theosophic conversation, and to a Reading Club for the Cultivation of a Feeling for Nature through Poetry. It was all immensely solemn and earnest. And Jack wondered that the managers did not get hold of these things and put them on the stage. Nothing could draw like them. Not burlesques, though, said Edith; not in the least. If only these circles would perform in public as they did in private, how they would draw!

And then Father Damon had been to consult her about his fund. He had been ill, and would not stay, and seemed more severe and ascetic than ever. She was sure something was wrong. For Dr. Leigh, whom she had sought out several times, was reserved, and did not voluntarily speak of Father Damon; she had heard that he was throwing himself with more than his usual fervor into his work. There was plenty to talk about. The purchase of the farm by the sea had better not be delayed; Jack might have to go down and see the owner. Yes, he would make it his first business in the morning. Perhaps it would be best to get some Long-Islander to buy it for them.

By the time it was ten o'clock, Jack said he thought he would step down to the Union a moment. Edith's countenance fell. There might be letters, he explained, and he had a little matter of business; he wouldn't be late.

It was very agreeable, home was, and Edith was charming. He could distinctly feel that she was charming. But Jack was restless. He felt the need of talking with somebody about what was on his mind. If only with Major Fairfax. He would not consult the Major, but the latter was in the way of picking up all sorts of gossip, both social and Street gossip.

And the Major was willing to unpack his budget. It was not very reassuring, what he had to tell; in fact, it was somewhat depressing, the general tightness and the panicky uncertainty, until, after a couple of glasses of Scotch, the financial world began to open a little and seem more hopeful.

"The Hendersons are going to build," Jack said at length, after a remark of the Major's about that famous operator.

"Build? What for? They've got a palace."

"Carmen says it's for an object-lesson. To show New York millionaires how to adorn their city."

"It's like that little schemer. What does Henderson say?"

"He appears to be willing. I can't get the hang of Henderson. He doesn't seem to care what his wife does. He's a cynical cuss. The other night, at dinner, in Washington, when the thing was talked over, he said: 'My dear, I don't know why you shouldn't do that as well as anything. Let's build a house of gold, as Nero did; we are in the Roman age.' Carmen looked dubious for a moment, but she said, 'You know, Rodney, that you always used to say that some time you would show New York what a house ought to be in this climate.' 'Well, go on,' and he laughed. 'I suppose lightning will not strike that sooner than anything else.'" "Seems to me," said the Major, reflectively, reaching out his hand for the brown mug, "the way he gives that woman her head, and doesn't care what she does, he must have a contempt for her."

"I wish somebody had that sort of contempt for me," said Jack, filling up his glass also.

"But, I tell you," he continued, "Mrs. Henderson has caught on to the new notions. Her idea is the union of all the arts. She has already got the refusal of a square 'way up-town, on the rise opposite the Park, and has been consulting architects about it. It is to be surrounded with the building, with a garden in the interior, a tropical garden, under glass in the winter. The facades are to be gorgeous and monumental. Artists and sculptors are to decorate it, inside and out. Why shouldn't there be color on the exterior, gold and painting, like the Fugger palaces in Augsburg, only on a great scale? The artists don't see any reason why there should not. It will make the city brilliant, that sort of thing, in place of our monotonous stone lanes. And it's using her wealth for the public benefit--the architects and artists all say that. Gad, I don't know but the little woman is beginning to regard herself as a public benefactor."

"She is that or nothing," echoed the Major, warmly.

"And do you know," continued Jack, confidentially, "I think she's got the right idea. If I have any luck--of course I sha'n't do that--but if I have any luck, I mean to build a house that's got some life in it--color, old boy--something unique and stunning."

"So you will," cried the Major, enthusiastically, and, raising his glass, "Here's to the house that Jack built!"

It was later than he thought it would be when he went home, but Jack was attended all the way by a vision of a Golden House--all gold wouldn't be too good, and he will build it, damme, for Edith and the boy. The next morning not even the foundations of this structure were visible. The master of the house came down to a late breakfast, out of sorts with life, almost surly. Not even Edith's bright face and fresh toilet and radiant welcome appealed to him. No one would have thought from her appearance that she had waited for him last night hour after hour, and had at last gone to bed with a heavy heart, and not to sleep--to toss, and listen, and suffer a thousand tortures of suspense. How many tragedies of this sort are there nightly in the metropolis, none the less tragic because they are subjects of jest in the comic papers and on the stage! What would be the condition of social life if women ceased to be anxious in this regard, and let loose the reins in an easy-going indifference? What, in fact, is the condition in those households where the wives do not care? One can even perceive a tender sort of loyalty to women in the

ejaculation of that battered old veteran, the Major, "Thank God, there's nobody sitting up for me!"

Jack was not consciously rude. He even asked about the baby. And he sipped his coffee and glanced over the morning journal, and he referred to the conversation of the night before, and said that he would look after the purchase at once. If Edith had put on an aspect of injury, and had intimated that she had hoped that his first evening at home might have been devoted to her and the boy, there might have been a scene, for Jack needed only an occasion to vent his discontent. And for the chronicler of social life a scene is so much easier to deal with, an outburst of temper and sharp language, of accusation and recrimination, than the well-bred commonplace of an undefined estrangement.

And yet estrangement is almost too strong a word to use in Jack's case. He would have been the first to resent it. But the truth was that Edith, in the life he was leading, was a rebuke to him; her very purity and unworldliness were out of accord with his associations, with his ventures, with his dissipations in that smart and glittering circle where he was more welcome the more he lowered his moral standards. Could he help it if after the first hours of his return he felt the restraint of his home, and that the life seemed a little flat? Almost unconsciously to himself, his interests and his inclinations were elsewhere.

Edith, with the divination of a woman, felt this. Last night her love alone seemed strong enough to hold him, to bring him back to the purposes and the aspirations that only last summer had appeared to transform him. Now he was slipping away again. How pitiful it is, this contest of a woman who has only her own love, her own virtue, with the world and its allurements and seductions, for the possession of her husband's heart! How powerless she is against these subtle invitations, these unknown and all-encompassing temptations! At times the whole drift of life, of the easy morality of the time, is against her. The current is so strong that no wonder she is often swept away in it. And what could an impartial observer of things as they are say otherwise than that John Delancy was leading the common life of his kind and his time, and that Edith was only bringing trouble on herself by being out of sympathy with it?

He might not be in at luncheon, he said, when he was prepared to go down-town. He seldom was. He called at his broker's. Still suspense. He wrote to the Long Island farmer. At the Union he found a scented note from Carmen. They had all returned from the capital. How rejoiced she was to be at home! And she was dying to see him; no, not dying, but very much living; and it was very important. She should expect him at the usual hour. And could he guess what gown she would wear?

And Jack went. What hold had this woman on him? Undoubtedly she had fascinations, but he knew--knew well enough by this time--that her friendship was based wholly on calculation. And yet what a sympathetic comrade she could be! How freely he could talk with her; there was no subject she did not adapt herself to. No doubt it was this adaptability that made her such a favorite. She did not demand too much virtue or require too much conventionality. The hours he was with her he was wholly at his ease. She made him satisfied with himself, and she didn't disturb his conscience.

"I think," said Jack--he was holding both her hands with a swinging motion--when she came forward to greet him, and looking at her critically--"I think I like you better in New York than in Washington."

"That is because you see more of me here."

"Oh, I saw you enough in Washington."

"But that was my public manner. I have to live up to Mr. Henderson's reputation."

"And here you only have to live up to mine?"

"I can live for my friends," she replied, with an air of candor, giving a very perceptible pressure with her little hands. "Isn't that enough?"

Jack kissed each little hand before he let it drop, and looked as if he believed.

"And how does the house get on?"

"Famously. The lot is bought. Mr. Van Brunt was here all the morning. It's going to be something Oriental, mediaeval, nineteenth-century, gorgeous, and domestic. Van Brunt says he wants it to represent me."

"How?" inquired Jack; "all the four facades different?"

"With an interior unity--all the styles brought to express an individual taste, don't you know. A different house from the four sides of approach, and inside, home--that's the idea."

"It appears to me," said Jack, still bantering, "that it will look like an apartment-house."

"That is just what it will not--that is, outside unity, and inside a menagerie. This won't look gregarious. It is to have not more than three stories, perhaps only two. And then exterior color, decoration, statuary."

"And gold?"

"Not too much--not to give it a cheap gilded look. Oh, I asked him about Nero's house. As I remember it, that was mostly caverns. Mr. Van Brunt laughed, and said they were not going to excavate this house. The Roman notion was barbarous grandeur. But in point of beauty and luxury, this would be as much superior to Nero's house as the electric light is to a Roman lamp."

"Not classic, then?"

"Why, all that's good in classic form, with the modern spirit. You ought to hear Mr. Van Brunt talk. This country has never yet expressed itself in domestic inhabitation."

"It's going to cost! What does Mr. Henderson say?"

"I think he rather likes it. He told Mr. Van Brunt to consult me and go ahead with his plans. But he talks queerly. He said he thought he would have money enough at least for the foundation. Do you think, Jack," asked Carmen, with a sudden change of manner, "that Mr. Henderson is really the richest man in the United States?"

"Some people say so. Really, I don't know how any one can tell. If he let go his hand from his affairs, I don't know what a panic would do."

Carmen looked thoughtful. "He said to me once that he wasn't afraid of the Street any more. I told him this morning that I didn't want to begin this if it was going to incommode him."

"What did he say?"

"He was just going out. He looked at me a moment with that speculative sort of look--no, it isn't cynical, as you say; I know it so well--and then said: 'Oh, go ahead. I guess it will be all right. If anything happens, you can turn it into a boardinghouse. It will be an excellent sanitarium.' That was all. Anyway, it's something to do. Come, let's go and see the place." And she started up and touched the bell for the carriage. It was more than something to do. In those days before her marriage, when her mother was living, and when they wandered about Europe, dangerously near to the reputation of adventuresses, the girl had her dream of chateaux and castles and splendor. Her chance did not come in Europe, but, as she would have said, Providence is good to those who wait.

The next day Jack went to Long Island, and the farm was bought, and the deed brought to Edith, who, with much formality, presented it to the boy, and that young gentleman showed his appreciation of it by trying to eat it. It would have seemed a pretty incident to Jack, if he had not been absorbed in more important things.

