

eBook

New Faces

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New Faces

NEW FACES

"The play's the thing"

A business meeting of the Lady Hyacinths Shirt-Waist Club was in progress. The roll had been called. The twenty members were all present and the Secretary had read the minutes of the last meeting. These formalities had consumed only a few moments and the club was ready to fall upon its shirt waists. The sewing-machines were oiled and uncovered, the cutting-table was cleared, every Hyacinth had her box of sewing paraphernalia in her lap; and Miss Masters who had been half cajoled and half forced into the management of this branch of the St. Martha's Settlement Mission was congratulating herself upon the ease and expedition with which her charges were learning to transact their affairs, when the President drew a pencil from her pompadour and rapped professionally on the table. In her daytime capacity of saleslady in a Grand Street shoe store she would have called "cash," but as President of the Lady Hyacinths her speech was:

"If none of you goils ain't got no more business to lay before the meetin' a movement to adjoin is in order."

"I move we adjoin an git to woik," said Mamie Kidansky promptly. Only three buttonholes and the whalebones which would keep the collar well up behind the ears lay between her and the triumphant rearing of her shirt waist. Hence her zeal.

Susie Meyer was preparing to second the motion. As secretary she disapproved of much discussion. She was always threatening to resign her portfolio vowing, with some show of reason, "I never would 'a' joined your old Hyacinths Shirt-Waists if I'd a' known I was goin' to have to write down all the foolish talk you goils felt like givin' up."

It seemed therefore that the business meeting was closed, when a voice from the opposite side of the table broke in with:

"Say, Rosie, why can't us goils give a play?"

"Ah Jennie, you make me tired," protested the Secretary.

"An' you're out of order anyway," was the President's dictum.

"Where?" cried Jennie wildly, clutching her pompadour with one hand and the back of her belt with the other, "where, what's the matter with me?"

"Go 'way back an' sit down," was the Secretary's advice, "Rosie meant you're out of parliamentary order. We got a motion on the table an' it's too late for you to butt in on it. This meetin' is goin' to adjoin."

But Jennie was the spokesman of a newly-born party and her supporters were not going to allow her to be silenced. Even those Lady Hyacinths who had not been admitted to earlier consultations took kindly to the suggestion when they heard it.

"I don't care whether she's out of order or not," one ambitious Hyacinth declared, "I think it would be just too lovely for anything to have a play. They have 'em all the time over to Rivington Street an' down to the Educational Alliance."

"Rebecca Einstein," said the Secretary darkly, "if you're goin' to fire off your face about plays an' the Educational Alliances you can keep your own minnits, that's all! Do ye think I'm goin' to write down your foolishness? Well, I ain't."

Again the President plied her gavel. "Goils," she remonstrated, "this ain't no way to act. Say, Miss Masters," she went on, "I guess the whole lot of us is out of order now. What would you do about it if you was me?"

"I should suggest," Miss Masters answered, "that the motion to adjourn be carried and that the whole club go into committee on the question raised by Miss Meyer."

"I move that we take our woik into committee with us," cried Miss Kidansky, not to be deflected from her buttonholes. And from such humble beginnings the production of Hamlet by the Lady Hyacinths sprang.

Hamlet was not their first choice. It was not even their tenth and to the end it was not the unanimous choice. During the preliminary stages of the dramatic fever Miss Masters preserved that strict neutrality which marks the successful Settlement worker. She would help---oh, surely she would help---the Hyacinths, but she would not lead them. She had never questioned their taste in the shape and color of their shirt waists. Some horrid garments had resulted but to her they represented "self expression," and as such gave her more pleasure than any servile following of her advice could have done. She soon discovered that the latitude in the shirt waist field is far exceeded by that in the dramatic and she discovered too, that the Lady Hyacinths, though they seldom visited the theatre had strong digestions where plays were concerned.

"East Lynne" was warmly advocated until some one discovered a grandmother who had seen it in her youth. Then:

"Ah gee!" remarked the Lady Hyacinths, "we ain't no grave snatchers. We ain't goin' to dig up no dead ones. Say Miss Masters, ain't there no new plays we could give?"

Miss Masters referred them to the public library, but not many plays are obtainable in book form, and the next two meetings were devoted to the plays of Ibsen, Bernard Shaw, Vaughan Moody. When Miss Masters desried this literature in the hands of the now openly mutinous Secretary she felt the time had come to interfere with the "self activity" of her charges. She promptly confiscated the second volume of "G.B.S." "For," she explained "we don't want to do anything unpleasent and the writer of these plays himself describes them as that."

"Guess we don't," the President agreed. "We got to live up to our name, ain't we? An' what could be pleasanter than a Hyacinth?"

"Nothing, of course," agreed Miss Masters unsteadily.

"There's one in this Ibsen book might do," Jennie suggested. "It's called 'A Dolls' House,' that's a real sweet name."

"I am afraid it wouldn't do," said Miss Masters hastily.

"What's the matter with it?" demanded Susie Meyer.

"Well, in the first place, there are children in it---"

"Cut it! 'Nough said," pronounced the President. "Them plays wid kids in 'em is all out of style. We giv' 'East Lynne' the turn down an' there was only one kid in that. What else have you got in that Gibson book? Have you got the play with the Gibson goils in it? We could do that all right, all right. Ain't most of us got Gibson pleats in our shirt waists?"

"I don't see nothin' about goils," the Secretary made answer, "but there's one here about ghosts. How would that do?"

"Not at all," said Miss Masters firmly.

"What's the matter with it?" asked one of the girls abandoning her sewing-machine and coming over to the table. "I seen posters of it last year. They are givin' it in Broadway. The costumes would be real easy, just a sheet you know and your hair hanging down."

"It's not about that kind of ghost," Miss Masters explained, "and I don't think it would do for us as there are very few people in the cast and one of them is a minister."

"Cut it," said the President briefly, "we ain't goin' to have no hymn singin' in ours. We couldn't, you know," she explained to Miss Masters, "the most of us is Jewesses."

"Katie McGuire ain't no Jewess," asserted the Secretary. "She could be the minister if that's all you've got against this Gibson play. I wish we *could* give it. It's about the only up-to-date Broadway success we can find. The librarian says you can't never buy copies of Julia Marlowe's an' Ethel Barrymore's an' Maude Adams' plays. I guess they're just scared somebody like us will come along an' do 'em better than they do an' bust their market. Actresses," she went on, "is all jest et up with jealousy of one another. Is there anythin' except the minister the matter with 'Ghosts?'"

"Everything else is the matter with it," said Miss Masters. "To begin with, I might as well tell you, it never was a Broadway success. It's a play that is read oftener than it's acted and last year, Jennie, when you saw the posters, it only ran for a week."

"Cut it," said the President. "We ain't huntin' frosts."

The brows of the Hyacinths grew furrowed and their eyes haggard in the search. Everyone could tell them of plays but no one knew where they could be found in printed form and whenever the librarian found something which might be suitable Miss Masters was sure to know of something to its disadvantage.

And then the real stage, the legitimate Broadway stage intervened. Albert Marsden produced Hamlet and the Lady Hyacinths determined to follow suit.

"It's kind of old," the President admitted, "but there must be some style left to it. They're playin' it on Broadway right now. An' we'll give it on East Broadway just as soon as we can git ready. Me and Mamie went round to the library last night an' got it out. It's got a dandy lot of parts in it: more than this club will ever need. An' it's got lots of murders an' scraps, an' court ladies an' soldiers an' kings. It's our play all right!"

The sea of troubles into which the Lady Hyacinths plunged with so much enthusiasm swallowed them so completely that Miss Masters could only stand on its shore, looking across to Denmark and wringing her hands over the awful things that were happening in that unhappy land. Fortunately she had a friend to whom she could appeal for succour for the lost but still valiant Hyacinths. He was the sort of person to whom appeals came as naturally as honors come to some men and, since he had nothing to do and ample time and money with which to do it, he was generally helpful and resourceful. That he had once loved Miss Masters has nothing to do with this story. She was now engaged to be married to a poorer and busier man, but it was to Jack Burgess that she appealed.

"Of course I know," said he when he had responded to her message and she had anchored him with a tea-cup and disarmed him with a smile, "of course I know what you want to say to me. Every girl who has refused me has said it

sooner or later. You are saying it later---much later---than they generally do, but it always comes. 'You have found a wife for me.'"

"I have done much better than that," she answered, "I have found work for you." And she sketched the distress of the Hyacinths in Denmark and urged him to go to their assistance.

"But, my dear Margaret," he remonstrated, "What can I do? You have always known that 'something is rotten in the state of Denmark,' and yet you have let these poor innocents stir it up. I have often thought that poor Shakespeare added that line after the first performance. I intend to write that hint to Furniss one of these days."

"You will write it," said Margaret Masters, "with more conviction after you have seen *my* Denmark."

"Very well," said he, "I'll visit Elsinore to-night, but I insist upon a return ticket."

"You will be begging for a season ticket," she laughed. "They have reduced me to such a condition that I don't know whether they are amusing me or breaking my heart. Tell me, come, which is it? Did you ever hear blank verse recited with tense and reverent earnestness and a Bowery accent?"

"I never did," said he.

* * * * *

"Shakespeare was right," whispered Burgess to Miss Masters. "There is something rotten in Denmark. I've located it. It's the Prince." They were sitting together in a corner of the kindergarten room of the settlement: a large and spacious room all decked and bright with the paper and cardboard masterpieces of the babies who played and learned there in the mornings. Casts and pictures and green growing things added to its charm and the Lady Hyacinths so trim and neat and earnest did not detract from it.

The sewing-machines and the cutting-table had been cast into corners and well in the glare of the electric light the President was exclaiming in a voice which would have disgraced an early phonograph, "Oh that this too too solid flesh would melt."

It was not a dress rehearsal but the too solid Prince wore his hair low on his neck and a golden fillet bound his brows. Silent, he was noble. His walk as he came in at the end of a procession of court ladies and gentlemen was magnificent---slow, dejected, imperious, aloof. But Wittenberg had a great deal to answer for, if he had contracted his accent there.

Gertrude, Queen of Denmark, was a Hyacinth who worked daily at hooks and buttonholes for an East Broadway tailor. On this night she wore none of her regalia save her crown and the King had done nothing at all to differentiate himself from Susie Lacov who officiated as waitress in a Jewish lunchroom.

The Hyacinths had wisely decided to edit Hamlet. In this they followed an almost universal principle and their method was also time-honored. All the scenes in which unimportant members of the club or cast "came out strong," were eliminated. So far the Hyacinths were orthodox, but Rosie Rosenbaum, Prince, President and Censor, went a step further.

"Git busy. Mix her up, why don't you!" she commanded later from the wings. The other players were laboriously wading through persiflage and conversation. "You folks ain't *done* nothin' the last ten minutes only stand there and gas.

Is that actin'? Maybe it's wrote in the book. What I want to know is---is it actin'?" Burgess sat suddenly erect and his eyes glowed. Miss Masters half rose to assume authority but he restrained her.

"You shut up and leave me be," Polonius cried. "Ain't I got a right to say good-bye to my son?"

"You can say good-bye all right," Rosie reminded her, "without puttin' up that game of talk. Give him a 'I'll be a sister to you' on the cheek an' git through sometime before to-morrow. Cut it, I tell you."

This "off with his head" attitude on the President's part delighted Burgess. But the caste enjoyed it less and when the ghost was docked of a whole scene it grew rebellious.

"If you give me any more of your lip," said the princely stage manager, "I'll trow you out altogether. There's lots of people wouldn't believe in ghosts anyway. Me grandfather seen this play in Chermany and he told me they didn't use the ghost at all. Nothin' but a green light with a voice comin' out of it."

"Well, I could be the voice, couldn't I?" the ghost argued; and it was at this point that Miss Masters took charge of the meeting and introduced Mr. Burgess.

"Who has offered," she went on in spite of his energetic pantomime of disclaimer, "to help us with our play."

"That's real sweet of you, Mr. Burgess," said the President graciously.

"Not at all---not at all," he answered. "It will be a pleasure, I assure you."

"You'll excuse me, I'm sure," the Secretary broke in, "if we go right on with our woik while you're here. We're makin' our own costoomes, as much as we can. That was one reason us young ladies chose Hamlet. It's a play what everyone wears skoits in. It's easier for us and it ain't so embarrassing, and I guess our folks will like it better. You *have* to think of your folks sometimes. Even if they are old-fashioned. Miss Masters got us pictures of Mr. Marsden's production an' every last one of the characters has skoits on. Hamlet's ain't no longer than a bathin' suit, but anyway it's there. I don't think it's real refined, myself, for young ladies to wear gents' suits on the stage."

"And of course," a gentle-eyed little girl looked up from her sewing to remark,---"of course this club ain't formed just for makin' shirt waists. We've got a culture-an'-refinement clause in the club constitution, so we wouldn't want to do nothin' that wasn't real refined."

[Illustration: *Burgess gained an interest and an occupation more absorbing than he had found for many years.*]

"I understand," said Burgess more at a loss than a conversation had ever found him, "And what may I ask, is your part of the play?"

"Mamie Conners is too nervous," the lady President explained "to come right out and act. She's 'A flourish of trumpets within an' a voice without an' a lady of the court an' a soldier an' a choir boy at the funeral.'"

"Ah, Miss Conners," Burgess assured this timid but versatile Hyacinth, "that's only stage fright, all great actresses suffer from it at one time or another."

* * * * *

During the weeks that followed, order gradually gained sway in Denmark and Burgess gained an interest and an occupation more absorbing than he had found for many years.

"My dear Margaret," he was wont to assure Miss Masters, when she remonstrated with him upon his generosity, "Why shouldn't I order supper to be sent in for them? and why shouldn't I ask them up to the house for rehearsals? There's the big music room going to waste and those lazy beggars of servants with nothing to do, and you saw yourself how it brightened up poor old Aunt Priscilla. She likes it---they like it---I like it---you ought to like it. And you certainly can't object to my having taken them *en masse* to see Marsden in the play. By George! I'll drag him to theirs. We'll show him an Ophelia! that Mary Conners is a little genius."

"She is wonderful," agreed Miss Masters. "The grace of her! The dignity! What she herself would call the culture-an'-refinement!"

"All my discovery. That tyrant of a Rosie Rosenbaum had cast her as a quick change, general utility woman. And in the day-time you tell me she's a miserable little shop-girl in a Grand Street rookery!"

"That is what she used to be. But I went to the shop a day or two ago to ask her to come up to my house to rehearse with the new Hamlet. I watched her for a few moments before she noticed me. She was Ophelia to the life. She conversed in blank verse. She walked about with that little queenly air you have taught her. She was delicious, adorable. At first she said that she could not rehearse that night, but I told her you wished it and she came like a lamb. I often wonder if I did a wise thing in introducing them to you. Your sort of culture-an'-refinement' may rather upset them when the play is over and we all settle back to the humdrum."

"You did a great kindness to me," said he, "and the best stroke of missionary work you'll do in a dog's age. I'm going to work."

"You are not," she laughed.

"I am. Shamed into it by the Lady Hyacinths."

"Then perhaps the balance will be maintained. If you turn them against labor they will have turned you toward it."

But Miss Masters' fears were groundless: the Lady Hyacinths though dedicated to a flower of spring were old and wise in social distinctions. The story of King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid would have drawn only a contemptuous "cut it out" from the lady President. Every Hyacinth of them knew her exact place in nature's garden---all except Mary Conners---now Ophelia---and she knew herself to be a foundling with no place at all. The lonely woman who had adopted her was now dead and Mary was quite alone in her little two-room tenement, free to dream and play Ophelia to her heart's content and to an imaginary Hamlet who was always Burgess. To her he was indeed, "The expectancy and rose of the fair state." "The glass of fashion and the mould of form." He was "her honoured lord"---"her most dear lord." But in Monroe Street she never deceived him. Never handed his letters over to interfering relatives. She could quite easily go mad and tuneful when she knew that each rehearsal---each lesson taught by him and so quickly learned by her---brought the days when she would never see him so close that she could almost feel their emptiness.

It was well that she played to an idealized Hamlet for the real Hamlets came and went bewilderingly. One of Burgess's first triumphs of tact had been to pry the part away from the lady President and give it to the sturdy Secretary. There followed two other claimants to the throne in quick succession and then the lot fell to Rebecca Einstein and stayed there. Each change in the principal role necessitated readjustment throughout the cast and at every change the lady President was persuaded not to over exert herself.

And still Burgess in the seclusion of the homeward bound hansom railed and swore.

"I tell you, Margaret, that girl will ruin us. All the rest are funny. Overwhelmingly, incredibly funny! And pathetic! Could anything be more pathetic! But that awful President strikes a wrong note: Vulgarity. Take her out of it and we'll have a thing the like of which New York had never seen, for Ophelia is a genius or I miss my guess and all the rest are darlings."

