

Cap'n Dan's Daughter

Joseph C. Lincoln

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Cap'n Dan's Daughter, by Joseph C. Lincoln

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org

Title: Cap'n Dan's Daughter

Author: Joseph C. Lincoln

Release Date: June 6, 2006 [EBook #6718]

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CAP'N DAN'S DAUGHTER ***

Produced by Don Lainson

CAP'N DAN'S DAUGHTER

By Joseph C. Lincoln

1914

CAP'N DAN'S DAUGHTER

CHAPTER I

The Metropolitan Dry Goods and Variety Store at Trumet Centre was open for business. Sam Bartlett, the boy whose duty it was to take down the shutters, sweep out, dust, and wait upon early-bird customers, had performed the first three of these tasks and gone home for breakfast.

Livros Grátis

<http://www.livrosgratis.com.br>

Milhares de livros grátis para download.

The reason he had not performed the fourth--the waiting upon customers--was simple enough; there had been no customers to wait upon. The Metropolitan Dry Goods and Variety Store was open and ready for business--but, unfortunately, there was no business.

There should have been. This was August, the season of the year when, if ever, Trumet shopkeepers should be beaming across their counters at the city visitor, male or female, and telling him or her, that "white duck hats are all the go this summer," or "there's nothin' better than an oilskin coat for sailin' cruises or picnics." Outing shirts and yachting caps, fancy stationery, post cards, and chocolates should be changing hands at a great rate and the showcase, containing the nicked blue plates and cracked teapots, the battered candlesticks and tarnished pewters, "genuine antiques," should be opened at frequent intervals for the inspection of bargain-seeking mothers and their daughters. July and August are the Cape Cod harvest months; if the single-entry ledgers of Trumet's business men do not show good-sized profits during that season they are not likely to do so the rest of the year.

Captain Daniel Dott, proprietor of the Metropolitan Store, bending over his own ledger spread on the little desk by the window at the rear of his establishment, was realizing this fact, realizing it with a sinking heart and a sense of hopeless discouragement. The summer was almost over; September was only three days off; in another fortnight the hotels would be closed, the boarding houses would be closing, and Trumet, deserted by its money spending visitors, would be falling asleep, relapsing into its autumn and winter hibernation. And the Dott ledger, instead of showing a profit of a thousand or fifteen hundred dollars, as it had the first summer after Daniel bought the business, showed but a meager three hundred and fifty, over and above expenses.

Through the window the sun was shining brightly. From the road in front of the store--Trumet's "Main Street"--came the rattle of wheels and the sound of laughter and conversation in youthful voices. The sounds drew nearer. Someone shouted "Whoa!" Daniel Dott, a ray of hope illuminating his soul at the prospect of a customer, rose hurriedly from his seat by the desk and hastened out into the shop.

A big two-horsed vehicle, the "barge" from the Manonquit House, had stopped before the door. It was filled with a gay crowd, youths and maidens from the hotel, dressed in spotless flannels and "blazers," all talking at once, and evidently carefree and happy. Two of the masculine members of the party descended from the "barge" and entered the store. Daniel, smiling his sweetest, stepped forward to meet them.

"Good mornin', good mornin'," he said. "A fine mornin', ain't it?"

The greeting was acknowledged by both of the young fellows, and one of them added that it was a fine morning, indeed.

"Don't know as I ever saw a finer," observed Daniel. "Off on a cruise somewhere, I presume likely; hey?"

"Picnic down at the Point."

"Well, you've got picnic weather, all right. Yes sir, you have!"

Comment concerning the weather is the inevitable preliminary to all commercial transactions in Trumet. Now, preliminaries being over, Daniel

waited hopefully for what was to follow. His hopes were dashed.

"Is--is Miss Dott about?" inquired one of the callers.

"Miss Dott? Oh, Gertie! No, she ain't. She's gone down street somewheres. Be back pretty soon, I shouldn't wonder."

"Humph! Well, I'm afraid we can't wait. We hoped she might go with us on the picnic. We--er--we wanted her very much."

"That so? I'm sorry, but I'm afraid she couldn't go, even if she was here. You see, it's her last day at home, and--we--her mother and I--that is, I don't believe she'd want to leave us to-day."

"No; no, of course not. Well, tell her we wish she might have come, but we understand. Yes, yes," in answer to the calls from the "barge," "we're coming. Well, good by, Captain Dott."

"Er--good by. Er--er--don't want anything to take along, do you? A nice box of candy, or--or anything?"

"No, I think not. We stopped at the Emporium just now, and loaded up with candy enough to last a week. Good morning."

"How are you fixed for sun hats and things? I've got a nice line of hats and--well, good by."

"Good by."

The "barge" moved off. Daniel, standing dejectedly in the door, remembered his manners.

"Hope you have a nice time," he shouted. Then he turned and moved disconsolately back to the desk. He might have expected it. It was thus in nine cases out of ten. The Emporium, Mr. J. Cohen, proprietor, was his undoing in this instance as in so many others. The Emporium got the trade and he got the good bys. Mr. Cohen was not an old resident, as he was; Mr. Cohen's daughter was not invited to picnics by the summer people; Mrs. Cohen was not head of the sewing circle and the Chapter of the Ladies of Honor, and prominent socially, as was Mrs. Dott; but Mr. Cohen bought cheap and sold cheap, and the Emporium flourished like a green bay tree, while the Metropolitan Store was rapidly going to seed. Daniel, looking out through the front window at the blue sea in the distance, thought of the past, of the days when, as commander and part owner of the three masted schooner Bluebird, he had been free and prosperous and happy. Then he considered the future, which was bluer than the sea, and sighed again. Why had he not been content to stick to the profession he understood, to remain on the salt water he loved; instead of retiring from the sea to live on dry land and squander his small fortune in a business for which he was entirely unfitted?

And yet the answer was simple enough. Mrs. Dott--Mrs. Serena Dott, his wife--was the answer, she and her social aspirations. It was Serena who had coaxed him into giving up seafaring; who had said that it was a shame for him to waste his life ordering foremast hands about when he might be one of the leading citizens in his native town. It was Serena who had persuaded him to invest the larger part of his savings in the Metropolitan Store. Serena, who had insisted that Gertrude, their daughter and only child, should leave home to attend the fashionable

and expensive seminary near Boston. Serena who--but there! it was all Serena; and had been ever since they were married. Captain Daniel, on board his schooner, was a man whose word was law. On shore, he was law abiding, and his words were few.

The side door of the store--that leading to the yard separating it from the Dott homestead--opened, and Azuba Ginn appeared. Azuba had been the Dott maid of all work for eighteen years, ever since Gertrude was a baby. She was married, but her husband, Laban Ginn, was mate on a steam freighter running between New York and almost anywhere, and his shore leaves were short and infrequent. Theirs was a curious sort of married life. "We is kind of independent, Labe and me," said Azuba. "He often says to me--that is, as often as we're together, which ain't often--he says to me, he says, 'Live where you want to, Zuby,' he says, 'and if you want to move, move! When I get ashore I can hunt you up.' We don't write many letters because time each get t'other's, the news is so plaguey old 'tain't news at all. You Dott's seem more like home folks to me than anybody else, so I stick to you. I presume likely I shall till I die."

Azuba entered the store in the way in which she did most things, with a flurry and a slam. Her sleeves were rolled up, she wore an apron, and one hand dripped suds, demonstrating that it had just been taken from the dishpan. In the other, wiped more or less dry on the apron, she held a crumpled envelope.

"Well!" she exclaimed, excitedly. "If some human bein's don't beat the Dutch then _I_ don't know, that's all. If the way some folks go slip-slop, hit or miss, through this world ain't a caution then--Tut! tut! tut! don't talk to ME!"

Captain Dan looked up from the ledger.

"What?" he asked absently.

"I say, don't talk to ME!"

"We--ll," with deliberation, "I guess I shan't, unless you stop talkin' yourself, and give me a chance. What's the matter now, Zuba?"

"Matter! Don't talk to ME! Carelessness is the matter! Slip-sloppiness is the matter! Here's a man that calls himself a man and goes mopin' around pretendin' to BE a man, and what does he do?"

"I don't know. I'd tell you better, maybe, if I knew who he was."

"Who he was! I'll tell you who he was--is, I mean. He's Balaam Hambleton, that's who he is."

"Humph! Bale Hamilton, hey? Then it's easy enough to say what he does--nothin', most of the time. Is that letter for me?"

"Course it's for you! And it's a week old, what's more. One week ago that letter come in the mail and the postmaster let that--that Hambleton thing take it, 'cause he said he was goin' right by here and could leave it just as well as not. And this very mornin' that freckle-faced boy of his--that George Washin'ton one--what folks give such names to their young ones for _I_ can't see!--he rung the front door bell and yanked me right out of the dish water, and he says his ma found the letter in

Balaam's other pants when she was mendin' 'em, and would I please excuse his forgettin' it 'cause he had so much on his mind lately. Mind! Land of love! if he had a thistle top on his mind 'twould smash it flat. Don't talk to me!"

"I won't," drily; "I WON'T, Zuba, I swear it. Let's see the letter."

He bent forward and took the letter from her hand. Then, adjusting his spectacles, he examined the envelope. It was of the ordinary business size and was stamped with the Boston postmark, and a date a week old. Captain Dan looked at the postmark, studied the address, which was in an unfamiliar handwriting, and then turned the envelope over. On the flap was printed "Shepley and Farwell, Attorneys, ----- Devonshire Street." The captain drew a long breath; he leaned back in his chair and sat staring at the envelope.

Azuba wiped the suds from her wet hand and arm upon her apron. Then she wrapped it and the other arm in said apron and coughed. The cough was intended to arouse her employer from the trance into which he had, apparently, fallen. But it was without effect. Captain Daniel did stop staring at the envelope, but he merely transferred his gaze to the ink-spattered blotter and the ledger upon it, and stared at them.

"Well?" observed Azuba.

The captain started. "Hey?" he exclaimed, looking up. "Did you speak?"

"I said 'Well?'. I suppose that's speakin'?"

""Well?' Well what?"

"Oh, nothin'! I was just wonderin'--"

"Wonderin' what?"

"I was wonderin' if that letter was anything important. Ain't you goin' to open it and see?"

"Hey? Open it? Oh, yes, yes. Well, I shouldn't wonder if I opened it some time or other, Zuba. I gen'rally open my letters. It's a funny habit I have."

"Humph! Well, all right, then. I didn't know. Course, 'tain't none of my business what's in other folks's letters. _I_ ain't nosey, land knows. Nobody can accuse me of--"

"Nobody can accuse you of anything, Zuba. Not even dish washin' just now."

Azuba drew herself up. Outraged dignity and injured pride were expressed in every line of her figure. "Well!" she exclaimed; "WELL! if that ain't--if that don't beat all that ever _I_ heard! Here I leave my work to do folks favors, to fetch and carry for 'em, and this is what I get. Cap'n Dott, I want you to understand that I ain't dependent on nobody for a job. I don't HAVE to slave myself to death for nobody. If you ain't satisfied--"

"There, there, Zuba! I was only jokin'. Don't get mad!"

"Mad! Who's mad, I'd like to know? It takes more'n that to make me mad, I'd have you understand."

"That's good; I'm glad of it. Well, I'm much obliged to you for bringin' the letter."

"You're welcome. Land sakes! I don't mind doin' errands, only I like to have 'em appreciated. And I like jokes well as anybody, but when you tell me--"

"Hold on! don't get het up again. Keep cool, Zuba, keep cool! Think of that dish water; it's gettin' cooler every minute."

The answer to this was an indignant snort followed by the bang of the door. Azuba had gone. Captain Daniel looked after her, smiled faintly, shook his head, and again turned his attention to the letter in his hand. He did not open it immediately. Instead he sat regarding it with the same haggard, hopeless expression which he had worn when he first read the firm's name upon the envelope. He dreaded, perhaps, as much as he had ever dreaded anything in his life, to open that envelope.

He was sure, perfectly sure, what he should find when he did open it. A letter from the legal representatives of Smith and Denton, the Boston hat manufacturers and dealers, stating that, unless the latter's account was paid within the next week, suit for the amount due would be instituted in the courts. A law suit! a law suit for the collection of a debt against him, Daniel Dott, the man who had prided himself upon his honesty! Think of what it would mean! the disgrace of it! the humiliation, not only for himself but for Serena, his wife, and Gertrude, his daughter!

He did not blame Smith and Denton; they had been very kind, very lenient indeed. The thirty-day credit originally given him had been extended to sixty and ninety. They had written him many times, and each time he had written in reply that as soon as collections were better he should be able to pay in full; that he had a good deal of money owed him, and as soon as it came in they should have it. But it did not come in. No wonder, considering that it was owed by the loafers and ne'er-do-wells of the town and surrounding country, who, because no one else would trust them, bestowed their custom upon good-natured, gullible Captain Dan. The more recent letters from the hat dealers had been sharper and less kindly. They had ceased to request; they demanded. At last they had threatened. And now the threat was to be fulfilled.

The captain laid the envelope down upon the open ledger, rose, and, going to the front of the store, carefully closed the door. Then, going to the door communicating with the other half of the store, he made sure that no one was in the adjoining room. He had a vague feeling that all the eyes in Trumet were regarding him with suspicion, and he wished to shut out their accusing gaze. He wanted to be alone when he read that letter. He had half a mind to take it to the cellar and open it there.

His fingers shook as he tore the end from the envelope. They shook still more as he drew forth the enclosure, a typewritten sheet, and held it to the light. He read it through to the end. Then, with a loud exclamation, almost a shout, he rushed to the side door, flung it open and darted across the yard, the letter fluttering from his fingers like a flag. The store was left unguarded, but he forgot that.

He stumbled up the steps into the kitchen. Azuba, a saucer in one hand and the dish towel in the other, was, to say the least, startled. As she expressed it afterward, "the everlastin' soul was pretty nigh scart out of her." The saucer flew through the air and lit upon the top of the cookstove.

"What--what--what--" stammered Azuba. "Oh, my land! WHAT is it?"

"Where's Serena?" demanded Captain Daniel, paying no attention to the saucer, except to tread upon the fragments.

"Hey? Oh, what IS it? Is the store afire?"

"No, no! Where's Serena?"

"She--she--what--"

"Where's SERENA, I ask you?"

"In her room, I cal'late. For mercy sakes, what--"

But the captain did not answer. Through dining-room, sitting-room, and parlor he galloped, and up the front stairs to the bedroom occupied by himself and wife. Mrs. Dott was standing before the mirror, red-faced and panting, both arms behind her and her fingers busily engaged. Her husband's breath was almost gone by the time he reached the foot of the stairs; consequently his entrance was a trifle less noisy and startling than his sky-rocket flight through the kitchen. It is doubtful if his wife would have noticed even if it had been. She caught a glimpse of him in the mirror, and heaved a sigh of relief.

"Oh, it's you, is it!" she panted. "My, I'm glad! For mercy sakes fasten those last three hooks; I'm almost distracted with 'em."

But the hooks remained unfastened for the time. Captain Dan threw himself into a chair and waved the letter.

"Serena," he cried, puffing like a stranded porpoise, "what--WHAT do you suppose has happened? Aunt Laviny is dead."

Serena turned. "Dead!" she repeated. "Your Aunt Lavinia Dott? The rich one?"

"Yes, sir; she's gone. Died in Italy a fortnight ago. Naples, I think 'twas--or some such outlandish place; you know she's done nothin' but cruise around Europe ever since Uncle Jim died. The letter says she was taken sick on a Friday, and died Sunday, so 'twas pretty sudden. I--"

But Mrs. Dott interrupted. "What else does it say?" she asked excitedly. "What else does that letter say? Who is it from?"

"It's from her lawyers up to Boston. What made you think it said anything else?"

"Because I'm not blind and I can see your face, Daniel Dott. What else does it say? Tell me! Has she--did she--?"

Captain Dan nodded solemnly. "She didn't forget us," he said. "She didn't forget us, Serena. The letter says her will gives us that solid

silver teapot and sugar-bowl that was presented to Uncle Jim by the Ship Chandlers' Society, when he was president of it. She willed that to us. She knew I always admired that tea-pot and--"

His wife interrupted once more.

"Tea-pot!" she repeated strongly. "Tea-pot! What are you talking about? Do you mean to say that all she left us was a TEA-POT? If you do I--"

"No, no, Serena. Hush! She's left us three thousand dollars besides. Think of it! Three thousand dollars--just now!"

His voice shook as he said it. He spoke as if three thousand dollars was an unheard-of sum, a fortune. Mrs. Dott had no such illusion. She sat down upon the edge of the bed.

"Three thousand dollars!" she exclaimed. "Is that all? Three thousand dollars!"

"All! My soul, Serena! Why, ONE thousand dollars just now is like--"

"Hush! Do be still! Three thousand dollars! And she worth a hundred thousand, if she was worth a cent. A lone woman, without a chick or a child or a relation except you, and that precious young swell of a cousin of hers she thought so much of. I suppose he gets the rest of it. Oh, how can anybody be so stingy!"

"Sh-sh, sh-h, Serena. Don't speak so of the dead. Why, we ought to be mournin' for her, really, instead of rejoicing over what she left us. It ain't right to talk so. I'm ashamed of myself--or I ought to be. But, you see, I thought sure the letter was from those hat folks's lawyers, sayin' they'd started suit. When I found it wasn't, I was so glad I forgot everything else. Ah hum!--poor Aunt Laviny!"

He sighed. His wife shook her head.

"Daniel," she said, "I--I declare I try not to lose patience with you, but it's awful hard work. Mourning! Mourn for her! What did she ever do to make you sorry she was gone? Did she ever come near us when she was alive? No, indeed, she didn't. Did she ever offer to give you, or even lend you, a cent? I guess not. And she knew you needed it, for I wrote her."

"You DID? Serena!"

"Yes, I did. Why shouldn't I? I wrote her six months ago, telling her how bad your business was, and that Gertie was at school, and we were trying to give her a good education, and how much money it took and--oh, everything. When your Uncle Jim's business was bad, in the hard times back in '73, who was it that helped him out and saved him from bankruptcy? Why, his brother--your own father. And he never got a cent of it back. I reminded her of that, too."

Daniel sprang out of his chair.

"You did!" he cried again. "Serena, how could you? You knew how Father felt about that money. You knew how I felt. And yet, you did that!"

"I did. Somebody in this family must be practical and worldly-minded,

and I seem to be the one. YOU wouldn't ask her for a cent. You wouldn't ask anybody for money, even if they owed it a thousand years. You sell everybody anything they want from the store; and trust them for it. You know you do. You sold that good-for-nothing Lem Brackett a whole suit of clothes only last week, and he owes you a big bill and has owed it for a year."

Her husband looked troubled. "Well," he answered, slowly, "I suppose likely I didn't do right there. But those Bracketts are poor, and there's a big family of 'em, and the fall's comin' on, and--and all. So--"

"So you thought it was your duty to help support them, I suppose. Oh, Daniel, Daniel, I don't know what to do with you sometimes."

Captain Dan looked very grave.

"I guess you're right, Serena," he admitted. "I ain't much good, I'm afraid."

Mrs. Dott's expression changed. She rose, walked over, and kissed him. "You're too good, that's the main trouble with you," she said. "Well, I won't scold any more. I'm glad we've got the three thousand anyway--and the tea-pot."

"It's a lovely tea-pot, all engravin' and everything. And the sugar-bowl's almost as pretty. You'll like 'em, Serena."

"Yes, I'll love 'em, I don't doubt. You and I can look at them and think of that cousin of Aunt Lavinia's spending the rest of her fortune. No wonder she didn't leave him the tea-pot; precious little tea he drinks, if stories we hear are true. Well, there's one good thing about it--Gertie can keep on with her college. This is her last year."

"Yes; I thought of that. I thought of a million things when I was racin' across the yard with this letter. Say, Serena, you've never told Gertie anything about how trade was or how hard-up we've been?"

"Of course not."

"No, I knew you wouldn't. She's such a conscientious girl; if she thought we couldn't afford it she wouldn't think of keepin' on with that college, and I've set my heart on her havin' the best start in life we can give her."

"I know. Ah hum! I wish she could have the start some people's daughters have. Mrs. Black was with me at the lodge room yesterday--we are decorating for the men's evening to-morrow night, you know--and Mrs. Black has been helping me; she's awfully kind that way. You'd think she belonged here in Trumet, instead of being rich and living in Scarford and being way up in society there. She and her husband are just like common folks."

"Humph! Barney Black IS common folks. He was born right here in Trumet and his family was common as wharf rats. HE needn't put on airs with me."

"He doesn't. And yet, if he was like some people, he would. So successful in his big factory, and his wife way up in the best circles

of Scarford; she's head of the Ladies of Honor there as I am here, and means to get a national office in the order; she told me so. But there! that reminds me that I was going to meet her at the lodge room at ten, and it's half-past nine now. Do help me with these hooks. If I wasn't so fleshy I could do them myself, but I almost died hooking the others."

"Why didn't you call Zuba? She'd have hooked 'em for you."

"Azuba! Heavens and earth! She's worse than nobody; her fingers are all thumbs. Besides, she would talk me deaf, dumb and blind. She doesn't know her place at all; thinks she is one of the family, I suppose."

"Well, she is, pretty nigh. Been here long enough."

"I don't care. She isn't one of the family; she's a servant, or ought to be. Oh dear! when I hear Annette Black telling about her four servants and all the rest it makes me so jealous, sometimes."

"Don't make ME jealous. I'd rather have you and Gertie and this place than all Barney Black owns--and that means his wife, too."

"Daniel, I keep telling you not to call Mr. Black 'Barney.' He is B. Phelps Black now. Mrs. Black always calls him 'Phelps.' So does everybody in Scarford, so she says."

"Want to know! He was Barney Black when he lived here regular. Havin' a summer cottage here and a real house in Scarford must make a lot of difference. By the way, speakin' of Scarford, that's where Aunt Laviny used to live afore she went abroad. She owned a big house there."

"Why, so she did! I wonder what will become of it. I suppose that cousin will get it, along with the rest. Oh dear! suppose--just suppose there wasn't any cousin. Suppose you and I and Gertie had that house and the money. Wouldn't it be splendid? WE could be in society then."

"Humph! I'd look pretty in society, wouldn't I?"

"Of course you would. You'd look as pretty as Barney--B. Phelps Black, wouldn't you? And I--Oh, HOW I should love it! Trumet is so out of date. A real intelligent, ambitious woman has no chance in Trumet."

The captain shook his head. He recognized the last sentence as a quotation from the works of Mrs. Annette Black, self-confessed leader in society in the flourishing manufacturing city of Scarford, and summer resident and condescending patroness of Trumet.

"Well," he observed; "we've got more chance, even in Trumet, than we've had for the last year, thanks to Aunt Laviny's three thousand. It gives us a breathin' spell, anyhow. If only trade in the store would pick up, I--Hey! Good heavens to Betsy! I forgot the store altogether. Sam hadn't got back from breakfast and I left the store all alone. I must be crazy!"

He bolted from the room and down the stairs, the legacy forgotten for the moment, and in his mind pictures of rifled showcases and youthful Trumet regaling itself with chocolates at his expense. Azuba shrieked another question as her employer once more rushed through the kitchen, but again her question was unanswered. She hurried to the window and watched him running across the yard.

"Well!" she exclaimed, in alarmed soliloquy. "WELL, the next time I fetch that man a letter I'll fetch the doctor along with it. Has the world turned upside down, or what is the matter?"

She might have made a worse guess. The Dott world was turning upside down; this was the beginning of the revolution.

CHAPTER II

Captain Dan's fears concerning the safety of his showcases were groundless. Even as he sprang up the steps to the side door of his place of business, he heard familiar voices in the store. He recognized the voices, and, halting momentarily to wipe his forehead with his handkerchief and to regain some portion of his composure and his breath, he walked in.

Gertrude, his daughter, was seated in his chair by the desk, and John Doane was leaning upon the desk, talking with her. In the front of the store, Sam Bartlett, the boy, who had evidently returned from breakfast, was doing nothing in particular, and doing it with his usual air of enjoyment. It was only when required to work that Sam was unhappy.

Gertrude looked up as her father entered; prior to that she had been looking at the blotter on the desk. John Doane, who had been looking at Gertrude, also changed the direction of his gaze. Captain Dan struggled with the breath and the composure.

"Why, Dad!" exclaimed Gertrude. "What is it?"

"What's the matter, Cap'n Dott?" asked Mr. Doane.

Daniel did his best to appear calm; it was a poor best. At fifty-two one cannot run impromptu hurdle races against time, and show no effects.

"Hey?" he panted. "Matter? Nothin's the matter. I left the store alone for a minute and I was in a kind of hurry to get back to it, that's all."

The explanation was not entirely satisfactory. Gertrude looked more puzzled than ever.

"A minute," she repeated. "Left it a minute! Why, John and I have been here fifteen minutes, and Sam was here when we came."

The captain looked at his watch. "Well, maybe 'twas a little more'n a minute," he admitted.

Master Bartlett sauntered up to take part in the conversation.

"I got here twenty minutes ago," he observed, grinning, "and you wasn't here then, Cap'n Dan'l. I was wonderin' what had become of ye."

Daniel seized the opportunity to change the subject.

"Anybody been in since you came?" he asked, addressing Sam.

"No, nobody special. Abel Calvin was in to see if you wanted to buy some beach plums for puttin' up. He said he had about a bushel of first-rate ones, just picked."

"Beach plums! What in time would I want of beach plums? I don't put up preserves, do I? Why didn't he go to the house?"

"I asked him that, myself, and he said 'twa'n't no use."

"No use! What did he mean by that?"

"Well, he said--he said--" Sam seemed suddenly to realize that he was getting into deep water; "he said--he said somethin' or other; I guess I've forgot what 'twas."

"I guess you ain't. WHAT did he say?"