But he was very much absorbed, and apparently more idle than ever. As the days went on, and the weeks, he was less and less at home, and in a worse humor--that is, at home. Carmen did not find him ill-humored, nor was there any change towards the fellows at the Union, except that it was noticed that he had his cross days. There was nothing specially to distinguish him from a dozen others, who led the same life of vacuity, of mild dissipation, of enforced pleasure. A wager now and then on an "event"; a fictitious interest in elections; lively partisanship in society scandals: Not much else. The theatres were stale, and only endurable on account of the little suppers afterwards; and really there wasn't much in life except the women who made it agreeable.

Major Fairfax was not a model; there had not much survived out of his checkered chances and experiences, except a certain instinct of being a gentleman, sir; the close of his life was not exactly a desirable goal; but even the Major shook his head over Jack.

XIX

The one fact in which men universally agree is that we come into the world alone and we go out of the world alone; and although we travel in company, make our pilgrimage to Canterbury or to Vanity Fair in a great show of fellowship, and of bearing one another's burdens, we carry our deepest troubles alone. When we think of it, it is an awful lonesomeness in this animated and moving crowd. Each one either must or will carry his own burden, which he commonly cannot, or by pride or shame will not, ask help in carrying.

Henderson drew more and more apart from confidences, and was alone in building up the colossal structure of his wealth. Father Damon was carrying his renewed temptation alone, after all his brave confession and attempt at renunciation. Ruth Leigh plodded along alone, with her secret which was the joy and the despair of her life--the opening of a gate into the paradise which she could never enter. Jack Delancy, the confiding, open-hearted good fellow, had come to a stage in his journey where he also was alone. Not even to Carmen could he confess the extent of his embarrassments, nor even in her company, nor in the distraction of his increasingly dissipated life, could he forget them. Not only had his investments been all transferred to his speculations, but his home had been mortgaged, and he did not dare tell Edith of the lowering cloud that hung over it; and that his sole dependence was the confidence of the Street, which any rumor might shatter, in that one of Henderson's schemes to which he had committed himself. Edith, the one person who could have comforted him, was the last person to whom he could have told this, for he had the most elementary, and the common conception of what marriage is.

But Edith's lot was the most pitiful of all. She was not only alone, but compelled to inaction. She saw the fair fabric of her life dissolving, and neither by cries nor tears, by appeals nor protest, by show of anger nor by show of suffering, could she hinder the dissolution. Strong in herself and full of courage, day by day and week by week she felt her powerlessness. Heaven knows what it cost her--what it costs all women in like circumstances--to be always cheerful, never to show distrust. If her love were not enough, if her attractions were not enough, there was no human help to which she could appeal.

And what, pray, was there to appeal? There was no visible neglect, no sufficient alienation for gossip to take hold of. If there was a little talk about Jack's intimacy elsewhere, was there anything uncommon in that? Affairs went on as usual. Was it reasonable to suppose that society should notice that one woman's heart was full of foreboding, heavy with a sense of loss and defeat, and with the ruin of two lives? Could simple misery like this rise to the dignity of tragedy in a world that has its share of tragedies, shocking and violent, but is on the whole going on decorously and prosperously?

The season wore on. It was the latter part of May. Jack had taken Edith and the boy down to the Long Island house, and had returned to the city and was living at his club, feverishly waiting for some change in his affairs. It was a sufficient explanation of his anxiety that money was "tight," that failures were daily announced, and that there was a general fear of worse times. It was fortunate for Jack and other speculators that they could attribute their ill-luck to the general financial condition. There were reasons enough for this condition. Some attributed it to want of confidence, others to the tariff, others to the action of this or that political party, others to over-production, others to silver, others to the action of English capitalists in withdrawing their investments. It could all be accounted for without referring to the fact that most of the individual sufferers, like Jack, owed more than they could pay.

Henderson was much of the time absent--at the West and at the South. His every move was watched, his least sayings were reported as significant, and the Street was hopeful or depressed as he seemed to be cheerful or unusually taciturn. Uncle Jerry was the calmest man in town, and his observation that Henderson knew what he was about was reassuring.

His serenity was well founded. The fact was that he had been pulling in and lowering canvas for months. Or, as he put it, he hadn't much hay out. . . "It's never a good plan," said Uncle Jerry, "to put off raking up till the shower begins."

It seems absurd to speak of the East Side in connection with the financial situation. But that was where the pinch was felt, and felt first. Work was slack, and that meant actual hunger for many families. The monetary solidarity of the town is remarkable. No one flies a kite in Wall Street that somebody in Rivington Street does not in consequence have to go without his dinner. As Dr. Leigh went her daily rounds she encountered painful evidence of the financial disturbance. Increased number of cases for the doctor followed want of sufficient food and the eating of cheap, unwholesome food. She was often obliged to draw upon the Margaret Fund, and to invoke the aid of Father Damon when the responsibility was too great for her. And Father Damon found that his ministry was daily diverted from the cure of souls to the care of bodies. Among all those who came to the mission as a place of refuge and rest, and to whom the priest sought to offer the consolations of religion and of his personal sympathy, there were few who did not have a tale of suffering to tell that wrung his heart. Some of them were actually ill, or had at home a sick husband or a sick daughter. And such cases had to be reported to Dr. Leigh.

It became necessary, therefore, that these two, who had shunned each other for months, should meet as often as they had done formerly. This was very hard for both, for it meant only the renewal of heart-break, regret, and despair. And yet it had been almost worse when they did not see each other. They met; they talked of nothing but their work; they tried to forget themselves in their devotion to humanity. But the human heart will not be thus disposed of. It was impossible that some show of personal interest, some tenderness, should not appear. They were walking towards Fourth Avenue one evening--the priest could not resist the impulse to accompany her a little way towards her home--after a day of unusual labor and anxiety.

"You are working too hard," he said, gently; "you look fatigued."

"Oh no," she replied, looking up cheerfully; "I'm a regular machine. I get run down, and then I wind up. I get tired, and then I get rested. It isn't the work," she added, after a moment, "if only I could see any good of it. It seems so hopeless."

"From your point of view, my dear doctor," he answered, but without any shade of reproof in his tone. "But no good deed is lost. There is nothing else in the world--nothing for me." The close of the sentence seemed wholly accidental, and he stopped speaking as if he could not trust himself to go on.

Ruth Leigh looked up quickly. "But, Father Damon, it is you who ought to be rebuked for overwork. You are undertaking too much. You ought to go off for a vacation, and go at once."

The father looked paler and thinner than usual, but his mouth was set in firm lines, and he said: "It cannot be. My duty is here. And"--he turned, and looked her full in the face--"I cannot go."

No need to explain that simple word. No need to interpret the swift glance that their eyes exchanged--the eager, the pitiful glance. They

both knew. It was not the work. It was not the suffering of the world. It was the pain in their own hearts, and the awful chasm that his holy vows had put between them. They stood so only an instant. He was trembling in the effort to master himself, and in a second she felt the hot blood rising to her face. Her woman's wit was the first to break the hopeless situation. She turned, and hailed a passing car. "I cannot walk any farther. Good-night." And she was gone.

The priest stood as if a sudden blow had struck him, following the retreating car till it was out of sight, and then turned homeward, dazed, and with feeble steps. What was this that had come to him to so shake his life? What devil was tempting him to break his vows and forsake his faith? Should he fly from the city and from his work, or should he face what seemed to him, in the light of his consecration, a monstrous temptation, and try to conquer himself? He began to doubt his power to do this. He had always believed that it was easy to conquer nature. And now a little brown woman had taught him that he reckons ill who leaves out the strongest human passion. And yet suppose he should break his solemn vows and throw away his ideal, and marry Ruth Leigh, would he ever be happy? Here was a mediaeval survival confronted by a nineteenth-century skepticism. The situation was plainly insoluble. It was as plainly so to the clear mind of the unselfish little woman without faith as it was to him. Perhaps she could not have respected him if he had yielded. Strangely enough, the attraction of the priest for her and for other women who called themselves servants of humanity was in his consecration, in his attitude of separation from the vanities and passions of this world. They believed in him, though they did not share his faith. To Ruth Leigh this experience of love was as unexpected as it was to the priest. Perhaps because her life was lived on a less exalted plane she could bear it with more equanimity. But who knows? The habit of her life was endurance, the sturdy meeting of the duty of every day, with at least only a calm regard of the future. And she would go on. But who can measure the inner change in her life? She must certainly be changed by this deep experience, and, terrible as it was, perhaps ennobled by it. Is there not something supernatural in such a love itself? It has a wonderful transforming power. It is certain that a new light, a tender light, was cast upon her world. And who can say that some time, in the waiting and working future, this new light might not change life altogether for this faithful soul?

There was one person upon whom the tragedy of life thus far sat lightly. Even her enemies, if she had any, would not deny that Carmen had an admirable temperament. If she had been a Moslem, it might be predicted that she would walk the wire 'El Serat' without a tremor. In these days she was busy with the plans of her new house. The project suited her ambition and her taste. The structure grew in her mind into barbaric splendor, but a barbaric splendor refined, which revealed in the exquisite adornment of the Alhambra itself. She was in daily conferences with her architect and her artists, she constantly consulted Jack about it, and Mavick whenever he was in town, and occasionally she awakened the interest of Henderson himself, who put no check upon her proceedings, although his mind was concerned with a vaster structure of his own. She talked of little else, until in her small world there grew up a vast expectation of magnificence, of which hints appeared from time to time in the newspapers, mysterious allusions to Roman luxury, to Nero and his Golden House. Henderson read these paragraphs, as he read the paragraphs about his own fortune, with a grim smile.

"Your house is getting a lot of free advertising," he said to Carmen one

evening after dinner in the library, throwing the newspaper on the table as he spoke.

"They all seem to like the idea," replied Carmen. "Did you see what one of the papers said about the use of wealth in adorning the city? That's my notion."

"I suppose," said Henderson, with a smile, "that you put that notion into the reporter's head."

"But he thought he suggested it to me."

"Let's look over the last drawing." Henderson half rose from his chair to pull the sheet towards him, but instantly sank back, and put his hand to his heart. Carmen saw that he was very pale, and ran round to his chair.

"What is it?"

"Nothing," he said, taking a long breath. "Just a stitch. Indigestion. It must have been the coffee."

Carmen ran to the dining-room, and returned with a wineglass of brandy.

"There, take that."

He drank it. "Yes, that's better. I'm all right now." And he sat still, slowly recovering color and control of himself.

"I'm going to send for the doctor."

"No, no; nonsense. It has all passed," and he stretched out his arms and threw them back vigorously. "It was only a moment's faintness. It's quite gone."

