

Hazard of New Fortunes, a — Volume 3 eBook

Hazard of New Fortunes, a — Volume 3 by William Dean Howells

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Contents

Hazard of New Fortunes, a — Volume 3 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	5
Page 2.....	6
Page 3.....	7
Page 4.....	9
Page 5.....	11
Page 6.....	13
Page 7.....	15
Page 8.....	17
Page 9.....	19
Page 10.....	21
Page 11.....	23
Page 12.....	25
Page 13.....	27
Page 14.....	29
Page 15.....	31
Page 16.....	33
Page 17.....	35
Page 18.....	37
Page 19.....	39
Page 20.....	40
Page 21.....	42
Page 22.....	44



Page 23..... 45
Page 24..... 47
Page 25..... 49
Page 26..... 51
Page 27..... 52
Page 28..... 53
Page 29..... 55
Page 30..... 57
Page 31..... 58
Page 32..... 59
Page 33..... 60
Page 34..... 62
Page 35..... 64
Page 36..... 65
Page 37..... 66
Page 38..... 68
Page 39..... 69
Page 40..... 71
Page 41..... 73
Page 42..... 75
Page 43..... 77



Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
By William Dean Howells		1
PART THIRD		1
I.		1
II.		5
III.		9
IV		14
V.		18
VI.		25
VII		27
VIII.		29
IX.		34
PG EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:		43



Page 1

By William Dean Howells

PART THIRD

I.

The scheme of a banquet to celebrate the initial success of 'Every Other Week' expanded in Fulkerson's fancy into a series. Instead of the publishing and editorial force, with certain of the more representative artists and authors sitting down to a modest supper in Mrs. Leighton's parlors, he conceived of a dinner at Delmonico's, with the principal literary and artistic, people throughout the country as guests, and an inexhaustible hospitality to reporters and correspondents, from whom paragraphs, prophetic and historic, would flow weeks before and after the first of the series. He said the thing was a new departure in magazines; it amounted to something in literature as radical as the American Revolution in politics: it was the idea of self government in the arts; and it was this idea that had never yet been fully developed in regard to it. That was what must be done in the speeches at the dinner, and the speeches must be reported. Then it would go like wildfire. He asked March whether he thought Mr. Depew could be got to come; Mark Twain, he was sure, would come; he was a literary man. They ought to invite Mr. Evarts, and the Cardinal and the leading Protestant divines. His ambition stopped at nothing, nothing but the question of expense; there he had to wait the return of the elder Dryfoos from the West, and Dryfoos was still delayed at Moffitt, and Fulkerson openly confessed that he was afraid he would stay there till his own enthusiasm escaped in other activities, other plans.

Fulkerson was as little likely as possible to fall under a superstitious subjection to another man; but March could not help seeing that in this possible measure Dryfoos was Fulkerson's fetish. He did not revere him, March decided, because it was not in Fulkerson's nature to revere anything; he could like and dislike, but he could not respect. Apparently, however, Dryfoos daunted him somehow; and besides the homage which those who have not pay to those who have, Fulkerson rendered Dryfoos the tribute of a feeling which March could only define as a sort of bewilderment. As well as March could make out, this feeling was evoked by the spectacle of Dryfoos's unflinching luck, which Fulkerson was fond of dazzling himself with. It perfectly consisted with a keen sense of whatever was sordid and selfish in a man on whom his career must have had its inevitable effect. He liked to philosophize the case with March, to recall Dryfoos as he was when he first met him still somewhat in the sap, at Moffitt, and to study the processes by which he imagined him to have dried into the hardened speculator, without even the pretence to any advantage but his own in his ventures. He was aware of painting the character too vividly, and he warned March not to accept it exactly in those tints, but to subdue

Page 2

them and shade it for himself. He said that where his advantage was not concerned, there was ever so much good in Dryfoos, and that if in some things he had grown inflexible, he had expanded in others to the full measure of the vast scale on which he did business. It had seemed a little odd to March that a man should put money into such an enterprise as 'Every Other Week' and go off about other affairs, not only without any sign of anxiety, but without any sort of interest. But Fulkerson said that was the splendid side of Dryfoos. He had a courage, a magnanimity, that was equal to the strain of any such uncertainty. He had faced the music once for all, when he asked Fulkerson what the thing would cost in the different degrees of potential failure; and then he had gone off, leaving everything to Fulkerson and the younger Dryfoos, with the instruction simply to go ahead and not bother him about it. Fulkerson called that pretty tall for an old fellow who used to bewail the want of pigs and chickens to occupy his mind. He alleged it as another proof of the versatility of the American mind, and of the grandeur of institutions and opportunities that let every man grow to his full size, so that any man in America could run the concern if necessary. He believed that old Dryfoos could step into Bismarck's shoes and run the German Empire at ten days' notice, or about as long as it would take him to go from New York to Berlin. But Bismarck would not know anything about Dryfoos's plans till Dryfoos got ready to show his hand. Fulkerson himself did not pretend to say what the old man had been up to since he went West. He was at Moffitt first, and then he was at Chicago, and then he had gone out to Denver to look after some mines he had out there, and a railroad or two; and now he was at Moffitt again. He was supposed to be closing up his affairs there, but nobody could say.

Fulkerson told March the morning after Dryfoos returned that he had not only not pulled out at Moffitt, but had gone in deeper, ten times deeper than ever. He was in a royal good-humor, Fulkerson reported, and was going to drop into the office on his way up from the Street (March understood Wall Street) that afternoon. He was tickled to death with 'Every Other Week' so far as it had gone, and was anxious to pay his respects to the editor.

March accounted for some rhetoric in this, but let it flatter him, and prepared himself for a meeting about which he could see that Fulkerson was only less nervous than he had shown himself about the public reception of the first number. It gave March a disagreeable feeling of being owned and of being about to be inspected by his proprietor; but he fell back upon such independence as he could find in the thought of those two thousand dollars of income beyond the caprice of his owner, and maintained an outward serenity.



Page 3

He was a little ashamed afterward of the resolution it had cost him to do so. It was not a question of Dryfoos's physical presence: that was rather effective than otherwise, and carried a suggestion of moneyed indifference to convention in the gray business suit of provincial cut, and the low, wide-brimmed hat of flexible black felt. He had a stick with an old-fashioned top of buckhorn worn smooth and bright by the palm of his hand, which had not lost its character in fat, and which had a history of former work in its enlarged knuckles, though it was now as soft as March's, and must once have been small even for a man of Mr. Dryfoos's stature; he was below the average size. But what struck March was the fact that Dryfoos seemed furtively conscious of being a country person, and of being aware that in their meeting he was to be tried by other tests than those which would have availed him as a shrewd speculator. He evidently had some curiosity about March, as the first of his kind whom he had encountered; some such curiosity as the country school trustee feels and tries to hide in the presence of the new schoolmaster. But the whole affair was, of course, on a higher plane; on one side Dryfoos was much more a man of the world than March was, and he probably divined this at once, and rested himself upon the fact in a measure. It seemed to be his preference that his son should introduce them, for he came upstairs with Conrad, and they had fairly made acquaintance before Fulkerson joined them.

Conrad offered to leave them at once, but his father made him stay. "I reckon Mr. March and I haven't got anything so private to talk about that we want to keep it from the other partners. Well, Mr. March, are you getting used to New York yet? It takes a little time."

"Oh yes. But not so much time as most places. Everybody belongs more or less in New York; nobody has to belong here altogether."

"Yes, that is so. You can try it, and go away if you don't like it a good deal easier than you could from a smaller place. Wouldn't make so much talk, would it?" He glanced at March with a jocose light in his shrewd eyes. "That is the way I feel about it all the time: just visiting. Now, it wouldn't be that way in Boston, I reckon?"

"You couldn't keep on visiting there your whole life," said March.

Dryfoos laughed, showing his lower teeth in a way that was at once simple and fierce. "Mr. Fulkerson didn't hardly know as he could get you to leave. I suppose you got used to it there. I never been in your city."

"I had got used to it; but it was hardly my city, except by marriage. My wife's a Bostonian."

"She's been a little homesick here, then," said Dryfoos, with a smile of the same quality as his laugh.



“Less than I expected,” said March. “Of course, she was very much attached to our old home.”

“I guess my wife won’t ever get used to New York,” said Dryfoos, and he drew in his lower lip with a sharp sigh. “But my girls like it; they’re young. You never been out our way yet, Mr. March? Out West?”



Page 4

“Well, only for the purpose of being born, and brought up. I used to live in Crawfordsville, and then Indianapolis.”

“Indianapolis is bound to be a great place,” said Dryfoos. “I remember now, Mr. Fulkerson told me you was from our State.” He went on to brag of the West, as if March were an Easterner and had to be convinced. “You ought to see all that country. It’s a great country.”

“Oh yes,” said March, “I understand that.” He expected the praise of the great West to lead up to some comment on ‘Every Other Week’; and there was abundant suggestion of that topic in the manuscripts, proofs of letter-press and illustrations, with advance copies of the latest number strewn over his table.

But Dryfoos apparently kept himself from looking at these things. He rolled his head about on his shoulders to take in the character of the room, and said to his son, “You didn’t change the woodwork, after all.”

“No; the architect thought we had better let it be, unless we meant to change the whole place. He liked its being old-fashioned.”

“I hope you feel comfortable here, Mr. March,” the old man said, bringing his eyes to bear upon him again after their tour of inspection.

“Too comfortable for a working-man,” said March, and he thought that this remark must bring them to some talk about his work, but the proprietor only smiled again.

“I guess I sha’n’t lose much on this house,” he returned, as if musing aloud. “This down-town property is coming up. Business is getting in on all these side streets. I thought I paid a pretty good price for it, too.” He went on to talk of real estate, and March began to feel a certain resentment at his continued avoidance of the only topic in which they could really have a common interest. “You live down this way somewhere, don’t you?” the old man concluded.

“Yes. I wished to be near my work.” March was vexed with himself for having recurred to it; but afterward he was not sure but Dryfoos shared his own diffidence in the matter, and was waiting for him to bring it openly into the talk. At times he seemed wary and masterful, and then March felt that he was being examined and tested; at others so simple that March might well have fancied that he needed encouragement, and desired it. He talked of his wife and daughters in a way that invited March to say friendly things of his family, which appeared to give the old man first an undue pleasure and then a final distrust. At moments he turned, with an effect of finding relief in it, to his son and spoke to him across March of matters which he was unacquainted with; he did not seem aware that this was rude, but the young man must have felt it so; he always brought the conversation back, and once at some cost to himself when his father made it personal.

“I want to make a regular New York business man out of that fellow,” he said to March, pointing at Conrad with his stick. “You s’pose I’m ever going to do it?”



Page 5

“Well, I don’t know,” said March, trying to fall in with the joke. “Do you mean nothing but a business man?”

The old man laughed at whatever latent meaning he fancied in this, and said: “You think he would be a little too much for me there? Well, I’ve seen enough of ’em to know it don’t always take a large pattern of a man to do a large business. But I want him to get the business training, and then if he wants to go into something else he knows what the world is, anyway. Heigh?”

“Oh yes!” March assented, with some compassion for the young man reddening patiently under his father’s comment.

Dryfoos went on as if his son were not in hearing. “Now that boy wanted to be a preacher. What does a preacher know about the world he preaches against when he’s been brought up a preacher? He don’t know so much as a bad little boy in his Sunday-school; he knows about as much as a girl. I always told him, You be a man first, and then you be a preacher, if you want to. Heigh?”

“Precisely.” March began to feel some compassion for himself in being witness of the young fellow’s discomfort under his father’s homily.

“When we first come to New York, I told him, Now here’s your chance to see the world on a big scale. You know already what work and saving and steady habits and sense will bring a man, to; you don’t want to go round among the rich; you want to go among the poor, and see what laziness and drink and dishonesty and foolishness will bring men to. And I guess he knows, about as well as anybody; and if he ever goes to preaching he’ll know what he’s preaching about.” The old man smiled his fierce, simple smile, and in his sharp eyes March fancied contempt of the ambition he had balked in his son. The present scene must have been one of many between them, ending in meek submission on the part of the young man, whom his father, perhaps without realizing his cruelty, treated as a child. March took it hard that he should be made to suffer in the presence of a co-ordinate power like himself, and began to dislike the old man out of proportion to his offence, which might have been mere want of taste, or an effect of mere embarrassment before him. But evidently, whatever rebellion his daughters had carried through against him, he had kept his dominion over this gentle spirit unbroken. March did not choose to make any response, but to let him continue, if he would, entirely upon his own impulse.

II.

A silence followed, of rather painful length. It was broken by the cheery voice of Fulkerson, sent before him to herald Fulkerson’s cheery person. “Well, I suppose you’ve got the glorious success of ‘Every Other Week’ down pretty cold in your talk by



this time. I should have been up sooner to join you, but I was nipping a man for the last page of the cover. I guess we'll have to let the Muse have that for an advertisement instead of a poem the next time, March. Well, the old gentleman given you boys your scolding?" The person of Fulkerson had got into the room long before he reached this question, and had planted itself astride a chair. Fulkerson looked over the chairback, now at March, and now at the elder Dryfoos as he spoke.