"Well, he said--he said Serena--Mrs. Dott, I mean--was probably gallivantin' down to the lodge room by this time. Said 'twa'n't no use tryin' to get her to attend to common things or common folks nowadays; she was too busy tryin' to keep up with Annette Black."

This literal quotation from the frank Mr. Calvin caused a sensation. Captain Dan struggled to find words. His daughter laid a hand on his sleeve.

"Never mind, Dad," she said, soothingly. "You know what Abel Calvin is; you don't mind what he says. Sam, you shouldn't repeat such nonsense. Run away now and attend to your work. I'm sure there's enough for you to do."

"You--you go and clean up the cellar," ordered the irate captain. Sam departed cellarward, muttering that it wasn't his fault; HE hadn't said nothin'. Gertrude spoke again.

"Don't mind that, Dad," she urged. "Why, how warm you are, and how excited you look. What is it? You haven't spoken a word to John."

Her father shook his head. "Mornin', John," he said. "I beg your pardon. I ain't responsible to-day, I shouldn't wonder. I--I've had some news that's drivin' everything else out of my mind."

"News? Why, Dad! what do you mean? Bad news?"

"No, no! Good as ever was, and.... Humph! no, I don't mean that. It is bad news, of course. Your Great-aunt Laviny's dead, Gertie."

He told of the lawyer's letter, omitting for the present the news of the legacy. Gertrude was interested, but not greatly shocked or grieved. She had met her great-aunt but once during her lifetime, and her memory of the deceased was of a stately female, whose earrings and brooches and rings sparkled as if she was on fire in several places; who sat bolt upright at the further end of a hotel room in Boston, and ordered Captain Dan not to bring "that child" any nearer until its hands were washed. As she had been the child and had distinctly disagreeable recollections of the said hands having been washed three times before admittance to the presence, the memory was not too pleasant. She said she was sorry to hear that Aunt Lavinia was no more, and asked when it

happened. Her father told what he knew of the circumstances attending the bereavement, which was not much.

"She's gone, anyhow," he said. "It's liable to happen to any of us, bein' cut off that way. We ought to be prepared, I suppose."

"I suppose so. But, Daddy, Aunt Lavinia wasn't cut off exactly, was she? She was your aunt and she must have been quite old."

"Hey? Why, let's see. She was your grandpa's brother's wife, and he--Uncle Jim, I mean--was about four years older than Father. She was three years younger'n he was when he married her. Let's see again. Father--that's your grandpa, Gertie--was sixty-five when he died and... Humph! No, Aunt Laviny was eighty-eight, or thereabouts. She wasn't exactly cut off, was she, come to think of it?"

Gertrude's brown eyes twinkled. "Not exactly--no," she said, gravely. "Well, Daddy, I'm sure I am sorry she has gone, but, considering that she has never deigned to visit us or have us visit her, or even to write you a letter for the past two years, I don't think we should be expected to mourn greatly. And," glancing at him, "I don't understand just what you meant by saying first that the news was good, and then that it was bad. There is something else, isn't there?"

Her father smiled, in an embarrassed way. "Well, ye--es," he admitted, "there is somethin' else, but--but I don't know as I didn't do wrong to feel so good over it. I--I guess I'll tell you by and by, if you don't mind. Maybe then I won't feel--act, I mean--so tickled. It don't seem right that I should be. Let me get sort of used to it first. I'll tell you pretty soon."

His daughter laughed, softly. "I know you will, Dad," she said. "You couldn't keep a secret in that dear old head of yours if you tried. Not from me, anyway; could you, dear?"

"I guess not," regarding her fondly. "Anyhow, I shan't try to keep this one. Well, this time to-morrow you'll be back at college again, in among all those Greek and Latin folks. Wonder she'll condescend to come and talk plain United States to us Cape Codders, ain't it, John."

John Doane admitted that it was a wonder. He seemed to regard Miss Dott as a very wonderful young person altogether. Gertrude glanced up at him, then at her father, and then at the blotter on the desk. She absently played with the pages of the ledger.

"Dad," she said, suddenly, "you are not the only one who has a secret."

The captain turned and looked at her. Her head was bent over the ledger and he could see but the top of a very becoming hat, a stray lock of wavy brown hair, and the curve of a very pretty cheek. The cheek--what he could see of it--was crimson. He looked up at Mr. Doane. That young man's face was crimson also.

"Oh!" said Captain Daniel; and added, "I want to know!"

"Yes, you're not the only one. We--I--there is another secret. Daddy, dear, John wants to talk with you."

The captain looked at Mr. Doane, then at the hat and the face beneath

it.

"Oh!" he said, again.

"Yes. I--I--" She rose and, putting her arms about her father's neck, kissed him. "I will be back before long, dear," she whispered, and hurried out. Mr. Doane cleared his throat. Captain Dan waited.

"Well, sir," began the young man, and stopped. The captain continued to wait.

"Well, sir," began Mr. Doane, again, "I--I--" For one who, as Gertrude had declared, wished to talk, he seemed to be finding the operation difficult. "I--Well, sir, the fact is, I have something to say to you."

Captain Dan, who was looking very grave, observed that he "wanted to know." John Doane cleared his throat once more, and took a fresh start.

"Yes, sir," he said, "I have something to say to you--er--something that--that may surprise you."

A faint smile disturbed the gravity of the captain's face.

"May surprise me, hey?" he repeated. "Is that so?"

"Yes. You see, I--Gertie and I--have--are--"

Daniel looked up.

"Hard navigatin', ain't it, John?" he inquired, whimsically. "Maybe I could help you over the shoals. You and Gertie think you'd like to get married sometime or other, I presume likely. Is that what you're tryin' to tell me?"

There was no doubt of it. The young man's face expressed several emotions, relief that the great secret was known, and surprise that anyone should have guessed it.

"Why, yes, sir," he admitted, "that is it. Gertie and I have known each other for years, ever since we were children, in fact; and, you see--you see--" he paused once more, began again, and then broke out impatiently with, "I'm making an awful mess of this. I don't know why."

Captain Dan's smile broadened.

"I made just as bad a one myself, once on a time," he observed. "Just as bad, or worse--and _I_ didn't know why either. There, John, you sit down. Come to anchor alongside here, and let's talk this thing over in comfort."

Mr. Doane "came to anchor" on an empty packing case beside the desk. As he was tall and big, and the box was low and small, the "comfort" was doubtful. However, neither of the pair noticed this at the time.

"So you think you want Gertie, do you, John?" said the captain.

"I know it," was the emphatic answer.

"So. And she thinks she wants you?"

"She says so."

"Humph!" with a sidelong glance. "Think she means it?"

"I'm trying to believe she does."

The tone in which this was uttered caused Captain Dan to chuckle. "'Tis strange, I'll give in," he remarked, drily. "No accountin' for taste, is there--Well," his gravity returning, "I suppose likely you realize that her mother and I think consider'ble of her."

"I realize that thoroughly."

"You don't realize it as much as you will some day, perhaps. Yes, we think Gertie's about right. She's a smart girl and, what's more, she's a good girl, and she's all the child we've got. Of course we've realized that she was growin' up and that--Oh, good mornin', Alphy. Fine weather, ain't it. Lookin' for somethin', was you?"

He hurried out into the store to sell Mrs. Theophilus Berry, known locally as "Alphy Ann," a box of writing paper and a penholder. The transaction completed, he returned to his chair. John Doane, who had recovered, in a measure, from his embarrassment, was ready for him.

"Cap'n Dott," said the young man, "I know how you feel, I think. I know what Gertie is to you and how anxious you and her mother must be concerning her future. If I did not feel certain--practically certain--that I could give her a good home and all that goes with it, I should not have presumed to speak to her, or to you, concerning marriage. My business prospects are good, or I think they are. I--"

The captain held up his hand. "Er--er--John," he said, uneasily, "maybe you'd better tell about that part of it when Serena's around. She's the practical one of us two, I guess, far's money's concerned, anyway. I used to think I was pretty practical when I was on salt water, but--but lately I ain't so sure. I'm afraid--"

He stopped, began to speak again, and then relapsed into silence, seeming to forget his companion altogether. The latter reminded him by saying:

"I shall be glad to tell Mrs. Dott everything, of course. I have been with the firm now employing me for eight years, ever since I left high school. They seem to like me. I have been steadily advanced, my salary is a fairly good one, and in another year I have the promise of a partnership. After that my progress will depend upon myself."

He went on, in a manly, straightforward manner, to speak of his hopes and ambitions. Daniel listened, but the most of what he heard was incomprehensible. Increased output and decreased manufacturing costs were Greek to him. When the young man paused, he brought the conversation back to what, in his mind, was the essential.

"And you're certain sure that you two care enough for each other?" he asked. "Not just care, but care enough?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I guess I ain't got much to say. There's one thing, though. Gertie's young. She ain't finished her schoolin' yet, and--"

"And you think she should. So do I. She wishes to do it, herself, and I should be the last to prevent her, even if I could. We have agreed that she shall have the final year at college and then come back to you. After that--well, after that, the time of our marriage can be settled. Gertie and I are willing to wait; we expect to. In a few years I shall have a little more money, I hope, and be more sure of success in life. I may never be a rich man, but Gertie's tastes and mine are modest. She does not care for society--"

The captain interrupted. "That's so," he said, hastily, "she don't. She don't care for 'em at all. Her mother has the greatest work to get her to go to lodge meetin's. No, she don't care for societies any more'n I do. Well, John, I--I--it'll come pretty hard to give her up to anybody. Wait till you have a daughter of your own and you'll know how hard. But, if I've got to give her up, I'd rather give her to you than anybody I know. You're a Trumet boy and I've known you all my life, and so's Gertie, for that matter. All I can say is, God bless you and--and take good care of my girl, that's all."

He extended his hand and John seized it. Then the captain coughed, blew his nose with vigor, and, reaching into his pocket, produced two battered cigars.

"Smoke up, John," he said.

At dinner, a meal at which Mrs. Dott, still busy with the lodge room decorations, was not present, Gertrude and her father talked it over.

"It comes kind of hard, Gertie," he admitted, "but, Lord love you, there's a heap of hard things in this world. John's a good fellow and--and, well, we ain't goin' to lose you just yet, anyhow."

Gertrude rose and, coming around the table, put her arms about his neck.

"Indeed you're not, dear," she said. "If I supposed my marriage meant giving you up, I shouldn't think of it."

"Want to know! Wouldn't think of John, either, I suppose, hey?"

"Well, I--I might think of him a little, just a tiny little bit."

"I shouldn't wonder. That's all right. You can't get rid of me so easy. After you two are all settled in your fine new house, I'll be comin' around to disgrace you, puttin' my boots on the furniture and--"

"Dad!"

"Won't I? Well, maybe I won't. I cal'late by that time I'll be broke to harness. Your mother's gettin' in with the swells so, lately, Barney Black's wife and the rest, that I'll have to mind my manners. There! let's go into the sittin'-room a few minutes and give Zuba a chance to clear off. Sam's tendin' store and his dinner can wait a spell; judgin' by the time he took for breakfast he hadn't ought to be hungry for the next week."

In the sitting-room they spoke of many things, of Gertrude's departure

for school--she was leaving on the three o'clock train--of the engagement, of course, and of the three thousand dollar windfall from Aunt Lavinia. The captain had told that bit of news when they sat down to dinner.

"What is that cousin's name?" asked Gertrude. "The one who inherits all of your aunt's fortune?"

"Let's see. His name? I ought to know it well's I know my own. It's--it's Starvation, or somethin' like that. Somethin' about bein' hungry, anyhow. Hungerford, Percy Hungerford, that's it!"

Gertrude looked surprised.

"Not Percy Hungerford--of Scarford!" she cried. "What sort of a man is he? What does he look like?"

"Looked like a picked chicken, last time I saw him. Kind of a spindlin' little critter, with sandy complexion and hair, but dressed--my soul! there wasn't any picked chicken look about his clothes."

Gertrude nodded. "I believe it is the same one," she said. "Yes, I am sure of it. He came out to the college at one of our commencements. One of the girls invited him. He danced with me--once. They said he was very wealthy."

"Humph! All the wealth he had come from Aunt Laviny, far's I ever heard. He was her pet and the only thing she ever spent money on, except herself. And you met him! Well, this is a small world. Like him, did you?"

"No," said Gertrude, and changed the subject.

Before her father departed for the store and she went to her room to finish packing, she sat upon the arm of his chair and, bending down, said:

"Daddy, if you hadn't got this money, this three thousand dollars, do you know what I had very nearly made up my mind to do?"

"No, I'm sure I don't."

"I had almost decided not to stay at college, but to come back here and live with you and mother."

"For the land sakes! Why?"

"Because I was sure you needed me. You never told me, of course--being you, you wouldn't--but I was sure that you were troubled about--about things."

"Me? Troubled? What put that into your head? I'm the most gay, happy-go-lucky fellow in the world. I don't get troubled enough. Ask your mother if that ain't so."

"I shall not ask anybody but you. Tell me truly: Weren't you troubled; about the business, and the store? Truly, now."

Captain Dan rubbed his chin. He wished very much to deny the allegation,

or at least to dodge the truth. But he was a poor prevaricator at any time, and his daughter was looking him straight in the eye.

"Well," he faltered, "I--I--How in time did you guess that? I--Humph! why, yes, I was a little mite upset. You see, trade ain't been first rate this summer, and collections were awful slow. I hate to drive folks, especially when I know they're hard up. I was a little worried, but it's all right now. Aunt Laviny's three thousand fixed that all right. It'll carry me along like a full sail breeze. You go back to school, like a sensible girl, and don't you worry a mite. It's all right now, Gertie."

"Honest?"

"Honest to Betsy!" with an emphatic nod.

He meant it; he really thought it was all right. The fact that he owed a thousand already and that the remaining two would almost certainly be swept into the capacious maw of the Metropolitan Store did not occur to him then. Daniel Dott was a failure as a business man but as an optimist he was a huge success.

"Then you're sure you can afford to have me go back for my last year?"

"Course I am. I couldn't afford to do anything else."

His absolute certainty stifled his daughter's doubts for the time, but she asked another question.

"And there's nothing that troubles you at all?"

"No-o." The captain's answer was not quite as emphatic this time. Gertrude smiled, and patted his shoulder.

"Daddy, dear," she said, "you're as transparent as a window pane, aren't you. Well, don't worry any more. That will be all right pretty soon, too. Mrs. Black doesn't stay in Trumet all the year."

Her father gasped. That this child of his, whom he had always regarded as a child, should dive into the recesses of his soul and drag to light its most secret misgivings was amazing.

"What on earth?" he demanded.

"You know what I mean. I'm not blind. I can see. Mother is just a little carried away. She has heard so much about big houses and servants and society and woman's opportunity, and all the rest of it, that she has been swept off her feet. But it won't last, I'm sure. She isn't really discontented; she only thinks she is."

Daniel sighed. "I know," he said. "Fact is, I ain't up-to-date enough, myself, that's what's the matter. She's a mighty able, ambitious woman, your mother is, Gertie, and I don't wonder she gets to thinkin', sometimes, that Trumet is a kind of one-horse town. I like it; I AM one-horse, I suppose. But she ain't, and she ain't satisfied to be satisfied, like me. It's a good thing she ain't, I guess. Somebody's got to live up to the responsibilities of life, and--"

Gertrude laughed. "She said that, didn't she," she interrupted.

"Why, yes, she did. She says it every once in a while. How did you know?"

"I guessed. And I imagine Mrs. Phelps Black said it first. But there, Dad, be patient and.... Sh-sh! here's Mother now."

It was Serena, sure enough, breathless from hurrying, her hat a bit on one side, one glove off and the other on, but full of energy and impatience.

"I suppose you've had dinner," she exclaimed. "Well, all right, I don't care. I couldn't help being late, there was so much to do at the lodge rooms and nobody to do it right, except me. If Mrs. Black hadn't helped and superintended and--and everything, I don't know where we should have been. And those visiting delegates from Boston coming! I must get a bite and hurry back. Where's Azuba? Azuba!"

She was rushing in the direction of the kitchen, but her husband detained her.

"Hold on, Serena," he shouted. "Goin' back! What do you mean? You ain't goin' back to that lodge this afternoon, are you? Why, Gertie's goin' on the up-train!"

"I know, but I must go back, Daniel. Goodness knows what would happen if I didn't. If you had seen some of the decorations those other women wanted to put up, you would think it was necessary for someone with respectable taste to be there. Why, Sophronia Smalley actually would have draped the presiding officer's desk--MY desk--with a blue flag with a white whale on it, if I hadn't been there to stop her."

"Well, I--Why, Serena, you know Sophrony thinks a sight of that flag. Simeon Smalley, her father, was in the whalin' trade for years, and that flag was his private signal. She always has that flag up somewhere."

"Well, she shan't have it on my desk. Annette--Mrs. Black, I mean--said it was ridiculous. If such a thing happened in Scarford the audience would have hysterics. Would you want your wife to make a spectacle of herself, before those Boston delegates, standing behind a white whale, and a dirty white at that! Gertie, I shall be at the depot to say good by, but I must be at that lodge room first. I MUST. You understand, don't you?"

Gertrude said she understood perfectly and her mother hurried to the kitchen, where she ate lukewarm fried fish and apple pie, while Azuba washed the dishes and prophesied darkly concerning "dyspepsy." Gertrude went to her room to put the last few things in her trunks, and Captain Dan returned to the store, where he found the Bartlett boy pacifying a gnawing appetite with chocolate creams abstracted from stock.

At a quarter to three the captain was at the railway station, where he was joined by John Doane, who, his vacation over, was returning to Boston. After a five-minute wait Serena and Gertrude appeared. The latter had called at the lodge room for her mother and, during the walk to the station, had broken the news of her engagement.

Serena was not surprised, of course; she, like everyone else, had expected it, and she liked John. But she was a good deal agitated and

even the portentous business of the lodge meeting was driven from her mind. She and Mr. Doane shook hands, but the young man felt very much like a thief, and a particularly mean sort of thief, as young men are likely to feel under such circumstances. Farewells were harder to say than usual, although Gertrude tried her best to seem cheerful, and the captain swallowed the lump in his throat and smiled and joked in a ghastly fashion all through the ceremony. Just before the train started, his daughter led him to one side and whispered:

"Now, Daddy, remember--you are not to worry. And, if you need me at any time, you will tell me so, and I shall surely come. You'll promise, won't you? And you will write at least once a week?"

The captain made both promises. They kissed, Serena and Gertrude exchanged hugs, and John Doane solemnly shook hands once more. Then the train moved away from the station.

Daniel and Serena walked homeward, Mrs. Dott wiping her eyes with a damp handkerchief, and her husband very grave and silent. As they passed the lodge building the lady said:

"I ought to go right back in there again. I ought to, but I just can't, not now. I--I want to be with you, Daniel, a time like this."

"Goodness knows I want you, Serena; but--but for mercy sakes don't call it a 'time like this.' Sounds as if we'd just come from the cemetery instead of the depot. We ain't been to a funeral; we're only lookin' for'ard to a weddin'."

In spite of this philosophical declaration the remainder of that afternoon was rather funereal for Captain Dan. He moped about the store, waiting half-heartedly upon the few customers who happened in, and the ring of the supper bell was welcome, as it promised some company other than his thoughts.

But the promise was not fulfilled. He ate his supper alone. Mrs. Dott had gone back to the lodge room, so Azuba said.

"I don't think she was intendin' to," remarked the latter, confidentially. "She said she guessed she'd 'lay down a spell'; said she was 'kind of tired.' But afore she got upstairs scarcely, along comes that Black automobile with that Irish 'shover man'--that's what they call 'em, ain't it?--drivin' it and her in the back seat, and he gets out and comes and rings the front door bell, and when I answer it--had my hands all plastered up with dough, I did, for I was makin' pie, and it took me the longest time to get 'em clean--when I answered it he said that she said she wanted to see her and--"

"Here! hold on, Zuba!" interrupted her bewildered employer. "'Vast heavin' a second, will you? You ought to run that yarn of yours through a sieve and strain some of the 'hes' and 'shes' out of it. 'He said that she said she wanted to see her.' Who wanted to see what?"

"Why, Barney Black's wife. She wanted to see Serena. So in she came, all rigged up in her best clothes and--"

"How do you know they were her best ones?"

"Hey? Well, they would have been MY best ones, if _I_ owned 'em, I tell

you that. I never see such clothes as that woman has! All trimmin' and flounces and didos, and--"

"Hi! steady there, Zuba. Keep your eye on the compass. You're gettin' off the course again. Annette--Mrs. Black, I mean--came to see Mrs. Dott; that's plain sailin' so far. What happened after that?"

"Why, they went off together in the automobile and Serena said to tell you she had to go to lodge, and she'd be back when she could and not to wait supper. That's all I know."

The captain finished his lonely meal and returned to the store, where he found Abel Blount's wife and their twin boys, aged eight, waiting to negotiate for rubber boots. The boots were for the boys, but Mrs. Blount did the buying and it was a long and talky process. At last, however, the youngsters were fitted and clumped proudly away, bearing their leather shoes in their hands. It was a dry evening, but to separate the twins from those rubber boots would have been next door to an impossibility.

"There!" exclaimed the lady, as she bade the captain good night, "that's done; that much is settled anyhow. I'm thankful I ain't got four twins, instead of two, Cap'n Dott."

Daniel, entering the sale in the ledger, was thankful also. If the lengthy Blount account had been settled he would have been still more so.

At nine o'clock he and Sam locked up, extinguished the lamps, and closed the Metropolitan Store for the night. Crossing the yard to the house, which he entered by the front door, he found Serena in the sitting-room. She was reclining upon the couch. She was tired, and out of sorts.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed, acknowledging her husband's greeting with a nod, "I am just about worn out, Daniel."

"I should think you would be, Serena. You've been makin' tracks between here and that lodge room all to-day and yesterday, too. I should think you'd be about dead."

"It isn't that. I don't mind the work. It's the thanklessness of it all that breaks me down. I give my time and effort to help the lodge, and what does it amount to?"

"Well, I--I give in that it don't seem to me to amount to much, 'cordin' to my figurin'. I don't care much for lodge meetin's and sociables and such, myself. I'd rather have one evenin' at home with you than the whole cargo of 'em."

This statement was frank, but it was decidedly undiplomatic. Serena sniffed contempt.

"Of course you would!" she said. "I don't get a bit of encouragement here at home, either. I should think you'd be proud to have your wife the head of the Chapter, presiding at meetings and welcoming the visiting delegates and--and all."

"I am," hastily. "I'm proud of you, Serena. Always have been, far's that goes. But I'm just as proud of you here in this sittin'-room as I am

when you're back of that pulpit, poundin' with your mallet and tellin' Alphy Ann Berry to 'come to order.' Notwithstanding that you're the only one can make her come--or go, either--unless she takes a notion. Why," with a chuckle, "it takes her husband half an hour to make her go home after meetin's over."

Mrs. Dott did not chuckle.

"You think it's a joke," she said. "I don't. It is the Berry woman and her kind that make me disgusted. I'm tired of them all. I'm tired of Trumet. I wish we were somewhere where I had an opportunity; somewhere where I might be appreciated."

"_I_ appreciate you, Serena."

Serena ignored the remark. "I wish we had never settled here," she went on. "I'd leave in a minute, if I could. I'd like to be in with nice people, cultivated people, intelligent, up-to-date society, where I could have a chance to go on and be somebody. I'd like to be a leader. I could be. Annette says I would be in a city like Scarford. She says I 'have the faculty of the born leader.' All I lack is the opportunity."

Her husband sighed. He had heard all this before. Inwardly he wished Mrs. Black at Scarford, or China, or anywhere, provided it was not Trumet.

His wife heard the sigh. "There, Daniel," she said; "I won't be complaining. I try not to be. But," she hesitated, "there is one thing I'd like to ask, now that we've got your Aunt Lavinia's three thousand: Don't you suppose I could have some new clothes; I need at least two dresses right away."

"Why--why, I guess likely you could, Serena. Yes, course you can. You go see Sarah Loveland right off."

Miss Loveland was the Trumet dressmaker. At the mention of her name Serena shook her head.

"I don't want Sarah to make them, Daniel," she said. "Mrs. Black says the things she makes are awful old-fashioned; 'country,' she calls them."

Daniel snorted. "I want to know!" he exclaimed. "Well, I remember her husband when his ma used to make his clothes out of his dad's old ones. I don't know whether they was 'country' or not, but they were the dumbest things ever _I_ saw. Country, huh! Scarford ain't any Paris, is it? I never heard it was."

"Well, it isn't Trumet. No, Daniel, if we could afford it, I'd like to have these dresses made up in Boston, where Gertie gets hers. Mrs. Black often speaks of Gertie's gowns; she says they are remarkably stylish, considering."

"CONSIDERIN'! What does she mean by that?"

"Don't be cross. I suppose she meant considering that they were not as expensive as her own. DO you suppose I could go to that Boston dressmaker, Daniel?"

Captain Dan's reply was slow in coming. He hated to say no; in fact, he said it so seldom that he scarcely knew how. So he temporized.

"Well, Serena," he began, "I--I'd like to have you; you know that. If 'twasn't for the cost I wouldn't hesitate a minute."

"But we have that three thousand dollars."

"Well, we ain't got all of it. Or we shan't have it long. I was footin' up what I owed--what the store owes, I mean--just now, and it come to a pretty high figure. Over twelve hundred, it was. That's GOT to be paid. Then there's Gertie's schoolin' and her board. Course, I never tell her we ain't so well off as we were. You and I agreed she shouldn't know. But it takes a lot of money and--"

Mrs. Dott sat up on the couch. Her eyes snapped. "Oh!" she cried; "money! money! money! It's always money! If only just once I had all the money I wanted, I should be perfectly happy. If I wouldn't GO IT!"