He rose from his chair and took a turn or two about the room. Yes, he was quite himself, and he patted Carmen's head as he passed and took his seat again. For a moment or two there was silence. Then he said, still as if reflecting:

"Isn't it queer? In that moment of faintness all my life flashed through my mind."

"It has been a very successful life," Carmen said, by way of saying something.

"Yes, yes; but I wonder if it was worth while?"

"If I were a man, I should enjoy the power you have, the ability to do what you will."

"I suppose I do. That is all there is. I like to conquer obstacles, and I like to command. And money; I never did care for money in itself. But there is a fascination in building up a great fortune. It is like conducting a political or a military campaign. Now, I haven't much interest in anything else."

As he spoke he looked round upon the crowded shelves of his library, and, getting up, went to the corner where there was a shelf of rare editions

and took down a volume.

"Do you remember when I got this, Carmen? It was when I was a bachelor. It was rare then. I saw it quoted the other day as worth twice the price I gave for it."

He replaced it carefully, and walked along the shelves looking at the familiar titles.

"I used to read then. And you read still; you have time."

"Not those books," she replied, with a laugh. "Those belong to the last generation."

"That is where I belong," he said, smiling also. "I don't think I have read a book, not really read it, in ten years. This modern stuff that pretends to give life is so much less exciting than my own daily experience that I cannot get interested in it. Perhaps I could read these calm old books."

"It is the newspapers that take your time," Carmen suggested.

"Yes, they pass the time when I am thinking. And they are full of suggestions. I suppose they are as accurate about other things as about me. I used to think I would make this library the choicest in the city. It is good as far as it goes. Perhaps I will take it up some day--if I live." And he turned away from the shelves and sat down. Carmen had never seen him exactly in this humor and was almost subdued by it.

He began to talk again, philosophizing about life generally and his own life. He seemed to like to recall his career, and finally said: "Uncle Jerry is successful too, and he never did care for anything else--except his family. There is a clerk in my office on five thousand a year who is never without a book when he comes to the office and when I see him on the train. He has a wife and a nice little family in Jersey. I ask him sometimes about his reading. He is collecting a library, but not of rare books; says he cannot afford that. I think he is successful too, or will be if he never gets more than five thousand a year, and is content with his books and his little daily life, coming and going to his family. Ah, well! Everybody must live his life. I suppose there is some explanation of it all."

"Has anything gone wrong?" asked Carmen, anxiously.

"No, not at all. Nothing to interfere with the house of gold." He spoke quite gently and sincerely. "I don't know what set me into this moralizing. Let's look at the plans."

The next day--it was the first of June--in consultation with the architect, a project was broached that involved such an addition of cost that Carmen hesitated. She declared that it was a question of ways and means, and that she must consult the chairman. Accordingly she called her carriage and drove down to Henderson's office.

It was a beautiful day, a little warm in the narrow streets of the lower city, but when she had ascended by the elevator to the high story that Henderson occupied in one of the big buildings that rise high enough to give a view of New York Harbor, and looked from the broad windows upon one of the most sparkling and animated scenes in the world, it seemed

to her appreciative eyes a day let down out of Paradise.

The clerks all knew Mrs. Henderson, and they rose and bowed as she tripped along smiling towards her husband's rooms. It did not seem to be a very busy day, and she found no one waiting in the anteroom, and passed into the room of his private secretary.

"Is Mr. Henderson in?"

"Yes, madam."

"And busy?"

"Probably busy," replied the secretary, with a smile, "but he is alone. No one has disturbed him for over half an hour."

"Then I will go in."

She tapped lightly at the door. There was no response. She turned the knob softly and looked in, and then, glancing back at the secretary, with a finger uplifted, "I think he is asleep," opened the door, stepped in, and closed it carefully.

The large room was full of light, and through the half-dozen windows burst upon her the enchanting scene of the Bay, Henderson sat at his table, which was covered with neatly arranged legal documents, but bowed over it, his head resting upon his arms.

"So, Rodney, this is the way, old boy, that you wear yourself out in business!"

She spoke laughingly, but he did not stir, and she tiptoed along to awaken him.

She touched his hand. It moved heavily away from her hand. The left arm, released, dropped at his side.

She started back, her eyes round with terror, and screamed.

Instantly the secretary was at her side, and supported her, fainting, to a seat. Other clerks rushed in at the alarm. Henderson was lifted from his chair and laid upon a lounge. When the doctor who had been called arrived, Carmen was in a heap by the low couch, one arm thrown across the body, and her head buried in the cushion close to his.

The doctor instantly applied restoratives; he sent for an electric battery; everything was done that science could suggest. But all was of no avail. There was no sign of life. He must have been dead half an hour, said the doctor. It was evidently heart-failure.

Before the doctor had pronounced his verdict there was a whisper in the Stock Exchange.

"Henderson is dead!"

"It is not possible," said one.

"I saw him only yesterday," said another.

"I was in his office this morning," said a third. "I never saw him looking in better health."

The whisper was confirmed. There was no doubt of it. Henderson's private secretary had admitted it. Yet it seemed incredible. No provision had been made for it. Speculation had not discounted it. A panic set in. No one knew what to do, for no one knew well the state of Henderson's affairs. In the first thirty minutes there was a tremendous drop in Henderson stocks. Then some of them rallied, but before the partial recovery hundreds of men had been ruined. It was a wild hour in the Exchange. Certain stocks were hopelessly smashed for the time, and some combinations were destroyed; among them was one that Uncle Jerry had kept out of; and Jack Delancy was hopelessly ruined.

The event was flashed over the wires of the continent; it was bulletined; it was cried in the streets; it was the all-absorbing talk of the town. Already, before the dead man was removed to his own house, people were beginning to moralize about him and his career. Perhaps the truest thing was said by the old broker in the board whose reputation for piety was only equaled by his reputation of always having money to loan at exorbitant rates in a time of distress. He said to a group of downcast operators, "In the midst of life we are in death."

XX

The place that Rodney Henderson occupied in the mind of the public was shown by the attention the newspapers paid to his death. All the great newspapers in all the cities of importance published long and minute biographies of him, with pictorial illustrations, and day after day characteristic anecdotes of his remarkable career. Nor was there, it is believed, a newspaper in the United States, secular, religious, or special, that did not comment upon his life. This was the more remarkable in that he was not a public man in the common use of the word: he had never interested himself in politics, or in public affairs, municipal or State or national; he had devoted himself entirely to building up his private fortune. If this is the duty of a citizen, he had discharged it with singleness of purpose; but no other duty of the citizen had he undertaken, if we except his private charities. And yet no public man of his day excited more popular interest or was the subject of more newspaper comment.

And these comments were nearly all respectful, and most of them kindly. There was some justice in this, for Henderson had been doing what everybody else was trying to do, usually without his good-fortune. If he was more successful than others in trying to get rich, surely a great deal of admiration was mingled with the envy of his career. To be sure, some journals were very severe upon his methods, and some revived the old stories of his unscrupulousness in transactions which had laid him open to criminal prosecution, from the effects of which he was only saved by uncommon adroitness and, some said, by legal technicalities. His career also was denounced by some as wholly vicious in its effect upon the youth of the republic, and as lowering the tone of public morals. And yet it was remembered that he had been a frank, open-hearted friend, kind to his family, and generous in contrast with some of his close-fisted contemporaries. There was nothing mean about him; even his rascalities, if you chose to call his transactions by that name, were on

a grand scale. To be sure, he would let nothing stand between him and the consummation of his schemes--he was like Napoleon in that--but those who knew him personally liked him. The building up of his colossal fortune--which the newspapers were saying was the largest that had been accumulated in one lifetime in America--had ruined thousands of people, and carried disaster into many peaceful houses, and his sudden death had been a cyclone of destruction for an hour. But it was hardly fair, one journal pointed out, to hold Henderson responsible for his untimely death.

Even Jack Delancy, when the crushing news was brought him at the club, where he sat talking with Major Fairfax, although he saw his own ruin in a flash, said, "It wouldn't have happened if Henderson had lived."

"Not so soon," replied the Major, hesitatingly.

"Do you mean to say that Henderson and Mavick and Mrs. Henderson would have thrown me over?"

"Why, no, not exactly; but a big machine grinds on regardless, and when the crash comes everybody looks out for himself."

"I think I'll telegraph to Mavick."

"That wouldn't do any good now. He couldn't have stopped the panic. I tell you what, you'd better go down to your brokers and see just how matters stand."

And the two went down to Wall Street. It was after hours, but the brokers' office was full of excitement. No one knew what was left from the storm, nor what to expect. It was some time before Jack could get speech with one of the young men of the firm.

"How is it?" he asked.

"It's been a---of a time."

"And Henderson?"

"Oh, his estate is all right, so far as we know. He was well out of the Missouri."

"And the Missouri?"

"Bottom dropped out; temporarily, anyway."

"And my account?"

"Wiped out, I am sorry to say. Might come up by-and-by, if you've got a lot of money to put up, and wait."

"Then it's all up," said Jack, turning to the Major. He was very pale. He knew now that his fortune was gone absolutely--house, everything.

Few words were exchanged as they made their way back to the club. And here the Major did a most unusual thing for him. He ordered the drinks. But he did this delicately, apologetically.

"I don't know as you care for anything, but Wall Street has made me

thirsty. Eh?"

"I don't mind if I do," Jack replied.

And they sat down.

The conversation was not cheerful; it was mainly ejaculatory. After a second glass, Jack said, "I don't suppose it would do any good, but I should like to see Mavick." And then, showing the drift of his thoughts, "I wonder what Carmen will do?"

"I should say that will depend upon the will," replied the Major.

"She is a good-hearted woman," and Jack's tone was one of inquiry.

"She hasn't any, Jack. Not the least bit of a heart. And I believe Henderson found it out. I shall be surprised if his will doesn't show that he knew it."

A servant came to the corner where they were sitting and handed Jack a telegram.

"What's this? Mavick?" He tore it open. "No; Edith." He read it with something like a groan, and passed it over to the Major.

What he read was this: "Don't be cast down, Jack. The boy and I are well. Come. Edith."

"That is splendid; that is just like her," cried the Major. "I'd be out of this by the first train."

"It is no use," replied Jack gloomily. "I couldn't 'face Edith now. I couldn't do it. I wonder how she knew?"

He called back the servant, and penned as reassuring a message as he could, but said that it was impossible to leave town. She must not worry about him. This despatched, they fell again into a talk about the situation. After another glass Jack was firm in his resolution to stay and watch things. It seemed not impossible that something might turn up.

