

Far Country, a — Volume 2 eBook

Far Country, a — Volume 2 by Winston Churchill

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Contents

Far Country, a — Volume 2 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	7
Page 1.....	8
Page 2.....	10
Page 3.....	12
Page 4.....	14
Page 5.....	16
Page 6.....	18
Page 7.....	20
Page 8.....	21
Page 9.....	23
Page 10.....	25
Page 11.....	27
Page 12.....	29
Page 13.....	31
Page 14.....	32
Page 15.....	33
Page 16.....	35
Page 17.....	36
Page 18.....	38
Page 19.....	40
Page 20.....	41
Page 21.....	43
Page 22.....	45



[Page 23.....47](#)

[Page 24.....49](#)

[Page 25.....51](#)

[Page 26.....52](#)

[Page 27.....54](#)

[Page 28.....55](#)

[Page 29.....56](#)

[Page 30.....57](#)

[Page 31.....59](#)

[Page 32.....61](#)

[Page 33.....63](#)

[Page 34.....64](#)

[Page 35.....66](#)

[Page 36.....68](#)

[Page 37.....70](#)

[Page 38.....71](#)

[Page 39.....73](#)

[Page 40.....75](#)

[Page 41.....76](#)

[Page 42.....77](#)

[Page 43.....78](#)

[Page 44.....79](#)

[Page 45.....81](#)

[Page 46.....83](#)

[Page 47.....85](#)

[Page 48.....86](#)



[Page 49..... 87](#)

[Page 50..... 89](#)

[Page 51..... 90](#)

[Page 52..... 91](#)

[Page 53..... 93](#)

[Page 54..... 95](#)

[Page 55..... 97](#)

[Page 56..... 99](#)

[Page 57..... 101](#)

[Page 58..... 103](#)

[Page 59..... 105](#)

[Page 60..... 107](#)

[Page 61..... 109](#)

[Page 62..... 111](#)

[Page 63..... 113](#)

[Page 64..... 115](#)

[Page 65..... 117](#)

[Page 66..... 119](#)

[Page 67..... 121](#)

[Page 68..... 122](#)

[Page 69..... 124](#)

[Page 70..... 125](#)

[Page 71..... 126](#)

[Page 72..... 128](#)

[Page 73..... 129](#)

[Page 74..... 130](#)



[Page 75..... 132](#)

[Page 76..... 134](#)

[Page 77..... 136](#)

[Page 78..... 137](#)

[Page 79..... 139](#)

[Page 80..... 141](#)

[Page 81..... 143](#)

[Page 82..... 145](#)

[Page 83..... 146](#)

[Page 84..... 147](#)

[Page 85..... 149](#)

[Page 86..... 151](#)

[Page 87..... 153](#)

[Page 88..... 155](#)

[Page 89..... 157](#)

[Page 90..... 159](#)

[Page 91..... 161](#)

[Page 92..... 163](#)

[Page 93..... 165](#)

[Page 94..... 167](#)

[Page 95..... 169](#)

[Page 96..... 171](#)

[Page 97..... 173](#)

[Page 98..... 175](#)

[Page 99..... 177](#)

[Page 100..... 178](#)

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
X.		1
XI.		17
XII.		26
XIII.		41
XIV.		53
XV.		65
XVI.		77
XVII.		90



Page 1

X.

This was not my first visit to the state capital. Indeed, some of that recondite knowledge, in which I took a pride, had been gained on the occasions of my previous visits. Rising and dressing early, I beheld out of the car window the broad, shallow river glinting in the morning sunlight, the dome of the state house against the blue of the sky. Even at that early hour groups of the gentlemen who made our laws were scattered about the lobby of the Potts House, standing or seated within easy reach of the gaily coloured cuspidors that protected the marble floor: heavy-jawed workers from the cities mingled with moon-faced but astute countrymen who manipulated votes amongst farms and villages; fat or cadaverous, Irish, German or American, all bore in common a certain indefinable stamp. Having eaten my breakfast in a large dining-room that resounded with the clatter of dishes, I directed my steps to the apartment occupied from year to year by Colonel Paul Barney, generalissimo of the Railroad on the legislative battlefield,—a position that demanded a certain uniqueness of genius.

“How do you do, sir,” he said, in a guarded but courteous tone as he opened the door. I entered to confront a group of three or four figures, silent and rather hostile, seated in a haze of tobacco smoke around a marble-topped table. On it reposed a Bible, attached to a chain.

“You probably don’t remember me, Colonel,” I said. “My name is Pared, and I’m associated with the firm of Watling, Fowndes, and Ripon.”

His air of marginality,—heightened by a grey moustache and goatee a la Napoleon Third,—vanished instantly; he became hospitable, ingratiating.

“Why—why certainly, you were down heah with Mr. Fowndes two years ago.” The Colonel spoke with a slight Southern accent. “To be sure, sir. I’ve had the honour of meeting your father. Mr. Norris, of North Haven, meet Mr. Paret—one of our rising lawyers...” I shook hands with them all and sat down. Opening his long coat, Colonel Varney revealed two rows of cigars, suggesting cartridges in a belt. These he proceeded to hand out as he talked. “I’m glad to see you here, Mr. Paret. You must stay awhile, and become acquainted with the men who—ahem—are shaping the destinies of a great state. It would give me pleasure to escort you about.”

I thanked him. I had learned enough to realize how important are the amenities in politics and business. The Colonel did most of the conversing; he could not have filled with efficiency and ease the important post that was his had it not been for the endless fund of humorous anecdotes at his disposal. One by one the visitors left, each assuring me of his personal regard: the Colonel closed the door, softly, turning the key in the lock; there was a sly look in his black eyes as he took a chair in proximity to mine.

“Well, Mr. Paret,” he asked softly, “what’s up?”

Page 2

Without further ado I handed him Mr. Gorse's letter, and another Mr. Watling had given me for him, which contained a copy of the bill. He read these, laid them on the table, glancing at me again, stroking his goatee the while. He chuckled.

"By gum!" he exclaimed. "I take off my hat to Theodore Watling, always did." He became contemplative. "It can be done, Mr. Paret, but it's going to take some careful driving, sir, some reaching out and flicking 'em when they r'ar and buck. Paul Varney's never been stumped yet. Just as soon as this is introduced we'll have Gates and Armstrong down here—they're the Ribblevale attorneys, aren't they? I thought so,—and the best legal talent they can hire. And they'll round up all the disgruntled fellows, you know,—that ain't friendly to the Railroad. We've got to do it quick, Mr. Paret. Gorse gave you a letter to the Governor, didn't he?"

"Yes," I said.

"Well, come along. I'll pass the word around among the boys, just to let 'em know what to expect." His eyes glittered again. "I've been following this Ribblevale business," he added, "and I understand Leonard Dickinson's all ready to reorganize that company, when the time comes. He ought to let me in for a little, on the ground floor."

I did not venture to make any promises for Mr. Dickinson.

"I reckon it's just as well if you were to meet me at the Governor's office," the Colonel added reflectively, and the hint was not lost on me. "It's better not to let 'em find out any sooner than they have to where this thing comes from,—you understand." He looked at his watch. "How would nine o'clock do? I'll be there, with Trulease, when you come,—by accident, you understand. Of course he'll be reasonable, but when they get to be governors they have little notions, you know, and you've got to indulge 'em, flatter 'em a little. It doesn't hurt, for when they get their backs up it only makes more trouble."

He put on a soft, black felt hat, and departed noiselessly...

At nine o'clock I arrived at the State House and was ushered into a great square room overlooking the park. The Governor was seated at a desk under an elaborate chandelier, and sure enough, Colonel Varney was there beside him; making barely perceptible signals.

"It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Mr. Paret," said Mr. Trulease. "Your name is a familiar one in your city, sir. And I gather from your card that you are associated with my good friend, Theodore Watling."

I acknowledged it. I was not a little impressed by the perfect blend of cordiality, democratic simplicity and impressiveness Mr. Trulease had achieved. For he had managed, in the course of a long political career, to combine in exact proportions these

elements which, in the public mind, should up the personality of a chief executive. Momentarily he overcame the feeling of superiority with which I had entered his presence; neutralized the sense I had of being associated now with the higher powers which had put him where he was. For I knew all about his "record."

Page 3

"You're acquainted with Colonel Varney?" he inquired.

"Yes, Governor, I've met the Colonel," I said.

"Well, I suppose your firm is getting its share of business these days," Mr. Trulease observed. I acknowledged it was, and after discussing for a few moments the remarkable growth of my native city the Governor tapped on his desk and inquired what he could do for me. I produced the letter from the attorney for the Railroad. The Governor read it gravely.

"Ah," he said, "from Mr. Gorse." A copy of the proposed bill was enclosed, and the Governor read that also, hemmed and hawed a little, turned and handed it to Colonel Varney, who was sitting with a detached air, smoking contemplatively, a vacant expression on his face. "What do you think of this, Colonel?"

Whereupon the Colonel tore himself away from his reflections.

"What's that, Governor?"

"Mr. Gorse has called my attention to what seems to him a flaw in our statutes, an inability to obtain testimony from corporations whose books are elsewhere, and who may thus evade, he says, to a certain extent, the sovereign will of our state."

The Colonel took the paper with an admirable air of surprise, adjusted his glasses, and became absorbed in reading, clearing his throat once or twice and emitting an exclamation.

"Well, if you ask me, Governor," he said, at length, "all I can say is that I am astonished somebody didn't think of this simple remedy before now. Many times, sir, have I seen justice defeated because we had no such legislation as this."

He handed it back. The Governor studied it once more, and coughed.

"Does the penalty," he inquired, "seem to you a little severe?"

"No, sir," replied the Colonel, emphatically. "Perhaps it is because I am anxious, as a citizen, to see an evil abated. I have had an intimate knowledge of legislation, sir, for more than twenty years in this state, and in all that time I do not remember to have seen a bill more concisely drawn, or better calculated to accomplish the ends of justice. Indeed, I often wondered why this very penalty was not imposed. Foreign magistrates are notoriously indifferent as to affairs in another state than their own. Rather than go into the hands of a receiver I venture to say that hereafter, if this bill is made a law, the necessary testimony will be forthcoming."

The Governor read the bill through again.



“If it is introduced, Colonel,” he said, “the legislature and the people of the state ought to have it made clear to them that its aim is to remedy an injustice. A misunderstanding on this point would be unfortunate.”

“Most unfortunate, Governor.”

“And of course,” added the Governor, now addressing me, “it would be improper for me to indicate what course I shall pursue in regard to it if it should come to me for my signature. Yet I may go so far as to say that the defect it seeks to remedy seems to me a real one. Come in and see me, Mr. Paret, when you are in town, and give my cordial regards to Mr. Watling.”

Page 4

So gravely had the farce been carried on that I almost laughed, despite the fact that the matter in question was a serious one for me. The Governor held out his hand, and I accepted my dismissal.

I had not gone fifty steps in the corridor before I heard the Colonel's voice in my ear.

"We had to give him a little rope to go through with his act," he whispered confidentially. "But he'll sign it all right. And now, if you'll excuse me, Mr. Paret, I'll lay a few mines. See you at the hotel, sir."

Thus he indicated, delicately, that it would be better for me to keep out of sight. On my way to the Potts House the bizarre elements in the situation struck me again with considerable force. It seemed so ridiculous, so puerile to have to go through with this political farce in order that a natural economic evolution might be achieved. Without doubt the development of certain industries had reached a stage where the units in competition had become too small, when a greater concentration of capital was necessary. Curiously enough, in this mental argument of justification, I left out all consideration of the size of the probable profits to Mr. Scherer and his friends. Profits and brains went together. And, since the Almighty did not limit the latter, why should man attempt to limit the former? We were playing for high but justifiable stakes; and I resented the comedy which an hypocritical insistence on the forms of democracy compelled us to go through. It seemed unworthy of men who controlled the destinies of state and nation. The point of view, however, was consoling. As the day wore on I sat in the Colonel's room, admiring the skill with which he conducted the campaign: a green country lawyer had been got to introduce the bill, it had been expedited to the Committee on the Judiciary, which would have an executive session immediately after dinner. I had ventured to inquire about the hearings.

"There won't be any hearings, sir," the Colonel assured me. "We own that committee from top to bottom."

Indeed, by four o'clock in the afternoon the message came that the committee had agreed to recommend the bill.

Shortly after that the first flurry occurred. There came a knock at the door, followed by the entrance of a stocky Irish American of about forty years of age, whose black hair was plastered over his forehead. His sea-blue eyes had a stormy look.

"Hello, Jim," said the Colonel. "I was just wondering where you were."

"Sure, you must have been!" replied the gentleman sarcastically.

But the Colonel's geniality was unruffled.



“Mr. Maker,” he said, “you ought to know Mr. Paret. Mr. Maker is the representative from Ward Five of your city, and we can always count on him to do the right thing, even if he is a Democrat. How about it, Jim?”

Mr. Maker relighted the stump of his cigar.

“Take a fresh one, Jim,” said the Colonel, opening a bureau drawer.



Page 5

Mr. Maker took two.

“Say, Colonel,” he demanded, “what’s this bill that went into the judiciary this morning?”

“What bill?” asked the Colonel, blandly.

“So you think I ain’t on?” Mr. Maker inquired.

The Colonel laughed.

“Where have you been, Jim?”

“I’ve been up to the city, seem’ my wife—that’s where I’ve been.”

The Colonel smiled, as at a harmless fiction.

“Well, if you weren’t here, I don’t see what right you’ve got to complain. I never leave my good Democratic friends on the outside, do I?”

“That’s all right,” replied Mr. Maker, doggedly, “I’m on, I’m here now, and that bill in the Judiciary doesn’t pass without me. I guess I can stop it, too. How about a thousand apiece for five of us boys?”

“You’re pretty good at a joke, Jim,” remarked the Colonel, stroking his goatee.

“Maybe you’re looking for a little publicity in this here game,” retorted Mr. Maker, darkly. “Say, Colonel, ain’t we always treated the Railroad on the level?”

“Jim,” asked the Colonel, gently, “didn’t I always take care of you?”

He had laid his hand on the shoulder of Mr. Maker, who appeared slightly mollified, and glanced at a massive silver watch.

“Well, I’ll be dropping in about eight o’clock,” was his significant reply, as he took his leave.

“I guess we’ll have to grease the wheels a little,” the Colonel remarked to me, and gazed at the ceiling....

The telegram apropos of the Ward Five leader was by no means the only cipher message I sent back during my stay. I had not needed to be told that the matter in hand would cost money, but Mr. Watling’s parting instruction to me had been to take the Colonel’s advice as to specific sums, and obtain confirmation from Fowndes. Nor was it any surprise to me to find Democrats on intimate terms with such a stout Republican as the Colonel. Some statesman is said to have declared that he knew neither Easterners



nor Westerners, Northerners nor Southerners, but only Americans; so Colonel Varney recognized neither Democrats nor Republicans; in our legislature party divisions were sunk in a greater loyalty to the Railroad.

At the Colonel's suggestion I had laid in a liberal supply of cigars and whiskey. The scene in his room that evening suggested a session of a sublimated grand lodge of some secret order, such were the mysterious comings and goings, knocks and suspenses. One after another the "important" men duly appeared and were introduced, the Colonel supplying the light touch.

"Why, cuss me if it isn't Billy! Mr. Paret, I want you to shake hands with Mr. Donovan, the floor leader of the 'opposition,' sir. Mr. Donovan has had the habit of coming up here for a friendly chat ever since he first came down to the legislature. How long is it, Billy?"

"I guess it's nigh on to fifteen years, Colonel."

Page 6

“Fifteen years!” echoed the Colonel, “and he’s so good a Democrat it hasn’t changed his politics a particle.”

Mr. Donovan grinned in appreciation of this thrust, helped himself liberally from the bottle on the mantel, and took a seat on the bed. We had a “friendly chat.”

Thus I made the acquaintance also of the Hon. Joseph Mecklin, Speaker of the House, who unbent in the most flattering way on learning my identity.

“Mr. Paret’s here on that little matter, representing Watling, Fowndes and Ripon,” the Colonel explained. And it appeared that Mr. Mecklin knew all about the “little matter,” and that the mention of the firm of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon had a magical effect in these parts. The President of the Senate, the Hon. Lafe Giddings, went so far as to say that he hoped before long to see Mr. Watling in Washington. By no means the least among our callers was the Hon. Fitch Truesdale, editor of the St. Helen’s Messenger, whose editorials were of the trite effectiveness that is taken widely for wisdom, and were assiduously copied every week by other state papers and labeled “Mr. Truesdale’s Common Sense.” At countless firesides in our state he was known as the spokesman of the plain man, who was blissfully ignorant of the fact that Mr. Truesdale was owned body and carcass by Mr. Cyrus Ridden, the principal manufacturer of St. Helen’s and a director in several subsidiary lines of the Railroad. In the legislature, the Hon. Fitch’s function was that of the moderate counsellor and bellwether for new members, hence nothing could have been more fitting than the choice of that gentleman for the honour of moving, on the morrow, that Bill No. 709 ought to pass.

Mr. Truesdale reluctantly consented to accept a small “loan” that would help to pay the mortgage on his new press....

When the last of the gathering had departed, about one o’clock in the morning, I had added considerably to my experience, gained a pretty accurate idea of who was who in the legislature and politics of the state, and established relationships—as the Colonel reminded me—likely to prove valuable in the future. It seemed only gracious to congratulate him on his management of the affair,—so far. He appeared pleased, and squeezed my hand.

“Well, sir, it did require a little delicacy of touch. And if I do say it myself, it hasn’t been botched,” he admitted. “There ain’t an outsider, as far as I can learn, who has caught on to the nigger in the wood-pile. That’s the great thing, to keep ’em ignorant as long as possible. You understand. They yell bloody murder when they do find out, but generally it’s too late, if a bill’s been handled right.”

I found myself speculating as to who the “outsiders” might be. No Ribblevale attorneys were on the spot as yet,—of that I was satisfied. In the absence of these, who were the

opposition? It seemed to me as though I had interviewed that day every man in the legislature.

Page 7

I was very tired. But when I got into bed, it was impossible to sleep. My eyes smarted from the tobacco smoke; and the events of the day, in disorderly manner, kept running through my head. The tide of my exhilaration had ebbed, and I found myself struggling against a revulsion caused, apparently, by the contemplation of Colonel Varney and his associates; the instruments, in brief, by which our triumph over our opponents was to be effected. And that same idea which, when launched amidst the surroundings of the Boyne Club, had seemed so brilliant, now took on an aspect of tawdriness. Another thought intruded itself,—that of Mr. Pugh, the president of the Ribblevale Company. My father had known him, and some years before I had traveled halfway across the state in his company; his kindness had impressed me. He had spent a large part of his business life, I knew, in building up the Ribblevale, and now it was to be wrested from him; he was to be set aside, perhaps forced to start all over again when old age was coming on! In vain I accused myself of sentimentality, and summoned all my arguments to prove that in commerce efficiency must be the only test. The image of Mr. Pugh would not down.

I got up and turned on the light, and took refuge in a novel I had in my bag. Presently I grew calmer. I had chosen. I had succeeded. And now that I had my finger at last on the nerve of power, it was no time to weaken.

It was half-past six when I awoke and went to the window, relieved to find that the sun had scattered my morbid fancies with the darkness; and I speculated, as I dressed, whether the thing called conscience were not, after all, a matter of nerves. I went downstairs through the tobacco-stale atmosphere of the lobby into the fresh air and sparkly sunlight of the mild February morning, and leaving the business district I reached the residence portion of the little town. The front steps of some of the comfortable houses were being swept by industrious servant girls, and out of the chimneys twisted, fantastically, rich blue smoke; the bare branches of the trees were silver-grey against the sky; gaining at last an old-fashioned, wooden bridge, I stood for awhile gazing at the river, over the shallows of which the spendthrift hand of nature had flung a shower of diamonds. And I reflected that the world was for the strong, for him who dared reach out his hand and take what it offered. It was not money we coveted, we Americans, but power, the self-expression conferred by power. A single experience such as I had had the night before would since to convince any sane man that democracy was a failure, that the world-old principle of aristocracy would assert itself, that the attempt of our ancestors to curtail political power had merely resulted in the growth of another and greater economic power that bade fair to be limitless. As I walked slowly back into town I felt a reluctance to return to the noisy hotel, and finding myself in front of a little

Page 8

restaurant on a side street, I entered it. There was but one other customer in the place, and he was seated on the far side of the counter, with a newspaper in front of him; and while I was ordering my breakfast I was vaguely aware that the newspaper had dropped, and that he was looking at me. In the slight interval that elapsed before my brain could register his identity I experienced a distinct shock of resentment; a sense of the reintrusion of an antagonistic value at a moment when it was most unwelcome....

The man had risen and was coming around the counter. He was Hermann Krebs.

“Paret!” I heard him say.

“You here?” I exclaimed.

He did not seem to notice the lack of cordiality in my tone. He appeared so genuinely glad to see me again that I instantly became rather ashamed of my ill nature.

“Yes, I’m here—in the legislature,” he informed me.

“A Solon!”

“Exactly.” He smiled. “And you?” he inquired.

“Oh, I’m only a spectator. Down here for a day or two.”

He was still lanky, his clothes gave no evidence of an increased prosperity, but his complexion was good, his skin had cleared. I was more than ever baked by a resolute good humour, a simplicity that was not innocence, a whimsical touch seemingly indicative of a state of mind that refused to take too seriously certain things on which I set store. What right had he to be contented with life?

“Well, I too am only a spectator here,” he laughed. “I’m neither fish, flesh nor fowl, nor good red herring.”

“You were going into the law, weren’t you?” I asked. “I remember you said something about it that day we met at Beverly Farms.”

“Yes, I managed it, after all. Then I went back home to Elkington to try to make a living.”

“But somehow I have never thought of you as being likely to develop political aspirations, Krebs,” I said.

“I should say not! he exclaimed.



“Yet here you are, launched upon a political career! How did it happen?”

“Oh, I’m not worrying about the career,” he assured me. “I got here by accident, and I’m afraid it won’t happen again in a hurry. You see, the hands in those big mills we have in Elkington sprang a surprise on the machine, and the first thing I knew I was nominated for the legislature. A committee came to my boarding-house and told me, and there was the deuce to pay, right off. The Railroad politicians turned in and worked for the Democratic candidate, of course, and the Hutchinses, who own the mills, tried through emissaries to intimidate their operatives.”

“And then?” I asked.

“Well,—I’m here,” he said.

“Wouldn’t you be accomplishing more,” I inquired, “if you hadn’t antagonized the Hutchinses?”

“It depends upon what you mean by accomplishment,” he answered, so mildly that I felt more rued than ever.

“Well, from what you say, I suppose you’re going in for reform, that these workmen up at Elkington are not satisfied with their conditions and imagine you can help to better them. Now, provided the conditions are not as good as they might be, how are you going to improve them if you find yourself isolated here, as you say?”



Page 9

“In other words, I should cooperate with Colonel Varney and other disinterested philanthropists,” he supplied, and I realized that I was losing my temper.

“Well, what can you do?” I inquired defiantly.

“I can find out what’s going on,” he said. “I have already learned something, by the way.”

“And then?” I asked, wondering whether the implication were personal.

“Then I can help—disseminate the knowledge. I may be wrong, but I have an idea that when the people of this country learn how their legislatures are conducted they will want to change things.”

“That’s right!” echoed the waiter, who had come up with my griddle-cakes. “And you’re the man to tell ’em, Mr. Krebs.”

“It will need several thousand of us to do that, I’m afraid,” said Krebs, returning his smile.

My distaste for the situation became more acute, but I felt that I was thrown on the defensive. I could not retreat, now.

“I think you are wrong,” I declared, when the waiter had departed to attend to another customer. “The people the great majority of them, at least are indifferent, they don’t want to be bothered with politics. There will always be labour agitation, of course,—the more wages those fellows get, the more they want. We pay the highest wages in the world to-day, and the standard of living is higher in this country than anywhere else. They’d ruin our prosperity, if we’d let ’em.”

“How about the thousands of families who don’t earn enough to live decently even in times of prosperity?” inquired Krebs.

“It’s hard, I’ll admit, but the inefficient and the shiftless are bound to suffer, no matter what form of government you adopt.”

“You talk about standards of living,—I could show you some examples of standards to make your heart sick,” he said. “What you don’t realize, perhaps, is that low standards help to increase the inefficient of whom you complain.”

He smiled rather sadly. “The prosperity you are advocating,” he added, after a moment, “is a mere fiction, it is gorging the few at the expense of the many. And what is being done in this country is to store up an explosive gas that some day will blow your superstructure to atoms if you don’t wake up in time.”



“Isn’t that a rather one-sided view, too?” I suggested.

“I’ve no doubt it may appear so, but take the proceedings in this legislature. I’ve no doubt you know something about them, and that you would maintain they are justified on account of the indifference of the public, and of other reasons, but I can cite an instance that is simply legalized thieving.” For the first time a note of indignation crept into Krebs’s voice. “Last night I discovered by a mere accident, in talking to a man who came in on a late train, that a bill introduced yesterday, which is being rushed through the Judiciary Committee of the House—an apparently innocent little bill—will enable, if it becomes a law, the Boyne Iron Works, of your city, to take possession of the Ribblevale Steel Company, lock, stock, and barrel. And I am told it was conceived by a lawyer who claims to be a respectable member of his profession, and who has extraordinary ability, Theodore Watling.”

Page 10

Krebs put his hand in his pocket and drew out a paper. "Here's a copy of it,—House Bill 709." His expression suddenly changed. "Perhaps Mr. Watling is a friend of yours."

"I'm with his firm," I replied....

Krebs's fingers closed over the paper, crumpling it.

"Oh, then, you know about this," he said. He was putting the paper back into his pocket when I took it from him. But my adroitness, so carefully schooled, seemed momentarily to have deserted me. What should I say? It was necessary to decide quickly.

"Don't you take rather a—prejudiced view of this, Krebs?" I said. "Upon my word, I can't see why you should accept a rumour running around the lobbies that Mr. Watling drafted this bill for a particular purpose."

He was silent. But his eyes did not leave my face.

"Why should any sensible man, a member of the legislature, take stock in that kind of gossip?" I insisted. "Why not judge this bill by its face, without heeding a cock and bull story as to how it may have originated? It is a good bill, or a bad bill? Let's see what it says."

I read it.

"So far as I can see, it is legislation which we ought to have had long ago, and tends to compel a publicity in corporation affairs that is much needed, to put a stop to practices which every decent citizen deploras."

He drew the paper out of my hand.

"You needn't go on, Paret," he told me. "It's no use."

"Well, I'm sorry we don't agree," I said, and got up. I left him twisting the paper in his fingers.

Beside the clerk's desk in the Potts House, relating one of his anecdotes, I spied Colonel Varney, and managed presently to draw him upstairs to his room. "What's the matter?" he asked.

"Do you know a man named Krebs in the House?" I said.

"From Elkington? Why, that's the man the Hutchinses let slip through,—the Hutchinses, who own the mills over there. The agitators put up a job on them." The Colonel was no longer the genial and social purveyor of anecdotes. He had become tense, alert, suspicious. "What's he up to?"



“He’s found out about this bill,” I replied.

“How?”

“I don’t know. But someone told him that it originated in our office, and that we were going to use it in our suit against the Ribblevale.”

I related the circumstances of my running across Krebs, speaking of having known him at Harvard. Colonel Varney uttered an oath, and strode across to the window, where he stood looking down into the street from between the lace curtains.

“We’ll have to attend to him, right off,” he said.

I was surprised to find myself resenting the imputation, and deeply. “I’m afraid he’s one of those who can’t be ‘attended to,’” I answered.

“You mean that he’s in the employ of the Ribblevale people?” the Colonel inquired.

“I don’t mean anything of the kind,” I retorted, with more heat, perhaps, than I realized. The Colonel looked at me queerly.



Page 11

“That’s all right, Mr. Paret. Of course I don’t want to question your judgment, sir. And you say he’s a friend of yours.”

“I said I knew him at college.”

“But you will pardon me,” the Colonel went on, “when I tell you that I’ve had some experience with that breed, and I have yet to see one of ’em you couldn’t come to terms with in some way—in some way,” he added, significantly. I did not pause to reflect that the Colonel’s attitude, from his point of view (yes, and from mine,—had I not adopted it?) was the logical one. In that philosophy every man had his price, or his weakness. Yet, such is the inconsistency of human nature, I was now unable to contemplate this attitude with calmness.

“Mr. Krebs is a lawyer. Has he accepted a pass from the Railroad?” I demanded, knowing the custom of that corporation of conferring this delicate favour on the promising young talent in my profession.

“I reckon he’s never had the chance,” said Mr. Varney.

“Well, has he taken a pass as a member of the legislature?”

“No,—I remember looking that up when he first came down. Sent that back, if I recall the matter correctly.” Colonel Varney went to a desk in the corner of the room, unlocked it, drew forth a black book, and running his fingers through the pages stopped at the letter K. “Yes, sent back his legislative pass, but I’ve known ’em to do that when they were holding out for something more. There must be somebody who can get close to him.”

The Colonel ruminated awhile. Then he strode to the door and called out to the group of men who were always lounging in the hall.

“Tell Alf Young I want to see him, Fred.”

I waited, by no means free from uneasiness and anxiety, from a certain lack of self-respect that was unfamiliar. Mr. Young, the Colonel explained, was a legal light in Galesburg, near Elkington,—the Railroad lawyer there. And when at last Mr. Young appeared he proved to be an oily gentleman of about forty, inclining to stoutness, with one of those “blue,” shaven faces.

“Want me, Colonel?” he inquired blithely, when the door had closed behind him; and added obsequiously, when introduced to me, “Glad to meet you, Mr. Paret. My regards to Mr. Watling, when you go back.

“Alf,” demanded the Colonel, “what do you know of this fellow Krebs?”



Mr. Young laughed. Krebs was “nutty,” he declared—that was all there was to it.

“Won’t he—listen to reason?”

“It’s been tried, Colonel. Say, he wouldn’t know a hundred-dollar bill if you showed him one.”

“What does he want?”