Steps sounded on the front porch, and the patent door bell clicked and clanged.

CHAPTER III

Next morning an astonishing rumor began to circulate through Trumet. It spread with remarkable quickness, and, as it spread, it grew. The Dotts had inherited money! The Dotts were rich! The Dotts were millionaires! Captain Daniel's brother had died and left him fifty thousand dollars! His brother's wife had died and left him a hundred thousand! It was not his brother's wife, but Serena's uncle who had died, and the inheritance was two hundred and fifty thousand at least. By the time the story reached Trumet Neck it seemed to be fairly certain that all the Dott relatives on both sides of the house had passed away, leaving the sole survivors of the family all the money and property in the world, with a few trifling exceptions.

Captain Dan, coming in for dinner,--one must eat, or try to eat, even though the realities of life have been blown away, and one is moving in a sort of dream, with the fear of awakening always present--Captain Dan, coming into the house for dinner, expressed his opinion of Trumet gossip mongers.

"My heavens and earth, Serena!" he cried, sinking into his chair at the table, "am I me, or somebody else? Do I know what I'm doin' or what's happened to me, or don't I?"

Serena, a transformed, flushed, excited Serena, beamed at him across the table.

"I should hope you did, Daniel," she answered.

"Well, if I do, then nobody else does, and if THEY do, I don't. I've heard of more dead relations this forenoon than I ever had alive. And yarns about 'em! and about you and me! My soul and body! Say, did you know you had a cousin-in-law in Californy?"

"I? In California? Nonsense!"

"No nonsense about it. You had one and he was a lunatic or a epileptic or an epizootic or somethin', and lived in a hospital or a palace or a jail, and he was worth four millions or forty, I forget which, and fell out of an automobile or out of a balloon or out of bed--anyhow, it killed him--and--"

"Daniel Dott! DON'T talk so idiotic!"

"Humph! that's nothin' to the idiocy that's been talked to me this forenoon. I've done nothin' for the last hour but say 'No' to folks that come tearin' in to unload lies and ask questions. And some of 'em was people you'd expect to have common sense, too. My head's kind of wobbly this mornin', after the shock that hit it last night, but it's a regular Dan'l Webster's alongside the general run of heads in this town. Aunt Laviny's will has turned Trumet into an asylum, and the patients are all runnin' loose."

"But WHAT foolishness was that about a cousin in California?"

"Twa'n't foolishness, I tell you. You ask any one of a dozen folks you meet outside the post-office now, and they'll all tell you you had one. They might not agree whether 'twas a cousin or a grandmother or a step-child, or whether it lived in Californy or the Cape of Good Hope, but they all know it's dead now, and we've got anywheres from a postage stamp to a hogshead of diamonds. Serena, if you hear yells for help this afternoon, don't pay any attention. It'll only mean that my patience has run out and I'm tryin' to make this community short one devilish fool at least. There'll be enough left; he'll never be missed."

"Daniel, I never saw you so worked up. You must expect people to be excited. I'm excited myself."

The captain wiped his forehead with his napkin. "_I_ ain't exactly a graven image, now that you mention it," he admitted. "But you and I have got some excuse and they ain't. Haven't they been in to see you; or did you lock the doors?"

"I have had callers, of course. Mrs. Berry was here, and Mrs. Tripp, and the Cahoon girls, and Issachar Eldredge's wife. The first four pretended they came on lodge business, and the Eldredge woman to get my recipe for chocolate doughnuts; but, of course, I knew what they really came for. Daniel, HOW do you suppose the news got out so soon? I didn't tell a soul and you promised you wouldn't."

"I didn't, neither. Probably that lawyer man dropped a hint down at the Manonquit House, and that set things goin'. Just heave over one seed of a yarn in most any hotel or boardin' house and you'll have a crop of lies next mornin' that would load a three-master. They come up in the night, like toadstools."

"But you didn't tell anyone how much your Aunt Lavinia left us?"

"You bet I didn't. I told 'em I didn't know yet. I was cal'latin' to hire a couple of dozen men and a boy to count it, and soon's the job was finished I'd get out a proclamation. What did you tell your gang?"

"I simply said," Serena unconsciously drew herself up and spoke with

a gracious dignity; "I said they might quote me as saying it was NOT a million."

Azuba entered from the kitchen, heaving a steaming platter.

"There!" she exclaimed, setting the dish before her employers; "I don't know as clam fritters are what rich folks ought to eat, but I done the best I could. I'm so shook up and trembly this day it's a mercy I didn't fry the platter."

Yes, something had happened to the Dotts, something vastly more wonderful and surprising than falling heir to three thousand dollars and a silver tea-pot. When Captain Daniel shut up the Metropolitan Store the previous evening and started for the house, the bearer of the great news was on his way from the Manonquit House, where he had had supper. When Serena bewailed her fate and expressed a desire for an opportunity, he was almost at the front gate, and the ring of the bell which interrupted her conversation with her husband was the signal that Opportunity, in the person of Mr. Glenn Farwell, Junior, newest member of the firm of Shepley and Farwell, attorneys, of Boston, was at the door.

Mr. Farwell was spruce and brisk and businesslike; also he was young, a fact which he tried to conceal by a rather feeble beard, and much professional dignity of manner and expression. Occasionally, in the heat of conversation, he forgot the dignity; the beard he never forgot. Shown into the Dott sitting-room by Azuba, who, as usual, had neglected to remove her kitchen apron, he bowed politely and inquired if he had the pleasure of addressing Captain and Mrs. Daniel Abner Dott. The captain assured him that he had. Serena was too busy glaring at the apron and its wearer to remember etiquette.

"Won't you--won't you sit down, Mr. er--er--" began the captain.

Mr. Farwell introduced himself, and sat down, as requested. After a glance about the room, which took in the upright piano--purchased second-hand when Gertrude first began her music lessons--the what-not, with its array of shells, corals, miniature ships in bottles, and West Indian curiosities, and the crayon enlargement over the mantel of Captain Solon Dott, Daniel's grandfather, he proceeded directly to business.

"Captain Dott," he said, addressing that gentleman, but bowing politely to Serena to indicate that she was included in the question, "you received a letter from our firm about a week ago, did you not?"

Captain Dan, who had scarcely recovered from his surprise at his caller's identity, shook his head. "As a matter of fact," he stammered, "I--I only got it to-day. It came all right, that is, it got as far as the post-office, but the postmaster, he handed it over to Balaam Hamilton, to bring to me. Well, Balaam is--well, his underpinnin's all right; he wears a number eleven shoe--but his top riggin' is kind of lackin' in spots. You'd understand if you knew him. He put the letter in his pocket and--"

"Mercy!" cut in Serena, impatiently, "what do you suppose Mr. Farwell cares about Balaam Hamilton? He forgot the letter, Mr. Farwell, and we only got it this morning. That is why it hasn't been answered. What about the letter?"

The visitor did not answer directly. "I see," he said. "That letter informed you that Mrs. Lavinia Dott--your aunt, Captain,--was dead, and that we, her legal representatives, having, as we supposed, her will in our possession, and being in charge of her affairs--"

Mrs. Dott interrupted. Her excitement had been growing ever since she learned the visitor's name and, although her husband did not notice the peculiar phrasing of the lawyer's sentence, she did.

"As you supposed?" she repeated. "You did have the will, didn't you?"

"We had a will, one which Mrs. Dott drew some eight or nine years ago. But we received word from Italy only yesterday that there was another, a much more recent one, which superseded the one in our possession. Of course, that being the case, the bequests in the former were not binding upon the estate. That is to say, our will was not a will at all."

Serena gasped. She looked at her husband, and he at her.

"Then we--then she didn't leave us the three thousand dollars?" she cried.

"Or--or the tea-pot?" faltered Captain Dan.

Mr. Farwell smiled. He was having considerable fun out of the situation. However, it would not do to keep possibly profitable clients in suspense too long, so he broke the news he had journeyed from Boston to impart.

"She left you a great deal more than that," he said. "In the former will, her cousin, Mr. Percy Hungerford of Scarford, was the principal legatee. He was a favorite of hers, I believe, and she left the bulk of her property--some hundred and twenty thousand dollars in securities, and her estate at Scarford--to him. But last February it appears that he and she had a falling out. He--Mr. Hungerford--is, so I am told, a good deal of a sport--ahem! that is, he is a young gentleman of fashionable and expensive tastes, and he wrote his aunt, asking for money, rather frequently. The February letter reached her when she was grouchy--er--not well, I mean, and she changed her will, practically disinheriting him. Under the new will he receives twenty thousand dollars in cash. The balance--" Mr. Farwell, who, during this long statement, had interspersed legal dignity of term with an occasional lapse into youthful idiom, now spoke with impressive solemnity,--"the balance," he said, "one hundred thousand in money and securities, and the house at Scarford, which is valued, I believe, at thirty-five thousand more, she leaves to you, as her only other relative, Captain Dott. I am here to congratulate you and to offer you my services and those of the firm, should you desire legal advice."

Having sprung his surprise, Mr. Farwell leaned back in his chair to enjoy the effect of the explosion. The first effect appeared to be the complete stupefaction of his hearers. Those which followed were characteristic.

"My soul and body!" gasped Captain Dan. "I--I--my land of love! And only this mornin' I was scared I couldn't pay my store bills!"

"A hundred thousand dollars!" cried Serena. "And that beautiful house at Scarford! OURS! Oh! oh! oh!"

Mr. Farwell crossed his knees. "A very handsome little windfall," he observed, with condescension.

"We get a hundred thousand!" murmured the captain. "My! I wish Father was alive to know about it. But, say, it's kind of rough on that young Hungerford, after expectin' so much, ain't it now!"

"A hundred thousand!" breathed his wife, her hands clasped. "And that lovely house! Why, we could move to Scarford to-morrow if we wanted to! Yes, and live there! Oh--oh, Daniel! I--I don't know why I'm doing it, but I--I believe I'm going to cry."

Her husband rushed over to the couch and threw his arm about her shoulder.

"Go ahead, old lady," he commanded. "Cry, if you want to. I--I'm goin' to do SOMETHIN' darn ridiculous, myself!"

Thus it was that Fortune and Opportunity came to the Dott door, and it was the news of the visitation, distorted and exaggerated, which set all Trumet by the ears next day.

Azuba's clam fritters were neglected that noon, just as breakfast had been. Neither Captain Dan nor his wife had slept, and they could not eat. They pretended to, they even tried to, but one or the other was certain to break out with an exclamation or a wondering surmise, and the meal was, as the captain said, "all talk and no substantials." They had scarcely risen from the table when the doorbell rang.

Azuba heard it and made her entrance from the kitchen. She had remembered this time to shed the offending apron, but she carried it in her hand.

"I'm a-goin'," she declared; "I'm a-goin', soon's ever I can."

She started for the sitting-room, but the captain stepped in front of her.

"You stay right where you are," he ordered. "I'll answer that bell myself this time."

"Daniel," cried his wife, "what are you going to do?"

"Do? I'm goin' to head off some more fools, that's what I'm goin' to do. They shan't get in here to pester you to death with questions, not if I can help it."

"But, Daniel, you mustn't. You don't know who it may be."

"I don't care."

"Oh, dear me! What are you going to say? You mustn't insult people."

"I shan't insult 'em. I'll tell 'em--I'll tell 'em you're sick and can't see anybody."

"But I'm not sick."

"Then, I am," said Captain Dan. "They make me sick. Shut up, will you?"

addressing the bell, which had rung the second time. "I'll come when I get ready."

He seemed to be quite ready that very moment. At all events he strode from the room, and his anxious wife and the flushed Azuba heard him tramping through the front hall.

"What--WHAT is he going to do?" faltered Serena; "or say?"

Azuba shook her head. "Land knows!" she exclaimed. "I ain't seen him this way since the weasel got into the hen-house. He went for THAT with the hoe-handle. And as for what he said! Well, don't talk to ME!"

But no riot or verbal explosion followed the opening of the door. The anxious listeners in the dining-room heard voices, but they were subdued ones. A moment later Captain Dan returned. He looked troubled.

"It's Barney Black and his wife," he answered, in a whisper. "I couldn't tell THEM to go to thunder. They're in the front room, waitin'. I suppose we'll have to see 'em, won't we?"

Mrs. Dott was hurriedly shaking the wrinkles out of her gown and patting her hair into presentable shape.

"See 'em!" she repeated. "Of course we'll see them. I declare! I think it's real kind of 'em to call. Daniel, do fix your necktie. It's way round under your ear."

They entered the parlor, Serena, outwardly calm, in the lead and her husband following, and tugging at the refractory tie.

Mrs. and Mr. Black--scanning them in the order of their importance--rose as they appeared. Mrs. Black was large and impressive, and gorgeous to view. She did not look her age. Her husband was not as tall as his wife, and did not look his height. Annette swept forward.

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Dott," she gushed, taking Serena's hand in her own gloved one. "We've just heard the news, Phelps and I, and we couldn't resist dropping in to congratulate you. Isn't it wonderful!"

Serena admitted that it was wonderful. "We can hardly believe it yet, ourselves," she said. "But it was real nice of you to come. Do sit down again, won't you? Daniel, get Mr. Black a chair."

Captain Dan and Mr. Black shook hands. "Sit down anywhere, Barney," said the former. "Anywhere but that rocker, I mean; that's got a squeak in the leg."

Mr. Black, who had headed for the rocker, changed his course and sank into an arm chair. The shudder with which his wife heard the word "Barney," and the glare with which Serena favored her husband, were entirely lost upon the latter.

"We had that rocker up in the attic till last month," he observed; "but Serena found out 'twas an antique, and antiques seem to be all the go now-a-days, though you do have to be careful of 'em. I suppose it's all right. We'll be antiques ourselves before many years, and we'll want folks to be careful of us. Hey? Ha! ha! ... Why, what's the matter, Serena?"

Mrs. Dott replied, rather sharply, that "nothing was the matter."

"The rocker isn't very strong," she explained, addressing Mrs. Black. "But it belonged to my great--that is, it has been in our family for a good many years and we think a great deal of it."

Mrs. Black condescendingly expressed her opinion that the rocker was a "dear."

"I love old-fashioned things," she said. "So does Mr. Black. Don't you, Phelps?"

"Yes," replied that gentleman. His love did not appear to be over-enthusiastic.

"But do tell us about your little legacy," went on the lady. "Of course we have heard all sorts of ridiculous stories, but we know better than to believe them. Why, we even heard that you were worth a million. Naturally, THAT was absurd, wasn't it? Ha! ha!"

Captain Dan opened his mouth to reply, but his wife flashed a glance in his direction, and he closed it again.

"Yes," said Serena, addressing Mrs. Black, "that was absurd, of course."

"So I told Phelps. I said that the way in which these country people exaggerated such things was too funny for anything. Why, we heard that your cousin had died--that is, I heard it was a cousin; Phelps heard it was an uncle. An uncle was what you heard, wasn't it, Phelps?"

"Yes," said Phelps. It was his second contribution to the conversation.

"So," went on Mrs. Black, "we didn't know which it was."

She paused, smilingly expectant. Again Captain Dan started to speak, and again a look from his wife caused him to change his mind. Before he had quite recovered, Mrs. Black, who may have noticed the look, had turned to him.

"Wasn't it funny!" she gushed. "I don't wonder you laugh. Here was I saying it was a cousin and Phelps declaring it was an uncle. It was so odd and SO like this funny little town. Do tell us; which was it, really, Captain Dott?"

Daniel, staggering before this point blank attack, hesitated. "Why," he stammered, "it was--it was--" He looked appealingly at Serena.

"Why don't you answer Mrs. Black?" inquired his wife, rather sharply.

"It was my Aunt Laviny," said the captain.

Mrs. Black nodded and smiled.

"Oh! your aunt!" she exclaimed. "There! isn't that funny! And SO characteristic of Trumet. Neither an uncle nor a cousin, but an aunt. What did you say her name was?"

"Laviny?"

"Yes, I know. Laviny--what an odd name! I don't think I ever heard it before. Was the rest of it as odd as that?"

Serena, who had been fidgeting in her chair, cut in here.

"It wasn't Laviny at all," she said. "That is only Daniel's way of pronouncing it. It is what he used to call her when he was a child. A--a sort of pet name, you know."

"Why, Serena! how you talk! She never had any pet name, far's I ever heard. You might as well give a pet name to the Queen of Sheba. She--"

"Hush! it doesn't make any difference. Her name, Mrs. Black, was Lavinia. She was Mrs. Lavinia Dott, and her husband was James Dott, Daniel's father's brother. I shouldn't wonder if you knew her. She has spent most of her time in Europe lately, but her home, her American home, was where you live, in Scarford."

This statement caused a marked sensation. Mrs. Black gasped audibly, and leaned back in her chair. B. Phelps evinced his first sign of interest.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Mrs. Lavinia Dott, of Scarford? You don't say! Why, of course we knew her; that is, we knew who she was. Everybody in Scarford did. Her place is one of the finest in town."

Serena bowed. Life, for her, had not offered many sweeter moments than this.

"Yes," she said, calmly, "so we understand. The place--er--that is, the estate--is a PART--" she emphasized the word--"a PART of what she left to my husband."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Mr. Black. His wife said nothing, but her face was a study.

Captain Dan crossed his knees.

"I remember seein' that place after Uncle Jim first built it," he observed, reminiscently. "I tell you it looked big enough to me! I was only a young feller, just begun goin' to sea, and that house looked big as a town hall, you might say. Ho! ho! when I got inside and was sittin' in the front parlor, I declare I was all feet and hands! didn't know what to do with 'em.... Hey? did you speak, Serena?"

"I was only going to say," replied his wife, "that that was a good while ago, of course. You have been about the world and seen a great deal since. Things look different after we grow up, don't they, Mrs. Black?"

Annette's composure, a portion of it, had returned by this time. Nevertheless, there was an odd note in her voice.

"They do, indeed," she said. "I remember the Dott house, of course. It was very fine, I believe, in its day."

Her husband interrupted. "In its day!" he repeated. "Humph! there's nothing the matter with it now, that I can see. I wish I had as good. Why--"

"Phelps!" snapped Annette, "don't be silly. Mrs. Dott understands what I meant to say. The place is very nice, very attractive, indeed. Perhaps some might think it a bit old-fashioned, but that is a matter of taste."

"Humph! it's on the best street in town. As for being old-fashioned--I thought you just said you loved old-fashioned things. That's what she said, wasn't it, Dan?"

Mrs. Black's gloved fingers twitched, but she ignored the remark entirely. Daniel, too, did not answer, although he smiled in an uncertain fashion. It was Serena who spoke.

"I haven't any doubt it is lovely," she said. "We're just dying to see it, Daniel and I. I hope you can be with us when we do, Mrs. Black. You might suggest some improvements, you know."

"Improvements!" the visitor repeated the word involuntarily. "Improvements! You're not going to LIVE there, are you?"

"I don't know. We may. Now, Daniel, don't argue. You know we haven't made up our minds yet what we shall do. And Scarford is a beautiful city. Mrs. Black has told us so ever so many times. What were you going to say, Mrs. Black?"

The lady addressed looked as if she would like to say several things, particularly to her husband, who was grinning maliciously. But what she did was to smile, a smile of gracious sweetness, and agree that Scarford was beautiful.

"And so is the place, my dear Mrs. Dott," she added. "A very charming, quaint old house. But--you'll excuse my saying so, won't you; you know Phelps and I have had some experience in keeping up a city estate--don't you think it might prove rather expensive for you to maintain?"

Serena's armor was not even dented. "Oh," she said, lightly, "that wouldn't trouble us, I'm sure. Really, we've hardly thought of the expense. The Scarford place wasn't ALL that Aunt Lavinia left us, Mrs. Black."

"Indeed!" rather feebly, "wasn't it?"

"My goodness, no! But there! I mustn't talk about ourselves and our affairs any more. Have you seen the lodge rooms to-day? I must find time to run down there this afternoon for a last look around. I want this open meeting to go off nicely. Who knows--well, I may not have the care of the next one."

Azuba appeared in the doorway.

"The minister and his wife's comin'," she announced.

Mrs. Dott turned.

"The minister and his wife?" she repeated. "The bell hasn't rung, has it? How do you know they're coming here?"

"See 'em through the window," replied Azuba, cheerfully. "They was at the gate quite a spell. She was gettin' her hat straight, and he was helpin' her. Here they be," as the callers' footsteps sounded on the

porch. "Shall I let 'em in?"

"Let them in! Why, of course! Why shouldn't you let them in?"

"Well, I didn't know. The way the cap'n was talkin' when you was havin' dinner, I thought--oh, that reminds me," addressing the horror stricken Daniel, "Sam was in just now and wanted you to come right out to the store. Ezra Taylor's there and he wants another pair of them checkered overalls, same as he had afore."

That evening when, having closed the Metropolitan Store at an early hour, the captain and his wife were on their way to the lodge meeting, Daniel voiced a feeling of perplexity which had disturbed his mind ever since the Blacks' call.

"Say, Serena," he asked, "ain't you and Barney Black's wife friends any more?"

"Why, of course we're friends. What a question that is."

"Humph! didn't seem to me you acted much like friends this afternoon. Slappin' each other back and forth--"

"Slappin' each other! Have you lost your brains altogether? What DO you mean?"

"I don't mean slappin' each other side of the head. 'Tain't likely I meant that. But the way you talked to each other--and the way you looked. And when 'twa'n't her it was me. She as much as asked you four or five times who it was that had died and you wouldn't tell, so, of course, I supposed you didn't want to. And yet, when she asked me and I was backin' and fillin', tryin' to get off the shoals, you barked out why didn't I 'answer her'? That may be sense, but I don't see it, myself."

Serena laughed and squeezed his arm with her own.

"Did I bark?" she asked. "I'm sorry; I didn't mean to. But it did make me cross to have her come sailing in, in that high and mighty way--"

"It's the same way she always sails. I never saw her when she didn't act as if she was the only clipper in the channel and small craft better get out from under her bows."

"I know, you never did like her, although she has been so kind and nice to me and to Gertrude. Why, we, and the minister's family, and Doctor Bradstreet's people, are the only ones, except the summer folks, that she has anything to do with."

The captain muttered that he knew it but that THAT didn't make him like her any better. His wife continued.

"I was a little put out by her to-day," she admitted. "You see, she was SO anxious to find out things, and SO sure we couldn't be very rich, and SO certain we couldn't keep up Aunt Lavinia's big house, that--that I just had to give her as good as she sent."

Daniel chuckled. "You did that all right," he said.

"But I wouldn't hurt her feelings--really hurt them--for the world. I like her and admire her, and I am sure she likes me."

"Humph! All right; only next time you get to admirin' each other I'm goin' out. That kind of admiration makes me nervous. I heard you admirin' Zuba out in the kitchen just before we left."

"Azuba makes me awfully out of patience. She won't do what I tell her; she will wear her apron to the door; she will talk when she shouldn't. Just think what she said about you when the minister called. It was just Providence, and nothing else, that kept her from telling the Blacks what you said and how you acted at dinner. That's it--laugh! I expected you'd think it was funny."

"Well, I give in that it does seem kind of funny to me, now, though it didn't when she started to say it. But you can't stop Zuba talkin' any more than you can a poll parrot. She means well; she's awful good-hearted--yes, and sensible, too, in her way."

"I can't help it. She's got to learn her place. Just think of having her up there at Scarford, behaving as she does."

The captain caught his breath.

"Scarford!" he repeated. "At Scarford! Look here, Serena, what are you talkin' about? You didn't mean what you said to that Black woman about our goin' to Scarford to live?"

"I don't know that I didn't. There! there! don't get excited. I don't say I do mean it, either. Aunt Lavinia's left us that lovely house, hasn't she? We've got it on our hands, haven't we? What are we going to do with it?"

"Why--why, I--I was cal'latin' we'd probably sell it, maybe. We've got our own place here in Trumet. We don't want two places, do we?"

"We might sell this one, at a pinch. No, Daniel, I don't know what we shall do yet awhile. But, one thing I AM sure of--you and I will go to Scarford and LOOK at that house, if nothing more. Now, don't argue, please. We're almost at the meeting. Be sure you don't tell anyone how much money we've got or anything about it. They'll all ask, of course, and they'll all talk about us, but you must expect that. Our position in life has altered, Daniel, and rich folks are always looked at and talked over. Are your shoes clean? Did you bring a handkerchief? Be sure and don't applaud too much when I'm speaking, because last time I was told that Abigail Mayo said if she was married and had a husband she wouldn't order him to clap his hands half off every time his wife opened her mouth. She isn't married and ain't likely to be, but.... Oh, Mrs. Black, I'm SO glad to see you! It's real lovely of you to come so early."

Daniel Dott, as has been intimated, did not share his wife's love for lodge meetings. He attended them because she did, and wished him to, but he was not happy while they were going on. At this one he was distinctly unhappy. He saw Serena and Annette Black exchange greetings as if the little fencing match of the afternoon had been but an exchange of compliments. He saw the two ladies go, arm in arm, to the platform, where sat the "Boston delegates." He nodded to masculine acquaintances

in the crowd, other captives chained, like himself, to their wives' and daughters' chariot wheels. He heard the applause which greeted Serena's opening speech of introduction. He heard the Boston delegates speak, and Mrs. Black's gracious response to the request for a few words from the president of our Scarford Chapter. He heard it all, but, when it was over, he could not have repeated a sentence of all those which had reached his ears.

No, Captain Dan was not happy at this, the most successful "open meeting" ever held by the Trumet Chapter of the Guild of Ladies of Honor. He was thinking, and thinking hard. Aunt Lavinia's will had changed their position in life, so Serena had said. She had said other things, also, and he was beginning, dimly, to realize what they might mean.

CHAPTER IV

"SCARFORD!" screamed the brakeman, throwing open the car door.
"Scarford!"