On the third day after, both the Major and Jack attended the funeral at the house. Carmen was not visible. The interment was private. The day following, Jack left his card of condolence at the door; but one day passed, and another and another, and no word of acknowledgment came from the stricken widow. Jack said to himself that it was not natural to expect it. But he did expect it, and without reason, for he should have known that Carmen was not only overwhelmed with the sudden shock of her calamity, but that she would necessarily be busy with affairs that even grief would not permit her to neglect. Jack heard that Mavick had been in the city, and that he went to the Henderson house, but he had not called at the club, and the visit must have been a flying one.

A week passed, and Jack received no message from Carmen. His note offering his services if she needed the services of any one had not been answered.

Carmen was indeed occupied. It could not be otherwise. The state of Henderson's affairs could not wait upon conventionalities. The day after the funeral Mr. Henderson's private secretary came to the house, and had

a long interview with Mrs. Henderson. He explained to her that the affairs should be immediately investigated, the will proved, and the estate put into the hands of the executors. It would be best for Mrs. Henderson herself to bring his keys down to the office, and to see the opening of his desk and boxes. Meantime it would be well for her to see if there were any papers of importance in the house; probably everything was in the office safe.

The next morning Carmen nerved herself to the task. With his keys in hand she went alone into the library and opened his writing-desk. Everything was in perfect order; letters and papers filed and labeled, and neatly arranged in drawers and pigeonholes. There lay his letter-book as he had last used it, and there lay fresh memoranda of his projects and engagements. She found in one of the drawers some letters of her own, mostly notes, and most of them written before her marriage. In another drawer were some bundles of letters, a little yellow with age, endorsed with the name of "Margaret." She shut the drawer without looking at them. She continued to draw papers from the pigeon-holes and glance at them. Most of them related to closed transactions. At length she drew out one that instantly fixed her attention. It was endorsed, "Last Will and Testament." She looked first at the date at the end--it was quite recent--and then leaned back in her chair and set herself deliberately to read it.

The document was long and full of repetitions and technicalities, but the purport of it was plain. As she read on she was at first astonished, then she was excited to trembling, and felt herself pale and faint; but when she had finished and fully comprehended it her pretty face was distorted with rage. The great bulk of the property was not for her. She sprang up and paced the floor. She came back and took up the document with a motion of tearing it in pieces. No--it would be better to burn it. Of course there must be another will deposited in the safe. Henderson had told her so. It was drawn up shortly after their marriage. It could not be worse for her than this. She lighted the gas-jet by the fireplace, and held the paper in her hand. Then a thought struck her. What if somebody knew of this will, and its execution could be proved! She looked again at the end. It was signed and sealed. There were the names of two witnesses. One was the name of their late butler, who had been long in Henderson's service, and who had died less than a month ago. The other name was Thomas Mavick. Evidently the will had been signed recently, on some occasion when Mavick was in the house. And Henderson's lawyer probably knew it also!

She folded the document carefully, put it back in the pigeon-hole, locked the desk, and rang the bell for her carriage. She was ready when the carriage came to the door, and told the coachman to drive to the office of Mr. Sage in Nassau Street. Mr. Sage had been for many years Henderson's most confidential lawyer.

He received Carmen in his private office, with the subdued respect due to her grief and the sudden tragedy that had overtaken her. He was a man well along in years, a small man, neat in his dress, a little formal and precise in his manner, with a smoothly shaven face and gray eyes, keen, but not unkindly in expression. He had the reputation, which he deserved, for great ability and integrity. After the first salutations and words of condolence were spoken, Carmen said, "I have come to consult you, Mr. Sage, about my husband's affairs."

"I am quite at your service, madam."

"I wanted to see you before I went to the office with the keys of his safe."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Sage, "I could spare you that trouble."

"Oh no; his secretary thought I had better come myself, if I could."

"Very well," said Mr. Sage.

Carmen hesitated a moment, and then said, in an inquiring tone, "I suppose the first thing is the will. He told me long ago that his will was made. I suppose it is in the safe. Didn't you draw it, Mr. Sage?"

"Oh yes," the lawyer replied, leaning back in his chair, "I drew that; a long time ago; shortly after your marriage. And about a year ago I drew another one. Did he ever speak of that?"

"No," Carmen replied, with a steady voice, but trembling inwardly at her narrow escape.

"I wonder," continued Mr. Sage, "if it was ever executed? He took it, and said he would think it over."

"Executed?" queried Carmen, looking up. "How do you mean, before a magistrate?"

"Oh, no; signed and witnessed. It is very simple. The law requires two witnesses; the testator and the witnesses must declare that they sign in the presence of each other. The witnesses prove the will, or, if they are dead, their signatures can be proved. I was one of the witnesses of the first will, and a clerk of Henderson's, who is still in his office, was the other."

"The last one is probably in the safe if it was executed."

"Probably," the lawyer assented. "If not, you'd better look for it in the house."

"Of course. Whether it exists or not, I want to carry out my husband's intention," Carmen said, sweetly. "Have you any memorandum of it?"

"I think so, somewhere, but the leading provisions are in my mind. It would astonish the public."

"Why?" asked Carmen.

"Well, the property was greater than any of us supposed, and--perhaps I ought not to speak to you of this now, Mrs. Henderson."

"I think I have a right to know what my husband's last wishes were," Carmen answered, firmly.

"Well, he had a great scheme. The greater part of his property after the large legacies--" The lawyer saw that Carmen looked pale, and he hesitated a moment, and then said, in a cheery manner: "Oh, I assure you, madam, that this will gave you a great fortune; all the establishment, and a very great fortune. But the residue was in trust for the building

and endowment of an Industrial School on the East Side, with a great library and a reading-room, all to be free. It was a great scheme, and carefully worked out."

"I am so glad to know this," said Carmen. "Was there anything else?"

"Only some legacies." And Mr. Sage went on, trying to recall details that his attentive listener already knew. There were legacies to some of his relatives in New Hampshire, and there was a fund, quite a handsome fund, for the poor of the city, called the "Margaret Fund." And there was something also for a relative of the late Mrs. Henderson.

Carmen again expressed her desire to carry out her husband's wishes in everything, and Mr. Sage was much impressed by her sweet manner. When she had found out all that he knew or remembered of the new will, and arose to go, Mr. Sage said he would accompany her to the office. And Carmen gratefully accepted his escort, saying that she had wished to ask him to go with her, but that she feared to take up so much of his time.

At the office the first will was found, but no other. The lawyer glanced through it, and then handed it to Mrs. Henderson, with the remark, "It leaves you, madam, pretty much everything of which he died possessed." Carmen put it aside. She did not care to read it now. She would go home and search for the other one.

"If no other is found," said Mr. Sage, in bidding her good-morning, "this one ought to be proved tomorrow. I may tell you that you and Mr. Hollowell are named as executors."

On her way home Carmen stopped at a telegraph station, and sent a message to Mavick, in Washington, to take an afternoon train and come to New York.

When Carmen reached home she was in a serious but perfectly clear frame of mind. The revelation in the last will of Henderson's change of mind towards her was mortifying to a certain extent. It was true that his fortune was much increased since the first will was made, and that it justified his benevolent scheme. But he might have consulted her about it. If she had argued the matter with her conscience, she would have told her conscience that she would carry out this new plan in her own way and time. She was master of the situation, and saw before her a future of almost unlimited opportunity and splendor, except for one little obstacle. That obstacle was Mr. Mavick. She believed that she understood him thoroughly, but she could not take the next step until she had seen him. It was true that no one except herself positively knew that a second will now existed, but she did not know how much he might choose to remember.

She was very impatient to see Mr. Mavick. She wandered about the house, restless and feverish. Presently it occurred to her that it would be best to take the will wholly into her own keeping. She unlocked the desk, took it out with a trembling hand, but did not open it again. It was not necessary. A first reading had burned every item of it into her brain. It seemed to be a sort of living thing. She despised herself for being so agitated, and for the furtive feeling that overcame her as she glanced about to be sure that she was alone, and then she ran up stairs to her room and locked the document in her own writing-desk.

What was that? Oh, it was only the door-bell. But who could it be?

Some one from the office, from her lawyer? She could see nobody. In two minutes there was a rap at her door. It was only the servant with a despatch. She took it and opened it without haste.

"Very well, Dobson; no answer. I expect Mr. Mavick on business at ten. I am at home to no one else."

At ten o'clock Mr. Mavick came, and was shown into the library, where Carmen awaited him.

"It was very good of you to come," she said, as she advanced to meet him and gave him her hand in the natural subdued manner that the circumstances called for.

"I took the first train after I received your despatch."

"I am sorry to inconvenience you so," she said, after they were seated, "but you know so much of Mr. Henderson's affairs that your advice will be needed. His will is to be proved tomorrow."

"Yes?" said Mavick.

"I went to see--Mr. Sage today, and he went with me to the office. The will was in the safe. I did not read it, but Mr. Sage said that it left everything to me except a few legacies."

"Yes?"

"He said it should be proved tomorrow, unless a later will turned up."

"Was there a later will?"

"That is what he did not know. He had drawn a new will about a year ago, but he doubted if it had ever been executed. Mr. Henderson was considering it. He thought he had a memorandum of it somewhere, but he remembered the principal features of it."

"Was it a great change from the first?" Mavick asked.

"Yes, considerable. In fact, the greater part of his property, as far as I could make out, was to go to endow a vast training-school, library, and reading-room on the East Side. Of course that would be a fine thing."

"Of course," said Mavick. "And no such will has been found?"

"I've looked everywhere," replied Carmen, simply; "all over the house. It should be in that desk if anywhere. We can look again, but I feel pretty sure there is no such document there."

She took in her hand the bunch of keys that lay on the table, as if she were about to rise and unlock the desk. Then she hesitated, and looked Mavick full in the face.

"Do you think, Mr. Mavick, that will was ever executed?"

For a moment they looked steadily at each other, and then he said, deliberately, their eyes squarely meeting, "I do not think it was." And in a moment he added, "He never said anything to me about such a disposition of his property."

Two things were evident to Carmen from this reply. He saw her interests as she saw them, and it was pretty certain that the contents of the will were not made known to him when he witnessed it. She experienced an immense feeling of relief as she arose and unlocked the desk. They sat down before it together, and went over its contents. Mavick made a note of the fresh business memoranda that might be of service next day, since Mrs. Henderson had requested him to attend the proving of the will, and to continue for the present the business relations with her that he had held with Mr. Henderson.