“Oh, something,—that’s sure, they all want something.” Mr. Young shrugged his shoulder expressively, and by a skillful manipulation of his lips shifted his cigar from one side of his mouth to the other without raising his hands. “But it ain’t money. I guess he’s got a notion that later on the labour unions’ll send him to the United States Senate some day. He’s no slouch, either, when it comes to law. I can tell you that.”



Page 12

“No—no flaw in his—record?” Colonel Varney’s agate eyes sought those of Mr. Young, meaningly.

“That’s been tried, too,” declared the Galesburg attorney. “Say, you can believe it or not, but we’ve never dug anything up so far. He’s been too slick for us, I guess.”

“Well,” exclaimed the Colonel, at length, “let him squeal and be d—d! He can’t do any more than make a noise. Only I hoped we’d be able to grease this thing along and slide it through the Senate this afternoon, before they got wind of it.”

“He’ll squeal, all right, until you smother him,” Mr. Young observed.

“We’ll smother him some day!” replied the Colonel, savagely.

Mr. Young laughed.

But as I made my way toward the State House I was conscious of a feeling of relief. I had no sooner gained a front seat in the gallery of the House of Representatives when the members rose, the Senate marched gravely in, the Speaker stopped jesting with the Chaplain, and over the Chaplain’s face came suddenly an agonized expression. Folding his hands across his stomach he began to call on God with terrific fervour, in an intense and resounding voice. I was struck suddenly by the irony of it all. Why have a legislature when Colonel Paul Varney was so efficient! The legislature was a mere sop to democratic prejudice, to pray over it heightened the travesty. Suppose there were a God after all? not necessarily the magnified monarch to whom these pseudo-democrats prayed, but an Intelligent Force that makes for righteousness. How did He, or It, like to be trifled with in this way? And, if He existed, would not His disgust be immeasurable as He contemplated that unctuous figure in the “Prince Albert” coat, who pretended to represent Him?

As the routine business began I searched for Krebs, to find him presently at a desk beside a window in the rear of the hall making notes on a paper; there was, confessedly, little satisfaction in the thought that the man whose gaunt features I contemplated was merely one of those impractical idealists who beat themselves to pieces against the forces that sway the world and must forever sway it. I should be compelled to admit that he represented something unique in that assembly if he had the courage to get up and oppose House Bill 709. I watched him narrowly; the suggestion intruded itself—perhaps he had been “seen,” as the Colonel expressed it. I repudiated it. I grew impatient, feverish; the monotonous reading of the clerk was interrupted now and then by the sharp tones of the Speaker assigning his various measures to this or that committee, “unless objection is offered,” while the members moved about and murmured among themselves; Krebs had stopped making notes; he was looking out of the window. At last, without any change of emphasis in his droning voice, the clerk

announced the recommendation of the Committee on Judiciary that House Bill 709 ought to pass.

Page 13

Down in front a man had risen from his seat—the felicitous Mr. Truesdale. Glancing around at his fellow-members he then began to explain in the impressive but conversational tone of one whose counsels are in the habit of being listened to, that this was merely a little measure to remedy a flaw in the statutes. Mr. Truesdale believed in corporations when corporations were good, and this bill was calculated to make them good, to put an end to jugglery and concealment. Our great state, he said, should be in the forefront of such wise legislation, which made for justice and a proper publicity; but the bill in question was of greater interest to lawyers than to laymen, a committee composed largely of lawyers had recommended it unanimously, and he was sure that no opposition would develop in the House. In order not to take up their time he asked: therefore, that it be immediately put on its second and third reading and allowed to pass.

He sat down, and I looked at Krebs. Could he, could any man, any lawyer, have the presumption to question such an obviously desirable measure, to arraign the united judgment of the committee's legal talent? Such was the note Mr. Truesdale so admirably struck. As though fascinated, I continued to gaze at Krebs. I hated him, I desired to see him humiliated, and yet amazingly I found myself wishing with almost equal vehemence that he would be true to himself. He was rising,—slowly, timidly, I thought, his hand clutching his desk lid, his voice sounding wholly inadequate as he addressed the Speaker. The Speaker hesitated, his tone palpably supercilious.

“The gentleman from—from Elkington, Mr. Krebs.”

There was a craning of necks, a staring, a tittering. I burned with vicarious shame as Krebs stood there awkwardly, his hand still holding the desk. There were cries of “louder” when he began; some picked up their newspapers, while others started conversations. The Speaker rapped with his gavel, and I failed to hear the opening words. Krebs paused, and began again. His speech did not, at first, flow easily.

“Mr. Speaker, I rise to protest against this bill, which in my opinion is not so innocent as the gentleman from St. Helen's would have the House believe. It is on a par, indeed, with other legislation that in past years has been engineered through this legislature under the guise of beneficent law. No, not on a par. It is the most arrogant, the most monstrous example of special legislation of them all. And while I do not expect to be able to delay its passage much longer than the time I shall be on my feet—”

“Then why not sit down?” came a voice, just audible.

As he turned swiftly toward the offender his profile had an eagle-like effect that startled me, seemingly realizing a new quality in the man. It was as though he had needed just the stimulus of that interruption to electrify and transform him. His awkwardness disappeared; and if he was a little bombastic, a little “young,” he spoke with the fire of conviction.



Page 14

“Because,” he cried, “because I should lose my self-respect for life if I sat here and permitted the political organization of a railroad, the members of which are here under the guise of servants of the people, to cow me into silence. And if it be treason to mention the name of that Railroad in connection with its political tyranny, then make the most of it.” He let go of the desk, and tapped the copy of the bill. “What are the facts? The Boyne Iron Works, under the presidency of Adolf Scherer, has been engaged in litigation with the Ribblevale Steel Company for some years: and this bill is intended to put into the hands of the attorneys for Mr. Scherer certain information that will enable him to get possession of the property. Gentlemen, that is what ‘legal practice’ has descended to in the hands of respectable lawyers. This device originated with the resourceful Mr. Theodore Watling, and if it had not had the approval of Mr. Miller Gorse, it would never have got any farther than the judiciary committee. It was confided to the skillful care of Colonel Paul Varney to be steered through this legislature, as hundreds of other measures have been steered through,—without unnecessary noise. It may be asked why the Railroad should bother itself by lending its political organization to private corporations? I will tell you. Because corporations like the Boyne corporation are a part of a network of interests, these corporations aid the Railroad to maintain its monopoly, and in return receive rebates.”

Krebs had raised his voice as the murmurs became louder. At this point a sharp-faced lawyer from Belfast got to his feet and objected that the gentleman from Elkington was wasting the time of the House, indulging in hearsay. His remarks were not germane, *etc.* The Speaker rapped again, with a fine show of impartiality, and cautioned the member from Elkington.

“Very well,” replied Krebs. “I have said what I wanted to say on that score, and I know it to be the truth. And if this House does not find it germane, the day is coming when its constituents will.”

Whereupon he entered into a discussion of the bill, dissecting it with more calmness, with an ability that must have commanded, even from some hostile minds, an unwilling respect. The penalty, he said, was outrageous, hitherto unheard of in law,—putting a corporation in the hands of a receiver, at the mercy of those who coveted it, because one of its officers refused, or was unable, to testify. He might be in China, in Timbuctoo when the summons was delivered at his last or usual place of abode. Here was an enormity, an exercise of tyrannical power exceeding all bounds, a travesty on popular government.... He ended by pointing out the significance of the fact that the committee had given no hearings; by declaring that if the bill became a law, it would inevitably react upon the heads of those who were responsible for it.

He sat down, and there was a flutter of applause from the scattered audience in the gallery.



Page 15

“By God, that’s the only man in the whole place!”

I was aware, for the first time, of a neighbour at my side,—a solid, red-faced man, evidently a farmer. His trousers were tucked into his boots, and his gnarled and powerful hands, ingrained with dirt, clutched the arms of the seat as he leaned forward.

“Didn’t he just naturally lambaste ’em?” he cried excitedly. “They’ll down him, I guess,—but say, he’s right. A man would lose his self-respect if he didn’t let out his mind at them hoss thieves, wouldn’t he? What’s that fellow’s name?”

I told him.

“Krebs,” he repeated. “I want to remember that. Durned if I don’t shake hands with him.”

His excitement astonished me. Would the public feel like that, if they only knew?... The Speaker’s gavel had come down like a pistol shot.

One “war-hoss”—as my neighbour called them—after another proceeded to crush the member from Elkington. It was, indeed, very skillfully done, and yet it was a process from which I did not derive, somehow, much pleasure. Colonel Varney’s army had been magnificently trained to meet just this kind of situation: some employed ridicule, others declared, in impassioned tones, that the good name of their state had been wantonly assailed, and pointed fervently to portraits on the walls of patriots of the past,—sentiments that drew applause from the fickle gallery. One gentleman observed that the obsession of a “railroad machine” was a sure symptom of a certain kind of insanity, of which the first speaker had given many other evidences. The farmer at my side remained staunch.

“They can’t fool me,” he said angrily, “I know ’em. Do you see that fellow gettin’ up to talk now? Well, I could tell you a few things about him, all right. He comes from Glasgow, and his name’s Letchworth. He’s done more harm in his life than all the criminals he’s kept out of prison,—belongs to one of the old families down there, too.”

I had, indeed, remarked Letchworth’s face, which seemed to me peculiarly evil, its lividity enhanced by a shock of grey hair. His method was withering sarcasm, and he was clearly unable to control his animus....

No champion appeared to support Krebs, who sat pale and tense while this denunciation of him was going on. Finally he got the floor. His voice trembled a little, whether with passion, excitement, or nervousness it was impossible to say. But he contented himself with a brief defiance. If the bill passed, he declared, the men who voted for it, the men who were behind it, would ultimately be driven from political life by an indignant public. He had a higher opinion of the voters of the state than those who

accused him of slandering it, than those who sat silent and had not lifted their voices against this crime.

When the bill was put to a vote he demanded a roll call. Ten members besides himself were recorded against House Bill No. 709!



Page 16

In spite of this overwhelming triumph my feelings were not wholly those of satisfaction when I returned to the hotel and listened to the exultations and denunciations of such politicians as Letchworth, Young, and Colonel Varney. Perhaps an image suggesting Hermann Krebs as some splendid animal at bay, dragged down by the hounds, is too strong: he had been ingloriously crushed, and defeat, even for the sake of conviction, was not an inspiring spectacle.... As the chase swept on over his prostrate figure I rapidly regained poise and a sense of proportion; a “master of life” could not permit himself to be tossed about by sentimentality; and gradually I grew ashamed of my bad quarter of an hour in the gallery of the House, and of the effect of it—which lingered awhile—as of a weakness suddenly revealed, which must at all costs be overcome. I began to see something dramatic and sensational in Krebs’s performance....

The Ribblevale Steel Company was the real quarry, after all. And such had been the expedition, the skill and secrecy, with which our affair was conducted, that before the Ribblevale lawyers could arrive, alarmed and breathless, the bill had passed the House, and their only real chance of halting it had been lost. For the Railroad controlled the House, not by owning the individuals composing it, but through the leaders who dominated it,—men like Letchworth and Truesdale. These, and Colonel Varney, had seen to it that men who had any parliamentary ability had been attended to; all save Krebs, who had proved a surprise. There were indeed certain members who, although they had railroad passes in their pockets (which were regarded as just perquisites,—the Railroad being so rich!), would have opposed the bill if they had felt sufficiently sure of themselves to cope with such veterans as Letchworth. Many of these had allowed themselves to be won over or cowed by the oratory which had crushed Krebs.

Nor did the Ribblevale people—be it recorded—scruple to fight fire with fire. Their existence, of course, was at stake, and there was no public to appeal to. A part of the legal army that rushed to the aid of our adversaries spent the afternoon and most of the night organizing all those who could be induced by one means or another to reverse their sentiments, and in searching for the few who had grievances against the existing power. The following morning a motion was introduced to reconsider; and in the debate that followed, Krebs, still defiant, took an active part. But the resolution required a two-thirds vote, and was lost.

When the battle was shifted to the Senate it was as good as lost. The Judiciary Committee of the august body did indeed condescend to give hearings, at which the Ribblevale lawyers exhausted their energy and ingenuity without result with only two dissenting votes the bill was calmly passed. In vain was the Governor besieged, entreated, threatened,—it was said; Mr. Trulease had informed protesters—so Colonel Varney gleefully reported—that he had “become fully convinced of the inherent justice of the measure.” On Saturday morning he signed it, and it became a law....



Page 17

Colonel Varney, as he accompanied me to the train, did not conceal his jubilation.

“Perhaps I ought not to say it, Mr. Paret, but it couldn’t have been done neater. That’s the art in these little affairs, to get ’em runnin’ fast, to get momentum on ’em before the other party wakes up, and then he can’t stop ’em.” As he shook hands in farewell he added, with more gravity: “We’ll see each other often, sir, I guess. My very best regards to Mr. Watling.”

Needless to say, I had not confided to him the part I had played in originating House Bill No. 709, now a law of the state. But as the train rolled on through the sunny winter landscape a sense of well-being, of importance and power began to steal through me. I was victoriously bearing home my first scalp,—one which was by no means to be despised.... It was not until we reached Rossiter, about five o’clock, that I was able to get the evening newspapers. Such was the perfection of the organization of which I might now call myself an integral part that the “best” publications contained only the barest mention,—and that in the legislative news,—of the signing of the bill. I read with complacency and even with amusement the flaring headlines I had anticipated in Mr. Lawler’s ‘Pilot.’

“The Governor Signs It!”

“Special legislation, forced through by the Railroad Lobby, which will drive honest corporations from this state.”

“Ribblevale Steel Company the Victim.”

It was common talk in the capital, the article went on to say, that Theodore Watling himself had drawn up the measure.... Perusing the editorial page my eye fell on the name, Krebs. One member of the legislature above all deserved the gratitude of the people of the state,—the member from Elkington. “An unknown man, elected in spite of the opposition of the machine, he had dared to raise his voice against this iniquity,” *etc.*, *etc.*

We had won. That was the essential thing. And my legal experience had taught me that victory counts; defeat is soon forgotten. Even the discontented, half-baked and heterogeneous element from which the Pilot got its circulation had short memories.

XI.

The next morning, which was Sunday, I went to Mr. Watling’s house in, Fillmore Street—a new residence at that time, being admired as the *dernier cri* in architecture. It had a mediaeval look, queer dormers in a steep roof of red tiles, leaded windows buried deep in walls of rough stone. Emerging from the recessed vestibule on a level with the street



were the Watling twins, aglow with health, dressed in identical costumes of blue. They had made their bow to society that winter.

“Why, here’s Hugh!” said Frances. “Doesn’t he look pleased with himself?”

“He’s come to take us to church,” said Janet.

“Oh, he’s much too important,” said Frances. “He’s made a killing of some sort,—haven’t you, Hugh?”...



Page 18

I rang the bell and stood watching them as they departed, reflecting that I was thirty-two years of age and unmarried. Mr. Watling, surrounded with newspapers and seated before his library fire, glanced up at me with a welcoming smile: how had I borne the legislative baptism of fire? Such, I knew, was its implication.

"Everything went through according to schedule, eh? Well, I congratulate you, Hugh," he said.

"Oh, I didn't have much to do with it," I answered, smiling back at him. "I kept out of sight."

"That's an art in itself."

"I had an opportunity, at close range, to study the methods of our lawmakers."

"They're not particularly edifying," Mr. Watling replied. "But they seem, unfortunately, to be necessary."

Such had been my own thought.

"Who is this man Krebs?" he inquired suddenly. "And why didn't Varney get hold of him and make him listen to reason?"

"I'm afraid it wouldn't have been any use," I replied. "He was in my class at Harvard. I knew him—slightly. He worked his way through, and had a pretty hard time of it. I imagine it affected his ideas."

"What is he, a Socialist?"

"Something of the sort." In Theodore Watling's vigorous, sanity-exhaling presence Krebs's act appeared fantastic, ridiculous. "He has queer notions about a new kind of democracy which he says is coming. I think he is the kind of man who would be willing to die for it."

"What, in these days!" Mr. Watling looked at me incredulously. "If that's so, we must keep an eye on him, a sincere fanatic is a good deal more dangerous than a reformer who wants something. There are such men," he added, "but they are rare. How was the Governor, Trulease?" he asked suddenly. "Tractable?"

"Behaved like a lamb, although he insisted upon going through with his little humbug," I said.

Mr. Watling laughed. "They always do," he observed, "and waste a lot of valuable time. You'll find some light cigars in the corner, Hugh."



I sat down beside him and we spent the morning going over the details of the Ribblevale suit, Mr. Watling delegating to me certain matters connected with it of a kind with which I had not hitherto been entrusted; and he spoke again, before I left, of his intention of taking me into the firm as soon as the affair could be arranged. Walking homeward, with my mind intent upon things to come, I met my mother at the corner of Lyme Street coming from church. Her face lighted up at sight of me.

“Have you been working to-day, Hugh?” she asked.

I explained that I had spent the morning with Mr. Watling.

“I’ll tell you a secret, mother. I’m going to be taken into the firm.”

“Oh, my dear, I’m so glad!” she exclaimed. “I often think, if only your father were alive, how happy he would be, and how proud of you. I wish he could know. Perhaps he does know.”

Page 19

Theodore Watling had once said to me that the man who can best keep his own counsel is the best counsel for other men to keep. I did not go about boasting of the part I had played in originating the now famous Bill No. 709, the passage of which had brought about the capitulation of the Ribblevale Steel Company to our clients. But Ralph Hambleton knew of it, of course.

“That was a pretty good thing you pulled off, Hughie,” he said. “I didn’t think you had it in you.”

It was rank patronage, of course, yet I was secretly pleased. As the years went on I was thrown more and more with him, though in boyhood there had been between us no bond of sympathy. About this time he was beginning to increase very considerably the Hambleton fortune, and a little later I became counsel for the Crescent Gas and Electric Company, in which he had shrewdly gained a controlling interest. Even toward the colossal game of modern finance his attitude was characteristically that of the dilettante, of the amateur; he played it, as it were, contemptuously, even as he had played poker at Harvard, with a cynical audacity that had a peculiarly disturbing effect upon his companions. He bluffed, he raised the limit in spite of protests, and when he lost one always had the feeling that he would ultimately get his money back twice over. At the conferences in the Boyne Club, which he often attended, his manner toward Mr. Dickinson and Mr. Scherer and even toward Miller Gorse was frequently one of thinly veiled amusement at their seriousness. I often wondered that they did not resent it. But he was a privileged person.

His cousin, Ham Durrett, whose inheritance was even greater than Ralph’s had been, had also become a privileged person whose comings and goings and more reputable doings were often recorded in the newspapers. Ham had attained to what Gene Hollister aptly but inadvertently called “notoriety”: as Ralph wittily remarked, Ham gave to polo and women that which might have gone into high finance. He spent much of his time in the East; his conduct there and at home would once have created a black scandal in our community, but we were gradually leaving our Calvinism behind us and growing more tolerant: we were ready to forgive much to wealth especially if it was inherited. Hostesses lamented the fact that Ham was “wild,” but they asked him to dinners and dances to meet their daughters.

If some moralist better educated and more far-seeing than Perry Blackwood (for Perry had become a moralist) had told these hostesses that Hambleton Durrett was a victim of our new civilization, they would have raised their eyebrows. They deplored while they coveted. If Ham had been told he was a victim of any sort, he would have laughed.

He enjoyed life; he was genial and jovial, both lavish and parsimonious,—this latter characteristic being the curious survival of the trait of the ancestors to which he owed his millions. He was growing even heavier, and decidedly red in the face.



Page 20

Perry used to take Ralph to task for not saving Ham from his iniquities, and Ralph would reply that Ham was going to the devil anyway, and not even the devil himself could stop him.

“You can stop him, and you know it,” Perry retorted indignantly.

“What do you want me to do with him?” asked Ralph. “Convert him to the saintly life I lead?”

This was a poser.

“That’s a fact,” said Perry, “you’re no better than he is.”

“I don’t know what you mean by ‘better,’” retorted Ralph, grinning. “I’m wiser, that’s all.” (We had been talking about the ethics of business when Perry had switched off to Ham.) “I believe, at least, in restraint of trade. Ham doesn’t believe in restraint of any kind.”

When, therefore, the news suddenly began to be circulated in the Boyne Club that Ham was showing a tendency to straighten up, surprise and incredulity were genuine. He was drinking less,—much less; and it was said that he had severed certain ties that need not again be definitely mentioned. The theory of religious regeneration not being tenable, it was naturally supposed that he had fallen in love; the identity of the unknown lady becoming a fruitful subject of speculation among the feminine portion of society. The announcement of the marriage of Hambleton Durrett would be news of the first magnitude, to be absorbed eagerly by the many who had not the honour of his acquaintance, —comparable only to that of a devastating flood or a murder mystery or a change in the tariff.

Being absorbed in affairs that seemed more important, the subject did not interest me greatly. But one cold Sunday afternoon, as I made my way, in answer to her invitation, to see Nancy Willett, I found myself wondering idly whether she might not be by way of making a shrewd guess as to the object of Hambleton’s affections. It was well known that he had entertained a hopeless infatuation for her; and some were inclined to attribute his later lapses to her lack of response. He still called on her, and her lectures, which she delivered like a great aunt with a recondite knowledge of the world, he took meekly. But even she had seemed powerless to alter his habits....

Powell Street, that happy hunting-ground of my youth, had changed its character, become contracted and unfamiliar, sooty. The McAlerys and other older families who had not decayed with the neighbourhood were rapidly deserting it, moving out to the new residence district known as “the Heights.” I came to the Willett House. That, too, had an air of shabbiness,—of well-tended shabbiness, to be sure; the stone steps had been scrupulously scrubbed, but one of them was cracked clear across, and the silver



on the polished name-plate was wearing off; even the act of pulling the knob of a doorbell was becoming obsolete, so used had we grown to pushing porcelain buttons in bright, new vestibules. As I waited for my summons to be answered it struck me as remarkable that neither Nancy nor her father had been contaminated by the shabbiness that surrounded them.



Page 21

She had managed rather marvellously to redeem one room from the old-fashioned severity of the rest of the house, the library behind the big "parlour." It was Nancy's room, eloquent of her daintiness and taste, of her essential modernity and luxuriousness; and that evening, as I was ushered into it, this quality of luxuriousness, of being able to shut out the disagreeable aspects of life that surrounded and threatened her, particularly impressed me. She had not lacked opportunities to escape. I wondered uneasily as I waited why she had not embraced them. I strayed about the room. A coal fire burned in the grate, the red-shaded lamps gave a subdued but cheerful light; some impulse led me to cross over to the windows and draw aside the heavy hangings. Dusk was gathering over that garden, bleak and frozen now, where we had romped together as children. How queer the place seemed! How shrivelled! Once it had had the wide range of a park. There, still weathering the elements, was the old-fashioned latticed summer-house, but the fruit-trees that I recalled as clouds of pink and white were gone.... A touch of poignancy was in these memories. I dropped the curtain, and turned to confront Nancy, who had entered noiselessly.

"Well, Hugh, were you dreaming?" she said.

"Not exactly," I replied, embarrassed. "I was looking at the garden."

"The soot has ruined it. My life seems to be one continual struggle against the soot,—the blacks, as the English call them. It's a more expressive term. They are like an army, you know, overwhelming in their relentless invasion. Well, do sit down. It is nice of you to come. You'll have some tea, won't you?"

The maid had brought in the tray. Afternoon tea was still rather a new custom with us, more of a ceremony than a meal; and as Nancy handed me my cup and the thinnest of slices of bread and butter I found the intimacy of the situation a little disquieting. Her manner was indeed intimate, and yet it had the odd and disturbing effect of making her seem more remote. As she chatted I answered her perfunctorily, while all the time I was asking myself why I had ceased to desire her, whether the old longing for her might not return—was not even now returning? I might indeed go far afield to find a wife so suited to me as Nancy. She had beauty, distinction, and position. She was a woman of whom any man might be proud....

"I haven't congratulated you yet, Hugh," she said suddenly, "now that you are a partner of Mr. Watling's. I hear on all sides that you are on the high road to a great success."

"Of course I'm glad to be in the firm," I admitted.

It was a new tack for Nancy, rather a disquieting one, this discussion of my affairs, which she had so long avoided or ignored. "You are getting what you have always wanted, aren't you?"

I wondered in some trepidation whether by that word “always” she was making a deliberate reference to the past.



Page 22

“Always?” I repeated, rather fatuously.

“Nearly always, ever since you have been a man.”

I was incapable of taking advantage of the opening, if it were one. She was baffling.

“A man likes to succeed in his profession, of course,” I said.

“And you made up your mind to succeed more deliberately than most men. I needn’t ask you if you are satisfied, Hugh. Success seems to agree with you,—although I imagine you will never be satisfied.”

“Why do you say that?” I demanded.

“I haven’t known you all your life for nothing. I think I know you much better than you know yourself.”

“You haven’t acted as if you did,” I exclaimed.

She smiled.

“Have you been interested in what I thought about you?” she asked.

“That isn’t quite fair, Nancy,” I protested. “You haven’t given me much evidence that you did think about me.”

“Have I received much encouragement to do so?” she inquired.

“But you haven’t seemed to invite—you’ve kept me at arm’s length.”

“Oh, don’t fence!” she cried, rather sharply.

I had become agitated, but her next words gave me a shock that was momentarily paralyzing.

“I asked you to come here to-day, Hugh, because I wished you to know that I have made up my mind to marry Hambleton Durrett.”

“Hambleton Durrett!” I echoed stupidly. “Hambleton Durrett!”

“Why not?”

“Have you—have you accepted him?”

“No. But I mean to do so.”



“You—you love him?”

“I don’t see what right you have to ask.”

“But you just said that you invited me here to talk frankly.”

“No, I don’t love him.”

“Then why, in heaven’s name, are you going to marry him?”

She lay back in her chair, regarding me, her lips slightly parted. All at once the full flavour of her, the superfine quality was revealed after years of blindness.—Nor can I describe the sudden rebellion, the revulsion that I experienced. Hambleton Durrett! It was an outrage, a sacrilege! I got up, and put my hand on the mantel. Nancy remained motionless, inert, her head lying back against the chair. Could it be that she were enjoying my discomfiture? There is no need to confess that I knew next to nothing of women; had I been less excited, I might have made the discovery that I still regarded them sentimentally. Certain romantic axioms concerning them, garnered from Victorian literature, passed current in my mind for wisdom; and one of these declared that they were prone to remain true to an early love. Did Nancy still care for me? The query, coming as it did on top of my emotion, brought with it a strange and overwhelming perplexity. Did I really care for her? The many years during which I had practised the habit of caution began to exert an inhibiting pressure. Here was a situation, an opportunity suddenly thrust upon me which might never return, and which I was utterly unprepared to meet. Would I be happy with Nancy, after all? Her expression was still enigmatic.



Page 23

“Why shouldn’t I marry him?” she demanded.

“Because he’s not good enough for you.”

“Good!” she exclaimed, and laughed. “He loves me. He wants me without reservation or calculation.” There was a sting in this. “And is he any worse,” she asked slowly, “than many others who might be mentioned?”

“No,” I agreed. I did not intend to be led into the thankless and disagreeable position of condemning Hambleton Durrett. “But why have you waited all these years if you did not mean to marry a man of ability, a man who has made something of himself?”

“A man like you, Hugh?” she said gently.

I flushed.

“That isn’t quite fair, Nancy.”

“What are you working for?” she suddenly inquired, straightening up.

“What any man works for, I suppose.”

“Ah, there you have hit it,—what any man works for in our world. Power,—personal power. You want to be somebody,—isn’t that it? Not the noblest ambition, you’ll have to admit,—not the kind of thing we used to dream about, when we did dream. Well, when we find we can’t realize our dreams, we take the next best thing. And I fail to see why you should blame me for taking it when you yourself have taken it. Hambleton Durrett can give it to me. He’ll accept me on my own terms, he won’t interfere with me, I shan’t be disillusionized,—and I shall have a position which I could not hope to have if I remained unmarried, a very marked position as Hambleton Durrett’s wife. I am thirty, you know.”

Her frankness appalled me.

“The trouble with you, Hugh, is that you still deceive yourself. You throw a glamour over things. You want to keep your cake and eat it too.

“I don’t see why you say that. And marriage especially—”

She took me up.

“Marriage! What other career is open to a woman? Unless she is married, and married well, according to the money standard you men have set up, she is nobody. We can’t all be Florence Nightingales, and I am unable to imagine myself a Julia Ward Howe or a Harriet Beecher Stowe. What is left? Nothing but marriage. I’m hard and cynical, you



will say, but I have thought, and I'm not afraid, as I have told you, to look things in the face. There are very few women, I think, who would not take the real thing if they had the chance before it were too late, who wouldn't be willing to do their own cooking in order to get it."

She fell silent suddenly. I began to pace the room.

"For God's sake, don't do this, Nancy!" I begged.

But she continued to stare into the fire, as though she had not heard me.

"If you had made up your mind to do it, why did you tell me?" I asked.

"Sentiment, I suppose. I am paying a tribute to what I once was, to what you once were," she said. A—a sort of good-bye to sentiment."

"Nancy!" I said hoarsely.

She shook her head.



Page 24

“No, Hugh. Surely you can’t misjudge me so!” she answered reproachfully. “Do you think I should have sent for you if I had meant—that!”

“No, no, I didn’t think so. But why not? You—you cared once, and you tell me plainly you don’t love him. It was all a terrible mistake. We were meant for each other.”

“I did love you then,” she said. “You never knew how much. And there is nothing I wouldn’t give to bring it all back again. But I can’t. It’s gone. You’re gone, and I’m gone. I mean what we were. Oh, why did you change?”

“It was you who changed,” I declared, bewildered.

“Couldn’t you see—can’t you see now what you did? But perhaps you couldn’t help it. Perhaps it was just you, after all.”

“What I did?”

“Why couldn’t you have held fast to your faith? If you had, you would have known what it was I adored in you. Oh, I don’t mind telling you now, it was just that faith, Hugh, that faith you had in life, that faith you had in me. You weren’t cynical and calculating, like Ralph Hambleton, you had imagination. I—I dreamed, too. And do you remember the time when you made the boat, and we went to Logan’s Pond, and you sank in her?”