Page 6

March answered him. "I guess we must have been waiting for you, Fulkerson. At any rate, we hadn't got to the scolding yet."

"Why, I didn't suppose Mr. Dryfoos could 'a' held in so long. I understood he was awful mad at the way the thing started off, and wanted to give you a piece of his mind, when he got at you. I inferred as much from a remark that he made." March and Dryfoos looked foolish, as men do when made the subject of this sort of merry misrepresentation.

"I reckon my scolding will keep awhile yet," said the old man, dryly.

"Well, then, I guess it's a good chance to give Mr. Dryfoos an idea of what we've really done—just while we're resting, as Artemus Ward says. Heigh, March?"

"I will let you blow the trumpet, Fulkerson. I think it belongs strictly to the advertising department," said March. He now distinctly resented the old man's failure to say anything to him of the magazine; he made his inference that it was from a suspicion of his readiness to presume upon a recognition of his share in the success, and he was determined to second no sort of appeal for it.

"The advertising department is the heart and soul of every business," said Fulkerson, hardily, "and I like to keep my hand in with a little practise on the trumpet in private. I don't believe Mr. Dryfoos has got any idea of the extent of this thing. He's been out among those Rackensackens, where we were all born, and he's read the notices in their seven by nine dailies, and he's seen the thing selling on the cars, and he thinks he appreciates what's been done. But I should just like to take him round in this little old metropolis awhile, and show him 'Every Other Week' on the centre tables of the millionaires—the Vanderbilts and the Astors—and in the homes of culture and refinement everywhere, and let him judge for himself. It's the talk of the clubs and the dinner-tables; children cry for it; it's the Castoria of literature and the Pearline of art, the 'Won't-be-happy-till-he-gets-it' of every en lightened man, woman, and child in this vast city. I knew we could capture the country; but, my goodness! I didn't expect to have New York fall into our hands at a blow. But that's just exactly what New York has done. Every Other Week supplies the long-felt want that's been grinding round in New York and keeping it awake nights ever since the war. It's the culmination of all the high and ennobling ideals of the past."

"How much," asked Dryfoos, "do you expect to get out of it the first year, if it keeps the start it's got?"

"Comes right down to business, every time!" said Fulkerson, referring the characteristic to March with a delighted glance. "Well, sir, if everything works right, and we get rain enough to fill up the springs, and it isn't a grasshopper year, I expect to clear above all expenses something in the neighborhood of twenty-five thousand dollars."



“Humph! And you are all going to work a year—editor, manager, publisher, artists, writers, printers, and the rest of 'em—to clear twenty-five thousand dollars?—I made that much in half a day in Moffitt once. I see it made in half a minute in Wall Street, sometimes.” The old man presented this aspect of the case with a good-natured contempt, which included Fulkerson and his enthusiasm in an obvious liking.



Page 7

His son suggested, "But when we make that money here, no one loses it."

"Can you prove that?" His father turned sharply upon him. "Whatever is won is lost. It's all a game; it don't make any difference what you bet on. Business is business, and a business man takes his risks with his eyes open."

"Ah, but the glory!" Fulkerson insinuated with impudent persiflage. "I hadn't got to the glory yet, because it's hard to estimate it; but put the glory at the lowest figure, Mr. Dryfoos, and add it to the twenty-five thousand, and you've got an annual income from 'Every Other Week' of dollars enough to construct a silver railroad, double-track, from this office to the moon. I don't mention any of the sister planets because I like to keep within bounds."

Dryfoos showed his lower teeth for pleasure in Fulkerson's fooling, and said, "That's what I like about you, Mr. Fulkerson—you always keep within bounds."

"Well, I ain't a shrinking Boston violet, like March, here. More sunflower in my style of diffidence; but I am modest, I don't deny it," said Fulkerson. "And I do hate to have a thing overstated."

"And the glory—you do really think there's something in the glory that pays?"

"Not a doubt of it! I shouldn't care for the paltry return in money," said Fulkerson, with a burlesque of generous disdain, "if it wasn't for the glory along with it."

"And how should you feel about the glory, if there was no money along with it?"

"Well, sir, I'm happy to say we haven't come to that yet."

"Now, Conrad, here," said the old man, with a sort of pathetic rancor, "would rather have the glory alone. I believe he don't even care much for your kind of glory, either, Mr. Fulkerson."

Fulkerson ran his little eyes curiously over Conrad's face and then March's, as if searching for a trace there of something gone before which would enable him to reach Dryfoos's whole meaning. He apparently resolved to launch himself upon conjecture. "Oh, well, we know how Conrad feels about the things of this world, anyway. I should like to take 'em on the plane of another sphere, too, sometimes; but I noticed a good while ago that this was the world I was born into, and so I made up my mind that I would do pretty much what I saw the rest of the folks doing here below. And I can't see but what Conrad runs the thing on business principles in his department, and I guess you'll find it so if you look into it. I consider that we're a whole team and big dog under the wagon with you to draw on for supplies, and March, here, at the head of the literary business, and Conrad in the counting-room, and me to do the heavy lying in the



advertising part. Oh, and Beaton, of course, in the art. I 'most forgot Beaton—Hamlet with Hamlet left out.”

Dryfoos looked across at his son. “Wasn’t that the fellow’s name that was there last night?”

“Yes,” said Conrad.

Page 8

The old man rose. "Well, I reckon I got to be going. You ready to go up-town, Conrad?"

"Well, not quite yet, father."

The old man shook hands with March, and went downstairs, followed by his son.

Fulkerson remained.

"He didn't jump at the chance you gave him to compliment us all round, Fulkerson," said March, with a smile not wholly of pleasure.

Fulkerson asked, with as little joy in the grin he had on, "Didn't he say anything to you before I came in?"

"Not a word."

"Dogged if I know what to make of it," sighed Fulkerson, "but I guess he's been having a talk with Conrad that's soured on him. I reckon maybe he came back expecting to find that boy reconciled to the glory of this world, and Conrad's showed himself just as set against it as ever."

"It might have been that," March admitted, pensively. "I fancied something of the kind myself from words the old man let drop."

Fulkerson made him explain, and then he said:

"That's it, then; and it's all right. Conrad 'll come round in time; and all we've got to do is to have patience with the old man till he does. I know he likes you." Fulkerson affirmed this only interrogatively, and looked so anxiously to March for corroboration that March laughed.

"He dissembled his love," he said; but afterward, in describing to his wife his interview with Mr. Dryfoos, he was less amused with this fact.

When she saw that he was a little cast down by it, she began to encourage him. "He's just a common, ignorant man, and probably didn't know how to express himself. You may be perfectly sure that he's delighted with the success of the magazine, and that he understands as well as you do that he owes it all to you."

"Ah, I'm not so sure. I don't believe a man's any better for having made money so easily and rapidly as Dryfoos has done, and I doubt if he's any wiser. I don't know just the point he's reached in his evolution from grub to beetle, but I do know that so far as it's gone the process must have involved a bewildering change of ideals and criterions. I guess he's come to despise a great many things that he once respected, and that intellectual ability is among them—what we call intellectual ability. He must have



undergone a moral deterioration, an atrophy of the generous instincts, and I don't see why it shouldn't have reached his mental make-up. He has sharpened, but he has narrowed; his sagacity has turned into suspicion, his caution to meanness, his courage to ferocity. That's the way I philosophize a man of Dryfoos's experience, and I am not very proud when I realize that such a man and his experience are the ideal and ambition of most Americans. I rather think they came pretty near being mine, once."

"No, dear, they never did," his wife protested.

"Well, they're not likely to be in the future. The Dryfoos feature of 'Every Other Week' is thoroughly distasteful to me."



Page 9

“Why, but he hasn’t really got anything to do with it, has he, beyond furnishing the money?”

“That’s the impression that Fulkerson has allowed us to get. But the man that holds the purse holds the reins. He may let us guide the horse, but when he likes he can drive. If we don’t like his driving, then we can get down.”

Mrs. March was less interested in this figure of speech than in the personal aspects involved. “Then you think Mr. Fulkerson has deceived you?”

“Oh no!” said her husband, laughing. “But I think he has deceived himself, perhaps.”

“How?” she pursued.

“He may have thought he was using Dryfoos, when Dryfoos was using him, and he may have supposed he was not afraid of him when he was very much so. His courage hadn’t been put to the test, and courage is a matter of proof, like proficiency on the fiddle, you know: you can’t tell whether you’ve got it till you try.”

“Nonsense! Do you mean that he would ever sacrifice you to Mr. Dryfoos?”

“I hope he may not be tempted. But I’d rather be taking the chances with Fulkerson alone than with Fulkerson and Dryfoos to back him. Dryfoos seems, somehow, to take the poetry and the pleasure out of the thing.”

Mrs. March was a long time silent. Then she began, “Well, my dear, I never wanted to come to New York—”

“Neither did I,” March promptly put in.

“But now that we’re here,” she went on, “I’m not going to have you letting every little thing discourage you. I don’t see what there was in Mr. Dryfoos’s manner to give you any anxiety. He’s just a common, stupid, inarticulate country person, and he didn’t know how to express himself, as I said in the beginning, and that’s the reason he didn’t say anything.”

“Well, I don’t deny you’re right about it.”

“It’s dreadful,” his wife continued, “to be mixed up with such a man and his family, but I don’t believe he’ll ever meddle with your management, and, till he does, all you need do is to have as little to do with him as possible, and go quietly on your own way.”

“Oh, I shall go on quietly enough,” said March. “I hope I sha’n’t begin going stealthily.”



“Well, my dear,” said Mrs. March, “just let me know when you’re tempted to do that. If ever you sacrifice the smallest grain of your honesty or your self-respect to Mr. Dryfoos, or anybody else, I will simply renounce you.”

“In view of that I’m rather glad the management of ‘Every Other Week’ involves tastes and not convictions,” said March.

III.

That night Dryfoos was wakened from his after-dinner nap by the sound of gay talk and nervous giggling in the drawing-room. The talk, which was Christine’s, and the giggling, which was Mela’s, were intershot with the heavier tones of a man’s voice; and Dryfoos lay awhile on the leathern lounge in his library, trying to make out whether he knew the voice. His wife sat in a deep chair before the fire, with her eyes on his face, waiting for him to wake.



Page 10

“Who is that out there?” he asked, without opening his eyes.

“Indeed, indeed, I don’t know, Jacob,” his wife answered. “I reckon it’s just some visitor of the girls’.”

“Was I snoring?”

“Not a bit. You was sleeping as quiet! I did hate to have ’em wake you, and I was just goin’ out to shoo them. They’ve been playin’ something, and that made them laugh.”

“I didn’t know but I had snored,” said the old man, sitting up.

“No,” said his wife. Then she asked, wistfully, “Was you out at the old place, Jacob?”

“Yes.”

“Did it look natural?”

“Yes; mostly. They’re sinking the wells down in the woods pasture.”

“And—the children’s graves?”

“They haven’t touched that part. But I reckon we got to have ’em moved to the cemetery. I bought a lot.”

The old woman began softly to weep. “It does seem too hard that they can’t be let to rest in peace, pore little things. I wanted you and me to lay there, too, when our time come, Jacob. Just there, back o’ the beehives and under them shoomakes—my, I can see the very place! And I don’t believe I’ll ever feel at home anywheres else. I woon’t know where I am when the trumpet sounds. I have to think before I can tell where the east is in New York; and what if I should git faced the wrong way when I raise? Jacob, I wonder you could sell it!” Her head shook, and the firelight shone on her tears as she searched the folds of her dress for her pocket.

A peal of laughter came from the drawing-room, and then the sound of chords struck on the piano.

“Hush! Don’t you cry, ’Liz’beth!” said Dryfoos. “Here; take my handkerchief. I’ve got a nice lot in the cemetery, and I’m goin’ to have a monument, with two lambs on it—like the one you always liked so much. It ain’t the fashion, any more, to have family buryin’ grounds; they’re collectin’ ’em into the cemeteries, all round.”

“I reckon I got to bear it,” said his wife, muffling her face in his handkerchief. “And I suppose the Lord kin find me, wherever I am. But I always did want to lay just there.”



You mind how we used to go out and set there, after milkin', and watch the sun go down, and talk about where their angels was, and try to figger it out?"

"I remember, 'Liz'beth."

The man's voice in the drawing-room sang a snatch of French song, insolent, mocking, salient; and then Christine's attempted the same strain, and another cry of laughter from Mela followed.

"Well, I always did expect to lay there. But I reckon it's all right. It won't be a great while, now, anyway. Jacob, I don't believe I'm a-goin' to live very long. I know it don't agree with me here."

"Oh, I guess it does, 'Liz'beth. You're just a little pulled down with the weather. It's coming spring, and you feel it; but the doctor says you're all right. I stopped in, on the way up, and he says so."

Page 11

“I reckon he don’t know everything,” the old woman persisted: “I’ve been runnin’ down ever since we left Moffitt, and I didn’t feel any too well there, even. It’s a very strange thing, Jacob, that the richer you git, the less you ain’t able to stay where you want to, dead or alive.”

“It’s for the children we do it,” said Dryfoos. “We got to give them their chance in the world.”

“Oh, the world! They ought to bear the yoke in their youth, like we done. I know it’s what Coonrod would like to do.”