Mrs. Dott, umbrella in hand, was already in the aisle. Captain Dan, standing between the seats, was struggling to get the suitcase down from the rack above. It was a brand-new suitcase. Serena had declared that their other, the one which had accompanied them on various trips to Boston during the past eight years, was altogether too shabby. She had insisted on buying another, and, the stock in the store not being good enough, had selected this herself from the catalog of a Boston manufacturer. Her umbrella, silk with a silver handle, was new also. So was her hat, her gown and her shoes. So, too, was the captain's hat, and his suit and light overcoat. There was a general air of newness about the Dotts, so apparent, particularly on Daniel's part, that various passengers had nudged each other, winked, and whispered surmises concerning recent marriage and a honeymoon trip.

The suitcase, the buckle of which had caught in the meshes of the rack, giving way, came down unexpectedly and with a thump on the seat. The captain hurriedly lifted it. A stifled laugh from the occupants of adjacent seats reached Serena's ears.

"What is it?" she demanded impatiently. "Aren't you coming? Do hurry."

"I--I'm comin'," stammered her husband, thrusting his fist into the new hat which, as it lay on the seat, had received the weight of the falling suitcase. "I'm comin'. Go ahead! I'll be right along."

He pounded the battered "derby" into more or less presentable shape, clapped it on his head, and, suitcase in hand, followed his wife.

Through the crowd on the platform they passed, through the waiting room and out to the sidewalk. There Captain Dan put down the case, gave the maltreated hat a brush with his sleeve, and looked about him.

"Lively place, ain't it, Serena?" he observed. "Whew! that valise is heavy. Well, where's the next port of call?"

"We'll go to the hotel first. Oh, dear, it's a shame things happened so

we had to come now. In another fortnight the Blacks would have been here and we could have gone right to their house. Mrs. Black felt dreadfully about it. She said so ever so many times."

The captain made no answer. If he had doubts concerning the depths of the Blacks' sorrow he kept them to himself. Picking up the suitcase, he stepped forward to the curb.

"Where are you going?" demanded his wife.

"Why, to the hotel. That's where you wanted to go, wasn't it?"

"Certainly; but how were you going? You don't know where it is."

"No, so I don't. But I can hail one of those electrics and ask the conductor to stop when he got to it. He'd know where 'twas, most likely."

"Electric" is the Down East term for trolley car, lines of which were passing and repassing the station. Daniel waved his disengaged hand to the conductor of the nearest. The car stopped.

"Wait a minute," said Serena quickly. "How do you know that car is going the right way?"

"Hey? Well, of course I don't know, but--"

"Of course you don't. Besides, we don't want to go in an electric. We must take a carriage."

"A carriage? A hack, you mean. What do we want to do that for?"

"Because it's what everyone does."

"No, they don't. Look at all the folks on that electric now. Besides, we--"

"Hi there!" shouted the conductor of the car angrily. "Brace up! Get a move on, will you?"

Mrs. Dott regarded him with dignity.

"We're not coming," she said. "You can go right along."

The car proceeded, the conductor commenting freely and loudly, and the passengers on the broad grin.

"Now, Daniel," said Serena, "you get one of those carriages and we'll go as we ought to. I know we've always gone in the electrics when we were in Boston, but then we didn't feel as if we could afford anything else. Now we can. And don't stop to bargain about the fare. What is fifty cents more or less to US?"

The captain shook his head, but he obeyed orders. A few minutes later they were seated in a cab, drawn by a venerable horse and driven by a man with a hooked nose, and were moving toward the Palatine House, the hostelry recommended by Mrs. Black as the finest in Scarford.

"There!" said Serena, leaning back against the shabby cushions, "this is

better than an electric, isn't it? And when we get to the hotel you'll see the difference it will make in the way they treat us. Mrs. Black says there is everything in a first impression. If people judge by your looks that you're no account they'll treat you that way. But what were you and the driver having such a talk about?"

Captain Dan grinned. "I got the name of the hotel wrong at first," he admitted. "I called it the Palestine House instead of the other thing. The driver thought I was makin' fun of him. It ain't safe to mention Palestine to a feller with a nose like that."

The Palatine House was new and gorgeous; built in the hope of attracting touring automobilists, it was that dreary mistake, a cheap imitation of the swagger metropolitan article. Scarford was not a metropolis, and the imitation in this case was a particularly poor one. However, to the Dotts, its marble-floored lobby and gilded pillars and cornices were grand and imposing. Their room on the third floor looked out upon the street below, and if the view of shops and signs and trucks and trolleys was not beautiful it was, at least, distinctly different from any view in Trumet.

Serena gloried in it.

"Ah!" she sighed, "this is something like. THIS is life! There's something going on here, Daniel. Don't you feel it?"

Daniel was counting his small change.

"What say?" he asked.

His wife repeated her question, raising her voice to carry above the noises of the street.

"Feel it! Yes, yes; and hear it, too. How we're ever goin' to sleep with all that hullabaloo outside I don't know. Don't you suppose we could get a quieter room than this, Serena?"

"I don't want a quiet room. I don't want to sleep. I feel as if I'd been asleep all my life. Now, thank goodness, I am where people are really awake. What are you doing with that money?"

"Oh, just lookin' at it, while I can. I shan't have the chance very long, if the other folks in this town are like that hack driver. A dollar to drive half a mile in that hearse! Why, the whole shebang wa'n't worth more than two dollars, to buy. And then he had the cheek to ask me to give him 'a quarter for himself."

"Yes, that was his tip. We must expect that. Gertrude says she always has to tip the servants and drivers and such at college. Did you give it to him?"

"Who? Me? I told him I was collectin' for a museum, and I'd give him a quarter for the horse, just as it stood--or WHILE it stood. I said he'd better take the offer pretty quick because the critter looked as if 'twould lay down most any minute."

He chuckled. Serena, however, was very solemn.

"Daniel," she said, "I must speak to you again about your language.

You've lived in Trumet so long that you talk just like Azuba, or pretty nearly as bad. You mustn't say 'critter' and 'wa'n't' and 'cal'late.' Do try, won't you, to please me?"

"I'll try, Serena. But I don't see what difference it makes. We DO live in Trumet, don't we?"

"We HAVE lived there. How long we shall--But there, never mind. Just remember as well as you can and get ready now for dinner."

Her husband muttered that he didn't see where the "getting ready" came in; he had on the best he'd got. But he washed his hands and brushed his hair and they descended to the dining-room, where they ate a 'table d'hote' meal, beginning with lukewarm soup and ending with salty ice cream.

They had left Trumet the previous evening, spending the night at Centreboro and taking the early morning train for Scarford. Two weeks had passed since the fateful visit of young Mr. Farwell, and, though the wondrous good fortune which had befallen the Dott family was still wonderful, they were beginning to accept it as a real and established fact. All sorts of things had happened during those two weeks. They had gone to Boston, where they spent the better part of two days with the lawyers, going over the lists of securities, signing papers, and arranging all sorts of business matters. Serena and the attorneys did the most of the arranging. Captain Dan looked on, understanding very little, saying "Yes" or "No" as commanded by his wife, and signing his name whenever and wherever requested.

After another day, spent in the Boston shops, where the new clothes were purchased or ordered, a process which Serena enjoyed hugely and her husband endured with a martyr's patience, they had paid a flying visit to the college town and Gertrude. They found the young lady greatly excited and very happy, but her happiness was principally on their account.

"I'm so glad for you both, Daddy," she told her father. "When I got Mother's letter with the news the very first thing I thought was: 'There! now Father won't have to worry any more about the old store or anything else. He can be comfortable and carefree and happy, as he deserves to be.' And you won't worry, will you, Dad?"

The captain seemed oddly doubtful.

"I shan't if I can help it," he said. "But I'm the most foolish chap that ever lived, in some ways, seems so. When the business was so I had to worry about it all the time I used to set up nights wishin' I didn't own it. Now that we're fixed so it don't make much difference whether I get a profit or not, I find myself frettin' and wonderin' how Nathaniel and Sam are gettin' along. I wake up guessin' how much they've sold since I've been away, and whether we're stuck on those canvas hats and those middy blouses and one thing or 'nother, same as I was afraid we'd be. I've only been away three days altogether, but it seems about a year."

Gertrude smiled and shook her head.

"Why don't you sell out?" she asked. "Or would no one buy? I presume that's it."

"No-o, that ain't it. I don't wonder you think so, but it ain't. Cohen--the fellow that owns the Emporium--was in only the day afore we left, hintin' around about my retirin' and so on. He didn't make any real bid for the business, but he as much as said he'd consider buyin' me out if I'd sell. Your mother, she'd give me fits if she knew it. She wants me to sell; but--but somehow I can't make up my mind to. I've been so used to goin' out to that store every mornin' and--and havin' it on my mind that somehow I hate to give it up. Seems like cuttin' my anchor rope, as you might say."

"I understand. I shall feel much the same, I know, when I graduate and my college work is over. I shall be lost for a time without it; or I should be if it were not for John and--and my other plans. But, whether you keep the store or not, you mustn't worry any more, Daddy dear. Nathaniel is a clever, able fellow; every one says so. You were fortunate to get him. Why don't you engage him permanently? With his experience, he might make a real success of the business. Who knows?"

He could not possibly make less of a success than the captain had made, that was fairly certain, although she did not say so. Nathaniel Bangs was a Trumet young man who had been getting on well with a little business of his own in Brockton, but who, owing to ill health, had been obliged to return to the Cape the year before. Then, health much improved, he was very glad of the opportunity to take charge of the Metropolitan Store during its owners' short absence. Serena had thought of him, and Serena had hired him.

Captain Dan's real reason for not selling out to the astute Mr. Cohen he had kept to himself. His wife's hints concerning Scarford and her discontent in Trumet were his reasons. These were what troubled him most. He liked Trumet; he liked its quiet, easy-going atmosphere; he liked the Trumet people, and they liked him. He had never been in Scarford, but he was certain he should not like the life there, the kind of life lived by the B. Phelps Blacks, at any rate. The Metropolitan Store was, he felt, an anchor holding him fast to the Cape Cod village. If he cut the anchor rope, goodness knows where he might drift.

On the very day of their return from the Boston trip Serena had begun to discuss the visit to Scarford, the visit of inspection to Aunt Lavinia's "estate." They must go, she said; of course they must go. It was their duty to do that, at least. How could they know what to do with the property until they saw it? To all Daniel's feeble objections and excuses she was deaf. Of course they could leave the house. Azuba would take care of that, just as she always did when they were away. As for the store, Nathaniel would be glad to remain as manager indefinitely if they wanted him. Surely he had done splendidly with it while they were in Boston.

He had. During the four days' absence of its proprietor the Metropolitan Store had actually sold more goods for cash than it had sold during any previous week that summer. Bangs was optimistic concerning its prospects. He was loaded with schemes and ideas.

"All you need is a little push and up-to-date methods, Cap'n," he said. "You must advertise a little, and let people know what you've got to sell. That's how I got rid of all that stale candy you had in the boxes behind the showcase. I knew the Methodist folks had a Sunday school picnic on the slate for Tuesday. Kids like candy, but candy costs money."

I got out all that stale stuff, put it up in bags at five cents apiece, and sent the bags and Sam here to the picnic. About every kid had ten cents or so to spend, and it didn't make any difference to him or her whether the candy was fresh or not, so there was enough of it. If a chocolate cream is harder than the rock of Gibraltar it lasts longer when you're eating it, and that's a big advantage to the average young one. Sam came back, sold out, and we've got four dollars and eighty cents right out of the junk pile, as you might call it. The kids are happy and so are we. There's a half-dozen dried-up oilskin coats in the attic that I've got my eye on. The Manonquit House crowd are going off on a final codfishing cruise to-morrow and I'll be on the dock with those coats at a dollar apiece when they sail."

"But--but those coats are old as Methuselah," faltered the captain. "They'll leak, won't they?"

"Not if it's fair weather, they won't. And, if it's rough, they're better than nothing. You can't expect a mackintosh for a dollar."

Daniel's method would have been to refuse selling the coats because they "wouldn't be much good in a no'theaster." When the codfishers returned, enthusiastic because, although it had "drizzled" for fifteen minutes, they had not gotten wet, he scratched his head and regarded his new assistant with awe. Mr. Bangs' services were retained, "for a spell, anyhow," and the captain's principal excuse for not visiting Scarford was knocked in the head. To Scarford they went, and at the Palatine Hotel in Scarford they now were.

The 'table d'hote' meal eaten, the next feature of Mrs. Dott's program was the visit to the Aunt Lavinia homestead. There was a caretaker in charge, so the Boston lawyers told them, and Serena had written him announcing the coming of the new owners. In spite of her husband's protestations, another carriage was hired for the journey. Daniel was strongly in favor of walking or going by trolley.

"Walkin'll be cheaper, Serena," he declared, "and pretty nigh as fast, to say nothin' of bein' more cheerful. A hack always makes me think of funerals and graveyards, and that skeleton of a horse looked like somethin' that had been buried and dug up. Let's walk, will you?"

But Serena would not walk.

"We must get used to carriages," she said. "We may ride in them a great deal from now on. And, besides, we needn't take a horse carriage. We shouldn't have taken one before. Get one of those new kind, the automobile ones. What is it they call them? Oh, yes--taxis."

The taxi gave no opportunity for complaint as far as slowness was concerned. After the first quarter of a mile dodge up the crowded street Captain Dan shouted through the window.

"Hi!" he hailed, addressing the driver. "Hi, you! You've made a mistake, ain't you? You thought we wanted to fly. We don't. Just hit the ground once in a while, so we'll know it's there."

After this the cab moved at a more reasonable speed and its occupants had an opportunity to observe the streets through which they were passing. The business district was being left behind and they were entering the residential section.

Mrs. Dott seized her husband's arm.

"Look!" she cried. "Look, Daniel, quick! Do you see that? That building there!"

"I see it. Some kind of a hall or somethin', ain't it?"

"Yes. And I'm quite sure, from what Mrs. Black said, that it is the hall where the Scarford Guild meets. Yes, it's just as she said it was. I'm SURE that's it. Oh, I'm glad I've seen it! Yes, and Mrs. Black said they lived not very far from the hall. Daniel! Daniel! ask the man if he knows where the Blacks live and if he can show us their house."

Captain Dan obediently made the inquiry.

"Who?" grunted the driver. "Which Black? Black and Cobb, the Wee Waist Corset feller? Sure! I know where he lives. I'll show you."

A few moments later the cab slackened its speed.

"There you are!" said the driver, pointing. "That's Black's house. Built two years ago, 'twas."

Serena and Daniel looked. The house was new and commodious, a trifle ornate in decoration, perhaps, and a bit mixed in architecture, owing to Mrs. Black's insisting upon the embodiment of various features which she had seen in magazines; but on the whole a rather fine house. To the Dotts, of course, it was a mansion.

"My!" said Serena, "to think of our knowing, really knowing, people who live in a house like that! Oh, dear!" with a sigh, "I almost wish I hadn't seen it until after we'd seen our own. We must try not to be disappointed, mustn't we?"

Captain Dan was surprised. "Disappointed?" he said. "Why, what do you mean? As I recollect Aunt Laviny's place, 'twas just as good as that, if not better. You said so yourself. You used to call it a regular palace."

"I know, but don't you think that was because we hadn't seen many fine houses then? I'm afraid that was it. You know Mrs. Black said it was old-fashioned."

"Humph! Barney--What's his name? Phelps, I mean--he said he wished his was as good. Don't you remember he did?"

"Probably he didn't mean it. I'm not going to expect too much, anyway. I'm going to try and think of it as just a nice old place, and then I shan't feel bad when I see it. I'm not going to get my expectations up or be a bit excited."

In proof of the sincerity of this determination, she sat bolt upright on the seat and looked straight before her. Her husband, however, was staring out of the window with all his might.

"Say!" he exclaimed, "this is a mighty nice street, anyhow."

"Is it? Is it really?" For a person not excited, Mrs. Dott's breathing was short and her fingers, tightly clasped in her lap, were trembling.

"You bet it is! Hey! Why, we're slowin' up! We're stoppin'!"

The cab drew up at the curb and came to a standstill.

"Here you are," said the driver. "This is Number 180."

Daniel made no reply. Leaning from the window, he was staring with all his might. Serena's impatience got the better of her.

"Well? WELL?" she burst forth. "What does it look like? Do say something!"

The captain drew back into the carriage.

"My--soul!" he exclaimed presently. "Look, Serena."

Serena looked, and her look was a long one. Then, her face flushed and her eyes shining, she turned to her husband.

"Oh! Oh, Daniel!" she gasped. "It's as good as the Blacks', isn't it? I--I do believe it's better! Get out, quick!"

The caretaker, a middle-aged man with dark hair and mutton-chop whiskers, met them at the top of the stone steps leading to the front door. He bowed low.

"Good afternoon, ma'am," he said. "Good afternoon, sir. Mr. Dott, ain't it, sir? And Mrs. Dott, ma'am. My name is 'Apgood, sir. I was expecting you. Will you be so good as to walk in?"

He threw open the door and, bowing once more, ushered them into the hall, a large, old-fashioned hall with lofty ceiling and a mahogany railed staircase.

"I presume, sir," he said, addressing the captain, "that you and the madam would wish to 'ave me show you about a bit. I was Mrs. Dott's--the late Mrs. Dott's--butler when she resided 'ere, sir, and she was good enough to make me 'er caretaker when she went away, sir."

Captain Dan, rather overawed by Mr. Hapgood's magnificent manner, observed that he wanted to know, adding that he had heard about the caretaking from the lawyers "up to Boston." After an appraising glance at the speaker, Mr. Hapgood addressed his next remark to Serena.

"Shall I show you about the establishment, madam?" he asked.

Serena's composure was a triumph. An inexperienced observer might have supposed she had been accustomed to butlers and establishments all her life.

"Yes," she said loftily, "you can show us."

Mr. Hapgood was a person of wide experience; however, he merely bowed and led the way. Serena followed him, and Captain Dan followed Serena.

A large drawing-room, a library, a very large dining-room, five large bedrooms--"owners' and guest rooms," Mr. Hapgood grandly termed them, to distinguish from the servants' quarters at the rear--billiard room,

bathroom, and back to the hall again.

"You would wish to see the kitchens, I suppose, ma'am," said Mr. Hapgood. "Doubtless Mr. Dott wouldn't care for those, sir. Most gentlemen don't. Perhaps, sir, you'd sit 'ere while the lady and I go through the service portion of the 'ouse, sir."

Daniel, who was rather curious to see the "service portion," partly because he had never heard of one before, hesitated. His wife, however, settled the question. She was conscious of a certain condescension in the Hapgood tone.

"Of course," she said lightly, "Cap'n Dott will not go to the--er--service portion. Such things never interest him. Sit here, Daniel, and wait. Now--" cutting off just in time the "Mister" that was on the tip of her tongue and remembering how butlers in novels were invariably addressed--"Now--er--Hapgood, you can take me to the--ahem--kitchens."

It was somewhat disappointing to find that the plural was merely a bit of verbal embroidery on the caretaking butler's part, and that there was but one kitchen, situated in the basement. However, it was of good size and well furnished with closets, the contents of which stirred Serena's housekeeping curiosity. The inspection of the kitchen and laundry took some time.

Meanwhile, upstairs in the dim front hall, Captain Dan sat upon a most uncomfortable carved teak-wood chair and looked about him. Through the doorway leading to the drawing-room--"front parlor," he would have called it--he could see the ebony grand piano, the ormolu clock, and the bronze statuettes on the marble mantel, the buhl cabinet filled with bric-a-brac, the heavy mahogany-framed and silk-covered sofa. There were oil paintings on the walls, paintings which foreign dealers, recognizing Aunt Lavinia's art craving as a gift of Providence--to them--had sold her at high prices. They were, for the most part, landscapes, inclining strongly to snow-covered mountains, babbling brooks, and cows; or marines in which one-third of vivid sunset illumined two-thirds of placid sea. Of portraits there were two, Uncle Jim Dott in black broadcloth and dignity and Aunt Lavinia Dott in dignity and black satin.

Captain Dan felt strangely out of place alone amid this oppressive grandeur. Again, as on the memorable occasion of his first visit to the house, he was conscious of his hands and feet. Aunt Lavinia's likeness, staring stonily and paintily from the wall, seemed to regard him with disapproval, almost as if she were reading his thoughts. If the portrait could have spoken he might have expected it to say: "Here is the person upon whom all these, my worldly possessions, have been bestowed, and he does not appreciate them. There he sits, upon the teakwood chair which I myself bought in Cairo, and, so far from being grateful for the gifts which my generosity has poured into his lap, he is wondering what in the world to do with them, and wishing himself back in Trumet."

Mrs. Dott and the caretaker reentered the hall.

"Thank you, Mr.--er--Thank you, Hapgood," said the lady. "That will be all for to-day, I think. We will go now. Come, Daniel."

Hapgood bowed. "You would wish me to stay 'ere as I've done, ma'am?" he asked.

"Yes. You may stay, for the present. Cap'n Dott and I will pay your regular wages as long as we need you."

"Thank you kindly, ma'am. And might I take the liberty of saying that if you decide to stay 'ere permanently, ma'am, and need a butler or a manservant about the place, I should be glad to 'ave you consider me for the position. I'm sure it would 'ave pleased the late Mrs. Dott to 'ave you do so, ma'am."

"Well," said the captain, with surprising promptness for him, "you see, Mr. Hapgood, as far as that goes we ain't intendin' to--"

"Hush, Daniel. We don't know what we intend. You know that our plans are not settled as yet. We will consider the matter, Hapgood. Good day."

"Good day, ma'am," said Hapgood. "Good day, sir."

He opened the big front door, bowed them out, and stood respectfully waiting as they descended the steps. The taxi driver, whom the captain had neglected to discharge or pay, was still there at the curb with his vehicle. Serena addressed him.

"The Palatine Hotel," she said, with great distinctness. "Come, Daniel."

They entered the cab. Captain Dan closed the door. The driver, looking up at Mr. Hapgood, grinned broadly. The latter gentleman glanced at the cab window to make sure that his visitors were not watching him, then he winked.

As the cab whizzed through the streets Serena gloated over the splendors of their new possessions. The house was finer than she expected, the furniture was so rich and high-toned, the pictures--did Daniel notice the pictures?

"And the location!" she cried ecstatically. "Right on the very best street in town, and yet, so the Hapgood man said, convenient to the theaters and the clubs and the halls. We saw the Ladies of Honor hall on the way up, Daniel, you remember."

Daniel nodded. "Yes," he admitted, "it's fine and convenient and all. We"--with a sidelong glance at his wife's face--"we ought to get a good rent for it if we decide not to sell; hey, Serena?"

Serena did not answer. When they reached the hotel she left her husband to settle with the driver and took the elevator to their room. A few minutes later the captain joined her. He looked as if suffering from shock.

"My heavens and earth, Serena!" he exclaimed, "what do you suppose that tax hack feller had the cheek to--"

"Sshh! shh!" interrupted the lady, who was reclining upon the couch. "Don't bother me now, Daniel. I don't want to be bothered with common every-day things now; I want to think."

"Common! Everyday! My soul and body! if what that pirate charged me was everyday, I'd be in the poorhouse in a fortni't. Why--"

"Oh, don't! Please don't! Can't you see I am trying to realize that it's true and not a dream. That it has really happened--to ME. Please don't talk. Do go away, can't you? Just go out and take a walk, or something; just for a little while. I want to be alone."

Captain Dan slowly descended the stairs. The elevator, of course, would have been quicker, but he was in no hurry. If he must walk, and it seemed that he must, he might as well begin at once. He descended the stairs to the ground floor of the hotel and wandered aimlessly about through the lobby into the billiard room, and finally to a plate glass door upon which was lettered the word "Rathskeller."

What a Rathskeller might be he did not know, but, as there was another set of letters on the door and those spelled "Push," he pushed.

The Rathskeller was a large room, with a bar at one end and many little tables scattered about. At these tables men were eating, drinking and smoking. A violin, harp and piano, played by a trio of Italians, were doing their worst with a popular melody.

The captain looked about him, selected one of three chairs at an unoccupied table, and sat down. A waiter drifted alongside.

"What'll you have, sir?" inquired the waiter.

"Hey? Oh, I don't know. Give me a cup of coffee."

"Coffee? Yes, sir. Anything to eat?"

"No, I guess not. I've had my dinner."

"Smoke?"

"Well, you might bring me a ten-cent cigar."

The coffee and cigar were brought. Daniel lit the latter, took a sip of the former and listened to the music. This was not taking a walk exactly, but, so far as leaving his wife alone was concerned, it answered the purpose.

The room, already well tenanted, gradually filled. Groups of men entered, stopped to glance at the tape of a sporting news ticker near the bar, exchanged a word or two with the bartenders, and then selected tables. Several times the two vacant chairs at the captain's table were on the point of being taken, but each time the prospective occupants went elsewhere.

At length, however, two young men, laughing and talking rather loudly, sauntered through the room. One of them paused.

"Here are a couple," he said, indicating the chairs.

His companion, an undersized, dapper individual, whose raiment--suit, socks, shirt, shoes, hat and tie--might comprehensively be described as a symphony in brown, paused also, turned and looked at the chairs, then at the table, and finally at the captain.

"Yes," he drawled, regarding the latter fixedly, "so I see. Well, perhaps we can't do better. This place is getting too infernally common,

though. Don't think I shall come here again. If it wasn't that they put up the best cocktail in town I should have quit before. All right, this will have to do, I suppose."

He seated himself in one of the chairs. His friend followed suit. The watchful waiter was on hand immediately.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," he said, bowing obsequiously.

Neither of the young men acknowledged the bow or the greeting, although it was evident that the waiter was an old acquaintance. The symphony in brown did not even turn his head.

"Two dry Martinis," he said. "And mind that they ARE dry. Have Charlie make them himself. If that other fellow does it I'll send them back."