“And you stayed,” I went on, “when all the others ran away? You ran down the hill like a whirlwind.”

She laughed.

“And then you came here one day, to a party, and said you were going to Harvard, and quarrelled with me.”

“Why did you doubt me?” I asked agitatedly. “Why didn’t you let me see that you still cared?”

“Because that wasn’t you, Hugh, that wasn’t your real self. Do you suppose it mattered to me whether you went to Harvard with the others? Oh, I was foolish too, I know. I shouldn’t have said what I did. But what is the use of regrets?” she exclaimed. “We’ve both run after the practical gods, and the others have hidden their faces from us. It may be that we are not to blame, either of us, that the practical gods are too strong. We’ve learned to love and worship them, and now we can’t do without them.”

“We can try, Nancy,” I pleaded.

“No,” she answered in a low voice, “that’s the difference between you and me. I know myself better than you know yourself, and I know you better.” She smiled again.



“Unless we could have it all back again, I shouldn’t want any of it. You do not love me —”

I started once more to protest.

“No, no, don’t say it!” she cried.

“You may think you do, just this moment, but it’s only because—you’ve been moved. And what you believe you want isn’t me, it’s what I was. But I’m not that any more,—I’m simply recalling that, don’t you see? And even then you wouldn’t wish me, now, as I was. That sounds involved, but you must understand. You want a woman who will be wrapped up in your career, Hugh, and yet who will not share it,—who will devote herself body and soul to what you have become.



Page 25

A woman whom you can shape. And you won't really love her, but only just so much of her as may become the incarnation of you. Well, I'm not that kind of woman. I might have been, had you been different. I'm not at all sure. Certainly I'm not that kind now, even though I know in my heart that the sort of career you have made for yourself, and that I intend to make for myself is all dross. But now I can't do without it."

"And yet you are going to marry Hambleton Durrett!" I said.

She understood me, although I regretted my words at once.

"Yes, I am going to marry him." There was a shade of bitterness, of defiance in her voice. "Surely you are not offering me the—the other thing, now. Oh, Hugh!"

"I am willing to abandon it all, Nancy."

"No," she said, "you're not, and I'm not. What you can't see and won't see is that it has become part of you. Oh, you are successful, you will be more and more successful. And you think I should be somebody, as your wife, Hugh, more perhaps, eventually, than I shall be as Hambleton's. But I should be nobody, too. I couldn't stand it now, my dear. You must realize that as soon as you have time to think it over. We shall be friends."

The sudden gentleness in her voice pierced me through and through. She held out her hand. Something in her grasp spoke of a resolution which could not be shaken.

"And besides," she added sadly, "I don't love you any more, Hugh. I'm mourning for something that's gone. I wanted to have just this one talk with you. But we shan't mention it again,—we'll close the book."...

At that I fled out of the house, and at first the thought of her as another man's wife, as Hambleton Durrett's wife, was seemingly not to be borne. It was incredible! "We'll close the book." I found myself repeating the phrase; and it seemed then as though something within me I had believed dead—something that formerly had been all of me—had revived again to throb with pain.

It is not surprising that the acuteness of my suffering was of short duration, though I remember certain sharp twinges when the announcement of the engagement burst on the city. There was much controversy over the question as to whether or not Ham Durrett's reform would be permanent; but most people were willing to give him the benefit of the doubt; it was time he settled down and took the position in the community that was to be expected of one of his name; and as for Nancy, it was generally agreed that she had done well for herself. She was not made for poverty—and who so well as she was fitted for the social leadership of our community?



Page 26

They were married in Trinity Church in the month of May, and I was one of Ham's attendants. Ralph was "best man." For the last time the old Willett mansion in Powell Street wore the gala air of former days; carpets were spread over the sidewalk, and red and white awnings; rooms were filled with flowers and flung open to hundreds of guests. I found the wedding something of an ordeal. I do not like to dwell upon it—especially upon that moment when I came to congratulate Nancy as she stood beside Ham at the end of the long parlour. She seemed to have no regrets. I don't know what I expected of her—certainly not tears and tragedy. She seemed taller than ever, and very beautiful in her veil and white satin gown and the diamonds Ham had given her; very much mistress of herself, quite a contrast to Ham, who made no secret of his elation. She smiled when I wished her happiness.

"We'll be home in the autumn, Hugh, and expect to see a great deal of you," she said.

As I paused in a corner of the room my eye fell upon Nancy's father. McAlery Willett's elation seemed even greater than Ham's. With a gardenia in his frock-coat and a glass of champagne in his hand he went from group to group; and his familiar laughter, which once had seemed so full of merriment and fun, gave me to-day a somewhat scandalized feeling. I heard Ralph's voice, and turned to discover him standing beside me, his long legs thrust slightly apart, his hands in his pockets, overlooking the scene with typical, semi-contemptuous amusement.

"This lets old McAlery out, anyway," he said.

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"One or two little notes of his will be cancelled, sooner or later—that's all."

For a moment I was unable to speak.

"And do you think that she—that Nancy found out—?" I stammered.

"Well, I'd be willing to take that end of the bet," he replied. "Why the deuce should she marry Ham? You ought to know her well enough to understand how she'd feel if she discovered some of McAlery's financial coups? Of course it's not a thing I talk about, you understand. Are you going to the Club?"

"No, I'm going home," I said. I was aware of his somewhat compassionate smile as I left him....

XII.

One November day nearly two years after my admission as junior member of the firm of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon seven gentlemen met at luncheon in the Boyne Club; Mr.



Barbour, President of the Railroad, Mr. Scherer, of the Boyne Iron Works and other corporations, Mr. Leonard Dickinson, of the Corn National Bank, Mr. Halsey, a prominent banker from the other great city of the state, Mr. Grunewald, Chairman of the Republican State Committee, and Mr. Frederick Grierson, who had become a very important man in our community. At four o'clock they emerged from the club: citizens in Boyne Street who saw them chatting amicably on the steps little suspected that in the last three hours these gentlemen had chosen and practically elected the man who was to succeed Mr. Wade as United States Senator in Washington. Those were the days in which great affairs were simply and efficiently handled. No democratic nonsense about leaving the choice to an electorate that did not know what it wanted.

Page 27

The man chosen to fill this high position was Theodore Watling. He said he would think about the matter.

In the nation at large, through the defection of certain Northern states neither so conservative nor fortunate as ours, the Democratic party was in power, which naturally implies financial depression. There was no question about our ability to send a Republican Senator; the choice in the Boyne Club was final; but before the legislature should ratify it, a year or so hence, it were just as well that the people of the state should be convinced that they desired Mr. Watling more than any other man; and surely enough, in a little while such a conviction sprang up spontaneously. In offices and restaurants and hotels, men began to suggest to each other what a fine thing it would be if Theodore Watling might be persuaded to accept the toga; at the banks, when customers called to renew their notes and tight money was discussed and Democrats excoriated, it was generally agreed that the obvious thing to do was to get a safe man in the Senate. From the very first, Watling sentiment stirred like spring sap after a hard winter.

The country newspapers, watered by providential rains, began to put forth tender little editorial shoots, which Mr. Judah B. Tallant presently collected and presented in a charming bouquet in the Morning Era. "The Voice of the State Press;" thus was the column headed; and the remarks of the Hon. Fitch Truesdale, of the St. Helen's Messenger, were given a special prominence. Mr. Truesdale was the first, in his section, to be inspired by the happy thought that the one man preeminently fitted to represent the state in the present crisis, when her great industries had been crippled by Democratic folly, was Mr. Theodore Watling. The Rossiter Banner, the Elkington Star, the Belfast Recorder, and I know not how many others simultaneously began to sing Mr. Watling's praises.

"Not since the troublous times of the Civil War," declared the Morning Era, "had the demand for any man been so unanimous." As a proof of it, there were the country newspapers, "which reflected the sober opinion of the firesides of the common people."

There are certain industrious gentlemen to whom little credit is given, and who, unlike the average citizen who reserves his enthusiasm for election time, are patriotic enough to labour for their country's good all the year round. When in town, it was their habit to pay a friendly call on the Counsel for the Railroad, Mr. Miller Gorse, in the Corn Bank Building. He was never too busy to converse with them; or, it might better be said, to listen to them converse. Let some legally and politically ambitious young man observe Mr. Gorse's method. Did he inquire what the party worker thought of Mr. Watling for the Senate? Not at all! But before the party worker left he was telling Mr. Gorse that public sentiment demanded Mr. Watling. After leaving Mr. Gorse they wended their way to the Durrett Building



Page 28

and handed their cards over the rail of the offices of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon. Mr. Watling shook hands with scores of them, and they departed, well satisfied with the flavour of his cigars and intoxicated by his personality. He had a marvellous way of cutting short an interview without giving offence. Some of them he turned over to Mr. Paret, whom he particularly desired they should know. Thus Mr. Paret acquired many valuable additions to his acquaintance, cultivated a memory for names and faces that was to stand him in good stead; and kept, besides, an indexed note-book into which he put various bits of interesting information concerning each. Though not immediately lucrative, it was all, no doubt, part of a lawyer's education.

During the summer and the following winter Colonel Paul Varney came often to town and spent much of his time in Mr. Paret's office smoking Mr. Watling's cigars and discussing the coming campaign, in which he took a whole-souled interest.

"Say, Hugh, this is goin' slick!" he would exclaim, his eyes glittering like round buttons of jet. "I never saw a campaign where they fell in the way they're doing now. If it was anybody else but Theodore Watling, it would scare me. You ought to have been in Jim Broadhurst's campaign," he added, referring to the junior senator, "they wouldn't wood up at all, they was just listless. But Gorse and Barbour and the rest wanted him, and we had to put him over. I reckon he is useful down there in Washington, but say, do you know what he always reminded me of? One of those mud-turtles I used to play with as a boy up in Columbia County,—shuts up tight soon as he sees you coming. Now Theodore Watling ain't like that, any way of speaking. We can get up some enthusiasm for a man of his sort. He's liberal and big. He's made his pile, and he don't begrudge some of it to the fellows who do the work. Mark my words, when you see a man who wants a big office cheap, look out for him."

This, and much more wisdom I imbibed while assenting to my chief's greatness. For Mr. Varney was right,—one could feel enthusiasm for Theodore Watling; and my growing intimacy with him, the sense that I was having a part in his career, a share in his success, became for the moment the passion of my life. As the campaign progressed I gave more and more time to it, and made frequent trips of a confidential nature to the different counties of the state. The whole of my being was energized. The national fever had thoroughly pervaded my blood—the national fever to win. Prosperity—writ large—demanded it, and Theodore Watling personified, incarnated the cause. I had neither the time nor the desire to philosophize on this national fever, which animated all my associates: animated, I might say, the nation, which was beginning to get into a fever about games. If I remember rightly, it was about this time that golf was introduced, tennis had become a commonplace, professional baseball was in full swing; Ham Durrett had even organized a local polo team.... The man who failed to win something tangible in sport or law or business or politics was counted out. Such was the spirit of America, in the closing years of the nineteenth century.



Page 29

And yet, when one has said this, one has failed to express the national Geist in all its subtlety. In brief, the great American sport was not so much to win the game as to beat it; the evasion of rules challenged our ingenuity; and having won, we set about devising methods whereby it would be less and less possible for us winners to lose in the future. No better illustration of this tendency could be given than the development which had recently taken place in the field of our city politics, hitherto the battle-ground of Irish politicians who had fought one another for supremacy. Individualism had been rampant, competition the custom; you bought an alderman, or a boss who owned four or five aldermen, and then you never could be sure you were to get what you wanted, or that the aldermen and the bosses would “stay bought.” But now a genius had appeared, an American genius who had arisen swiftly and almost silently, who appealed to the imagination, and whose name was often mentioned in a whisper,—the Hon. Judd Jason, sometimes known as the Spider, who organized the City Hall and capitalized it; an ultimate and logical effect—if one had considered it—of the Manchester school of economics. Enlightened self-interest, stripped of sentiment, ends on Judd Jasons. He ran the city even as Mr. Sherrill ran his department store; you paid your price. It was very convenient. Being a genius, Mr. Jason did not wholly break with tradition, but retained those elements of the old muddled system that had their value, chartering steamboats for outings on the river, giving colossal picnics in Lowry Park. The poor and the wanderer and the criminal (of the male sex at least) were cared for. But he was not loved, as the rough-and-tumble Irishmen had been loved; he did not make himself common; he was surrounded by an aura of mystery which I confess had not failed of effect on me. Once, and only once during my legal apprenticeship, he had been pointed out to me on the street, where he rarely ventured. His appearance was not impressive....

Mr. Jason could not, of course, prevent Mr. Watling's election, even did he so desire, but he did command the allegiance of several city candidates—both democratic and republican—for the state legislature, who had as yet failed to announce their preferences for United States Senator. It was important that Mr. Watling's vote should be large, as indicative of a public reaction and repudiation of Democratic national folly. This matter among others was the subject of discussion one July morning when the Republican State Chairman was in the city; Mr. Grunewald expressed anxiety over Mr. Jason's continued silence. It was expedient that somebody should “see” the boss.

“Why not Paret?” suggested Leonard Dickinson. Mr. Watling was not present at this conference. “Paret seems to be running Watling's campaign, anyway.”



Page 30

It was settled that I should be the emissary. With lively sensations of curiosity and excitement, tempered by a certain anxiety as to my ability to match wits with the Spider, I made my way to his "lair" over Monahan's saloon, situated in a district that was anything but respectable. The saloon, on the ground floor, had two apartments; the bar-room proper where Mike Monahan, chamberlain of the establishment, was wont to stand, red faced and smiling, to greet the courtiers, big and little, the party workers, the district leaders, the hangers-on ready to be hired, the city officials, the police judges,—yes, and the dignified members of state courts whose elections depended on Mr. Jason's favour: even Judge Bering, whose acquaintance I had made the day I had come, as a law student, to Mr. Watling's office, unbent from time to time sufficiently to call there for a small glass of rye and water, and to relate, with his owl-like gravity, an anecdote to the "boys." The saloon represented Democracy, so dear to the American public. Here all were welcome, even the light-fingered gentlemen who enjoyed the privilege of police protection; and who sometimes, through fortuitous circumstances, were hauled before the very magistrates with whom they had rubbed elbows on the polished rail. Behind the bar-room, and separated from it by swinging doors only the elite ventured to thrust apart, was an audience chamber whither Mr. Jason occasionally descended. Anecdote and political reminiscence gave place here to matters of high policy.

I had several times come to the saloon in the days of my apprenticeship in search of some judge or official, and once I had run down here the city auditor himself. Mike Monahan, whose affair it was to know everyone, recognized me. It was part of his business, also, to understand that I was now a member of the firm of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon.

"Good morning to you, Mr. Paret," he said suavely. We held a colloquy in undertones over the bar, eyed by the two or three customers who were present. Mr. Monahan disappeared, but presently returned to whisper: "Sure, he'll see you," to lead the way through the swinging doors and up a dark stairway. I came suddenly on a room in the greatest disorder, its tables and chairs piled high with newspapers and letters, its windows streaked with soot. From an open door on its farther side issued a voice.

"Is that you, Mr. Paret? Come in here."

It was little less than a command.

"Heard of you, Mr. Paret. Glad to know you. Sit down, won't you?"

The inner room was almost dark. I made out a bed in the corner, and propped up in the bed a man; but for the moment I was most aware of a pair of eyes that flared up when the man spoke, and died down again when he became silent. They reminded me of those insects which in my childhood days we called "lightning bugs." Mr. Jason gave

me a hand like a woman's. I expressed my pleasure at meeting him, and took a chair beside the bed.



Page 31

“I believe you’re a partner of Theodore Watling’s now aren’t you? Smart man, Watling.”

“He’ll make a good senator,” I replied, accepting the opening.

“You think he’ll get elected—do you?” Mr. Jason inquired.

I laughed.

“Well, there isn’t much doubt about that, I imagine.”

“Don’t know—don’t know. Seen some dead-sure things go wrong in my time.”

“What’s going to defeat him?” I asked pleasantly.

“I don’t say anything,” Mr. Jason replied. “But I’ve known funny things to happen—never does to be dead sure.”

“Oh, well, we’re as sure as it’s humanly possible to be,” I declared. The eyes continued to fascinate me, they had a peculiar, disquieting effect. Now they died down, and it was as if the man’s very presence had gone out, as though I had been left alone; and I found it exceedingly difficult, under the circumstances, to continue to address him. Suddenly he flared up again.

“Watling send you over here?” he demanded.

“No. As a matter of fact, he’s out of town. Some of Mr. Watling’s friends, Mr. Grunewald and Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Gorse and others, suggested that I see you, Mr. Jason.”

There came a grunt from the bed.

“Mr. Watling has always valued your friendship and support,” I said.

“What makes him think he ain’t going to get it?”

“He hasn’t a doubt of it,” I went on diplomatically. “But we felt—and I felt personally, that we ought to be in touch with you, to work along with you, to keep informed how things are going in the city.”

“What things?”

“Well—there are one or two representatives, friends of yours, who haven’t come out for Mr. Watling. We aren’t worrying, we know you’ll do the right thing, but we feel that it would have a good deal of influence in some other parts of the state if they declared themselves. And then you know as well as I do that this isn’t a year when any of us can afford to recognize too closely party lines; the Democratic administration has brought on



a panic, the business men in that party are down on it, and it ought to be rebuked. And we feel, too, that some of the city's Democrats ought to be loyal to Mr. Watling,—not that we expect them to vote for him in caucus, but when it comes to the joint ballot—”

“Who?” demanded Mr. Jason.

“Senator Dowse and Jim Maher, for instance,” I suggested.

“Jim voted for Bill 709 all right—didn't he?” said Mr. Jason abruptly.

“That's just it,” I put in boldly. “We'd like to induce him to come in with us this time. But we feel that—the inducement would better come through you.”

Page 32

I thought Mr. Jason smiled. By this time I had grown accustomed to the darkness, the face and figure of the man in the bed had become discernible. Power, I remember thinking, chooses odd houses for itself. Here was no overbearing, full-blooded ward ruffian brimming with vitality, but a thin, sallow little man in a cotton night-shirt, with iron-grey hair and a wiry moustache; he might have been an overworked clerk behind a dry-goods counter; and yet somehow, now that I had talked to him, I realized that he never could have been. Those extraordinary eyes of his, when they were functioning, marked his individuality as unique. It were almost too dramatic to say that he required darkness to make his effect, but so it seemed. I should never forget him. He had in truth been well named the Spider.

“Of course we haven’t tried to get in touch with them. We are leaving them to you,” I added.

“Paret,” he said suddenly, “I don’t care a damn about Grunewald—never did. I’d turn him down for ten cents. But you can tell Theodore Watling for me, and Dickinson, that I guess the ‘inducement’ can be fixed.”

I felt a certain relief that the interview had come to an end, that the moment had arrived for amenities. To my surprise, Mr. Jason anticipated me.

“I’ve been interested in you, Mr. Paret,” he observed. “Know who you are, of course, knew you were in Watling’s office. Then some of the boys spoke about you when you were down at the legislature on that Ribblevale matter. Guess you had more to do with that bill than came out in the newspapers—eh?”

I was taken off my guard.

“Oh, that’s talk,” I said.

“All right, it’s talk, then? But I guess you and I will have some more talk after a while,—after Theodore Watling gets to be United States Senator. Give him my regards, and— and come in when I can do anything for you, Mr. Paret.”

Thanking him, I groped my way downstairs and let myself out by a side door Monahan had shown me into an alleyway, thus avoiding the saloon. As I walked slowly back to the office, seeking the shade of the awnings, the figure in the darkened room took on a sinister aspect that troubled me....

The autumn arrived, the campaign was on with a whoop, and I had my first taste of “stump” politics. The acrid smell of red fire brings it back to me. It was a medley of railroad travel, of committees provided with badges—and cigars, of open carriages slowly drawn between lines of bewildered citizens, of Lincoln clubs and other clubs marching in serried ranks, uniformed and helmeted, stalwarts carrying torches and

banners. And then there were the draughty opera-houses with the sylvan scenery pushed back and plush chairs and sofas pushed forward; with an ominous table, a pitcher of water on it and a glass, near the footlights. The houses were packed with more bewildered citizens. What a wonderful study of mob-psychology it would have offered! Men who



Page 33

had not thought of the grand old Republican party for two years, and who had not cared much about it when they had entered the dooms, after an hour or so went mad with fervour. The Hon. Joseph Mecklin, ex-Speaker of the House, with whom I traveled on occasions, had a speech referring to the martyred President, ending with an appeal to the revolutionary fathers who followed Washington with bleeding feet. The Hon. Joseph possessed that most valuable of political gifts, presence; and when with quivering voice he finished his peroration, citizens wept with him. What it all had to do with the tariff was not quite clear. Yet nobody seemed to miss the connection.

We were all of us most concerned, of course, about the working-man and his dinner pail,—whom the Democrats had wantonly thrown out of employment for the sake of a doctrinaire theory. They had put him in competition with the serf of Europe. Such was the subject-matter of my own modest addresses in this, my maiden campaign. I had the sense to see myself in perspective; to recognize that not for me, a dignified and substantial lawyer of affairs, were the rhetorical flights of the Hon. Joseph Mecklin. I spoke with a certain restraint. Not too dryly, I hope. But I sought to curb my sentiments, my indignation, at the manner in which the working-man had been treated; to appeal to the common sense rather than to the passions of my audiences. Here were the statistics! (drawn, by the way, from the Republican Campaign book). Unscrupulous demagogues—Democratic, of course—had sought to twist and evade them. Let this terrible record of lack of employment and misery be compared with the prosperity under Republican rule.

“One of the most effective speakers in this campaign for the restoration of Prosperity,” said the Rossiter Banner, “is Mr. Hugh Paret, of the firm of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon. Mr. Paret’s speech at the Opera-House last evening made a most favourable impression. Mr. Paret deals with facts. And his thoughtful analysis of the situation into which the Democratic party has brought this country should convince any sane-minded voter that the time has come for a change.”

I began to keep a scrap-book, though I locked it up in the drawer of my desk. In it are to be found many clippings of a similarly gratifying tenor....

Mecklin and I were well contrasted. In this way, incidentally, I made many valuable acquaintances among the “solid” men of the state, the local capitalists and manufacturers, with whom my manner of dealing with public questions was in particular favour. These were practical men; they rather patronized the Hon. Joseph, thus estimating, to a nicety, a man’s value; or solidity, or specific gravity, it might better be said, since our universe was one of checks and balances. The Hon. Joseph and his like, skyrocketing through the air, were somehow necessary in the scheme of things, but not to be taken too seriously. Me they did take seriously, these provincial lords,

Page 34

inviting me to their houses and opening their hearts. Thus, when we came to Elkington, Mr. Mecklin reposed in the Commercial House, on the noisy main street. Fortunately for him, the clanging of trolley cars never interfered with his slumbers. I slept in a wide chamber in the mansion of Mr. Ezra Hutchins. There were many Hutchinses in Elkington,—brothers and cousins and uncles and great-uncles,—and all were connected with the woollen mills. But there is always one supreme Hutchins, and Ezra was he: tall, self-contained, elderly, but well preserved through frugal living, essentially American and typical of his class, when he entered the lobby of the Commercial House that afternoon the babel of political discussion was suddenly hushed; politicians, traveling salesmen and the members of the local committee made a lane for him; to him, the Hon. Joseph and I were introduced. Mr. Hutchins knew what he wanted. He was cordial to Mr. Mecklin, but he took me. We entered a most respectable surrey with tassels, driven by a raw-boned coachman in a black overcoat, drawn by two sleek horses.

“How is this thing going, Paret?” he asked.

I gave him Mr. Grunewald’s estimated majority.

“What do you think?” he demanded, a shrewd, humorous look in his blue eyes.

“Well, I think we’ll carry the state. I haven’t had Grunewald’s experience in estimating.”

Ezra Hutchins smiled appreciatively.

“What does Watling think?”

“He doesn’t seem to be worrying much.”

“Ever been in Elkington before?”

I said I hadn’t.

“Well, a drive will do you good.”

It was about four o’clock on a mild October afternoon. The little town, of fifteen thousand inhabitants or so, had a wonderful setting in the widening valley of the Scopanong, whose swiftly running waters furnished the power for the mills. We drove to these through a gateway over which the words “No Admittance” were conspicuously painted, past long brick buildings that bordered the canals; and in the windows I caught sight of drab figures of men and women bending over the machines. Half of the buildings, as Mr. Hutchins pointed out, were closed,—mute witnesses of tariff-tinkering madness. Even more eloquent of democratic folly was that part of the town through



which we presently passed, streets lined with rows of dreary houses where the workers lived. Children were playing on the sidewalks, but theirs seemed a listless play; listless, too, were the men and women who sat on the steps,—listless, and somewhat sullen, as they watched us passing. Ezra Hutchins seemed to read my thought.

“Since the unions got in here I’ve had nothing but trouble,” he said. “I’ve tried to do my duty by my people, God knows. But they won’t see which side their bread’s buttered on. They oppose me at every step, they vote against their own interests. Some years ago they put up a job on us, and sent a scatter-brained radical to the legislature.”



Page 35

“Krebs.”

“Do you know him?”

“Slightly. He was in my class at Harvard.... Is he still here?” I asked, after a pause.

“Oh, yes. But he hasn’t gone to the legislature this time, we’ve seen to that. His father was a respectable old German who had a little shop and made eye-glasses. The son is an example of too much education. He’s a notoriety seeker. Oh, he’s clever, in a way. He’s given us a good deal of trouble, too, in the courts with damage cases.”...

We came to a brighter, more spacious, well-to-do portion of the town, where the residences faced the river. In a little while the waters widened into a lake, which was surrounded by a park, a gift to the city of the Hutchins family. Facing it, on one side, was the Hutchins Library; on the other, across a wide street, where the maples were turning, were the Hutchinses’ residences of various dates of construction, from that of the younger George, who had lately married a wife, and built in bright yellow brick, to the old-fashioned mansion of Ezra himself. This, he told me, had been good enough for his father, and was good enough for him. The picture of it comes back to me, now, with singular attractiveness. It was of brick, and I suppose a modification of the Georgian; the kind of house one still sees in out-of-the-way corners of London, with a sort of Dickensy flavour; high and square and uncompromising, with small-paned windows, with a flat roof surrounded by a low balustrade, and many substantial chimneys. The third storey was lower than the others, separated from them by a distinct line. On one side was a wide porch. Yellow and red leaves, the day’s fall, scattered the well-kept lawn. Standing in the doorway of the house was a girl in white, and as we descended from the sally she came down the walk to meet us. She was young, about twenty. Her hair was the colour of the russet maple leaves.

“This is Mr. Paret, Maude.” Mr. Hutchins looked at his watch as does a man accustomed to live by it. “If you’ll excuse me, Mr. Paret, I have something important to attend to. Perhaps Mr. Paret would like to look about the grounds?” He addressed his daughter.

I said I should be delighted, though I had no idea what grounds were meant. As I followed Maude around the house she explained that all the Hutchins connection had a common back yard, as she expressed it. In reality, there were about two blocks of the property, extending behind all the houses. There were great trees with swings, groves, orchards where the late apples glistened between the leaves, an old-fashioned flower garden loath to relinquish its blooming. In the distance the shadowed western ridge hung like a curtain of deep blue velvet against the sunset.

“What a wonderful spot!” I exclaimed.

“Yes, it is nice,” she agreed, “we were all brought up here—I mean my cousins and myself. There are dozens of us. And dozens left,” she added, as the shouts and laughter of children broke the stillness.



Page 36

A boy came running around the corner of the path. He struck out at Maude. With a remarkably swift movement she retaliated.

“Ouch!” he exclaimed.

“You got him that time,” I laughed, and, being detected, she suddenly blushed. It was this act that drew my attention to her, that defined her as an individual. Before that I had regarded her merely as a shy and provincial girl. Now she was brimming with an unsuspected vitality. A certain interest was aroused, although her shyness towards me was not altered. I found it rather a flattering shyness.

“It’s Hugh,” she explained, “he’s always trying to be funny. Speak to Mr. Paret, Hugh.”

“Why, that’s my name, too,” I said.

“Is it?”

“She knocked my hat off a little while ago,” said Hugh. “I was only getting square.”

“Well, you didn’t get square, did you?” I asked.

“Are you going to speak in the towns hall to-night?” the boy demanded. I admitted it. He went off, pausing once to stare back at me.... Maude and I walked on.

“It must be exciting to speak before a large audience,” she said. “If I were a man, I think I should like to be in politics.”

“I cannot imagine you in politics,” I answered.

She laughed.

“I said, if I were a man.”

“Are you going to the meeting?”

“Oh, yes. Father promised to take me. He has a box.”

I thought it would be pleasant to have her there.

“I’m afraid you’ll find what I have to say rather dry,” I said.

“A woman can’t expect to understand everything,” she answered quickly.

This remark struck me favourably. I glanced at her sideways. She was not a beauty, but she was distinctly well-formed and strong. Her face was oval, her features not quite regular,—giving them a certain charm; her colour was fresh, her eyes blue, the lighter



blue one sees on Chinese ware: not a poetic comparison, but so I thought of them. She was apparently not sophisticated, as were most of the young women at home whom I knew intimately (as were the Watling twins, for example, with one of whom, Frances, I had had, by the way, rather a lively flirtation the spring before); she seemed refreshingly original, impressionable and plastic....

We walked slowly back to the house, and in the hallway I met Mrs. Hutchins, a bustling, housewifely lady, inclined to stoutness, whose creased and kindly face bore witness to long acquiescence in the discipline of matrimony, to the contentment that results from an essentially circumscribed and comfortable life. She was, I learned later, the second Mrs. Hutchins, and Maude their only child. The children of the first marriage, all girls, had married and scattered.