It was late when he left the house, but he took with him a note to Mr. Sage to drop into the box for morning delivery. The note said that she had searched the house, that no second will existed there, and that she had telegraphed to Mr. Mavick, who had much knowledge of Mr. Henderson's affairs, to meet him in the morning. And she read the note to Mavick before she sealed it.

Before the note could have been dropped into the box, Carmen was in her room, and the note was literally true. No second will existed.

The will was proved, and on the second day its contents were in all the newspapers. But with it went a very exciting story. This was the rumor of another will, and of Henderson's vast scheme of benevolence. Mr. Sage had been interviewed and Carmen had been interviewed. The memorandum (which was only rough and not wholly legible notes) had been found and sent to Carmen. There was no concealment about it. She gave the reporters all the details, and to every one she said that it was her intention to carry out her husband's wishes, so far as they could be ascertained from this memorandum, when his affairs had been settled. The thirst of the reporters for information amused even Carmen, who had seen much of this industrious tribe. One of them, to whom she had partially explained the situation, ended by asking her, "Are you going to contest the will?"

"Contest the will?" cried Carmen. "There is nothing to contest."

"I didn't know," said the young man, whose usual occupation was reporting sports, and who had a dim idea that every big will must be contested.

Necessarily the affair made a great deal of talk. The newspapers discussed it for days, and turned over the scheme in every light, the most saying that it was a noble gift to the city that had been intended, while only one or two doubted if charity institutions of this sort really helped the poor. Regret, of course, was expressed that the second will had never been executed, but with this regret was the confidence that the widow would carry out, eventually, Henderson's plans.

This revelation modified the opinion in regard to Henderson. He came to be regarded as a public benefactor, and his faithful wife shared the credit of his noble intention.

XXI

Waiting for something to turn up, Jack found a weary business. He had written to Mavick after the newspaper report that that government officer

had been in the city on Henderson's affairs, and had received a very civil and unsatisfactory reply. In the note Mavick had asked him to come to Washington and spend a little time, if he had nothing better on hand, as his guest. Perhaps no offense was intended, but the reply enraged Jack. There was in the tone of the letter and in the manner of the invitation a note of patronage that was unendurable.

"Confound the fellow's impudence!" said Jack to himself; and he did not answer the invitation.

Personally his situation was desperate enough, but he was not inclined to face it. In a sort of stupor he let the law take its course. There was nothing left of his fortune, and his creditors were in possession of his house and all it contained. "Do not try to keep anything back that legally belongs to them," Edith had written when he informed her of this last humiliation. Of course decency was observed. Jack's and Edith's wardrobes, and some pieces of ancestral furniture that he pointed out as belonging to his wife, were removed before the auction flag was hung out. When this was over he still temporized. Edith's affectionate entreaties to him to leave the dreadful city and come home were evaded on one plea or another. He had wild schemes of going off West or South --of disappearing. Perhaps he would have luck somewhere. He couldn't ask aid or seek occupation of his friends, but some place where he was not known he felt that he might do something to regain his position, get some situation, or make some money--lots of men had done it in a new country and reinstate himself in Edith's opinion.

But he did not go, and days and weeks went by in irresolution. No word came from Carmen, and this humiliated Jack more than anything else--not the loss of her friendship, but the remembrance that he had ever danced attendance on her and trusted her. He was getting a good many wholesome lessons in these days.

One afternoon he called upon Miss Tavish. There was no change in her. She received him with her usual gay cordiality, and with no affectation.

"I didn't know what had become of you," she said.

"I've been busy," he replied, with a faint attempt at a smile.

"Yes, I know. It's been an awful time, what with Henderson's death and everything else. Almost everybody has been hit. But," and she looked at him cheerfully, "they will come up again; up and down; it is always so. Why, even I got a little twist in that panic." The girl was doing what she could in her way to cheer him up.

"I think of going off somewhere to seek my fortune," said Jack, with a rueful smile.

"Oh, I hope not; your friends wouldn't like that. There is no place like New York, I'm sure." And there was a real note of friendliness and encouragement in her tone. "Only," and she gave him another bright smile, "I think of running away from it myself, for a time. It's a secret yet. Carmen wants me to go abroad with her."

"I have not seen Mrs. Henderson since her husband's death. How is she?"

"Oh, she bears up wonderfully. But then she has so much to do, poor thing. And then the letters she gets, the begging letters. You've no

idea. I don't wonder she wants to go abroad. Don't stay away so long again," she said as Jack rose to go. "And, oh, can't you come in to dinner tomorrow night--just Carmen--I think I can persuade her--and nobody else?"

"I'm sorry that I have an engagement," Jack answered.

"Well, some other time. Only soon."

This call did Jack temporarily a world of good. It helped his self-esteem. But it was only temporary. The black fact stared him in the face every morning that he was ruined. And it came over him gradually that he was a useless member of society. He never had done anything; he was not trained or fitted to do anything. And this was impressed upon him in the occasional attempts he made to get employment. He avoided as much as possible contact with those who knew him. Shame prevented him from applying to them for occupation, and besides he very well knew that to those who knew him his idle career was no recommendation. Yet he formed a habit of going down-town every day and looking for work. His appearance commanded civility, but everywhere he met with refusal, and he began to feel like a well-bred tramp. There had been in his mind before no excuse for tramps. He could see now how they were made.

It was not that he lacked capacity. He knew a great deal, in an amateurish way, about pictures, books, bric-a-brac, and about society. Why shouldn't he write? He visited the Loan Exhibition, and wrote a careful criticism on the pictures and sent it to a well-known journal. It was returned with thanks: the journal had its own art critic. He prepared other articles about curious books, and one about porcelain and pottery. They were all returned, except one which gave the history of a rare bit of majolica, which had been picked up forty cents and then sold for five hundred dollars, and was now owned by a collector who had paid four thousand dollars for it. For that the newspaper sent him five dollars. That was not encouraging, and his next effort for the same journal was returned. Either he hadn't the newspaper knack, or the competition was too great.

He had ceased going to his club. It was too painful to meet his acquaintances in his altered circumstances, and it was too expensive. It even annoyed him to meet Major Fairfax. That philosopher had not changed towards him any more than Miss Tavish had, but it was a melancholy business to talk of his affairs, and to listen to the repeated advice to go down to the country to Edith, and wait for some good opening. That was just what he could not do. His whole frivolous life he began now to see as she must have seen it. And it seemed to him that he could only retain a remnant of his self-respect by doing something that would reinstate him in her opinion.

"Very well," said the Major, at the close of the last of their talks at the club; "what are you going to do?"

"I'm going into some business," said Jack, stiffly.

"Have you spoken to any of your friends?"

"No. It's no use," he said, bitterly; "they are all like me, or they know me."

"And hasn't your wife some relations who are in business?"

"The last people I should apply to. No. I'm going to look around. Major, do you happen to know a cheap lodging-house that is respectable?"

"I don't know any that is not respectable," the Major replied, in a huffy manner.

"I beg your pardon," said Jack. "I want to reduce expenses."

The Major did know of a place in the neighborhood where he lived. He gave Jack the address, and thereafter the club and his usual resorts knew him no more.

As the days went by and nothing happened to break the monotony of his waiting and his fruitless search, he became despondent. Day after day he tramped about the city, among the business portions, and often on the East Side, to see misery worse than his own. He had saved out of the wreck his ample wardrobe, his watch, and some jewelry, and upon these he raised money for his cheap lodgings and his cheap food. He grew careless of his personal appearance. Every morning he rose and went about the city, always with less hope, and every night he returned to his lodging, but not always sober.

One day he read the announcement that Mrs. Rodney Henderson and Miss Tavish had sailed for Europe. That ended that chapter. What exactly he had expected he could not say. Help from Carmen? Certainly not. But there had never been a sign from her, nor any word from Mavick lately. There evidently was nothing. He had been thrown over. Carmen evidently had no more use for him. She had other plans. The thought that he had been used and duped was almost more bitter than his loss.

In after-days Jack looked back upon this time with a feeling akin to thankfulness for Carmen's utter heartlessness in regard to his affairs. He trembled to think what might have happened to him if she had sent for him and consulted him and drawn him again into the fatal embrace of her schemes and her fascinations. Now he was simply enraged when he thought of her, and irritated with himself.

These were dark days, days to which he looked back with a shudder. He wrote to Edith frequently--a brief note. He was straightening out his affairs; he was busy. But he did not give her his address, and he only got her letters when the Major forwarded them from the club, which was irregularly. A stranger, who met him at his lodgings or elsewhere, would have said that he was an idle and rather dissipated-looking man. He was idle, except in his feeble efforts to get work; he was worn and discouraged, but he was not doing anything very bad. In his way of looking at it, he was carrying out his notion of honor. He was only breaking a woman's heart.

He was conscious of little except his own misfortunes and misery. He did not yet apprehend his own selfishness nor her nobility. He did not yet comprehend the unselfishness of a good woman's love.

On the East Side one day, as he was sauntering along Grand Street, he encountered Dr. Leigh, his wife's friend, whom he had seen once at his house. She did not at first recognize him until he stopped and spoke his name.

"Oh," she said, with surprise at seeing him, and at his appearance,

"I didn't expect to see you here. I thought everybody had gone from the city. Perhaps you are going to the Neighborhood Guild?"

"No," and Jack forced a little laugh, "I'm not so good as that. I'm kept in town on business. I strolled over here to see how the other side of life looks."

"It doesn't improve. It is one of the worst summers I ever saw. Since Mr. Henderson's death--"

"What difference did Henderson's death make over here?"

"Why, he had deposited a little fund for Father Damon to draw on, and the day after his death the bank returned a small check with the notice that there was no deposit to draw on. It had been such a help in extraordinary cases. Perhaps you saw some allusion to it in the newspapers?"

"Wasn't it the Margaret Fund?"

"Yes. Father Damon dropped a note to Mrs. Henderson explaining about it. No reply came."

"As he might have expected." Dr. Leigh looked up quickly as if for an explanation, but Jack ignored the query, and went on. "And Father Damon, is he as active as ever?"

"He has gone."

"What, left the city, quit his work? And the mission?"

"I don't suppose he will ever quit his work while he lives, but he is much broken down. The mission chapel is not closed, but a poor woman told me that it seemed so."

"And he will not return? Mrs. Delancy will be so sorry."

"I think not. He is in retreat now, and I heard that he might go to Baltimore. I thought of your wife. She was so interested in his work. Is she well this summer?"