"Yes, sir. All right, sir. Will you have a bit of lunch with them, sir? Caviare sandwich or--"

"No."

"Shall I bring cigars, sir?"

"Lord, no! The last I had here nearly poisoned me. Get the cocktails and be lively about it."

The waiter departed. The young gentleman drew a gold cigarette case from his pocket.

"Here you are," he drawled, proffering the case. "Cigars!" with a contemptuous laugh. "They buy their cigars by the yard, at the rope walk. Fact, Monty; take my word for it."

"Monty" laughed. "That's pretty rough, Tacks," he declared.

"Oh, but it's so. You can actually smell the hemp. Eh? By gad, you can smell it now, can't you?"

Captain Dan was relighting the stump of his "ten-center" which had gone out. He had scarcely noticed the newcomers; his thoughts were far away from Scarford and the Palatine Hotel. Now, however, he suddenly became aware that his tablemates were regarding him and the cigar with apparent amusement. He smiled good naturedly.

"Been runnin' her too low," he observed. "Have to get up steam if I want to be in at the finish."

This nautical remark was received with blank stares. "Monty" turned his shoulder toward the speaker. "Tacks" did not even turn; he continued to stare. The arrival of the cocktails was the next happening of importance.

"I say, Tacks," observed Monty, leaning back in his chair and sipping his Martini, "how are you getting on? Made up your mind what to do?"

"No," shortly.

"Going to fight, are you?"

"No use. The confounded lawyers say I wouldn't have a show."

"Humph! Low-down trick of the old woman's, wasn't it, giving you the shake that way? Everybody thought you were her pet weakness. We used to envy your soft snap. Did you get the go-by altogether?"

"Pretty near. Got a little something, but it was precious little."

"Can you pull through on it?"

"'Twill be a devilish hard pull."

"Too bad, old man. But cheer up! You'll come out on top. Have another one of these things?"

"All right."

More Martinis were ordered. "Monty" and his friend lit fresh cigarettes. The former asked another question.

"Who are the lucky winners?" he inquired. "Some country cousins or other, I know that; but who are they?"

"Oh, I don't know. Yes, I know; but what difference does it make?"

"Isn't there a girl somewhere in the crowd?"

"Yes, but--" He broke off. Captain Dan was regarding him intently.

"Is there anything I can do to make you more comfortable, Uncle?" drawled "Tacks," with bland sarcasm.

Daniel was taken aback.

"Why," he stammered, "I--I don't know's there is."

"Shall I speak a little louder? Possibly that might help. Delighted to oblige, I'm sure."

This was plain enough, certainly. The captain colored. His confusion increased.

"I--I hope you don't think I was listenin' to you and your friend's talk," he protested hastily. "I wasn't. Why, if--if you two would like this table to yourself you can have it just as well as not. I can go somewhere else. You see, I was thinkin'--when you spoke to me--I was thinkin' there was somethin' familiar about your face. Seemed as if I'd seen you somewhere before, that's all; and--"

The young gentleman in brown interrupted him. "You're mistaken," he said, "I was never there." Then, turning to his friend, he added, with an elaborate "Josh Whitcomb" accent: "Monty, 'taters must be lookin' up. All aour folks have come to town to spend their money."

Monty, upon whom, like his companion, the second cocktail--second in this particular sense--there had been others--seemed to be having some effect, laughed uproariously. Even the joker himself deigned to smile. Captain Dan did not smile. He had risen, preparatory to leaving the table; now he slowly sat down again.

"I guess I WAS mistaken," he said gravely. "I guess you're right about my not havin' seen you before. If I had I wouldn't have forgot where."

Monty evidently thought it his turn to be funny.

"You have a good memory, haven't you, Deacon?" he observed.

The captain looked at him.

"That don't necessarily follow, young man," he said. "There's some things you CAN'T forget."

There was a choking sound at the next table; a stout man there seemed to be having trouble in swallowing. Those with him looked strangely happy, considering.

"Tacks" frowned, pushed back his chair and stood up.

"Come on, Monty," he growled. "This place is going to the dogs. They let ANYTHING in here now."

Daniel turned to the stout man and his party.

"That's strange, ain't it?" he said in a tone of grave surprise. "I was just thinkin' that myself."

Then, his cigar smoked to the bitter end, he, too, rose, and, declining the invitations of the stout man and his friends to have something "because he had earned it," he walked out of the Rathskeller and took the elevator to the third floor.

He opened the door of the room gently and entered on tiptoe, for he thought it likely that Serena was taking a nap. She was not, however; on the contrary, she was very wide awake.

"Where have you been?" she demanded. "I've been waiting and waiting for you."

Daniel chuckled.

"I've been down below in a place they call the Rat Cellar, or some such name," he said. "The rats was there, two of 'em, anyhow. And I'd met one of 'em before. I know I have. I wish I could think who he was. A sort of--"

But Serena was not listening.

"Daniel," she interrupted, "it is all settled. I have made up my mind."

Her voice was tremulous with excitement. Captain Dan looked at her.

"Made up your mind?" he repeated. "I want to know! What about?"

"About our plans and our future, Daniel; my opportunity has come, the opportunity I was wishing for. It has been sent to me by Providence, I do believe--and it would be wicked not to take advantage of it. Daniel, you and I must move to Scarford."

The captain gasped.

"Why--why, Serena," he faltered. "What are you talkin' about? DON'T talk so! Move to Scarford! Give up Trumet and--"

"Trumet! Don't mention Trumet to me. Daniel Dott, you'll never get me back to Trumet again--to live there, I mean--never, never, NEVER!"

CHAPTER V

Captain Dan said--Well, it does not matter much what he said. He said a great deal, of course, during that evening and the next morning, and would have kept on saying it all the way to Trumet if his wife had not declined to listen.

"It is no use, Daniel," she declared calmly but firmly. "I have thought it all out and I KNOW it is the right thing for us to do. You will think so, too, one of these days."

"Durned if I will! I tell you, Serena--"

"Hush! you're telling everybody in the car, and THAT isn't necessary, at any rate. Now we won't argue any more until we get home. Then you can say your say; but"--with discouraging candor--"it won't change my decision a single mite. My mind is made up. A higher power than you or me has settled everything for us. We are going to Scarford to live, and we will go just as soon as we can get ready."

And go they did. The captain fought a stubborn battle, surprisingly stubborn and protracted for him, but he surrendered at last. Serena drove him from one line of entrenchments after the other, and, at length, when she had him in the last ditch, where, argument and expostulation unavailing, he could only say, "No! no, I won't, I tell you!" over and over again, she used her most effective weapon, tears, and brought him to terms.

"You don't care," she sobbed. "You don't care for me at all. All you care about is just yourself. You're willing to stay here in this awful place, you're willing to plod along just as you always have; and it doesn't make any difference about my wishes or my hopes, or anything. If you were like most husbands you'd be proud and glad to see me getting on in the world; you'd be glad to give me the chance to be somebody; you'd--"

"There! there! Serena, don't talk so. I'd do anything in this world to please you."

"Hush! hush! I should think you'd be ashamed to say such things. I should think you'd be AFRAID to say them, afraid something would happen to you--you'd be struck down or something. Oh, well! I must be resigned, I suppose. I must give in, just as I always do. I must be satisfied to be miserable and--and--Oh, what shall I do? What SHALL I do?"

Sobs and more sobs, frantic clutchings at the sofa pillows and declarations that she had better die; it would be better for her and ever so much better for everyone else if she were dead. No one would

care.

Poor Daniel, distressed and remorseful, vaguely conscious that he was right, but conscience stricken nevertheless, hoisted the white flag.

"Hush, hush, Serena!" he pleaded. "Land sakes, don't say such things--please don't. I'll do anything you want, of course I will. I'll go to Scarford, if you say so. I was just--"

"I don't ask you to go there forever. I never have asked that. I only ask you to go there and live a while and just see how we like it. That was all I asked, and you knew it. But you won't! you won't!"

"Why, yes I will, too. I'll go--go next week, if you say so. I--I just--"

He got no further. Mrs. Dott, wet-eyed but radiant, lifted her head from the sofa pillow and threw her arms about his neck.

"Will you?" she cried ecstatically. "Will you, Daniel? I knew you would. You're a dear, good man and I love you better than all the world. We will be so happy. You see if we aren't."

The captain was no less doubtful of the happiness than he had ever been, but he tried to smile and to find comfort in the thought that she was happy if he was not.

He had written Gertrude telling of her mother's new notion and asking for advice and counsel. The reply, which came by return mail, did not cheer him as much as he had hoped.

"It was inevitable, I suppose," Gertrude wrote. "I expected it. I was almost certain that Mother would want to live in Scarford. Mrs. Black has been telling her all summer about society and club life and what she calls 'woman's opportunity,' and Mother has come to believe that Scarford is Paradise. You will have to go, I think, Daddy dear. Perhaps it is just as well. Mother won't be satisfied until she has tried it, and perhaps, after she has tried it, she may be glad to come back to Trumet. My advice is to let her find out for herself, but, of course, if you feel sure it is wrong, then you must put your foot down, say no, and stick to it. No one can do that for you; you must do it yourself."

Which was perfectly true, as true as the other fact--namely, that Captain Dan could not "stick to it" in a controversy with his wife, having lost the sticking faculty years before.

But, oddly enough, there was one point upon which he did stick and refused to budge: That point was Azuba's going to Scarford with them. Mrs. Ginn's attitude when she was told of the family exodus was a great surprise. Serena, who broke the news to her, expected grief and lamentations; instead Azuba was delighted.

"Well, now!" she exclaimed. "Ain't that fine! Ain't that splendid! I always wanted to go somewhere's besides Trumet, and now I'm goin'. I always told Labe, my husband, that if there was one thing I was jealous of him about 'twas travelin'. 'You go from Dan to Beersheby,' I says to him, 'any time you want to.' 'Yes,' says he--this was the last time he was to home, three years ago--'Yes,' he says, 'and when I don't want to, too.' 'And I,' I says, 'I have to say stuck here in Trumet like a post

in a rail fence.' 'You look more like the rail, Zubu,' he says--he's always pokin' fun 'cause I ain't fleshy. 'Don't make no difference what I LOOK like,' I says, 'here I be and I ain't never been further than the Brockton cattle show since I was ten year old.' But now I'm goin' to travel at last. My! I'm so tickled I don't know what to do. I'll start in makin' my last fall's hat over this very night. Say, it's a good thing you've got me to help in the goin' and the settlin', ain't it, Sereny--Mrs. Dott, I mean."

In the face of this superb confidence Serena, who had intended leaving Azuba behind, lacked the courage to mention the fact. And when she sought her husband in the store and asked him to do it, he flatly refused.

"What!" he said. "Tell Zuba Ginn we're goin' to cast her adrift! I should say not! Of course we can't do any such thing, Serena."

"But what can we do with her, Daniel? We might leave her here to take care of the place, I suppose, but that would only be for a time, until we find somebody to buy it. Of course we can't run two places, and we'll have to sell this one some time or other."

Daniel, to whom the idea of selling the home of which he had been so proud was unthinkable, ignored the question.

"You couldn't leave her here," he declared. "She wouldn't stay. Zuba's queer--all her tribe are and always was--but she's nobody's fool. She'd know right off you were tryin' to get rid of her. No, it may be all right enough to leave Nate Bangs in charge of the store, because he'd like nothin' better, but you can't leave Zuba in the house."

"Then what can we do with her?"

"Take her with us. She can do housekeepin' in Scarford same as she can here, can't she?"

"Take her with us! Why, Daniel Dott! the very idea! Think of Azuba in a place like that Scarford mansion! Think of her and that dignified, polite Hapgood man together! Think of it!"

The captain seemed to find the thought amusing.

"Say, that would be some fun, wouldn't it?" he chuckled. "I'd risk Zuba, though. He wouldn't do the Grand Panjandrum over her more'n once. I'd risk her to hold up her end."

"What do you think the B. Phelps Blacks would say if they saw Azuba trotting through the grand front hall with her kitchen apron on?"

The mention of the name had an odd effect upon the captain. He straightened in his chair.

"I don't care what they say," he declared. "I don't care what the Blacks would say, nor the Yellows nor the Blues either. If they don't like it they can stay in their own front halls and lock the door. Look here, Serena: Zuba Ginn has been with us ever since Gertie was born; she took care of her when she had the scarlet fever, set up nights and run the risk of catchin' it herself, and all that. The doctor told us that if it hadn't been for Zuba and her care and self-sacrifice and common sense

Gertie would have died. She may be queer and hard to keep in her place, as you call it, and a regular walkin' talkin' machine, and all that. I don't say she ain't. What I do say is she's been good enough for us all these years and she's good enough for me now. She ain't got any folks; her husband is as queer as she is, and only shows up once in two or three years, when he happens to think of it. She ain't got any home but ours, and nobody else to turn to, and I won't cast her adrift just because I've got more money than I did have. I'd be ASHAMED to do it. No, sir! if Zuba Ginn wants to go to Scarford, along with us, she goes, or I don't go myself."

He struck the desk a violent blow with his clenched fist. Serena regarded him with astonishment. It had been a long time since she had seen him like this, not since the old seafaring days.

"Why--why, Daniel," she faltered, "I didn't mean to make you cross. I--I only thought.... Of course, she can go with us if you feel that way."

"That's the way I feel," said her husband shortly. Then, as if suddenly awakening and with a relapse into his usual manner, he added, "Was I cross? I'm real sorry, Serena. Say, don't you want some candy? Nathaniel's just openin' a new case from Boston. Hi, Sam! Sam! bring me a pound box of those Eureka chocolates, will you?"

Serena did not again suggest Azuba's remaining in Trumet. Neither she nor Captain Dan referred to the subject again. Mrs. Dott was, to tell the truth, just a bit frightened; she did not understand her husband's sudden outbreak of determination. And yet the explanation was simple enough. So long as he was the only sufferer, so long as only his own preferences and wishes were pushed aside for those of his wife or daughter, he was meekly passive or, at the most, but moderately rebellious; here, however, was an injustice--or what he considered an injustice--done to someone else, and he "put his foot down" for once, at least.

So, upon the fateful day when, preceded by a wagonload of trunks and bags and boxes, the Dotts once more drove through Scarford's streets to the mansion which was to be their home--permanently, according to Serena; temporarily, so her husband hoped--Azuba accompanied them. And Azuba was wildly excited and tirelessly voluble. Even Captain Dan, the long-suffering, grew weary of her exclamations and chatter at last.

"Say, Zuba," he remonstrated, "is this an all-day service you're givin' us? If it is, I wish you'd take up a collection or somethin', for a change. Mrs. Dott and I are gettin' sort of tired of the sermon."

"Why--why, what do you mean? I was only just sayin' I never see so many folks all at once since that time I was at the Brockton cattle show. I'll bet there's a million right on this street."

"I'll take the bet. Now you start in and count 'em, and let's see who wins. Count 'em to yourself, that's all I ask."

Azuba, with an indignant toss of the "made-over" hat, subsided for the time. But the sight of the Aunt Lavinia mansion, with Mr. Hapgood bowing a welcome from the steps, was too much for her.

"Oh!" she burst forth. "Oh! you don't mean to tell me THAT'S it! Why, it's perfectly grand! And--and there's the minister comin' to call

already! Ain't it LOVELY!"

That night, as they sat down for the first meal in the new abode, a meal cooked by Azuba and served by the light-footed, soft-spoken, deft-handed Hapgood, Serena voiced the exultation she felt.

"There, Daniel," she observed, beaming across the table at her husband, "now you begin to appreciate what it means, don't you. NOW you begin to see the difference."

Captain Dan, glancing up at the obsequious Hapgood standing at his elbow, hesitated.

"Yes, sir?" said Mr. Hapgood anxiously. "What is it you wish, sir?"

"Nothin', nothin'. Why, yes, I tell you: You go out and--and buy me a cigar somewhere. Here's the money."

"Cigar, sir? Yes, sir. What kind do you--"

"Any kind; only get it quick."

Then, as the door closed behind the dignified Hapgood, he added:

"I've got three cigars in my pocket now, but that doesn't matter. I had to send him after somethin'! Say, Serena, is it real necessary to have that undertaker hangin' over us ALL the time? Every time he looks at me I feel as if he was takin' my measure. Has EVERY meal got to be a funeral?"

There was no doubt that the captain noticed the difference. He noticed it more the following day, and more still on each succeeding one.

The next evening the Blacks called--called in state. A note from Mrs. Black, arriving by the morning's post, announced their coming. Serena noted the Black stationery, its quality and the gilded monogram, and resolved to order a supply of her own immediately. Also she bade her husband don his newest and best. She did the same, and when Captain Dan, painfully conscious of a pair of tight shoes, entered the drawing-room he found her already there.

"My!" he exclaimed, regarding her with admiration, "you do look fine, Serena. Is that the one the Boston dressmaker made?"

"Yes. I'm glad you like it."

"Couldn't help likin' it. I can't hardly realize it's my wife that's got it on. Walk around and let me take an observation. Whew! I always said you looked ten years younger than you are. THAT rig don't spell forty-five next January, Serena."

Mrs. Dott sniffed.

"Don't remind me of my age, Daniel," she protested. "It isn't necessary to tell everyone how old I am."

"All right. Nobody'd guess it, anyhow. But how funny you walk. What makes you take such little short steps?"

"I can't help it. This dress--gown, I mean--is so tight I can hardly step at all."

"Have to shake out a reef, won't you? How in the world did you get downstairs--hop?"

"Hush! Don't be foolish. The gown is no tighter than anyone else's. It's the style, Daniel, and you and I must get used to it. Are those your new shoes?"

"They certainly are. Do they look as new as they feel? I walk about the way you do, Serena. Bein' in style ain't all joy, is it?"

"It's better than being out of it. And, Daniel, please remember not to say 'ain't.' I've asked you so many times. We have our opportunity now and so must improve ourselves. You're not keeping store in the country any longer. You are a man of means, living among cultivated society people, and you must try to behave like the ladies and gentlemen you will be called upon to associate with."

"Humph!" doubtfully. "I don't know as I could behave like a lady if I tried. As for the gentleman, if you mean Barney Black--"

"I mean B. Phelps Black. Don't you dare call him Barney to-night. If you do I shall be SO mortified. Hush! Here they are. Very well, Hapgood. You may show them in."

Even Serena's new gown, fine as it was and proud as she had been of it, lost something of its glory and sank into a modest second place when Annette appeared. Mrs. Black had dressed for the occasion. Also, she had insisted upon her husband's dressing.

"What in blazes must I climb into a dress suit for?" demanded that gentleman grumpily. "Going to call on Dan Dott and his wife. You don't expect Dan to be wearing a dress suit, do you? He never wore one in his life."

"It doesn't make any difference what he wears. I want you to go in evening dress."

"But, confound it, Annette, we've been calling on those people all summer."

"THAT was in the country; this is not. Don't you SEE, Phelps? Can't you understand? Those Dotts have come here to live. I did all I could to prevent it, but--"

"WHAT?" Mr. Black interrupted with an amazed protest. "Did all you could to prevent it! Why, you used to preach Scarford to Serena Dott from morning till night. You were always telling her how much better it was than Trumet. I don't believe she would ever have thought of coming here if it hadn't been for you."

Annette stamped her foot impatiently. "Don't you suppose I know it?" she demanded. "That was when I never imagined there was any chance of their really coming. But now they have come and we've got to be with them to some extent. We've GOT to; we can't get out of it. That is why I want them to see how people of our class dress. I can't TELL her that her clothes are a sight, as country as a green pumpkin, but I can show

her mine, and she's clever enough to understand. And you can show her husband. Not that that will do much good, I'm afraid. HE is the real dreadful part of the thing. Goodness knows what he may say or do at any time!"

Phelps grinned. Nevertheless, he donned the dress suit.

Mrs. Black had another reason, one which she did not mention, for making this, their first, call upon the Dotts in their new home a ceremonial occasion. It was true that they would be obliged to associate with these acquaintances from the country more or less; the commonest politeness required that, considering all that had gone before. But she meant there should be no misunderstanding of the relations between the families. In Trumet she had made Mrs. Dott her protegee because it was her nature to patronize, and Serena had not resented the patronage. Now circumstances were quite different; now the Dotts possessed quite as much worldly wealth as the Blacks, but Annette did not intend to let Serena presume upon that. No, indeed! She intended, not only by the grandeur of her raiment and that of her husband, but by her tone and manner, to make perfectly plain the fact that the acquaintanceship was still a great condescension on her part and did not imply equality in the least.

But this lofty attitude was destined to be shaken before the evening was over. The first shock came at the very beginning, and Mr. Hapgood was responsible for it. Annette had referred, during the Trumet acquaintanceship, to her "staff of servants," and had spoken casually of her cook and second girl and laundress and "man," as if the quartette were permanent fixtures in the Black establishment. As a matter of fact, the only fixtures were the cook and second girl. The laundress came in on Mondays and Tuesdays to do the washing and ironing, and the "man" acted as janitor's helper at the factory three days of the week. The chauffeur was but a summer flourish; B. Phelps drove his own car eight months in the year.

So when the door of the Dott mansion was opened by a butler--and such a dignified, polite, imposing butler--Mrs. Black's soul was shaken by a twinge of envy. The second shock was Serena's appearance and the calm graciousness of her demeanor. The Boston gown was not as grand, as prodigal of lace and embroidery, as was the visitor's, but it was in the latest fashion and Serena wore it as if she had been used to such creations all her life. Neither was she overawed or flurried when her callers entered. Serena had read a good deal, had observed as much as her limited opportunities would allow, and was naturally a clever woman in many ways.

"Why, how do you do, Mrs. Black?" she said. "It's so good of you to come. And to bring Mr. Black, too. You must take off your things. Yes, you must. Hapgood, take the lady's wraps. Daniel!"

The captain, who, not being used to butlers and lacking much of his wife's presence of mind, had started forward to assist with the wraps, stopped short.

"Yes, Serena?" he faltered.

"Can't you ask Mr. Black to sit down?"

"Hey? Why, course I can. I judged he was goin' to sit down anyway. Wasn't figgerin' to stand up all the evenin', was you, Bar--er--Phelps?"

"No," replied Mr. Black. To prove it he selected the most comfortable chair in the room.

"I had such a time to get Phelps to come," declared Annette, sinking, with a rustle, into the next best chair. "He wanted to see you both, of course, and to welcome you to Scarford, but he is SO busy and has so many engagements. If it isn't a directors' meeting it is a house committee at the club, or--or something. You should be thankful that your husband is not a man of affairs and constantly in demand. It was a club meeting to-night, wasn't it, Phelps, dear?"

"'Twas a stag dinner," observed Mr. Black. "Say, Dan, I'll have to take you to one of 'em some time. It's a good bunch of fellows and we have some of the cleverest vaudeville stunts afterward that you ever saw. Last week there were a couple of coons that--"

"Phelps!" Annette interrupted tartly, "you needn't go into details. I don't imagine Captain and Mrs. Dott will be greatly interested. What a charming old room this is, isn't it? SO quaint! Everything looks as if it had been here a hundred years."

Before Serena could frame a reply to this back-handed compliment the unconscious B. Phelps removed the greater part of its sting by observing:

"That butler of yours looks as if he had been here a thousand. I felt as if George the First was opening the door for me. He's a star, all right. Did he come with the place?"

Mrs. Dott explained that Hapgood was one of Aunt Lavinia's old servants. "She thought the world of him. Daniel and I feel perfectly safe in leaving everything to him. Auntie found him somewhere abroad--working for a lord or a count or something, I believe--and brought him over. He is pretty expensive, his wages, I mean, but he is worth it all. Don't you think so?"

Yes, Mrs. Black found it much more difficult to patronize than she expected, and Serena was correspondingly happy. But the crowning triumph came later. The doorbell rang, and Hapgood entered the drawing-room bearing a tray upon which were several cards. He bent and whispered respectfully.

Mrs. Dott was evidently surprised and startled.

"Who?" she asked.

Hapgood whispered again.

Serena rose. "Yes, of course," she said nervously. "Yes, certainly. I declare, I--"

"What's up?" asked her husband, his curiosity aroused. "Nothin' wrong, is there? What's that he's bringin' you on that thing?"

He referred to the cards and the tray. His wife, who had caught a glimpse of Mrs. Black's face, fought down her nervousness and announced with dignified composure.

"Some more callers, that's all, Daniel," she said. "Oh, you mustn't go, Mrs. Black. You know them, I'm sure. I've heard you speak of 'em--of them often. It's"--referring to the cards--"the Honorable Oscar Fenholtz and Mrs. Fenholtz. Ask them right in, Hapgood. Daniel, get up!"

Daniel hurriedly obeyed orders. Mr. Black also rose.

"The Fenholtzes!" he observed in a tone of surprise. "Say, Dan, I didn't know you knew them. Annette didn't say anything about it."

Annette hadn't known of it; her expression showed that. The Honorable and Mrs. Fenholtz were Scarford's wealthiest citizens. Mr. Fenholtz was proprietor of a large brewery and was an ex-mayor. His wife was prominent socially; as prominent as Mrs. Black hoped to be some day.

Hapgood reappeared, ushering in the new arrivals. The Honorable Oscar was plump and florid and good-natured. He wore a business suit and his shoes were not patent leathers. Mrs. Fenholtz was likewise plump. Her gown, in comparison with Annette's, or even Serena's, was extremely plain and old-fashioned.

She hastened over to where Serena was standing and extended her hand.

"How do you do, Mrs. Dott?" she said pleasantly. "Welcome to Scarford. You and I have never met, of course, but I used to know Mrs. Lavinia Dott very well indeed. And this is Mr. Dott, I suppose. How do you do? And here is my husband. Oscar, these are our new neighbors."

Mr. Fenholtz and the captain shook hands. Captain Dan felt his embarrassment disappearing under the influence of that hearty shake.