Page 37

Supper was a decorous but heterogeneous meal of the old-fashioned sort that gives one the choice between tea and cocoa. It was something of an occasion, I suspected. The minister was there, the Reverend Mr. Doddridge, who would have made, in appearance at least, a perfect Puritan divine in a steeple hat and a tippet. Only—he was no longer the leader of the community; and even in his grace he had the air of deferring to the man who provided the bounties of which we were about to partake rather than to the Almighty. Young George was there, Mr. Hutchins's nephew, who was daily becoming more and more of a factor in the management of the mills, and had built the house of yellow brick that stood out so incongruously among the older Hutchinses' mansions, and marked a transition. I thought him rather a yellow-brick gentleman himself for his assumption of cosmopolitan manners. His wife was a pretty, discontented little woman who plainly deplored her environment, longed for larger fields of conquest: George, she said, must remain where he was, for the present at least,—Uncle Ezra depended on him; but Elkington was a prosy place, and Mrs. George gave the impression that she did not belong here. They went to the city on occasions; both cities. And when she told me we had a common acquaintance in Mrs. Hambleton Durrett—whom she thought so lovely!—I knew that she had taken Nancy as an ideal: Nancy, the social leader of what was to Mrs. George a metropolis.

Presently the talk became general among the men, the subject being the campaign, and I the authority, bombarded with questions I strove to answer judicially. What was the situation in this county and in that? the national situation? George indulged in rather a vigorous arraignment of the demagogues, national and state, who were hurting business in order to obtain political power. The Reverend Mr. Doddridge assented, deploring the poverty that the local people had brought on themselves by heeding the advice of agitators; and Mrs. Hutchins, who spent much of her time in charity work, agreed with the minister when he declared that the trouble was largely due to a decline in Christian belief. Ezra Hutchins, too, nodded at this.

“Take that man Krebs, for example,” the minister went on, stimulated by this encouragement, “he’s an atheist, pure and simple.” A sympathetic shudder went around the table at the word. George alone smiled. “Old Krebs was a free-thinker; I used to get my glasses of him. He was at least a conscientious man, a good workman, which is more than can be said for the son. Young Krebs has talent, and if only he had devoted himself to the honest practice of law, instead of stirring up dissatisfaction among these people, he would be a successful man to-day.”

Mr. Hutchins explained that I was at college with Krebs.

“These people must like him,” I said, “or they wouldn’t have sent him to the legislature.”

“Well, a good many of them do like him,” the minister admitted. “You see, he actually lives among them. They believe his socialistic doctrines because he’s a friend of theirs.”



Page 38

“He won’t represent this town again, that’s sure,” exclaimed George. “You didn’t see in the papers that he was nominated,—did you, Paret?”

“But if the mill people wanted him, George, how could it be prevented?” his wife demanded.

George winked at me.

“There are more ways of skinning a cat than one,” he said cryptically.

“Well, it’s time to go to the meeting, I guess,” remarked Ezra, rising. Once more he looked at his watch.

We were packed into several family carriages and started off. In front of the hall the inevitable red fire was burning, its quivering light reflected on the faces of the crowd that blocked the street. They stood silent, strangely apathetic as we pushed through them to the curb, and the red fire went out suddenly as we descended. My temporary sense of depression, however, deserted me as we entered the hall, which was well lighted and filled with people, who clapped when the Hon. Joseph and I, accompanied by Mr. Doddridge and the Hon. Henry Clay Mellish from Pottstown, with the local chairman, walked out on the stage. A glance over the audience sufficed to ascertain that that portion of the population whose dinner pails we longed to fill was evidently not present in large numbers. But the farmers had driven in from the hills, while the merchants and storekeepers of Elkington had turned out loyally.

The chairman, in introducing me, proclaimed me as a coming man, and declared that I had already achieved, in the campaign, considerable notoriety. As I spoke, I was pleasantly aware of Maude Hutchins leaning forward a little across the rail of the right-hand stage box—for the town hall was half opera-house; her attitude was one of semi-absorbed admiration; and the thought that I had made an impression on her stimulated me. I spoke with more aplomb. Somewhat to my surprise, I found myself making occasional, unexpected witticisms that drew laughter and applause. Suddenly, from the back of the hall, a voice called out:—“How about House Bill 709?”

There was a silence, then a stirring and craning of necks. It was my first experience of heckling, and for the moment I was taken aback. I thought of Krebs. He had, indeed, been in my mind since I had risen to my feet, and I had scanned the faces before me in search of his. But it was not his voice.

“Well, what about Bill 709?” I demanded.

“You ought to know something about it, I guess,” the voice responded.

“Put him out!” came from various portions of the hall.



Inwardly, I was shaken. Not—in orthodox language from any “conviction of sin.” Yet it was my first intimation that my part in the legislation referred to was known to any save a select few. I blamed Krebs, and a hot anger arose within me against him. After all, what could they prove?

“No, don’t put him out,” I said. “Let him come up here to the platform. I’ll yield to him. And I’m entirely willing to discuss with him and defend any measures passed in the legislature of this state by a Republican majority. Perhaps,” I added, “the gentleman has a copy of the law in his pocket, that I may know what he is talking about, and answer him intelligently.”



Page 39

At this there was wild applause. I had the audience with me. The offender remained silent and presently I finished my speech. After that Mr. Mecklin made them cheer and weep, and Mr. Mellish made them laugh. The meeting had been highly successful.

"You polished him off, all right," said George Hutchins, as he took my hand.

"Who was he?"

"Oh, one of the local sore-heads. Krebs put him up to it, of course."

"Was Krebs here?" I asked.

"Sitting in the corner of the balcony. That meeting must have made him feel sick." George bent forward and whispered in my ear: "I thought Bill 709 was Watling's idea."

"Oh, I happened to be in the Potts House about that time," I explained.

George, of whom it may be gathered that he was not wholly unsophisticated, grinned at me appreciatively.

"Say, Paret," he replied, putting his hand through my arm, "there's a little legal business in prospect down here that will require some handling, and I wish you'd come down after the campaign and talk it over, with us. I've just about made up my mind that you're the man to tackle it."

"All right, I'll come," I said.

"And stay with me," said George....

We went to his yellow-brick house for refreshments, salad and ice-cream and (in the face of the Hutchins traditions) champagne. Others had been invited in, some twenty persons.... Once in a while, when I looked up, I met Maude's eyes across the room. I walked home with her, slowly, the length of the Hutchinses' block. Floating over the lake was a waning October moon that cast through the thinning maples a lace-work of shadows at our feet; I had the feeling of well-being that comes to heroes, and the presence of Maude Hutchins was an incense, a vestal incense far from unpleasing. Yet she had reservations which appealed to me. Hers was not a gushing provincialism, like that of Mrs. George.

"I liked your speech so much, Mr. Paret," she told me. "It seemed so sensible and—controlled, compared to the others. I have never thought a great deal about these things, of course, and I never understood before why taking away the tariff caused so much misery. You made that quite plain.

"If so, I'm glad," I said.



She was silent a moment.

“The working people here have had a hard time during the last year,” she went on. “Some of the mills had to be shut down, you know. It has troubled me. Indeed, it has troubled all of us. And what has made it more difficult, more painful is that many of them seem actually to dislike us. They think it’s father’s fault, and that he could run all the mills if he wanted to. I’ve been around a little with mother and sometimes the women wouldn’t accept any help from us; they said they’d rather starve than take charity, that they had the right to work. But father couldn’t run the mills at a loss—could he?”

“Certainly not,” I replied.



Page 40

“And then there’s Mr. Krebs, of whom we were speaking at supper, and who puts all kinds of queer notions into their heads. Father says he’s an anarchist. I heard father say at supper that he was at Harvard with you. Did you like him?”

“Well,” I answered hesitatingly, “I didn’t know him very well.”

“Of course not,” she put in. “I suppose you couldn’t have.”

“He’s got these notions,” I explained, “that are mischievous and crazy—but I don’t dislike him.”

“I’m glad to hear you say that!” she answered quietly. “I like him, too—he seems so kind, so understanding.”

“Do you know him?”

“Well,—” she hesitated—“I feel as though I do. I’ve only met him once, and that was by accident. It was the day the big strike began, last spring, and I had been shopping, and started for the mills to get father to walk home with me, as I used to do. I saw the crowds blocking the streets around the canal. At first I paid no attention to them, but after a while I began to be a little uneasy, there were places where I had to squeeze through, and I couldn’t help seeing that something was wrong, and that the people were angry. Men and women were talking in loud voices. One woman stared at me, and called my name, and said something that frightened me terribly. I went into a doorway—and then I saw Mr. Krebs. I didn’t know who he was. He just said, ‘You’d better come with me, Miss Hutchins,’ and I went with him. I thought afterwards that it was a very courageous thing for him to do, because he was so popular with the mill people, and they had such a feeling against us. Yet they didn’t seem to resent it, and made way for us, and Mr. Krebs spoke to many of them as we passed. After we got to State Street, I asked him his name, and when he told me I was speechless. He took off his hat and went away. He had such a nice face—not at all ugly when you look at it twice—and kind eyes, that I just couldn’t believe him to be as bad as father and George think he is. Of course he is mistaken,” she added hastily, “but I am sure he is sincere, and honestly thinks he can help those people by telling them what he does.”

The question shot at me during the meeting rankled still; I wanted to believe that Krebs had inspired it, and her championship of him gave me a twinge of jealousy,—the slightest twinge, to be sure, yet a perceptible one. At the same time, the unaccountable liking I had for the man stirred to life. The act she described had been so characteristic.

“He’s one of the born rebels against society,” I said glibly. “Yet I do think he’s sincere.”



Page 41

Maude was grave. "I should be sorry to think he wasn't," she replied. After I had bidden her good night at the foot of the stairs, and gone to my room, I reflected how absurd it was to be jealous of Krebs. What was Maude Hutchins to me? And even if she had been something to me, she never could be anything to Krebs. All the forces of our civilization stood between the two; nor was she of a nature to take plunges of that sort. The next day, as I lay back in my seat in the parlour-car and gazed at the autumn landscape, I indulged in a luxurious contemplation of the picture she had made as she stood on the lawn under the trees in the early morning light, when my carriage had driven away; and I had turned, to perceive that her eyes had followed me. I was not in love with her, of course. I did not wish to return at once to Elkington, but I dwelt with a pleasant anticipation upon my visit, when the campaign should be over, with George.

XIII.

"The good old days of the Watling campaign," as Colonel Paul Varney is wont to call them, are gone forever. And the Colonel himself, who stuck to his gods, has been through the burning, fiery furnace of Investigation, and has come out unscathed and unrepentant. The flames of investigation, as a matter of fact, passed over his head in their vain attempt to reach the "man higher up," whose feet they licked; but him they did not devour, either. A veteran in retirement, the Colonel is living under his vine and fig tree on the lake at Rossiter; the vine bears Catawba grapes, of which he is passionately fond; the fig tree, the Bartlett pears he gives to his friends. He has saved something from the spoils of war, but other veterans I could mention are not so fortunate. The old warriors have retired, and many are dead; the good old methods are becoming obsolete. We never bothered about those mischievous things called primaries. Our county committees, our state committees chose the candidates for the conventions, which turned around and chose the committees. Both the committees and the conventions—under advice—chose the candidates. Why, pray, should the people complain, when they had everything done for them? The benevolent parties, both Democratic and Republican, even undertook the expense of printing the ballots! And generous ballots they were (twenty inches long and five wide!), distributed before election, in order that the voters might have the opportunity of studying and preparing them: in order that Democrats of delicate feelings might take the pains to scratch out all the Democratic candidates, and write in the names of the Republican candidates. Patriotism could go no farther than this....



Page 42

I spent the week before election in the city, where I had the opportunity of observing what may be called the charitable side of politics. For a whole month, or more, the burden of existence had been lifted from the shoulders of the homeless. No church or organization, looked out for these frowsy, blear-eyed and ragged wanderers who had failed to find a place in the scale of efficiency. For a whole month, I say, Mr. Judd Jason and his lieutenants made them their especial care; supported them in lodging-houses, induced the night clerks to give them attention; took the greatest pains to ensure them the birth-right which, as American citizens, was theirs,—that of voting. They were not only given homes for a period, but they were registered; and in the abundance of good feeling that reigned during this time of cheer, even the foreigners were registered! On election day they were driven, like visiting notables, in carryalls and carriages to the polls! Some of them, as though in compensation for ills endured between elections, voted not once, but many times; exercising judicial functions for which they should be given credit. For instance, they were convinced that the Hon. W. W. Trulease had made a good governor; and they were Watling enthusiasts,—intent on sending men to the legislature who would vote for him for senator; yet there were cases in which, for the minor offices, the democrat was the better man!

It was a memorable day. In spite of Mr. Lawler's Pilot, which was as a voice crying in the wilderness, citizens who had wives and homes and responsibilities, business men and clerks went to the voting booths and recorded their choice for Trulease, Watling and Prosperity: and working-men followed suit. Victory was in the air. Even the policemen wore happy smiles, and in some instances the election officers themselves in absent-minded exuberance thrust bunches of ballots into the boxes!

In response to an insistent demand from his fellow-citizens Mr. Watling, the Saturday evening before, had made a speech in the Auditorium, decked with bunting and filled with people. For once the Morning Era did not exaggerate when it declared that the ovation had lasted fully ten minutes. "A remarkable proof" it went on to say, "of the esteem and confidence in which our fellow-citizen is held by those who know him best, his neighbours in the city where he has given so many instances of his public spirit, where he has achieved such distinction in the practice of the law. He holds the sound American conviction that the office should seek the man. His address is printed in another column, and we believe it will appeal to the intelligence and sober judgment of the state. It is replete with modesty and wisdom."



Page 43

Mr. Watling was introduced by Mr. Bering of the State Supreme Court (a candidate for re-election), who spoke with deliberation, with owl-like impressiveness. He didn't believe in judges meddling in politics, but this was an unusual occasion. (Loud applause.) Most unusual. He had come here as a man, as an American, to pay his tribute to another man, a long-time friend, whom he thought to stand somewhat aside and above mere party strife, to represent values not merely political.... So accommodating and flexible is the human mind, so "practical" may it become through dealing with men and affairs, that in listening to Judge Bering I was able to ignore the little anomalies such a situation might have suggested to the theorist, to the mere student of the institutions of democracy. The friendly glasses of rye and water Mr. Bering had taken in Monahan's saloon, the cases he had "arranged" for the firm of Watling, Fowndes and Ripon were forgotten. Forgotten, too, when Theodore Watling stood up and men began, to throw their hats in the air,—were the cavilling charges of Mr. Lawler's Pilot that, far from the office seeking the man, our candidate had spent over a hundred thousand dollars of his own money, to say nothing of the contributions of Mr. Scherer, Mr. Dickinson and the Railroad! If I had been troubled with any weak, ethical doubts, Mr. Watling would have dispelled them; he had red blood in his veins, a creed in which he believed, a rare power of expressing himself in plain, everyday language that was often colloquial, but never—as the saying goes—"cheap." The dinner-pail predicament was real to him. He would present a policy of our opponents charmingly, even persuasively, and then add, after a moment's pause: "There is only one objection to this, my friends—that it doesn't work." It was all in the way he said it, of course. The audience would go wild with approval, and shouts of "that's right" could be heard here and there. Then he proceeded to show why it didn't work. He had the faculty of bringing his lessons home, the imagination to put himself into the daily life of those who listened to him,—the life of the storekeeper, the clerk, of the labourer and of the housewife. The effect of this can scarcely be overestimated. For the American hugs the delusion that there are no class distinctions, even though his whole existence may be an effort to rise out of once class into another. "Your wife," he told them once, "needs a dress. Let us admit that the material for the dress is a little cheaper than it was four years ago, but when she comes to look into the family stocking—" (Laughter.) "I needn't go on. If we could have things cheaper, and more money to buy them with, we should all be happy, and the Republican party could retire from business."

He did not once refer to the United States Senatorship.



Page 44

It was appropriate, perhaps, that many of us dined on the evening of election day at the Boyne Club. There was early evidence of a Republican land-slide. And when, at ten o'clock, it was announced that Mr. Trulease was re-elected by a majority which exceeded Mr. Grunewald's most hopeful estimate, that the legislature was "safe," that Theodore Watling would be the next United States Senator, a scene of jubilation ensued within those hallowed walls which was unprecedented. Chairs were pushed back, rugs taken up, Gene Hollister played the piano and a Virginia reel started; in a burst of enthusiasm Leonard Dickinson ordered champagne for every member present. The country was returning to its senses. Theodore Watling had preferred, on this eventful night, to remain quietly at home. But presently carriages were ordered, and a "delegation" of enthusiastic friends departed to congratulate him; Dickinson, of course, Grierson, Fowndes, Ogilvy, and Grunewald. We found Judah B. Tallant there,—in spite of the fact that it was a busy night for the Era; and Adolf Scherer himself, in expansive mood, was filling the largest of the library chairs. Mr. Watling was the least excited of them all; remarkably calm, I thought, for a man on the verge of realizing his life's high ambition. He had some old brandy, and a box of cigars he had been saving for an occasion. He managed to convey to everyone his appreciation of the value of their cooperation....

It was midnight before Mr. Scherer arose to take his departure. He seized Mr. Watling's hand, warmly, in both of his own.

"I have never," he said, with a relapse into the German f's, "I have never had a happier moment in my life, my friend, than when I congratulate you on your success." His voice shook with emotion. "Alas, we shall not see so much of you now."

"He'll be on guard, Scherer," said Leonard Dickinson, putting his arm around my chief.

"Good night, Senator," said Tallant, and all echoed the word, which struck me as peculiarly appropriate. Much as I had admired Mr. Watling before, it seemed indeed as if he had undergone some subtle change in the last few hours, gained in dignity and greatness by the action of the people that day. When it came my turn to bid him good night, he retained my hand in his.

"Don't go yet, Hugh," he said.

"But you must be tired," I objected.

"This sort of thing doesn't make a man tired," he laughed, leading me back to the library, where he began to poke the fire into a blaze. "Sit down awhile. You must be tired, I think,—you've worked hard in this campaign, a good deal harder than I have. I haven't said much about it, but I appreciate it, my boy." Mr. Watling had the gift of expressing his feelings naturally, without sentimentality. I would have given much for that gift.



“Oh, I liked it,” I replied awkwardly.

I read a gentle amusement in his eyes, and also the expression of something else, difficult to define. He had seated himself, and was absently thrusting at the logs with the poker.



Page 45

"You've never regretted going into law?" he asked suddenly, to my surprise.

"Why, no, sir," I said.

"I'm glad to hear that. I feel, to a considerable extent, responsible for your choice of a profession."

"My father intended me to be a lawyer," I told him. "But it's true that you gave me my—my first enthusiasm."

He looked up at me at the word.

"I admired your father. He seemed to me to be everything that a lawyer should be. And years ago, when I came to this city a raw country boy from upstate, he represented and embodied for me all the fine traditions of the profession. But the practice of law isn't what it was in his day, Hugh."

"No," I agreed, "that could scarcely be expected."

"Yes, I believe you realize that," he said. "I've watched you, I've taken a personal pride in you, and I have an idea that eventually you will succeed me here—neither Fowndes nor Ripon have the peculiar ability you have shown. You and I are alike in a great many respects, and I am inclined to think we are rather rare, as men go. We are able to keep one object vividly in view, so vividly as to be able to work for it day and night. I could mention dozens who had and have more natural talent for the law than I, more talent for politics than I. The same thing may be said about you. I don't regard either of us as natural lawyers, such as your father was. He couldn't help being a lawyer."

Here was new evidence of his perspicacity.

"But surely," I ventured, "you don't feel any regrets concerning your career, Mr. Watling?"

"No," he said, "that's just the point. But no two of us are made wholly alike. I hadn't practised law very long before I began to realize that conditions were changing, that the new forces at work in our industrial life made the older legal ideals impracticable. It was a case of choosing between efficiency and inefficiency, and I chose efficiency. Well, that was my own affair, but when it comes to influencing others—" He paused. "I want you to see this as I do, not for the sake of justifying myself, but because I honestly believe there is more to it than expediency,—a good deal more. There's a weak way of looking at it, and a strong way. And if I feel sure you understand it, I shall be satisfied.

"Because things are going to change in this country, Hugh. They are changing, but they are going to change more. A man has got to make up his mind what he believes in, and be ready to fight for it. We'll have to fight for it, sooner perhaps than we realize. We are

a nation divided against ourselves; democracy—Jacksonian democracy, at all events, is a flat failure, and we may as well acknowledge it. We have a political system we have outgrown, and which, therefore, we have had to nullify. There are certain needs, certain tendencies of development in nations as well as in individuals,—needs stronger than the state,

Page 46

stronger than the law or constitution. In order to make our resources effective, combinations of capital are more and more necessary, and no more to be denied than a chemical process, given the proper ingredients, can be thwarted. The men who control capital must have a free hand, or the structure will be destroyed. This compels us to do many things which we would rather not do, which we might accomplish openly and unopposed if conditions were frankly recognized, and met by wise statesmanship which sought to bring about harmony by the reshaping of laws and policies. Do you follow me?"

"Yes," I answered. "But I have never heard the situation stated so clearly. Do you think the day will come when statesmanship will recognize this need?"

"Ah," he said, "I'm afraid not—in my time, at least. But we shall have to develop that kind of statesmen or go on the rocks. Public opinion in the old democratic sense is a myth; it must be made by strong individuals who recognize and represent evolutionary needs, otherwise it's at the mercy of demagogues who play fast and loose with the prejudice and ignorance of the mob. The people don't value the vote, they know nothing about the real problems. So far as I can see, they are as easily swayed to-day as the crowd that listened to Mark Antony's oration about Caesar. You've seen how we have to handle them, in this election and—in other matters. It isn't a pleasant practice, something we'd indulge in out of choice, but the alternative is unthinkable. We'd have chaos in no time. We've just got to keep hold, you understand—we can't leave it to the irresponsible."

"Yes," I said. In this mood he was more impressive than I had ever known him, and his confidence flattered and thrilled me.

"In the meantime, we're criminals," he continued. "From now on we'll have to stand more and more denunciation from the visionaries, the dissatisfied, the trouble makers. We may as well make up our minds to it. But we've got something on our side worth fighting for, and the man who is able to make that clear will be great."

"But you—you are going to the Senate," I reminded him.

He shook his head.

"The time has not yet come," he said. "Confusion and misunderstanding must increase before they can diminish. But I have hopes of you, Hugh, or I shouldn't have spoken. I shan't be here now—of course I'll keep in touch with you. I wanted to be sure that you had the right view of this thing."



“I see it now,” I said. “I had thought of it, but never—never as a whole—not in the large sense in which you have expressed it.” To attempt to acknowledge or deprecate the compliment he had paid me was impossible; I felt that he must have read my gratitude and appreciation in my manner.

“I mustn’t keep you up until morning.” He glanced at the clock, and went with me through the hall into the open air. A meteor darted through the November night. “We’re like that,” he observed, staring after it, a “flash across the darkness, and we’re gone.”



Page 47

“Only—there are many who haven’t the satisfaction of a flash,” I was moved to reply.

He laughed and put his hand on my shoulder as he bade me good night.

“Hugh, you ought to get married. I’ll have to find a nice girl for you,” he said. With an elation not unmingled with awe I made my way homeward.

Theodore Watling had given me a creed.

A week or so after the election I received a letter from George Hutchins asking me to come to Elkington. I shall not enter into the details of the legal matter involved. Many times that winter I was a guest at the yellow-brick house, and I have to confess, as spring came on, that I made several trips to Elkington which business necessity did not absolutely demand.

I considered Maude Hutchins, and found the consideration rather a delightful process. As became an eligible and successful young man, I was careful not to betray too much interest; and I occupied myself at first with a review of what I deemed her shortcomings. Not that I was thinking of marriage—but I had imagined the future Mrs. Paret as tall; Maude was up to my chin: again, the hair of the fortunate lady was to be dark, and Maude’s was golden red: my ideal had esprit, lightness of touch, the faculty of seizing just the aspect of a subject that delighted me, and a knowledge of the world; Maude was simple, direct, and in a word provincial. Her provinciality, however, was negative rather than positive, she had no disagreeable mannerisms, her voice was not nasal; her plasticity appealed to me. I suppose I was lost without knowing it when I began to think of moulding her.

All of this went on at frequent intervals during the winter, and while I was organizing the Elkington Power and Traction Company for George I found time to dine and sup at Maude’s house, and to take walks with her. I thought I detected an incense deliciously sweet; by no means overpowering, like the lily’s, but more like the shy fragrance of the wood flower. I recall her kind welcomes, the faint deepening of colour in her cheeks when she greeted me, and while I suspected that she looked up to me she had a surprising and tantalizing self-command.

There came moments when I grew slightly alarmed, as, for instance, one Sunday in the early spring when I was dining at the Ezra Hutchins’s house and surprised Mrs. Hutchins’s glance on me, suspecting her of seeking to divine what manner of man I was. I became self-conscious; I dared not look at Maude, who sat across the table; thereafter I began to feel that the Hutchins connection regarded me as a suitor. I had grown intimate with George and his wife, who did not refrain from sly allusions; and George himself once remarked, with characteristic tact, that I was most conscientious in my attention to the traction affair; I have reason to believe they were even less delicate with Maude. This was the logical time to withdraw—but I dallied. The experience

Page 48

was becoming more engrossing,—if I may so describe it,—and spring was approaching. The stars in their courses were conspiring. I was by no means as yet a self-acknowledged wooer, and we discussed love in its lighter phases through the medium of literature. Heaven forgive me for calling it so! About that period, it will be remembered, a mushroom growth of volumes of a certain kind sprang into existence; little books with “artistic” bindings and wide margins, sweetened essays, some of them written in beautiful English by dilettante authors for drawing-room consumption; and collections of short stories, no doubt chiefly bought by philanderers like myself, who were thus enabled to skate on thin ice over deep water. It was a most delightful relationship that these helped to support, and I fondly believed I could reach shore again whenever I chose.

There came a Sunday in early May, one of those days when the feminine assumes a large importance. I had been to the Hutchinses’ church; and Maude, as she sat and prayed decorously in the pew beside me, suddenly increased in attractiveness and desirability. Her voice was very sweet, and I felt a delicious and languorous thrill which I identified not only with love, but also with a reviving spirituality. How often the two seem to go hand in hand!

She wore a dress of a filmy material, mauve, with a design in gold thread running through it. Of late, it seemed, she had had more new dresses: and their modes seemed more cosmopolitan; at least to the masculine eye. How delicately her hair grew, in little, shining wisps, around her white neck! I could have reached out my hand and touched her. And it was this desire,—although by no means overwhelming,—that startled me. Did I really want her? The consideration of this vital question occupied the whole time of the sermon; made me distrait at dinner,—a large family gathering. Later I found myself alone with her on a bench in the Hutchinses’ garden where we had walked the day of my arrival, during the campaign.

The gardens were very different, now. The trees had burst forth again into leaf, the spiraea bushes seemed weighted down with snow, and with a note like that of the quivering bass string of a ’cello the bees hummed among the fruit blossoms. And there beside me in her filmy dress was Maude, a part of it all—the meaning of all that set my being clamouring. She was like some ripened, delicious flower ready to be picked.... One of those pernicious, make-believe volumes had fallen on the bench between us, for I could not read any more; I could not think; I touched her hand, and when she drew it gently away I glanced at her. Reason made a valiant but hopeless effort to assert itself. Was I sure that I wanted her—for life? No use! I wanted her now, no matter what price that future might demand. An awkward silence fell between us—awkward to me, at least—and I, her guide and mentor, became banal, apologetic, confused. I made some idiotic remark about being together in the Garden of Eden.



Page 49

"I remember Mr. Doddridge saying in Bible class that it was supposed to be on the Euphrates," she replied. "But it's been destroyed by the flood."

"Let's make another—one of our own," I suggested.

"Why, how silly you are this afternoon."

"What's to prevent us—Maude?" I demanded, with a dry throat.

"Nonsense!" she laughed. In proportion as I lost poise she seemed to gain it.

"It's not nonsense," I faltered. "If we were married."

At last the fateful words were pronounced—irrevocably. And, instead of qualms, I felt nothing but relief, joy that I had been swept along by the flood of feeling. She did not look at me, but gazed straight ahead of her.

"If I love you, Maude?" I stammered, after a moment.

"But I don't love you," she replied, steadily.

Never in my life had I been so utterly taken aback.

"Do you mean," I managed to say, "that after all these months you don't like me a little?"

"'Liking' isn't loving." She looked me full in the face. "I like you very much."

"But—" there I stopped, paralyzed by what appeared to me the quintessence of feminine inconsistency and caprice. Yet, as I stared at her, she certainly did not appear capricious. It is not too much to say that I was fairly astounded at this evidence of self-command and decision, of the strength of mind to refuse me. Was it possible that she had felt nothing and I all? I got to my feet.

"I hate to hurt your feelings," I heard her say. "I'm very sorry..." She looked up at me. Afterwards, when reflecting on the scene, I seemed to remember that there were tears in her eyes. I was not in a condition to appreciate her splendid sincerity. I was overwhelmed and inarticulate. I left her there, on the bench, and went back to George's, announcing my intention of taking the five o'clock train....

Maude Hutchins had become, at a stroke, the most desirable of women. I have often wondered how I should have felt on that five-hour journey back to the city if she had fallen into my arms! I should have persuaded myself, no doubt, that I had not done a foolish thing in yielding to an impulse and proposing to an inexperienced and provincial young woman, yet there would have been regrets in the background. Too deeply

chagrined to see any humour in the situation, I settled down in a Pullman seat and went over and over again the event of that afternoon until the train reached the city.

As the days wore on, and I attended to my cases, I thought of Maude a great deal, and in those moments when the pressure of business was relaxed, she obsessed me. She must love me,—only she did not realize it. That was the secret! Her value had risen amazingly, become supreme; the very act of refusing me had emphasized her qualifications as a wife, and I now desired her with all the intensity of a nature which had been permitted always to achieve



Page 50

its objects. The inevitable process of idealization began. In dusty offices I recalled her freshness as she had sat beside me in the garden,—the freshness of a flower; with Berkeleyan subjectivism I clothed the flower with colour, bestowed it with fragrance. I conferred on Maude all the gifts and graces that woman had possessed since the creation. And I recalled, with mingled bitterness and tenderness, the turn of her head, the down on her neck, the half-revealed curve of her arm.... In spite of the growing sordidness of Lyme Street, my mother and I still lived in the old house, for which she very naturally had a sentiment. In vain I had urged her from time to time to move out into a brighter and fresher neighbourhood. It would be time enough, she said, when I was married.