"But we can't throw out the President of the club. She must have a part. You have moved her down from Hamlet to Laertes---to the King---"

"I did," groaned Burgess. "Will you ever forget her rendering of the line, "Now I could do it, Pat," and then her storming up to me to know "Who Pat was anyway?""

"I do," laughed Margaret, "and then how you moved her on to Guildenstern and now you have got her down to Bernardo with all her part cut out and nothing except that opening line, "Who's there?" and the other: "'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.'"

"Yes, and she ruins them. I've drilled her and drilled her till my throat is sore and still she says it straight through her nose just as though she were delivering an order of 'ham and' at her hash battery. Just the same truculent 'Don't you dare to answer back' attitude. She's impossible. She must be removed."

Meanwhile the Lady Hyacinths scattering to their different homes discussed their mentor. Ophelia and Horatio and Hamlet were going through Clinton Street together. Ophelia was still at Elsinore but Horatio was approaching common ground again.

"I suppose he's Miss Masters' steady," said he to Hamlet. "He wouldn't come down here every other night just to help us goils out."

But Ophelia was better informed. She knew Miss Masters to be engaged to quite another person.

"Then I know," cried Horatio triumphantly. "He's stuck on Rosie Rosenbaum. It's her brings him."

Ophelia said nothing, and Horatio having experienced an inspiration, set about strengthening it with proof.

"It's Rosie sure enough. Ain't he learned her about every part in the play? Don't he keep takin' her off in corners an' goin' 'Who's there, 'Tis now struck twelve' for about an hour every night? I wouldn't have nothin' to do with a feller that kept company that way, but I s'pose it's the style on Fifth Avenue. You know how I tell you, Ham, in the play that there's lots of things goin' on what you ain't on to. Well it's so. None of you was on to Rosie an' his nibs. You didn't ever guess it did you 'Pheleir?"

"No," admitted Ophelia. "No, I never did."

"Well it's so. You watch 'em. The style in wives is changin'. Actresses is goin' out an' the 'poor but honest workin' goil' is comin' in. One of our salesladies has a book about it. "The Bowery Bride" its name is. All about a shop goil what married a rich fellow and used to come back to the store and take her old friends carriage ridin'. If Rosie Rosenbaum tries it on me, I'll break her face. If she comes round me," cried the Prince's fellow student: "with carriages and a benevolent smile, I'll claw the smile off of her if I have to take the skin with it!"

When Horatio and Hamlet left her, she wandered disconsolate, down to the river. But no willow grows aslant that brook, no flowers were there with which to weave fantastic garlands.

"I've gone crazy all right," said poor Ophelia as she watched the lights of the great bridge, "but I don't drown myself until Scene VII. And I'm goin' up to his house to-morrow night to learn to act crazy. I guess I don't need much learning."

* * * * *

The performance of Hamlet by the Lady Hyacinths is still remembered by those who saw it as the most bewildering entertainment of their theatrical experience. The play had been cut down to its absolute essentials and the players, though drilled and coached in their lines and business, had been left quite free in the matters of interpretation and accent. The result was so unique that the daily press fell upon it with whoops of joy and published portraits of and interviews with the leading characters. People who had thought that only ferries and docks lay south of Twenty-third Street penetrated to the heart of the great East Side and went home again full of an altruism which lasted three days. And on the last night of the "run" of three nights, Jack Burgess brought Albert Marsden to witness it. Other spectators had always emerged dumb or inarticulate from the ordeal but the great actor was not one of them. He was blusterous and garrulous and, to Burgess' amazement, not at all amused.

"Who is that girl who played Ophelia? Is she an East Side working girl or one of the mission people?"

"She's a shop-girl," answered Burgess. "There's no good in your asking me to introduce you to her for I won't. That's been one of our rules from the beginning. We don't want the children to be upset and patronized."

"Who taught her to act?"

"Well, I coached them all as you know, but she never seemed to require any special teaching. Pretty good, isn't she?"

"Pretty good! She is a genius---a wonder. This is all rot about my not meeting her. I am going to meet her and train her. I suppose you have noticed that she is a beauty too."

"But she's only a child," Burgess urged. "She's only eighteen. She couldn't stand the life and the work and she couldn't stand the people. You have no idea what high ideals these girls have, and Mary Connors---that's the girl's name---seems to be exceptional even amongst them."

"Too good for us, eh?" asked the actor.

"Entirely too good," answered Burgess steadily.

"And do you feel justified in deciding her future for her! In condemning her to an obscure life in the slums instead of a successful career on the stage?"

"I do not," answered Burgess, "she must decide that for herself. I'll ask her and let you know."

To this end he sought Miss Masters. "I want you," said he, "to ask Mary Connors to tea with you to-morrow afternoon. It will be Sunday so she can manage. And then I want you to leave us alone. I have something very serious to say to her."

Margaret looked at him and laughed. "Then you were right," said she, "and I was wrong; I had found a wife for you."

"For absolute inane, insensate romanticism," said he, "I recommend you to the recently engaged. You used to have some sense. You were clever enough to refuse me and now you go and forever ruin my opinion of you by making a remark like that."

"It is not romanticism at all," she maintained. "It is the best of common sense. You will never be satisfied with anyone you haven't trained and formed to suit your own ideals. And you will never find such a 'quick study' as Mary."

It was the earliest peep of spring and Burgess stopped on his way to Miss Masters' house and bought a sheaf of white hyacinths and pale maiden hair for the little Lady Hyacinth who was waiting for him.

As soon as he was alone with her he managed to distract her attention from her flowers and to make her listen to Marsden's message. He set the case before her plainly. Without exaggeration and without extenuation.

"And we don't expect you," he ended, "to make up your mind at once. You must consult your relatives and friends."

"I have no relatives," she answered.

"Your friends then."

"I don't think I have many. Some of the girls in the club perhaps. The old book-keeper in the store where I work, perhaps Miss Masters."

"And you have me," he interrupted. But she smiled at him and shook her head. "You were real kind about the play," said she, "but the play's all over now. I guess you'd better tell your friend that I'll take the position. I have been getting pretty tired of work in the store and I'd like to try this if he don't mind."

"Oh, but you mustn't go into it like that," Burgess protested, "just for the want of something better. Acting is an art---a great art---you must be glad and proud."

"I'll try it," she said without enthusiasm. "If you feel that way about it I'll try it. It can't be worse than the store. The store is just horrible. Oh! Mr. Burgess you can't think what it is to be Ophelia in the evening with princes loving you and then to be a cashier in the day-time that any fresh customer thinks he can get gay with. Maybe if I was an actress I could be Ophelia oftener. I'd do anything, Mr. Burgess, to get away from the store."

Burgess did not answer immediately. Her earnestness had rather overcome her and he waited silently while she walked to the window, surreptitiously pressed her handkerchief against her eyes and conquered the sobs that threatened to choke her. Burgess watched her. The trimness of her figure, the absolute neatness and propriety of her dress, the poise and restraint of her manner. Then she turned and he rose to meet her.

"Mary," said he, "you never in all the time I've known you have failed to do what I asked you. Will you do something for me now?"

"Yes, sir," she answered simply.

"Then sit down in that chair and take this watch of mine in your hand and don't say one single, solitary, lonely word for five minutes. No matter what happens: no matter what anyone says or does. Will you promise?"

"Yes, sir," she answered again.

"Well then," he began, "I know another man who wants you---this stage idea is not the only way out of the store. Remember you're not to speak---this other man wants to marry you."

A scarlet flush sprang to Mary's face and slowly ebbed away again leaving her deadly pale. She kept her word in letter but hardly in spirit for she looked at him through tear-filled eyes, and shook her head.

"Of course you can't be expected to take to the idea just at first," said he, as if she had spoken, "but I want you to think it over. The man is a well-off, gentlemanly sort of chap. Miles too old for you of course---for you're not twenty and he's nearly forty---but I think he would make you happy. I know he'd try with all the strength that's in him."

Blank incredulity was on Mary's face. She glanced at the watch and up at him and again she shook her head.

"This man," Burgess went on, "is a friend of Miss Masters and it was through her that he first heard of the Lady Hyacinths. He was an idler then. A shiftless, worthless loafer, but the Lady Hyacinths made a man of him and he's gone out and got a job."

Comprehension overwhelming, overmastering, flashed into Mary's eyes. But her promise held her silent and in her chair. Again it was as though she had spoken.

"Yes, I see you understand---you probably think of me as an old man past the time of love and yet I love you."

"Doubt thou the stars are fire;
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt I love."

"That's all I have to offer you, sweetheart. Just love and my life," and he in turn went to the window and looked out into the gathering dusk.

Mary sat absolutely still. She knew now that she was dreaming. Just so the dream had always run and when the five minutes were past, she rose and went to him: a true Ophelia, her arms all full of hyacinths.

"My honored Lord," said she. He turned, and the dream held.

THERE'S DANGER IN NUMBERS

The Pennsylvania Limited was approaching Jersey City and the afternoon was approaching three o'clock when Mr. John Blake turned to Mrs. John Blake, nee Marjorie Underwood, a bride of about three hours, and precipitated the first discussion of their hitherto happy married life.

"Your Uncle Richard Underwood," said he---the earlier discussions in the wedded state are usually founded upon relations---"is as stupid as he is kind. It was very good of him to arrange that I should meet old Nicholson. Any young fellow in the country would give his eyes for the chance. But to make an appointment for a fellow at four o'clock in the afternoon of his wedding day is a thing of which no one, except your Uncle Richard, would be capable. He might have known that I couldn't go."

"But you must go," urged the bride, "it's the chance of a lifetime. Besides which," she added with a pretty little air of practicality, "we can't afford to throw away an opportunity like this. We may never get another one, and if you don't go

how are you to explain it to Uncle Richard when we dine there to-morrow night?---you know we promised to, when he was last at West Hills."

"But what," suggested her husband---"what if, in grasping at the shadow, I lose the reality? I'd rather lose twenty opportunities than my only wife, and what's to become of you while I go down to Broad Street? Do you propose to sit in the station?"

"I propose nothing of the kind," she laughed. "I shall go straight to the Ruissillard and wait for you. Dick and Gladys may be there already."

Although Mr. John Blake received this suggestion with elaborate disfavor and disclaimer it was clear to the pretty eyes of Mrs. John Blake that he hailed it with delight, and she was full of theories upon marital co-operation and of eagerness to put them into practice. None of her husband's objections could daunt her, and before he had adjusted himself to the situation he had packed his wife into a hansom, given the cabman careful instructions and a careless tip, and was standing on the step admonishing his bride:

"Be sure to tell them that we must have out-side rooms. Have the baggage sent up, but don't touch it. If you open a trunk or lift a tray before I arrive I shall instantly send you home to your mother as incorrigible."

"Very well," she agreed; "I'll be good."

"And then, if Gladys is there---it's only an off-chance that they come before to-morrow---get her to sit with you. But don't go wandering about the hotel by yourself. And, above all, don't go out."

"Goosie," said she, "of course I shan't go out. Where should I go?"

"And you're sure, sure, sure that you don't mind?" he asked for the dozenth time.

"Goosie," said she again, "I am quite, quite sure of it. Now go or you will surely miss your appointment and disappoint your uncle."

After two or three more questions of his and assurances of hers the cab was allowed to swing out into the current. John had given the driver careful navigation orders, and Marjorie leaned back contentedly enough and watched the busy people, all hot and haggard, as New York's people sometimes are in the first warm days of May. Her collection of illustrated post-cards had prepared her to identify many of the places she passed, but once or twice she felt, a little ruefully the difference between this, her actual first glimpse of New York and the same first glimpse as she and John had planned it before the benign, but hardly felicitous, interference of Uncle Richard. This feeling of loneliness was strongly in the ascendent when the cab stopped under an ornate portico and two large male creatures, in powdered wigs and white silk stockings, emerged before her astonished eyes. Open flew her little door, down jumped the cabman, out rushed other menials and laid hands upon her baggage. Horses fretted, pedestrians risked their lives, motors snorted and newsboys clamored as an enormous police-appearing person assisted her to alight. He had such an air of having been expecting and longing for her arrival that she wondered innocently whether John had telephoned about her. This thought persisted with her until she and her following of baggage-laden pages drew up before the desk, but it fell from her with a crash when she encountered the aloof, impersonal, world-weary regard of the presiding clerk. In all Marjorie's happy life she had never met anything but welcome. The belle of a fast-growing town is rather a sheltered person, and not even the most confiding of ingenues could detect a spark of greeting in the lackadaisical regard of this highly-manicured young man.

Marjorie began her story, began to recite her lesson: "Outside rooms, not lower than the fourth nor higher than the eighth floor; the Fifth Avenue side if possible---and was Mrs. Robert Blake in?"

The lackadaisical young man consulted the register with a disparaging eye.

"Not staying here," Marjorie understood him to remark.

"Oh, it doesn't matter---but about the rooms?"

"Front!" drawled the young man, and several blue-clad bellboys ceased from lolling on a bench and approached the desk.

"Register here," commanded the clerk, twirling the big book on its turn-table toward Marjorie so suddenly that she jumped, and laying his pink-tinted finger on its first blank line.

"No, thank you," she stammered, "I was not to register until my husband---" and her heart cried out within her for that she was saying these new, dear words for the first time to so unresponsive a stranger---"told me not to register until he should come and see that the rooms were satisfactory. He will be here presently."

"We have no unsatisfactory rooms," was the answer, followed by: "Front 625 and 6," and fresh pages and bellboys fell upon the yellow baggage, and Marjorie, in a hot confusion of counting her property and wondering how to resent the young man's impertinence, turned to follow them.

"One moment, madam," the clerk murmured; "name and address, please." The pages were escaping with the bags, and Mrs. Blake hardly turned as she answered, according to the habit of her lifetime:

"Underwood, West Hills, N.J.," and flew to the elevator, which had already swallowed her baggage and the boys. Up to suite Number 625 and 6 she was conducted by her blue-clad attendants, who opened the windows, pushed the furniture about---then waited; who fetched ice water, drew down shades---and waited; who closed the windows, drew up the shades, shifted the baggage from sofa to armchair, unbuckled the straps of a suitcase, indicated the telephone---and waited; who put the bags on the bed, opened the windows, pushed the furniture back against the wall---and waited. Marjorie viewed all these manoeuvres with amused but unsophisticated eyes. She smiled serenely at the smiling bellboys---while they waited. She thanked them prettily for their assistance---and they waited. She dismissed them still prettily, and it is to be regretted that, in the privacy of the hall, they swore.

She then took possession of her little domain. The clerk, however unbearably, had spoken the truth, and the rooms were charming. There could be no question, she decided, of going farther. She spread her pretty wedding silver on the dressing-table, she hung her negligee with her hat and coat in the closet. She went down on her knees and investigated the slide which was to lead shoes to the bootblack; she tested, with her bridal glove-stretcher, the electrical device in the bathroom for the heating of curling irons. She studied all the pictures, drew out all the drawers, examined the furniture and bric-a-brac, and then she looked at her watch. Only half an hour was gone.

She went to the window and watched the hats of the passing multitude, noting how short and fore-shortened all the figures seemed and how queerly the horses passed along beneath her, without visible legs to move them. Still an hour before John could be expected.

And then their trunks, hers large and his small, made their thumping entrance. The porter crossed to the window and raised the shade, crossed to her trunk and undid its straps, dried his moistened brow---and waited. Marjorie thanked him and smiled. He smiled and waited, drying his brow industriously the while. No village black-smith ever had so damp a

brow as he. She sympathized with him in the matter of the heat; he agreed---and waited. He undid the straps of John's trunk; he moved her trunk into greater proximity to the window and the light; he carried John's trunk into the sitting-room; he performed innumerable feats of prowess before her. But she only smiled and commended in an unfinancial way. Finally he laid violent hands upon his truck and retreated into the hall, swearing, as became his age, more luridly than the bellboys.

Once more Marjorie looked out into the street for a while and began to plan the exact form of greeting with which she should meet John. It already seemed an eternity since she had parted with him. She drew the pretty evening dress which she had chosen for this and most important evening from its tissue-paper nest in the upper tray of her trunk. Its daintiness comforted and cheered her, as a friend's face might have done, and under its impetus she found calm enough to rearrange her hair, and, with many a shy recoil and shy caress, to lay out John's evening things for him, as she had often laid out her father's. How surprised, she smiled, he would be. How delighted, when he came, to find everything so comfy and domestic. Surely it was time for him to come. Presently it was late, and yet he did not come. She evolved another form of greeting: he did not deserve comfort and domesticity when he did not set more store on them than on a stupid interview in a stuffy office. He should see that an appointment with old Nicholson could not be allowed to interfere with their home life; that, simply because they were married now, he could not neglect her with impunity.

She practised the detached, casual sort of smile with which she would greet him, and the patient, uninterested silence with which she would listen to his apologies. Then, realizing that these histrionics would be somewhat marred by a pink negligee, she struggled into her dinner dress.