Dryfoos got upon his feet. “If Coonrod ’ll mind his own business, and do what I want him to, he’ll have yoke enough to bear.” He moved from his wife, without further effort to comfort her, and pattered heavily out into the dining-room. Beyond its obscurity stretched the glitter of the deep drawing-room. His feet, in their broad; flat slippers, made no sound on the dense carpet, and he came unseen upon the little group there near the piano. Mela perched upon the stool with her back to the keys, and Beaton bent over Christine, who sat with a banjo in her lap, letting him take her hands and put them in the right place on the instrument. Her face was radiant with happiness, and Mela was watching her with foolish, unselfish pleasure in her bliss.

There was nothing wrong in the affair to a man of Dryfoos’s traditions and perceptions, and if it had been at home in the farm sitting-room, or even in his parlor at Moffitt, he would not have minded a young man’s placing his daughter’s hands on a banjo, or even holding them there; it would have seemed a proper, attention from him if he was courting her. But here, in such a house as this, with the daughter of a man who had made as much money as he had, he did not know but it was a liberty. He felt the angry doubt of it which beset him in regard to so many experiences of his changed life; he wanted to show his sense of it, if it was a liberty, but he did not know how, and he did not know that it was so. Besides, he could not help a touch of the pleasure in Christine’s happiness which Mela showed; and he would have gone back to the library, if he could, without being discovered.

But Beaton had seen him, and Dryfoos, with a nonchalant nod to the young man, came forward. “What you got there, Christine?”

“A banjo,” said the girl, blushing in her father’s presence.

Mela gurgled. “Mr. Beaton is learnun’ her the first position.”

Beaton was not embarrassed. He was in evening dress, and his face, pointed with its brown beard, showed extremely handsome above the expanse of his broad, white shirt-front. He gave back as nonchalant a nod as he had got, and, without further greeting to



Dryfoos, he said to Christine: “No, no. You must keep your hand and arm so.” He held them in position. “There! Now strike with your right hand. See?”

“I don’t believe I can ever learn,” said the girl, with a fond upward look at him.



Page 12

“Oh yes, you can,” said Beaton.

They both ignored Dryfoos in the little play of protests which followed, and he said, half jocosely, half suspiciously, “And is the banjo the fashion, now?” He remembered it as the emblem of low-down show business, and associated it with end-men and blackened faces and grotesque shirt-collars.

“It’s all the rage,” Mela shouted, in answer for all. “Everybody plays it. Mr. Beaton borrowed this from a lady friend of his.”

“Humph! Pity I got you a piano, then,” said Dryfoos. “A banjo would have been cheaper.”

Beaton so far admitted him to the conversation as to seem reminded of the piano by his mentioning it. He said to Mela, “Oh, won’t you just strike those chords?” and as Mela wheeled about and beat the keys he took the banjo from Christine and sat down with it. “This way!” He strummed it, and murmured the tune Dryfoos had heard him singing from the library, while he kept his beautiful eyes floating on Christine’s. “You try that, now; it’s very simple.”

“Where is Mrs. Mandel?” Dryfoos demanded, trying to assert himself.

Neither of the girls seemed to have heard him at first in the chatter they broke into over what Beaton proposed. Then Mela said, absently, “Oh, she had to go out to see one of her friends that’s sick,” and she struck the piano keys. “Come; try it, Chris!”

Dryfoos turned about unheeded and went back to the library. He would have liked to put Beaton out of his house, and in his heart he burned against him as a contumacious hand; he would have liked to discharge him from the art department of ‘Every Other Week’ at once. But he was aware of not having treated Beaton with much ceremony, and if the young man had returned his behavior in kind, with an electrical response to his own feeling, had he any right to complain? After all, there was no harm in his teaching Christine the banjo.

His wife still sat looking into the fire. “I can’t see,” she said, “as we’ve got a bit more comfort of our lives, Jacob, because we’ve got such piles and piles of money. I wisht to gracious we was back on the farm this minute. I wisht you had held out ag’inst the childern about sellin’ it; ’twould ‘a’ bin the best thing fur ’em, I say. I believe in my soul they’ll git spoiled here in New York. I kin see a change in ’em a’ready—in the girls.”

Dryfoos stretched himself on the lounge again. “I can’t see as Coonrod is much comfort, either. Why ain’t he here with his sisters? What does all that work of his on the East Side amount to? It seems as if he done it to cross me, as much as anything.” Dryfoos complained to his wife on the basis of mere affectional habit, which in married



life often survives the sense of intellectual equality. He did not expect her to reason with him, but there was help in her listening, and though she could only soothe his fretfulness with soft answers which were often wide of the purpose, he still went to her for solace. "Here, I've gone into this newspaper business, or whatever it is, on his account, and he don't seem any more satisfied than ever. I can see he hain't got his heart in it."



Page 13

“The pore boy tries; I know he does, Jacob; and he wants to please you. But he give up a good deal when he give up bein’ a preacher; I s’pose we ought to remember that.”

“A preacher!” sneered Dryfoos. “I reckon bein’ a preacher wouldn’t satisfy him now. He had the impudence to tell me this afternoon that he would like to be a priest; and he threw it up to me that he never could be because I’d kept him from studyin’.”

“He don’t mean a Catholic priest—not a Roman one, Jacob,” the old woman explained, wistfully. “He’s told me all about it. They ain’t the kind o’ Catholics we been used to; some sort of ’Piscopalians; and they do a heap o’ good amongst the poor folks over there. He says we ain’t got any idea how folks lives in them tenement houses, hundreds of ’em in one house, and whole families in a room; and it burns in his heart to help ’em like them Fathers, as he calls ’em, that gives their lives to it. He can’t be a Father, he says, because he can’t git the eddication now; but he can be a Brother; and I can’t find a word to say ag’inst it, when it gits to talkin’, Jacob.”

“I ain’t saying anything against his priests, ’Liz’beth,” said Dryfoos. “They’re all well enough in their way; they’ve given up their lives to it, and it’s a matter of business with them, like any other. But what I’m talking about now is Coonrod. I don’t object to his doin’ all the charity he wants to, and the Lord knows I’ve never been stingy with him about it. He might have all the money he wants, to give round any way he pleases.”

“That’s what I told him once, but he says money ain’t the thing—or not the only thing you got to give to them poor folks. You got to give your time and your knowledge and your love—I don’t know what all you got to give yourself, if you expect to help ’em. That’s what Coonrod says.”

“Well, I can tell him that charity begins at home,” said Dryfoos, sitting up in his impatience. “And he’d better give himself to us a little—to his old father and mother. And his sisters. What’s he doin’ goin’ off there to his meetings, and I don’t know what all, an’ leavin’ them here alone?”

“Why, ain’t Mr. Beaton with ’em?” asked the old woman. “I thought I heard his voice.”

“Mr. Beaton! Of course he is! And who’s Mr. Beaton, anyway?”

“Why, ain’t he one of the men in Coonrod’s office? I thought I heard—”

“Yes, he is! But who is he? What’s he doing round here? Is he makin’ up to Christine?”

“I reckon he is. From Mely’s talk, she’s about crazy over the fellow. Don’t you like him, Jacob?”

“I don’t know him, or what he is. He hasn’t got any manners. Who brought him here? How’d he come to come, in the first place?”



“Mr. Fulkerson brung him, I believe,” said the old woman, patiently.

“Fulkerson!” Dryfoos snorted. “Where’s Mrs. Mandel, I should like to know? He brought her, too. Does she go traipsin’ off this way every evening?”



Page 14

“No, she seems to be here pretty regular most o’ the time. I don’t know how we could ever git along without her, Jacob; she seems to know just what to do, and the girls would be ten times as outbreakin’ without her. I hope you ain’t thinkin’ o’ turnin’ her off, Jacob?”

Dryfoos did not think it necessary to answer such a question. “It’s all Fulkerson, Fulkerson, Fulkerson. It seems to me that Fulkerson about runs this family. He brought Mrs. Mandel, and he brought that Beaton, and he brought that Boston fellow! I guess I give him a dose, though; and I’ll learn Fulkerson that he can’t have everything his own way. I don’t want anybody to help me spend my money. I made it, and I can manage it. I guess Mr. Fulkerson can bear a little watching now. He’s been travelling pretty free, and he’s got the notion he’s driving, maybe. I’m a-going to look after that book a little myself.”

“You’ll kill yourself, Jacob,” said his wife, “tryin’ to do so many things. And what is it all fur? I don’t see as we’re better off, any, for all the money. It’s just as much care as it used to be when we was all there on the farm together. I wisht we could go back, Ja—”

“We can’t go back!” shouted the old man, fiercely. “There’s no farm any more to go back to. The fields is full of gas-wells and oil-wells and hell-holes generally; the house is tore down, and the barn’s goin’—”

“The barn!” gasped the old woman. “Oh, my!”

“If I was to give all I’m worth this minute, we couldn’t go back to the farm, any more than them girls in there could go back and be little children. I don’t say we’re any better off, for the money. I’ve got more of it now than I ever had; and there’s no end to the luck; it pours in. But I feel like I was tied hand and foot. I don’t know which way to move; I don’t know what’s best to do about anything. The money don’t seem to buy anything but more and more care and trouble. We got a big house that we ain’t at home in; and we got a lot of hired girls round under our feet that hinder and don’t help. Our children don’t mind us, and we got no friends or neighbors. But it had to be. I couldn’t help but sell the farm, and we can’t go back to it, for it ain’t there. So don’t you say anything more about it, ‘Liz’beth.”

“Pore Jacob!” said his wife. “Well, I woon’t, dear.”

IV

It was clear to Beaton that Dryfoos distrusted him; and the fact heightened his pleasure in Christine’s liking for him. He was as sure of this as he was of the other, though he was not so sure of any reason for his pleasure in it. She had her charm; the charm of wildness to which a certain wildness in himself responded; and there were times when



his fancy contrived a common future for them, which would have a prosperity forced from the old fellow's love of the girl. Beaton liked the idea of this compulsion better than he liked the idea of the money; there was something a little repulsive in that; he imagined himself rejecting it; he almost wished he was enough in love with the girl to marry her without it; that would be fine. He was taken with her in a certain' measure, in a certain way; the question was in what measure, in what way.



Page 15

It was partly to escape from this question that he hurried down-town, and decided to spend with the Leightons the hour remaining on his hands before it was time to go to the reception for which he was dressed. It seemed to him important that he should see Alma Leighton. After all, it was her charm that was most abiding with him; perhaps it was to be final. He found himself very happy in his present relations with her. She had dropped that barrier of pretences and ironical surprise. It seemed to him that they had gone back to the old ground of common artistic interest which he had found so pleasant the summer before. Apparently she and her mother had both forgiven his neglect of them in the first months of their stay in New York; he was sure that Mrs. Leighton liked him as well as ever, and, if there was still something a little provisional in Alma's manner at times, it was something that piqued more than it discouraged; it made him curious, not anxious.

He found the young ladies with Fulkerson when he rang. He seemed to be amusing them both, and they were both amused beyond the merit of so small a pleasantry, Beaton thought, when Fulkerson said: "Introduce myself, Mr. Beaton: Mr. Fulkerson of 'Every Other Week.' Think I've met you at our place." The girls laughed, and Alma explained that her mother was not very well, and would be sorry not to see him. Then she turned, as he felt, perversely, and went on talking with Fulkerson and left him to Miss Woodburn.

She finally recognized his disappointment: "Ah don't often get a chance at you, Mr. Beaton, and Ah'm just goin' to toak yo' to death. Yo' have been Soath yo'self, and yo' know ho' we do toak."

"I've survived to say yes," Beaton admitted.

"Oh, now, do you think we toak so much mo' than you do in the No'th?" the young lady deprecated.

"I don't know. I only know you can't talk too much for me. I should like to hear you say Soath and house and about for the rest of my life."

"That's what Ah call raght personal, Mr. Beaton. Now Ah'm goin' to be personal, too." Miss Woodburn flung out over her lap the square of cloth she was embroidering, and asked him: "Don't you think that's beautiful? Now, as an awtust—a great awtust?"

"As a great awtust, yes," said Beaton, mimicking her accent. "If I were less than great I might have something to say about the arrangement of colors. You're as bold and original as Nature."

"Really? Oh, now, do tell me yo' favo'ite colo', Mr. Beaton."



“My favorite color? Bless my soul, why should I prefer any? Is blue good, or red wicked? Do people have favorite colors?” Beaton found himself suddenly interested.

“Of co’se they do,” answered the girl. “Don’t awtusts?”

“I never heard of one that had—consciously.”

“Is it possible? I supposed they all had. Now mah favo’ite colo’ is gawnet. Don’t you think it’s a pretty colo’?”



Page 16

"It depends upon how it's used. Do you mean in neckties?" Beaton stole a glance at the one Fulkerson was wearing.

Miss Woodburn laughed with her face bowed upon her wrist. "Ah do think you gentlemen in the No'th awe ten tahms as lahvely as the ladies."

"Strange," said Beaton. "In the South—Soath, excuse me! I made the observation that the ladies were ten times as lively as the gentlemen. What is that you're working?"

"This?" Miss Woodburn gave it another flirt, and looked at it with a glance of dawning recognition. "Oh, this is a table-covah. Wouldn't you lahke to see where it's to go?"