“If you wait for that, mother,” I answered, “we shall spend the rest of our lives here.”

“I shall spend the rest of my life here,” she would declare. “But you—you have your life before you, my dear. You would be so much more contented if—if you could find some nice girl. I think you live—too feverishly.”

I do not know whether or not she suspected me of being in love, nor indeed how much she read of me in other ways. I did not confide in her, nor did it strike me that she might have yearned for confidences; though sometimes, when I dined at home, I surprised her gentle face—framed now with white hair—lifted wistfully toward me across the table. Our relationship, indeed, was a pathetic projection of that which had existed in my childhood; we had never been confidants then. The world in which I lived and fought, of great transactions and merciless consequences frightened her; her own world was more limited than ever. She heard disquieting things, I am sure, from Cousin Robert Breck, who had become more and more querulous since the time-honoured firm of Breck and Company had been forced to close its doors and the home at Claremore had been sold. My mother often spent the day in the scrolled suburban cottage with the coloured glass front door where he lived with the Kinleys and Helen....

If my mother suspected that I was anticipating marriage, and said nothing, Nancy Durrett suspected and spoke out.

Life is such a curious succession of contradictions and surprises that I record here without comment the fact that I was seeing much more of Nancy since her marriage than I had in the years preceding it. A comradeship existed between us. I often dined at her house and had fallen into the habit of stopping there frequently on my way home in the evening. Ham did not seem to mind. What was clear, at any rate, was that Nancy, before marriage, had exacted some sort of an understanding by which her “freedom” was not to be interfered with. She was the first among us of the “modern wives.”



Page 51

Ham, whose heartstrings and purse-strings were oddly intertwined, had stipulated that they were to occupy the old Durrett mansion; but when Nancy had made it “livable,” as she expressed it, he is said to have remarked that he might as well have built a new house and been done with it. Not even old Nathaniel himself would have recognized his home when Nancy finished what she termed furnishing: out went the horsehair, the hideous chandeliers, the stuffy books, the Recamier statuary, and an army of upholsterers, wood-workers, *etc.*, from Boston and New York invaded the place. The old mahogany doors were spared, but matched now by Chippendale and Sheraton; the new, polished floors were covered with Oriental rugs, the dreary Durrett pictures replaced by good canvases and tapestries. Nancy had what amounted to a genius for interior effects, and she was the first to introduce among us the luxury that was to grow more and more prevalent as our wealth increased by leaps and bounds. Only Nancy’s luxury, though lavish, was never vulgar, and her house when completed had rather marvellously the fine distinction of some old London mansion filled with the best that generations could contribute. It left Mrs. Frederick Grierson—whose residence on the Heights had hitherto been our “grandest”—breathless with despair.

With characteristic audacity Nancy had chosen old Nathaniel’s sanctum for her particular salon, into which Ham himself did not dare to venture without invitation. It was hung in Pompeiian red and had a little wrought-iron balcony projecting over the yard, now transformed by an expert into a garden. When I had first entered this room after the metamorphosis had taken place I inquired after the tombstone mantel.

“Oh, I’ve pulled it up by the roots,” she said.

“Aren’t you afraid of ghosts?” I inquired.

“Do I look it?” she asked. And I confessed that she didn’t. Indeed, all ghosts were laid, nor was there about her the slightest evidence of mourning or regret. One was forced to acknowledge her perfection in the part she had chosen as the arbitress of social honours. The candidates were rapidly increasing; almost every month, it seemed, someone turned up with a fortune and the aspirations that go with it, and it was Mrs. Durrett who decided the delicate question of fitness. With these, and with the world at large, her manner might best be described as difficult; and I was often amused at the way in which she contrived to keep them at arm’s length and make them uncomfortable. With her intimates—of whom there were few—she was frank.

“I suppose you enjoy it,” I said to her once.

“Of course I enjoy it, or I shouldn’t do it,” she retorted. “It isn’t the real thing, as I told you once. But none of us gets the real thing. It’s power.... Just as you enjoy what you’re doing—sorting out the unfit. It’s a game, it keeps us from brooding over things we can’t help. And after all, when we have good appetites and are fairly happy, why should we complain?”



Page 52

"I'm not complaining," I said, taking up a cigarette, "since I still enjoy your favour."

She regarded me curiously.

"And when you get married, Hugh?"

"Sufficient unto the day," I replied.

"How shall I get along, I wonder, with that simple and unsophisticated lady when she appears?"

"Well," I said, "you wouldn't marry me."

She shook her head at me, and smiled....

"No," she corrected me, "you like me better as Hams' wife than you would have as your own."

I merely laughed at this remark.... It would indeed have been difficult to analyze the new relationship that had sprung up between us, to say what elements composed it. The roots of it went back to the beginning of our lives; and there was much of sentiment in it, no doubt. She understood me as no one else in the world understood me, and she was fond of me in spite of it.

Hence, when I became infatuated with Maude Hutchins, after that Sunday when she so unexpectedly had refused me, I might have known that Nancy's suspicions would be aroused. She startled me by accusing me, out of a clear sky, of being in love. I denied it a little too emphatically.

"Why shouldn't you tell me, Hugh, if it's so?" she asked. "I didn't hesitate to tell you."

It was just before her departure for the East to spend the summer. We were on the balcony, shaded by the big maple that grew at the end of the garden.

"But there's nothing to tell," I insisted.

She lay back in her chair, regarding me.

"Did you think that I'd be jealous?"

"There's nothing to be jealous about."

"I've always expected you to get married, Hugh. I've even predicted the type."

She had, in truth, with an accuracy almost uncanny.



“The only thing I’m afraid of is that she won’t like me. She lives in that place you’ve been going to so much, lately,—doesn’t she?”

Of course she had put two and two together, my visits to Elkington and my manner, which I had flattered myself had not been distraught. On the chance that she knew more, from some source, I changed my tactics.

“I suppose you mean Maude Hutchins,” I said.

Nancy laughed.

“So that’s her name!”

“It’s the name of a girl in Elkington. I’ve been doing legal work for the Hutchinses, and I imagine some idiot has been gossiping. She’s just a young girl—much too young for me.”

“Men are queer creatures,” she declared. “Did you think I should be jealous?”

It was exactly what I had thought, but I denied it.

“Why should you be—even if there were anything to be jealous about? You didn’t consult me when you got married. You merely announced an irrevocable decision.”

Nancy leaned forward and laid her hand on my arm.

“My dear,” she said, “strange as it may seem, I want you to be happy. I don’t want you to make a mistake, Hugh, too great a mistake.”



Page 53

I was surprised and moved. Once more I had a momentary glimpse of the real Nancy...

Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Ralph Hambleton....

XIV.

However, thoughts of Maude continued to possess me. She still appeared the most desirable of beings, and a fortnight after my repulse, without any excuse at all, I telegraphed the George Hutchinses that I was coming to pay them a visit. Mrs. George, wearing a knowing smile, met me at the station in a light buck-board.

"I've asked Maude to dinner," she said....

Thus with masculine directness I returned to the charge, and Maude's continued resistance but increased my ardour; could not see why she continued to resist me.

"Because I don't love you," she said.

This was incredible. I suggested that she didn't know what love was, and she admitted it was possible: she liked me very, very much. I told her, sagely, that this was the best foundation for matrimony. That might be, but she had had other ideas. For one thing, she felt that she did not know me.... In short, she was charming and maddening in her defensive ruses, in her advances and retreats, for I pressed her hard during the four weeks which followed, and in them made four visits. Flinging caution to the winds, I did not even pretend to George that I was coming to see him on business. I had the Hutchins family on my side, for they had the sense to see that the match would be an advantageous one; I even summoned up enough courage to talk to Ezra Hutchins on the subject.

"I'll not attempt to influence Maude, Mr. Paret—I've always said I wouldn't interfere with her choice. But as you are a young man of sound habits, sir, successful in your profession, I should raise no objection. I suppose we can't keep her always."

To conceal his emotion, he pulled out the watch he lived by. "Why, it's church time!" he said.... I attended church regularly at Elkington....

On a Sunday night in June, following a day during which victory seemed more distant than ever, with startling unexpectedness Maude capitulated. She sat beside me on the bench, obscured, yet the warm night quivered with her presence. I felt her tremble.... I remember the first exquisite touch of her soft cheek. How strange it was that in conquest the tumult of my being should be stilled, that my passion should be transmuted into awe that thrilled yet disquieted! What had I done? It was as though I had suddenly entered an unimagined sanctuary filled with holy flame....



Presently, when we began to talk, I found myself seeking more familiar levels. I asked her why she had so long resisted me, accusing her of having loved me all the time.

“Yes, I think I did, Hugh. Only—I didn’t know it.”

“You must have felt something, that afternoon when I first proposed to you!”



Page 54

“You didn’t really want me, Hugh. Not then.”

Surprised, and a little uncomfortable at this evidence of intuition, I started to protest. It seemed to me then as though I had always wanted her.

“No, no,” she exclaimed, “you didn’t. You were carried away by your feelings—you hadn’t made up your mind. Indeed, I can’t see why you want me now.”

“You believe I do,” I said, and drew her toward me.

“Yes, I—I believe it, now. But I can’t see why. There must be so many attractive girls in the city, who know so much more than I do.”

I sought fervidly to reassure her on this point.... At length when we went into the house she drew away from me at arm’s length and gave me one long searching look, as though seeking to read my soul.

“Hugh, you will always love me—to the very end, won’t you?”

“Yes,” I whispered, “always.”

In the library, one on each side of the table, under the lamp, Ezra Hutchins and his wife sat reading. Mrs. Hutchins looked up, and I saw that she had divined.

“Mother, I am engaged to Hugh,” Maude said, and bent over and kissed her. Ezra and I stood gazing at them. Then he turned to me and pressed my hand.

“Well, I never saw the man who was good enough for her, Hugh. But God bless you, my son. I hope you will prize her as we prize her.”

Mrs. Hutchins embraced me. And through her tears she, too, looked long into my face. When she had released me Ezra had his watch in his hand.

“If you’re going on the ten o’clock train, Hugh—”

“Father!” Maude protested, laughing, “I must say I don’t call that very polite.”...

In the train I slept but fitfully, awakening again and again to recall the extraordinary fact that I was now engaged to be married, to go over the incidents of the evening. Indifferent to the backings and the bumpings of the car, the voices in the stations, the clanging of locomotive bells and all the incomprehensible startings and stoppings, exalted yet troubled I beheld Maude luminous with the love I had amazingly awakened, a love somewhere beyond my comprehension. For her indeed marriage was made in heaven. But for me? Could I rise now to the ideal that had once been mine, thrust



henceforth evil out of my life? Love forever, live always in this sanctuary she had made for me? Would the time come when I should feel a sense of bondage?...

The wedding was set for the end of September. I continued to go every week to Elkington, and in August, Maude and I spent a fortnight at the sea. There could be no doubt as to my mother's happiness, as to her approval of Maude; they loved each other from the beginning. I can picture them now, sitting together with their sewing on the porch of the cottage at Mattapoisett. Out on the bay little white-caps danced in the sunlight, sail-boats tacked hither and thither, the strong cape breeze, laden with invigorating salt, stirred Maude's hair, and occasionally played havoc with my papers.



Page 55

“She is just the wife for you, Hugh,” my mother confided to me. “If I had chosen her myself I could not have done better,” she added, with a smile.

I was inclined to believe it, but Maude would have none of this illusion.

“He just stumbled across me,” she insisted....

We went on long sails together, towards Wood’s Hole and the open sea, the sprays washing over us. Her cheeks grew tanned.... Sometimes, when I praised her and spoke confidently of our future, she wore a troubled expression.

“What are you thinking about?” I asked her once.

“You mustn’t put me on a pedestal,” she said gently. “I want you to see me as I am—I don’t want you to wake up some day and be disappointed. I’ll have to learn a lot of things, and you’ll have to teach me. I can’t get used to the fact that you, who are so practical and successful in business, should be such a dreamer where I am concerned.”

I laughed, and told her, comfortably, that she was talking nonsense.

“What did you think of me, when you first knew me?” I inquired.

“Well,” she answered, with the courage that characterized her, “I thought you were rather calculating, that you put too high a price on success. Of course you attracted me. I own it.”

“You hid your opinions rather well,” I retorted, somewhat discomfited.

She flushed.

“Have you changed them?” I demanded.

“I think you have that side, and I think it a weak side, Hugh. It’s hard to tell you this, but it’s better to say so now, since you ask me. I do think you set too high a value on success.’

“Well, now that I know what success really is, perhaps I shall reform,” I told her.

“I don’t like to think that you fool yourself,” she replied, with a perspicacity I should have found extraordinary.

Throughout my life there have been days and incidents, some trivial, some important, that linger in my memory because they are saturated with “atmosphere.” I recall, for instance, a gala occasion in youth when my mother gave one of her luncheon parties; on my return from school, the house and its surroundings wore a mysterious, exciting



and unfamiliar look, somehow changed by the simple fact that guests sat decorously chatting in a dining-room shining with my mother's best linen and treasured family silver and china. The atmosphere of my wedding-day is no less vivid. The house of Ezra Hutchins was scarcely recognizable: its doors and windows were opened wide, and all the morning people were being escorted upstairs to an all-significant room that contained a collection like a jeweller's exhibit,—a bewildering display. There was a massive punch-bowl from which dangled the card of Mr. and Mrs. Adolf Scherer, a really wonderful tea set of old English silver given by Senator and Mrs. Watling, and Nancy Willett, with her certainty of good taste, had sent an old English tankard of the time of the second Charles. The secret was in that room. And it magically transformed for me (as I stood, momentarily alone, in the doorway where I had first beheld Maude) the accustomed scene, and charged with undivined significance the blue shadows under the heavy foliage of the maples. The September sunlight was heavy, tinged with gold....

Page 56

So fragmentary and confused are the events of that day that a cubist literature were necessary to convey the impressions left upon me. I had something of the feeling of a recruit who for the first time is taking part in a brilliant and complicated manoeuvre. Tom and Susan Peters flit across the view, and Gene Hollister and Perry Blackwood and the Ewanses,—all of whom had come up in a special car; Ralph Hambleton was “best man,” looking preternaturally tall in his frock-coat: and his manner, throughout the whole proceeding, was one of good-natured tolerance toward a folly none but he might escape.

“If you must do it, Hughie, I suppose you must,” he had said to me. “I’ll see you through, of course. But don’t blame me afterwards.”

Maude was a little afraid of him....

I dressed at George’s; then, like one of those bewildering shifts of a cinematograph, comes the scene in church, the glimpse of my mother’s wistful face in the front pew; and I found myself in front of the austere Mr. Doddridge standing beside Maude—or rather beside a woman I tried hard to believe was Maude—so veiled and generally encased was she. I was thinking of this all the time I was mechanically answering Mr. Doddridge, and even when the wedding march burst forth and I led her out of the church. It was as though they had done their best to disguise her, to put our union on the other-worldly plane that was deemed to be its only justification, to neutralize her sex at the very moment it should have been most enhanced. Well, they succeeded. If I had not been as conventional as the rest, I should have preferred to have run away with her in the lavender dress she wore when I first proposed to her. It was only when we had got into the carriage and started for the house and she turned to me her face from which the veil had been thrown back that I realized what a sublime meaning it all had for her. Her eyes were wet. Once more I was acutely conscious of my inability to feel deeply at supreme moments. For months I had looked forward with anticipation and impatience to my wedding-day.

I kissed her gently. But I felt as though she had gone to heaven, and that the face I beheld enshrouded were merely her effigy. Commonplace words were inappropriate, yet it was to these I resorted.

“Well—it wasn’t so bad after all! Was it?”

She smiled at me.

“You don’t want to take it back?”

She shook her head.

“I think it was a beautiful wedding, Hugh. I’m so glad we had a good day.”...



She seemed shy, at once very near and very remote. I held her hand awkwardly until the carriage stopped.

A little later we were standing in a corner of the parlour, the atmosphere of which was heavy with the scent of flowers, submitting to the onslaught of relatives. Then came the wedding breakfast: croquettes, champagne, chicken salad, ice-cream, the wedding-cake, speeches and more kisses.... I remember Tom Peters holding on to both my hands.



Page 57

“Good-bye, and God bless you, old boy,” he was saying. Susan, in view of the occasion, had allowed him a little more champagne than usual—enough to betray his feelings, and I knew that these had not changed since our college days. I resolved to see more of him. I had neglected him and undervalued his loyalty.... He had followed me to my room in George’s house where I was dressing for the journey, and he gave it as his deliberate judgment that in Maude I had “struck gold.”

“She’s just the girl for you, Hughie,” he declared. “Susan thinks so, too.”

Later in the afternoon, as we sat in the state-room of the car that was bearing us eastward, Maude began to cry. I sat looking at her helplessly, unable to enter into her emotion, resenting it a little. Yet I tried awkwardly to comfort her.

“I can’t bear to leave them,” she said.

“But you will see them often, when we come back,” I reassured her. It was scarcely the moment for reminding her of what she was getting in return. This peculiar family affection she evinced was beyond me; I had never experienced it in any poignant degree since I had gone as a freshman to Harvard, and yet I was struck by the fact that her emotions were so rightly placed. It was natural to love one’s family. I began to feel, vaguely, as I watched her, that the new relationship into which I had entered was to be much more complicated than I had imagined. Twilight was coming on, the train was winding through the mountain passes, crossing and re-crossing a swift little stream whose banks were massed with alder; here and there, on the steep hillsides, blazed the goldenrod.... Presently I turned, to surprise in her eyes a wide, questioning look,—the look of a child. Even in this irrevocable hour she sought to grasp what manner of being was this to whom she had confided her life, and with whom she was faring forth into the unknown. The experience was utterly unlike my anticipation. Yet I responded. The kiss I gave her had no passion in it.

“I’ll take good care of you, Maude,” I said.

Suddenly, in the fading light, she flung her arms around me, pressing me tightly, desperately.

“Oh, I know you will, Hugh, dear. And you’ll forgive me, won’t you, for being so horrid to-day, of all days? I do love you!”

Neither of us had ever been abroad. And although it was before the days of swimming-pools and gymnasiums and a la carte cafes on ocean liners, the Atlantic was imposing enough. Maude had a more lasting capacity for pleasure than I, a keener enjoyment of new experiences, and as she lay beside me in the steamer-chair where I had carefully tucked her she would exclaim:



“I simply can’t believe it, Hugh! It seems so unreal. I’m sure I shall wake up and find myself back in Elkington.”

“Don’t speak so loud, my dear,” I cautioned her. There were some very formal-looking New Yorkers next us.

“No, I won’t,” she whispered. “But I’m so happy I feel as though I should like to tell everyone.”



Page 58

"There's no need," I answered smiling.

"Oh, Hugh, I don't want to disgrace you!" she exclaimed, in real alarm. "Otherwise, so far as I am concerned, I shouldn't care who knew."

People smiled at her. Women came up and took her hands. And on the fourth day the formidable New Yorkers unexpectedly thawed.

I had once thought of Maude as plastic. Then I had discovered she had a mind and will of her own. Once more she seemed plastic; her love had made her so. Was it not what I had desired? I had only to express a wish, and it became her law. Nay, she appealed to me many times a day to know whether she had made any mistakes, and I began to drill her in my silly traditions,—gently, very gently.

"Well, I shouldn't be quite so familiar with people, quite so ready to make acquaintances, Maude. You have no idea who they may be. Some of them, of course, like the Sardells, I know by reputation."

The Sardells were the New Yorkers who sat next us.

"I'll try, Hugh, to be more reserved, more like the wife of an important man." She smiled.

"It isn't that you're not reserved," I replied, ignoring the latter half of her remark. "Nor that I want you to change," I said. "I only want to teach you what little of the world I know myself."

"And I want to learn, Hugh. You don't know how I want to learn!"

The sight of mist-ridden Liverpool is not a cheering one for the American who first puts foot on the mother country's soil, a Liverpool of yellow-browns and dingy blacks, of tilted funnels pouring out smoke into an atmosphere already charged with it. The long wharves and shed roofs glistened with moisture.

"Just think, Hugh, it's actually England!" she cried, as we stood on the wet deck. But I felt as though I'd been there before.

"No wonder they're addicted to cold baths," I replied. "They must feel perfectly at home in them, especially if they put a little lampblack in the water."

Maude laughed.

"You grumpy old thing!" she exclaimed.

Nothing could dampen her ardour, not the sight of the rain-soaked stone houses when we got ashore, nor even the frigid luncheon we ate in the lugubrious hotel. For her it



was all quaint and new. Finally we found ourselves established in a compartment upholstered in light grey, with tassels and arm-supporters, on the window of which was pasted a poster with the word reserved in large, red letters. The guard inquired respectfully, as the porter put our new luggage in the racks, whether we had everything we wanted. The toy locomotive blew its toy whistle, and we were off for the north; past dingy, yellow tenements of the smoking factory towns, and stretches of orderly, hedge-spaced rain-swept country. The quaint cottages we glimpsed, the sight of distant, stately mansions on green slopes caused Maude to cry out with rapture:—"Oh, Hugh, there's a manor-house!"



Page 59

More vivid than were the experiences themselves of that journey are the memories of them. We went to windswept, Sabbath-keeping Edinburgh, to high Stirling and dark Holyrood, and to Abbotsford. It was through Sir Walter's eyes we beheld Melrose bathed in autumn light, by his aid repeopled it with forgotten monks eating their fast-day kale.

And as we sat reading and dreaming in the still, sunny corners I forgot, that struggle for power in which I had been so furiously engaged since leaving Cambridge. Legislatures, politicians and capitalists receded into a dim background; and the gift I had possessed, in youth, of living in a realm of fancy showed astonishing signs of revival.

"Why, Hugh," Maude exclaimed, "you ought to have been a writer!"

"You've only just begun to fathom my talents," I replied laughingly. "Did you think you'd married just a dry old lawyer?"

"I believe you capable of anything," she said....

I grew more and more to depend on her for little things.

She was a born housewife. It was pleasant to have her do all the packing, while I read or sauntered in the queer streets about the inns. And she took complete charge of my wardrobe.

She had a talent for drawing, and as we went southward through England she made sketches of the various houses that took our fancy—suggestions for future home-building; we spent hours in the evenings in the inn sitting-rooms incorporating new features into our residence, continually modifying our plans. Now it was a Tudor house that carried us away, now a Jacobean, and again an early Georgian with enfolding wings and a wrought-iron grill. A stage of bewilderment succeeded.

Maude, I knew, loved the cottages best. She said they were more "homelike." But she yielded to my liking for grandeur.

"My, I should feel lost in a palace like that!" she cried, as we gazed at the Marquis of So-and-So's country-seat.

"Well, of course we should have to modify it," I admitted. "Perhaps—perhaps our family will be larger."

She put her hand on my lips, and blushed a fiery red....

We examined, with other tourists, at a shilling apiece historic mansions with endless drawing-rooms, halls, libraries, galleries filled with family portraits; elaborate, formal bedrooms where famous sovereigns had slept, all roped off and carpeted with canvas



strips to protect the floors. Through mullioned windows we caught glimpses of gardens and geometrical parterres, lakes, fountains, statuary, fantastic topiary and distant stretches of park. Maude sighed with admiration, but did not covet. She had me. But I was often uncomfortable, resenting the vulgar, gaping tourists with whom we were herded and the easy familiarity of the guides. These did not trouble Maude, who often annoyed me by asking naive questions herself. I would nudge her.

One afternoon when, with other compatriots, we were being hurried through a famous castle, the guide unwittingly ushered us into a drawing-room where the owner and several guests were seated about a tea-table. I shall never forget the stares they gave us before we had time precipitately to retreat, nor the feeling of disgust and rebellion that came over me. This was heightened by the remark of a heavy, six-foot Ohioan with an infantile face and a genial manner.



Page 60

"I notice that they didn't invite us to sit down and have a bite," he said. "I call that kind of inhospitable."

"It was 'is lordship himself!" exclaimed the guide, scandalized.

"You don't say!" drawled our fellow-countryman. "I guess I owe you another shilling, my friend."

The guide, utterly bewildered, accepted it. The transatlantic point of view towards the nobility was beyond him.

"His lordship could make a nice little income if he set up as a side show," added the Ohioan.

Maude giggled, but I was furious. And no sooner were we outside the gates than I declared I should never again enter a private residence by the back door.

"Why, Hugh, how queer you are sometimes," she said.

"I maybe queer, but I have a sense of fitness," I retorted.

She asserted herself.

"I can't see what difference it makes. They didn't know us. And if they admit people for money—"

"I can't help it. And as for the man from Ohio—"

"But he was so funny!" she interrupted. "And he was really very nice."

I was silent. Her point of view, eminently sensible as it was, exasperated me. We were leaning over the parapet of a little-stone bridge. Her face was turned away from me, but presently I realized that she was crying. Men and women, villagers, passing across the bridge, looked at us curiously. I was miserable, and somewhat appalled; resentful, yet striving to be gentle and conciliatory. I assured her that she was talking nonsense, that I loved her. But I did not really love her at that moment; nor did she relent as easily as usual. It was not until we were together in our sitting-room, a few hours later, that she gave in. I felt a tremendous sense of relief.

"Hugh, I'll try to be what you want. You know I am trying. But don't kill what is natural in me."

I was touched by the appeal, and repentant...



It is impossible to say when the little worries, annoyances and disagreements began, when I first felt a restlessness creeping over me. I tried to hide these moods from her, but always she divined them. And yet I was sure that I loved Maude; in a surprisingly short period I had become accustomed to her, dependent on her ministrations and the normal, cosy intimacy of our companionship. I did not like to think that the keen edge of the enjoyment of possession was wearing a little, while at the same time I philosophized that the divine fire, when legalized, settles down to a comfortable glow. The desire to go home that grew upon me I attributed to the irritation aroused by the spectacle of a fixed social order commanding such unquestioned deference from the many who were content to remain resignedly outside of it. Before the setting in of the Liberal movement and the "American invasion" England was a country in which (from my point of view) one must be "somebody" in order to be happy. I was "somebody" at home; or at least rapidly becoming so....



Page 61

London was shrouded, parliament had risen, and the great houses were closed. Day after day we issued forth from a musty and highly respectable hotel near Piccadilly to a gloomy Tower, a soggy Hampton Court or a mournful British Museum. Our native longing for luxury—or rather my native longing—impelled me to abandon Smith's Hotel for a huge hostelry where our suite overlooked the Thames, where we ran across a man I had known slightly at Harvard, and other Americans with whom we made excursions and dined and went to the theatre. Maude liked these persons; I did not find them especially congenial. My life-long habit of unwillingness to accept what life sent in its ordinary course was asserting itself; but Maude took her friends as she found them, and I was secretly annoyed by her lack of discrimination. In addition to this, the sense of having been pulled up by the roots grew upon me.

"Suppose," Maude surprised me by suggesting one morning as we sat at breakfast watching the river craft flit like phantoms through the yellow-green fog—"suppose we don't go to France, after all, Hugh?"

"Not go to France!" I exclaimed. "Are you tired of the trip?"

"Oh, Hugh!" Her voice caught. "I could go on, always, if you were content."

"And—what makes you think that I'm not content?"

Her smile had in it just a touch of wistfulness.

"I understand you, Hugh, better than you think. You want to get back to your work, and—and I should be happier. I'm not so silly and so ignorant as to think that I can satisfy you always. And I'd like to get settled at home,—I really should."

There surged up within me a feeling of relief. I seized her hand as it lay on the table.

"We'll come abroad another time, and go to France," I said. "Maude, you're splendid!"

She shook her head.

"Oh, no, I'm not."

"You do satisfy me," I insisted. "It isn't that at all. But I think, perhaps, it would be wiser to go back. It's rather a crucial time with me, now that Mr. Watling's in Washington. I've just arrived at a position where I shall be able to make a good deal of money, and later on—"

"It isn't the money, Hugh," she cried, with a vehemence which struck me as a little odd. "I sometimes think we'd be a great deal happier without—without all you are going to make."

I laughed.

“Well, I haven’t made it yet.”

She possessed the frugality of the Hutchinses. And some times my lavishness had frightened her, as when we had taken the suite of rooms we now occupied.

“Are you sure you can afford them, Hugh?” she had asked when we first surveyed them.

I began married life, and carried it on without giving her any conception of the state of my finances. She had an allowance from the first.



Page 62

As the steamer slipped westward my spirits rose, to reach a climax of exhilaration when I saw the towers of New York rise gleaming like huge stalagmites in the early winter sun. Maude likened them more happily—to gigantic ivory chessmen. Well, New York was America's chessboard, and the Great Players had already begun to make moves that astonished the world. As we sat at breakfast in a Fifth Avenue hotel I ran my eye eagerly over the stock-market reports and the financial news, and rallied Maude for a lack of spirits.

"Aren't you glad to be home?" I asked her, as we sat in a hansom.

"Of course I am, Hugh!" she protested. "But—I can't look upon New York as home, somehow. It frightens me."

I laughed indulgently.

"You'll get used to it," I said. "We'll be coming here a great deal, off and on."

She was silent. But later, when we took a hansom and entered the streams of traffic, she responded to the stimulus of the place: the movement, the colour, the sight of the well-appointed carriages, of the well-fed, well-groomed people who sat in them, the enticement of the shops in which we made our purchases had their effect, and she became cheerful again....

In the evening we took the "Limited" for home.

We lived for a month with my mother, and then moved into our own house. It was one which I had rented from Howard Ogilvy, and it stood on the corner of Baker and Clinton streets, near that fashionable neighbourhood called "the Heights." Ogilvy, who was some ten years older than I, and who belonged to one of our old families, had embarked on a career then becoming common, but which at first was regarded as somewhat meteoric: gradually abandoning the practice of law, and perceiving the possibilities of the city of his birth, he had "gambled" in real estate and other enterprises, such as our local water company, until he had quadrupled his inheritance. He had built a mansion on Grant Avenue, the wide thoroughfare bisecting the Heights. The house he had vacated was not large, but essentially distinctive; with the oddity characteristic of the revolt against the banal architecture of the 80's. The curves of the tiled roof enfolded the upper windows; the walls were thick, the note one of mystery. I remember Maude's naive delight when we inspected it.

"You'd never guess what the inside was like, would you, Hugh?" she cried.