It was then seven o'clock and time to practise some more vehement reception for the laggard. It went well---very well. Any man would have been annihilated by it, but there was still no man when half-past seven came.

Quite suddenly she fell into a panic. John was dead! She had heard and read of the perils of New York. She had seen a hundred potential accidents on her drive from the ferry. Trolley, anarchist, elevated railroad, collapsed buildings, frightened horses, runaway automobiles. Her dear John! Her mangled husband! Passing out of the world, even while she, his widowed bride, was dressing in hideous colors, and thinking so falsely of him!

He must be brought to her. Some one should go and say something to somebody! Telephone Uncle Richard! She flew to the directory, which had interested her so little when the polite bellboy of the itching palm had pointed it out to her, and presently she had startled a respectable old stockbroker, so thoroughly and so hastily that he burst into his wife's presence with the news that John Blake had met with a frightful accident and was being carried to the hotel in the automobile of some rich gentleman from Paterson, New Jersey.

"Hurry down there at once," commanded Aunt Richard, who was as staid and practical as the wife of a stockbroker ought to be, "and bring the two poor lambs here in your car. Take the big one. They'll want plenty of room to lay him flat. I'll have the nurse and the doctor here and a room ready. Get there if possible before he does, so as not to move him about too often."

Meanwhile Mrs. John Blake, bride now of nearly eight hours, lay in a stricken heap upon the bed, bedewing with hot tears the shirt she had so dutifully laid ready for Mr. John Blake, and which now he was never more to wear. And Mr. John Blake, in a hurricane of fear, exasperation and bewilderment, a taxicab, and the swift-falling darkness, fared from hotel to hotel and demanded speech with Mrs. John Blake, a young lady in blue with several handbags and some heavy luggage, who had arrived at some hotel early that afternoon.

His interview with old Nicholson had been short and satisfactory, and at about five-thirty o'clock he was at the Ruissillard inquiring for Mrs. J. Blake's number and floor with a confidence he was soon to lose. There was no such

person. No such name. Then could the clerk tell him whether, and why, she had gone elsewhere. A slim and tall young lady in blue.

The clerk really couldn't say. He had been on duty for only half an hour. There was no person of the name of Blake in the hotel. Sometimes guests who failed to find just the accommodation they wanted went over to the Blenheim, just across the avenue. So the bridegroom set out upon his quest and the clerk, less world-weary than his predecessor, turned back to the telephone-girl.

Presently there approached the desk a brisk, business-like person who asked a few business-like questions and then registered in a bold and flowing hand, "Mr. and Mrs. Robert Blake, Boston."

"My husband," she announced, "will be here presently."

"He was here ten minutes ago," said the clerk, and added particulars.

"Oh, that's all right," replied the slightly-puzzled but quite unexcited lady; "he'll be back." And then, accompanied by bags and suitcases, she vanished aloft.

"Missed connections, somehow," commented the clerk to the stenographer, and gave himself to the contemplation of "Past Performances" in the *Evening Telegram*, and to ordinary routine of a hotel office for an hour or so, when, to prove the wisdom of the lady's calm, the excited Mr. John Blake returned.

"There must be some mistake," he began darkly, "I've been to every hotel---"

"Lady came ten minutes after you left," said the genial clerk. "Front, show the gentleman to 450." And, presently, John was explaining his dilemma to Gladys, the pretty wife of his cousin Bob. "She is somewhere in this hotel," he fumed, "and I'll find her if I have to search it room by room."

The office was hardly quiet after the appearance and disappearance of Mr. John Blake, when the clerk and the telephone-girl were again interrupted by an excited gentleman. His white whiskers framed an anxious, kindly face, his white waistcoat bound a true and tender heart.

"Has Mr. Blake arrived?" he demanded with some haste.

"Just a minute ago," the clerk replied, and was surprised at the disappointment his answer caused.

"I must see him," cried the old gentleman. "You needn't announce me. I'll go right up. I'm his wife's uncle, and she telephoned me to come."

"Front!" called the clerk. "This gentleman to 450."

At the door of 450 he dismissed his guide with suitable *largesse*, and softly entered the room. It was brightly illuminated, and Uncle Richard was able clearly to contemplate his nephew of eight hours in animated converse with a handsome woman in evening dress.

"I think, sir," said the woman, "that there is some mistake."

"I agree with you, madam," said Uncle Richard, "and I'm sorry for it."

"But you are exactly the man to help us," cried the nephew; "we are in an awful state."

"I agree with you, sir," repeated Uncle Richard.

"You *must* know how to help us," urged the nephew. "I've lost Marjorie."

"So I should have inferred. But she had already thrown herself away."

"She's *lost*!" stormed the bridegroom. "Don't you understand? Lost, lost, lost!"

"I rather think he misunderstands," the handsome woman interrupted. "You've not told him, John, who I am."

"You are mistaken," replied Uncle Richard with a horrible suavity; "I understand enough. That poor child telephoned to me not twenty minutes ago that her husband was injured, perhaps mortally, and implored my help. I left my dinner to come to his assistance and I find him---here---and thus."

"Twenty minutes ago?" yelled John, leaping upon his new relative and quite disregarding that gentleman's last words. "Where was she? Did she tell you where to look for her?"

"So, sir," stormed Uncle Richard, "the poor, deluded child has left you and turned to her faithful old uncle! Allow me to say that you're a blackguard, sir, and to wish you good-bye."

"If you dare to move," stormed John Blake, "until you tell me where my wife is, I'll strangle you. Now listen to me. This is Mrs. Bob Blake, wife of my cousin Robert. She's an old friend of Marjorie's. We had a half engagement to meet here this week. Bob is due any minute, but Marjorie is lost. There is only one record of a Blake in to-day's register and that's this room and this lady---when Marjorie left me at the ferry she was coming here, straight. I've been to all the possible hotels. She is nowhere. You say she telephoned to you. From where?"

"She didn't say," answered Uncle Richard, shame-facedly, and added still more dejectedly, "I didn't ask. She said in a letter her aunt received this morning that she was coming here. So I inferred that she was here."

"Then she is here," cried Gladys. "It's some stupid mistake in the office."

"I'll go down to that chap," John threatened, "and if he doesn't instantly produce Marjorie I'll shoot him."

[Illustration: UNCLE RICHARD'S FACE, AS HE MET JOHN'S EYES, WAS A STUDY.]

"You'll do nothing of the sort," his uncle contradicted, "the child appealed to me and I am the one to rescue her. I shall interview the manager. I know him. You may come with me if you like."

Down at the desk they accosted the still-courteous clerk. Uncle Richard produced his card, and, before he could ask for the manager the clerk flicked a memorandum out of one pigeon-hole, a key out of another, and twirled the register on its turn-table almost into the midst of the white waistcoat.

"The lady has been expecting you for hours, Mr. Underwood," said he. "Looked for you quite early in the afternoon, so the maid says. Register here, please. Quite hysterical, she is, they tell me, and the maid was asking for the doctor---Front! 625!"

Uncle Richard's face, as he met John's eyes, was a study. The telephone-girl disentangled the receiver from her pompadour so that she might hear without hindrance the speech which was bursting through the swelling buttons of the white waistcoat and making the white whiskers quiver.

"I know nothing whatever about *any* lady in *any* of your rooms," he roared, greatly to the delight of the bellboys. "I know nothing about your Underwood woman, with her doctors and her hysterics. I want to see the manager."

"If," said the telephone maiden, adjusting her skirt at the hips and shaking her figure into greater conformity with the ideal she had set before it---"If this gentleman is 2525 Gram., then the lady in 625 rang him up at seven-thirty and held the wire seven minutes talkin' to him and cryin' to beat Sousa's band. All about her uncle she was talkin'. I guess it was him, all right, all right. His voice sounds sort of familiar to me when he talks mad."

But John had neither eyes nor ears for Uncle Richard's wrath. He snatched the key and the paper upon which the supercilious clerk had inscribed, at Marjorie's embarrassed dictation, "Mrs. Underwood, West Hills, N.J. (husband to arrive later), 625 and 6," and, since love is keen, he jumped to the right conclusion and the open elevator without further delay.

An hour or so later the attention of the clerk and the telephone-girl was again drawn to the complicated Blakes. A party of four sauntered out of the dining-room and approached the desk.

"I'll register now, I think," said John. And when he had finished he turned to the star-eyed girl behind him.

"Look carefully at this, Marjorie," he admonished. "Mr. and Mrs. John Blake. *You* are Mrs. John Blake. Do you think you can remember that?"

"Don't laugh at me," she pleaded, "Gladys says it was a most natural mistake, and so does Bob. Don't you, Gladys and Bob?"

"An almost inevitable mistake," they chorused mendaciously, "but," added Bob, "a rather disastrous mistake for your uncle to explain to his wife, the doctor and the nurse. He'll be able for it, though; I never saw so game an old chap."

"And I'll never do it again," she promised. People never do when they've been married a long, long time, and I feel as though I had been married thousands and thousands of years."

"Poor, tired little girl," said John, "you have had a rather indifferent time of it. Say good-night to Dick and Gladys. Come, my dear."

MISERY LOVES COMPANY.

"But, Win," remonstrated the bride-elect, "I really don't think we *could*. Wouldn't it look awfully strange? I don't think I ever heard of its being done."

"Neither did I," he agreed. "And yet I want you to do it. Look at it from my point of view. I persuade John Mead to stop wandering around the world and to take an apartment with me here in New York. Then I meet you. The inevitable happens and in less than a year John is to be left desolate. You know how eccentric he is, and how hard it will be for him to get on with any other companion---"

"I know," said Patty, "that he never will find any one---but you---to put up with his eccentricities."

"And then, as if abandoning him were not bad enough, I go and maim the poor beggar: blind him temporarily---permanently, if he is not taken care of---and disfigure him beyond all description. Honestly, Patty, you never saw anything like him."

"I know," said she, "I know. A pair of black eyes."

"Black!" he cried, "why, they're all the colors of the rainbow and two more beside, as the story-book says. All the way from his hair to his mustache he is one lurid sunset. I don't want to minimize this thing. It has only one redeeming feature: he will be a complete disguise. No amount of rice or ribbon could counteract his sinister companionship. No bridal suspicions could live in the light of it. Doesn't that thought help?"

The conversation wandered into personalities and back again, as a conversation may three days before a wedding, but Patty was not entirely won over to Hawley's view of his responsibility for having with unprecedented dexterity and precision planted a smashing "right" on the bridge of his friend's nose in the course of an amicable "bout."

"And the oculist chap says," Winthrop urged, "that he simply must not be allowed to use his eyes. I'm the only one who takes any interest in him or has any control over him, and to abandon him now would be an awful responsibility. Can't you see that, dear? If we stay at home to take care of him he will understand why we're doing it, and he'd vanish. Do let me put him into a motor mask and attach him to the procession."

"Well, of course, Win," Patty answered, "of course we must have him if you feel so strongly about it. It's a pity," she ended mischievously, "that he dislikes me so much."

"That's because you dislike him. But just wait till you know one another."

"I will," she answered with a spirit which promised well for the future. "I'll wait."

And Winthrop was so touched and gratified by her complaisance that he had no alternative, save to duplicate it, when the following evening brought him this communication:

"Kate Perry and I were playing golf this morning. And, oh! Win, it seems just too dreadful! I banged her between the eyes with my driver. I can't think how I ever did it. She's not fit to be seen. Awful! worse than Mr. Mead can possibly be. She can't stay here and she can't go home to Washington.

"So, now, if you will consent, we shall be four instead of three. Let me take poor Kate. She can wear a thick veil and sit in behind with Mr. Mead, in his goggles, and leave the front seats for us. They'll be company for one another."

Winthrop questioned this final sentence. A supercilious, spoiled beauty---a beauty now doubly spoiled and presumedly bad tempered---was hardly an ideal companion for the misanthropic Mead.

* * * * *

The wedding took place in the morning and the beginning of the honeymoon was prosaic enough. Winthrop and Patty sat in the front seat of the throbbing touring car, while hysterical bridesmaids and vengeful groomsmen showered the requisite quantities of rice, confetti and old slippers upon them.

It was at the New York side of the ferry that a shrouded female joined them, and it was at the Hoboken side of the river that a be-goggled young man was added unto her. The bride rushed through the formula of introduction: a readjustment

of dress-suit cases and miniature trunks was effected, and the disguise which the bridegroom had predicted was complete. The most romantic onlooker would not have suspected them of concealing a honeymoon about them.

It was nearly six o'clock when at last they reached their destination, the little town of Rapidan, in New Jersey, and stopped before the Empress Hotel. Hawley had visited Rapidan once before, as a member of his college glee club, and he had recalled it instantly when Mead's disfigurement made sequestration imperative.

The motor sobbed itself to a standstill: several children and dogs gathered to inspect it, and then finding more interest and novelty in Mead's mask turned their attention to him.

The Empress had evidently been dethroned for some years, and the hospitality she afforded her guests was of an impoverished sort. Hawley, approaching the desk to make enquiries, was met by a clerk incredibly arrayed, and the intelligence that the whole house was theirs to choose, except for two small rooms on the third floor occupied by two gentlemen who "traveled" respectively in sarsaparilla and molasses.

Hawley returned to his friends and repeated this information.

"How perfectly sweet of them," cried the irresponsible bride. "Oh! Win, we must stay here and see them. Isn't it the dearest sleepy hollow of a place?"

Attended by the impressed and impressive clerk, they made an inspection of the house. Mr. and Mrs. Hawley settled upon a suite just over the main entrance. Mead was established across the hall. But Kate found a wonderful panorama which could only be seen from the rooms on the third floor, and there, down a dreary length of oil-clothed hall, she bestowed herself and her belongings.

"For I must," she explained to Patty, "I simply *must* get out of this veil and breathe, and I shouldn't dare to do it within reach of that horribly supercilious friend of Winthrop's. I'm going to plead headache or something, and have my dinner sent up here."

Mead, meanwhile, was unfolding similar plans to Hawley. "I should have joined you," said he, "if your wife's friend had been a little less self-sufficient and unsympathetic. Of course, I don't require any sympathy; but I don't want ridicule either. So, while she is of the party I'll have my meals in my room. I can't act the 'Man in the Iron Mask' forever. You just leave the ladies together after dinner and come up here for a pipe with me."

And when Mr. and Mrs. Hawley next encountered one another and reported the wishes of their friends, he suggested and she rapturously agreed, that they should dine in their horse-hair-covered sitting-room.

"I have a reason, dear," she told him, "for not wishing to go to the dining-room for our first meal together. I'll explain later."

"Your wishing it is enough," he answered before the conversation sank to banalities.

And when these several intentions were made clear to the conscientious clerk, he sent for the police force of the town---it consisted of a mild, little old man in a uniform and helmet which might have belonged to some mountainous member of the Broadway Squad in its prime---and implored him to spend the evening in the hall.

"They're beginning to act up funny already," the clerk imparted. "This eatin' all over the house don't seem just right to me. What do they think the dining-room's for anyway? Sam was up with the bag belonging to the single fellow, and he

says he's got the worst looking pair of black eyes he ever saw. Here, Sam, you come and tell Jimmie what he looks like."

Sam, a middle-aged combination of porter, bellboy, furnace-man, office assistant and emergency barkeeper was but newly launched upon his description of Mead's face, when the chambermaid, who was also the waitress and housekeeper, broke in upon them with the intelligence that never in all her born days *or* nights had she seen anything like the face of the young lady on the third floor.

"What's the matter with her," said the clerk suspiciously, with a look which warned Jimmie to be at once a Bingham and a Sherlock Holmes.

"Why, Horace," she answered tragically, "that girl has two of the most awful black eyes. The whites of them is red and then comes purple and green and yellow. I guess they was meant to be blue."

This chromatic scale was too much for Jimmie. He reeled where he sat and then, the postman opportunely arriving, sent word to Mrs. Jimmie that duty would keep him from her all the night.

"Tell her," he huskily charged his messenger, "that there is suspicious circumstances going on in this house."

"You bet there is," the clerk agreed. "It looks like a case of attempted murder to me."

"Divorce, more likely," was Jimmie's professional opinion, but he had scant time to enlarge upon it before the waitress, outraged to the point of tears, broke out of her domain. She brought with her an atmosphere of long-dead beefsteak, chops and onions, and she shrilled for an answer to her question.

"What's the matter with 'em anyway? Ain't the dining-room good enough for 'em to eat in? It done all right for Judge Campbell's funeral this afternoon, and I found a real sweet wreath on that there whatnot in the corner. The candles wasn't all burnt up neither, an' I set out four of 'em on the four corners. It looks elegant, an' them tube-roses smells grand. An' when I told that young lady what's got the use of her eyes how glad I was they happened in when we was so well fixed for decorations, she looked awful funny. Most like she was cross-eyed."