"Why, certainly."

"Well, if you'll be raght good I'll let yo' give me some professional advass about putting something in the co'ners or not, when you have seen it on the table."

She rose and led the way into the other room. Beaton knew she wanted to talk with him about something else; but he waited patiently to let her play her comedy out. She spread the cover on the table, and he advised her, as he saw she wished, against putting anything in the corners; just run a line of her stitch around the edge, he said.

"Mr. Fulkerson and Ah, why, we've been having a regular faght aboat it," she commented. "But we both agreed, fahnally, to leave it to you; Mr. Fulkerson said you'd be sure to be raght. Ah'm so glad you took mah sahde. But he's a great admahrer of yours, Mr. Beaton," she concluded, demurely, suggestively.

"Is he? Well, I'm a great admirer of Fulkerson," said Beaton, with a capricious willingness to humor her wish to talk about Fulkerson. "He's a capital fellow; generous, magnanimous, with quite an ideal of friendship and an eye single to the main chance all the time. He would advertise 'Every Other Week' on his family vault."

Miss Woodburn laughed, and said she should tell him what Beaton had said.

"Do. But he's used to defamation from me, and he'll think you're joking."

"Ah suppose," said Miss Woodburn, "that he's quahte the tahpe of a New York business man." She added, as if it followed logically, "He's so different from what I thought a New York business man would be."

"It's your Virginia tradition to despise business," said Beaton, rudely.

Miss Woodburn laughed again. "Despahse it? Mah goodness! we want to get into it and woak it fo' all it's wo'th,' as Mr. Fulkerson says. That tradition is all past. You don't know what the Soath is now. Ah suppose mah fathaw despahses business, but he's a



tradition himself, as Ah tell him.” Beaton would have enjoyed joining the young lady in anything she might be going to say in derogation of her father, but he restrained himself, and she went on more and more as if she wished to account for her father’s habitual hauteur with Beaton, if not to excuse it. “Ah tell him he don’t understand the rising generation. He was brought up in the old school,

Page 17

and he thinks we're all just lahke he was when he was young, with all those ahdeals of chivalry and family; but, mah goodness! it's money that cyoants no'adays in the Soath, just lahke it does everywhere else. Ah suppose, if we could have slavery back in the fawm mah fathaw thinks it could have been brought up to, when the commercial spirit wouldn't let it alone, it would be the best thing; but we can't have it back, and Ah tell him we had better have the commercial spirit as the next best thing."

Miss Woodburn went on, with sufficient loyalty and piety, to expose the difference of her own and her father's ideals, but with what Beaton thought less reference to his own unsympathetic attention than to a knowledge finally of the personnel and materiel of 'Every Other Week.' and Mr. Fulkerson's relation to the enterprise. "You most excuse my asking so many questions, Mr. Beaton. You know it's all mah doing that we awe heah in New York. Ah just told mah fathaw that if he was evah goin' to do anything with his wrahtings, he had got to come No'th, and Ah made him come. Ah believe he'd have stayed in the Soath all his lahfe. And now Mr. Fulkerson wants him to let his editor see some of his wrahtings, and Ah wanted to know something aboat the magazine. We awe a great deal excited aboat it in this hoase, you know, Mr. Beaton," she concluded, with a look that now transferred the interest from Fulkerson to Alma. She led the way back to the room where they were sitting, and went up to triumph over Fulkerson with Beaton's decision about the table-cover.

Alma was left with Beaton near the piano, and he began to talk about the Dryfooses as he sat down on the piano-stool. He said he had been giving Miss Dryfoos a lesson on the banjo; he had borrowed the banjo of Miss Vance. Then he struck the chord he had been trying to teach Christine, and played over the air he had sung.

"How do you like that?" he asked, whirling round.

"It seems rather a disrespectful little tune, somehow," said Alma, placidly.

Beaton rested his elbow on the corner of the piano and gazed dreamily at her. "Your perceptions are wonderful. It is disrespectful. I played it, up there, because I felt disrespectful to them."

"Do you claim that as a merit?"

"No, I state it as a fact. How can you respect such people?"

"You might respect yourself, then," said the girl. "Or perhaps that wouldn't be so easy, either."

"No, it wouldn't. I like to have you say these things to me," said Beaton, impartially.



“Well, I like to say them,” Alma returned.

“They do me good.”

“Oh, I don’t know that that was my motive.”

“There is no one like you—no one,” said Beaton, as if apostrophizing her in her absence. “To come from that house, with its assertions of money—you can hear it chink; you can smell the foul old banknotes; it stifles you—into an atmosphere like this, is like coming into another world.”



Page 18

“Thank you,” said Alma. “I’m glad there isn’t that unpleasant odor here; but I wish there was a little more of the chinking.”

“No, no! Don’t say that!” he implored. “I like to think that there is one soul uncontaminated by the sense of money in this big, brutal, sordid city.”

“You mean two,” said Alma, with modesty. “But if you stifle at the Dryfooses’, why do you go there?”

“Why do I go?” he mused. “Don’t you believe in knowing all the natures, the types, you can? Those girls are a strange study: the young one is a simple, earthly creature, as common as an oat-field and the other a sort of sylvan life: fierce, flashing, feline—”

Alma burst out into a laugh. “What apt alliteration! And do they like being studied? I should think the sylvan life might—scratch.”

“No,” said Beaton, with melancholy absence, “it only-purrs.”

The girl felt a rising indignation. “Well, then, Mr. Beaton, I should hope it would scratch, and bite, too. I think you’ve no business to go about studying people, as you do. It’s abominable.”

“Go on,” said the young man. “That Puritan conscience of yours! It appeals to the old Covenanter strain in me—like a voice of pre-existence. Go on—”

“Oh, if I went on I should merely say it was not only abominable, but contemptible.”

“You could be my guardian angel, Alma,” said the young man, making his eyes more and more slumbrous and dreamy.

“Stuff! I hope I have a soul above buttons!”

He smiled, as she rose, and followed her across the room. “Good-night; Mr. Beaton,” she said.

Miss Woodburn and Fulkerson came in from the other room. “What! You’re not going, Beaton?”

“Yes; I’m going to a reception. I stopped in on my way.”

“To kill time,” Alma explained.

“Well,” said Fulkerson, gallantly, “this is the last place I should like to do it. But I guess I’d better be going, too. It has sometimes occurred to me that there is such a thing as



staying too late. But with Brother Beaton, here, just starting in for an evening's amusement, it does seem a little early yet. Can't you urge me to stay, somebody?"

The two girls laughed, and Miss Woodburn said:

"Mr. Beaton is such a butterfly of fashion! Ah wish Ah was on mah way to a pawty. Ah feel quahte envious."

"But he didn't say it to make you," Alma explained, with meek softness.

"Well, we can't all be swells. Where is your party, anyway, Beaton?" asked Fulkerson. "How do you manage to get your invitations to those things? I suppose a fellow has to keep hinting round pretty lively, Neigh?"

Beaton took these mockeries serenely, and shook hands with Miss Woodburn, with the effect of having already shaken hands with Alma. She stood with hers clasped behind her.

V.



Page 19

Beaton went away with the smile on his face which he had kept in listening to Fulkerson, and carried it with him to the reception. He believed that Alma was vexed with him for more personal reasons than she had implied; it flattered him that she should have resented what he told her of the Dryfooses. She had scolded him in their behalf apparently; but really because he had made her jealous by his interest, of whatever kind, in some one else. What followed, had followed naturally. Unless she had been quite a simpleton she could not have met his provisional love-making on any other terms; and the reason why Beaton chiefly liked Alma Leighton was that she was not a simpleton. Even up in the country, when she was overawed by his acquaintance, at first, she was not very deeply overawed, and at times she was not overawed at all. At such times she astonished him by taking his most solemn histrionics with flippant incredulity, and even burlesquing them. But he could see, all the same, that he had caught her fancy, and he admired the skill with which she punished his neglect when they met in New York. He had really come very near forgetting the Leightons; the intangible obligations of mutual kindness which hold some men so fast, hung loosely upon him; it would not have hurt him to break from them altogether; but when he recognized them at last, he found that it strengthened them indefinitely to have Alma ignore them so completely. If she had been sentimental, or softly reproachful, that would have been the end; he could not have stood it; he would have had to drop her. But when she met him on his own ground, and obliged him to be sentimental, the game was in her hands. Beaton laughed, now, when he thought of that, and he said to himself that the girl had grown immensely since she had come to New York; nothing seemed to have been lost upon her; she must have kept her eyes uncommonly wide open. He noticed that especially in their talks over her work; she had profited by everything she had seen and heard; she had all of Wetmore's ideas pat; it amused Beaton to see how she seized every useful word that he dropped, too, and turned him to technical account whenever she could. He liked that; she had a great deal of talent; there was no question of that; if she were a man there could be no question of her future. He began to construct a future for her; it included provision for himself, too; it was a common future, in which their lives and work were united.

He was full of the glow of its prosperity when he met Margaret Vance at the reception.

The house was one where people might chat a long time together without publicly committing themselves to an interest in each other except such a grew out of each other's ideas. Miss Vance was there because she united in her catholic sympathies or ambitions the objects of the fashionable people and of the aesthetic people who met there on common ground. It was almost the only house in New York where this happened

Page 20

often, and it did not happen very often there. It was a literary house, primarily, with artistic qualifications, and the frequenters of it were mostly authors and artists; Wetmore, who was always trying to fit everything with a phrase, said it was the unfrequenters who were fashionable. There was great ease there, and simplicity; and if there was not distinction, it was not for want of distinguished people, but because there seems to be some solvent in New York life that reduces all men to a common level, that touches everybody with its potent magic and brings to the surface the deeply underlying nobody. The effect for some temperaments, for consciousness, for egotism, is admirable; for curiosity, for hero worship, it is rather baffling. It is the spirit of the street transferred to the drawing-room; indiscriminating, levelling, but doubtless finally wholesome, and witnessing the immensity of the place, if not consenting to the grandeur of reputations or presences.

Beaton now denied that this house represented a salon at all, in the old sense; and he held that the salon was impossible, even undesirable, with us, when Miss Vance sighed for it. At any rate, he said that this turmoil of coming and going, this bubble and babble, this cackling and hissing of conversation was not the expression of any such civilization as had created the salon. Here, he owned, were the elements of intellectual delightfulness, but he said their assemblage in such quantity alone denied the salon; there was too much of a good thing. The French word implied a long evening of general talk among the guests, crowned with a little chicken at supper, ending at cock-crow. Here was tea, with milk or with lemon-baths of it and claret-cup for the hardier spirits throughout the evening. It was very nice, very pleasant, but it was not the little chicken—not the salon. In fact, he affirmed, the salon descended from above, out of the great world, and included the aesthetic world in it. But our great world—the rich people, were stupid, with no wish to be otherwise; they were not even curious about authors and artists. Beaton fancied himself speaking impartially, and so he allowed himself to speak bitterly; he said that in no other city in the world, except Vienna, perhaps, were such people so little a part of society.

“It isn’t altogether the rich people’s fault,” said Margaret; and she spoke impartially, too. “I don’t believe that the literary men and the artists would like a salon that descended to them. Madame Geoffrin, you know, was very plebeian; her husband was a business man of some sort.”

“He would have been a howling swell in New York,” said Beaton, still impartially.

Wetmore came up to their corner, with a scroll of bread and butter in one hand and a cup of tea in the other. Large and fat, and clean-shaven, he looked like a monk in evening dress.

“We were talking about salons,” said Margaret.

“Why don’t you open a salon yourself?” asked Wetmore, breathing thickly from the anxiety of getting through the crowd without spilling his tea.



Page 21

“Like poor Lady Barberina Lemon?” said the girl, with a laugh. “What a good story! That idea of a woman who couldn’t be interested in any of the arts because she was socially and traditionally the material of them! We can, never reach that height of nonchalance in this country.”

“Not if we tried seriously?” suggested the painter. “I’ve an idea that if the Americans ever gave their minds to that sort of thing, they could take the palm—or the cake, as Beaton here would say—just as they do in everything else. When we do have an aristocracy, it will be an aristocracy that will go ahead of anything the world has ever seen. Why don’t somebody make a beginning, and go in openly for an ancestry, and a lower middle class, and an hereditary legislature, and all the rest? We’ve got liveries, and crests, and palaces, and caste feeling. We’re all right as far as we’ve gone, and we’ve got the money to go any length.”

“Like your natural-gas man, Mr. Beaton,” said the girl, with a smiling glance round at him.

“Ah!” said Wetmore, stirring his tea, “has Beaton got a natural-gas man?”

“My natural-gas man,” said Beaton, ignoring Wetmore’s question, “doesn’t know how to live in his palace yet, and I doubt if he has any caste feeling. I fancy his family believe themselves victims of it. They say—one of the young ladies does—that she never saw such an unsociable place as New York; nobody calls.”

“That’s good!” said Wetmore. “I suppose they’re all ready for company, too: good cook, furniture, servants, carriages?”

“Galore,” said Beaton.

“Well, that’s too bad. There’s a chance for you, Miss Vance. Doesn’t your philanthropy embrace the socially destitute as well as the financially? Just think of a family like that, without a friend, in a great city! I should think common charity had a duty there—not to mention the uncommon.”