From the panelled box of an entrance hall one went up a few steps to a drawing-room which had a bowed recess like an oriel, and window-seats. The dining-room was an odd shape, and was wainscoted in oak; it had a tiled fireplace and (according to Maude)



the “sweetest” china closet built into the wall. There was a “den” for me, and an octagonal reception-room on the corner. Upstairs, the bedrooms were quite as unusual, the plumbing of the new pattern, heavy and imposing. Maude expressed the air of seclusion when she exclaimed that she could almost imagine herself in one of the mediaeval towns we had seen abroad.



Page 63

"It's a dream, Hugh," she sighed. "But—do you think we can afford it?"...

"This house," I announced, smiling, "is only a stepping-stone to the palace I intend to build you some day."

"I don't want a palace!" she cried. "I'd rather live here, like this, always."

A certain vehemence in her manner troubled me. I was charmed by this disposition for domesticity, and yet I shrank from the contemplation of its permanency. I felt vaguely, at the time, the possibility of a future conflict of temperaments. Maude was docile, now. But would she remain docile? and was it in her nature to take ultimately the position that was desirable for my wife? Well, she must be moulded, before it were too late. Her ultra-domestic tendencies must be halted. As yet blissfully unaware of the inability of the masculine mind to fathom the subtleties of feminine relationships, I was particularly desirous that Maude and Nancy Durrett should be intimates. The very day after our arrival, and while we were still at my mother's, Nancy called on Maude, and took her out for a drive. Maude told me of it when I came home from the office.

"Dear old Nancy!" I said. "I know you liked her."

"Of course, Hugh. I should like her for your sake, anyway. She's—she's one of your oldest and best friends."

"But I want you to like her for her own sake."

"I think I shall," said Maude. She was so scrupulously truthful! "I was a little afraid of her, at first."

"Afraid of Nancy!" I exclaimed.

"Well, you know, she's much older than I. I think she is sweet. But she knows so much about the world—so much that she doesn't say. I can't describe it."

I smiled.

"It's only her manner. You'll get used to that, when you know what she really is."

"Oh, I hope so," answered Maude. "I'm very anxious to like her—I do like her. But it takes me such a lot of time to get to know people."

Nancy asked us to dinner.

"I want to help Maude all I can,—if she'll let me," Nancy said.

"Why shouldn't she let you?" I asked.



“She may not like me,” Nancy replied.

“Nonsense!” I exclaimed.

Nancy smiled.

“It won’t be my fault, at any rate, if she doesn’t,” she said. “I wanted her to meet at first just the right people your old friends and a few others. It is hard for a woman—especially a young woman—coming among strangers.” She glanced down the table to where Maude sat talking to Ham. “She has an air about her,—a great deal of self-possession.”

I, too, had noticed this, with pride and relief. For I knew Maude had been nervous.

“You are luckier than you deserve to be,” Nancy reminded me. “But I hope you realize that she has a mind of her own, that she will form her own opinions of people, independently of you.”

I must have betrayed the fact that I was a little startled, for the remark came as a confirmation of what I had dimly felt.



Page 64

"Of course she has," I agreed, somewhat lamely. "Every woman has, who is worth her salt."

Nancy's smile bespoke a knowledge that seemed to transcend my own.

"You do like her?" I demanded.

"I like her very much indeed," said Nancy, a little gravely. "She's simple, she's real, she has that which so few of us possess nowadays—character. But—I've got to be prepared for the possibility that she may not get along with me."

"Why not?" I demanded.

"There you are again, with your old unwillingness to analyze a situation and face it. For heaven's sake, now that you have married her, study her. Don't take her for granted. Can't you see that she doesn't care for the things that amuse me, that make my life?"

"Of course, if you insist on making yourself out a hardened, sophisticated woman—" I protested. But she shook her head.

"Her roots are deeper,—she is in touch, though she may not realize it, with the fundamentals. She is one of those women who are race-makers."

Though somewhat perturbed, I was struck by the phrase. And I lost sight of Nancy's generosity. She looked me full in the face.

"I wonder whether you can rise to her," she said. "If I were you, I should try. You will be happier—far happier than if you attempt to use her for your own ends, as a contributor to your comfort and an auxiliary to your career. I was afraid—I confess it—that you had married an aspiring, simpering and empty-headed provincial like that Mrs. George Hutchins' whom I met once, and who would sell her soul to be at my table. Well, you escaped that, and you may thank God for it. You've got a chance, think it over."

"A chance!" I repeated, though I gathered something of her meaning.

"Think it over, said Nancy again. And she smiled.

"But—do you want me to bury myself in domesticity?" I demanded, without grasping the significance of my words.

"You'll find her reasonable, I think. You've got a chance now, Hugh. Don't spoil it."

She turned to Leonard Dickinson, who sat on her other side....



When we got home I tried to conceal my anxiety as to Maude's impressions of the evening. I lit a cigarette, and remarked that the dinner had been a success.

"Do you know what I've been wondering all evening?" Maude asked. "Why you didn't marry Nancy instead of me."

"Well," I replied, "it just didn't come off. And Nancy was telling me at dinner how fortunate I was to have married you."

Maude passed this.

"I can't see why she accepted Hambleton Durrett. It seems horrible that such a woman as she is could have married—just for money.

"Nancy has an odd streak in her," I said. "But then we all have odd streaks. She's the best friend in the world, when she is your friend."

"I'm sure of it," Maude agreed, with a little note of penitence.



Page 65

“You enjoyed it,” I ventured cautiously.

“Oh, yes,” she agreed. “And everyone was so nice to me—for your sake of course.”

“Don’t be ridiculous!” I said. “I shan’t tell you what Nancy and the others said about you.”

Maude had the gift of silence.

“What a beautiful house!” she sighed presently. “I know you’ll think me silly, but so much luxury as that frightens me a little. In England, in those places we saw, it seemed natural enough, but in America—! And they all your friends—seem to take it as a matter of course.”

“There’s no reason why we shouldn’t have beautiful things and well served dinners, too, if we have the money to pay for them.”

“I suppose not,” she agreed, absently.

XV.

That winter many other entertainments were given in our honour. But the conviction grew upon me that Maude had no real liking for the social side of life, that she acquiesced in it only on my account. Thus, at the very outset of our married career, an irritant developed: signs of it, indeed, were apparent from the first, when we were preparing the house we had rented for occupancy. Hurrying away from my office at odd times to furniture and department stores to help decide such momentous questions as curtains, carpets, chairs and tables I would often spy the tall, uncompromising figure of Susan Peters standing beside Maude’s, while an obliging clerk spread out, anxiously, rugs or wall-papers for their inspection.

“Why don’t you get Nancy to help you, too!” I ventured to ask her once.

“Ours is such a little house—compared to Nancy’s, Hugh.”

My attitude towards Susan had hitherto remained undefined. She was Tom’s wife and Tom’s affair. In spite of her marked disapproval of the modern trend in business and social life,—a prejudice she had communicated to Tom, as a bachelor I had not disliked her; and it was certain that these views had not mitigated Tom’s loyalty and affection for me. Susan had been my friend, as had her brother Perry, and Lucia, Perry’s wife: they made no secret of the fact that they deplored in me what they were pleased to call plutocratic obsessions, nor had their disapproval always been confined to badinage. Nancy, too, they looked upon as a renegade. I was able to bear their reproaches with the superior good nature that springs from success, to point out why the American



tradition to which they so fatuously clung was a thing of the past. The habit of taking dinner with them at least once a week had continued, and their arguments rather amused me. If they chose to dwell in a backwater out of touch with the current of great affairs, this was a matter to be deplored, but I did not feel strongly enough to resent it. So long as I remained a bachelor the relationship had not troubled me, but now that I was married I began to consider with some alarm its power to affect my welfare.



Page 66

It had remained for Nancy to inform me that I had married a woman with a mind of her own. I had flattered myself that I should be able to control Maude, to govern her predilections, and now at the very beginning of our married life she was showing a disquieting tendency to choose for herself. To be sure, she had found my intimacy with the Peterses and Blackwoods already formed; but it was an intimacy from which I was growing away. I should not have quarrelled with her if she had not discriminated: Nancy made overtures, and Maude drew back; Susan presented herself, and with annoying perversity and in an extraordinarily brief time Maude had become her intimate. It seemed to me that she was always at Susan's, lunching or playing with the children, who grew devoted to her; or with Susan, choosing carpets and clothes; while more and more frequently we dined with the Peterses and the Blackwoods, or they with us. With Perry's wife Maude was scarcely less intimate than with Susan. This was the more surprising to me since Lucia Blackwood was a dyed-in-the-wool "intellectual," a graduate of Radcliffe, the daughter of a Harvard professor. Perry had fallen in love with her during her visit to Susan. Lucia was, perhaps, the most influential of the group; she scorned the world, she held strong views on the higher education of women; she had long discarded orthodoxy for what may be called a Cambridge stoicism of simple living and high thinking; while Maude was a strict Presbyterian, and not in the least given to theories. When, some months after our homecoming, I ventured to warn her gently of the dangers of confining one's self to a coterie—especially one of such narrow views—her answer was rather bewildering.

"But isn't Tom your best friend?" she asked.

I admitted that he was.

"And you always went there such a lot before we were married."

This, too, was undeniable. "At the same time," I replied, "I have other friends. I'm fond of the Blackwoods and the Peterses, I'm not advocating seeing less of them, but their point of view, if taken without any antidote, is rather narrowing. We ought to see all kinds," I suggested, with a fine restraint.

"You mean—more worldly people," she said with her disconcerting directness.

"Not necessarily worldly," I struggled on. "People who know more of the world—yes, who understand it better."

Maude sighed.

"I do try, Hugh,—I return their calls,—I do try to be nice to them. But somehow I don't seem to get along with them easily—I'm not myself, they make me shy. It's because I'm provincial."



“Nonsense!” I protested, “you’re not a bit provincial.” And it was true; her dignity and self-possession redeemed her.

Nancy was not once mentioned. But I think she was in both our minds....

Page 67

Since my marriage, too, I had begun to resent a little the attitude of Tom and Susan and the Blackwoods of humorous yet affectionate tolerance toward my professional activities and financial creed, though Maude showed no disposition to take this seriously. I did suspect, however, that they were more and more determined to rescue Maude from what they would have termed a frivolous career; and on one of these occasions—so exasperating in married life when a slight cause for pique tempts husband or wife to try to ask myself whether this affair were only a squall, something to be looked for once in a while on the seas of matrimony, and weathered: or whether Maude had not, after all, been right when she declared that I had made a mistake, and that we were not fitted for one another? In this gloomy view endless years of incompatibility stretched ahead; and for the first time I began to rehearse with a certain cold detachment the chain of apparently accidental events which had led up to my marriage: to consider the gradual blindness that had come over my faculties; and finally to wonder whether judgment ever entered into sexual selection. Would Maude have relapsed into this senseless fit if she had realized how fortunate she was? For I was prepared to give her what thousands of women longed for, position and influence. My resentment rose again against Perry and Tom, and I began to attribute their lack of appreciation of my achievements to jealousy. They had not my ability; this was the long and short of it.... I pondered also, regretfully, on my bachelor days. And for the first time, I, who had worked so hard to achieve freedom, felt the pressure of the yoke I had fitted over my own shoulders. I had voluntarily, though unwittingly, returned to slavery. This was what had happened. And what was to be done about it? I would not consider divorce.

Well, I should have to make the best of it. Whether this conclusion brought on a mood of reaction, I am unable to say. I was still annoyed by what seemed to the masculine mind a senseless and dramatic performance on Maude's part, an incomprehensible case of "nerves." Nevertheless, there stole into my mind many recollections of Maude's affection, many passages between us; and my eye chanced to fall on the ink-well she had bought me out of the allowance I gave her. An unanticipated pity welled up within me for her loneliness, her despair in that room upstairs. I got up—and hesitated. A counteracting, inhibiting wave passed through me. I hardened. I began to walk up and down, a prey to conflicting impulses. Something whispered, "go to her"; another voice added, "for your own peace of mind, at any rate." I rejected the intrusion of this motive as unworthy, turned out the light and groped my way upstairs. The big clock in the hall struck twelve.

I listened outside the door of the bedroom, but all was silent within. I knocked.

"Maude!" I said, in a low voice.



Page 68

There was no response.

“Maude—let me in! I didn’t mean to be unkind—I’m sorry.”

After an interval I heard her say: “I’d rather stay here,—to-night.”

But at length, after more entreaty and self-abasement on my part, she opened the door. The room was dark. We sat down together on the window-seat, and all at once she relaxed and her head fell on my shoulder, and she began weeping again. I held her, the alternating moods still running through me.

“Hugh,” she said at length, “how could you be so cruel? when you know I love you and would do anything for you.”

“I didn’t mean to be cruel, Maude,” I answered.

“I know you didn’t. But at times you seem so—indifferent, and you can’t understand how it hurts. I haven’t anybody but you, now, and it’s in your power to make me happy or—or miserable.”

Later on I tried to explain my point of view, to justify myself.

“All I mean,” I concluded at length, “is that my position is a little different from Perry’s and Tom’s. They can afford to isolate themselves, but I’m thrown professionally with the men who are building up this city. Some of them, like Ralph Hambleton and Mr. Ogilvy, I’ve known all my life. Life isn’t so simple for us, Maude—we can’t ignore the social side.”

“I understand,” she said contentedly. “You are more of a man of affairs—much more than Tom or Perry, and you have greater responsibilities and wider interests. I’m really very proud of you. Only—don’t you think you are a little too sensitive about yourself, when you are teased?”

I let this pass....

I give a paragraph from a possible biography of Hugh Paret which, as then seemed not improbable, might in the future have been written by some aspiring young worshipper of success.

“On his return from a brief but delightful honeymoon in England Mr. Paret took up again, with characteristic vigour, the practice of the law. He was entering upon the prime years of manhood; golden opportunities confronted him as, indeed, they confronted other men—but Paret had the foresight to take advantage of them. And his training under Theodore Watling was now to produce results.... The reputations had already been made of some of that remarkable group of financial geniuses who were chiefly



instrumental in bringing about the industrial evolution begun after the Civil War: at the same time, as is well known, a political leadership developed that gave proof of a deplorable blindness to the logical necessity of combinations in business. The lawyer with initiative and brains became an indispensable factor," *etc.*, *etc.*

The biography might have gone on to relate my association with and important services to Adolf Scherer in connection with his constructive dream. Shortly after my return from abroad, in answer to his summons, I found him at Heinrich's, his napkin tucked into his shirt front, and a dish of his favourite sausages before him.



Page 69

“So, the honeymoon is over!” he said, and pressed my hand. “You are right to come back to business, and after awhile you can have another honeymoon, eh? I have had many since I married. And how long do you think was my first? A day! I was a foreman then, and the wedding was at six o’clock in the morning. We went into the country, the wife and I.”

He laid down his knife and fork, possessed by the memory. “I have grown rich since, and we’ve been to Europe and back to Germany, and travelled on the best ships and stayed at the best hotels, but I never enjoyed a holiday more than that day. It wasn’t long afterwards I went to Mr. Durrett and told him how he could save much money. He was always ready to listen, Mr. Durrett, when an employee had anything to say. He was a big man,—an iron-master. Ah, he would be astonished if only he could wake up now!”

“He would not only have to be an iron-master,” I agreed, “but a financier and a railroad man to boot.”

“A jack of all trades,” laughed Mr. Scherer. “That’s what we are—men in my position. Well, it was comparatively simple then, when we had no Sherman law and crazy statutes, such as some of the states are passing, to bother us. What has got into the politicians, that they are indulging in such foolishness?” he exclaimed, more warmly. “We try to build up a trade for this country, and they’re doing their best to tie our hands and tear it down. When I was in Washington the other day I was talking with one of those Western senators whose state has passed those laws. He said to me, ‘Mr. Scherer, I’ve been making a study of the Boyne Iron Works. You are clever men, but you are building up monopolies which we propose to stop.’ ‘By what means?’” I asked. “‘Rebates, for one,’ said he, ‘you get preferential rates from your railroad which give you advantages over your competitors.’ Foolishness!” Mr. Scherer exclaimed. “I tell him the railroad is a private concern, built up by private enterprise, and it has a right to make special rates for large shippers. No,—railroads are public carriers with no right to make special rates. I ask him what else he objects to, and he says patented processes. As if we don’t have a right to our own patents! We buy them. I buy them, when other steel companies won’t touch ’em. What is that but enterprise, and business foresight, and taking risks? And then he begins to talk about the tariff taking money out of the pockets of American consumers and making men like me rich. I have come to Washington to get the tariff raised on steel rails; and Watling and other senators we send down there are raising it for us. We are building up monopolies! Well, suppose we are. We can’t help it, even if we want to. Has he ever made a study of the other side of the question—the competition side? Of course he hasn’t.”

He brought down his beer mug heavily on the table. In times of excitement his speech suggested the German idiom. Abruptly his air grew mysterious; he glanced around the room, now becoming empty, and lowered his voice.



Page 70

“I have been thinking a long time, I have a little scheme,” he said, “and I have been to Washington to see Watling, to talk over it. Well, he thinks much of you. Fowndes and Ripon are good lawyers, but they are not smart like you. See Paret, he says, and he can come down and talk to me. So I ask you to come here. That is why I say you are wise to get home. Honeymoons can wait—eh?”

I smiled appreciatively.

“They talk about monopoly, those Populist senators, but I ask you what is a man in my place to do? If you don’t eat, somebody eats you—is it not so? Like the boa-constrictors—that is modern business. Look at the Keystone Plate people, over there at Morris. For years we sold them steel billets from which to make their plates, and three months ago they serve notice on us that they are getting ready to make their own billets, they buy mines north of the lakes and are building their plant. Here is a big customer gone. Next year, maybe, the Empire Tube Company goes into the business of making crude steel, and many more thousands of tons go from us. What is left for us, Paret?”

“Obviously you’ve got to go into the tube and plate business yourselves,” I said.

“So!” cried Mr. Scherer, triumphantly, “or it is close up. We are not fools, no, we will not lie down and be eaten like lambs for any law. Dickinson can put his hand on the capital, and I—I have already bought a tract on the lakes, at Bolivar, I have already got a plant designed with the latest modern machinery. I can put the ore right there, I can send the coke back from here in cars which would otherwise be empty, and manufacture tubes at eight dollars a ton less than they are selling. If we can make tubes we can make plates, and if we can make plates we can make boilers, and beams and girders and bridges.... It is not like it was but where is it all leading, my friend? The time will come—is right on us now, in respect to many products—when the market will be flooded with tubes and plates and girders, and then we’ll have to find a way to limit production. And the inefficient mills will all be forced to shut down.”

The logic seemed unanswerable, even had I cared to answer it.... He unfolded his campaign. The Boyne Iron Works was to become the Boyne Iron Works, Ltd., owner of various subsidiary companies, some of which were as yet blissfully ignorant of their fate. All had been thought out as calmly as the partition of Poland—only, lawyers were required; and ultimately, after the process of acquisition should have been completed, a delicate document was to be drawn up which would pass through the meshes of that annoying statutory net, the Sherman Anti-trust Law. New mines were to be purchased, extending over a certain large area; wide coal deposits; little strips of railroad to tap them. The competition of the Keystone Plate people was to be met by acquiring and bringing up to date the plate mills of King and Son, over the



Page 71

borders of a sister state; the Somersworth Bridge and Construction Company and the Gring Steel and Wire Company were to be absorbed. When all of this should have been accomplished, there would be scarcely a process in the steel industry, from the smelting of the ore to the completion of a bridge, which the Boyne Iron Works could not undertake. Such was the beginning of the "lateral extension" period.

"Two can play at that game," Mr. Scherer said. "And if those fellows could only be content to let well enough alone, to continue buying their crude steel from us, there wouldn't be any trouble."...

It was evident, however, that he really welcomed the "trouble," that he was going into battle with enthusiasm. He had already picked out his points of attack and was marching on them. Life, for him, would have been a poor thing without new conflicts to absorb his energy; and he had already made of the Boyne Iron Works, with its open-hearth furnaces, a marvel of modern efficiency that had opened the eyes of the Steel world, and had drawn the attention of a Personality in New York,—a Personality who was one of the new and dominant type that had developed with such amazing rapidity, the banker-dinosaur; preying upon and superseding the industrial-dinosaur, conquering type of the preceding age, builder of the railroads, mills and manufactories. The banker-dinosaurs, the gigantic ones, were in Wall Street, and strove among themselves for the industrial spoils accumulated by their predecessors. It was characteristic of these monsters that they never fought in the open unless they were forced to. Then the earth rocked, huge economic structures tottered and fell, and much dust arose to obscure the vision of smaller creatures, who were bewildered and terrified. Such disturbances were called "panics," and were blamed by the newspapers on the Democratic party, or on the reformers who had wantonly assailed established institutions. These dominant bankers had contrived to gain control of the savings of thousands and thousands of fellow-citizens who had deposited them in banks or paid them into insurance companies, and with the power thus accumulated had sallied forth to capture railroads and industries. The railroads were the strategic links. With these in hand, certain favoured industrial concerns could be fed, and others starved into submission.

Adolf Scherer might be said to represent a transitional type. For he was not only an iron-master who knew every detail of his business, who kept it ahead of the times; he was also a strategist, wise in his generation, making friends with the Railroad while there had yet been time, at length securing rebates and favours. And when that Railroad (which had been constructed through the enterprise and courage of such men as Nathaniel Durrett) had passed under the control of the banker-personality to whom I have referred, and had become part of a system, Adolf Scherer remained in alliance, and continued to receive favours.... I can well remember the time when the ultimate authority of our Railroad was transferred, quietly, to Wall Street. Alexander Barbour, its

president, had been a great man, but after that he bowed, in certain matters, to a greater one.

Page 72

I have digressed.... Mr. Scherer unfolded his scheme, talking about “units” as calmly as though they were checkers on a board instead of huge, fiery, reverberating mills where thousands and thousands of human beings toiled day and night—beings with families, and hopes and fears, whose destinies were to be dominated by the will of the man who sat opposite me. But—did not he in his own person represent the triumph of that American creed of opportunity? He, too, had been through the fire, had sweated beside the blasts, had handled the ingots of steel. He was one of the “fittest” who had survived, and looked it. Had he no memories of the terrors of that struggle?... Adolf Scherer had grown to be a giant. And yet without me, without my profession he was a helpless giant, at the mercy of those alert and vindictive lawmakers who sought to restrain and hamper him, to check his growth with their webs. How stimulating the idea of his dependence! How exhilarating too, the thought that that vision which had first possessed me as an undergraduate—on my visit to Jerry Kyme—was at last to be realized! I had now become the indispensable associate of the few who divided the spoils, I was to have a share in these myself.

“You’re young, Paret,” Mr. Scherer concluded. “But Watling has confidence in you, and you will consult him frequently. I believe in the young men, and I have already seen something of you—so?”...

When I returned to the office I wrote Theodore Watling a letter expressing my gratitude for the position he had, so to speak, willed me, of confidential legal adviser to Adolf Scherer. Though the opportunity had thrust itself upon me suddenly, and sooner than I expected it, I was determined to prove myself worthy of it. I worked as I had never worked before, making trips to New York to consult leading members of this new branch of my profession there, trips to Washington to see my former chief. There were, too, numerous conferences with local personages, with Mr. Dickinson and Mr. Grierson, and Judah B. Tallant,—whose newspaper was most useful; there were consultations and negotiations of a delicate nature with the owners and lawyers of other companies to be “taken in.” Nor was it all legal work, in the older and narrower sense. Men who are playing for principalities are making war. Some of our operations had all the excitement of war. There was information to be got, and it was got—somehow. Modern war involves a spy system, and a friendly telephone company is not to be despised. And all of this work from first to last had to be done with extreme caution. Moribund distinctions of right and wrong did not trouble me, for the modern man labours religiously when he knows that Evolution is on his side.

Page 73

For all of these operations a corps of counsel had been employed, including the firm of Harrington and Bowes next to Theodore Watling, Joel Harrington was deemed the ablest lawyer in the city. We organized in due time the corporation known as the Boyne Iron Works, Limited; a trust agreement was drawn up that was a masterpiece of its kind, one that caused, first and last, meddling officials in the Department of Justice at Washington no little trouble and perplexity. I was proud of the fact that I had taken no small part in its composition.... In short, in addition to certain emoluments and opportunities for investment, I emerged from the affair firmly established in the good graces of Adolf Scherer, and with a reputation practically made.

A year or so after the Boyne Company, Ltd., came into existence I chanced one morning to go down to the new Ashuela Hotel to meet a New Yorker of some prominence, and was awaiting him in the lobby, when I overheard a conversation between two commercial travellers who were sitting with their backs to me.

“Did you notice that fellow who went up to the desk a moment ago?” asked one.

“The young fellow in the grey suit? Sure. Who is he? He looks as if he was pretty well fixed.”

“I guess he is,” replied the first. “That’s Paret. He’s Scherer’s confidential counsel. He used to be Senator Watling’s partner, but they say he’s even got something on the old man.”

In spite of the feverish life I led, I was still undoubtedly young-looking, and in this I was true to the incoming type of successful man. Our fathers appeared staid at six and thirty. Clothes, of course, made some difference, and my class and generation did not wear the sombre and cumbersome kind, with skirts and tails; I patronized a tailor in New York. My chestnut hair, a little darker than my father’s had been, showed no signs of turning grey, although it was thinning a little at the crown of the forehead, and I wore a small moustache, clipped in a straight line above the mouth. This made me look less like a college youth. Thanks to a strong pigment in my skin, derived probably from Scotch-Irish ancestors, my colour was fresh. I have spoken of my life as feverish, and yet I am not so sure that this word completely describes it. It was full to overflowing—one side of it; and I did not miss (save vaguely, in rare moments of weariness) any other side that might have been developed. I was busy all day long, engaged in affairs I deemed to be alone of vital importance in the universe. I was convinced that the welfare of the city demanded that supreme financial power should remain in the hands of the group of men with whom I was associated, and whose battles I fought in the courts, in the legislature, in the city council, and sometimes in Washington,—although they were well cared for there. By every means ingenuity could devise, their enemies were to be driven from the field, and they were to be protected from blackmail.



Page 74

A sense of importance sustained me; and I remember in that first flush of a success for which I had not waited too long—what a secret satisfaction it was to pick up the Era and see my name embedded in certain dignified notices of board meetings, transactions of weight, or cases known to the initiated as significant. “Mr. Scherer’s interests were taken care of by Mr. Hugh Paret.” The fact that my triumphs were modestly set forth gave me more pleasure than if they had been trumpeted in headlines. Although I might have started out in practice for myself, my affection and regard for Mr. Watling kept me in the firm, which became Watling, Fowndes and Paret, and a new arrangement was entered into: Mr. Ripon retired on account of ill health.

There were instances, however, when a certain amount of annoying publicity was inevitable. Such was the famous Galligan case, which occurred some three or four years after my marriage. Aloysius Galligan was a brakeman, and his legs had become paralyzed as the result of an accident that was the result of defective sills on a freight car. He had sued, and been awarded damages of \$15,000. To the amazement and indignation of Miller Gorse, the Supreme Court, to which the Railroad had appealed, affirmed the decision. It wasn’t the single payment of \$15,000 that the Railroad cared about, of course; a precedent might be established for compensating maimed employees which would be expensive in the long run. Carelessness could not be proved in this instance. Gorse sent for me. I had been away with Maude at the sea for two months, and had not followed the case.

“You’ve got to take charge, Paret, and get a rehearing. See Bering, and find out who in the deuce is to blame for this. Chesley’s one, of course. We ought never to have permitted his nomination for the Supreme Bench. It was against my judgment, but Varney and Gill assured me that he was all right.”

I saw Judge Bering that evening. We sat on a plush sofa in the parlour of his house in Baker Street.

“I had a notion Gorse’d be mad,” he said, “but it looked to me as if they had it on us, Paret. I didn’t see how we could do anything else but affirm without being too rank. Of course, if he feels that way, and you want to make a motion for a rehearing, I’ll see what can be done.”

“Something’s got to be done,” I replied. “Can’t you see what such a decision lets them in for?”

“All right,” said the judge, who knew an order when he heard one, “I guess we can find an error.” He was not a little frightened by the report of Mr. Gorse’s wrath, for election-day was approaching. “Say, you wouldn’t take me for a sentimental man, now, would you?”

I smiled at the notion of it.



“Well, I’ll own up to you this kind of got under my skin. That Galligan is a fine-looking fellow, if there ever was one, and he’ll never be of a bit of use any more. Of course the case was plain sailing, and they ought to have had the verdict, but that lawyer of his handled it to the queen’s taste, if I do say so. He made me feel real bad, by God,—as if it was my own son Ed who’d been battered up. Lord, I can’t forget the look in that man Galligan’s eyes. I hate to go through it again, and reverse it, but I guess I’ll have to, now.”

Page 75

The Judge sat gazing at the flames playing over his gas log.

“Who was the lawyer?” I asked.

“A man by the name of Krebs,” he replied. “Never heard of him before. He’s just moved to the city.”

“This city?” I ejaculated.

The Judge glanced at me interestedly.

“This city, of course. What do you know about him?”

“Well,” I answered, when I had recovered a little from the shock—for it was a distinct shock—“he lived in Elkington. He was the man who stirred up the trouble in the legislature about Bill 709.”

The Judge slapped his knee.

“That fellow!” he exclaimed, and ruminated. “Why didn’t somebody tell me?” he added, complainingly. “Why didn’t Miller Gorse let me know about it, instead of licking up a fuss after it’s all over?”...

Of all men of my acquaintance I had thought the Judge the last to grow maudlin over the misfortunes of those who were weak or unfortunate enough to be defeated and crushed in the struggle for existence, and it was not without food for reflection that I departed from his presence. To make Mr. Bering “feel bad” was no small achievement, and Krebs had been responsible for it, of course,—not Galligan. Krebs had turned up once more! It seemed as though he were destined to haunt me. Well, I made up my mind that he should not disturb me again, at any rate: I, at least, had learned to eliminate sentimentality from business, and it was not without deprecation I remembered my experience with him at the Capital, when he had made me temporarily ashamed of my connection with Bill 709. I had got over that. And when I entered the court room (the tribunal having graciously granted a rehearing on the ground that it had committed an error in the law!) my feelings were of lively curiosity and zest. I had no disposition to underrate his abilities, but I was fortified by the consciousness of a series of triumphs behind me, by a sense of association with prevailing forces against which he was helpless. I could afford to take a superior attitude in regard to one who was destined always to be dramatic.