"They all seem to have eye-trouble," Jimmie commented. "Do you suppose they're running away from one of these here blind asylums."

"Lunatic asylum, most likely," the cheerful clerk contributed.

When the other two guests ceased from traveling in molasses and sarsaparilla and returned to their quiet hostelry, all these surmises had hardened into certainties, and were imparted to them with a new maze of suspicion, more dense, more deadly, and more strictly in accordance with the principles laid down in "Dandy Dick, the Boy Detective."

Madeline, the waitress, reported further particulars as she ministered to the creature-comforts of the traveling gentlemen dining alone among the funeral-baked meats. So interested and excited did these gentlemen become that they determined to interview, or at least to see, their mysterious fellow guests.

When their elaborate supper had reached its apotheosis of stewed prunes and blue-boiled rice, Hawley and Mead had gone out for a meditative and tobacco-shrouded stroll. They passed through the hall and inspiration awoke in Jimmie.

"By gum," said he, "I know them now. I suspicioned them from the first by what Horace told me. But now I've got them sure. You mind that time I was down to New York and was showed over Police Headquarters, by professional

etiquette?"

"Sure," they all agreed. It was indeed a reminiscence, the details of which had been playing havoc with Rapidan's nerves for the past fifteen years. They felt that they could not bear it now.

"Well," continued Jimmie, gathering his auditors close about him by the husky whisper he now adopted, "I see them two fellers then. Mebbe 'twas in the Rogue's Gallery and mebbe it was in the cells. I ain't worked it down that fine yet, but I'll think and pray on it and let you know when I get light."

When the staff and the commercial guests of the Empress Hotel were waiting to see illumination burst through the blue-shrouded protector, the bridal party was veering momentarily further from the normal. For the deserted bride, alone in the desolate best sitting-room, laid her head upon her arms and laughed and laughed. She had made one cautious descent to the ground floor in search of diversion, and meeting Jimmie, she found it. After a conversation strictly categorical upon his side and widely misleading upon hers, she had gone up stairs again and halted in the upper hall just long enough to hear Jimmie's triumphant:

"Well, we know *her* name anyway."

"What is it?" hissed Horace, while the porter relieved himself of a quid of tobacco so that nothing should interfere with his hearing and attention.

"Huh!" ejaculated Jimmie, "you bin a hotel clerk two years and sold seegars all that time (when you could) and you don't know Ruby Mandeville when she stands before you."

A box of the "Flor de" that gifted songstress, was soon produced and pried open, and the effulgent charms of its godmother compared with the less effulgent, but no less charming figure which had just trailed away.

"It's her, sure as you're born," cried the gentleman who traveled in molasses, absent-mindedly abstracting three cigars and conveying them surreptitiously to his coat pocket.

"She's fallen off some in flesh," commented Horace, as with careful presence of mind he drew out his daybook and entered a charge for those three cigars.

"But she don't fool me," said Jimmie, "she can put flesh on or she can take it off---"

"My, how you talk!" shrilled the chambermaid-bellboy, "you'd think you was talkin' about clothes."

"It ain't no different to them," Jimmie maintained. "That's one of the things us detekitives has got to watch out for."

"What do you s'pose she's doing here?" asked the porter.

"Gettin' married again most likely. That's about all she does nowadays."

Patty was still chuckling and choking over these remarks, when the door of the sitting-room opened cautiously and Kate Perry, swathed in her motor veil, looked in.

"Are we alone?" she demanded with proper melodramatic accent.

"We are," the bride answered, "Winthrop and Mr. Mead have gone out for a smoke."

"Then I want you to tell me if I'm fading at all. I've been looking at it upstairs, in a little two-by-three mirror, and taken that way, by inches, it looks awful. Tell me what you think?" She removed the veil and presented her damaged face for her friend's inspection. There was not much improvement to report, but the always optimistic Patty did what she could with it.

[Illustration: SHE SWOOPED UNDER THE LARGE CENTER TABLE, DRAGGING PATTY WITH HER.]

"The left cheek," she pronounced, "is really better, less swollen, less---Oh! Kate, here they come."

Miss Perry began to readjust her charitable gray chiffon veil. It was one of those which are built around a circular aperture, and as the steps in the hall came ever closer she, in one last frantic effort succeeded in framing the most lurid of her eyes in this opening. Casting one last look into the mirror, she swooped under the large center-table, dragging Patty with her, and disposing their various frills and ribbons under the long-hanging tablecover.

"If they don't find either of us," she whispered, "they'll go away to look for us."

She had no time to say more, and Patty had no time to say anything before the door opened and presented to their limited range of vision, two utterly strange pairs of shoes and the hems of alien trousers.

"I hope you will excuse me, Miss," began the molasses gentleman, so full of his entrance speech that he said the first part of it before he noticed that the room was empty. And then turned to rend his fellow adventurer, who was laughing at him.

"Didn't Horace tell us," he stormed, "that she was here, and wasn't you going to say how you had saw her in the original 'Black Crook?'"

"I seen her all right," said his more grammatical friend, with heavy emphasis.

"Do you see her now?" demanded the irate molasses traveler.

"I do not, but I'll set here 'til she comes."

They both sat. Not indeed until the arrival of Ruby Mandeville, but until Hawley and Mead made their appearance, and made it, too, very plain that they had not expected and did not enjoy the society of the travelers.

"Where are the ladies?" asked Hawley.

"Search us," responded the travelers.

"They must have gone to their rooms," said the bridegroom. "If these gentlemen don't object to our waiting here," he went on with a fine and wasted sarcasm.

"Set right down," said the genial sarsaparilla man, and to further promote good feeling he tendered his remaining "Ruby Mandeville" cigar.

"Your friend," said he affably, "does he always wear them goggles?"

"Always," answered Hawley. "Eats in them, sleeps in them."

"Born in them," supplemented Mead savagely.

They sat and waited for yet a few moments, and though Mead did not add geniality to the conversation, he certainly contributed interest to it. For his views on honeymoon etiquette being strong within him, and an audience made to his hand, he went on to amplify some of the theories with which he had been trying to undermine Winthrop's loyalty.

"I am persuaded that most of the disappointments of married life are due to the impossible standards set up at the beginning. Look at it this way. You know the fuss most wives make about the hours a husband keeps. Well! suppose Mr. Hawley comes out in the car with me to-night. I know some fellows who have a summer studio near here. We'll run over and make a night of it."

"Say," the molasses gentleman broke in, "be you married, mister?"

"No!" said Mead.

"Sounds like it," said the molasses gentleman. "Marriage will sort of straighten you out on these here subjects."

"Oh, leave 'em be," admonished the sarsaparilla man. "If I had 'a met up with him thirty years ago, mebbee I wouldn't be in the traveling line now. He's got a fine idee."

Hawley, meanwhile, was wrestling with his manners and the "Ruby Mandeville," until the lady, as was her custom, triumphed.

He hurriedly and incompletely extinguished the cigar, and attracted by the same opportunity for concealment which had appealed to Kate and Patty, he lifted a corner of the heavy-fringed tablecover and sent Ruby to join the other ladies.

Now, a lighted cigar applied suddenly to the ear of an excited and half-hysterical conspirator, will generally produce results. In this case it produced a scream, the bride, and after an interval, the shrouded confidential friend.

"See where amazement on your mother sits," the ghost remarks in Hamlet, but amazement never sat so hard on the wicked Gertrude of Denmark as it did upon the four men who saw the tablecloth give up its ghosts.

At first there was silence. One of those throbbing, abominable silences whose every second makes a situation worse and explanation more impossible.

The "Black Crook" speech of welcome and appreciation died in the heart of the molasses traveler. It did not somehow seem the safest answer to Hawley's threatening---

"I think you gentlemen had better explain how you happen to be in my private sitting-room. Perhaps we had better step out into the hall."

They did, and the echoes of their conversation brought Jimmie, that trusty sleuth, upon the scene. With him he brought Horace as witness. Also, he carried his dark lantern. He directed its glare fitfully at the two strangers until Mead, catching a beam in his eye, turned and drove Jimmie and his cohorts from the scene. They retreated in exceedingly bad order to the bar, and then Jimmie announced in sepulchral whispers that he had further identification to impart. He required much liquid refreshment to nerve him to speech, and his audience required to be similarly strengthened to hear.

"I've got 'em," he began, "I know 'em now. Horace, this is the biggest thing you'll ever be anywhere near." And, as his hearers drew close about him, he whispered "counterfeiters. The hull kit and bilin' of 'em."

* * * * *

Meanwhile, Kate and Patty wrestled afresh with the automobile veil, and had succeeded in getting it tied in a limp string around the bridesmaid's neck, leaving all her head and face uncovered. And when the groom and the groomsman returned she, with a muffled gurgle, dived back into the seclusion of the tablecover.

"We've got rid of those bounders," Hawley announced, and---

"Hello!" cried Mead, "Miss Perry gone already?"

"She was very tired," said Patty veraciously, but evasively.

"Awfully jolly girl, isn't she Mead?" said Hawley, with the expansiveness of the newly-wed. "Handsome, too?"

"Perhaps she is, but so long as she dresses like a veiled prophet it is hard to tell."

"If you two can get on without me," said Patty, disregarding a muffled protest from under the table, "I'll go up and fetch," she made these comforting words very clear, "my green motor veil."

Instantly, when he closed the door after her, Mead turned to Hawley.

"There's something wrong with this confounded mask," said he. "This strap-thing that goes round my head must be too tight. I've been mad with it the last half hour. How do I look?" he asked genially as he took it off, and proceeded to tamper with the buckles and elastic. "Howling Jupiter!" he cried a moment later, "I've busted it."

As the two friends stood and stared at one another aghast, they heard the click of Patty's returning heels, and Mead, abandoning dignity, courage---everything except the broken mask---dived into Miss Perry's maiden bower.

Mrs. Hawley watched this procedure with wide and fascinated eyes. No ripple shook the walls of the bower. No sound proceeded from it as the moments flew. Then Patty fell away into helpless laughter and wept tears of shocked and sudden mirth into the now useless motor veil.

"Patty!" remonstrated her husband, but she laughed helplessly on. "At least come out into the hall and laugh there," he urged, "the poor chap will hear you." And when he had followed her and listened to her shaken whisper, he broke into such a shout as forced the indignant and outraged Kate into a shudder of protest and disgust.

Instantly Mead threw an arm past the table's single central support and grasped a handful of silk chiffon and two fingers.

He, being of an acquisitive turn, retained the fingers. She being of a dictatorial turn, rebuked him.

"Finding is keeping," he shamelessly remarked. "Even in infancy I was taught that."

Now, a certain pomp of scene and circumstance is necessary to the sort of dignified snubbing with which Miss Perry was accustomed to treat possible admirers. Also, a serene consciousness of superlative good looks. But Kate Perry disfigured, cramped into a ridiculous hiding place, and suffering untold miseries of headache and throbbing eyes, was a

very different creature.

And Mead, flippant, hard, and misanthropic in the state of nature, softened wonderfully as he sat in the gloom of the tablecover, in silent possession of those two slim fingers.

His words grew gentle, his manner kind, and her answers were calculated to petrify her long-suffering family if they could have overheard them.

"Mr. Mead," she said at last, "will you be so very kind as to stay here quietly under the table while I scramble out and go up to my room?"

No tongue of angel could have made a more welcome suggestion. Mead uttered feeble and polite proffers of escort, and silently called down blessings upon the head he had never seen. He had just allowed himself to be dissuaded from knight errantry, when the door opened and Jimmie flashed his dark lantern about the brightly lighted room. He then beckoned mysteriously to the still vigilant Horace, who lurked in the hall.

"Have you found them?" whispered that youth.

"Not a trace of them," answered Jimmie triumphantly. "They ain't gone out. They ain't in their rooms, and I'm studyin' how I can round 'em up. They're the most suspicious characters I ever see, Horace, and this night's work may cost us our lives."

This disposition of his existence did not seem to cheer Horace.

"Counterfeiters," Jimmie went on, "is the desperatest kind of criminals there is. Still we got to git 'em. I'll look round this room just so as nothing won't escape us, and then we'll go up to the next floor. It's good we got two of them located in the bridal suite."

Jimmie, with his prying dark lantern and his prodding nightstick, soon reached the space under the table, and the counterfeiters secreted there.

"I got 'em," he cried delightedly. "Hi, you. Come out of there and show yourselves."

They came. There was nothing else to do.

"Moses's holy aunt," cried Jimmie, falling back upon Horace, who promptly fell back upon the sofa.

"Here, you," said Mead. "You get out of this, both of you. Don't you know this is a private sitting-room?"

"No settin'-room," said Jimmie, recovering somewhat, "is private to them as sets under tables blackening one another's eyes."

"You ridiculous idiot," snorted Mead. "Do you dare to think that I hurt this lady?"

"Lady? Ain't she your wife?"

"She is *not*," snapped Kate.

"Then why did you hit her?" demanded Jimmie. "If she ain't your wife what did you want to hit her for? An' anyway, she'd ought to be. That's all I got to say."

* * * * *

The same idea occurred to Mr. and Mrs. Hawley, crouched guiltily against their door to hear their victims pass, for their amazed ears caught these words---the first were Kate's:

"You must let me give you some of my lotion."

And then came Mead's:

"I shall be *most* grateful. It must be hot stuff. You know you're hardly disfigured at all."

"The saints forgive him," Patty gurgled.

Later on in the darkness, Jimmie's idea visited Mead and was received with some cordiality. And at some time later still, it must have been presented to Miss Perry, for the misanthropic Mead---no longer misanthropic---now boasts a massive and handsome wife whom he calls his Little Kitty. But the idea was originally Jimmie's.

THE CHRISTMAS GUEST

On the day before Christmas eve John Sedyard closed his desk, dismissed his two clerks and his stenographer two hours earlier than usual, and set out in quest of adventure and a present for his sister Edith. John Sedyard had a habit of succeeding in all he set forth to do but the complete and surprising success which attended him in this quest was a notch above even his high average.

Earlier in the month, his stenographer had secured the annual pledges of his affection for all the relatives, friends and dependants to whom he was in the habit of giving presents: all except his mother, his unmarried sister, Edith, who still lived at home, and his fiancée, Mary Van Plank. The gifts for these three, he had decided, must be of his own choice and purchase. He had provided for his mother and for Mary earlier in the week. Neither excitement nor adventure had attended upon the purchase of their gifts. Something for the house or the table was always the trick for elderly ladies who presided over large establishments and gave their whole souls to the managing of them. He bought for his mother a set of colonial silver candlesticks. For Mary, he bought a comb of gold---all gold, like her own lovely hair. The dark tortoise shell of the one she wore always seemed an incongruous note in her fair crown. But Edith was as yet unrepresented, and it was on her account that Mr. Sedyard deserted his office and delighted his subordinates at three o'clock in the afternoon.

Edith was much more difficult than the other two had been. She was strong-minded, much given to churchwork and committees. Neither the home, as represented by the candlesticks, nor self-adornment as typified by the golden comb could be expected to appeal to her communistic, altruistic nature. And Sedyard, having experienced two inspirations, could think of nothing but combs and candlesticks. So he threw himself into the current, which swept along Broadway, trusting that some accident would suggest a suitable offering. Meanwhile, he revelled in the crowd, good-humored, holiday-making, holly-decked, which carried him uptown, past Wanamaker's and Grace Church, swirled him across old "dead man's curve," and down the Fourteenth Street side of Union Square. Here the shops were smaller, not so overwhelming, and here he was stopped by seeing a red auction flag. Looking in over the heads of the assembled crowd, he saw that the auctioneer was holding up a feather-crowned hat and addressing his audience after the manner of his kind:

"Buy a hat for your wife. A waste-paper basket by night and a hat by day. Genuine ostrich feathers growing on it. Becoming to all styles of feminine beauty. What am I bid on this sure tickler of the feminine palate? Three dollars? Why, ladies and gents, the dooty on it alone was twelve. It's a Paris hat, ladies. Your sister, your mother, your maiden aunt---"

Sedyard hearkened, but absently, to the fellow's words, but his problem was solved. He would buy Edith something to look pretty in. She was a pretty girl and in danger of forgetting it. And she had been decent, John reflected, awfully decent about Mary. He knew that the *entente cordiale* which existed between Mary and his mother was largely due to Edith, and he knew, too, that Edith, an authority on modern-housing and model-living, surely but silently disapproved of Mary's living alone in a three-roomed studio and devoting her days to painting, when there was so much rescue work to be done in the world.

"I get my uplift," Mary would explain when Edith urged these things upon her, "from the elevator. Living on the eighth floor, dear, I cannot but help seeing the world from a very different angle."

Yes, John reflected as he chuckled in retrospect over such conversations, Edith had certainly been awfully decent.