"I suppose you scarcely expected callers--or calls from strangers--so soon," went on Mrs. Fenholtz. "But, you see, I hope we shan't be strangers after this. I couldn't bear to think of you all alone here in this great house in a strange place, and so I told Oscar that he and I must run in. We live near here, only on the next corner."

"I said you would be having your after-dinner smoke, Mr. Dott," explained the Honorable, with a smile and a Teutonic accent. "I said you would wish we was ovid instead of in; but Olga would not have it so. And, when the women say yes, we don't say no. Eh; what is the use?" He chuckled.

Captain Dan grinned. "That's right," he said. "No use for the fo'mast hand to contradict the skipper."

Mrs. Black stepped forward.

"How do you do, Mrs. Fenholtz?" she said with unctiousness.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Serena. "I--I'm forgetting everything. But you know Mr. and Mrs. Black, don't you, Mrs. Fenholtz?"

Mrs. Fenholtz turned.

"How do you do, Mrs. Black?" she said. Her tone lacked the enthusiasm of Annette's.

"Hello, Black," said her husband. "What are you doing here? I thought

you would be at the club, listening to the--what is it?--the cabaret. Py George, my wife says I shall not go any more! She says it is no place for a settled man so old as I am. Ho! ho! Yet I tell her the stag dinner is good for the beer business."

Before B. Phelps could answer, Mrs. Black spoke.

"He wanted to go, Mr. Fenholtz," she declared. "But he felt, as I did, that our first duty was here. Captain and Mrs. Dott are old friends of ours. We meet them every year at the Cape; we have a summer home there, you know."

Fenholtz seemed interested. "That is so," he said. "I forgot. Dott, are you one of those Cape Cod skippers they tell me about? I am glad of it. I have got a boat myself down in Narragansett Bay. One of those gruisin' launches, they call them. But this one is like the women, it will guise only where and when it wants to, and not where I want to at all. There is something the matter with the engine always. I have had egsperts--ah, those egsperts!--they are egsperts only in getting the money. When they are there it will go beautifully; but when they have left it will not go at all. I wish you could see it."

Captain Dan was interested, too.

"Well," he said, "I'd like to, first rate. I've got a boat of my own back home; that is, I used to have her. She was a twenty-five foot cat and she had a five-horsepower auxiliary in her. I had considerable experience with that engine. Course, I ain't what you'd call an expert."

"I am glad of that. Now I will explain about this drouble of mine."

He went on to explain. In five minutes he and the captain were head over heels in spark plugs and batteries and valves and cylinders. Mr. Black endeavored to help out with quotations from his experience as a motorist, but his suggestions, not being of a nautical nature, were ignored for the most part. After a time he lost interest and settled back in his chair.

Meanwhile the three ladies were engrossed in other matters. Mrs. Fenholtz asked to be shown the house; she had not seen it for a long time, she said, and was much interested. Annette suddenly remembered that, she also was "mad" to see it. So Serena led a tour of inspection, in which Mr. Hapgood officiated as assistant pilot and superintendent of lighting.

After the tour was at an end, and just before the party descended to the drawing-room, Mrs. Fenholtz turned to Serena and said:

"Mrs. Dott, are you interested in club matters; in women's clubs, I mean?"

Serena's answer was a prompt one.

"Indeed I am," she said. "I have always been interested in them. In fact, I am president of the Trumet Chapter; that is, I was; of course, I resigned when I came here."

Mrs. Fenholtz looked puzzled.

"Trumet Chapter?" she repeated.

"Why, yes, the Chapter of the Guild of the Ladies of Honor. The order Mrs. Black belongs to."

"Oh!" in a slightly different tone. "Oh, yes, I see."

"I'm terribly interested in THAT," declared Serena enthusiastically. "If you knew the hours and hours I have put in working for the Guild. It is a splendid movement; don't you think so?"

"Why--why, I have no doubt it is. I don't belong to it myself. I was thinking of our local club, our Scarford women's club, when I spoke. I thought perhaps you might care to attend a meeting of that with me."

"I should love--" began Serena, and stopped.

Mrs. Black, who was standing behind Mrs. Fenholtz, was shaking her head. The last-named lady noticed her hostess' hesitation.

"But of course," she went on, "if you are interested in the Ladies of Honor you would no doubt prefer visiting a meeting of theirs. In that case Mrs. Black could help you more than I. She is vice-president of the Scarford Branch, I think. You are vice-president, aren't you, Mrs. Black?"

Annette colored slightly.

"Why--why, yes," she admitted; "I am."

Serena was surprised.

"Vice-president?" she repeated. "Vice-president--I--I--must have made a dreadful mistake. I introduced you as president at that Trumet meeting. I certainly thought you were president."

Now, as a matter of fact, if Mrs. Black had not specifically said that she was president of the Scarford Chapter, she had led her acquaintances in Trumet to infer that she was; at all events, she had not corrected Serena's misapprehension on the night of the meeting. She hastened to do so now.

"Oh, no!" she said. "I noticed that you made a mistake when you introduced me, but, of course, I could hardly correct you publicly, and, when it was all over, I forgot. I am only vice-president, just as Mrs. Fenholtz says."

Mrs. Fenholtz smiled. "Well, I am not even an officeholder in our club," she said, "although I was at one time. I have no doubt you will prefer to be introduced by a vice-president rather than a mere member; and I am sure Mrs. Black is planning for you to attend one of the Guild meetings, so I mustn't interfere."

Annette was visibly flurried. The Scarford Chapter was the one subject which she had carefully avoided that evening. But between it and the Woman's Club there was a bitter rivalry, and, although she had not been at all anxious to act as sponsor for her friend from the country, now that Mrs. Fenholtz had offered to do so and had placed the responsibility squarely on her shoulders, she could not dodge.

"Why--why, of course," she said. "That was understood. We have had so many things to talk about this evening that I had really forgotten it, my dear Mrs. Dott. I had indeed! When," she hesitated, "when could you make it convenient to attend one of our meetings? Of course I know how busy you are just now in your new home, and I shall not be unreasonable. I shouldn't, of course, expect you to attend the NEXT meeting."

"Oh," said the unconscious Serena, "I'm not so busy as all that. I could go to the next meeting just as well as not. I should love to."

They entered the drawing-room, to find Captain Dan and the Honorable Oscar still deep in the engine discussion and Mr. Black sound asleep in his chair. Roused by his indignant wife, he drowsily inquired if it was time to get up, and then, becoming aware of the realities of the situation, hastily explained that he had been thinking about business affairs and had forgotten where he was.

"Going, Annette, are you?" he asked.

Annette tartly observed that she was going, and added that she judged it high time to do so. Mrs. Fenholtz said that she and her husband must be going, also.

"But we shall hope to see a great deal of you and Mr.--I should say Captain Dott," she said. "You must dine with us very soon. I will set an evening and you mustn't say no."

"That is right," said Mr. Fenholtz heartily. "Captain, some of these days you and I will take a couple of days and go down and look at that boat. If she does not go then, we will put an 'egspert' in her and sink them both. What?"

Altogether, it was a wonderful evening. The only fly in the ointment was Azuba, who appeared just as the visitors were at the door, to announce that "that foolhead of a grocer's boy" hadn't brought the things she ordered and what they was going to do for breakfast she didn't know.

"I could give you b'iled eggs," she added, "but Captain Dan! I made such a fuss about them we had yesterday that I didn't dast to do it without askin' you. I wanted to have some picked-up fish, but they didn't keep none but the hashed-up kind that comes in pasteboard boxes, and I'd just as soon eat hay as that."

On the way home Mrs. Black divided her discourse into two parts, one a scorching of her husband for falling asleep and making her ridiculous before the Fenholtzes, and the other a sort of irritated soliloquy concerning "those Dott's" and the way in which they had been loaded upon her shoulders.

"I did my best to keep the Guild out of the conversation," she said, "but that Fenholtz woman had to drag it in, and now, of course, I've got to take that Dott person to the next meeting and introduce her to everybody, and I suppose I shall have to see that she is made a member. Oh, dear! I almost wish I had never seen Trumet."

B. Phelps grunted. "Humph!" he said. "If the Fenholtzes take them up I don't see what you've got to kick about. You've been trying to get in the Fenholtz set yourself for the last three years. Maybe you can do it

now."

CHAPTER VI

The Scarford Chapter of the Guild of the Ladies of Honor was not as large a body as Mrs. Black in the exuberance of her Trumet conversation had led Serena to think. In reality, its membership was less than a hundred. It was formed in the beginning by a number of seceders from the local Women's Club, who, disappointed in their office-seeking ambitions and deeming the club old-fashioned and old-fogyish in its ideas, had elected to form an organization of their own. They had affiliated with the national order of the Ladies of Honor, chiefly because of the opportunity which such a body offered for office holding and notoriety. The members were not drawn from the oldest families of Scarford nor from those whose social position was established. They were chiefly the wives and daughters of men who had made money rather suddenly; would-be geniuses whose genius had not been recognized as yet; women to whom public speaking and publicity were as the breath of their nostrils; extravagants and social climbers of all sorts.

The purposes of the organization, outside those specified in the constitution of the parent body, were rather vague. Ex-Mayor Fenholtz expressed a rather general opinion when he said:

"The Ladies of Honor? Sure! it is a place where the women go who think their husbands don't appreciate them. If I was one of those husbands I should appreciate their having that place. They might stay at home if they didn't. That would be a calamity."

The ladies of the Scarford Chapter made it a point to be always abreast of the times. Theirs was not a suffrage organization because, as many of them said, the belief in suffrage was so common nowadays. Their motto was "Advancement." Just what sort of advancement seemed to make little difference.

The next meeting--that is, the meeting to which Serena had been invited--was one of the few at which men were permitted to be present. The Blacks called at the Dott mansion with the car, Mr. Black not acting as driver this time, and the journey to the hall was made in that vehicle. It was not a lively journey, so Captain Dan thought. He and B. Phelps occupied the folding seats facing the two ladies and Mr. Black maintained a gloomy silence all the way. As for Annette and Serena, they talked and talked upon subjects miles above the head of the captain. Mrs. Black did most of the talking; Serena was content to listen and pretend to understand.

"This is to be an open meeting, Mrs. Dott," said Annette graciously. "You see, we have open meetings, just as you do in Trumet, although I doubt if you find much resemblance between the two. You'd scarcely expect that, would you? Ha! ha! It is a good thing," she added, addressing the occupants of the carriage in general, "for these husbands of ours to be shown occasionally what their wives are capable of. Here is our Chapter building. Phelps, give Mrs. Dott your arm."

The Chapter building proved to be not quite up to Serena's expectation. It was a building, of course, but the Chapter occupied only two or three

rooms on the third floor, the other floors being occupied by offices of various sorts. The largest room, that which Mrs. Black dignified by the title of "Assembly Hall," was partially filled when they entered. Some sixty women of various ages, with a sprinkling of men among them, occupied the chairs on the floor. Upon the speakers' platform half a dozen ladies in radiant attire were chatting volubly with another, an imposing creature in crimson silk, who surveyed the audience through a gold lorgnette, and whose general appearance reminded Daniel of one of the stuffed armchairs in the parlor of their new home.

"That is Mrs. Cornish, the speaker of the evening," whispered Annette. "She is one of our most brilliant members."

"Yes," replied Dan'l, to whom the information had been imparted, and upon whom the crimson silk had made an impression; "yes, she--she does look sort of--sort of brilliant."

"But I thought the Chapter was larger than this," said the puzzled Mrs. Dott. "I thought Scarford had one of the largest Chapters."

"Oh, no, not the largest, merely one of the best. Our motto always has been quality not quantity. And now will you excuse me? They are waiting for me on the platform. I will see you when the open meeting is over. Phelps, find good seats for Mr. and Mrs. Dott."

She bustled away to the platform. The gloomy B. Phelps found seats for the guests and himself and sank heavily down beside them. Daniel, who had been gazing about him with curiosity, whispered a question.

"What do they do at these things, Barney--Phelps, I mean?" he asked. "Are they like lodge meetings at home? This is my first trip here, you know."

"Humph!" grunted his companion. "You're in luck."

"Talk, don't they?"

"Talk! Good Lord! Say, Dan, if I get to sleep and you notice Annette looking this way, nudge me, that's a good fellow."

He settled himself in his chair and closed his eyes. Daniel turned to his wife.

"Serena," he murmured. "Say, Serena, don't you think it is a queer-lookin' crowd? Seems to me I never saw such clothes or so many different kinds of hair. Look at that woman's skirt. It's tore all up one side."

"Sssh! Don't speak so loud. That's the latest style."

"What! THAT? Well, I--"

"Sssh! It's the latest style, I tell you. Haven't you seen the fashion magazines? All the new dresses are made that way."

"Yours ain't."

"Well, I--I'm not as young as that woman is."

"You wouldn't wear a thing like that if you were as young as Gertie; and she wouldn't either, not if I saw it first. I never saw such folks as these at Trumet."

"Of course you didn't. Trumet isn't Scarford. We are in society now, Daniel. We mustn't show our ignorance."

"Humph! I'd rather show my ignorance than--Hello, the doin's are goin' to commence."

The Chapter president, a Mrs. Lake, advanced to the desk, smote it fiercely with a gavel and demanded order. The hall, which had been buzzing like a colony of June bugs, gradually grew still. Then Mrs. Lake opened the meeting. She delivered a short speech. Mrs. Black, in lieu of the secretary, who was absent, read the minutes. Then there were motions and amendments and excited calls for recognition from "Madam President." It was livelier than Daniel had expected.

But soon the woman in crimson silk was introduced. Mrs. Cornish bowed in recognition of the gloved applause, and proceeded to talk... and talk... and talk....

At first Captain Dan endeavored to pay strict attention to the address. Its title was "The Modern Tendency," and the tendency in this case seemed to be to say as much as possible about nothing in particular.

Daniel found his attention wandering and his eyes closing. They opened at intervals as the applause burst forth, but they closed between bursts. The tremendous enthusiasm at the end, however, awoke him for good, and he remained awake until the close of the "open meeting," a marked contrast to Mr. Black, who slumbered to the finish.

When it was over Annette descended from the platform and came hurrying to them.

"How did you enjoy it, Captain Dott?" she purred.

Daniel rather dubiously admitted that he guessed 'twas first rate, far's he could make it out. His wife was enthusiastic; she affirmed that it was splendid.

"I'm sure we couldn't help enjoying it, Mrs. Black," she said. "Everyone of us. Didn't you enjoy it, Mr. Black?"

"Sure!" replied Phelps promptly. "Great stuff!"

His wife swooped upon him like a swallow on a fly.

"You?" she snorted contemptuously. "You didn't hear a word of it. I only hope Mrs. Cornish wasn't watching you, as I was. And now," she added, turning to Serena, "comes the other part, the important part. Captain Dott, there is to be a short business meeting in a few minutes, and men are, of course, excluded. Phelps, will you have James drive Captain Dott home? You had better go with him, and then come back again and wait for us. Captain Dott, I am going to borrow your wife for a short time."

Daniel, not knowing exactly what to say, said nothing. Phelps seized his arm and led him down to the carriage. The driver received his instructions and the homeward ride began.

"I say, Barney," observed Daniel, after waiting for his escort to volunteer a word or two, "are all their meetings like that?"

Mr. Black snorted. "No," he declared; "some are a d----d sight worse."

It was after eleven when Serena returned. Her face was flushed and shining with excitement. She did not wait to remove her hat, but rushed into the parlor where her husband sat in lonely magnificence. The solicitous Hapgood, who had happened in every few minutes to see if his employer "wished anything," had been ordered to "go aloft and turn in." The tone in which the order was given made an impression and Hapgood had obeyed.

"Oh, Daniel!" she cried. "What do you think? I've been made a member of the Chapter!"

Captain Dan should perhaps have been enthusiastic. If he was, he suppressed his feelings wonderfully.

"Have you, Serena?" he observed. "I want to know!"

He listened while his wife dilated upon the wonderful happenings at the meeting and the glorious consequences which she felt sure were to follow. Just before putting out the light he asked one more question.

"That--that Mrs. Lake?" he said. "She's a grass widow, ain't she--isn't she, I mean?"

"Yes, what of it?"

"Oh, nothing. Only I thought you were kind of prejudiced against--against--"

"I've had a good many prejudices, I suppose, like other people. But Mrs. Lake's husband was a brute; Mrs. Black told me so. He must have been, for she is perfectly lovely. I've met them all, and they are ALL lovely. They're going to call and--and everything. Oh, Daniel, this means so much to us!"

Captain Dan turned out the gas.

"Yes, Serena," he said slowly. "I shouldn't wonder if it did."

The calls began the very next afternoon. Mrs. Black, having made up her mind that the taking of the Dotts under her wing was a necessity, made a virtue of that necessity and explained to her fellow members of Scarford Chapter that Serena and Daniel were really very nice people. "A little countrified, of course. You must expect that. But they are very kind hearted and immensely wealthy--oh, immensely." She was kind enough to add that Serena was quite an exceptional person and an advanced thinker, considering her opportunities. "The club people were going to take them up, and so I felt that we should get in first," she explained. "If they should prove to be impossible we can drop them at any time, of course."

In making this explanation she did not mention the Fenholtzes, and yet if it had not been for the call of the Honorable Oscar and his wife it is extremely doubtful if Serena would have become a member of Scarford Chapter so soon. Also it is doubtful if the little dinner given by the

Blacks to Mr. and Mrs. Dott would have taken place within the week. At that dinner Captain Dan wore his first dress suit. He bought it ready made at one of the Scarford shops and it fitted him remarkably well, considering. What he could not do, however, was to feel at ease in it.

"Good land, Serena!" he said, when the dressing was completed and they were about to start for the dinner, "don't pick at me so everlastin'ly. Don't you suppose I know I look as stiff and awkward as if I'd froze? You won't let me put my hands in my pockets, and all I can do is hang 'em around loose and think about 'em, and this blessed collar is so high I can't scarcely get my chin over it. I'm doin' my best, so don't keep remindin' me what I look like all the time."

"I don't care what you say, Daniel," declared his wife. "The clothes are just what you ought to wear, and if you would only forget them for a little while you would look all right."

"But I can't forget. I know the clothes are all right. It's me that's all wrong. My red face stickin' over the top of this collar looks like a fireman's shirt on a white fence. I tell you I ain't used to this kind of thing. I wasn't born to it and it don't come natural to me."

"Neither was Mr. Black 'born to it,' but he has got used to it and so can you if you will try."

"Oh, I'll try. But I'm beginnin' awful late in life. I know you'll be ashamed of me, Serena. You ought to have a different husband."

"I don't want a different one. I wouldn't change you for anybody. But I do think you ought to try and help me as much as you can. My chance has just come; I am only just beginning and I mean to go on and improve myself and our position in life all I can. All I ask you to do is not to hold me back by complaining."

The "little dinner" was not as little as it might have been. Annette had taken pains to make it as elaborate and as costly an affair as she could. This was not solely on the Dotts' account. She had invited Mr. and Mrs. Fenholtz and the impression was to be made upon them, if possible. But, unfortunately, the Fenholtzes did not attend. Mrs. Fenholtz wrote that she had a prior engagement and sent regrets, just as she had previously done on the occasions of Mrs. Black's other "little" functions.

However, the leading lights of Scarford Chapter attended and the display of gowns and coiffures was more varied and elaborate than at the open meeting. Serena, seated at the right hand of B. Phelps, was in her glory. She felt that at last she was in touch with the real thing. Daniel, sandwiched between Annete and Mrs. Lake, was not as happy. The necessity of forgetting his clothes and remembering his grammar was a heavy burden. His conversation was limited to "Yes" and "No" and "I shouldn't wonder," and after a time the ladies ceased in their efforts to make him talk and carried on an animated dialogue across his shirt front.

After dinner there was music and bridge. Daniel was fond of music, but most of the songs, sung by a thin young lady with a great deal of hair and a decollete gown, were in a language which he did not understand, and the piano solos seemed to him to be made up of noise and gymnastics with very little melody. He watched Serena, however, who, in turn, was

watching Mrs. Lake and the rest; when they applauded, she applauded and the captain followed suit.

Bridge was an unknown quantity to both of them, and they sat and looked on while Mrs. Black made it "without" and found fault with her partner when they lost. The thin young lady, who had obliged with the vocal selections, asked the captain if he played "nullo." Daniel, who was not sure whether "nullo" was a musical instrument or a game, replied that he wasn't sure, but he didn't think he did; after which he retired into the corner to avoid further questioning.

They reached home about two o'clock, and the captain fell sound asleep in the taxi and had to be shaken into consciousness when the machine reached the Dott door.

"My soul, Serena," he said, when they were upstairs in the bedroom, "don't those folks ever go to bed? There was stuff enough to eat at that dinner to last the average family through three meals. Time I had finished the ice cream I was ready to curl up like a cat in front of the fire; but the rest of them seemed to be just startin' in to be lively. Are we goin' to keep this up very long? If we are, I'll have to sleep in the daytime, like a fo'mast hand on night lookout."

"But wasn't it splendid?" explained his wife. "Weren't they cultivated, brilliant people? You and I never went to anything like THAT dinner before, Daniel Dott."

The captain admitted that they never did. "Could you make anything out of that game they were playin'?" he asked. "What was it they called it?"

"Bridge. No, I couldn't, but I'm going to. I'm going to learn it just as soon as I can. Mrs. Black says everybody plays it now."

Her husband chuckled. "Those that don't play it had better not try," he observed. "Judgin' from what I saw to-night, if they do try they get into trouble. That Lake woman was givin' that poor little bald-headed fellow she was playin' with fits most of the time. Whenever they won she patted herself on the back, and when they didn't she said it was his fault. He ought to have 'echoed' or hollered back--or somethin'. One time she put down a card and he put another kind of a one on it, and she glared at him and said, 'Havin' no clubs?' and he had one that he'd forgot. He spent the next ten minutes beggin' her pardon, but 'twas a good thing SHE didn't have a club. She'd have used it on him if she had. He was all shriveled up like a frostbitten cranberry when they got through."

After they were in bed he said, "Serena, what was that black stuff they had on the toast at the beginnin' of that supper? Looked like tar, but it tasted kind of salty and good."

"Don't say supper, Daniel. It was a dinner. All city people have dinner at night. That was caviar on the toast. I've read about it. It comes from Russia."

Silence for a moment. Then Captain Dan said reflectively, "Caviar? Caviar, eh? I've heard of that somewhere before; where was it? Yes, yes, I know. 'Twas a caviar sandwich the waiter asked that young fellow I met in the Rat Cellar to have. I never found out who that young fellow was, and yet I know I've met him somewhere before. I wish I could remember

where it was. My memory is failin' me, I guess; must be gettin' old. Can't you remember, Serena?"

But his wife bade him stop talking and go to sleep.

The next day there were more calls, and Serena was asked to attend a committee meeting as a guest. She attended it and returned more full of Chapter enthusiasm than ever. She announced that she might be asked to prepare a paper to be read before the Chapter, and that she intended to study and prepare for it. Study and prepare she did, and, between dodging callers, or helping to entertain them, and keeping out of his wife's way while she was busy with the encyclopedias which she had taken from the library, the captain began to feel somewhat deserted. Hapgood's company was too stately to be congenial, and Daniel sought refuge in the kitchen, where Azuba, as usual, was always ready to talk.

Azuba was brimming over with the novelty of city life. She had been to the theater once already since her arrival, and to the moving picture show three times.

"Don't talk to ME," she said. "If them pictures ain't the most wonderful things that ever was, then _I_ don't know. _I_ never expected to see such sights--soldiers paradin', and cowboys a-ridin', and houses a-burnin', and Indians scalpin' 'em! I was so worked up I hollered right out."

"I should think you would. An Indian scalpin' a house is enough to make anybody holler."

"They didn't scalp the house; what sort of foolishness would that be--the idea! They scalped the folks IN the house. That is, they would have scalped 'em, only along come the cowboys wavin' pistols and hurrahin'--"

"Could you hear 'em hurrah?"

"No, but I could see 'em. And the way they went for them Indians was a caution. And--Oh, say, Captain Dott, there was one set of pictures there made me think of you. 'Twas all about some people that wanted to go into society. She had a paralyzed father and they had a child, a real pretty girl, and, would you believe it, they commenced to neglect their child and go off playin' cards and dancin' and carousin' around, and the child was took down sick and the poor paralyzed grandfather--"

"Grandfather? Thought you said it was a father."

"'Twas the WOMAN'S father--the child's grandfather. Well, anyhow, the poor thing had to take care of it, and the nurse went to sleep and the father come home and found her dyin'--"

"Who, the nurse?"

"No, no, the child. The nurse wa'n't sick; but the child was terrible sick."

"What was the matter with the child; paralysis, too?"

"I don't know what was the matter with it. 'Tain't likely 'twas paralysis. You get me so mixed up I shan't know what I AM sayin' pretty

soon. Well, anyhow, what happened was that the child's mother and father neglected it on account their fashionable goin's-on, and the child up and died. 'Twas the most affectin' thing. There was the child a-dyin', and the mother and father cryin', and the old grandfather goin' all to pieces--"

"All to pieces! That's worse than paralysis. Hold on a minute, Azuba! Was all this in the picture?"

"Yes."

"And you paid to see it?"

"Course I paid to see it. They wouldn't let me in for nothin', 'tain't likely."

"Well, seems to me you've made a mistake. If cryin' and misery is what you want, I don't doubt you can find a lot of funerals to go to for nothin'. But what was there about all this mess of horrors that made you think of me?"

"Oh, I don't know, unless the way you and Mrs. Dott are goin' in for society in Scarford. Course your child is grown up, so that's different, though, ain't it?"

"Yes, and there isn't any paralysis in the family, so far as I know. That's a mercy. Don't you get paralysis, Azuba. If you do, it will take you longer to get breakfast than it does now."