As the case proceeded I was rather disappointed on the whole that he was not dramatic—not even as dramatic as he had been when he defied the powers in the Legislature. He had changed but little, he still wore ill-fitting clothes, but I was forced to acknowledge that he seemed to have gained in self-control, in presence. He had nodded at me

before the case was called, as he sat beside his maimed client; and I had been on the alert for a hint of reproach in his glance: there was none. I smiled back at him....



Page 76

He did not rant. He seemed to have rather a remarkable knowledge of the law. In a conversational tone he described the sufferings of the man in the flannel shirt beside him, but there could be no question of the fact that he did produce an effect. The spectators were plainly moved, and it was undeniable that some of the judges wore rather a sheepish look as they toyed with their watch chains or moved the stationery in front of them. They had seen maimed men before, they had heard impassioned, sentimental lawyers talk about wives and families and God and justice. Krebs did none of this. Just how he managed to bring the thing home to those judges, to make them ashamed of their role, just how he managed—in spite of my fortified attitude to revive something of that sense of discomfort I had experienced at the State House is difficult to say. It was because, I think, he contrived through the intensity of his own sympathy to enter into the body of the man whose cause he pleaded, to feel the despair in Galligan's soul—an impression that was curiously conveyed despite the dignified limits to which he confined his speech. It was strange that I began to be rather sorry for him, that I felt a certain reluctant regret that he should thus squander his powers against overwhelming odds. What was the use of it all!

At the end his voice became more vibrant—though he did not raise it—as he condemned the Railroad for its indifference to human life, for its contention that men were cheaper than rolling-stock.

I encountered him afterward in the corridor. I had made a point of seeking him out, perhaps from some vague determination to prove that our last meeting in the little restaurant at the Capital had left no traces of embarrassment in me: I was, in fact, rather aggressively anxious to reveal myself to him as one who has thriven on the views he condemned, as one in whose unity of mind there is no rift. He was alone, apparently waiting for someone, leaning against a steam radiator in one of his awkward, angular poses, looking out of the court-house window.

“How are you?” I said blithely. “So you've left Elkington for a wider field.” I wondered whether my alert cousin-in-law, George Hutchins, had made it too hot for him.

He turned to me unexpectedly a face of profound melancholy; his expression had in it, oddly, a trace of sternness; and I was somewhat taken aback by this evidence that he was still bearing vicariously the troubles of his client. So deep had been the thought I had apparently interrupted that he did not realize my presence at first.

“Oh, it's you, Paret. Yes, I've left Elkington,” he said.

“Something of a surprise to run up against you suddenly, like this.”

“I expected to see you,” he answered gravely, and the slight emphasis he gave the pronoun implied not only a complete knowledge of the situation and of the part I had

taken in it, but also a greater rebuke than if his accusation had been direct. But I clung to my affability.



Page 77

"If I can do anything for you, let me know," I told him. He said nothing, he did not even smile. At this moment he was opportunely joined by a man who had the appearance of a labour leader, and I walked away. I was resentful; my mood, in brief, was that of a man who has done something foolish and is inclined to talk to himself aloud: but the mood was complicated, made the more irritating by the paradoxical fact that that last look he had given me seemed to have borne the traces of affection....

It is perhaps needless to add that the court reversed its former decision.

XVI.

The Pilot published a series of sensational articles and editorials about the Galligan matter, a picture of Galligan, an account of the destitute state of his wife and family. The time had not yet arrived when such newspapers dared to attack the probity of our courts, but a system of law that permitted such palpable injustice because of technicalities was bitterly denounced. What chance had a poor man against such a moloch as the railroad, even with a lawyer of such ability as had been exhibited by Hermann Krebs? Krebs was praised, and the attention of Mr. Lawler's readers was called to the fact that Krebs was the man who, some years before, had opposed single-handed in the legislature the notorious Bill No. 709. It was well known in certain circles—the editorial went on to say—that this legislation had been drawn by Theodore Watling in the interests of the Boyne Iron Works, *etc.*, *etc.* Hugh Paret had learned at the feet of an able master. This first sight of my name thus opprobriously flung to the multitude gave me an unpleasant shock. I had seen Mr. Scherer attacked, Mr. Gorse attacked, and Mr. Watling: I had all along realized, vaguely, that my turn would come, and I thought myself to have acquired a compensating philosophy. I threw the sheet into the waste basket, presently picked it out again and reread the sentence containing my name. Well, there were certain penalties that every career must pay. I had become, at last, a marked man, and I recognized the fact that this assault would be the forerunner of many.

I tried to derive some comfort and amusement from the thought of certain operations of mine that Mr. Lawler had not discovered, that would have been matters of peculiar interest to his innocent public: certain extra-legal operations at the time when the Bovine corporation was being formed, for instance. And how they would have licked their chops had they learned of that manoeuvre by which I had managed to have one of Mr. Scherer's subsidiary companies in another state, with property and assets amounting to more than twenty millions, reorganized under the laws of New Jersey, and the pending case thus transferred to the Federal court, where we won hands down! This Galligan affair was nothing to that. Nevertheless, it was annoying. As I sat in the street car on

Page 78

my way homeward, a man beside me was reading the Pilot. I had a queer sensation as he turned the page, and scanned the editorial; and I could not help wondering what he and the thousands like him thought of me; what he would say if I introduced myself and asked his opinion. Perhaps he did not think at all: undoubtedly he, and the public at large, were used to Mr. Lawler's daily display of "injustices." Nevertheless, like slow acid, they must be eating into the public consciousness. It was an outrage—this freedom of the press.

With renewed exasperation I thought of Krebs, of his disturbing and almost uncanny faculty of following me up. Why couldn't he have remained in Elkington? Why did he have to follow me here, to make capital out of a case that might never have been heard of except for him?... I was still in this disagreeable frame of mind when I turned the corner by my house and caught sight of Maude, in the front yard, bending bareheaded over a bed of late flowers which the frost had spared. The evening was sharp, the dusk already gathering.

"You'll catch cold," I called to her.

She looked up at the sound of my voice.

"They'll soon be gone," she sighed, referring to the flowers. "I hate winter."

She put her hand through my arm, and we went into the house. The curtains were drawn, a fire was crackling on the hearth, the lamps were lighted, and as I dropped into a chair this living-room of ours seemed to take on the air of a refuge from the vague, threatening sinister things of the world without. I felt I had never valued it before. Maude took up her sewing and sat down beside the table.

"Hugh," she said suddenly, "I read something in the newspaper—"

My exasperation flared up again.

"Where did you get that disreputable sheet?" I demanded.

"At the dressmaker's!" she answered. "I—I just happened to see the name, Paret."

"It's just politics," I declared, "stirring up discontent by misrepresentation. Jealousy."

She leaned forward in her chair, gazing into the flames.

"Then it isn't true that this poor man, Galligan—isn't that his name?—was cheated out of the damages he ought to have to keep himself and his family alive?"



“You must have been talking to Perry or Susan,” I said. “They seem to be convinced that I am an oppressor of the poor.

“Hugh!” The tone in which she spoke my name smote me. “How can you say that? How can you doubt their loyalty, and mine? Do you think they would undermine you, and to me, behind your back?”

“I didn’t mean that, of course, Maude. I was annoyed about something else. And Tom and Perry have an air of deprecating most of the enterprises in which I am professionally engaged. It’s very well for them to talk. All Perry has to do is to sit back and take in receipts from the Boyne Street car line, and Tom is content if he gets a few commissions every week. They’re like militiamen criticizing soldiers under fire. I know they’re good friends of mine, but sometimes I lose patience with them.”



Page 79

I got up and walked to the window, and came back again and stood before her.

"I'm sorry for this man, Galligan," I went on, "I can't tell you how sorry. But few people who are not on the inside, so to speak, grasp the fact that big corporations, like the Railroad, are looked upon as fair game for every kind of parasite. Not a day passes in which attempts are not made to bleed them. Some of these cases are pathetic. It had cost the Railroad many times fifteen thousand dollars to fight Galligan's case. But if they had paid it, they would have laid themselves open to thousands of similar demands. Dividends would dwindle. The stockholders have a right to a fair return on their money. Galligan claims that there was a defective sill on the car which is said to have caused the wreck. If damages are paid on that basis, it means the daily inspection of every car which passes over their lines. And more than that: there are certain defects, as in the present case, which an inspection would not reveal. When a man accepts employment on a railroad he assumes a certain amount of personal risk,—it's not precisely a chambermaid's job. And the lawyer who defends such cases, whatever his personal feelings may be, cannot afford to be swayed by them. He must take the larger view."

"Why didn't you tell me about it before?" she asked.

"Well, I didn't think it of enough importance—these things are all in the day's work."

"But Mr. Krebs? How strange that he should be here, connected with the case!"

I made an effort to control myself.

"Your old friend," I said. "I believe you have a sentiment about him."

She looked up at me.

"Scarcely that," she replied gravely, with the literalness that often characterized her, "but he isn't a person easily forgotten. He may be queer, one may not agree with his views, but after the experience I had with him I've never been able to look at him in the way George does, for instance, or even as father does."

"Or even as I do," I supplied.

"Well, perhaps not even as you do," she answered calmly. "I believe you once told me, however, that you thought him a fanatic, but sincere."

"He's certainly a fanatic!" I exclaimed.

"But sincere, Hugh—you still think him sincere."

"You seem a good deal concerned about a man you've laid eyes on but once."



She considered this.

“Yes, it is surprising,” she admitted, “but it’s true. I was sorry for him, but I admired him. I was not only impressed by his courage in taking charge of me, but also by the trust and affection the work-people showed. He must be a good man, however mistaken he may be in the methods he employs. And life is cruel to those people.”

“Life is-life,” I observed. “Neither you nor I nor Krebs is able to change it.”

“Has he come here to practice?” she asked, after a moment.



Page 80

“Yes. Do you want me to invite him to dinner?” and seeing that she did not reply I continued: “In spite of my explanation I suppose you think, because Krebs defended the man Galligan, that a monstrous injustice has been done.”

“That is unworthy of you,” she said, bending over her stitch.

I began to pace the room again, as was my habit when overwrought.

“Well, I was going to tell you about this affair if you had not forestalled me by mentioning it yourself. It isn’t pleasant to be vilified by rascals who make capital out of vilification, and a man has a right to expect some sympathy from his wife.”

“Did I ever deny you that, Hugh?” she asked. “Only you don’t ever seem to need it, to want it.”

“And there are things,” I pursued, “things in a man’s province that a woman ought to accept from her husband, things which in the very nature of the case she can know nothing about.”

“But a woman must think for herself,” she declared. “She shouldn’t become a mere automaton,—and these questions involve so much! People are discussing them, the magazines and periodicals are beginning to take them up.”

I stared at her, somewhat appalled by this point of view. There had, indeed, been signs of its development before now, but I had not heeded them. And for the first time I beheld Maude in a new light.

“Oh, it’s not that I don’t trust you,” she continued, “I’m open to conviction, but I must be convinced. Your explanation of this Galligan case seems a sensible one, although it’s depressing. But life is hard and depressing sometimes I’ve come to realize that. I want to think over what you’ve said, I want to talk over it some more. Why won’t you tell me more of what you are doing? If you only would confide in me—as you have now! I can’t help seeing that we are growing farther and farther apart, that business, your career, is taking all of you and leaving me nothing.” She faltered, and went on again. “It’s difficult to tell you this—you never give me the chance. And it’s not for my sake alone, but for yours, too. You are growing more and more self-centred, surrounding yourself with a hard shell. You don’t realize it, but Tom notices it, Perry notices it, it hurts them, it’s that they complain of. Hugh!” she cried appealingly, sensing my resentment, forestalling the words of defence ready on my lips. “I know that you are busy, that many men depend on you, it isn’t that I’m not proud of you and your success, but you don’t understand what a woman craves,—she doesn’t want only to be a good housekeeper, a good mother, but she wants to share a little, at any rate, in the life of her husband, in his troubles as well as in his successes. She wants to be of some little use, of some little help to him.”



My feelings were reduced to a medley.

“But you are a help to me—a great help,” I protested.

She shook her head. “I wish I were,” she said.

Page 81

It suddenly occurred to me that she might be. I was softened, and alarmed by the spectacle she had revealed of the widening breach between us. I laid my hand on her shoulder.

“Well, I’ll try to do better, Maude.”

She looked up at me, questioningly yet gratefully, through a mist of tears. But her reply—whatever it might have been—was forestalled by the sound of shouts and laughter in the hallway. She sprang up and ran to the door.

“It’s the children,” she exclaimed, “they’ve come home from Susan’s party!”

It begins indeed to look as if I were writing this narrative upside down, for I have said nothing about children. Perhaps one reason for this omission is that I did not really appreciate them, that I found it impossible to take the same minute interest in them as Tom, for instance, who was, apparently, not content alone with the six which he possessed, but had adopted mine. One of them, little Sarah, said “Uncle Tom” before “Father.” I do not mean to say that I had not occasional moments of tenderness toward them, but they were out of my thoughts much of the time. I have often wondered, since, how they regarded me; how, in their little minds, they defined the relationship. Generally, when I arrived home in the evening I liked to sit down before my study fire and read the afternoon newspapers or a magazine; but occasionally I went at once to the nursery for a few moments, to survey with complacency the medley of toys on the floor, and to kiss all three. They received my caresses with a certain shyness—the two younger ones, at least, as though they were at a loss to place me as a factor in the establishment. They tumbled over each other to greet Maude, and even Tom. If I were an enigma to them, what must they have thought of him? Sometimes I would discover him on the nursery floor, with one or two of his own children, building towers and castles and railroad stations, or forts to be attacked and demolished by regiments of lead soldiers. He was growing comfortable-looking, if not exactly stout; prematurely paternal, oddly willing to renounce the fiercer joys of life, the joys of acquisition, of conquest, of youth.

“You’d better come home with me, Chickabiddy,” he would say, “that father of yours doesn’t appreciate you. He’s too busy getting rich.”

“Chickabiddy,” was his name for little Sarah. Half of the name stuck to her, and when she was older we called her Biddy.

She would gaze at him questioningly, her eyes like blue flower cups, a strange little mixture of solemnity and bubbling mirth, of shyness and impulsiveness. She had fat legs that creased above the tops of the absurd little boots that looked to be too tight; sometimes she rolled and tumbled in an ecstasy of abandon, and again she would sit motionless, as though absorbed in dreams. Her hair was like corn silk in the sun,

twisting up into soft curls after her bath, when she sat rosily presiding over her supper table.



Page 82

As I look back over her early infancy, I realize that I loved her, although it is impossible for me to say how much of this love is retrospective. Why I was not mad about her every hour of the day is a puzzle to me now. Why, indeed, was I not mad about all three of them? There were moments when I held and kissed them, when something within me melted: moments when I was away from them, and thought of them. But these moments did not last. The something within me hardened again, I became indifferent, my family was wiped out of my consciousness as though it had never existed.

There was Matthew, for instance, the oldest. When he arrived, he was to Maude a never-ending miracle, she would have his crib brought into her room, and I would find her leaning over the bedside, gazing at him with a rapt expression beyond my comprehension. To me he was just a brick-red morsel of humanity, all folds and wrinkles, and not at all remarkable in any way. Maude used to annoy me by getting out of bed in the middle of the night when he cried, and at such times I was apt to wonder at the odd trick the life-force had played me, and ask myself why I got married at all. It was a queer method of carrying on the race. Later on, I began to take a cursory interest in him, to watch for signs in him of certain characteristics of my own youth which, in the philosophy of my manhood, I had come to regard as defects. And it disturbed me somewhat to see these signs appear. I wished him to be what I had become by force of will—a fighter. But he was a sensitive child, anxious for approval; not robust, though spiritual rather than delicate; even in comparative infancy he cared more for books than toys, and his greatest joy was in being read to. In spite of these traits—perhaps because of them—there was a sympathy between us. From the time that he could talk the child seemed to understand me. Occasionally I surprised him gazing at me with a certain wistful look that comes back to me as I write.

Moreton, Tom used to call Alexander the Great because he was a fighter from the cradle, beating his elder brother, too considerate to strike back, and likewise—when opportunity offered—his sister; and appropriating their toys. A self-sufficient, doughty young man, with the round head that withstands many blows, taking by nature to competition and buccaneering in general. I did not love him half so much as I did Matthew—if such intermittent emotions as mine may be called love. It was a standing joke of mine—which Maude strongly resented—that Moreton resembled Cousin George of Elkington.



Page 83

Imbued with the highest ambition of my time, I had set my barque on a great circle, and almost before I realized it the barque was burdened with a wife and family and the steering had insensibly become more difficult; for Maude cared nothing about the destination, and when I took any hand off the wheel our ship showed a tendency to make for a quiet harbour. Thus the social initiative, which I believed should have been the woman's, was thrust back on me. It was almost incredible, yet indisputable, in a day when most American women were credited with a craving for social ambition that I, of all men, should have married a wife in whom the craving was wholly absent! She might have had what other women would have given their souls for. There were many reasons why I wished her to take what I deemed her proper place in the community as my wife—not that I cared for what is called society in the narrow sense; with me, it was a logical part of a broader scheme of life; an auxiliary rather than an essential, but a needful auxiliary; a means of dignifying and adorning the position I was taking. Not only that, but I felt the need of intercourse—of intercourse of a lighter and more convivial nature with men and women who saw life as I saw it. In the evenings when we did not go out into that world our city afforded ennui took possession of me: I had never learned to care for books, I had no resources outside of my profession, and when I was not working on some legal problem I dawdled over the newspapers and went to bed. I don't mean to imply that our existence, outside of our continued intimacy with the Peterses and the Blackwoods, was socially isolated. We gave little dinners that Maude carried out with skill and taste; but it was I who suggested them; we went out to other dinners, sometimes to Nancy's—though we saw less and less of her—sometimes to other houses. But Maude had given evidence of domestic tastes and a disinclination for gaiety that those who entertained more were not slow to sense. I should have liked to take a larger house, but I felt the futility of suggesting it; the children were still small, and she was occupied with them. Meanwhile I beheld, and at times with considerable irritation, the social world changing, growing larger and more significant, a more important function of that higher phase of American existence the new century seemed definitely to have initiated. A segregative process was away to which Maude was wholly indifferent. Our city was throwing off its social conservatism; wealth (which implied ability and superiority) was playing a greater part, entertainments were more luxurious, lines more strictly drawn. We had an elaborate country club for those who could afford expensive amusements. Much of this transformation had been due to the initiative and leadership of Nancy Durrett....



Page 84

Great and sudden wealth, however, if combined with obscure antecedents and questionable qualifications, was still looked upon askance. In spite of the fact that Adolf Scherer had “put us on the map,” the family of the great iron-master still remained outside of the social pale. He himself might have entered had it not been for his wife, who was supposed to be “queer,” who remained at home in her house opposite Gallatin Park and made little German cakes,—a huge house which an unknown architect had taken unusual pains to make pretentious and hideous, for it was Rhenish, Moorish and Victorian by turns. Its geometric grounds matched those of the park, itself a monument to bad taste in landscape. The neighbourhood was highly respectable, and inhabited by families of German extraction. There were two flaxen-haired daughters who had just graduated from an expensive boarding-school in New York, where they had received the polish needful for future careers. But the careers were not forthcoming.

I was thrown constantly with Adolf Scherer; I had earned his gratitude, I had become necessary to him. But after the great coup whereby he had fulfilled Mr. Watling’s prophecy and become the chief factor in our business world he began to show signs of discontent, of an irritability that seemed foreign to his character, and that puzzled me. One day, however, I stumbled upon the cause of this fermentation, to wonder that I had not discovered it before. In many ways Adolf Scherer was a child. We were sitting in the Boyne Club.

“Money—yes!” he exclaimed, apropos of some demand made upon him by a charitable society. “They come to me for my money—there is always Scherer, they say. He will make up the deficit in the hospitals. But what is it they do for me? Nothing. Do they invite me to their houses, to their parties?”

This was what he wanted, then,—social recognition. I said nothing, but I saw my opportunity: I had the clew, now, to a certain attitude he had adopted of late toward me, an attitude of reproach; as though, in return for his many favours to me, there were something I had left undone. And when I went home I asked Maude to call on Mrs. Scherer.

“On Mrs. Scherer!” she repeated.

“Yes, I want you to invite them to dinner.” The proposal seemed to take away her breath. “I owe her husband a great deal, and I think he feels hurt that the wives of the men he knows down town haven’t taken up his family.” I felt that it would not be wise, with Maude, to announce my rather amazing discovery of the iron-master’s social ambitions.

“But, Hugh, they must be very happy, they have their friends. And after all this time wouldn’t it seem like an intrusion?”



“I don’t think so,” I said, “I’m sure it would please him, and them. You know how kind he’s been to us, how he sent us East in his private car last year.”

“Of course I’ll go if you wish it, if you’re sure they feel that way.” She did make the call, that very week, and somewhat to my surprise reported that she liked Mrs. Scherer and the daughters: Maude’s likes and dislikes, needless to say, were not governed by matters of policy.



Page 85

"You were right, Hugh," she informed me, almost with enthusiasm, "they did seem lonely. And they were so glad to see me, it was rather pathetic. Mr. Scherer, it seems, had talked to them a great deal about you. They wanted to know why I hadn't come before. That was rather embarrassing. Fortunately they didn't give me time to talk, I never heard people talk as they do. They all kissed me when I went away, and came down the steps with me. And Mrs. Scherer went into the conservatory and picked a huge bouquet. There it is," she said, laughingly, pointing to several vases. "I separated the colours as well as I could when I got home. We had coffee, and the most delicious German cakes in the Turkish room, or the Moorish room, whichever it is. I'm sure I shan't be able to eat anything more for days. When do you wish to have them for dinner?"

"Well," I said, "we ought to have time to get the right people to meet them. We'll ask Nancy and Ham."

Maude opened her eyes.

"Nancy! Do you think Nancy would like them?"

"I'm going to give her a chance, anyway," I replied....

It was, in some ways, a memorable dinner. I don't know what I expected in Mrs. Scherer—from Maude's description a benevolent and somewhat stupid, blue-eyed German woman, of peasant extraction. There could be no doubt about the peasant extraction, but when she hobbled into our little parlour with the aid of a stout, gold-headed cane she dominated it. Her very lameness added to a distinction that evinced itself in a dozen ways. Her nose was hooked, her colour high,—despite the years in Steelville,—her peculiar costume heightened the effect of her personality; her fire-lit black eyes bespoke a spirit accustomed to rule, and instead of being an aspirant for social honours, she seemed to confer them. Conversation ceased at her entrance.

"I'm sorry we are late, my dear," she said, as she greeted Maude affectionately, "but we have far to come. And this is your husband!" she exclaimed, as I was introduced. She scrutinized me. "I have heard something of you, Mr. Paret. You are smart. Shall I tell you the smartest thing you ever did?" She patted Maude's shoulder. "When you married your wife—that was it. I have fallen in love with her. If you do not know it, I tell you."

Next, Nancy was introduced.

"So you are Mrs. Hambleton Durrett?"

Nancy acknowledged her identity with a smile, but the next remark was a bombshell.

"The leader of society."

“Alas!” exclaimed Nancy, “I have been accused of many terrible things.”



Page 86

Their glances met. Nancy's was amused, baffling, like a spark in amber. Each, in its way, was redoubtable. A greater contrast between two women could scarcely have been imagined. It was well said (and not snobbishly) that generations had been required to make Nancy's figure: she wore a dress of blue sheen, the light playing on its ripples; and as she stood, apparently wholly at ease, looking down at the wife of Adolf Scherer, she reminded me of an expert swordsman who, with remarkable skill, was keeping a too pressing and determined aspirant at arm's length. I was keenly aware that Maude did not possess this gift, and I realized for the first time something of the similarity between Nancy's career and my own. She, too, in her feminine sphere, exercised, and subtly, a power in which human passions were deeply involved.

If Nancy Durrett symbolized aristocracy, established order and prestige, what did Mrs. Scherer represent? Not democracy, mob rule—certainly. The stocky German peasant woman with her tightly drawn hair and heavy jewels seemed grotesquely to embody something that ultimately would have its way, a lusty and terrible force in the interests of which my own services were enlisted; to which the old American element in business and industry, the male counterpart of Nancy Willett, had already succumbed. And now it was about to storm the feminine fastnesses! I beheld a woman who had come to this country with a shawl over her head transformed into a new species of duchess, sure of herself, scorning the delicate euphemisms in which Fancy's kind were wont to refer to a social realm, that was no less real because its boundaries had not definitely been defined. She held her stick firmly, and gave Nancy an indomitable look.

"I want you to meet my daughters. Gretchen, Anna, come here and be introduced to Mrs. Durrett."

It was not without curiosity I watched these of the second generation as they made their bows, noted the differentiation in the type for which an American environment and a "finishing school" had been responsible. Gretchen and Anna had learned—in crises, such as the present—to restrain the superabundant vitality they had inherited. If their cheekbones were a little too high, their Delft blue eyes a little too small, their colour was of the proverbial rose-leaves and cream. Gene Hollister's difficulty was to know which to marry. They were nice girls,—of that there could be no doubt; there was no false modesty in their attitude toward "society"; nor did they pretend—as so many silly people did, that they were not attempting to get anywhere in particular, that it was less desirable to be in the centre than on the dubious outer walks. They, too, were so glad to meet Mrs. Durrett.

Nancy's eyes twinkled as they passed on.

"You see what I have let you in for?" I said.

"My dear Hugh," she replied, "sooner or later we should have had to face them anyhow. I have recognized that for some time. With their money, and Mr. Scherer's prestige, and

the will of that lady with the stick, in a few years we should have had nothing to say. Why, she's a female Napoleon. Hilda's the man of the family."



Page 87

After that, Nancy invariably referred to Mrs. Scherer as Hilda.

If Mrs. Scherer was a surprise to us, her husband was a still greater one; and I had difficulty in recognizing the Adolf Scherer who came to our dinner party as the personage of the business world before whom lesser men were wont to cringe. He seemed rather mysteriously to have shed that personality; become an awkward, ingratiating, rather too exuberant, ordinary man with a marked German accent. From time to time I found myself speculating uneasily on this phenomenon as I glanced down the table at his great torso, white waist-coated for the occasion. He was plainly “making up” to Nancy, and to Mrs. Ogilvy, who sat opposite him. On the whole, the atmosphere of our entertainment was rather electric. “Hilda” was chiefly responsible for this; her frankness was of the breath-taking kind. Far from attempting to hide or ignore the struggle by which she and her husband had attained their present position, she referred with the utmost naivete to incidents in her career, while the whole table paused to listen.

“Before we had a carriage, yes, it was hard for me to get about. I had to be helped by the conductors into the streetcars. I broke my hip when we lived in Steelville, and the doctor was a numbskull. He should be put in prison, is what I tell Adolf. I was standing on a clothes-horse, when it fell. I had much washing to do in those days.”

“And—can nothing be done, Mrs. Scherer?” asked Leonard Dickinson, sympathetically.

“For an old woman? I am fifty-five. I have had many doctors. I would put them all in prison. How much was it you paid Dr. Stickney, in New York, Adolf? Five thousand dollars? And he did nothing—nothing. I’d rather be poor again, and work. But it is well to make the best of it.”...

“Your grandfather was a fine man, Mr. Durrett,” she informed Hambleton. “It is a pity for you, I think, that you do not have to work.”

Ham, who sat on her other side, was amused.

“My grandfather did enough work for both of us,” he said.

“If I had been your grandfather, I would have started you in puddling,” she observed, as she eyed with disapproval the filling of his third glass of champagne. “I think there is too much gay life, too much games for rich young men nowadays. You will forgive me for saying what I think to young men?”

“I’ll forgive you for not being my grandfather, at any rate,” replied Ham, with unaccustomed wit.

She gazed at him with grim humour.

“It is bad for you I am not,” she declared.



There was no gainsaying her. What can be done with a lady who will not recognize that morality is not discussed, and that personalities are tabooed save between intimates. Hilda was a personage as well as a Tartar. Laws, conventions, usages—to all these she would conform when it pleased her. She would have made an admirable inquisitorial judge, and quite as admirable a sick nurse. A rare criminal lawyer, likewise, was wasted in her. She was one of those individuals, I perceived, whose loyalties dominate them; and who, in behalf of those loyalties, carry chips on their shoulders.



Page 88

“It is a long time that I have been wanting to meet you,” she informed me. “You are smart.”

I smiled, yet I was inclined to resent her use of the word, though I was by no means sure of the shade of meaning she meant to put into it. I had, indeed, an uneasy sense of the scantiness of my fund of humour to meet and turn such a situation; for I was experiencing, now, with her, the same queer feeling I had known in my youth in the presence of Cousin Robert Breck—the suspicion that this extraordinary person saw through me. It was as though she held up a mirror and compelled me to look at my soul features. I tried to assure myself that the mirror was distorted. I lost, nevertheless, the sureness of touch that comes from the conviction of being all of a piece. She contrived to resolve me again into conflicting elements. I was, for the moment, no longer the self-confident and triumphant young attorney accustomed to carry all before him, to command respect and admiration, but a complicated being whose unity had suddenly been split. I glanced around the table at Ogilvy, at Dickinson, at Ralph Hambleton. These men were functioning truly. But was I? If I were not, might not this be the reason for the lack of synthesis—of which I was abruptly though vaguely aware between my professional life, my domestic relationships, and my relationships with friends. The loyalty of the woman beside me struck me forcibly as a supreme trait. Where she had given, she did not withdraw. She had conferred it instantly on Maude. Did I feel that loyalty towards a single human being? towards Maude herself—my wife? or even towards Nancy? I pulled myself together, and resolved to give her credit for using the word “smart” in its unobjectionable sense. After all; Dickens had so used it.

“A lawyer must needs know something of what he is about, Mrs. Scherer, if he is to be employed by such a man as your husband,” I replied.