During these meditations several articles of feminine apparel had come and gone under the hammer. The crowd had decreased somewhat and his position now commanded a clear view of the auctioneer's platform, and he realized that the fierce light of the arc lamps beat down upon as charming a costume as he had seen for many a day. All of corn-flower blue it was, a chiffon gown, a big chiffon muff and a plumed hat. Oh! if he had been allowed to do such shopping for Mary! how quickly he would have entered into the lists of bidders! Mary's eyes were just that heavenly shade of blue, but Mary's pride was as great as her poverty, and the time when he could shower his now useless wealth upon her was not yet. And then his loyal memory told him that Edith was blue-eyed like all the Sedyards and he knew that his sister's Christmas gifts stood before him. He failed, however, to discern in the bland presence of the lay figure, upon which they were disposed to such advantage, the companion of one of the most varied adventures in his long career.

The chiffon finery was rather too much for the Fourteenth Street audience. The bidding languished. The auctioneer's pleadings fell upon deaf ears. In vain his assistant, a deft-fingered man with a beard, twirled the waxen-faced figure to show the "semi-princesse back" and the "near-Empire front." Corn-blue chiffon and panne velvet are not much worn in Fourteenth Street. The auctioneer grew desperate. "Twenty-five dollars," he repeated with such scorn that the timid woman who had made the bid wished herself at home and in bed. "*Twenty-five* dollars!"

"Throw in the girl, why don't you?" suggested a facetious youth, chiefly remarkable for a nose, a necktie and a diamond ring. "She's a peach all right, all right. She's got a smile that won't come off."

"All right, I'll throw her in," cried the desperate auctioneer. "What am I bid for this here afternoon costume complete with lady."

"Twenty-seven fifty," said a woman whom three years of banting would still have left too fat to get into it.

"Twenty-eight," whispered the first bidder.

"Thirty," said John Sedyard.

There was some other desultory bidding but in a few moments Sedyard found himself minus fifty-four dollars and plus a chiffon gown and muff, a hat all drooping plumes and a graceful female form, golden-haired, bewitching, with a smile sweetly blended of surprise, incipient idiocy and allure.

"She's a queen all right, all right," the sophisticated youth cheered him. "Git onto them lovely wax-like hands. Say, you know honest, on the level, she's worth the whole price of admission."

John, still chaperoned by this sagacious and helpful youth, made his way to the clerk's desk and proceeded to give his name and address and request that his purchases should be delivered in the morning.

"Deliver nothin'," said the clerk pleasantly. "Do you suppose we'd 'a let you have the goods at that price if we could 'a stored 'em overnight? Our lease is up," he continued consulting his Ingersoll watch, "in just fifteen minutes. In a quarter of an hour we hand over the keys and what's left of the fixtures to the landlord. He's let the store for to-morrow to a Christmas-tree ornaments merchant."

"Then I suppose I'll have to get an expressman. Where is the nearest, do you know?"

"Expressman!" exclaimed the sharp youth. "Well, I guess the nearest would be about Three Hundred and Fifty-second Street and *then* he'd have a load and a jag. No, sir, it's the faithful cab for yours. There's a row of cabs just on the edge of the square. I could go over and get you a hansom."

"Thank you," said John, "I wish you would." But a glance at his languishing companion made him add, "I guess you had better make it a four-wheeler. Hansom-riding would be pretty cold for a lady without a coat."

"All right," said the sharp youth. "You bring her out on the sidewalk and I'll get the hurry-up wagon. Say!" he halted to suggest, "you know what you'll look like, don't you?---riding around with that smile. When the lights flush you, you'll look just like a bridal party from Hoboken."

Leaving this word of comfort behind him, he proceeded to imperil his life among trolley cars and traffic, while John engaged the lady and urged her to motion.

He discovered that, supported at the waistline, she could be wheeled very nicely. He forced the muff over her upraised right hand, so that it somewhat concealed her face, and through an aisle respectfully cleared by the onlookers he led her to the open air. There he propped her against the show-window and turned in search of the cab and his new friend. In doing so he came face to face with an old one.

"Why, hello John!" said Frederick Trevor, a man who had an office in his building and an interest in his sister. "Who would have thought of meeting you here?"

"Or you," retorted John. "But since you are here, you can help me in a little difficulty."

"Not now, old chap," said Frederick, "I'm in a bit of a hurry. See you about it to-morrow. Well, so long. Don't let me keep you from your friend."

"Friend!" stormed John and then following the directions of Trevor's eyes, he descried a blue-clad, golden-haired young lady lolling against the window, trying with a giant chiffon muff to smother a fit of hilarious laughter. One arched and smiling eye showed above the muff and the whole figure was instinct with Bacchanalian mirth. "Why that's," he began to explain, but young Trevor had vanished into the crowd.

Presently the cab with the smart youth inside drew up to the curb and Sedyard, with a new self-consciousness, put his arm around the blue figure and trundled her across the sidewalk. The cabman threw his rug across his horse's quarters and lumbered down to assist at the embarkation of so fair a passenger. The smart youth held the door encouragingly

open and John proceeded, with much more strength than he had expected to use, to heave the passenger aboard.

Even these preliminaries had attracted the nucleus of a crowd and the smart youth grew restive.

"Aw, say Maudie," he urged when the lady stuck rigid catty-cornerwise across the cab with her blue feathers pressed against the roof in one corner, and her bird-cage skirt arrangement protruding beyond the door-sill. "Aw, say Maudie, set down, why don't you, and take your Trilbys in. This gent is going to take you carriage riding."

"What's the matter with her anyway," demanded the cabman. "Don't she know how to set in a carriage?"

"No, she doesn't, she's only a wax figure," said John, "but I bought her and now I'm determined to take her home. She'd better go up on the box with you."

"What! her?" demanded the outraged Jehu. "Say, what do you take me for anyway? Do you suppose I ain't got no friends just 'cause I drive a cab? Why! I wouldn't drive up Broadway with them goo-goo eyes settin' beside me, not for nothing you could offer, I wouldn't."

By this time the crowd had reached very respectable proportions although there was nothing to see except the end of a blue gown hanging out of the cab's open door. The sharp youth, the cabman and John took turns in trying to adjust the lady to her environment. The rigidity and fragility of her arms and head made this very difficult, and presently there rolled upon the scene a policeman, large, Irish and chivalrous. It took Patrolman McDonogh but a second, but one glance at the tableaux and one whisper from the crowd to understand that a kidnapping atrocity was in progress.

With wrath in his eye, he shouldered aside Sedyard and the cabman, grabbed the smart youth, whose turn at persuasion was then on, and threw him into the face of the crowd.

"Oh! but you're the villyans," he admonished them, and then addressed the captive maid in reassuring tones.

"You're all right, Miss, now. You're no longer defenceless in this wicked city. The arrum of the law is around you," he cried, encircling her waist with that substantial member. "You're safe at last, come here to me out of that."

"Oh! noble, noble man," cried an emotional woman in the crowd. "If all officers were like you!"

Heartened by these words the noble, noble man exerted the arm of the law and plucked the maiden out of the cab amid great excitement and applause. But above the general murmur the shrill voice of the sharp youth rent the air:

"Fathead," he cried, "you've broke her neck. Can't you see how her head's goin' round and round?"

[Illustration: THE CHANGELESS SMILE AND THE DROOPING PLUMES MADE THREE COMPLETE REVOLUTIONS AND NESTLED CONFIDINGLY UPON THE SHOULDER OF THE LAW. Page 129.]

At this the emotional woman dropped to the sidewalk. "Lady fainted here, officer," cried a gentleman. But the noble, noble officer had no time for faints, and the lady was obliged to revive with only the assistance of the cold stones and curiosity.

For the shrill voice had spoken truth. Something had given away in Maudie's mysterious anatomy; the fair head, the changeless smile and the drooping plumes made three complete revolutions and nestled confidently upon the shoulder of the Law.

"Here, none o' that," yelled Patrolman McDonogh quite reversing his earlier diagnosis of the situation. "None of your flim-flams, if you please. You go quiet and paceable with this gentleman. A little ride in the air is what you need."

"That's right, officer," Sedyard interrupted. "That's how to talk to her. I can't do a thing with her."

"Brute!" cried the emotional woman now happily restored. "It's officers like him that disgraces the force."

Patrolman McDonogh turned to identify this blasphemer and Maudie's head, deprived of its support, made another revolution and then dropped coyly to her left shoulder. She looked so unspeakable in that attitude that the cabman felt called upon to offer a little professional advice:

"She needs a checkrein," he declared, "an' she needs it bad," a remark which so incensed Patrolman McDonogh that Sedyard decided to explain:

"Just disperse those people, will you," said he, "I want to talk to you."

The sharp youth relieved the officer of law of his fair burden and posed her in a natural attitude of waiting beside the cab. McDonogh cleared the sidewalk and hearkened to Sedyard's tale.

"So you see," said John in conclusion, "what I'm up against. I really didn't want the dummy when I bought it and you can bet I'm tired of it now. What I wanted was the clothes, and I guess the thing for me to do is just to take them in the cab and leave the figure here."

"What!" thundered McDonogh. "You're going to leave a dummy without her clothes here on my beat? Not if I see ye first, ye ain't, and if ye try it on I'll run ye in."

"Say! I'll tell you what you want," piped up the still buoyant, smart youth. "You need one of them open taxicabs."

"He needs a hearse," corrected the disgruntled cabman. "Somethin' she can lay down in comfortable an' take in the sights through the windows."

"Now, he needs a taxi. He can leave her stand in the back all right, but I guess," he warned John, "you'll have to sit in with her and hold her head on."

And thus it was that Maudie left the scene. She left, too, the smart youth, the cabman and the noble, noble officer. And as the taxi bumped over the trolley tracks she, despite all Sedyard's efforts, turned her head and smiled out at them straight over her near-princesse back.

"Gee!" said the smart youth, "ain't she the friendliest bunch of calico."

"This case," said the noble Patrolman McDonogh with unpunctual inspiration, "had ought to be looked into by rights."

"Chauffeur," said John Sedyard to the shadowy form before him, "just pick out the darkest streets, will you?"

"Yes, sir," answered the chauffeur looking up into the bland smile and the outstretched hand above him. "I'll make it if I can but if we get stopped, don't blame me."

A year later, or so it seemed to John Sedyard, the taxicab, panting with indignation at the insults and interferences to which it had been subjected, turned into Sedyard's eminently respectable block and drew up before his eminently handsome house.

He paid and propitiated the chauffeur, took his lovely burden in his arms and staggered up the steps with the half regretful feeling of one who steps out of the country of adventure back to prosaic things. He found his latchkey, opened his door and drew Maudie into the hall. And on the landing half-way up the stairs stood his sister Edith, evidently the bearer of some pleasant tidings.

Maudie's smile flashed up at her from John's shoulder. Edith stared, stiffened, and retraced her steps. John wheeled the figure into the reception-room and thus addressed it:

"Listen to me, you dumbhead. You may think this adventure is over. Well, so did I, but I tell you now it's only just beginning. If you are not mighty careful you will be wrecking a home. So keep your mouth shut," he charged her, "and do nothing till you hear from me!"

Maudie smiled archly, coyly, confidentially, and he went upstairs.

In the sitting-room, he found gathered together his mother, his sister and Dick Van Plank, Mary's young brother and a student at Columbia. John was supported through Edith's first remark and the look with which she accompanied it by the memory of her goodness to Mary and by the anticipation of the fun which Maudie might be made to provide.

"I wish to say, John," she began, before any one else had time to speak, "that I've said *nothing* to mother or Dick, and I think it would be better if you didn't. I can attend to the case if you leave it to me."

"Like you," said John shortly. "Who told you she is a 'case.' Mother," he went on addressing that gentle knitter by the fire, "I want you to come downstairs."

"She shall do nothing of the kind!" cried Edith, and as Mrs. Sedyard looked interrogatively from one to another of her children, her daughter swept on. "John must be crazy, I saw him come in with a---a person---who never ought to be in a house like this."

"I'd like to know why not?" stormed John. "You don't know a thing about her. *I* don't know much for that matter, but when I came across her down on Union Square, just turned out of a shop where she had been working, mother, I made up my mind that I would bring her right straight home, and that Edith would be decent to her. You can see that Edith does not intend to be."

"But my dear boy," faltered Mrs. Sedyard, "was not that a very reckless thing to do? I know of an institution where you could send her."

"Oh! yes, yes," said John. "And I suppose I might have handed her over to a policeman," he added, thinking of his attempt in this direction, "but I didn't. The sight of her so gentle and uncomplaining in that awful situation at this time of general rejoicing was too much for me."

He felt this to be so fine a flight and its effect upon Dick was so remarkable, that he went on in a voice, as his mother always remembered, "that positively trembled at times."

"How was I, a man strong and well-dowered, to pass heartlessly by like the Good Samaritan---"

"There's something wrong with that," Dick interposed.

But John was not to be deflected. "What, mother, would you have thought of your son if he left that beautiful figure---for she is beautiful---"

"You don't say," said Dick.

"To be buffeted by the waves of 'dead man's curve?'"

"Oh, how awful!" murmured the old lady. "How *perfectly* dreadful."

It was at this point that Dick Van Plank unostentatiously left the room.

"But I didn't do it, mother," cried John, thumping his chest and anxious to make his full effect before the return of an enlightened and possibly enlightening Dick. "No, I thought of this big house, with only us three in it, and I said 'I'll bring her home.' Edith will love her. Edith will give her friendship, advice, guidance. She will even give her something to wear instead of the unsuitable things she has on. And what do I find?" He paused and looked around dramatically and warningly as Dick, with a beautified grin, returned. "Does Edith open her heart to her? No. Does Edith open her arms to her? No. All that Edith opens to her is the door which leads---who can tell where, whither?"

"I can tell," said Dick, "it leads right straight to my little diggings. If Edith throws her out, I'll take her in."

"Oh, noble, noble man," ejaculated John remembering the emotional woman, "but ah! that must not be. I took her hand in mine---by the way, did I tell you, she has beautiful little hands, not at all what I should have expected."

"You did not," said Dick. "And now that'll be about all from you. You're just about through."

"My opinion is," said Edith darkly, "that you are both either crazy or worse."

"Go down and see her for yourself," urged Dick, "so quiet, so reserved---hush! hark! she's coming up. Now be nice to her whatever you feel! I'll be taking her away in a minute or two."

But it was Mary Van Plank who came in. Mary, all blooming and glowing from the cold.

"Who's that in the reception-room?" she asked when the greetings were over and she was warming her slender hands before the fire. "She's the prettiest dear. She was standing at the window and she smiled so sweetly at me as I came up the steps."

John looked at Dick.

"Yes," admitted that unabashed delinquent, "I left her at the window when I came up."

"Alas! poor child," sighed John, looking out into the night. "She'll be there soon."

"What is she going out for at this time?" Mary demanded. "I quite thought that she, too, had come to dinner. Who is she, Mrs. Sedyard?"

Upon her mother's helpless silence, Edith broke in with the story as she felt she knew it. Union Square, the discharged shopgirl, John's quixotic conduct. And John watched Mary with a lover's eye. He had not intended that she should be involved. A moment of her displeasure, even upon mistaken grounds, was no part of his idea of a joke.

But there was no displeasure in Mary's lovely face.

"Why, of course, he brought her home," she echoed Edith's indignant peroration. "What else could he do?"

"Well, for one thing he could have taken her to the Margaret Louise Home, that branch of the Y.W.C.A., on Sixteenth Street, only a few blocks from where he found her."

"Oh! Edith," Mary remonstrated. "The Maggie Lou! And you know they would not admit her. Who would take a friendless girl to any sort of an institution at this season? John couldn't have done it! I think he's an old dear to bring her right straight home. Let's go down and talk to her. She must be wondering why we all leave her so long alone."

"No, you don't," said Dick. "Edith didn't tell you the whole story. The girl," and he drew himself up to a dignity based on John's, "is under *my* protection."

"Your protection!" repeated his amazed sister.

"Precisely. *My* protection. Edith declines to receive this helpless child. Therefore, I have offered her the shelter of my roof."

"His roof," explained Mary to Mrs. Sedyard, "is the floor of the hall bedroom above his. It measures about nine by six. So the thing to do, since of course, Dick is only talking nonsense, is to let me take the girl around to the studio until John and I can plan an uninstitutional future for her."

"You may do just as you please," said Edith coldly. "I have given my opinion as to what should be done with her. It has been considered, by persons more experienced than you, the opinion of an expert. Girls of her history and standards are not desirable inmates for well-ordered homes. I shall have nothing to do with her."

"How about it, Mary?" asked her brother. "Are you willing to risk her in the high-art atmosphere of the studio?"

"I'm glad to," Mary answered. "It's not often that one gets a chance of being a little useful, and doesn't the Christmas Carol say, 'Good will to men.' I'm going down to see her now."