"Yes, thank you," said Jack, and they parted. But as she went on her way his altered appearance struck her anew, and she wondered what had happened.

This meeting with Mr. Delancy recalled most forcibly Edith, her interest in the East Side work, her sympathy with Father Damon and the mission, the first flush of those days of enthusiasm. When Father Damon began his work the ladies used to come in their carriages to the little chapel with flowers and money and hearts full of sympathy with the devoted priest. Alone of all these Edith had been faithful in her visits, always, when she was in town. And now the whole glittering show of charity had vanished for the time, and Father Damon--The little doctor stopped, consulted a memorandum in her hand-bag, looked up at the tenement-house she was passing, and then began to climb its rickety stairway.

Yes, Father Damon had gone, and Ruth Leigh simply went on with her work as before. Perhaps in all the city that summer there was no other person whose daily life was so little changed as hers. Others were driven away

by the heat, by temporary weariness, by the need of a vacation and change of scene. Some charities and some clubs and schools were temporarily suspended; other charities, befitting the name, were more active, the very young children were most looked after, and the Good Samaritans of the Fresh-Air Funds went about everywhere full of this new enthusiasm of humanity. But the occupation of Ruth Leigh remained always the same, in a faithful pertinacity that nothing could wholly discourage, in a routine that no projects could kindle into much enthusiasm. Day after day she went about among the sick and the poor, relieving and counseling individuals, and tiring herself out in that personal service, and more and more conscious, when she had time, at night, for instance, to think, of the monstrous injustice somewhere, and at times in a mood of fierce revolt against the social order that made all this misery possible and hopeless.

Yet a great change had come into her life--the greatest that can come to any man or woman in the natural order. She loved and she was loved. An ideal light had been cast upon her commonplace existence, the depths of her own nature had been revealed to herself. In this illuminating light she walked about in the misery of this world. This love must be denied, this longing of the heart for companionship could never be gratified, yet after all it was a sweet self-sacrifice, and the love itself brought its own consolation. She had not to think of herself as weak, and neither was her lover's image dimmed to her by any surrender of his own principle or his own ideal. She saw him, as she had first seen him, a person consecrated and set apart, however much she might disagree with his supernatural vagaries--set apart to the service of humanity. She had bitter thoughts sometimes of the world, and bitter thoughts of the false system that controlled his conduct, but never of him.

It was unavoidable that she should recall her last interview with him, and that the image of his noble, spiritual face should be ever distinct in her mind. And there was even a certain comfort in this recollection.

Father Damon had indeed striven, under the counsel of his own courage and of Brother Monies, to conquer himself on the field of his temptation. But with his frail physique it was asking too much. This at last was so evident that the good brother advised him, and the advice was in the nature of a command in his order, to retire for a while, and then take up his work in a fresh field.

When this was determined on, his desire was nearly irresistible to see Ruth Leigh; he thought it would be cowardly to disappear and not say good-by. Indeed, it was necessary to see her and explain the stoppage of help from the Margaret Fund. The check that he had drawn, which was returned, had been for one of Dr. Leigh's cases. With his failure to elicit any response from Mrs. Henderson, the hope, raised by the newspaper comments on the unexecuted will, that the fund would be renewed was dissipated.

In the interview which Father Damon sought with Dr. Leigh at the Women's Hospital all this was explained, and ways and means were discussed for help elsewhere.

"I wanted to talk this over with you," said Father Damon, "because I am going away to take a rest."

"You need it, Father Damon," was Ruth's answer, in a professional manner.

"And--and," he continued, with some hesitation, "probably I shall not return to this mission."

"Perhaps that will be best," she said, simply, but looking up at him now, with a face full of tender sympathy.

"I am sure of it," he replied, turning away from her gaze. "The fact is, doctor, I am a little hipped--overworked, and all that. I shall pull myself together with a little rest. But I wanted to tell you how much I appreciate your work, and--and what a comfort you have been to me in my poor labors. I used to hope that some time you would see this world in relation to the other, and--"

"Yes, I know," she interrupted, hastily, "I cannot think as you do, but--" And she could not go on for a great lump in her throat. Involuntarily she rose from her seat. The interview was too trying. Father Damon rose also. There was a moment's painful silence as they looked in each other's faces. Neither could trust the voice for speech. He took her hand and pressed it, and said "God bless you!" and went out, closing the door softly.

A moment after he opened it again and stood on the threshold. She was in her chair, her head bowed upon her arms on the table. As he spoke she looked up, and she never forgot the expression of his face.

"I want to say, Ruth"--he had never before called her by her first name, and his accent thrilled her--"that I shall pray for you as I pray for myself, and though I may never see you again in this world, the greatest happiness that can come to me in this life will be to hear that you have learned to say Our Father which art in heaven."

As she looked he was gone, and his last words remained a refrain in her mind that evening and afterwards--"Our Father which art in heaven"--a refrain recurring again and again in all her life, inseparable from the memory of the man she loved.

XXII

Along the Long Island coast lay the haze of early autumn. It was the time of lassitude. In the season of ripening and decay Nature seemed to have lost her spring, and lay in a sort of delicious languor. Sea and shore were in a kind of truce, and the ocean south wind brought cool refreshment but no incentive.

From the sea the old brown farmhouse seemed a snug haven of refuge; from the inland road it appeared, with its spreading, sloping roofs, like an ancient sea-craft come ashore, which had been covered in and then embowered by kindly Nature with foliage. In those days its golden-brown color was in harmony with the ripening orchards and gardens.

Surely, if anywhere in the world, peace was here. But to its owner this very peace and quietness was becoming intolerable. The waiting days were so long, the sleepless nights of uncertainty were so weary. When her work was done, and Edith sat with a book or some sewing under the arbor where the grape clusters hung, growing dark and transparent, and the boy

played about near her, she had a view of the blue sea, and about her were the twitter of birds and the hum of the cicada. The very beauty made her heart ache. Seaward there was nothing--nothing but the leaping little waves and the sky. From the land side help might come at any hour, and at every roll of wheels along the road her heart beat faster and hope sprang up anew. But day after day nothing came.

Perhaps there is no greater bravery than this sort of waiting, doing the daily duty and waiting. Endurance is woman's bravery, and Edith was enduring, with an almost broken but still with a courageous heart. It was all so strange. Was it simply shame that kept him away, or had he ceased to love her? If the latter, there was no help for her. She had begged him to come, she had offered to leave the boy with her cousin companion and go to him. Perhaps it was pride only. In one of his short letters he had said, "Thank God, your little fortune is untouched." If it were pride only, how could she overcome it? Of this she thought night and day. She thought, and she was restless, feverish, and growing thin in her abiding anxiety.

It was true that her own fortune was safe and in her control. But with the usual instinct of women who know they have an income not likely to be ever increased, she began to be economical. She thought not of herself; but of the boy. It was the boy's fortune now. She began to look sharply after expenses; she reduced her household; she took upon herself the care of the boy, and other household duties. This was all well for her, for it occupied her time, and to some extent diverted her thoughts.

So the summer passed--a summer of anxiety, longing, and dull pain for Edith. The time came when the uncertainty of it could no longer be endured. If Jack had deserted her, even if he should die, she could order her life and try to adjust her heavy burden. But this uncertainty was quite beyond her power to sustain.

She made up her mind that she would go to the city and seek him. It was what he had written that she must not on any account do, but nothing that could happen to her there could be so bad as this suspense. Perhaps she could bring him back. If he refused, and was angry at her interference, that even would be something definite. And then she had carefully thought out another plan. It might fail, but some action had now become for her a necessity.

Early one morning--it was in September--she prepared for a journey to the city. This little trip, which thousands of people made daily, took on for her the air of an adventure. She had been immured so long that it seemed a great undertaking. And when she bade good-bye to the boy for the day she hugged him and kissed him again and again, as if it were to be an eternal farewell. To her cousin were given the most explicit directions for his care, and after she had started for the train she returned to give further injunctions. So she told herself, but it was really for one more look at the boy.

But on the whole there was a certain exhilaration in the preparation and the going, and her spirits rose as they had not done in months before. Arrived in the city, she drove at once to the club Jack most frequented. "He is not in," the porter said; "indeed, Mr. Delancy has not been here lately."

"Is Major Fairfax in?" Edith asked.

Major Fairfax was in, and he came out immediately to her carriage. From him she learned Jack's address, and drove to his lodging-house. The Major was more than civil; he was disposed to be sympathetic, but he had the tact to see that Mrs. Delancy did not wish to be questioned, nor to talk.

"Is Mr. Delancy at home?" she asked the small boy who ran the elevator.

"No'me."

"And he did not say where he was going?"

"No'me."

"Is he not sometimes at home in the daytime?"

"No'me."

"And what time does he usually come home in the evening?"

"Don't know. After I've gone, I guess."

Edith hesitated whether she should leave a card or a note, but she decided not to do either, and ordered the cabman to take her to Pearl Street, to the house of Fletcher & Co.

Mr. Fletcher, the senior partner, was her cousin, the son of her father's elder brother, and a man now past sixty years. Circumstances had carried the families apart socially since the death of her father and his brother, but they were on the most friendly terms, and the ties of blood were not in any way weakened. Indeed, although Edith had seen Gilbert Fletcher only a few times since her marriage, she felt that she could go to him any time if she were in trouble, with the certainty of sympathy and help. He had the reputation of the old-fashioned New York merchants, to whom her father belonged, for integrity and conservatism.

It was to him that she went now. The great shop, or wholesale warehouse rather, into which she entered from the narrow and cart-encumbered street, showed her at once the nature of the business of Fletcher & Co. It was something in the twine and cordage way. There were everywhere great coils of ropes and bales of twine, and the dark rooms had a tarry smell. Mr. Fletcher was in his office, a little space partitioned off in the rear, with half a dozen clerks working by gaslight, and a little sanctum where the senior partner was commonly found at his desk.

Mr. Fletcher was a little, round-headed man, with a shrewd face, vigorous and cheerful, thoroughly a man of business, never speculating, and who had been slowly gaining wealth by careful industry and cautious extension of his trade. Certain hours of the day--from ten to three--he gave to his business. It was a habit, and it was a habit that he enjoyed. He had now come back, as he told Edith, from a little holiday at the sea, where his family were, to get into shape for the fall trade.

Edith was closeted with him for a full hour. When she came out her eyes were brighter and her step more elastic. At sundown she reached home, almost in high spirits. And when she snatched up the boy and hugged him, she whispered in his ear, "Baby, we have done it, and we shall see."