"That's all right. You ought to be thankful you've got me to get breakfast. If I wa'n't here you'd have to get it yourself, I cal'late. Your wife's too busy these days, and that Hapgood man wouldn't do it. I know that."

Relations between the butler and Azuba were already somewhat strained. He considered her a rude and interfering person and she considered that he would bear watching.

"He's always recommendin' folks for us to trade with," she told Captain Dan. "What business is it to him who we trade with?--unless he gets a little somethin' for himself out of it. He won't do it more than once--not if I catch him at it. Don't talk to me about that Hapgood! I wouldn't trust one of them foreigners, anyhow."

The invitation to dine with the Fenholtzes came about a week after the dinner at the Blacks'. Daniel, who opened the letter containing the invitation, was very much pleased. He liked the Fenholtzes at first sight and felt sure he should like them better on further acquaintance. But when Serena came back from the lodge meeting--the first regular meeting which she had attended since becoming a member--she received the news rather coldly.

"When is it they want us?" she said. "Next Tuesday night? Well, we could go, I suppose, but I don't believe we shall. Mrs. Lake said something about coming around that evening to help me read my paper and criticise it."

The captain was surprised and troubled. "She could come some other time, couldn't she? I think 'twas real kind of the Fenholtzes to ask us. Seems

to me we ought to go. You and I haven't even been to pay back that call yet."

"I know it. I've meant to, but I've been so busy. Besides, I don't know whether it is worth while or not. The Fenholtzes have got a great deal of money, but all the Chapter people say they are sort of back numbers."

However, she decided to accept the invitation, and they went in state. But the state was largely on their part. The dinner was a very simple affair compared to the elaborate spread of the Blacks, and the two or three people whom they met were quite different from Mrs. Lake and her friends. Captain Dan enjoyed himself hugely. He sat next to Mrs. Fenholtz at the table, and her quiet conversation on every-day subjects he could understand. Before the dinner was over he was thoroughly at ease, and when later on, in company with the Honorable Oscar and the male guests, he sat smoking in the library, he found himself spinning yarns and joking as freely as if he had been in the back room of the Metropolitan Store in Trumet. The shouts of laughter from the library could be heard in the parlor, and Serena grew nervous.

"Your husband must be very entertaining," said Mrs. Fenholtz. "I haven't heard Mr. Fenholtz laugh so heartily in a long time."

Mrs. Dott was fearful that Daniel might be making himself ridiculous. She didn't mention her fears. Her own remarks were delivered with a great deal of dignity, and she quoted Mrs. Black and the encyclopedia often. On the way home she took her husband to task.

"What in the world were you talking about with those men?" she demanded. "I never heard such a noise as they made. I do hope you didn't forget yourself."

The captain rubbed his chin. "I don't know but what I did forget myself, Serena," he replied. "I know I had a good time and never thought about my clothes after the first ten minutes. Could you hear 'em laughin'? I was tellin' em' about Azuba's goin' to the movin' pictures then."

His wife was shocked. "And Azuba is our cook," she said, "and they know it. I don't know what sort of servants they think we have. They must think you're pretty familiar with them."

"Good land, Serena! I've been familiar with Zuba all my life. If I was to put on airs with her she'd take me down in a hurry."

Mrs. Dott sighed. "I'm afraid you did forget yourself," she declared. "I think if you could hear what the Fenholtzes are saying about us now you'd be ashamed. I'm sure I should."

And at that very moment Mr. Fenholtz was saying: "That man Dott is all right. I have not laughed so for years. And he has common sense, too. I like him."

His wife nodded. "So do I," she said; "and I think I should like Mrs. Dott, too, if she had not been spoiled by Annette Black and the rest of those foolish women she associates with. I don't mean to say that Mrs. Dott is completely spoiled yet, but she will be soon, I'm afraid, unless I can make her realize that she is beginning all wrong here in Scarford. If she could only have gone to the Woman's Club first I think she might understand, but now I'm afraid it's too late."

At the next meeting of the Chapter Serena read her paper. She mounted the platform with fear and trembling. She left it exalted and triumphant. The paper had been applauded and she had been congratulated by her fellow members. Annette was enthusiastic and Mrs. Lake and the other leaders equally so. Stories of the "vast" wealth inherited by the Dotts had been circulated freely, and these, quite as much as the wonderful paper, were responsible for Serena's bound into popularity.

But the popularity was there, and the unconscious Serena believed it to be real. That meeting was the beginning of her obsession. Thereafter she talked chapter and society and opportunity and advancement, and ate them and drank them, too--at least the meals--those at home--seemed to the captain to be made up of very little else. Their evenings alone together became few and fewer. When they were not entertaining callers they were calling. Captain Dan actually began to feel at home in his evening clothes; a good deal more than he did in his night clothes, so he told his wife. Breakfast, which, in the beginning of their Scarford residence, had been served at seven-thirty, was now an hour later, and even then Daniel frequently ate alone.

Then came the reception idea. Annette--she and Mrs. Dott were calling each other by their Christian names now--had dropped the hint concerning it. She had said that a good way in which to repay social obligations was by doing it all at once, by giving a dinner, or reception, or a tea, to which everyone should be invited. Serena decided that the reception was perhaps the better, all things considered. And so preparations for the reception began. There was to be a collation, and when this item of information was imparted to Azuba the kitchen became a maelstrom of activity in which Captain Daniel could no longer find rest and refuge.

"But, Zuba," he remonstrated, "what do you think's comin' here; a drove of hyenas? You've cooked enough already to victual a ship halfway across the ocean. These folks eat sometimes at home. You don't think they're comin' here to make up for six months' starvation, do you?"

"Don't talk to me!" was all the satisfaction he got. "I've heard about what they had to eat over there at Barney Black's, and I don't mean for folks to say that they went hungry when they come here. Don't say another word. I don't know now whether it was a cup full of sugar or a pinch of salt I put in, or the other way 'round. Cookin'! Don't talk to ME."

The captain found it practically impossible to talk to anybody. Hapgood was busy; Serena was busier, and Azuba was busiest of all. Wherever he went he seemed to be in the way, and when he fled for walks up and down the streets the crowds of strange faces made him feel lonelier than ever. On the evening before that upon which the reception was to be held he returned from one of these walks to find Serena in tears.

"Why, good gracious sakes!" he exclaimed. "What's the matter?"

"Matter!" sobbed his wife. "Oh, dear me! Everything is the matter! I'm so tired I don't know what to do, and Annette and Mrs. Lake were coming here to-morrow to help me, and now they can't come. They'll be at the reception, of course, but they can't come before; and there's so much to get ready and I don't know whether I'm doing it right or not. What SHALL I do!"

Daniel shook his head. "Seems to me I'd do the best I could and let it go at that," he advised. "If they ain't satisfied I'd let 'em stay the other way. I wish I could help you, but I don't know how."

"Of course you don't. You don't have any sympathy for the whole thing, and I know it. I feel it all the time. You haven't any sympathy for ME."

The captain sighed. He had a vague feeling that he could use a little sympathy himself, but with characteristic unselfishness he put that idea from his mind.

"I guess what you need is a manager," he said. "Somebody that's used to these sort of things that could help you out. I wish I knew where there was one."

Hapgood appeared and announced that dinner was served. Serena hurriedly dried her eyes and they descended to the dining-room. Just as they were about to take their seats at the table the doorbell rang. Hapgood left the room and returned a few moments later bearing a card on a tray. Serena took the card, looked at it, and then at her husband. Her face expressed astonishment and dismay.

"Why, Daniel!" she exclaimed under her breath. "Why, Daniel! WHO do you suppose is here?"

Her husband announced that he didn't know. He took the card from her hand and looked at it. It was a very simple but very correct card, and upon it in old English script was the name "Mr. Percy Hungerford."

Daniel's face reflected the astonishment upon his wife's.

"My soul!" he muttered. "Percy Hungerford! Why, that's--that's the cousin; the one Aunt Laviny cut out of her will; the one that would have had all this place and all the money if we hadn't got it. I thought he was in New York somewhere. Black said he was, and now he's here. What in the world does he want?"

Mrs. Dott rose. "I don't know," she gasped. "I can't imagine. But I suppose we must see him. We've got to. Did you ask him to wait, Hapgood?"

Hapgood bowed respectfully. "Mr. Hungerford is in the drawing-room, ma'am," he said.

To the drawing-room moved Serena, followed by her husband.

"Good evening, Mr. Hungerford," said the lady, with a partially successful attempt at calmness. "How do you do? My husband and I--"

She paused. The expression on Mr. Hungerford's face was an odd one. She turned to Daniel, and his expression was odder still. He was standing in the doorway gazing at the visitor, his eyes opening wider and wider.

Mr. Percy Hungerford was the young man whom his friend had addressed as "Tacks," the young man with whom Captain Dan had exchanged repartee in the Rathskeller of the Palatine Hotel.

CHAPTER VII

Of the two men, Mr. Hungerford was the first to recover presence of mind. Presence of mind was one of the qualities upon which he prided himself, and it was a very awkward situation to which he could not rise. For just an instant the color rushed to his cheeks as he recognized the captain and saw that the latter recognized him. Then:

"Why, how do you do, Captain Dott?" he said. "By Jove, this is extraordinary, isn't it! Strange that relatives shouldn't know each other when they meet. How do you do?"

He stepped forward with extended hand. Captain Dan, who had expected almost anything but this bland cordiality, scarcely knew what to say or do. He took the proffered hand mechanically and dropped it again.

"Well!" he stammered. "Well!--I declare I--I didn't expect to--"

He paused. Mrs. Dott, who had been watching this scene in bewilderment, spoke before he could finish his sentence.

"Why, what is it?" she asked. "Have you--"

Mr. Hungerford smiled. "Your husband and I have met before," he explained. "Just a casual meeting and we weren't aware of each other's identity. I'm afraid I was not as cordial as I might have been on that occasion, Captain. I was a bit tired and rather out of sorts. I hope you'll forgive me, I'm sure."

Daniel hesitated; then he smiled.

"Why, I guess I can forgive my half if you can yours," he said slowly.

Before the puzzled Serena could ask another question the visitor turned to her.

"I'm sure you must be very much surprised to see me here," he said. "I'm somewhat surprised to be here myself. I've spent a greater part of the past month in New York and have only just returned--that is, to stay. I fully intended to call before, and should if I had been in town. How are you getting on? How do you like the dear old place? Ah!" with a sigh, as he seated himself and looked about him, "how familiar it all seems!"

The Dotts looked at each other. Serena sank into a chair. Captain Dan remained standing.

"Does it?" said the former rather feebly.

"Indeed it does. One almost expects to see Auntie coming in at the door. Dear old Auntie! I can scarcely realize that she has gone."

Again Serena looked at Daniel and he at her. This was so strange, so different from the attitude which a disappointed legatee might be expected to assume that neither of the pair knew exactly how to reply. But Mr. Hungerford did not appear to notice the look or the hesitation.

"This house seems like home to me," he said. "I've spent so many happy hours here. When old Hapgood opened the door for me I almost ordered him

to take my bags to my room. Really I did. That would have been droll, wouldn't it?"

He laughed languidly. Serena admitted that it would have been droll. Captain Dan remained silent as before.

"Are--are you stopping at the hotel?" queried Mrs. Dott.

"Not yet. In fact, I'm not really stopping anywhere. I've just arrived. I must be hurrying back to dinner, I suppose, but I couldn't resist coming here first. It seemed the natural thing to do."

Voices were heard in the hall. One of the voices was Azuba's; she was informing Mr. Hapgood that if that soup didn't go back on the stove pretty soon it might just as well be on ice. The words were distinctly audible, and Serena colored. Mr. Hungerford rose.

"I'm sure I must be keeping you from your own dinner," he said. "Don't let me do that for the world."

"Why--why--" faltered Serena. She looked appealingly at Daniel, and the latter's instinctive hospitality asserted itself. He had disliked the young man "Tacks" when he met him in the Rathskeller. Now that "Tacks" had become Mr. Percy Hungerford, Aunt Lavinia's cousin and his own distant relative, the dislike was only partially abated. But to turn him away from the door hungry seemed wrong somehow.

"Hadn't you better--" he began.

"Have dinner with us?" finished his wife.

Mr. Hungerford protested.

"Oh, I couldn't think of it," he declared. "No doubt you have guests--"

"Oh, no, we haven't. We're all alone and it would be no trouble at all. We should like to have you stay. Shouldn't we, Daniel?"

"Sartin, no trouble at all," said Daniel heartily. "Like to have you first rate."

"Well, if you insist. It is a frightful imposition--I shouldn't think of it, of course, but--well, thank you so much."

So Hapgood received orders to lay another plate, and Mr. Hungerford, still murmuring protests, suffered himself to be conducted to the dining-room.

All through the meal the captain regarded him with puzzled curiosity. That he had come to the house merely for a friendly call he could scarcely believe. He had heard little or nothing of the conversation between Hungerford and his friend at the table in the Rathskeller, and yet the attitude of the former on that occasion had not indicated a temperament likely to forgive "dear Aunt Lavinia" so freely or to display such angelic cordiality toward those who had come into possession of her property. But the cordiality remained unchanged, and the visitor, so far from bearing a grudge toward his more fortunate relatives, continued to treat them as though they were near and dear friends, and do everything in his power to relieve their constraint and

to make himself agreeable. The dinner ended and they adjourned to the drawing-room, with Captain Dan's mental question "What in the world is this young chap really up to?" still unanswered.

Serena had asked herself that same question when the caller first came, but now she was beginning to be ashamed of her suspicions and to think them unfounded. Mr. Hungerford was agreeable; there was no doubt of that. Also he was good-looking, in an effeminate sort of way, and his conversation was fluent and cultured. He led Serena into speaking of the Chapter and her work there, and he displayed a knowledge of and an interest in that Chapter and its members which was very gratifying.

The coming reception was mentioned, and the visitor's interest in that was more gratifying still. It was evident that receptions and society functions generally were matters of every day, or every night, occurrence to him. He asked Mrs. Dott who was to assist her in receiving, and when she answered the question his approval of the selections was unqualified. He suggested one or two little ideas which he said might add to making the affair a success. Serena welcomed the suggestions as a starving man might welcome a meal.

"That'll be lovely," she said, "and we can do it just as well as not. And I had thought of having some bridge or something afterwards; but Annette--Mrs. Black, I mean--didn't seem to think bridge would be just the thing after a reception. And there's music; I know we really ought to have music, and I had meant to have somebody play the piano. But the woman I wanted can't come, and now I don't know what to do. What would you think about that, Mr. Hungerford?"

Mr. Hungerford suggested hiring one or two professional musicians. "A violinist, or harpist, or both, perhaps," he said. "Music is always, as you say, a great addition to such affairs, Mrs. Dott. I happen to know of a young fellow who plays exceptionally well, and his sister is really a very accomplished performer on the harp. Of course they should be engaged in merely a professional capacity. They are not persons who would mingle with our set, but they're not at all objectionable, really."

The diplomatic phrasing of this remark had its effect. It indicated that Mrs. Dott's "set" was an exclusive one and, incidentally, that the accomplished and polished Mr. Hungerford considered his host and hostess as social equals.

"There!" exclaimed Serena. "I think that will be just fine. And you are the first one, Mr. Hungerford, to think of it. Do you suppose you could get these--these--er--persons you speak of to come and play for us?"

"I think so. I have befriended the young man in various ways, and he is, if you will excuse my saying so, under some obligations to me. I should be glad to make the attempt if you wish it, Mrs. Dott."

"Cost somethin', won't it?" observed Captain Dan casually. Mr. Hungerford regarded him with well-bred surprise.

"Why, of course," he said, "there will be some expense. I think fifty dollars will cover the bill. The usual rate for musicians of their class is somewhat higher."

There was no doubt that the captain was surprised. "Fifty DOLLARS!" he

repeated. "Why--"

His wife interrupted. "That will be all right, Mr. Hungerford," she said. "That will be quite satisfactory."

"Of course, there are many whom you can obtain for less, and, if you feel that that figure is too high, I shall be glad to try elsewhere. I have had little experience outside of the best, but--"

Serena interrupted again. "We don't want anybody but the best," she declared, emphatically. "Be still, Daniel. This isn't Trumet."

Daniel drew a long breath. "There ain't much doubt of that," he observed. "But, all right, Serena, if you and Mr. Hungerford think it's all right, I guess it is. I'm more used to hirin' sailors than I am folks to play the harp."

"Music," went on Mr. Hungerford, "is almost a necessity, in these days, when everyone dances. Is this a formal reception, or had you intended clearing a floor for dancing, Mrs. Dott?"

Mrs. Dott had not intended any such thing; she had not thought of it. But she concealed the fact from her visitor with remarkable presence of mind.

"Oh, of course!" she said.

The conversation continued, a conversation limited to Mr. Hungerford and his hostess, while Captain Dan remained a silent and amazed listener. The young gentleman was invited to attend the reception, Serena making many apologies for the informality of the invitation, and the guest expressing himself as delighted.

"Of course," he said, "I wouldn't intrude for the world, but I don't feel like an intruder in this house, where I have spent so many happy hours. Feeling as I do, I'm going to make another suggestion which, under different circumstances, might be considered an impertinence. I am at leisure to-morrow--in fact, all this week--and if there is anything that I can do to help you and Cousin Daniel, in this matter of the reception or any other, I shall be at your service. I do hope you will permit me to help and that you will not consider me presuming in offering to do so."

It was quite evident that the offer was very welcome. Mrs. Dott accepted it with enthusiasm and called upon her husband to confirm the acceptance. He did so, but with less warmth, and it was agreed that the obliging Mr. Hungerford should drop in the next morning after calling upon his protegee, the violinist. A half hour later he said "Good-night," and departed.

"There!" said Serena. "If that isn't Providence, then I don't know. And it only goes to show how one person can misjudge another without knowing anything about him. I've always had a prejudice against that Mr. Hungerford simply because of what you told me of meeting him years ago, and now I don't think I ever met a kinder, nicer young man. Did you, Daniel?"

The captain hesitated. "I--I," he stammered, "well, Serena, I will give in that he seemed nice and obligin' enough to-night, but you see there's

just one thing that--"

Serena turned on him. "Yes, I know," she said. "There's always 'one thing' about everybody that _I_ like. He's smart and bright and well dressed and polite. He's a gentleman! and a different kind from any that we've ever met. That makes YOU suspicious, of course."

"Now you know it isn't that; but--but--"

"But what?"

There was more hesitation on the captain's part. He had intended to tell of the meeting at the Rathskeller; then he remembered the young man's explanation and apology and thought better of it. He and "Cousin Percy" might have another interview on the morrow. Meanwhile, he would keep still, particularly as his wife seemed to have forgotten their caller's reference to the meeting. He finished his sentence in another way.

"But I don't see what he came here for," he said.

"He came here to see us. And, I think, considering how he was treated in Aunt Lavinia's will, it was awfully nice of him to come at all. And, as for helping me out on that reception, he's been a perfect godsend already. I should THINK you would appreciate it."

Before the next day was over, and long before the first of the evening's guests arrived, the services of the new-found friend of the family were appreciated even by the reluctant Daniel. Mr. Hungerford came early and proceeded immediately to make himself useful. He had seen the violinist, and the latter and his sister had promised to be on hand. He took Hapgood in charge and superintended the arranging of the drawing-room and the library for the reception and the dancing. When the messenger from the florist came with the flowers which Serena, acting upon the suggestion of Mrs. Lake and Mrs. Black, had ordered, he saw that they were placed in exactly the right positions for effect. Being urged to stay for lunch, he stayed. And his conversation during the meal was so fluent, so aristocratic in flavor, and yet so friendly, that Serena became more and more taken with him. With the captain he was not quite as much at his ease. But he did his best to be agreeable, and Daniel, still vaguely suspicious, found nothing tangible upon which to base distrust. There was so much to be done in the afternoon that, acting upon a hint so delicate that it could scarcely be called a hint, Mrs. Dott urged him to send to the hotel for his bag and stay at their home overnight. He accepted and was even busier than he had been during the forenoon session. He was never so busy as to perform manual labor with his own hands--he never stooped to that extent--but he managed to convey the impression of being always ready and always helpful.

To say that Mrs. Black and Mrs. Lake were, upon their arrival, surprised to find him there would be expressing their feelings far too mildly. They knew Mr. Hungerford, but, heretofore, that gentleman had moved in circles other than their own. It is true that he belonged to the same club as did Mr. Black, but Mr. Hungerford's friends had been younger, the ultra-fashionable set, the set which Annette had characterized as "rather fast" but which, because of its money and society connections, she secretly envied. To find him here, an associate and friend of the people she had called "countrified," was most astonishing. She wondered, but she could not help being impressed, and her attitude toward her dear friend Serena was never so gushingly cordial. As for Mr. Hungerford, he

greeted the Chapter representatives with condescending urbanity. When the reception began, somehow or other, Cousin Percy was in the receiving line.

Captain Dan, uncomfortably starched and broad-clothed, received likewise, but his remarks to those who pressed his hand and murmured compliments were rather commonplace and very much alike; this consisted principally of "How d'ye do's" and "Glad to see you's"; and it was only when the Honorable and Mrs. Fenholtz came that he appeared to remember anything else. It was evident that Mr. and Mrs. Fenholtz were as surprised as the rest to see Mr. Hungerford there. The Honorable, seizing an opportunity when the captain was for a moment alone, whispered in his ear.

"Where did he come from?" he asked, with a jerk of the head in Cousin Percy's direction.

"Him?" replied Daniel. "Oh, he came last night."

"Is that so? Is he a friend of yours?"

"Well, he ain't--isn't exactly a friend, I guess. He's a sort of relation, a nephew of Aunt Laviny's."

"Oh, oh, I see--I see."

There was something in the tone which caused Captain Dan to ask a question in return.

"Know him, do you?" he inquired.

"Yes, I know him, but--it is all right, Olga; I'm coming."

He passed on to make room for another assortment of new arrivals, lady members of the Chapter, and Daniel's curiosity remained unsatisfied.

After the reception proper, came a social and, to Daniel, very uncomfortable hour, and then Mr. Hungerford, who seemed to have taken upon himself the position of master of ceremonies, suggested dancing.

Of all the captain's society experiences so far, this was the most amazing. He had danced in his younger days, it is true, but his were dances of quite another variety. Quadrilles and Virginia reels he was acquainted with, but tangos and Bostons and all the infinite varieties of the one-step were to him revelations, and revelations of a kind which caused him to gasp. He saw middle-aged matrons dipping and hopping and twisting about the room in company with middle-aged, stout, red-faced men who looked as if on the verge of apoplexy. He saw Mr. Hungerford laboring dutifully to pilot a woman of forty through the sinuosities of the "hesitation waltz," and when the lady, who was inclined toward plumpness, had collapsed into an armchair, he sought out her late partner and vented his feelings.

"For the land sakes!" he demanded; "what did you do that for?"

"Do what?" inquired Mr. Hungerford, himself as fresh and unwilted as an Easter lily.

"Why, that--to her. Look at her, she's pretty nigh gone! She ain't

caught more than two breaths in the last minute and a half. I've been watchin' her."

Cousin Percy condescended to smile. "It's her own fault," he observed. "She said she was dying to learn the 'hesitation' and asked me to teach it to her."

"Well, she ought to be satisfied. If she was dyin' before, she's pretty near dead now. Why didn't you stop sooner? She all but capsized a dozen times in the last two or three turns you and she took around the room."

Percy's smile became broader. "That is all part of the dance," he explained. "Watch this couple here."

Daniel watched as directed. The couple were a young man and a girl about Gertrude's age. They were doing the "hesitation" with the hesitancy emphasized.

"My soul!" muttered the captain. "Where's that girl's mother? Somebody ought to tell her."

Hungerford smiled once more. "That was her mother I was dancing with," he said.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Daniel. It was the only comment he made. He watched the rest of the dancing in silence.

The collation followed the dancing, and Azuba and Mr. Hapgood served it, assisted by four waiters who, at Mr. Hungerford's suggestion, had been hired for the occasion. The butler's serving was done with grace and elegance, not to mention dignity. Azuba served as if the main object to be attained was to provide each guest with as much food as possible in the shortest possible time. She was arrayed in a new black gown, worn under protest, for her own idea had been to wear her Sunday dress, a vivid purple, with trimmings which, for color and variety, looked "like a patchwork tidy," as Captain Dan expressed it. Also, under still greater protest, she wore a white apron and cap.

"I feel like my grandmother doin' dishes," Azuba declared when Mrs. Dott brought the cap and apron to her and insisted on a dress rehearsal. "The old woman lived to be ninety-five and wore a cap for all the world like this one for thirty year. She had some excuse for wearin' it--it hid the place where her hair was thin on top. But I ain't bald and I ain't ninety-five neither. And why in the world you want me to put an apron on in the parlor, _I_ don't see. You've been preachin' at me to leave one off till I was just rememberin' to do it, and now you want me to put it on again."

"Not this kind of an apron, Azuba. Mrs. Black's maids wear aprons like that, and so do Mrs. Fenholtz's. It's the proper thing and I expect you to do it."

"Humph! All right. Land knows I don't want to be improper. But I'd just like to ask you this: Does that Fenholtz hired help have to wear black clothes like this dress?"

"Yes, always."

"Well, then I suppose I'll have to do the same, but I hope they don't

feel as much like bein' in mournin' as I do. I thought this reception thing was supposed to be a good time, but when I looked at myself in the glass just now, all I could think of was the Trumet post-office draped up for President McKinley's funeral. I suppose it's style, so it'll have to be. But if Labe, my husband, should see me now, he'd have a shock, I guess. Cal'late he'd think he was dead and I'd got word of it afore he did."

But the food was good and the guests seemed to enjoy it. Some of them seemed to enjoy Azuba, and Mr. Fenholtz was observed by the indignant Serena to laugh heartily every time the transformed maid-of-all-work addressed him.