He distinguished that kind as Margaret’s by a glance of ironical deference. She had a repute for good works which was out of proportion to the works, as it always is, but she was really active in that way, under the vague obligation, which we now all feel, to be helpful. She was of the church which seems to have found a reversion to the imposing ritual of the past the way back to the early ideals of Christian brotherhood.

“Oh, they seem to have Mr. Beaton,” Margaret answered, and Beaton felt obscurely flattered by her reference to his patronage of the Dryfooses.

He explained to Wetmore: “They have me because they partly own me. Dryfoos is Fulkerson’s financial backer in ‘Every Other Week’.”



“Is that so? Well, that’s interesting, too. Aren’t you rather astonished, Miss Vance, to see what a petty thing Beaton is making of that magazine of his?”

“Oh,” said Margaret, “it’s so very nice, every way; it makes you feel as if you did have a country, after all. It’s as chic—that detestable little word!—as those new French books.”



Page 22

“Beaton modelled it on them. But you mustn’t suppose he does everything about ‘Every Other Week’; he’d like you to. Beaton, you haven’t come up to that cover of your first number, since. That was the design of one of my pupils, Miss Vance—a little girl that Beaton discovered down in New Hampshire last summer.”

“Oh yes. And have you great hopes of her, Mr. Wetmore?”

“She seems to have more love of it and knack for it than any one of her sex I’ve seen yet. It really looks like a case of art for art’s sake, at times. But you can’t tell. They’re liable to get married at any moment, you know. Look here, Beaton, when your natural-gas man gets to the picture-buying stage in his development, just remember your old friends, will you? You know, Miss Vance, those new fellows have their regular stages. They never know what to do with their money, but they find out that people buy pictures, at one point. They shut your things up in their houses where nobody comes, and after a while they overeat themselves—they don’t know what, else to do—and die of apoplexy, and leave your pictures to a gallery, and then they see the light. It’s slow, but it’s pretty sure. Well, I see Beaton isn’t going to move on, as he ought to do; and so I must. He always was an unconventional creature.”

Wetmore went away, but Beaton remained, and he outstayed several other people who came up to speak to Miss Vance. She was interested in everybody, and she liked the talk of these clever literary, artistic, clerical, even theatrical people, and she liked the sort of court with which they recognized her fashion as well as her cleverness; it was very pleasant to be treated intellectually as if she were one of themselves, and socially as if she was not habitually the same, but a sort of guest in Bohemia, a distinguished stranger. If it was Arcadia rather than Bohemia, still she felt her quality of distinguished stranger. The flattery of it touched her fancy, and not her vanity; she had very little vanity. Beaton’s devotion made the same sort of appeal; it was not so much that she liked him as she liked being the object of his admiration. She was a girl of genuine sympathies, intellectual rather than sentimental. In fact, she was an intellectual person, whom qualities of the heart saved from being disagreeable, as they saved her on the other hand from being worldly or cruel in her fashionableness. She had read a great many books, and had ideas about them, quite courageous and original ideas; she knew about pictures—she had been in Wetmore’s class; she was fond of music; she was willing to understand even politics; in Boston she might have been agnostic, but in New York she was sincerely religious; she was very accomplished; and perhaps it was her goodness that prevented her feeling what was not best in Beaton.

“Do you think,” she said, after the retreat of one of the comers and goers left her alone with him again, “that those young ladies would like me to call on them?”



Page 23

“Those young ladies?” Beaton echoed. “Miss Leighton and—”

“No; I have been there with my aunt’s cards already.”

“Oh yes,” said Beaton, as if he had known of it; he admired the pluck and pride with which Alma had refrained from ever mentioning the fact to him, and had kept her mother from mentioning it, which must have been difficult.

“I mean the Miss Dryfooses. It seems really barbarous, if nobody goes near them. We do all kinds of things, and help all kinds of people in some ways, but we let strangers remain strangers unless they know how to make their way among us.”

“The Dryfooses certainly wouldn’t know how to make their way among you,” said Beaton, with a sort of dreamy absence in his tone.

Miss Vance went on, speaking out the process of reasoning in her mind, rather than any conclusions she had reached. “We defend ourselves by trying to believe that they must have friends of their own, or that they would think us patronizing, and wouldn’t like being made the objects of social charity; but they needn’t really suppose anything of the kind.”

“I don’t imagine they would,” said Beaton. “I think they’d be only too happy to have you come. But you wouldn’t know what to do with each other, indeed, Miss Vance.”

“Perhaps we shall like each other,” said the girl, bravely, “and then we shall know. What Church are they of?”

“I don’t believe they’re of any,” said Beaton. “The mother was brought up a Dunkard.”

“A Dunkard?”

Beaton told what he knew of the primitive sect, with its early Christian polity, its literal interpretation of Christ’s ethics, and its quaint ceremonial of foot-washing; he made something picturesque of that. “The father is a Mammon-worshipper, pure and simple. I suppose the young ladies go to church, but I don’t know where. They haven’t tried to convert me.”

“I’ll tell them not to despair—after I’ve converted them,” said Miss Vance. “Will you let me use you as a ‘point d’appui’, Mr. Beaton?”

“Any way you like. If you’re really going to see them, perhaps I’d better make a confession. I left your banjo with them, after I got it put in order.”

“How very nice! Then we have a common interest already.”

“Do you mean the banjo, or—”



“The banjo, decidedly. Which of them plays?”

“Neither. But the eldest heard that the banjo was ‘all the rage,’ as the youngest says. Perhaps you can persuade them that good works are the rage, too.”

Beaton had no very lively belief that Margaret would go to see the Dryfooses; he did so few of the things he proposed that he went upon the theory that others must be as faithless. Still, he had a cruel amusement in figuring the possible encounter between Margaret Vance, with her intellectual elegance, her eager sympathies and generous ideals, and those girls with their rude past, their false and distorted perspective, their sordid and hungry selfishness, and their faith in the omnipotence of their father’s wealth wounded by their experience of its present social impotence. At the bottom of his heart he sympathized with them rather than with her; he was more like them.

Page 24

People had ceased coming, and some of them were going. Miss Vance said she must go, too, and she was about to rise, when the host came up with March; Beaton turned away.

“Miss Vance, I want to introduce Mr. March, the editor of 'Every Other Week.' You oughtn't to be restricted to the art department. We literary fellows think that arm of the service gets too much of the glory nowadays.” His banter was for Beaton, but he was already beyond ear-shot, and the host went on:

Mr. March can talk with you about your favorite Boston. He's just turned his back on it.”

“Oh, I hope not!” said Miss Vance. “I can't imagine anybody voluntarily leaving Boston.”

“I don't say he's so bad as that,” said the host, committing March to her. “He came to New York because he couldn't help it—like the rest of us. I never know whether that's a compliment to New York or not.”

They talked Boston a little while, without finding that they had common acquaintance there; Miss Vance must have concluded that society was much larger in Boston than she had supposed from her visits there, or else that March did not know many people in it. But she was not a girl to care much for the inferences that might be drawn from such conclusions; she rather prided herself upon despising them; and she gave herself to the pleasure of being talked to as if she were of March's own age. In the glow of her sympathetic beauty and elegance he talked his best, and tried to amuse her with his jokes, which he had the art of tingeing with a little seriousness on one side. He made her laugh; and he flattered her by making her think; in her turn she charmed him so much by enjoying what he said that he began to brag of his wife, as a good husband always does when another woman charms him; and she asked, Oh was Mrs. March there; and would he introduce her?

She asked Mrs. March for her address, and whether she had a day; and she said she would come to see her, if she would let her. Mrs. March could not be so enthusiastic about her as March was, but as they walked home together they talked the girl over, and agreed about her beauty and her amiability. Mrs. March said she seemed very unspoiled for a person who must have been so much spoiled. They tried to analyze her charm, and they succeeded in formulating it as a combination of intellectual fashionableness and worldly innocence. “I think,” said Mrs. March, “that city girls, brought up as she must have been, are often the most innocent of all. They never imagine the wickedness of the world, and if they marry happily they go through life as innocent as children. Everything combines to keep them so; the very hollowness of society shields them. They are the loveliest of the human race. But perhaps the rest have to pay too much for them.”

“For such an exquisite creature as Miss Vance,” said March, “we couldn’t pay too much.”

A wild laughing cry suddenly broke upon the air at the street-crossing in front of them. A girl’s voice called out: “Run, run, Jen! The copper is after you.” A woman’s figure rushed stumbling across the way and into the shadow of the houses, pursued by a burly policeman.



Page 25

"Ah, but if that's part of the price?"

They went along fallen from the gay spirit of their talk into a silence which he broke with a sigh. "Can that poor wretch and the radiant girl we left yonder really belong to the same system of things? How impossible each makes the other seem!"

VI.

Mrs. Horn believed in the world and in society and its unwritten constitution devoutly, and she tolerated her niece's benevolent activities as she tolerated her aesthetic sympathies because these things, however oddly, were tolerated—even encouraged—by society; and they gave Margaret a charm. They made her originality interesting. Mrs. Horn did not intend that they should ever go so far as to make her troublesome; and it was with a sense of this abeyant authority of her aunt's that the girl asked her approval of her proposed call upon the Dryfooses. She explained as well as she could the social destitution of these opulent people, and she had of course to name Beaton as the source of her knowledge concerning them.

"Did Mr. Beaton suggest your calling on them?"

"No; he rather discouraged it."

"And why do you think you ought to go in this particular instance? New York is full of people who don't know anybody."

Margaret laughed. "I suppose it's like any other charity: you reach the cases you know of. The others you say you can't help, and you try to ignore them."

"It's very romantic," said Mrs. Horn. "I hope you've counted the cost; all the possible consequences."

Margaret knew that her aunt had in mind their common experience with the Leightons, whom, to give their common conscience peace, she had called upon with her aunt's cards and excuses, and an invitation for her Thursdays, somewhat too late to make the visit seem a welcome to New York. She was so coldly received, not so much for herself as in her quality of envoy, that her aunt experienced all the comfort which vicarious penance brings. She did not perhaps consider sufficiently her niece's guiltlessness in the expiation. Margaret was not with her at St. Barnaby in the fatal fortnight she passed there, and never saw the Leightons till she went to call upon them. She never complained: the strain of asceticism, which mysteriously exists in us all, and makes us put peas, boiled or unboiled, in our shoes, gave her patience with the snub which the Leightons presented her for her aunt. But now she said, with this in mind: "Nothing seems simpler than to get rid of people if you don't want them. You merely have to let them alone."



“It isn’t so pleasant, letting them alone,” said Mrs. Horn.

“Or having them let you alone,” said Margaret; for neither Mrs. Leighton nor Alma had ever come to enjoy the belated hospitality of Mrs. Horn’s Thursdays.

“Yes, or having them let you alone,” Mrs. Horn courageously consented. “And all that I ask you, Margaret, is to be sure that you really want to know these people.”



Page 26

"I don't," said the girl, seriously, "in the usual way."

"Then the question is whether you do in the un usual way. They will build a great deal upon you," said Mrs. Horn, realizing how much the Leightons must have built upon her, and how much out of proportion to her desert they must now dislike her; for she seemed to have had them on her mind from the time they came, and had always meant to recognize any reasonable claim they had upon her.

"It seems very odd, very sad," Margaret returned, "that you never could act unselfishly in society affairs. If I wished to go and see those girls just to do them a pleasure, and perhaps because if they're strange and lonely, I might do them good, even—it would be impossible."

"Quite," said her aunt. "Such a thing would be quixotic. Society doesn't rest upon any such basis. It can't; it would go to pieces, if people acted from unselfish motives."

"Then it's a painted savage!" said the girl. "All its favors are really bargains. It's gifts are for gifts back again."

"Yes, that is true," said Mrs. Horn, with no more sense of wrong in the fact than the political economist has in the fact that wages are the measure of necessity and not of merit. "You get what you pay for. It's a matter of business." She satisfied herself with this formula, which she did not invent, as fully as if it were a reason; but she did not dislike her niece's revolt against it. That was part of Margaret's originality, which pleased her aunt in proportion to her own conventionality; she was really a timid person, and she liked the show of courage which Margaret's magnanimity often reflected upon her. She had through her a repute, with people who did not know her well, for intellectual and moral qualities; she was supposed to be literary and charitable; she almost had opinions and ideals, but really fell short of their possession. She thought that she set bounds to the girl's originality because she recognized them. Margaret understood this better than her aunt, and knew that she had consulted her about going to see the Dryfooses out of deference, and with no expectation of luminous instruction. She was used to being a law to herself, but she knew what she might and might not do, so that she was rather a by-law. She was the kind of girl that might have fancies for artists and poets, but might end by marrying a prosperous broker, and leavening a vast lump of moneyed and fashionable life with her culture, generosity, and good-will. The intellectual interests were first with her, but she might be equal to sacrificing them; she had the best heart, but she might know how to harden it; if she was eccentric, her social orbit was defined; comets themselves traverse space on fixed lines. She was like every one else, a congeries of contradictions and inconsistencies, but obedient to the general expectation of what a girl of her position must and must not finally be. Provisionally, she was very much what she liked to be.