One night when Jack returned from his now almost aimless tramping about

the city he found a letter on his table. It seemed from the printing on the envelope to be a business letter; and business, in the condition he was in--and it was the condition in which he usually came home--did not interest him. He was about to toss the letter aside, when the name of Fletcher caught his eye, and he opened it.

It was a brief note, written on an office memorandum, which simply asked Mr. Delancy to call at the office as soon as it was convenient, as the writer wished to talk with him on a matter of business, and it was signed "Gilbert Fletcher."

"Why don't he say what his business is?" said Jack, throwing the letter down impatiently. "I am not going to be hauled over the coals by any of the Fletchers." And he tumbled into bed in an injured and yet independent frame of mind.

But the next morning he reread the formal little letter in a new light. To be sure, it was from Edith's cousin. He knew him very well; he was not a person to go out of his way to interfere with anybody, and more than likely it was in relation to Edith's affairs that he was asked to call. That thought put a new aspect on the matter. Of course if it concerned her interests he ought to go. He dressed with unusual care for him in these days, breakfasted at the cheap restaurant which he frequented, and before noon was in the Fletcher warehouse in Pearl Street.

He had never been there before, and he was somewhat curious to see what sort of a place it was where Gilbert carried on the string business, as he used to call it when speaking to Edith of her cousin's occupation. It was a much more dingy and smelly place than he expected, but the carts about the doors, and the bustle of loading and unloading, of workmen hauling and pulling, and of clerks calling out names and numbers to be registered and checked, gave him the impression that it was not a dull place.

Mr. Fletcher received him in the little dim back office with a cordial shake of the hand, gave him a chair, and reseated himself, pushing back the papers in front of him with the air of a very busy man who was dropping for a moment one thing in order to give his mind promptly to another.

"Our fall trade is just starting up," he said, "and it keeps us all pretty busy."

"Yes," said Jack. "I could drop in any other time--"

"No, no," interrupted Mr. Fletcher; "it is just because I am busy that I wanted to see you. Are you engaged in anything?"

"Nothing in particular," replied Jack, hesitating. "I'd thought of going into some business." And then, after a pause: "It's no use to mince matters. You know--everybody knows, I suppose--that I got hit in that Henderson panic."

"So did lots of others," replied Mr. Fletcher, cheerfully. "Yes, I know about it. And I'm not sure but it was a lucky thing for me." He spoke still more cheerfully, and Jack looked at him inquiringly.

"Are you open to an offer?"

"I'm open to almost anything," Jack answered, with a puzzled look.

"Well," and Mr. Fletcher settled back in his chair, "I can give you the situation in five minutes. I've been in this business over thirty years --yes; over thirty-five years. It has grown, little by little, until it's a pretty big business. I've a partner, a first-rate man--he is in Europe now--who attends to most of the buying. And the business keeps spreading out, and needs more care. I'm not as young as I was I shall be sixty-four in October--and I can't work right along as I used to. I find that I come later and go away earlier. It isn't the 'work exactly, but the oversight, the details; and the fact is that I want somebody near me whom I can trust, whether I'm here or whether I'm away. I've got good, honest, faithful clerks--if there was one I did not trust, I wouldn't have him about. But do you know, Jack," it was the first time in the interview that he had used this name--"there is something in blood."

"Yes," Jack assented.

"Well, I want a confidential clerk. That's it."

"Me?" he asked. He was thinking rapidly while Mr. Fletcher had been speaking; something like a revolution was taking place in his mind, and when he asked this, the suggestion took on a humorous aspect--a humorous view of anything had not occurred to him in months.

"You are just the man."

"I can be confidential," Jack rejoined, with the old smile on his face that had been long a stranger to it, "but I don't know that I can be a clerk."

Mr. Fletcher was good enough to laugh at this pleasantry.

"That's all right. It isn't much of a position. We can make the salary twenty-five hundred dollars for a starter. Will you try it?"

Jack got up and went to the area window, and looked out a moment upon the boxes in the dim court. Then he came back and stood by Mr. Fletcher, and put his hand on the desk.

"Yes, I'll try."

"Good. When will you begin?"

"Now."

"That's good. No time like now. Wait a bit, and I'll show you about the place before we go to lunch. You'll get hold of the ropes directly."

This was Mr. Fletcher's veteran joke.

At three o'clock Mr. Fletcher closed his desk. It was time to take his train. "Tomorrow, then," he said, "we will begin in earnest."

"What are the business hours here?" asked Jack.

"Oh, I am usually here from ten to three, but the business hours are from nine till the business is done. By-the-way, why not run out with me and

spend the night, and we can talk the thing over?"

There was no reason why he should not go, and he went. And that was the way John Corlear Delancy was initiated in the string business in the old house of Fletcher & Co.

XXII

Few battles are decisive, and perhaps least of all those that are won by a sudden charge or an accident, and not as the result of long-maturing causes. Doubtless the direction of a character or a career is often turned by a sudden act of the will or a momentary impotence of the will. But the battle is not over then, nor without long and arduous fighting, often a dreary, dragging struggle without the excitement of novelty.

It was comparatively easy for Jack Delancy in Mr. Fletcher's office to face about suddenly and say yes to the proposal made him. There was on him the pressure of necessity, of his own better nature acting under a sense of his wife's approval; and besides, there was a novelty that attracted him in trying something absolutely new to his habits.

But it was one thing to begin, and another, with a man of his temperament, to continue. To have regular hours, to attend to the details of a traffic that was to the last degree prosaic, in short, to settle down to hard work, was a very different thing from the "business" about which Jack and his fellows at the club used to talk so much, and to fancy they were engaged in. When the news came to the Union that Delancy had gone into the house of Fletcher & Co. as a clerk, there was a general smile, and a languid curiosity expressed as to how long he would stick to it.

In the first day or two Jack was sustained not only by the original impulse, but by a real instinct in learning about business ways and details that were new to him. To talk about the business and about the markets, to hear plans unfolded for extension and for taking advantage of fluctuations in prices, was all very well; but the drudgery of details--copying, comparing invoices, and settling into the routine of a clerk's life, even the life of a confidential clerk--was contrary to the habits of his whole life. It was not to be expected that these habits would be overcome without a long struggle and many back-slidings.

The little matter of being at his office desk at nine o'clock in the morning began to seem a hardship after the first three or four days. For Mr. Fletcher not to walk into his shop on the stroke of ten would have been such a reversal of his habits as to cause him as much annoyance as it caused Jack to be bound to a fixed hour. It was only the difference in training. But that is saying everything.

Besides, while the details of his work, the more he got settled in them, were not to his taste, he was daily mortified to find himself ignorant of matters which the stupidest clerk in the office seemed to know by instinct. This acted, however, as a sort of stimulus, and touched his pride. He determined that he would not be humiliated in this way, and during office hours he worked as diligently as Mr. Fletcher could have desired. He had pledged himself to the trial, and he summoned all his intelligence to back his effort.

And it is true that the satisfaction of having a situation, of doing something, the relief to the previous daily anxiety and almost despair, raised his spirits. It was only when he thought of the public opinion of his little world, of some other occupation more befitting his education, of the vast change from his late life of ease and luxury to this of daily labor with a clerk's pay, that he had hours of revolt and cursed his luck.

No, Jack's battle was not won in a day, or a week, or a year. And before it was won he needed more help than his own somewhat irresolute will could give. It is the impression of his biographer that he would have failed in the end if he had been married to a frivolous and selfish woman.

Mr. Fletcher was known as a very strict man of business, and as little else. But he was a good judge of character, and under his notions of discipline and of industry he was a kindly man, as his clerks, who feared his sharp oversight, knew. And besides, he had made a compact with Edith, for whom he had something more than family affection, and he watched Jack's efforts to adjust himself to the new life with sympathy. If it was an experiment for Jack, it was also an experiment for him, the result of which gave him some anxiety. The situation was not a very heroic one, but a life is often decided for good or ill by as insignificant a matter as Jack's ability to persevere in learning about the twine and cordage trade. This was a day of trial, and the element of uncertainty in it kept both Mr. Fletcher and Jack from writing of the new arrangement to Edith, for fear that only disappointment to her would be the ultimate result. Jack's brief notes to her were therefore, as usual, indefinite, but with the hint that he was beginning to see a way out of his embarrassment.

After the passage of a couple of weeks, during which Mr. Fletcher had been quietly studying his new clerk, he suddenly said to him, one Saturday morning, after they had looked over and estimated the orders by the day's mail, "Jack, I think you'd better let up a little, and run down and see Edith."

"Oh!" said Jack, a little startled by the proposal, but recovering himself; "I didn't suppose the business could spare me."

"I didn't mean a vacation, but run down for over Sunday. It must be lovely there, and the change will make you as keen as a brier for business. It always does me. Stay over Monday if the weather is good. I have to be away myself the week after." As Jack hesitated and did not reply, Mr. Fletcher continued:

"I really think you'd better go, Jack. You have hardly had a breath of fresh air this summer. There's plenty of time to go up-town and get your grip and catch the afternoon train."

Jack was still silent. The thought of seeing Edith created a tumult in his mind. It seemed as if he were not quite ready, not exactly settled. He had been procrastinating so long, putting off going, on one pretext or another, that he had fallen into a sort of fear of going. At first, absorbed in his speculations, enthralled by the company of Carmen and the luxurious, easy-going view of life that her society created for him; he had felt Edith and his house as an irritating restraint. Later, when the smash came, he had been still more relieved that she was out of town.

And finally he had fallen into a reckless apathy, and had made himself believe that he never would see her again until some stroke of fortune should set him on his feet and restore his self-respect.

But since he had been with Fletcher & Co. his feelings had gradually undergone a change. With a regular occupation and regular hours, and in contact with the sensible mind and business routine of Mr. Fletcher, he began to have saner views of life, and to realize that Edith would approve what he was now attempting to do much more than any effort to relieve himself by speculation.

As soon as he felt himself a little more firmly established, a little more sure of himself, he would go to Edith, and confess everything, and begin life anew. This had been his mood, but he was still irresolute, and it needed some outside suggestion to push him forward to overcome his lingering reluctance to go home.

But this had come suddenly. It seemed to him at first thought that he needed time to prepare for it. Mr. Fletcher pulled out his watch. "There is a later train at four. Take that, and we will get some lunch first."

An hour of postponement was such a relief! Why, of course he could go at four. And instantly his heart leaped up with desire.

"All right," he said, as he rose and closed his desk. "But I think I'd better not stay for lunch. I want to get something for the boy on my way uptown."