Her black eyes snapped with pleasure.

“Ah, I suppose that is so,” she agreed. “I knew he was a great man when I married him, and that was before Mr. Nathaniel Durrett found it out.”

“But surely you did not think, in those days, that he would be as big as he has become? That he would not only be president of the Boyne Iron Works, but of a Boyne Iron Works that has exceeded Mr. Durrett’s wildest dreams.”

She shook her head complacently.

“Do you know what I told him when he married me? I said, ‘Adolf, it is a pity you are born in Germany.’ And when he asked me why, I told him that some day he might have been President of the United States.”

“Well, that won’t be a great deprivation to him,” I remarked. “Mr. Scherer can do what he wants, and the President cannot.”



“Adolf always does as he wants,” she declared, gazing at him as he sat beside the brilliant wife of the grandson of the man whose red-shirted foreman he had been. “He does what he wants, and gets what he wants. He is getting what he wants now,” she added, with such obvious meaning that I found no words to reply. “She is pretty, that Mrs. Durrett, and clever,—is it not so?”



Page 89

I agreed. A new and indescribable note had come into Mrs. Scherer's voice, and I realized that she, too, was aware of that flaw in the redoubtable Mr. Scherer which none of his associates had guessed. It would have been strange if she had not discovered it. "She is beautiful, yes," the lady continued critically, "but she is not to compare with your wife. She has not the heart,—it is so with all your people of society. For them it is not what you are, but what you have done, and what you have."

The banality of this observation was mitigated by the feeling she threw into it.

"I think you misjudge Mrs. Durrett," I said, incautiously. "She has never before had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Scherer or appreciating him."

"Mrs. Durrett is an old friend of yours?" she asked.

"I was brought up with her."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, and turned her penetrating glance upon me. I was startled. Could it be that she had discerned and interpreted those re nascent feelings even then stirring within me, and of which I myself was as yet scarcely conscious? At this moment, fortunately for me, the women rose; the men remained to smoke; and Scherer, as they discussed matters of finance, became himself again. I joined in the conversation, but I was thinking of those instants when in flashes of understanding my eyes had met Nancy's; instants in which I was lifted out of my humdrum, deadly serious self and was able to look down objectively upon the life I led, the life we all led—and Nancy herself; to see with her the comic irony of it all. Nancy had the power to give me this exquisite sense of detachment that must sustain her. And was it not just this sustenance she could give that I needed? For want of it I was hardening, crystallizing, growing blind to the joy and variety of existence. Nancy could have saved me; she brought it home to me that I needed salvation.... I was struck by another thought; in spite of our separation, in spite of her marriage and mine, she was still nearer to me—far nearer—than any other being.

Later, I sought her out. She looked up at me amusedly from the window-seat in our living-room, where she had been talking to the Scherer girls.

"Well, how did you get along with Hilda?" she asked. "I thought I saw you struggling."

"She's somewhat disconcerting," I said. "I felt as if she were turning me inside out."

Nancy laughed.

"Hilda's a discovery—a genius. I'm going to have them to dinner myself."

"And Adolf?" I inquired. "I believe she thought you were preparing to run away with him. You seemed to have him hypnotized."



“I’m afraid your great man won’t be able to stand—elevation,” she declared. “He’ll have vertigo. He’s even got it now, at this little height, and when he builds his palace on Grant Avenue, and later moves to New York, I’m afraid he’ll wobble even more.”

“Is he thinking of doing all that?” I asked.



Page 90

"I merely predict New York—it's inevitable," she replied. "Grant Avenue, yes; he wants me to help him choose a lot. He gave me ten thousand dollars for our Orphans' Home, but on the whole I think I prefer Hilda even if she doesn't approve of me."

Nancy rose. The Scherers were going. While Mr. Scherer pressed my hand in a manner that convinced me of his gratitude, Hilda was bidding an affectionate good night to Maude. A few moments later she bore her husband and daughters away, and we heard the tap-tap of her cane on the walk outside....

XVII.

The remembrance of that dinner when with my connivance the Scherers made their social debut is associated in my mind with the coming of the fulness of that era, mad and brief, when gold rained down like manna from our sooty skies. Even the church was prosperous; the Rev. Carey Heddon, our new minister, was well abreast of the times, typical of the new and efficient Christianity that has finally buried the hatchet with enlightened self-interest. He looked like a young and prosperous man of business, and indeed he was one.

The fame of our city spread even across the Atlantic, reaching obscure hamlets in Europe, where villagers gathered up their lares and penates, mortgaged their homes, and bought steamship tickets from philanthropists,—philanthropists in diamonds. Our Huns began to arrive, their Attilas unrecognized among them: to drive our honest Americans and Irish and Germans out of the mills by "lowering the standard of living." Still—according to the learned economists in our universities, enlightened self-interest triumphed. Had not the honest Americans and Germans become foremen and even presidents of corporations? What greater vindication for their philosophy could be desired?

The very aspect of the city changed like magic. New buildings sprang high in the air; the Reliance Trust (Mr. Grierson's), the Scherer Building, the Hambleton Building; a stew hotel, the Ashuela, took proper care of our visitors from the East,—a massive, grey stone, thousand-awninged affair on Boyne Street, with a grill where it became the fashion to go for supper after the play, and a head waiter who knew in a few weeks everyone worth knowing.

To return for a moment to the Huns. Maude had expressed a desire to see a mill, and we went, one afternoon, in Mr. Scherer's carriage to Steelville, with Mr. Scherer himself,—a bewildering, educative, almost terrifying experience amidst fumes and flames, gigantic forces and titanic weights. It seemed a marvel that we escaped being crushed or burned alive in those huge steel buildings reverberating with sound. They appeared a very bedlam of chaos, instead of the triumph of order, organization and human skill. Mr. Scherer was very proud of it all, and ours was a sort of triumphal procession,

accompanied by superintendents, managers and other factotums. I thought of my childhood image of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and our progress through the flames seemed no less remarkable and miraculous.



Page 91

Maude, with alarm in her eyes, kept very close to me, as I supplemented the explanations they gave her. I had been there many times before.

“Why, Hugh,” she exclaimed, “you seem to know a lot about it!”

Mr. Scherer laughed.

“He’s had to talk about it once or twice in court—eh, Hugh? You didn’t realize how clever your husband was did you, Mrs. Paret?”

“But this is so—complicated,” she replied. “It is overwhelming.”

“When I found out how much trouble he had taken to learn about my business,” added Mr. Scherer, “there was only one thing to do. Make him my lawyer. Hugh, you have the floor, and explain the open-hearth process.”

I had almost forgotten the Huns. I saw Maude gazing at them with a new kind of terror. And when we sat at home that evening they still haunted her.

“Somehow, I can’t bear to think about them,” she said. “I’m sure we’ll have to pay for it, some day.”

“Pay for what?” I asked.

“For making them work that way. And twelve hours! It can’t be right, while we have so much, and are so comfortable.”

“Don’t be foolish,” I exclaimed. “They’re used to it. They think themselves lucky to get the work—and they are. Besides, you give them credit for a sensitiveness that they don’t possess. They wouldn’t know what to do with such a house as this if they had it.”

“I never realized before that our happiness and comfort were built on such foundations;” she said, ignoring my remark.

“You must have seen your father’s operatives, in Elkington, many times a week.”

“I suppose I was too young to think about such things,” she reflected. “Besides, I used to be sorry for them, sometimes. But these men at the steel mills—I can’t tell you what I feel about them. The sight of their great bodies and their red, sullen faces brought home to me the cruelty of life. Did you notice how some of them stared at us, as though they were but half awake in the heat, with that glow on their faces? It made me afraid—afraid that they’ll wake up some day, and then they will be terrible. I thought of the children. It seems not only wicked, but mad to bring ignorant foreigners over here and make them slaves like that, and so many of them are hurt and maimed. I can’t forget them.”



“You’re talking Socialism,” I said crossly, wondering whether Lucia had taken it up as her latest fad.

“Oh, no, I’m not,” said Maude, “I don’t know what Socialism is. I’m talking about something that anyone who is not dazzled by all this luxury we are living in might be able to see, about something which, when it comes, we shan’t be able to help.”

I ridiculed this. The prophecy itself did not disturb me half as much as the fact that she had made it, as this new evidence that she was beginning to think for herself, and along lines so different from my own development.

Page 92

While it lasted, before novelists, playwrights, professors and ministers of the Gospel abandoned their proper sphere to destroy it, that Golden Age was heaven; the New Jerusalem—in which we had ceased to believe—would have been in the nature of an anticlimax to any of our archangels of finance who might have attained it. The streets of our own city turned out to be gold; gold likewise the acres of unused, scrubby land on our outskirts, as the incident of the Riverside Franchise—which I am about to relate—amply proved.

That scheme originated in the alert mind of Mr. Frederick Grierson, and in spite of the fact that it has since become notorious in the eyes of a virtue-stricken public, it was entered into with all innocence at the time: most of the men who were present at the “magnate’s” table at the Boyne Club the day Mr. Grierson broached it will vouch for this. He casually asked Mr. Dickinson if he had ever noticed a tract lying on the river about two miles beyond the Heights, opposite what used to be in the old days a road house.

“This city is growing so fast, Leonard,” said Grierson, lighting a special cigar the Club kept for him, “that it might pay a few of us to get together and buy that tract, have the city put in streets and sewers and sell it in building lots. I think I can get most of it at less than three hundred dollars an acre.”

Mr. Dickinson was interested. So were Mr. Ogilvy and Ralph Hambleton, and Mr. Scherer, who chanced to be there. Anything Fred Grierson had to say on the question of real estate was always interesting. He went on to describe the tract, its size and location.

“That’s all very well, Fred,” Dickinson objected presently, “but how are your prospective householders going to get out there?”

“Just what I was coming to,” cried Grierson, triumphantly, “we’ll get a franchise, and build a street-railroad out Maplewood Avenue, an extension of the Park Street line. We can get the franchise for next to nothing, if we work it right.” (Mr. Grierson’s eye fell on me), “and sell it out to the public, if you underwrite it, for two million or so.”

“Well, you’ve got your nerve with you, Fred, as usual,” said Dickinson. But he rolled his cigar in his mouth, an indication, to those who knew him well, that he was considering the matter. When Leonard Dickinson didn’t say “no” at once, there was hope. “What do you think the property holders on Maplewood Avenue would say? Wasn’t it understood, when that avenue was laid out, that it was to form part of the system of boulevards?”

“What difference does it make what they say?” Ralph interposed.

Dickinson smiled. He, too, had an exaggerated respect for Ralph. We all thought the proposal daring, but in no way amazing; the public existed to be sold things to, and what



did it matter if the Maplewood residents, as Ralph said; and the City Improvement League protested?

Perry Blackwood was the Secretary of the City Improvement League, the object of which was to beautify the city by laying out a system of parkways.



Page 93

The next day some of us gathered in Dickinson's office and decided that Grierson should go ahead and get the options. This was done; not, of course, in Grierson's name. The next move, before the formation of the Riverside Company, was to "see" Mr. Judd Jason. The success or failure of the enterprise was in his hands. Mahomet must go to the mountain, and I went to Monahan's saloon, first having made an appointment. It was not the first time I had been there since I had made that first memorable visit, but I never quite got over the feeling of a neophyte before Buddha, though I did not go so far as to analyze the reason,—that in Mr. Jason I was brought face to face with the concrete embodiment of the philosophy I had adopted, the logical consequence of enlightened self-interest. If he had ever heard of it, he would have made no pretence of being anything else. Greatness, declares some modern philosopher, has no connection with virtue; it is the continued, strong and logical expression of some instinct; in Mr. Jason's case, the predatory instinct. And like a true artist, he loved his career for itself—not for what its fruits could buy. He might have built a palace on the Heights with the tolls he took from the disreputable houses of the city; he was contented with Monahan's saloon: nor did he seek to propitiate a possible God by endowing churches and hospitals with a portion of his income. Try though I might, I never could achieve the perfection of this man's contempt for all other philosophies. The very fact of my going there in secret to that dark place of his from out of the bright, respectable region in which I lived was in itself an acknowledgment of this. I thought him a thief—a necessary thief—and he knew it: he was indifferent to it; and it amused him, I think, to see clinging to me, when I entered his presence, shreds of that morality which those of my world who dealt with him thought so needful for the sake of decency.

He was in bed, reading newspapers, as usual. An empty coffee-cup and a plate were on the littered table.

"Sit down, sit down, Paret," he said. "What do you hear from the Senator?"

I sat down, and gave him the news of Mr. Watling. He seemed, as usual, distraught, betraying no curiosity as to the object of my call, his lean, brown fingers playing with the newspapers on his lap. Suddenly, he flashed out at me one of those remarks which produced the uncanny conviction that, so far as affairs in the city were concerned, he was omniscient.

"I hear somebody has been getting options on that tract of land beyond the Heights, on the river."

He had "focussed."

"How did you hear that?" I asked.

He smiled.



“It’s Grierson, ain’t it?”

“Yes, it’s Grierson,” I said.

“How are you going to get your folks out there?” he demanded.

“That’s what I’ve come to see you about. We want a franchise for Maplewood Avenue.”



Page 94

"Maplewood Avenue!" He lay back with his eyes closed, as though trying to visualize such a colossal proposal....

When I left him, two hours later, the details were all arranged, down to Mr. Jason's consideration from Riverside Company and the "fee" which his lawyer, Mr. Bitter, was to have for "presenting the case" before the Board of Aldermen. I went back to lunch at the Boyne Club, and to receive the congratulations of my friends. The next week the Riverside Company was formed, and I made out a petition to the Board of Aldermen for a franchise; Mr. Bitter appeared and argued: in short, the procedure so familiar to modern students of political affairs was gone through. The Maplewood Avenue residents rose en masse, supported by the City Improvement League. Perry Blackwood, as soon as he heard of the petition, turned up at my office. By this time I was occupying Mr. Watling's room.

"Look here," he began, as soon as the office-boy had closed the door behind him, "this is going it a little too strong."

"What is?" I asked, leaning back in my chair and surveying him.

"This proposed Maplewood Avenue Franchise. Hugh," he said, "you and I have been friends a good many years, Lucia and I are devoted to Maude."

I did not reply.

"I've seen all along that we've been growing apart," he added sadly. "You've got certain ideas about things which I can't share. I suppose I'm old fashioned. I can't trust myself to tell you what I think—what Tom and I think about this deal."

"Go ahead, Perry," I said.

He got up, plainly agitated, and walked to the window. Then he turned to me appealingly.

"Get out of it, for God's sake get out of it, before it's too late. For your own sake, for Maude's, for the children's. You don't realize what you are doing. You may not believe me, but the time will come when these fellows you are in with will be repudiated by the community,—their money won't help them. Tom and I are the best friends you have," he added, a little irrelevantly.

"And you think I'm going to the dogs."

"Now don't take it the wrong way," he urged.

"What is it you object to about the Maplewood franchise?" I asked. "If you'll look at a map of the city, you'll see that development is bound to come on that side. Maplewood



Avenue is the natural artery, somebody will build a line out there, and if you'd rather have eastern capitalists—”

“Why are you going to get this franchise?” he demanded. “Because we haven't a decent city charter, and a healthy public spirit, you fellows are buying it from a corrupt city boss, and bribing a corrupt board of aldermen. That's the plain language of it. And it's only fair to warn you that I'm going to say so, openly.”

“Be sensible,” I answered. “We've got to have street railroads,—your family has one. We know what the aldermen are, what political conditions are. If you feel this way about it, the thing to do is to try to change them. But why blame me for getting a franchise for a company in the only manner in which, under present conditions, a franchise can be got? Do you want the city to stand still? If not, we have to provide for the new population.”



Page 95

“Every time you bribe these rascals for a franchise you entrench them,” he cried. “You make it more difficult to oust them. But you mark my words, we shall get rid of them some day, and when that fight comes, I want to be in it.”

He had grown very much excited; and it was as though this excitement suddenly revealed to me the full extent of the change that had taken place in him since he had left college. As he stood facing me, almost glaring at me through his eye-glasses, I beheld a slim, nervous, fault-finding doctrinaire, incapable of understanding the world as it was, lacking the force of his pioneer forefathers. I rather pitied him.

“I’m sorry we can’t look at this thing alike, Perry,” I told him. “You’ve said solve pretty hard things, but I realize that you hold your point of view in good faith, and that you have come to me as an old friend. I hope it won’t make any difference in our personal relations.”

“I don’t see how it can help making a difference,” he answered slowly. His excitement had cooled abruptly: he seemed dazed. At this moment my private stenographer entered to inform me that I was being called up on the telephone from New York. “Well, you have more important affairs to attend to, I won’t bother you any more,” he added.

“Hold on,” I exclaimed, “this call can wait. I’d like to talk it over with you.”

“I’m afraid it wouldn’t be any use, Hugh,” he said, and went out.

After talking with the New York client whose local interests I represented I sat thinking over the conversation with Perry. Considering Maude’s intimacy with and affection for the Blackwoods, the affair was awkward, opening up many uncomfortable possibilities; and it was the prospect of discomfort that bothered me rather than regret for the probable loss of Perry’s friendship. I still believed myself to have an affection for him: undoubtedly this was a sentimental remnant....

That evening after dinner Tom came in alone, and I suspected that Perry had sent him. He was fidgety, ill at ease, and presently asked if I could see him a moment in my study. Maude’s glance followed us.

“Say, Hugh, this is pretty stiff,” he blurted out characteristically, when the door was closed.

“I suppose you mean the Riverside Franchise,” I said. He looked up at me, miserably, from the chair into which he had sunk, his hands in his pockets.

“You’ll forgive me for talking about it, won’t you? You used to lecture me once in a while at Cambridge, you know.”

“That’s all right—go ahead,” I replied, trying to speak amiably.



“You know I’ve always admired you, Hugh,—I never had your ability,” he began painfully, “you’ve gone ahead pretty fast,—the truth is that Perry and I have been worried about you for some time. We’ve tried not to be too serious in showing it, but we’ve felt that these modern business methods were getting into your system without your realizing it. There are some things a man’s friends can tell him, and it’s their duty to tell him. Good God, haven’t you got enough, Hugh,—enough success and enough money, without going into a thing like this Riverside scheme?”



Page 96

I was intensely annoyed, if not angry; and I hesitated a moment to calm myself.

“Tom, you don’t understand my position,” I said. “I’m willing to discuss it with you, now that you’ve opened up the subject. Perry’s been talking to you, I can see that. I think Perry’s got queer ideas,—to be plain with you, and they’re getting queerer.”

He sat down again while, with what I deemed a rather exemplary patience, I went over the arguments in favour of my position; and as I talked, it clarified in my own mind. It was impossible to apply to business an individual code of ethics,—even to Perry’s business, to Tom’s business: the two were incompatible, and the sooner one recognized that the better: the whole structure of business was built up on natural, as opposed to ethical law. We had arrived at an era of frankness—that was the truth—and the sooner we faced this truth the better for our peace of mind. Much as we might deplore the political system that had grown up, we had to acknowledge, if we were consistent, that it was the base on which our prosperity was built. I was rather proud of having evolved this argument; it fortified my own peace of mind, which had been disturbed by Tom’s attitude. I began to pity him. He had not been very successful in life, and with the little he earned, added to Susan’s income, I knew that a certain ingenuity was required to make both ends meet. He sat listening with a troubled look. A passing phase of feeling clouded for a brief moment my confidence when there arose in my mind an unbidden memory of my youth, of my father. He, too, had mistrusted my ingenuity. I recalled how I had out-manoeuvred him and gone to college; I remembered the March day so long ago, when Tom and I had stood on the corner debating how to deceive him, and it was I who had suggested the nice distinction between a boat and a raft. Well, my father’s illogical attitude towards boyhood nature, towards human nature, had forced me into that lie, just as the senseless attitude of the public to-day forced business into a position of hypocrisy.

“Well, that’s clever,” he said, slowly and perplexedly, when I had finished. “It’s damned clever, but somehow it looks to me all wrong. I can’t pick it to pieces.” He got up rather heavily. “I—I guess I ought to be going. Susan doesn’t know where I am.”

I was exasperated. It was clear, though he did not say so, that he thought me dishonest. The pain in his eyes had deepened.

“If you feel that way—” I said.

“Oh, God, I don’t know how I feel!” he cried. “You’re the oldest friend I have, Hugh,—I can’t forget that. We’ll say nothing more about it.” He picked up his hat and a moment later I heard the front door close behind him. I stood for a while stock-still, and then went into the living-room, where Maude was sewing.

“Why, where’s Tom?” she inquired, looking up.

“Oh, he went home. He said Susan didn’t know where he was.”



Page 97

“How queer! Hugh, was there anything the matter? Is he in trouble?” she asked anxiously.

I stood toying with a book-mark, reflecting. She must inevitably come to suspect that something had happened, and it would be as well to fortify her.

“The trouble is,” I said after a moment, “that Perry and Tom would like to run modern business on the principle of a charitable institution. Unfortunately, it is not practical. They’re upset because I have been retained by a syndicate whose object is to develop some land out beyond Maplewood Avenue. They’ve bought the land, and we are asking the city to give us a right to build a line out Maplewood Avenue, which is the obvious way to go. Perry says it will spoil the avenue. That’s nonsense, in the first place. The avenue is wide, and the tracks will be in a grass plot in the centre. For the sake of keeping tracks off that avenue he would deprive people of attractive homes at a small cost, of the good air they can get beyond the heights; he would stunt the city’s development.”

“That does seem a little unreasonable,” Maude admitted. “Is that all he objects to?”

“No, he thinks it an outrage because, in order to get the franchise, we have to deal with the city politicians. Well, it so happens, and always has happened, that politics have been controlled by leaders, whom Perry calls ‘bosses,’ and they are not particularly attractive men. You wouldn’t care to associate with them. My father once refused to be mayor of the city for this reason. But they are necessities. If the people didn’t want them, they’d take enough interest in elections to throw them out. But since the people do want them, and they are there, every time a new street-car line or something of that sort needs to be built they have to be consulted, because, without their influence nothing could be done. On the other hand, these politicians cannot afford to ignore men of local importance like Leonard Dickinson and Adolf Scherer and Miller Gorse who represent financial substance and responsibility. If a new street-railroad is to be built, these are the logical ones to build it. You have just the same situation in Elkington, on a smaller scale.

“Your family, the Hutchinses, own the mills and the street-railroads, and any new enterprise that presents itself is done with their money, because they are reliable and sound.”

“It isn’t pleasant to think that there are such people as the politicians, is it?” said Maude, slowly.

“Unquestionably not,” I agreed. “It isn’t pleasant to think of some other crude forces in the world. But they exist, and they have to be dealt with. Suppose the United States should refuse to trade with Russia because, from our republican point of view, we regarded her government as tyrannical and oppressive? or to cooperate with England in



some undertaking for the world's benefit because we contended that she ruled India with an iron hand? In such a case, our President and Senate would be scoundrels for making and ratifying a treaty. Yet here are Perry and Tom, and no doubt Susan and Lucia, accusing me, a lifetime friend, of dishonesty because I happen to be counsel for a syndicate that wishes to build a street-railroad for the convenience of the people of the city."



Page 98

“Oh, no, not of dishonesty!” she exclaimed. “I can’t—I won’t believe they would do that.”

“Pretty near it,” I said. “If I listened to them, I should have to give up the law altogether.”

“Sometimes,” she answered in a low voice, “sometimes I wish you would.”

“I might have expected that you would take their point of view.”

As I was turning away she got up quickly and put her hand on my shoulder.

“Hugh, please don’t say such things—you’ve no right to say them.”

“And you?” I asked.

“Don’t you see,” she continued pleadingly, “don’t you see that we are growing apart? That’s the only reason I said what I did. It isn’t that I don’t trust you, that I don’t want you to have your work, that I demand all of you. I know a woman can’t ask that,—can’t have it. But if you would only give me—give the children just a little, if I could feel that we meant something to you and that this other wasn’t gradually becoming everything, wasn’t absorbing you more and more, killing the best part of you. It’s poisoning our marriage, it’s poisoning all your relationships.”

In that appeal the real Maude, the Maude of the early days of our marriage flashed forth again so vividly that I was taken aback. I understood that she had had herself under control, had worn a mask—a mask I had forced on her; and the revelation of the continued existence of that other Maude was profoundly disturbing. Was it true, as she said, that my absorption in the great game of modern business, in the modern American philosophy it implied was poisoning my marriage? or was it that my marriage had failed to satisfy and absorb me? I was touched—but sentimentally touched: I felt that this was a situation that ought to touch me; I didn’t wish to face it, as usual: I couldn’t acknowledge to myself that anything was really wrong... I patted her on the shoulder, I bent over and kissed her.

“A man in my position can’t altogether choose just how busy he will be,” I said smiling.

“Matters are thrust upon me which I have to accept, and I can’t help thinking about some of them when I come home. But we’ll go off for a real vacation soon, Maude, to Europe—and take the children.”

“Oh, I hope so,” she said.

From this time on, as may be supposed, our intercourse with both the Blackwoods began to grow less frequent, although Maude continued to see a great deal of Lucia; and when we did dine in their company, or they with us, it was quite noticeable that their former raillery was suppressed. Even Tom had ceased to refer to me as the young Napoleon of the Law: he clung to me, but he too kept silent on the subject of business.

Maude of course must have noticed this, must have sensed the change of atmosphere, have known that the Blackwoods, at least, were maintaining appearances for her sake. She did not speak to me of the change, nor I to her; but when I thought of her silence, it



Page 99

was to suspect that she was weighing the question which had led up to the difference between Perry and me, and I had a suspicion that the fact that I was her husband would not affect her ultimate decision. This faculty of hers of thinking things out instead of accepting my views and decisions was, as the saying goes, getting a little “on my nerves”: that she of all women should have developed it was a recurring and unpleasant surprise. I began at times to pity myself a little, to feel the need of sympathetic companionship —feminine companionship....

I shall not go into the details of the procurement of what became known as the Riverside Franchise. In spite of the Maplewood residents, of the City Improvement League and individual protests, we obtained it with absurd ease. Indeed Perry Blackwood himself appeared before the Public Utilities Committee of the Board of Aldermen, and was listened to with deference and gravity while he discoursed on the defacement of a beautiful boulevard to satisfy the greed of certain private individuals. Mr. Otto Bitter and myself, who appeared for the petitioners, had a similar reception. That struggle was a tempest in a tea-pot. The reformer raged, but he was feeble in those days, and the great public believed what it read in the respectable newspapers. In Mr. Judah B. Tallant's newspaper, for instance, the Morning Era, there were semi-playful editorials about “obstructionists.” Mr. Perry Blackwood was a well-meaning, able gentleman of an old family, *etc.*, but with a sentiment for horse-cars. The Era published also the resolutions which (with interesting spontaneity!) had been passed by our Board of Trade and Chamber of Commerce and other influential bodies in favour of the franchise; the idea—unknown to the public—of Mr. Hugh Paret, who wrote drafts of the resolutions and suggested privately to Mr. Leonard Dickinson that a little enthusiasm from these organizations might be helpful. Mr. Dickinson accepted the suggestion eagerly, wondering why he hadn't thought of it himself. The resolutions carried some weight with a public that did not know its right hand from its left.

After fitting deliberation, one evening in February the Board of Aldermen met and granted the franchise. Not unanimously, oh, no! Mr. Jason was not so simple as that! No further visits to Monahan's saloon on my part, in this connection were necessary; but Mr. Otto Bitter met me one day in the hotel with a significant message from the boss.

“It's all fixed,” he informed me. “Murphy and Scott and Ottheimer and Grady and Loth are the decoys. You understand?”

“I think I gather your meaning,” I said.

Mr. Bitter smiled by pulling down one corner of a crooked mouth.

“They'll vote against it on principle, you know,” he added. “We get a little something from the Maple Avenue residents.”



Page 100

I've forgotten what the Riverside Franchise cost. The sum was paid in a lump sum to Mr. Bitter as his "fee,"—so, to their chagrin, a grand jury discovered in later years, when they were barking around Mr. Jason's hole with an eager district attorney snapping his whip over them. I remember the cartoon. The municipal geese were gone, but it was impossible to prove that this particular fox had used his enlightened reason in their procurement. Mr. Bitter was a legally authorized fox, and could take fees. How Mr. Jason was to be rewarded by the land company's left-hand, unknown, to the land company's right hand, became a problem worthy of a genius. The genius was found, but modesty forbids me to mention his name, and the problem was solved, to wit: the land company bought a piece of downtown property from—Mr. Ryerson, who was Mr. Grierson's real estate man and the agent for the land company, for a consideration of thirty thousand dollars. An unconfirmed rumour had it that Mr. Ryerson turned over the thirty thousand to Mr. Jason. Then the Riverside Company issued a secret deed of the same property back to Mr. Ryerson, and this deed was not recorded until some years later.

Such are the elaborate transactions progress and prosperity demand. Nature is the great teacher, and we know that her ways are at times complicated and clumsy. Likewise, under the "natural" laws of economics, new enterprises are not born without travail, without the aid of legal physicians well versed in financial obstetrics. One hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand, let us say, for the right to build tracks on Maplewood Avenue, and we sold nearly two million dollars worth of the securities back to the public whose aldermen had sold us the franchise. Is there a man so dead as not to feel a thrill at this achievement? And let no one who declares that literary talent and imagination are nonexistent in America pronounce final judgment until he reads that prospectus, in which was combined the best of realism and symbolism, for the labours of Alonzo Cheyne were not to be wasted, after all. Mr. Dickinson, who was a director in the Maplewood line, got a handsome underwriting percentage, and Mr. Berringer, also a director, on the bonds and preferred stock he sold. Mr. Paret, who entered both companies on the ground floor, likewise got fees. Everybody was satisfied except the trouble makers, who were ignored. In short, the episode of the Riverside Franchise is a triumphant proof of the contention that business men are the best fitted to conduct the politics of their country.

We had learned to pursue our happiness in packs, we knew that the Happy Hunting-Grounds are here and now, while the Reverend Carey Heddon continued to assure the maimed, the halt and the blind that their kingdom was not of this world, that their time was coming later. Could there have been a more idyl arrangement! Everybody should have been satisfied, but everybody was not. Otherwise these pages would never have been written.