"You're a darling," cried John. "True blue right through. Now, we'll all go down and arrange the transfer. But, first, I want to give Edith one more chance. Do you finally and unreservedly--"

"I do," said Edith promptly.

"And you, Mary, are you sure of yourself? Suppose that, when you see her, you change your mind?"

"I've given my word," she answered. "I promise to take her."

"That's all I want," said John.

* * * * *

"How could you, John? How could you?" sobbed Edith. "How could you tell us--?"

"I told you nothing but the absolute truth. I meant her to be your Christmas present, but you have resigned her 'with all her works and all her pomps' to Mary."

"Ah! but if I refuse to take her from Edith?" Mary suggested.

"Then I get her," answered Dick blithely, "and she'd be safer with me. I know what you two girls are thinking of. You are going to borrow her clothes and make a Cinderella of her. They are what you care about. But I love her for herself, her useless hands, her golden hair, her lovely smile---well, no, I guess we'll cut out the smile," he corrected when Maudie, agitated by the appraising hands of the two girls, swung her head completely round and beamed impartially upon the whole assembly. "It don't look just sincere to me."

But there was no insincerity about Maudie. She was just as sweet-tempered as she looked. Uncomplainingly, she allowed herself to be despoiled of her finery and wrapped in a sheet while Mary wriggled ecstatically in the heavenly blue dress, pinned the plumed hat on her own bright head and threw the muff into a corner of the darkened drawing-room when she found that it interfered with the free expression of her gratitude to John.

And some months later when the trousseau was in progress, the once despised Christmas guest, now a member in good-standing of Mary's household, did tireless service, smilingly, in the sewing-room.

"WHO IS SYLVIA?"

"Lemon, I think," said Miss Knowles, in defiance of the knowledge, born of many afternoons, that he preferred cream. She took a keen and mischievous pleasure in annoying this hot-tempered young man, and she generally succeeded. But to-day he was not to be diverted from the purpose which, at the very moment of his entrance, she had divined.

"Nothing, thank you," he answered. "I'll not have any tea. I came in only for a moment to tell you that I'm going to be married."

"Again?" she asked calmly, as though he had predicted a slight fall of snow. But her calm did not communicate itself to him.

"Again?" he repeated hotly. "What do you mean by 'again?'"

"Now, Jimmie," she remonstrated, as she settled herself more comfortably among her pillows and centered all her apparent attention upon a fragile cup and a small but troublesome sandwich, "don't be savage. I only mean that you always tell me so when you find an opportunity. That you even manufacture opportunities---some of them out of most unlikely material. A chance meeting in a cross-town car; an especially *forte* place in an opera; the moment when a bishop is saying grace or a host telling his favorite story. And yet you expect me to be surprised to hear it now! Here in my own deserted drawing-room with the fire lighted and the lamps turned low. You forget that one is allowed to remember."

"You allow yourself to forget when you choose and to remember when you wish: You are---"

"And to whom are you going to be married? To the same girl? Do you know, I think she is not worthy of you?"

"She is not," he acquiesced, and she, for a passing moment, seemed disconcerted. "Yet she is," he continued, cheered by this slight triumph, "the most persistent, industrious and deserving of all the young persons who, attracted by my great position and vast wealth, are pressing themselves or being pressed by designing relatives upon my notice."

His hostess laughed softly.

"Make allowances for them," she pleaded. "You know very few men can rival your advantages. The sixth son of a retired yet respectable stock broker, and an income of four thousand a year derived from a small but increasing---shall we say increasing--?"

"Diminishing; incredible as it may seem, diminishing."

"From a small but diminishing law practice. And with these you must mention your greatest charm."

"Which is?"

"Your humility, your modesty, your lack of self-assertiveness. Do you think she recognizes that? It is so difficult to fully appreciate your humility."

Jimmie grinned. "She's up to it," said he. "She knows all about it. She's as clever, as keen, as clear-sighted."

"Is she, perhaps, pleasing to the eye?" asked Miss Knowles idly. "Clever women are often so---well, so---"

Jimmie gazed at her across the little tea-table. He filled his eyes with her. And, since his heart was in his eyes, he filled that, too. After a moment he made solemn answer:

"She is the most beautiful woman God ever made."

"Ah, now," said Miss Knowles, returning her cup to its fellows and turning her face, and her mind, more entirely to him, "now we grow interesting. Describe her to me."

"Again?" Jimmie plagiarized.

"Yes, again. Tell me, what is she like?"

"She is like," he began so deliberately that his hostess, leaning forward, hung upon his words, "she is exactly like---nothing." The hostess sat back. "There was never anything in the least like her. To begin with, she is fair and young and slim. She is tall enough, and small enough and her eyes are gray and black and blue."

"She sounds disreputable, your paragon."

"And her eyes," he insisted, "are gray in the sunlight, blue in the lamplight, and black by the light of the moon."

"And in the firelight?"

He rose to kick the logs into a greater brightness; and when he had studied her glowing face until it glowed even more brightly, he answered:

"In the firelight they are---wonderful. She has---did I tell you?---the whitest and smallest of teeth."

"They're so much worn this year," she laughed, and wondered the while what evil instinct tempted her to play this dangerous game; why she could not refrain from peering into the deeper places of his nature to see if her image were still there and still supreme? Why should she, almost involuntarily, work to create and foster an emotion upon which she set no store, which indeed, only amused her in its milder manifestations and frightened her when it grew intense? He showed symptoms of unwelcome seriousness now, but she would have none of it.

"Go on," she urged. "Unless you give her a few more features she will be like little Red Riding Hood's grandmother."

"And she has," he proceeded obediently, "eyebrows and eyelashes---"

"One might have guessed them."

"---beyond the common, long and dark and soft. The rest of her face is the only possible setting for her eyes. It is perfection."

"And is she gentle, womanly, tender? Is she, I so often wonder, good enough to you?"

"She treats me hundreds of times better than I deserve."

"Doesn't she rather swindle you? Doesn't she let you squander your time?"---she glanced at the clock---"your substance?"---she bent to lay her cheek against the violets at her breast---"your affection upon her--?"

"And how could she be kinder? And when I marry her---"

"And *if*," Miss Knowles amended.

"There's no question about it," he retorted. "She knows that I shall marry her." Miss Knowles looked unconvinced. "She knows that she will marry me." Miss Knowles looked rebellious. "She knows that I shall never marry anyone else." Miss Knowles took that apparently for granted.

"Dear boy!" said she.

"That I have waited seven years for her."

"Poor boy!" said she.

"That I shall wait seven more for her."

"Silly boy!" said she.

"And so I stopped this afternoon to tell her that I'm coming home to marry her in two or three months."

"Coming home?" she questioned with not much interest. "Where are you going?"

"To Japan on a little business trip. One of the big houses wants to get some papers and testimony and that sort of thing out of a man who is living in a backwoods village there for his health---and his liberty. None of their own men can

afford time to go. And I got the chance, a very good one for me--but I tire you."

"No; oh, no," said Miss Knowles politely. "You are very interesting."

"Then you shouldn't fidget and yawn. You lay yourself open to misinterpretation. To continue: a very great chance for me. The firm is a big firm, the case is a big case, and it will be a great thing for me to be heard of in connection with it."

"Some nasty scandal, of course."

"Not exactly. It is the Drewitt case. I wonder if you heard anything about it."

"For three months after the thing happened," she assured him with a flattering accession of interest, "I heard nothing about anything else. Poor, dear father knew him, to his cost, you know. I heard that there was to be a new investigation and another attempt at a settlement. And now you're going to interview the man! And you're going to Japan! Oh, the colossal luck of some people! You will write to me--won't you?--as soon as you see him, and tell me all about him. How he looks, what he says, how he justifies himself. O Jimmie, dear Jimmie, you will surely write to me?"

"Naturally," said Jimmie, and his thin, young face looked happier than it had at any other time since the beginning of this conversation; happier than it had in many preceding conversations with this very unsatisfying but charming interlocutor. "I always do. Sometimes when your mood has been particularly, well, unreceptive, I have thought of going away so that I might write to you. Perhaps I could write more convincingly than I can talk." A cheering condition of things for a lawyer, he reflected.

"But this is a different and much more particular thing," she insisted with a cruelty of which her interest made her unconscious. "I have a sort of a right to know on account of poor, dear father. I shall make a list of questions and you will answer them fully, won't you? Then I shall be the only woman in New York to know the true inwardness of the Drewitt affair. When do you start?"

"To-morrow morning. I shall be away for perhaps three months, and then," doggedly, "then I'm coming home to be married. I came in to tell you."

"And if I don't quite believe you?"

"I shall postpone the ceremony. Shall we say indefinitely, some time in the summer?"

"Not even then. Never, I think. That troublesome girl is beginning--she feels that she ought to tell you--"

"That there is another 'another'?"

"Yes, I fear so."

"Who will be in town for the next three months?"

"Again, I fear so."

"Then that's all right," said the optimistic Jimmie. "There never was a man--save one, oh, lady mine--who could, for three months, avoid boring you. When he holds forth upon every subject under the sun and stars you will think longingly of me and of the endless variety of my one topic, 'I'm going to marry you.'"

"But if he should make it his?"

"I defy him to do it. There is no guise in which he could clothe the idea which would not remind you instantly of me. If he should be poetical: well, so was I when we were twenty-one. If he should give you gifts of great price: well, so did I in those Halcyon days when I had an allowance from my Governor and toiled not. If his is an outdoor wooing, you will inevitably remember that I taught you to ride, to skate, to drive, and to play golf. If he should attack you musically, you will be surprised at the number of operas we've heard together and of duets we've sung together. And so, in the words of my friend, fellow-sufferer, and name-sake, Mr. Yellowplush, 'You'll still remember Jeames.'"

"That's nonsense!" cried Miss Knowles. "I've tried to be fond of you--I *am* fond of you and accustomed to you. The fatal point is that I am accustomed to you. You say you never bore me. Well, you don't. And that other men do. Well, you're right. But people don't marry people simply because they don't bore each other."

"Your meaning is clearer than your words and much more correct. This really essential consideration is, alas, frequently not considered."

"People should marry," said Miss Knowles with a sort of consecrated earnestness---the most deadly of all the practiced phases of her coquetry---"for love. Now, I'm not in love with you. If I were, the very idea of your going away would make me miserable. And do I seem miserable? Am I lovelorn? Look at me carefully and tell the truth."

Jimmie obeyed, and the contemplation of his hostess seemed to depress him.

"No," he agreed gloomily, "you seem to bear up. No one, looking at your face, could guess that your heart was in---was in---" Jimmie halted, vainly searching for the poetical word. Miss Knowles supplied it.

"In torn and bleeding fragments," she supplemented. "No, Jimmie, I'm sorry. You've laid siege to it in every known way, and yet there's not a feather out of it."

"There are two ways," Jimmie pondered audibly, "in which I have not wooed you. One is *a la* cave dweller. I might knock you on the head with a knobby club and drag you to my lair. But since my lair is some blocks away, and since those blocks are studded with the interested public and the uninterested police, the cave dweller's method will not serve. There remains one other. I stand before you, so; I take your hand, so; I may even have to kiss it, so. And I say: 'Dear one, I want you. Every hour of my life I want you. I want you to take care of, to work for, to be proud of. I want you to let me teach you what life means. I want you for my dearest friend, for my everlasting sweetheart, for my wife.' And when I've said it, I kiss your hand, so; gently, once again, and wait for your answer."

"Dear boy," said she with an unsteady little laugh, for---as always---she shrank from his earnestness after she had deliberately roused it, "I wish you wouldn't talk like that. You make me feel so shallow-pated and so small. I don't want to talk about life and knowledge and love. And I don't want any husband at all. What makes you so tragic this afternoon? You're spoiling our last hour together. Come, be reasonable. Tell me what you think of Drewitt. Why do you suppose he did it? Did his wife and daughter know?"

"You're quite sure about the other thing?"

"Unalterably sure. And, Jimmie, dear old Jimmie, there are two things I want you to do for me. The first is, to abandon forever and forever this 'one topic' of which, you are so proud. Will you?"

"I will not," said Jimmie.

"And the second is: to fall in love with a girl on the boat. There is always a girl on a boat. Will you?"

"I will," said Jimmie promptly. "It would be just what you deserve."

* * * * *

Miss Knowles bore the absence of her most persistent and accustomed suitor with a fortitude not predicted by that self-confident young man. She danced and drove, lunched and dined, rode and flirted with undiminished zest, bringing, each day, new energy and determination to the task of enjoying herself.

The enjoyment of her neighbors seemed less important. She preferred that her part in the cotillion should be observed by a frieze of unculled wall-flowers. A drive was always pleasanter if it were preceded by a skirmish with her mother in which Miss Knowles should come off victorious with the victoria, while Mrs. Knowles accepted the *coup de grace* and the coupe. A flirtation--if her languid, seeming innocent monopoly of a man's time and thoughts could be called by so gross a name--was more satisfying if it implied the breaking of vows and hearts and the mad jealousy of some less gifted sister; if it had, like a Russian folk song, a sob and a wail running through it.

Jimmie had never approved of these amusements and had never hesitated to express his opinion of them in terms which were intelligible even to her vanity. From the days when they had played together in the park she had dreaded his honesty and feared his judgments. "You're such a poacher, Sylvia," he told her once, "such an inveterate, diabolical Fly-by-Night, Will-o'-the-Wisp poacher. I sometimes think you'd condescend to take a shot at me if you didn't know that I'm fair game. But you like to kill two birds with one stone; smash two hearts with one smile."

During the weeks immediately following the departure of her mentor she devoted herself whole-heartedly to her favorite form of sport. Besides her unscrupulousness she was armed with her grandfather's name, the riches of her dead father, her own beauty, and a mind capable of much better things. And, since Jimmie's presence would have seriously interfered with the pleasures of the chase, she was rather glad than otherwise that he was not there to see--and comment.

Her mother bore his absence with a like stoicism. That astute matron had long and silently deprecated the regularity with which her Louis Quinze had groaned beneath one hundred and eighty pounds of ineligibility, the frequency with which a tall troupe horse of spectacular gait and snortings could be descried beside her daughter's English hunter in the park, the strange chain of coincidence by which at theater, house party, dinner, or even church, Jimmie smiling and unabashed, would find his way to her daughter's side and monopolize her daughter's attention.

In the excitement of the first stages of one of her expeditions into another's territory, Jimmie's first letter arrived. It was mailed at Honolulu, and consisted obediently of the cryptic statement: "There is no girl on the boat. She is a widow, but lots of fun." And it changed the character of the invasion from a harmless survey of the land to a determined attack upon its fortresses. And so Gilbert Stevenson, millionaire dock owner, veteran of many seasons and more campaigns, found himself engaged to Miss Sylvia Knowles just when, after a long and careful courtship, he had decided to bestow his hand and name upon the daughter of the retired senior partner of his firm: "that dear little girl of old Marvin's," as he described the lady of his choice, "his only child and a good child, too." He bore his surprise and honors with a courteous pomposity. Miss Knowles bore the situation with restraint and decorum. But that "dear little girl of old Marvin's" could not bring herself to bear it at all and wept away her modest claims to prettiness and spirit in one desolate month.

Like many a humbler poacher, Sylvia Knowles found an embarrassment in disposing of her victims after she had bagged them, and Mr. Gilbert Stevenson was peculiarly difficult in this regard. She did not want to keep him. In fact, the engagement upon which she was enduring congratulations had been as surprising to her as to her fiance. And the methodical manifestations of his regard contrasted wearily with the erratic events in another friendship in which

nothing was to be counted upon except the unaccountable. So that when vanquished suitors withdrew discomfited and returned to renew an earlier allegiance or to swear a new one; when "that good child of old Marvin's" had withdrawn her pitiful little face and her disappointment into the remote fastness of settlement work; when her mother resigned all claims upon the victoria and loudly affirmed her preference for the brougham, then things in general---and Mr. Stevenson in particular---began to bore Miss Knowles, and she began to look forward, with an emotion which would have surprised her betrothed, to foreign mails and letters. She considerately spared Mr. Stevenson this disquieting intelligence, having found him in matters of honor and rectitude as archaic and as fastidious as Jimmie himself. "Has a nasty suspicious mind," she reflected, "and a nasty jealous disposition. I wonder if he will expect me to give up all my friends when I marry him."

Yet even Mr. Stevenson could have found no cause for jealousy in the matter of the letters. He might have objected to their being written at all, but beyond that they were innocuous. For all the personality they contained they might have been transcripts of Jimmie's reports to his firm. He clung doggedly to his prescribed topics, and he could not have devised a surer method of arousing the curiosity and the interest of this spoiled young person. She spent hours, which should have been devoted to the contemplation of approaching bliss, in reading between the prosaic lines, in searching for sentiment in a catalogue of railway stations, for tenderness in description of eccentric *tables d'hote*. Finding no trace of his old gallantry in all the closely written pages, she attributed its absence to obedience and accepted it as the higher tribute to her power. She was forced to judge her lover's longing by the quantity rather than by the ardor of his words, and to detect the yearning of a true lover's heart through such effectual disguise as:

"Drewitt is a fine old chap; as placid and as bright as this country and a great deal more so than anyone you'll see in the windows of the Union League Club. He received me so cordially that I felt awkward about introducing the object of my visit, but when I had admired everything in sight from the mountains in the distance to the rug I was sitting on, I finally faced the situation and did it.