Page 27

VII

Margaret Vance tried to give herself some reason for going to call upon the Dryfooses, but she could find none better than the wish to do a kind thing. This seemed queerer and less and less sufficient as she examined it, and she even admitted a little curiosity as a harmless element in her motive, without being very well satisfied with it. She tried to add a slight sense of social duty, and then she decided to have no motive at all, but simply to pay her visit as she would to any other eligible strangers she saw fit to call upon. She perceived that she must be very careful not to let them see that any other impulse had governed her; she determined, if possible, to let them patronize her; to be very modest and sincere and diffident, and, above all, not to play a part. This was easy, compared with the choice of a manner that should convey to them the fact that she was not playing a part. When the hesitating Irish serving-man had acknowledged that the ladies were at home, and had taken her card to them, she sat waiting for them in the drawing-room. Her study of its appointments, with their impersonal costliness, gave her no suggestion how to proceed; the two sisters were upon her before she had really decided, and she rose to meet them with the conviction that she was going to play a part for want of some chosen means of not doing so. She found herself, before she knew it, making her banjo a property in the little comedy, and professing so much pleasure in the fact that Miss Dryfoos was taking it up; she had herself been so much interested by it. Anything, she said, was a relief from the piano; and then, between the guitar and the banjo, one must really choose the banjo, unless one wanted to devote one's whole natural life to the violin. Of course, there was the mandolin; but Margaret asked if they did not feel that the bit of shell you struck it with interposed a distance between you and the real soul of the instrument; and then it did have such a faint, mosquito little tone! She made much of the question, which they left her to debate alone while they gazed solemnly at her till she characterized the tone of the mandolin, when Mela broke into a large, coarse laugh.

"Well, that's just what it does sound like," she explained defiantly to her sister. "I always feel like it was going to settle somewhere, and I want to hit myself a slap before it begins to bite. I don't see what ever brought such a thing into fashion."

Margaret had not expected to be so powerfully seconded, and she asked, after gathering herself together, "And you are both learning the banjo?" "My, no!" said Mela, "I've gone through enough with the piano. Christine is learnun' it."

"I'm so glad you are making my banjo useful at the outset, Miss Dryfoos." Both girls stared at her, but found it hard to cope with the fact that this was the lady friend whose banjo Beaton had lent them. "Mr. Beaton mentioned that he had left it here. I hope you'll keep it as long as you find it useful."



Page 28

At this amiable speech even Christine could not help thanking her. "Of course," she said, "I expect to get another, right off. Mr. Beaton is going to choose it for me."

"You are very fortunate. If you haven't a teacher yet I should so like to recommend mine."

Mela broke out in her laugh again. "Oh, I guess Christine's pretty well suited with the one she's got," she said, with insinuation. Her sister gave her a frowning glance, and Margaret did not tempt her to explain.

"Then that's much better," she said. "I have a kind of superstition in such matters; I don't like to make a second choice. In a shop I like to take the first thing of the kind I'm looking for, and even if I choose further I come back to the original."

"How funny!" said Mela. "Well, now, I'm just the other way. I always take the last thing, after I've picked over all the rest. My luck always seems to be at the bottom of the heap. Now, Christine, she's more like you. I believe she could walk right up blindfolded and put her hand on the thing she wants every time."

"I'm like father," said Christine, softened a little by the celebration of her peculiarity. "He says the reason so many people don't get what they want is that they don't want it bad enough. Now, when I want a thing, it seems to me that I want it all through."

"Well, that's just like father, too," said Mela. "That's the way he done when he got that eighty-acre piece next to Moffitt that he kept when he sold the farm, and that's got some of the best gas-wells on it now that there is anywhere." She addressed the explanation to her sister, to the exclusion of Margaret, who, nevertheless, listened with a smiling face and a resolutely polite air of being a party to the conversation. Mela rewarded her amiability by saying to her, finally, "You've never been in the natural-gas country, have you?"

"Oh no! And I should so much like to see it!" said Margaret, with a fervor that was partly, voluntary.

"Would you? Well, we're kind of sick of it, but I suppose it would strike a stranger."

"I never got tired of looking at the big wells when they lit them up," said Christine. "It seems as if the world was on fire."

"Yes, and when you see the surface-gas burnun' down in the woods, like it used to by our spring-house-so still, and never spreadun' any, just like a bed of some kind of wild flowers when you ketch sight of it a piece off."

They began to tell of the wonders of their strange land in an antiphony of reminiscences and descriptions; they unconsciously imputed a merit to themselves from the number



and violence of the wells on their father's property; they bragged of the high civilization of Moffitt, which they compared to its advantage with that of New York. They became excited by Margaret's interest in natural gas, and forgot to be suspicious and envious.

She said, as she rose, "Oh, how much I should like to see it all!" Then she made a little pause, and added:

Page 29

“I’m so sorry my aunt’s Thursdays are over; she never has them after Lent, but we’re to have some people Tuesday evening at a little concert which a musical friend is going to give with some other artists. There won’t be any banjos, I’m afraid, but there’ll be some very good singing, and my aunt would be so glad if you could come with your mother.”

She put down her aunt’s card on the table near her, while Mela gurgled, as if it were the best joke: “Oh, my! Mother never goes anywhere; you couldn’t get her out for love or money.” But she was herself overwhelmed with a simple joy at Margaret’s politeness, and showed it in a sensuous way, like a child, as if she had been tickled. She came closer to Margaret and seemed about to fawn physically upon her.

“Ain’t she just as lovely as she can live?” she demanded of her sister when Margaret was gone.

“I don’t know,” said Christine. “I guess she wanted to know who Mr. Beaton had been lending her banjo to.”

“Pshaw! Do you suppose she’s in love with him?” asked Mela, and then she broke into her hoarse laugh at the look her sister gave her. “Well, don’t eat me, Christine! I wonder who she is, anyway? I’m goun’ to git it out of Mr. Beaton the next time he calls. I guess she’s somebody. Mrs. Mandel can tell. I wish that old friend of hers would hurry up and git well—or something. But I guess we appeared about as well as she did. I could see she was afraid of you, Christine. I reckon it’s gittun’ around a little about father; and when it does I don’t believe we shall want for callers. Say, are you goun’? To that concert of theirs?”

“I don’t know. Not till I know who they are first.”

“Well, we’ve got to hump ourselves if we’re goun’ to find out before Tuesday.”

As she went home Margaret felt wrought in her that most incredible of the miracles, which, nevertheless, any one may make his experience. She felt kindly to these girls because she had tried to make them happy, and she hoped that in the interest she had shown there had been none of the poison of flattery. She was aware that this was a risk she ran in such an attempt to do good. If she had escaped this effect she was willing to leave the rest with Providence.

VIII.

The notion that a girl of Margaret Vance’s traditions would naturally form of girls like Christine and Mela Dryfoos would be that they were abashed in the presence of the new conditions of their lives, and that they must receive the advance she had made them with a certain grateful humility. However they received it, she had made it upon principle, from a romantic conception of duty; but this was the way she imagined they

would receive it, because she thought that she would have done so if she had been as ignorant and unbred as they. Her error was in arguing their attitude from her own temperament, and endowing them, for the



Page 30

purposes of argument, with her perspective. They had not the means, intellectual or moral, of feeling as she fancied. If they had remained at home on the farm where they were born, Christine would have grown up that embodiment of impassioned suspicion which we find oftenest in the narrowest spheres, and Mela would always have been a good-natured simpleton; but they would never have doubted their equality with the wisest and the finest. As it was, they had not learned enough at school to doubt it, and the splendor of their father's success in making money had blinded them forever to any possible difference against them. They had no question of themselves in the social abeyance to which they had been left in New York. They had been surprised, mystified; it was not what they had expected; there must be some mistake.

They were the victims of an accident, which would be repaired as soon as the fact of their father's wealth had got around. They had been steadfast in their faith, through all their disappointment, that they were not only better than most people by virtue of his money, but as good as any; and they took Margaret's visit, so far as they, investigated its motive, for a sign that at last it was beginning to get around; of course, a thing could not get around in New York so quick as it could in a small place. They were confirmed in their belief by the sensation of Mrs. Mandel when she returned to duty that afternoon, and they consulted her about going to Mrs. Horn's musicale. If she had felt any doubt at the name for there were Horns and Horns—the address on the card put the matter beyond question; and she tried to make her charges understand what a precious chance had befallen them. She did not succeed; they had not the premises, the experience, for a sufficient impression; and she undid her work in part by the effort to explain that Mrs. Horn's standing was independent of money; that though she was positively rich, she was comparatively poor. Christine inferred that Miss Vance had called because she wished to be the first to get in with them since it had begun to get around. This view commended itself to Mela, too, but without warping her from her opinion that Miss Vance was all the same too sweet for anything. She had not so vivid a consciousness of her father's money as Christine had; but she reposed perhaps all the more confidently upon its power. She was far from thinking meanly of any one who thought highly of her for it; that seemed so natural a result as to be amiable, even admirable; she was willing that any such person should get all the good there was in such an attitude toward her.

They discussed the matter that night at dinner before their father and mother, who mostly sat silent at their meals; the father frowning absently over his plate, with his head close to it, and making play into his mouth with the back of his knife (he had got so far toward the use of his fork as to despise those who still ate from the edge of their knives), and the mother partly missing hers at times in the nervous tremor that shook her face from side to side.



Page 31

After a while the subject of Mela's hoarse babble and of Christine's high-pitched, thin, sharp forays of assertion and denial in the field which her sister's voice seemed to cover, made its way into the old man's consciousness, and he perceived that they were talking with Mrs. Mandel about it, and that his wife was from time to time offering an irrelevant and mistaken comment. He agreed with Christine, and silently took her view of the affair some time before he made any sign of having listened. There had been a time in his life when other things besides his money seemed admirable to him. He had once respected himself for the hard-headed, practical common sense which first gave him standing among his country neighbors; which made him supervisor, school trustee, justice of the peace, county commissioner, secretary of the Moffitt County Agricultural Society. In those days he had served the public with disinterested zeal and proud ability; he used to write to the Lake Shore Farmer on agricultural topics; he took part in opposing, through the Moffitt papers, the legislative waste of the people's money; on the question of selling a local canal to the railroad company, which killed that fine old State work, and let the dry ditch grow up to grass, he might have gone to the Legislature, but he contented himself with defeating the Moffitt member who had voted for the job. If he opposed some measures for the general good, like high schools and school libraries, it was because he lacked perspective, in his intense individualism, and suspected all expense of being spendthrift. He believed in good district schools, and he had a fondness, crude but genuine, for some kinds of reading—history, and forensics of an elementary sort.

With his good head for figures he doubted doctors and despised preachers; he thought lawyers were all rascals, but he respected them for their ability; he was not himself litigious, but he enjoyed the intellectual encounters of a difficult lawsuit, and he often attended a sitting of the fall term of court, when he went to town, for the pleasure of hearing the speeches. He was a good citizen, and a good husband. As a good father, he was rather severe with his children, and used to whip them, especially the gentle Conrad, who somehow crossed him most, till the twins died. After that he never struck any of them; and from the sight of a blow dealt a horse he turned as if sick. It was a long time before he lifted himself up from his sorrow, and then the will of the man seemed to have been breached through his affections. He let the girls do as they pleased—the twins had been girls; he let them go away to school, and got them a piano. It was they who made him sell the farm. If Conrad had only had their spirit he could have made him keep it, he felt; and he resented the want of support he might have found in a less yielding spirit than his son's.



Page 32

His moral decay began with his perception of the opportunity of making money quickly and abundantly, which offered itself to him after he sold his farm. He awoke to it slowly, from a desolation in which he tasted the last bitter of homesickness, the utter misery of idleness and listlessness. When he broke down and cried for the hard-working, wholesome life he had lost, he was near the end of this season of despair, but he was also near the end of what was best in himself. He devolved upon a meaner ideal than that of conservative good citizenship, which had been his chief moral experience: the money he had already made without effort and without merit bred its unholy self-love in him; he began to honor money, especially money that had been won suddenly and in large sums; for money that had been earned painfully, slowly, and in little amounts, he had only pity and contempt. The poison of that ambition to go somewhere and be somebody which the local speculators had instilled into him began to work in the vanity which had succeeded his somewhat scornful self-respect; he rejected Europe as the proper field for his expansion; he rejected Washington; he preferred New York, whither the men who have made money and do not yet know that money has made them, all instinctively turn. He came where he could watch his money breed more money, and bring greater increase of its kind in an hour of luck than the toil of hundreds of men could earn in a year. He called it speculation, stocks, the Street; and his pride, his faith in himself, mounted with his luck. He expected, when he had sated his greed, to begin to spend, and he had formulated an intention to build a great house, to add another to the palaces of the country-bred millionaires who have come to adorn the great city. In the mean time he made little account of the things that occupied his children, except to fret at the ungrateful indifference of his son to the interests that could alone make a man of him. He did not know whether his daughters were in society or not; with people coming and going in the house he would have supposed they must be so, no matter who the people were; in some vague way he felt that he had hired society in Mrs. Mandel, at so much a year. He never met a superior himself except now and then a man of twenty or thirty millions to his one or two, and then he felt his soul creep within him, without a sense of social inferiority; it was a question of financial inferiority; and though Dryfoos's soul bowed itself and crawled, it was with a gambler's admiration of wonderful luck. Other men said these many-millioned millionaires were smart, and got their money by sharp practices to which lesser men could not attain; but Dryfoos believed that he could compass the same ends, by the same means, with the same chances; he respected their money, not them.