As they were leaving he said to Captain Dan: "Captain, that maid of yours is a wonder. If you ever want to get rid of her, let me know. I thought Mrs. Fenholtz and I had tried every variety of servant, but she is something fresh."

Daniel grinned. "She's fresh enough, if that's all you want," he admitted. "That's the main trouble with her, accordin' to my wife. I like her myself. She reminds me of home."

The Honorable shook his hand. "Home is a good thing to remember," he said earnestly, "and a bedder thing not to be ashamed of. You are not ashamed of your home and you do not forget it. That is why I like you. Good night!"

Somehow this remark pleased the captain greatly, but when he repeated it to Serena, she did not seem pleased.

"I don't know what we shall do with that Azuba," she said. "She mortifies me to death, and yet you won't let me get rid of her."

Her husband did not answer. In the matter of Azuba he was as determined as ever. Amid the new life into which he had been thrown, head over heels, the housekeeper was the one familiar substantial upon which he could rely. He was used to her, her conversation, and her ways. As he had said, she reminded him of home, his real home, the home from which he was drifting further and further every day.

Next morning Serena was suffering from headache and had breakfast in her room. Mr. Hungerford, also, did not descend to the morning meal. Daniel wrote a long letter to Gertrude, describing the reception, after his own fashion, but taking care to seem as cheerful as ever. He did not feel cheerful, but there was nothing to be gained by troubling his daughter, as he reasoned.

Mr. Hungerford remained through that day and the next day and the next. At the end of that time he sent for his trunks and settled down to make the Dott house his home, for "a short season," he said. This, of course, was done only after much protest on his part and strenuous urging on the part of Serena. Cousin Percy had taken her fancy at the very beginning of their acquaintance, and his conduct since then had strengthened that liking tremendously.

"Of course he can stay," she said in conversation with her husband. "Why, Daniel, I don't know what I should do without him. His coming was a special Providence, just as I told you. Just see how he helped at that reception. It would never have been the success it was if it hadn't been

for him. And see how he's helped me since. He knows just what is right and proper for people in our station to do; he's been in society all his life. He's educated and he has helped me with my paper for the next meeting of the Chapter so much already. There's no reason why he can't be here; we've got plenty of room. And it will only be while he's on his vacation, anyway."

Daniel rubbed his chin. "I know," he admitted; "so he says. But how long a vacation is it goin' to be?"

"How do you suppose I know that? I haven't asked him, it isn't likely."

"No, I didn't suppose you had; but it seems kind of funny he hasn't told you himself. What's it a vacation from? What's he do for a livin'? Anything but run receptions?"

"That's it--sneer! He does a great many things. He is interested in literary work, so he says. He writes for a living, I suppose that means."

"Humph! Has he got any answer?"

"Answer? Answer to what?"

"Why, to his writing. Has the livin' sent him word 'twas on the way, or anything like that? I don't want to be mean, Serena. You know well enough I ain't stingy. But I can't quite make that young fellow out. Why did he come here, anyway? that's what sticks in my mind. What sort of a chap is he? You know what that lawyer man said about him. Nigh as I could make out from that, he thought he was a kind of high-toned loafer, sportin' round on his aunt's money. Why does that kind of a fellow come to live along with us? WE ain't sports."

"Will you EVER remember not to say 'ain't'? He came here because he isn't that kind of a fellow at all. He explained about that. It seems that he and that young upstart of a Farwell, the lawyer, had had some words and Farwell had a grudge against him. He thinks it was largely owing to those lawyers' influence that Aunt Lavinia treated him as she did in her will. But he doesn't hold any grudge. I never heard anybody speak more forgiving or kind than he did about the whole affair. I declare, it was positively affecting! He told me about his life and about how he was all alone in the world; how he had never had to earn much--never having been brought up to it--but that now he was trying to do his best. I felt so sorry for him, and that was one of the reasons why I thought we, the only relations he has, ought to be kind and show him hospitality at least. I never thought you were inhospitable, Daniel."

"I ain't, Serena. That is, I mean I are--am not. But--but--Well, I'll tell you. I haven't told you before, although I meant to, but he and I met once since we've been in Scarford. I told you about the meeting, but I didn't know then who I met. Now I--"

"I know. He told me about that, too. He was the one you met at the hotel that afternoon. He said he was ashamed of his behavior that day, that he was tired, out of sorts, and discouraged. He thought you had been listening to what he and his friend had been saying, and it made him cross. He said that he apologized when he first came to the house, and I remember that he did, and he asked me whether I thought any further

apology was necessary. I said no, of course it wasn't."

"Well, I don't suppose it is. But--well, there was somethin' else. It seemed to me that afternoon at the Rathskeller that he and that chum of his had been drinkin'."

"Drinking? Do you mean that they were intoxicated?"

"No, not exactly that; but they had a couple of cocktails while I was there."

"Is that all? Oh, dear me! Daniel, you are SO old-fashioned. Your ideas don't change a single mite. In Trumet a cocktail is a dreadful thing; but here it isn't. Why, everybody drinks a cocktail before dinner. The Blacks always have them. There were cocktails at that dinner at their house."

"I know there was, but I didn't see you drinkin' yours, Serena."

His wife hesitated. "No," she admitted rather reluctantly, "I didn't. I've been temperance all my life and somehow I couldn't bring myself to do it. I hope Annette didn't think it was bad manners, but I just couldn't somehow. Perhaps I ought to have tried--"

"Tried! My soul and body, Serena! Don't talk that way. If I see you startin' in to drink cocktails I shall begin to think the world's comin' to an end. SOMETHIN' will come to an end right then and there, I'll tell you that! The first cocktail you drink will be the signal for me to clear decks for action. There's some things I WON'T stand, and that's one of 'em!"

"There, there! Don't get excited! I shan't begin at my time of life. But I shan't be narrow, either. I don't want you to be. If all you've got against Cousin Percy is that he drinks a cocktail once in a while I think you'd better get over it as soon as you can. He does help me, Daniel, in my Chapter work and all the rest of it, and I'd like to have him stay here at present. Now won't you be nice and obliging, same as you usually are, and let him stay, for my sake? You will, won't you, dear?"

Captain Dan said that he would, and yet he said it with considerable inward reluctance. There was no real reason why he should have distrusted Percy Hungerford. At least he could think of none in particular. His distrust was based upon generalities and a knowledge of human nature acquired during his years of knocking about among men. His wife's words made an impression. If what she said was true, his conscience told him that he should be kind and generous in his attitude toward the literary person. But--well, the "but" was still there.

It was his intention to seek out Fenholtz and ask a few questions concerning Cousin Percy, but the opportunity did not offer itself, and shortly after the reception the Fenholtzes left for the South, where they were to spend the winter. So that source of information was cut off.

During the next fortnight the captain's sense of desertion and of being almost a stranger in his own house grew stronger than ever. There were more callers and more calls to return; there were more bridge parties and teas. His wife astonished him by announcing that she was going to

take lessons in bridge and that Mr. Hungerford had found a teacher to perfect her in that branch of knowledge.

"Of course," she said, "it will cost quite a little, but Cousin Percy says there's no use having a teacher at all unless you have a good one, and three dollars a lesson isn't too much, because you learn so quickly from an expert. I was sure you would be willing for me to take the lessons, Daniel."

Daniel shook his head. "I'm willin' for you to do most anything that pleases you, Serena," he said, "but three dollars a lesson for learnin' how to play cards seems to me a pretty good price. If it was me I should feel as if 'twas doubtful whether I'd get as much out of it as I put in. That's what Ezra Small, back home, said when he put his sprained foot in a plaster cast. Ezra said he never expected to get more than half his foot back, because the way that plaster stuck he cal'lated it would hang on to the rest. I should feel the same way about the three dollars for a bridge lesson."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't after you had taken a few. You'll like it then."

"_I_, like it! Good Heavens, you don't mean--"

"I meant that you're going to take lessons, too, of course. You must learn to play bridge--everybody plays it. And you used to like cards."

"I used to like high-low-jack, and I could manage to take a hand at euchre without raisin' too big a disturbance; but I never could learn that bridge and play it with those women friends of yours--never in this world. More'n that, I don't intend to try."

And he positively refused to try in spite of his wife's pleading. However, he consented to the employment of the bridge teacher for her and, thereafter, two hours of each alternate afternoon, Sundays excepted, were spent by Mrs. Dott and two other female students in company with a thin and didactic spinster who quoted Elwell and Foster and discoursed learnedly concerning the values of no-trump hands. The lessons were given at the Dott home and Mr. Hungerford was an interested spectator. Daniel, who was not interested, and felt himself in the way, moped in his own room or went upon more of the lonely walks about town.

Chapter meetings and Chapter activities occupied more of Serena's time. There were "open" meetings occasionally and these Captain Dan seldom attended. Mr. Hungerford acted as his wife's escort and seemed to enjoy it, in his languid fashion. Chapter politics began now to have their innings. There was to be a national convention of the Ladies of Honor, a convention to be held in the neighboring city of Atterbury, and Scarford Chapter was to send delegates. Mrs. B. Phelps Black, who aspired to national honors, was desirous of being one of these delegates, but so were many others, and Mrs. Black's candidacy was by no means unopposed. She called upon Serena for help, and into the fight in aid of her friend Serena flung herself, heart and soul.

There were meetings, and more meetings, and letter writing, and canvassing of voters. Here again, Daniel was of no use. Cousin Percy's experience--he seemed to have had all sorts of experience--helped amazingly. Mr. Hungerford's willingness to help in all things where no particular labor was concerned was most astonishing. By this time he was as much a member of the Dott household as Serena herself--more than the

captain, who began to feel that he was not a member at all. Even bridge was side-tracked for the more absorbing political game, and evening after evening Captain Dan spent alone. Occasionally Mr. Hungerford kept him company, but his was company not too congenial. It is true that the young man was agreeable enough, but he and the captain found nothing in common to talk about, and Cousin Percy usually gave up the attempt at conversation rather early and fell asleep upon the sofa or went out on little excursions of his own to which Daniel was not invited.

Mr. Hungerford smoked a good deal, and it was Daniel's cigars that he smoked. His vacation seemed no nearer the end than it had when he first came. The shrewd Azuba informed the captain that she guessed it was "one of them vacations that didn't have any end, but was all beginnin'." Her employer reproved her for speaking in this way of a friend of the family--he felt it was his duty to do that--but the rebuke was a mild one.

One night, or rather one morning, for it was nearly two o'clock, he was awakened by a series of violent shakes, and opened his eyes to find his wife bending over him. She had been out, attending a special meeting of the Chapter, and had hastened upstairs without stopping to take off her wraps.

"Daniel, Daniel, wake up!" she cried.

The captain groaned. "Hey! what is it?" he asked sleepily. Then, with a little more interest, "Is the house afire?"

"No, no, but do wake up and listen. I've had the greatest honor done me. You will hardly believe it. The delegates to the Atterbury Convention were elected to-night. Annette Black is one--I just KNEW she'd win--and Mrs. Lake is another, and who do you suppose is the third?"

Captain Dan sat up in bed. "Not you?" he shouted.

"Yes, I. And, more than that, I was the one selected to read a paper there. Annette expected to do that, but, when it came to the vote, my last paper, the one I read Thursday night, the one Cousin Percy helped me so in preparing, was selected over all the rest. The vote was nearly two to one. I am to read it on the second day of the Convention. Isn't it wonderful! Annette was so jealous she hardly said good-night to me. But I don't care. There, Daniel Dott! aren't you proud of your wife?"

There was a little hesitation in her husband's manner, and yet he tried his best to be enthusiastic. "Oh, yes," he said, "but then I was proud of you before, Serena. But--but what does this mean? Have you and I got to traipse way over to Atterbury?"

"Not you. You're not going. None of the men are. This is a women's convention. Men are not invited."

"I know. But I've got to go there with you. You ain't goin' off travelin' by yourself."

"I'm going with the other Chapter delegates; we will travel together."

"I want to know! How long are you goin' to be gone?"

"I'm not sure. Three or four days probably."

"And I've got to stay here alone?"

"Why, you won't be alone. Cousin Percy will be here, and there's Azuba."

"Yes, and that everlastin' Hapgood, I suppose. Say, Serena, have you GOT to go?"

"Got to? Why, I WANT to! It's an honor. Don't you want me to go?"

"Why--why, I suppose I do; but--but--"

"But, what? Oh, you DON'T want me to go! I can see--and I thought you'd be so glad!"

She was almost in tears. Daniel's sensitive conscience smote him once more. "Land sakes!" he protested. "Of course I want you to go, Serena! I wouldn't have you do anything else for the world. I--I was just kind of lonesome, that's all. I get that way sometimes, lately. Seems as if you and I don't see as much of each other as we used to. Do you think it's all worth while?"

"Worth while! Why, Daniel Dott!"

"There, there! don't take on. I guess it is. I suppose you know best about such things. But I get kind of blue settin' around here thinkin', without you to talk to; and Gertie isn't here. You see, I miss you both."

"Yes, I suppose you do. Well, after this convention is over I shall have a little more time, I hope. And Gertie will be home pretty soon. It's almost time for her Christmas vacation."

"Yes, I know it is. I was thinkin' that to-day. My! we'll be glad to see her, won't we?"

"Of course we will. But, do you know, Daniel, I've been so busy that I almost forgot about Christmas and Gertie's vacation and everything. It was Cousin Percy that reminded me of it."

"Reminded you of what?--of Christmas?"

"No, of course not--of Gertie's vacation. He said that she was coming and that he should be glad to make her acquaintance."

"HE said so? How did he know? _I_ never told him."

"I don't remember that I did, either. But I suppose I must have. Anyhow, he knew. He is very much interested in Gertie and how she was getting on at college and all that. I saw him looking at her photograph that very day of the reception. He knew that it was she, without being told."

"Humph! He seems to know a lot. But, there! I recollect now--Gertie said she met him at college. Well, Serena, I won't complain any more. You can go to Atterbury if you want to. I'll get along all right."

And to Atterbury Mrs. Dott went. It was the first time since the old sea-going days that Captain Dan and his wife had been separated longer than twenty-four hours. He saw her off on the train and then moped

drearly back to Aunt Lavinia's mansion, which he was now beginning to hate, and, seating himself in the library, tried to find interest in a novel. He did not find it, however, and went to bed early. Cousin Percy, who was out that evening, did not retire early. Next morning he seemed to have little appetite for breakfast, and was less agreeable than usual.

The three days passed somehow. The wanderer was to return on Thursday morning, but she did not. Instead came a telegram, reading as follows:

"Meeting and paper great success. Send immediately one of my latest photographs. Serena."

The puzzled Daniel sent the photograph preceded by a telegram of his own which read:

"When are you coming home? Why don't you write? Have been worried about you. Answer."

The answer was delayed still another day. When it came, it was in the shape of a very short note stating that Saturday was the date of return. Serena wrote that she was having a lovely time. She would tell him all about it when she got back. "And," she added, "I am sending you by this mail copies of the Atterbury paper. Please show it to any of the Chapter members whom you may meet."

Captain Dan unfolded the paper and gazed at the page marked with blue pencil. Here, under black headlines, which screamed the success of the convention of the Ladies of Honor, was a horrible blotted outrage resembling a stout negress peering through a screen door and labeled, "Mrs. Serena Sarah Dott, of Scarford, whose brilliant paper scored the success of the meeting." It was only by a process of deduction that Daniel realized the thing to be a reproduction of the photograph he had sent. He glanced hurriedly over the account of the meeting, catching here and there phrases like "Mrs. Dott's forte is evidently platform speaking"--"clear thought, well expressed"--"tumultuous applause." He felt that he ought to read the account from beginning to end, but also that he could not. Azuba, however, when it was shown to her, had no such feeling. She bore it to the kitchen, read it all, and returned to crow vaingloriously.

"Well, there now, Captain Daniel!" she exclaimed. "Ain't it wonderful! Ain't it grand! Ain't you a lucky man to have a wife as notorious as she's gettin' to be! I swan to man, if it ain't--"

The captain interrupted her. "Azuba," he said, rather testily for him, "if you use that word again I don't know as I won't make you eat a dictionary. My wife may be famous and she may be a platform speaker, but I'm blessed if I'll have her notorious, not if I can help it."

"But she is notorious, ain't she? Look at her right there in the newspaper, with all that piece about her in print! I wish Labe could read such a piece in the paper about me. Why, what ails you, Daniel Dott? Just look at that photograph!"

Captain Dan rose. "Yes," he said drily, "I've been lookin' at it. That's part of what ails me."

On Saturday he was at the station to meet his wife. Serena was inwardly jubilant, although, because of the presence of Mrs. Lake and Annette, she tried to appear dignified and calm. But when she and her husband were alone on their way to the house her jubilation burst forth.

"Oh, it was a wonderful success!" she declared. "I declare, I wish you might have been there. The way they applauded! And the entertainment they gave me! And the reporters after interviews! And the things the women of the other Chapters said! Oh, Daniel, it was splendid!"

Lunch was a mere formality on her part. She talked incessantly, while Cousin Percy and her husband listened. Mr. Hungerford's congratulations were hearty. His praise was as close to fulsome flattery as it could be and not overstep the mark.

Daniel offered congratulations, too. He was glad that his wife had succeeded, but the pleasure was solely because of her happiness. He was not as happy on his own account. Several remarks which Serena had made seemed to prophesy that the excursion to Atterbury was but the beginning.

All that afternoon Mrs. Dott spent in her room. She was going to be very busy, she said, and she must not be interrupted. It was only just before dinner that the captain found a moment for an uninterrupted interview. He entered the room to find her seated at the writing table, her fingers ink-stained, and the table covered with closely written sheets of manuscripts. She looked up when he appeared.

"Oh," she said, "I'm so tired! I've written steadily all the afternoon. My report had to be ready, and there was so much to say."

Daniel regarded her gravely. "You look tired, Serena. You're doin' altogether too much of this sort of thing. You ought to stop, or you'll be sick. Now, you just rest a while. My, it does seem good to have you back again! We can have an evening together now. I'll tell you what we'll do: You tell Hungerford you're tired and then come right up here, and I'll come, too. Then we can sit and talk. I've got so much to say to you."

But Serena shook her head. "No, Daniel," she said. "I can't talk to-night."

"Then don't; I'll do the talkin'. Land's sakes! it'll be enough just to look at you. I don't feel as if I'd seen you for a hundred years."

Another shake of the head. "I'm sorry, Daniel, but I can't be with you at all to-night. I must present my report to the Chapter and I shall probably not be home till very late."

Daniel sprang from his chair. "Serena Dott!" he cried. "Do you mean to tell me that you're goin' out to that Chapter thing again TO-NIGHT! after bein' away from me all this time! Why, you've just got home!"

"I can't help it, Daniel. I must present my report. It's my duty to do it. The Chapter expects me and I must be there."

"Expects you! _I_ expected you, didn't I? And, by the everlastin', I think I had a right to expect you! I'm your husband, ain't I? Seems to me I am entitled to a little of your society."

"I can't help it, Daniel. The Chapter--"

Captain Dan's feelings got the better of his prudence. "Damn the Chapter!" he shouted. "I wish you and I had never heard of it, nor anybody that belongs to it."

The instant after the words left his lips he would have given a good deal to recall them, but it was too late. His wife slowly rose.

"Daniel Dott!" she gasped. "Daniel Dott! You--YOU--why--my husband talking to me like that! My own HUSBAND! the man of all men that I expected would be proud of me! The man who should be proud and glad that I have found my lifework--speaking to me like that! Oh! oh! what shall I do! How CAN I bear it!"

She fell back into the chair, her head sank upon her arms over the manuscript of the precious report, and she burst into a storm of sobs.

Daniel was as much overcome as she. He hurried to her side and in an agony of remorse bent over her.

"There, there, Serena," he pleaded. "Don't do so. I didn't mean it. It kind of--"

He would have put his arms about her but she pushed them away.

"And swearing at me," she sobbed. "And using language that--"

"I didn't mean to swear, Serena. I never swore at you before in my life. I didn't mean to this time. It just seemed to come out all of itself. Please forgive me, won't you? Please?"

But Serena was not ready to forgive. The sleepless nights and days of wild excitement had thrown her nerves into a state where it needed but the slightest jar to break them completely. She sobbed, and choked, and gasped, her fingers clutching at her hair. Daniel, hanging over her, tried in vain to put in a word.

"Please, Serena," he kept saying. "Please."

Suddenly the sobs ceased. Serena's hands struck the desk and she rose so abruptly that her husband had scarce time to get out of her way.

"Serena," he cried.

But Serena cut him short. "Go away," she commanded. "Go away and leave me. I don't want to speak to you again."

"But, Serena--"

"Go away. Don't come near me again to-night. Go, go, GO!"

And Daniel went, slowly, reluctantly. He was scarcely past the sill, his hands still upon the knob of the door, when that door was closed from within with a slam. He made one more effort to speak, but he heard the

key turn and his wife's voice commanding him to go away. He descended the stairs to the library and threw himself into a chair. Mr. Hungerford, smoking one of his host's cigars and reading the evening paper, looked at him curiously and asked what was the matter.

Daniel turned on him. "Nothin'," he roared. "Nothin', do you hear?" Then he rushed from the library to the hall, seized his hat and coat from the rack and hurried out of the house. He walked and walked, but if, upon his return, anyone had asked him where he had walked he could not have told them. This was the first serious quarrel that he and his wife had had during their married life.

It was half-past seven when he returned and found Azuba fidgeting in the dining-room. It was Mr. Hapgood's free evening and he had left early.

"For mercy sakes!" Azuba demanded. "Where have you been?"

"Out!" was the gloomy rejoinder. "Where's the rest of the folks?"

"Gone to Chapter meetin'."

"Both of 'em?"

"Yes. It was an open meeting and Mr. Hungerford went along, too. Where are you goin' now? Don't you want anything to eat? It's been waitin' for you for an hour."

"Let it wait; I don't want it."

He walked from the room. Azuba gazed after him open-mouthed.

"Well!" she soliloquized in a voice loud enough for the captain to hear. "Well, if anybody'll tell me what's the use of gettin' all het up cookin' vittles in this house, then I'd like to have 'em do it. Here I've worked and worked and fussed and fussed to get dinner and nobody's ate a mouthful but one, and he's the one that gets it for nothin'. I never saw such doin's. Don't talk to ME!"

Captain Dan didn't talk to anybody. He sat alone in the library, miserable and downhearted. After a while Azuba came and announced that she guessed she'd get a mouthful of fresh air, if she wasn't needed. Receiving no answer, she apparently considered the request granted and the captain heard the back door shut. Still the captain sat in the library, a huddled, pathetic heap in the armchair, gazing at vacancy. Occasionally he sighed.

The doorbell rang. Aroused from his doleful reverie by the sound, Daniel jumped from his chair and, going to the hall, shouted for Azuba. Then he remembered that Azuba was not on the premises and answered the ring himself. He had forgotten to push the button of the porch light and, peering out into the dark, he could see only that the person standing upon the top step was a woman. A carriage had drawn up at the curb and the driver was unloading a trunk from the rack.

"Good evenin'!" said Daniel.

The answer was a surprise. There was a laugh, and then a pair of arms were thrown about Captain Dan's neck and a girlish voice said: "Good evening! Is THAT all you've got to say to me? Why, Daddy, you dear old

goose, don't you know me?"

Daniel's answer was a shout that might have been heard at the next corner.

"What!" he roared. "GERTIE! Good land of love! Where'd you come from?"

CHAPTER VIII

"But aren't you glad to see me, Daddy?" asked Gertrude. They were in the library. The trunk had been carried upstairs and the young lady had assured her father over and over again that she really didn't want any dinner, as she had eaten on the dining car during the journey from Boston.

The captain, who had scarcely taken his eyes off her since her arrival at the house, drew a long breath.

"Glad to see you!" he repeated. "I never was mo

Livros Grátis

(<http://www.livrosgratis.com.br>)

Milhares de Livros para Download:

[Baixar livros de Administração](#)

[Baixar livros de Agronomia](#)

[Baixar livros de Arquitetura](#)

[Baixar livros de Artes](#)

[Baixar livros de Astronomia](#)

[Baixar livros de Biologia Geral](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência da Computação](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência da Informação](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência Política](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciências da Saúde](#)

[Baixar livros de Comunicação](#)

[Baixar livros do Conselho Nacional de Educação - CNE](#)

[Baixar livros de Defesa civil](#)

[Baixar livros de Direito](#)

[Baixar livros de Direitos humanos](#)

[Baixar livros de Economia](#)

[Baixar livros de Economia Doméstica](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação - Trânsito](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação Física](#)

[Baixar livros de Engenharia Aeroespacial](#)

[Baixar livros de Farmácia](#)

[Baixar livros de Filosofia](#)

[Baixar livros de Física](#)

[Baixar livros de Geociências](#)

[Baixar livros de Geografia](#)

[Baixar livros de História](#)

[Baixar livros de Línguas](#)

[Baixar livros de Literatura](#)
[Baixar livros de Literatura de Cordel](#)
[Baixar livros de Literatura Infantil](#)
[Baixar livros de Matemática](#)
[Baixar livros de Medicina](#)
[Baixar livros de Medicina Veterinária](#)
[Baixar livros de Meio Ambiente](#)
[Baixar livros de Meteorologia](#)
[Baixar Monografias e TCC](#)
[Baixar livros Multidisciplinar](#)
[Baixar livros de Música](#)
[Baixar livros de Psicologia](#)
[Baixar livros de Química](#)
[Baixar livros de Saúde Coletiva](#)
[Baixar livros de Serviço Social](#)
[Baixar livros de Sociologia](#)
[Baixar livros de Teologia](#)
[Baixar livros de Trabalho](#)
[Baixar livros de Turismo](#)