"'Dear me,' said he, 'are those directors still troubling themselves about their transaction with me?' I admitted apologetically that they were; that their books refused to close over the gap left by the vanishing of \$50,000, and that he was earnestly requested to return to New York and to lend his acknowledged business acumen, *etc., etc.* He never turned a hair. Said they---and I---were very kind. Nothing could give him greater pleasure. But the ladies preferred Japan. Therefore he, *etc., etc., etc.* But he would be delighted to explain the matter fully to me; to supply me with all the figures and information I desired. (And that, of course, is as much as I am expected to bring back.) But he would have to postpone his return until---and you should have seen the whimsical, quizzical old eye of his---until the nations would agree upon new extradition treaties. Then, of course, *etc., etc., etc.* Meanwhile, as there was no immediate urgency about the matter, as he hoped that I would stay with them for as long a time as I cared to arrange, he would suggest that we should join Mrs. Drewitt in the garden. She would welcome news of our American friends. 'I need not ask you,' he added as we went out through the wall-like people in a dream or a fairy tale, to be discreet and casual in your conversation with the ladies. My daughter is away this week visiting an old friend of hers who is married to a missionary in a neighboring village. She knows the reason for our being here. My wife does not. It need not be discussed with either of them.' I should think not!

"And there in the garden was Mrs. Drewitt, a fat little old lady in a flaming kimono and spectacles. She wears her hair as your Aunt Matilda does, stuck to her forehead in scrolls. 'Water curls,' I think, is the technical term. She was holding the head of a dejected marigold while a native propped it up with a stick. It seemed she remembered my mother, and we spent a delightful tea-time in a garden which was a part of the same dream as the phantom wall. Then the old gentleman led me off by myself and wanted to hear all about Broadway. Whether Oscar was still at the Waldorf. Whether Fields and Weber made 'a good thing of it' apart. Then the old lady led me off by myself and wanted to know who was now the pastor of the Brick Church, and what was Maude Adam's latest play, and whether skirts were worn long or short in the street.

"You see this dress," she said, "is not really made for a woman of my age. In fact, in this country all the bright and pretty colors are worn by the waitresses. Geishas they call them. But Mr. Drewitt always liked bright colors, and red is very becoming to me." She was such a wistful, pathetic, and incongruous little figure that I said something about hoping that she would soon be in New York again. "But," she said, "Mr. Drewitt cannot leave his work here. Didn't you know that he is stationed here to report the changes of the weather to Washington? It is very important, and we can't go home until he is recalled. And, besides," she went on with a half sob in her voice and a look in her eyes that made her seem as young as her own daughter, "and, besides, I would much rather be here. In New York my husband was too busy. He had so many calls upon his time, so many people to meet, and so many places to go, that sometimes I hardly felt as though he belonged to me. But now for days and weeks at a time we are together. And he has no business worries. And his salary," she brightened up to tell me, "is almost as good here as it used to be in the Trust Company for *much* harder work." She's a sweet old thing---must have been quite a beauty once---and I wish you could see old Drewitt's manner with her---so courteous and affectionate---and hers with him---so adoring and confiding. It's wonderful!

"It will take some time to get all the information I want from the old man. He has the papers and he is quite willing to explain everything, but we spend the larger part of every day in entertaining the old lady and keeping her happy and unsuspecting."

A series of such letters covering several placid weeks reduced Miss Knowles to a condition of moodiness and abstraction which all the resources at her command failed to dissipate. In vain were the practical blandishments of Mr. Stevenson; in vain her mother's shopping triumphs; in vain were dinners given in her honor and receptions at which she reigned supreme. None of her other experiments had resulted in an engagement---an immunity which she now humbly attributed to the watchful Jimmie---and she was dismayed at the determined and matter-of-fact way in which she was called upon to fulfil her promise. "If only Jimmie were at home!" she realized, "he would save me." This was when the happy day was yet a great way off. "If only Jimmie would come home," she wailed as the weeks grew to months, and even the comfort of his letters failed her. For two months there had been no news of him, and Fate---and Mr. Stevenson---were very near when, at last, she heard from him again. He sent a telegram nearly as brief as his first letter.

"I am coming home," it announced, "I am coming home, and I'm going to be married."

And the simple little words, waited for so long, remembered so clearly, and coming, at last, so late, did what all Jimmie's more eloquent pleadings had failed to do.

Sylvia Knowles, a creature made of vanities, realized that she loved better than all her other vanities her place in this one man's regard. No contemplation of Mr. Stevenson's estate on the Hudson, his shooting lodge on a Scottish moor, his English abbey, and his Italian villa could nerve her for the first meeting with Jimmie, could fortify her against his first laughing repetition:

"*You* married to Gilbert Stevenson," or his later scornful, "*You married* to Gilbert Stevenson."

So she dismissed Mr. Stevenson with as little feeling as she had annexed him, and sought comfort in the knowledge that her mother was furious, her own fortune ample, and that marrying for love was a graceful, becoming pose and an unusual thing to do.

Her rejected suitor bore his disappointment as correctly as he had borne his joy. He stormed the special center of philanthropy in which old Marvin's little girl had buried herself, and she was most incorrectly but refreshingly glad to see him. She destroyed forever his poise and his pride in it when she sat upon his unaccustomed knee, rested her tired head upon his immaculate shirt front, and wept for very happiness.

* * * * *

"And I remember," said Miss Knowles, "that you always take cream."

"Nothing, thank you," Jimmie corrected. "Just plain unadulterated tea. I learned to like it in Japan. But don't bother about it. I haven't long to stay. I came in to tell you---"

"That you're going to be married."

"How did you guess?"

"You didn't leave me to guess. Your telegram."

"Ah, yes!" quoth Jimmie. "I sent a lot of them before I sailed. But in my letters---"

"You mentioned absolutely nothing but that stupid old Drewitt affair. Never a word of the places you saw, the people you met, or even the people you missed. Nothing of the customs, the girls, the clothes. Nothing but that shuffling old Drewitt and his stuffy old wife. Nothing about yourself."

"Orders are orders," quoth Jimmie, "and those were yours to me. I remember exactly how it came about. We had been talking personalities. I have an idea that I made rather a fool of myself, and that you told me so. Then you, wisely conjecturing that I might write as foolishly as I had talked, made out a list of subjects for my letters. My name, I noted with some care, was not upon that list."

"Jimmie," said Miss Knowles, "I was cruel and heartless that day. I've thought about it often."

"You've thought!" cried the genial Jimmie. "How had you time to think? Where were all those 'anthers'?"

"There were none," lied Miss Knowles soulfully with a disdainful backward glance toward Mr. Stevenson. "For a time I thought there was one. But whenever I thought of that last talk of ours---you remember it, don't you?"

"Of course. I told you I was going to be married as soon as I came home. Well, and so I am."

"So you are. But I used to think that if you hesitated to tell me; if you felt that I might still be hard about it and unsympathetic; if you decided to confide no more in me---"

"But you would be sure to know. Even if I had not telegraphed I never could have kept it a secret from you."

"Not easily. I should have been, as you observe, sure to know. Do you remember how I always refused to believe you? It was not until you were in that horrid Japan, where all the women are supposed to be beautiful---"

"Yes," Jimmie acquiesced. "It was when I was in Japan."

"It was then that it began to seem possible that you would be married when you came home. It was then that I began to realize that I didn't deserve to be told of your plans. For I had been a fool, Jimmie. You had been a fool, too, but not in the way you think. And so, if you will sit where I sat that horrid day, we will begin that conversation all over again and end it differently. The first speech was yours. Do you remember it?"

"But I'm going to be married," said Jimmie.

"Good boy. He knows his lesson. And now I say, "To the most beautiful woman in the world?"

"To the most beautiful woman God ever made. The dearest, the most clever, the most simple."

"Simple," repeated Miss Knowles with some natural surprise. "Did you say simple?"

"Simple and jolly and unaffected. As true and as bright as the stars. And I'm going to marry her---"

"Now this," Miss Knowles interjected, "is where the difference comes. You are to sit quite still and listen to me because a thing like this---however long and carefully one had thought it out---is difficult in the saying. So, I stand here before you where I can look at you; for four months are long; and where you may, when I have quite finished, kiss my hand again; for again four months are long. And I begin thus: Jimmie, you are going to be married---"

"I told you first," cried Jimmie.

"But I knew it first," she countered, "to a woman who has learned to love you during the past three months, but who could not do it more utterly, more perfectly, if she had practiced through all the years that you and I have been friends."

"So she says," Jimmie interrupted with sudden heat. "So she says. God bless her!"

"And, ah, *how* she is fond of you. 'Fond' is a darling of a word. It keeps just enough of its old 'foolish' meaning to be human. Proud of you, glad of you, fond of you---I think that this is, perhaps, the time for you to kiss my hand."

"You're a darling," he said as he obeyed. "But what I can't understand---"

"It's not your turn. You may talk after I finish if I leave anything for you to say. See, I go on: You are going to marry---"

"The most beautiful woman in the world."

"That reminds me. What is she like? I've not heard her described for ages."

"Because there was no one in New York who could do justice to her."

"You are the knightliest of knights. Go on. Describe her."

"Well, she is neither very tall nor very small. But the grace of her, the young, surpassing grace of her, makes you know as soon as your eyes have rested on her that her height, whatever it chances to be, is the perfect height for a woman. And then there is the noble heart of her. What other daughter would have buried herself, as she has done, in a little mountain village---"

Miss Knowles looked quickly about the luxurious room, then out upon the busy avenue, then back at him, suspecting raillery. But he was staring straight through her; straight into the land of visions. His eyes never wavered when she moved slowly out of their range and sat, huddled and white-faced, in the corner of a big chair.

"And all," Jimmie went on, "so bravely, so cheerily, that it makes one's throat ache to see. And one's heart hot to see. Then there is the beauty of her. Her hair is dark, her eyes are dark, but her skin is the fairest in the world."

Miss Knowles pushed back a loose lace cuff and studied the arm it had hidden. *La reine est morte*, she whispered, *morte, morte, morte*.

"But what puzzles me," said the genial Jimmie, "is your knowing about it all. I never wrote you a word of it, and as for Sylvia--by the way, did you know that her name, like yours, is Sylvia?"

"Yes," said Miss Knowles, "I had even guessed that her name would be Sylvia."

"You're a wonderful woman," Jimmie protested. "The most wonderful woman in the world."

"Except?"

"Except, of course, Sylvia Drewitt."

"Ah, yes," said Miss Knowles. "Yes, of course."

THE SPIRIT OF CECELIA ANNE

"And all the rest and residue of my estate," read the lawyer, his voice growing more impressive as he reached this most impressive clause, "I give and bequeath to my beloved granddaughter and godchild Cecelia Anne Hawtry for her own use and benefit forever."

The black-clothed relations whose faces had been turned toward the front of the long drawing-room now swung round toward the back where a fair-haired little girl, her hands spread guardian-wise round the new black hat on her knees, lay asleep in her father's arms. For old Mrs. Hawtry's "beloved granddaughter Cecelia Anne" was not yet too big to find solace in sleep when she was tired and uninterested, being indeed but nine years old and exceedingly small of stature and babyish of habit. So she slept on and missed hearing all the provisions which were meant to protect her in the enjoyment of her estate but which were equally calculated to drive her guardian distracted.

"I leave nothing to my beloved son, James Hawtry," the document continued, "because I consider that he has quite enough already. And I leave nothing to his son, James Hawtry, Junior, the twin-brother of Cecelia Anne Hawtry, because, though he and I have met but seldom, I have formed the opinion that he is capable of winning his way in the world without any aid from me."

James Hawtry, Junior, sitting beside the heiress, failed to derive much satisfaction from this clause. If things were being given away, he was not quite certain as to what "rest and residue" might mean, but if things of any kind were being doled out he would fain have enjoyed them with the rest.

Presently the lawyer read the final codicil and gathered his papers together, then addressed the blank and disappointed assemblage with: "As you have seen that all the minor bequests are articles of a household nature---portraits, tableware and the like, 'portable property' as my immortal colleague, Mr. Wemmick, would have said---I should suggest the present to be an admirable time for their removal by the fortunate legatees who may not again be in this neighbourhood. And now I have but to congratulate the young lady who has succeeded to this property, a really handsome property I may say, though the amount is not stated nor even yet fully ascertained. If Miss Cecelia Anne Hawtry is present, I should like to pay my respects to her and to wish her all happiness in her new inheritance. I have never had the pleasure of meeting

the principal legatee. May I ask her to come forward and accept my congratulations."

"Take her, Jimmie," commanded Mr. Hawtry, setting Cecelia down upon her thin little black legs, while he tried to smooth her into presentable shape in anticipation of the anxious cross-examination he was sure to undergo when he returned with the children to his New York home and wife.

"She looked as fit as paint," he afterward assured that anxious questioner. "I stood the bow out on her hair and pushed her dress down just as I've seen you do hundreds of times. Jimmie helped, too, and I declare to you, you'd have been as proud of those two kids as I was when that boy led his little sister through the hostile camp. Funny, he felt the hostility instantly, though of course, he didn't understand it. But she---well, you know what a confiding little thing she is, and having been asleep made her eyes look even more babyish than they always do---walked beside him, smiling her soft little smile and looking about three inches high in her little black dress."

"If I had been there," interrupted Mrs. Hawtry warmly, "I should have murdered your sister Elizabeth before I allowed her to put that baby into mourning. The black bow I packed for her hair would have been quite enough."

"Well, she had it on. I saw it bobbing up the room while tenth and fifteenth cousins seven or eight times removed, stared at it and at her. But the person most surprised was old Debrett when Jimmie introduced them."

"'This is her,' remarked your son with more truth than polish, and I'm, well, antecedently condemned, if that dry-as-dust old lawyer didn't stoop and kiss her as he wished her joy."

"Ah, I'm glad he's as nice as that," said Mrs. Hawtry, "since he is to be your co-trustee. However," she added a little wistfully, "I don't like the idea of anybody dictating to us about the baby. It makes her seem somehow not quite so much our very own. And we could have taken care of her quite well without your mother's money and advice."

"Why, my dear," laughed her husband, "that's a novel attitude to adopt toward a legacy. The baby is ours as much as she ever was. The advice is as good as any I ever read. And the money will leave us all the more to devote to Jimmie. There's the making of a good business man in Jimmie."

* * * * *

It was part of what Mrs. Hawtry for a long time considered the interference of Cecelia Anne's grandmother that the child should have a monthly allowance, small while she was small and growing with her growth. She was to be allowed to spend it without supervision and to keep an account of it. At the end of each year the trustees were to examine these accounts and to judge from them the trend of their ward's inclinations. They would be then in a position to curb or foster her leanings as their judgment should dictate.

Now, Cecelia Anne, restored to her friends from a wonderland sort of dream, called going---West---with---papa---on---the---train---and---living--- with---Aunt---Elizabeth, was too full of narration and too excited by the envious regard of untraveled playmates to trouble overmuch about that scene in the long drawing-room which she had never clearly understood. The first monthly payment of her allowance failed to connect itself in her mind with the journey. Her predominant emotion on the subject of legacies was one of ardent gratitude to Jimmie. He had given her a quarter out of the change they had received at the toyshop where they had purchased the most beautiful sloop-yacht they had ever seen or dreamed of. A quarter for her very own; Jimmie's generosity and condescension extended even further than this. He also allowed her, the day being warm, to carry the yacht for a considerable part of their homeward journey, and, when the treasure was exhibited upon the topmost of their own front steps, he allowed her twice to pull the sails up and down. When he went to Central Park to sail the *Jennie H*, that being

as near the feminine form of Jimmie Hawtry as their learning carried them, James, Junior, frequently allowed his sister to accompany him and his envious fellows. Then it was her proud privilege to watch the *Jennie H's* wavering course and to rush around the margin of the lake ready to "stand by" to receive her beloved bowsprit wherever she should dock. Then all proudly would she set the rudder straight again and turn the *Jennie H* back to the landing-stage where Jimmie, surrounded by his cohorts, all calm and cool in his magnificence, awaited this first evidence of "the trend of Cecelia Anne's inclinations."