When he now heard Mrs. Mandel and his daughters talking of that person, whoever she was, that Mrs. Mandel seemed to think had honored his girls by coming to see them, his curiosity was pricked as much as his pride was galled.



Page 33

“Well, anyway,” said Mela, “I don’t care whether Christine’s goon’ or not; I am. And you got to go with me, Mrs. Mandel.”

“Well, there’s a little difficulty,” said Mrs. Mandel, with her unfailing dignity and politeness. “I haven’t been asked, you know.”

“Then what are we goun’ to do?” demanded Mela, almost crossly. She was physically too amiable, she felt too well corporeally, ever to be quite cross. “She might ‘a’ knowed—well known—we couldn’t ‘a’ come alone, in New York. I don’t see why, we couldn’t. I don’t call it much of an invitation.”

“I suppose she thought you could come with your mother,” Mrs. Mandel suggested.

“She didn’t say anything about mother: Did she, Christine? Or, yes, she did, too. And I told her she couldn’t git mother out. Don’t you remember?”

“I didn’t pay much attention,” said Christine. “I wasn’t certain we wanted to go.”

“I reckon you wasn’t goun’ to let her see that we cared much,” said Mela, half reproachful, half proud of this attitude of Christine. “Well, I don’t see but what we got to stay at home.” She laughed at this lame conclusion of the matter.

“Perhaps Mr. Conrad—you could very properly take him without an express invitation—” Mrs. Mandel began.

Conrad looked up in alarm and protest. “I—I don’t think I could go that evening—”

“What’s the reason?” his father broke in, harshly. “You’re not such a sheep that you’re afraid to go into company with your sisters? Or are you too good to go with them?”

“If it’s to be anything like that night when them hussies come out and danced that way,” said Mrs. Dryfoos, “I don’t blame Coonrod for not wantun’ to go. I never saw the beat of it.”

Mela sent a yelling laugh across the table to her mother. “Well, I wish Miss Vance could ‘a’ heard that! Why, mother, did you think it like the ballet?”

“Well, I didn’t know, Mely, child,” said the old woman. “I didn’t know what it was like. I hain’t never been to one, and you can’t be too keerful where you go, in a place like New York.”

“What’s the reason you can’t go?” Dryfoos ignored the passage between his wife and daughter in making this demand of his son, with a sour face.

“I have an engagement that night—it’s one of our meetings.”



“I reckon you can let your meeting go for one night,” said Dryfoos. “It can’t be so important as all that, that you must disappoint your sisters.”

“I don’t like to disappoint those poor creatures. They depend so much upon the meetings—”

“I reckon they can stand it for one night,” said the old man. He added, “The poor ye have with you always.”

“That’s so, Coonrod,” said his mother. “It’s the Saviour’s own words.”

“Yes, mother. But they’re not meant just as father used them.”

“How do you know how they were meant? Or how I used them?” cried the father. “Now you just make your plans to go with the girls, Tuesday night. They can’t go alone, and Mrs. Mandel can’t go with them.”



Page 34

“Pshaw!” said Mela. “We don’t want to take Conrad away from his meetun’, do we, Chris?”

“I don’t know,” said Christine, in her high, fine voice. “They could get along without him for one night, as father says.”

“Well, I’m not a-goun’ to take him,” said Mela. “Now, Mrs. Mandel, just think out some other way. Say! What’s the reason we couldn’t get somebody else to take us just as well? Ain’t that rutable?”

“It would be allowable—”

“Allowable, I mean,” Mela corrected herself.

“But it might look a little significant, unless it was some old family friend.”

“Well, let’s get Mr. Fulkerson to take us. He’s the oldest family friend we got.”

“I won’t go with Mr. Fulkerson,” said Christine, serenely.

“Why, I’m sure, Christine,” her mother pleaded, “Mr. Fulkerson is a very good young man, and very nice appearun’.”

Mela shouted, “He’s ten times as pleasant as that old Mr. Beaton of Christine’s!”

Christine made no effort to break the constraint that fell upon the table at this sally, but her father said: “Christine is right, Mela. It wouldn’t do for you to go with any other young man. Conrad will go with you.”

“I’m not certain I want to go, yet,” said Christine.

“Well, settle that among yourselves. But if you want to go, your brother will go with you.”

“Of course, Coonrod ’ll go, if his sisters wants him to,” the old woman pleaded. “I reckon it ain’t agoun’ to be anything very bad; and if it is, Coonrod, why you can just git right up and come out.”

“It will be all right, mother. And I will go, of course.”

“There, now, I knowed you would, Coonrod. Now, fawther!” This appeal was to make the old man say something in recognition of Conrad’s sacrifice.

“You’ll always find,” he said, “that it’s those of your own household that have the first claim on you.”



“That’s so, Coonrod,” urged his mother. “It’s Bible truth. Your fawther ain’t a perfesser, but he always did read his Bible. Search the Scriptures. That’s what it means.”

“Laws!” cried Mely, “a body can see, easy enough from mother, where Conrad’s wantun’ to be a preacher comes from. I should ‘a’ thought she’d ‘a’ wanted to been one herself.”

“Let your women keep silence in the churches,” said the old woman, solemnly.

“There you go again, mother! I guess if you was to say that to some of the lady ministers nowadays, you’d git yourself into trouble.” Mela looked round for approval, and gurgled out a hoarse laugh.

IX.

The Dryfooses went late to Mrs. Horn’s musicale, in spite of Mrs. Mandel’s advice. Christine made the delay, both because she wished to show Miss Vance that she was (not) anxious, and because she had some vague notion of the distinction of arriving late at any sort of entertainment. Mrs. Mandel insisted upon the difference between this musicale and an ordinary reception; but Christine rather fancied disturbing a company that had got seated, and perhaps making people rise and stand, while she found her way to her place, as she had seen them do for a tardy comer at the theatre.



Page 35

Mela, whom she did not admit to her reasons or feelings always, followed her with the servile admiration she had for all that Christine did; and she took on trust as somehow successful the result of Christine's obstinacy, when they were allowed to stand against the wall at the back of the room through the whole of the long piece begun just before they came in. There had been no one to receive them; a few people, in the rear rows of chairs near them, turned their heads to glance at them, and then looked away again. Mela had her misgivings; but at the end of the piece Miss Vance came up to them at once, and then Mela knew that she had her eyes on them all the time, and that Christine must have been right. Christine said nothing about their coming late, and so Mela did not make any excuse, and Miss Vance seemed to expect none. She glanced with a sort of surprise at Conrad, when Christine introduced him; Mela did not know whether she liked their bringing him, till she shook hands with him, and said: "Oh, I am very glad indeed! Mr. Dryfoos and I have met before." Without explaining where or when, she led them to her aunt and presented them, and then said, "I'm going to put you with some friends of yours," and quickly seated them next the Marches. Mela liked that well enough; she thought she might have some joking with Mr. March, for all his wife was so stiff; but the look which Christine wore seemed to forbid, provisionally at least, any such recreation. On her part, Christine was cool with the Marches. It went through her mind that they must have told Miss Vance they knew her; and perhaps they had boasted of her intimacy. She relaxed a little toward them when she saw Beaton leaning against the wall at the end of the row next Mrs. March. Then she conjectured that he might have told Miss Vance of her acquaintance with the Marches, and she bent forward and nodded to Mrs. March across Conrad, Mela, and Mr. March. She conceived of him as a sort of hand of her father's, but she was willing to take them at their apparent social valuation for the time. She leaned back in her chair, and did not look up at Beaton after the first furtive glance, though she felt his eyes on her.

The music began again almost at once, before Mela had time to make Conrad tell her where Miss Vance had met him before. She would not have minded interrupting the music; but every one else seemed so attentive, even Christine, that she had not the courage. The concert went onto an end without realizing for her the ideal of pleasure which one ought to find in society. She was not exacting, but it seemed to her there were very few young men, and when the music was over, and their opportunity came to be sociable, they were not very sociable. They were not introduced, for one thing; but it appeared to Mela that they might have got introduced, if they had any sense; she saw them looking at her, and she was glad she had dressed so much; she was dressed more than any other lady there,



Page 36

and either because she was the most dressed of any person there, or because it had got around who her father was, she felt that she had made an impression on the young men. In her satisfaction with this, and from her good nature, she was contented to be served with her refreshments after the concert by Mr. March, and to remain joking with him. She was at her ease; she let her hoarse voice out in her largest laugh; she accused him, to the admiration of those near, of getting her into a perfect gale. It appeared to her, in her own pleasure, her mission to illustrate to the rather subdued people about her what a good time really was, so that they could have it if they wanted it. Her joy was crowned when March modestly professed himself unworthy to monopolize her, and explained how selfish he felt in talking to a young lady when there were so many young men dying to do so.

“Oh, pshaw, dyun’, yes!” cried Mela, tasting the irony. “I guess I see them!”

He asked if he might really introduce a friend of his to her, and she said, Well, yes, if he thought he could live to get to her; and March brought up a man whom he thought very young and Mela thought very old. He was a contributor to ‘Every Other Week,’ and so March knew him; he believed himself a student of human nature in behalf of literature, and he now set about studying Mela. He tempted her to express her opinion on all points, and he laughed so amiably at the boldness and humorous vigor of her ideas that she was delighted with him. She asked him if he was a New-Yorker by birth; and she told him she pitied him, when he said he had never been West. She professed herself perfectly sick of New York, and urged him to go to Moffitt if he wanted to see a real live town. He wondered if it would do to put her into literature just as she was, with all her slang and brag, but he decided that he would have to subdue her a great deal: he did not see how he could reconcile the facts of her conversation with the facts of her appearance: her beauty, her splendor of dress, her apparent right to be where she was. These things perplexed him; he was afraid the great American novel, if true, must be incredible. Mela said he ought to hear her sister go on about New York when they first came; but she reckoned that Christine was getting so she could put up with it a little better, now. She looked significantly across the room to the place where Christine was now talking with Beaton; and the student of human nature asked, Was she here? and, Would she introduce him? Mela said she would, the first chance she got; and she added, They would be much pleased to have him call. She felt herself to be having a beautiful time, and she got directly upon such intimate terms with the student of human nature that she laughed with him about some peculiarities of his, such as his going so far about to ask things he wanted to know from her; she said she never did believe in beating about the bush much. She had



Page 37

noticed the same thing in Miss Vance when she came to call that day; and when the young man owned that he came rather a good deal to Mrs. Horn's house, she asked him, Well, what sort of a girl was Miss Vance, anyway, and where did he suppose she had met her brother? The student of human nature could not say as to this, and as to Miss Vance he judged it safest to treat of the non-society side of her character, her activity in charity, her special devotion to the work among the poor on the East Side, which she personally engaged in.

"Oh, that's where Conrad goes, too!" Mela interrupted. "I'll bet anything that's where she met him. I wish I could tell Christine! But I suppose she would want to kill me, if I was to speak to her now."

The student of human nature said, politely, "Oh, shall I take you to her?"

Mela answered, "I guess you better not!" with a laugh so significant that he could not help his inferences concerning both Christine's absorption in the person she was talking with and the habitual violence of her temper. He made note of how Mela helplessly spoke of all her family by their names, as if he were already intimate with them; he fancied that if he could get that in skillfully, it would be a valuable color in his study; the English lord whom she should astonish with it began to form himself out of the dramatic nebulosity in his mind, and to whirl on a definite orbit in American society. But he was puzzled to decide whether Mela's willingness to take him into her confidence on short notice was typical or personal: the trait of a daughter of the natural-gas millionaire, or a foible of her own.

Beaton talked with Christine the greater part of the evening that was left after the concert. He was very grave, and took the tone of a fatherly friend; he spoke guardedly of the people present, and moderated the severity of some of Christine's judgments of their looks and costumes. He did this out of a sort of unreasoned allegiance to Margaret, whom he was in the mood of wishing to please by being very kind and good, as she always was. He had the sense also of atoning by this behavior for some reckless things he had said before that to Christine; he put on a sad, reproving air with her, and gave her the feeling of being held in check.

She chafed at it, and said, glancing at Margaret in talk with her brother, "I don't think Miss Vance is so very pretty, do you?"

"I never think whether she's pretty or not," said Beaton, with dreamy, affectation. "She is merely perfect. Does she know your brother?"

"So she says. I didn't suppose Conrad ever went anywhere, except to tenement-houses."



“It might have been there,” Becton suggested. “She goes among friendless people everywhere.”

“Maybe that’s the reason she came to see us!” said Christine.

Becton looked at her with his smouldering eyes, and felt the wish to say, “Yes, it was exactly that,” but he only allowed himself to deny the possibility of any such motive in that case. He added: “I am so glad you know her, Miss Dryfoos. I never met Miss Vance without feeling myself better and truer, somehow; or the wish to be so.”



Page 38

“And you think we might be improved, too?” Christine retorted. “Well, I must say you’re not very flattering, Mr. Becton, anyway.”