"Very good. Tuesday, then. My best regards to Edith."

As Jack came down the stairway from the elevated road at Twenty-third Street he ran against a man who was hurrying up--a man in a pronounced traveling-suit, grip-sack and umbrella in hand, and in haste. It was Mavick. Recognition was instantaneous, and it was impossible for either to avoid the meeting if he had desired to do so.

"You in town!" said Mavick.

"And you!" Jack retorted.

"No, not really. I'm just going to catch the steamer. Short leave. We have all been kept by that confounded Chile business."

"Going for the government?"

"No, not publicly. Of course shall confer with our minister in London. Any news here?"

"Yes; Henderson's dead." And Jack looked Mavick squarely in the face.

"Ah!" And Mavick smiled faintly, and then said, gravely: "It was an awful business. So sudden, you know, that I couldn't do anything." He made a movement to pass on. "I suppose there has been no--no--"

"I suppose not," said Jack, "except that Mrs. Henderson has gone to Europe."

"Ah!" And Mr. Mavick didn't wait for further news, but hurried up, with a

"Good-by."

So Mavick was following Carmen to Europe. Well, why not? What an unreal world it all was, that of a few months ago! The gigantic Henderson; Jack's own vision of a great fortune; Carmen and her house of Nero; the astute and diplomatic Mavick, with his patronizing airs! It was like a scene in a play.

He stepped into a shop and selected a toy for the boy. It was a real toy, and it was for a real boy. Jack experienced a genuine pleasure at the thought of pleasing him. Perhaps the little fellow would not know him.

And then he thought of Edith--not of Edith the mother, but of Edith the girl in the days of his wooing. And he went into Maillard's. The pretty girl at the counter knew him. He was an old customer, and she had often filled orders for him. She had despatched many a costly box to addresses he had given her. It was in the recollection of those transactions that he said: "A box of marrons glaces, please. My wife prefers that."

"Shall I send it?" asked the girl, when she had done it up.

"No, thanks; we are not in town."

"Of course," she said, beaming upon him; "nobody is yet."

And this girl also seemed a part of the old life, with her little affectation of familiarity with its ways.

He went to his room--it seemed a very mean little room now--packed his bag, told the janitor he should be absent a few days, and hurried to the ferry and the train as if he feared that some accident would delay him. When he was seated and the train moved off, his thoughts took another turn. He was in for it now.

He began to regret that he had not delayed, to think it all out more thoroughly; perhaps it would have been better to have written.

He bought an evening journal, but he could not read it. What he read between the lines was his own life. What a miserable failure! What a mess he had made of his own affairs, and how unworthy of such a woman as Edith he had been! How indifferent he had been to her happiness in the pursuit of his own pleasure! How would she receive him? He could hardly doubt that; but she must know, she must have felt cruelly his estrangement. What if she met him with a royal forgiveness, as if he were a returned prodigal? He couldn't stand that. If now he were only going back with his fortune recovered, with brilliant prospects to spread before her, and could come into the house in his old playful manner, with the assumed deference of the master, and say: "Well, Edith dear, the storm is over. It's all right now. I am awfully glad to get home. Where's the rascal of an heir?"

Instead of that, he was going with nothing, humiliated, a clerk in a twine-store. And not much of a clerk at that, he reflected, with his ready humorous recognition of the situation.

And yet he was for the first time in his life earning his living. Edith would like that. He had known all along that his idle life had been a

constant grief to her. No, she would not reproach him; she never did reproach him. No doubt she would be glad that he was at work. But, oh, the humiliation of the whole thing! At one moment he was eager to see her, and the next the rattling train seemed to move too fast, and he welcomed every wayside stop that delayed his arrival. But even the Long Island trains arrive some time, and all too soon the cars slowed up at the familiar little station, and Jack got out.

"Quite a stranger in these parts, Mr. Delancy," was the easy salutation of the station-keeper.

"Yes. I've been away. All right down here?"

"Right as a trivet. Hot summer, though. Calculate it's goin' to be a warm fall--generally is."

It was near sunset. When the train had moved on, and its pounding on the rails became a distant roar and then was lost altogether, the country silence so impressed Jack, as he walked along the road towards the sea, that he became distinctly conscious of the sound of his own footsteps. He stopped and listened. Yes, there were other sounds--the twitter of birds in the bushes by the roadside, the hum of insects, and the faint rhythmical murmur of lapsing waves on the shore.

And now the house came in view--first the big roof, and then the latticed windows, the balconies, where there were pots of flowers, and then the long veranda with its hammocks and climbing vines. There was a pink tone in the distant water answering to the flush in the sky, and away to the west the sand-dune that made out into the Sound was a point of light.

But the house! Jack's steps were again arrested. The level last rays of the disappearing sun flashed upon the window-panes so that they glowed like painted windows illuminated from within, with a reddish lustre, and the roofs and the brown sides of the building, painted by those great masters in color, the sun and the sea-wind, in that moment were like burnished gold. Involuntarily Jack exclaimed:

"It is the Golden House!"

He made his way through the little fore yard. No one was about. The veranda was deserted. There was Edith's work-basket; there were the baby's playthings. The door stood open, and as he approached it he heard singing--not singing, either, but a fitful sort of recitation, with the occasional notes of an accompaniment struck as if in absence of mind. The tune he knew, and as he passed through the first room towards the sitting-room that looked on the sea he caught a line:

"Wely, wely, but love is bonny, for a little while--when it is new."

It was an old English ballad, the ballad of the "Cockle-shells," that Edith used to sing often in the old days, when its note of melancholy seemed best to express her happiness. It was only that line, and the voice seemed to break, and there was silence.

He stole along and looked in. There was Edith, seated, her head bowed on her hands, at the piano.

In an instant, before she could turn to the sound of his quick footsteps, he was at her side, kneeling, his head bowed in the folds of her dress.

"Edith! I've been such a fool!"

She turned, slid from her seat, and was kneeling also, with her arms thrown about his neck.

"Oh, Jack! You've come. Thank God! Thank God!"

And presently they stood, and his arms were still around her, and she was looking up into his face, with her hands on his shoulders, and saying "You've come to stay."

"Yes, dear, forever."

XXIV

The whole landscape was golden, the sea was silver, on that October morning. It was the brilliant decline of the year. Edith stood with Jack on the veranda. He had his grip-sack in hand and was equipped for town. Both were silent in the entrancing scene.

The birds, twittering in the fruit-trees and over the vines, had the air of an orchestra, the concerts of the season over, gathering their instruments and about to depart. One could detect in the lapse of the waves along the shore the note of weariness preceding the change into the fretfulness and the tumult of tempests. In the soft ripening of the season there was peace and hope, but it was the hope of another day. The curtain was falling on this.

Was life beginning, then, or ending? If life only could change and renew itself like the seasons, with the perpetually recurring springs! But youth comes only once, and thereafter the man gathers the fruit of it, sweet or bitter.

Jack was not given to moralizing, but perhaps a subtle suggestion of this came to him in the thought that an enterprise, a new enterprise, might have seemed easier in May, when the forces of nature were with him, than in October. There was something, at least, that fell in with his mood, a mood of acquiescence in failure, in this closing season of the year, when he stood empty-handed in the harvest-time.

"Edith," he said, as they paced down the walk which was flaming with scarlet and crimson borders, and turned to look at the peaceful brown house, "I hate to go."

"But you are not going," said Edith, brightly. "I feel all the time as if you were just coming back. Jack, do you know," and she put her hand on his shoulder, "this is the sweetest home in the world now!"

"It is the only one, dear;" and Jack made the statement with a humorous sense of its truth. "Well, there's the train, and I'm off with the other clerks."

"Clerk, indeed!" cried Edith, putting up her face to his; "you are going to be a Merchant Prince, Jack, that is what you are going to be."

On the train there was an atmosphere of business. Jack felt that he was not going to the New York that he knew--not to his New York, but to a city of traffic; down into the streets of commercial enterprise, not at all to the metropolis of leisure, of pleasure, to the world of clubs and drawing-rooms and elegant loiterings and the rivalries of society life. That was all ended. Jack was hurrying to catch the down-town car for the dingy office of Fletcher & Co. at an hour fixed.

It was ended, to be sure, but the struggle with Jack in his new life was not ended, his biographer knows, for months and years.

It was long before he could pass his club windows without a pang of humiliation, or lift his hat to a lady of his acquaintance in her passing carriage without a vivid feeling of separateness from his old life. For the old life--he could see that any day in the Avenue, any evening by the flaming lights--went by in its gilded chariots and entrancing toilets, the fascinating whirl of Vanity Fair crowned with roses and with ennui. Did he regret it? No doubt. Not to regret would have been to change his nature, and that were a feat impossible for his biographer to accomplish. In a way his life was gone, and to build up a new life, serene and enduring, was not the work of a day.

One thing he did not regret in the shock he had received, and that was the absence of Carmen and her world. When he thought of her he had a sense of escape. She was still abroad, and he heard from time to time that Mavick was philandering about from capital to capital in her train. Certainly he would have envied neither of them if he had been aware, as the reader is aware, of the guilty secret that drew them together and must be forever their torment. They knew each other.

But this glittering world, to attain a place in which is the object of most of the struggles and hungry competition of modern life, seemed not so real nor so desirable when he was at home with Edith, and in his gradually growing interest in nobler pursuits. They had decided to take a modest apartment in town for the winter, and almost before the lease was signed, Edith, in her mind, had transformed it into a charming home. Jack used to rally her on her enthusiasm in its simple furnishing; it reminded him, he said, of Carmen's interest in her projected house of Nero. It was a great contrast, to be sure, to their stately house by the Park, but it was to them both what that had never been. To one who knows how life goes astray in the solicitations of the great world, there was something pathetic in Edith's pleasure. Even to Jack it might some day come with the force of keen regret for years wasted, that it is enough to break a body's heart to see how little a thing can make a woman happy.

It was another summer. Major Fairfax had come down with Jack to spend Sunday at the Golden House. Edith was showing the Major the view from the end of the veranda. Jack was running through the evening paper. "Hi!" he cried; "here's news. Mavick is to have the mission to Rome, and it is rumored that the rich and accomplished Mrs. Henderson, as the wife of the minister, will make the Roman season very gay."

"It's too bad," said Edith. "Nothing is said about the training-school?"

"Nothing." "Poor Henderson!" was the Major's comment. "It was for this that he drudged and schemed and heaped up his colossal fortune! His life must look to him like a burlesque."

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