Becton would have liked to answer her according to her cattishness, with a good clawing sarcasm that would leave its smart in her pride; but he was being good, and he could not change all at once. Besides, the girl’s attitude under the social honor done her interested him. He was sure she had never been in such good company before, but he could see that she was not in the least affected by the experience. He had told her who this person and that was; and he saw she had understood that the names were of consequence; but she seemed to feel her equality with them all. Her serenity was not obviously akin to the savage stoicism in which Beaton hid his own consciousness of social inferiority; but having won his way in the world so far by his talent, his personal quality, he did not conceive the simple fact in her case. Christine was self-possessed because she felt that a knowledge of her father’s fortune had got around, and she had the peace which money gives to ignorance; but Beaton attributed her poise to indifference to social values. This, while he inwardly sneered at it, avenged him upon his own too keen sense of them, and, together with his temporary allegiance to Margaret’s goodness, kept him from retaliating Christine’s vulgarity. He said, “I don’t see how that could be,” and left the question of flattery to settle itself.

The people began to go away, following each other up to take leave of Mrs. Horn. Christine watched them with unconcern, and either because she would not be governed by the general movement, or because she liked being with Beaton, gave no sign of going. Mela was still talking to the student of human nature, sending out her laugh in deep gurgles amid the unimaginable confidences she was making him about herself, her family, the staff of ‘Every Other Week,’ Mrs. Mandel, and the kind of life they had all led before she came to them. He was not a blind devotee of art for art’s sake, and though he felt that if one could portray Mela just as she was she would be the richest possible material, he was rather ashamed to know some of the things she told him; and he kept looking anxiously about for a chance of escape. The company had reduced itself to the Dryfoos groups and some friends of Mrs. Horn’s who had the right to linger, when Margaret crossed the room with Conrad to Christine and Beaton.

“I’m so glad, Miss Dryfoos, to find that I was not quite a stranger to you all when I ventured to call, the other day. Your brother and I are rather old acquaintances, though I never knew who he was before. I don’t know just how to say we met where he is valued so much. I suppose I mustn’t try to say how much,” she added, with a look of deep regard at him.

Conrad blushed and stood folding his arms tight over his breast, while his sister received Margaret’s confession with the suspicion which was her first feeling in regard to any new thing. What she concluded was that this girl was trying to get in with them, for reasons of her own. She said: “Yes; it’s the first I ever heard of his knowing you. He’s so much taken up with his meetings, he didn’t want to come to-night.”

Page 39

Margaret drew in her lip before she answered, without apparent resentment of the awkwardness or ungraciousness, whichever she found it: "I don't wonder! You become so absorbed in such work that you think nothing else is worth while. But I'm glad Mr. Dryfoos could come with you; I'm so glad you could all come; I knew you would enjoy the music. Do sit down—"

"No," said Christine, bluntly; "we must be going. Mela!" she called out, "come!"

The last group about Mrs. Horn looked round, but Christine advanced upon them undismayed, and took the hand Mrs. Horn promptly gave her. "Well, I must bid you good-night."

"Oh, good-night," murmured the elder lady. "So very kind of you to come."

"I've had the best kind of a time," said Mela, cordially. "I hain't laughed so much, I don't know when."

"Oh, I'm glad you enjoyed it," said Mrs. Horn, in the same polite murmur she had used with Christine; but she said nothing to either sister about any future meeting.

They were apparently not troubled. Mela said over her shoulder to the student of human nature, "The next time I see you I'll give it to you for what you said about Moffitt."

Margaret made some entreating paces after them, but she did not succeed in covering the retreat of the sisters against critical conjecture. She could only say to Conrad, as if recurring to the subject, "I hope we can get our friends to play for us some night. I know it isn't any real help, but such things take the poor creatures out of themselves for the time being, don't you think?"

"Oh yes," he answered. "They're good in that way." He turned back hesitatingly to Mrs. Horn, and said, with a blush, "I thank you for a happy evening."

"Oh, I am very glad," she replied, in her murmur.

One of the old friends of the house arched her eyebrows in saying good-night, and offered the two young men remaining seats home in her carriage. Beaton gloomily refused, and she kept herself from asking the student of human nature, till she had got him into her carriage, "What is Moffitt, and what did you say about it?"

"Now you see, Margaret," said Mrs. Horn, with bated triumph, when the people were all gone.

"Yes, I see," the girl consented. "From one point of view, of course it's been a failure. I don't think we've given Miss Dryfoos a pleasure, but perhaps nobody could. And at least we've given her the opportunity of enjoying herself."



“Such people,” said Mrs. Horn, philosophically, “people with their money, must of course be received sooner or later. You can’t keep them out. Only, I believe I would rather let some one else begin with them. The Leightons didn’t come?”

“I sent them cards. I couldn’t call again.”

Mrs. Horn sighed a little. “I suppose Mr. Dryfoos is one of your fellow-philanthropists?”

“He’s one of the workers,” said Margaret. “I met him several times at the Hall, but I only knew his first name. I think he’s a great friend of Father Benedict; he seems devoted to the work. Don’t you think he looks good?”



Page 40

“Very,” said Mrs. Horn, with a color of censure in her assent. “The younger girl seemed more amiable than her sister. But what manners!”

“Dreadful!” said Margaret, with knit brows, and a pursed mouth of humorous suffering. “But she appeared to feel very much at home.”

“Oh, as to that, neither of them was much abashed. Do you suppose Mr. Beaton gave the other one some hints for that quaint dress of hers? I don’t imagine that black and lace is her own invention. She seems to have some sort of strange fascination for him.”

“She’s very picturesque,” Margaret explained. “And artists see points in people that the rest of us don’t.”

“Could it be her money?” Mrs. Horn insinuated. “He must be very poor.”

“But he isn’t base,” retorted the girl, with a generous indignation that made her aunt smile.

“Oh no; but if he fancies her so picturesque, it doesn’t follow that he would object to her being rich.”

“It would with a man like Mr. Beaton!”

“You are an idealist, Margaret. I suppose your Mr. March has some disinterested motive in paying court to Miss Mela—Pamela, I suppose, is her name. He talked to her longer than her literature would have lasted.”

“He seems a very kind person,” said Margaret.

“And Mr. Dryfoos pays his salary?”

“I don’t know anything about that. But that wouldn’t make any difference with him.”

Mrs. Horn laughed out at this security; but she was not displeased by the nobleness which it came from. She liked Margaret to be high-minded, and was really not distressed by any good that was in her.

The Marches walked home, both because it was not far, and because they must spare in carriage hire at any rate. As soon as they were out of the house, she applied a point of conscience to him.

“I don’t see how you could talk to that girl so long, Basil, and make her laugh so.”

“Why, there seemed no one else to do it, till I thought of Kendricks.”



“Yes, but I kept thinking, Now he’s pleasant to her because he thinks it’s to his interest. If she had no relation to ‘Every Other Week,’ he wouldn’t waste his time on her.”

“Isabel,” March complained, “I wish you wouldn’t think of me in he, him, and his; I never personalize you in my thoughts: you remain always a vague unindividualized essence, not quite without form and void, but nounless and pronounless. I call that a much more beautiful mental attitude toward the object of one’s affections. But if you must he and him and his me in your thoughts, I wish you’d have more kindly thoughts of me.”

“Do you deny that it’s true, Basil?”

“Do you believe that it’s true, Isabel?”

“No matter. But could you excuse it if it were?”

“Ah, I see you’d have been capable of it in my, place, and you’re ashamed.”

“Yes,” sighed the wife, “I’m afraid that I should. But tell me that you wouldn’t, Basil!”



Page 41

"I can tell you that I wasn't. But I suppose that in a real exigency, I could truckle to the proprietary Dryfooses as well as you."

"Oh no; you mustn't, dear! I'm a woman, and I'm dreadfully afraid. But you must always be a man, especially with that horrid old Mr. Dryfoos. Promise me that you'll never yield the least point to him in a matter of right and wrong!"

"Not if he's right and I'm wrong?"

"Don't trifle, dear! You know what I mean. Will you promise?"

"I'll promise to submit the point to you, and let you do the yielding. As for me, I shall be adamant. Nothing I like better."

"They're dreadful, even that poor, good young fellow, who's so different from all the rest; he's awful, too, because you feel that he's a martyr to them."

"And I never did like martyrs a great deal," March interposed.

"I wonder how they came to be there," Mrs. March pursued, unmindful of his joke.

"That is exactly what seemed to be puzzling Miss Mela about us. She asked, and I explained as well as I could; and then she told me that Miss Vance had come to call on them and invited them; and first they didn't know how they could come till they thought of making Conrad bring them. But she didn't say why Miss Vance called on them. Mr. Dryfoos doesn't employ her on 'Every Other Week.' But I suppose she has her own vile little motive."

"It can't be their money; it can't be!" sighed Mrs. March.

"Well, I don't know. We all respect money."

"Yes, but Miss Vance's position is so secure. She needn't pay court to those stupid, vulgar people."

"Well, let's console ourselves with the belief that she would, if she needed. Such people as the Dryfooses are the raw material of good society. It isn't made up of refined or meritorious people—professors and litterateurs, ministers and musicians, and their families. All the fashionable people there to-night were like the Dryfooses a generation or two ago. I dare say the material works up faster now, and in a season or two you won't know the Dryfooses from the other plutocrats. *They* will—a little better than they do now; they'll see a difference, but nothing radical, nothing painful. People who get up in the world by service to others—through letters, or art, or science—may have their modest little misgivings as to their social value, but people that rise by money—especially if their gains are sudden—never have. And that's the kind of people that form



our nobility; there's no use pretending that we haven't a nobility; we might as well pretend we haven't first-class cars in the presence of a vestibuled Pullman. Those girls had no more doubt of their right to be there than if they had been duchesses: we thought it was very nice of Miss Vance to come and ask us, but they didn't; they weren't afraid, or the least embarrassed; they were perfectly natural—like born aristocrats. And you may be sure that if the plutocracy that now owns the country ever sees fit to take on the outward signs of an aristocracy—titles, and arms, and ancestors—it won't falter from any inherent question of its worth. Money prizes and honors itself, and if there is anything it hasn't got, it believes it can buy it."



Page 42

"Well, Basil," said his wife, "I hope you won't get infected with Lindau's ideas of rich people. Some of them are very good and kind."

"Who denies that? Not even Lindau himself. It's all right. And the great thing is that the evening's enjoyment is over. I've got my society smile off, and I'm radiantly happy. Go on with your little pessimistic diatribes, Isabel; you can't spoil my pleasure."

"I could see," said Mela, as she and Christine drove home together, "that she was as jealous as she could be, all the time you was talkun' to Mr. Beaton. She pretended to be talkun' to Conrad, but she kep' her eye on you pretty close, I can tell you. I bet she just got us there to see how him and you would act together. And I reckon she was satisfied. He's dead gone on you, Chris."

Christine listened with a dreamy pleasure to the flatteries with which Mela plied her in the hope of some return in kind, and not at all because she felt spitefully toward Miss Vance, or in anywise wished her ill. "Who was that fellow with you so long?" asked Christine. "I suppose you turned yourself inside out to him, like you always do."

Mela was transported by the cruel ingratitude. "It's a lie! I didn't tell him a single thing."

Conrad walked home, choosing to do so because he did not wish to hear his sisters' talk of the evening, and because there was a tumult in his spirit which he wished to let have its way. In his life with its single purpose, defeated by stronger wills than his own, and now struggling partially to fulfil itself in acts of devotion to others, the thought of women had entered scarcely more than in that of a child. His ideals were of a virginal vagueness; faces, voices, gestures had filled his fancy at times, but almost passionately; and the sensation that he now indulged was a kind of worship, ardent, but reverent and exalted. The brutal experiences of the world make us forget that there are such natures in it, and that they seem to come up out of the lowly earth as well as down from the high heaven. In the heart of this man well on toward thirty there had never been left the stain of a base thought; not that suggestion and conjecture had not visited him, but that he had not entertained them, or in any-wise made them his. In a Catholic age and country, he would have been one of those monks who are sainted after death for the angelic purity of their lives, and whose names are invoked by believers in moments of trial, like San Luigi Gonzaga. As he now walked along thinking, with a lover's beatified smile on his face, of how Margaret Vance had spoken and looked, he dramatized scenes in which he approved himself to her by acts of goodness and unselfishness, and died to please her for the sake of others. He made her praise him for them, to his face, when he disclaimed their merit, and after his death, when he could not. All the time he was poignantly sensible of her grace, her elegance, her style; they seemed to intoxicate him; some tones of her voice thrilled through his nerves, and some looks turned his brain with a delicious, swooning sense of her beauty; her refinement bewildered him. But all this did not admit the idea of possession, even of aspiration. At

the most his worship only set her beyond the love of other men as far as beyond his own.



Page 43

PG EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Affectional habit

Brag of his wife, as a good husband always does

But when we make that money here, no one loses it

Courage hadn't been put to the test

Family buryin' grounds

Homage which those who have not pay to those who have

Hurry up and git well—or something

Made money and do not yet know that money has made them

Society: All its favors are really bargains

Wages are the measure of necessity and not of merit

Without realizing his cruelty, treated as a child