Not quite a year elapsed before Mr. Hawtry's genial co-trustee visited his little ward. The reading of the will had taken place in November, and on the last week of the following June, Mr. Debrett, chancing to be in New York, decided to cultivate the acquaintance of Cecelia Anne. Mrs. Hawtry and the twins were by this time settled in their country home in Westchester, and Debrett, driving up from the station in the evening with Mr. Hawtry, found it difficult to accept the freckled, barelegged, blue-jumpered form which he saw in the garden, polishing the spokes of a bicycle, as the ward who had lived all these months in his memory: a fragile little figure in funeral black. Never had he seen so altered a child, he assured Mrs. Hawtry with many congratulations. She seemed taller, heavier, more self-assured. But the smile with which she put a greasy little hand into his extended hand was misty and babyish still.

Presently, while the two men rested with long chairs and long glasses and Mrs. Hawtry ministered to them, Jimmie appeared on the scene and after exchanging proper greetings turned to inspect Cecelia Anne and her work. "I think you've got it bright enough," he said with kindly condescension. "You can go and get dressed for dinner now. And to-morrow morning if I'm not using the wheel maybe I'll let you use it awhile."

"Oh, fank you!" said Cecelia Anne who had never quite outgrown her babyhood's lisp, "and can I have the saddle lowered so's I can reach the pedals?"

"Oh, I s'pose so," said Jimmie grudgingly. "Sometimes you act just like a girl. You give 'em something and they always want, more. Now you run on and open the stable door. I'm goin' to try if I can ride right into the harness-room without getting off. Don't catch your foot in the door and don't get too near Dolly's hind legs."

When the children had vanished around the corner of the house, Mrs. Hawtry turned to Mr. Debrett.

"There's the explanation of Cecelia Anne's ruggedness," said she. "She and Jimmie are inseparable. He has taught her all kinds of boys' accomplishments. And she's as happy as a bird if she's only allowed to trot around after him. It doesn't seem to make her in the least ungentle or hoydenish and I feel that she's safer with him than with the gossipy little girls down at the hotel."

"Not a doubt of it," Debrett heartily endorsed. "She couldn't have a better adviser. Her grandmother, a very clever lady by the way, had a high opinion of your son's practical mind. A useful antidote, I should say, to his sister's extreme gentleness."

He found further confirmation of old Mrs. Hawtry's acumen when Mr. Hawtry proposed that they should look over Cecelia Anne's disbursement account, kept by herself, as the will had specified.

Cecelia Anne was delighted with the idea. Jimmie had wandered out to see about the sports that were going to be held on the Fourth of July, and so the burden of explanation fell upon the little heiress. She drew her account book from its drawer in her father's desk, settled herself comfortably in the hollow of his arm and proceeded to disclose the "trend of her inclinations" as is evidenced by her shopping list:

"One sloop yat *Jennie H* swoped for hockey skates when it got cold.

One air riffle.

Three Tickets.

One riding skirt.

Two Tickets.

Six white rats two died.

Four Tickets.

Leather Stocking Tales. Three Books.

Three Tickets.

Four Boxing Gloves.

Eight Tickets.

One bull tarrier dog and collar he fought Len Fogerty's dog bit him all up and father sent him away."

"I remember him," said Mr. Hawtry, "a well-bred beast but a holy terror, go on dear."

"One Byccle.

Three Tickets.

Stanley's Darkest Africa two books but not very new.

One printing press.

Two Tickets.

Treasure Island. One Book."

"And that's all the big things," finished Cecelia Anne in evident relief. "Jimmie wrote down the prices, wouldn't you like to see them?"

And she crossed to Mr. Debrett and laid the open book on his knee.

Mr. Debrett, as Cecelia Anne teetered up and down on her heels and toes before him, read the list again, counted up the total expenditure and admitted that his ward had got remarkably good value for her money.

"But what are all these 'tickets,' my dear?" he asked her.

"Eden Musee," answered Cecelia Anne. And the very thought of it drew her to her mother's knee. "Jimmie and the boys used to take me there Saturday afternoons in the winter to try to get my nerve up. They say," she admitted dolefully,

"that I haven't got much. So they used to take me to the Chamber of Horrors so's I'd get accustomed to life. That's what Jimmie thought I needed. They used to like it, and I expect I'd have liked it, too, if I could have kept my eyes open, but I never could. I couldn't even *get* them open when the boys stood me right close to that gentleman having death throes on the ground after he'd been hung on a tree. You can hear him breathing!"

"I know him well," said Mr. Debrett. "He is rather awful I must admit. And now we'll talk about the books. Don't you care at all about 'Little Men' and 'Little Women' or the 'Elsie Books?'"

"Jimmie says," Cecelia Anne made reply, "that 'Darkest Africa' is better for me. It tells me just where to hit an elephant to give him the death throes. He says the 'Elsie Books' wouldn't be any help to us even with a buffalo. We're going to buy 'The Wild Huntress, or Love in the Wilderness' next month. Jimmie thinks that's sure to get my nerve up---being about a girl, you see---"

"And 'Treasure Island' now;" said her guardian, "did you enjoy that? It came rather late in my life, but I remember thinking it a great book."

"It's great for nerve. Jimmie often reads me parts of it after I go to bed at night. There's a poem in it---he taught me that by heart---and if I think to say it the last thing before I go to sleep he says I'll get so's *nothing* can scare me."

"Recite it for Mr. Debrett," urged Mrs. Hawtry. And Cecelia Anne obediently began, with a jerk of a curtsy and a shake of her delicate embroideries and blue sash.

"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the devil had done for the rest
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!"

Mr. Debrett's astonishment at this lullaby held him silent for some seconds.

"You see, sir," Cecelia Anne explained, "if you *can* go to sleep thinking about that it shows your nerve. I can't. Not yet. But it never makes me cry any more and Jimmie says that's something."

"I should say it was!" he congratulated her. "It's wonderful. And now in the matter of dolls," he went on referring to the list, "no rag babies, eh?"

"Oh, but she has beautiful dolls, Mr. Debrett," interposed her mother. "She'll show them to you to-morrow morning, won't you honey-child? But she did not buy them. They were given to her at Christmas and other times. But really, since we came out here for the summer they've been rather neglected. Their mother has been so busy."

"And Jimmie made me a house for them!" Cecelia Anne broke in. "And furniture! And a front yard stuck right on to the piazza! But I don't know, mother, whether I'd have time to show them to Mr. Debrett in the morning. I'm pretty busy now. It's getting so near the race. And I pace Jimmie *every* morning."

"Ah! that reminds me," said her father, "Jimmie told me to send you to bed at eight o'clock---one of the rules of 'training', you know---so say good night to us all and put your little book back in the drawer. You've kept it very nicely. I am sure Mr. Debrett agrees with me."

When the elders were alone, Mrs. Hawtry crossed over into the light and addressed her guest.

"I can't have you thinking badly of Jimmie," she began, "or of us, for allowing him to practically spend the baby's income. Every one of the things on that list mark a stage in Cecelia Anne's progress away from priggishness and toward health. I don't know just how much she realizes her own power of veto in these purchases but I am sure she would never exercise it against Jimmie. She's absolutely wrapped up in him and he's wonderfully good and patient with her. Of course, you know, they're twins although no one ever guesses it. They've shared everything from the very first."

"In this combination," laughed Debrett, "the boy is 'father to the girl' and the girl is 'mother to the boy.'"

"Precisely so," Mr. Hawtry replied, "and the mother part comes out strong in this race and training affair. An old chap down at the hotel---one of those old white-whiskered 'Foxy Grandpas' that no summer resort should be without---has arranged a great race for his friends, the children, on Fourth of July morning. The prize is to be the privilege of setting off the fireworks in the evening."

"They'll run themselves to death," commented Debrett, who knew his young America, "and is Jimmie to be one of the contestants?"

"He is," replied Hawtry, "it's a 'free for all' event and even Cecelia Anne *may* start if Jimmie allows it. She's not thinking much about that though. You see, Jimmie has gone into training and she's his trainer. I went out with them last Saturday morning to see how they manage. They marched me down to an untenanted little farm, back from the road. Jimmie carried the 'riffle' referred to in Cecelia Anne's text and a handful of blank cartridges. Cecelia Anne carried Jimmie's sweater, a bath towel, a large sponge, a small tin bucket and a long green bottle. I carried nothing. I was observing, not interfering."

"Oh, that dear baby!" broke in Mrs. Hawtry, "such a heavy load!"

"She's thriving under it, my dear." Well, presently we arrived at our destination, and I saw that those kids had worn a little path, not very deep of course, all round what used to be rather a spacious 'door yard.' The winning-post was the pump. By its side Cecelia Anne disposed her burden like a theatrical 'dresser' getting things ready for his principal. She hung her tin pail on the pump's snout and pumped it full of water, laid it beside the bath towel, threw the sponge into it, gave a final testing jerk to her tight little braids and divested herself of her jumpers and the dress she wore under them. Then she resumed the jumpers, took the rifle and crossed the 'track.' Jimmie, meanwhile, had stripped to trousers and the upper part of his bathing-suit, had donned his running shoes, set his feet in holes kicked in the ground for that purpose and bent forward, his back professionally hunched and in his hands the essential pieces of cork. Cecelia Anne gabbled the words of starting, shut her eyes tightly, fired the rifle into the air, threw it on the ground and set off after the swiftly moving Jimmie. Early in his first lap she was up to him. As they passed the pump, she was ahead. In the succeeding laps she kept a comfortable distance in the lead, until the end of the third when she sprinted for 'home,' grabbed the towel and, as Jimmie came bounding up, wrapped him in it, rubbed him down, fanned him with it, moistened his brow with vinegar from the long bottle, tied the sweater around his neck by its red sleeves and held the dripping sponge to his lips. Then she found time for me.

[Illustration: CELIA ANNE SHUT HER EYES TIGHTLY AND FIRED THE RIFLE INTO THE AIR.]

"Oh, father," she cried, "did you *ever* see anybody who could run as fast as Jimmie? Don't you just know he'll win that race?"

"There's but one chance against it," said I. "And really, Mr. Debrett, that boy can run. He's a little bit heavy maybe, but he holds himself well together and keeps up a pretty good pace. I timed him and measured up the distance roughly afterward. It was pretty good going for a little chap. Cecelia Anne is so much smaller that we often forget what a little

fellow he is after all. But that baby---whew---I wish you'd seen her fly. It wasn't running. She just blew over the ground and arrived at the pump as cool as a cucumber although Jimmie was puffing like an automobile of the vintage of 1890."

"You see," said Jimmie to me as he lay magnificently on the grass waiting to grow cool while Cecelia still fanned him with the towel, "you see it don't hurt her to pace me round the track."

"Apparently not," said I, and although he's my own boy and I know him pretty well, I couldn't for the life of me decide whether he, as well as Cecelia Anne, had really failed to grasp the fact that she beats him to a standstill every morning. I suppose we'll know on the Fourth. If she runs, then he does not know. But if he refuses to let her run; it will be because he does know."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Mrs. Hawtry.

* * * * *

Cecelia Anne *was* allowed to run. First, in a girl's race among the giggling, amateurish, self-conscious girls whom she outdistanced by a lap or two and, later, in the race for all winners, where she had to compete with Charlie Anderson, the beau of the hotel, Len Fogarty, the milkman's son, and her own incomparable Jimmie.

The master of ceremonies gave the signal and the event of the day was on. First to collapse was Charlie Anderson. Jimmie was then in the lead with Len Fogarty a close second, and Cecelia Anne beside him. So they went for a lap. Then Jimmie, missing perhaps the blue little figure of his pacemaker, wavered a little, only a little, but enough to allow Len Fogarty to forge past him. Len Fogarty! The blatant, hated Len Fogarty, always shouting defiance from his father's milk-wagon! Then forward sprang Cecelia Anne. Not for all the riches of the earth would she have beaten Jimmie, but not for all the glory of heaven would she allow any one else to beat him. And so by an easy spectacular ten seconds, she outran Len Fogarty.

Then wild was the enthusiasm of the audience and black was the brow of Len Fogarty. A chorus of: "Let a girl lick you," "Call yourself a runner," "Come up to the house an' race me baby brother," has not a soothing effect when added to the disappointment of being forever shut off from the business end of rockets and Roman candles. These things Cecelia Anne knew and so accepted, sadly and resignedly, the glare with which Len turned away from her little attempts at explanations.

But she was not prepared, nothing in her short life could ever have prepared her, to find the same expression on Jimmie's face when she broke through a shower of congratulations and followed him up the road; to expect praise and to meet *such* a rebuff would have been sufficient to make even stiffer laurels than Cecelia Anne's trail in the dust.

"Why Jimmie," she whimpered contrary to his most stringent rule. "Why Jimmie what's the matter?"

"You're a sneak," said Jimmie darkly and vouchsafed no more. There was indeed no more to say. It was the last word of opprobrium.

They pattered on in silence for a short but dusty distance, Cecelia Anne struggling with the temptation to lie down and die; Jimmie upborne by furious temper.

"Who taught you how to run?" he at last broke out. "Wasn't it me? Didn't I give you lessons every morning in the old lot? And then didn't you go and beat me when Len Fogarty, Charlie Anderson, Billy Van Derwater, and all the other

fellows were there?"

Cecelia Anne returned his angry gaze with her blue and loyal eyes.

"I didn't beat you 't all," she answered. "I didn't beat anybody but Len Fogarty."

Her mentor studied her for a while and then a grin overspread his once more placid features.

"I guess it'll be all right," he condescended. "Maybe you didn't mean it the way it looked. But say, Cecelia Anne, if you're afraid of fire-crackers what are you going to do about the rockets and the Roman candles? You know sparks fly out of them like rain. And if the smell of old cartridge shells makes you sick, I don't know just how you'll get along to-night."

The victor stopped short under the weight of this overwhelming spoil.

"I forgot all about it," she whispered. "Oh, Jimmie, I guess I ought to have let Len Fogarty win that race. He could set off rockets and Roman candles and Catherine wheels. I guess it'll kill me when the sparks and the smoke come out. Maybe I'd better go and see Mr. Anstell and ask to be excused."

"Aw, I wouldn't do that," Jimmie advised her, "you don't want everyone to know about your nerve. You just tell him your dress is too light and that you want me to attend to the fireworks for you."

In the transports of gratitude to which this knightly offer reduced her, Cecelia Anne fared on by Jimmie's side until they reached the house and their enquiring parents. Mrs. Hawtry was on the steps as they came up and she gathered Cecelia Anne into her arms. For a moment no one spoke. Then Jimmie made his declaration.

"Cecelia Anne beat Len Fogarty all to nothing. You ought to have been there to see her."

"Was there any one else in the race?" queried Mr. Hawtry in what his son considered most questionable taste.

"Oh, yes," he was constrained to answer. "Charlie Anderson was in it. She beat him, too. And I *started* with them but I thought it would do those boys more good to be licked by a little girl than to have me 'tend to them myself." And Jimmie proceeded leisurely into the house.

"But I don't have to set off the fireworks," Cecelia Anne explained happily. "Jimmie says I don't have to if I don't want to. He's going to do it for me."

"Kind brother," ejaculated Mr. Hawtry. And across the bright gold braids of her little Atalanta, Mrs. Hawtry looked at her husband.

"*Did* he know?" she questioned, "or did he not? You thought we could be sure if he let her start."

"Well," was Mr. Hawtry's cryptic utterance, "he knows now."

THEODORA, GIFT OF GOD

"And then," cried Mary breathlessly, "what did they do then?"

"And then," her father obediently continued, "the two doughty knights smote lustily with their swords. And each smote the other on the helmet and clove him to the middle. It was a fair battle and sightly."

But Mary's interest was unabated. "And then," she urged, "what did they do then?"

"Not much, I think. Even a knight of the Table Round stops fighting for a while when that happens to him."

"Didn't they do anything 'tall?" the audience insisted. "You aren't leaving it out, are you? Didn't they bleed nor nothing?"

"Oh, yes, they bled."

"Then tell me that part."

"Well, they bled. They never stinteth bleeding for three days and three nights until they were pale as the very earth for bleeding. And they made a great dole."

"And then, when they couldn't bleed any more nor make any more dole, what did they do?"

"They died."

"And then---"

"That's the end of the story," said the narrator definitely.

"Then tell me another," she pleaded, "and don't let them die so soon."

"There wouldn't be time for another long one," he pointed out as he encouraged his horse into an ambling trot. "We are nearly there now."

"After supper will you tell me one?"

"Yes," he promised.

"One about Lancelot and Elaine?"

"Yes," he repeated. "Anything you choose."

"I choose Lancelot," she declared.

"A great many ladies did," commented her father as the horse sedately stopped before the office of the Arcady *Herald-Journal*, of which he was day and night editor, sporting editor, proprietor, society editor, chief of the advertising department, and occasionally type-setter and printer and printer's devil.

Mary held the horse, which stood in need of no such restraint, while this composite of newspaper secured his mail, and then they jogged off through the spring sunshine, side by side, in the ramshackle old buggy on a leisurely canvass of outlying districts in search of news or advertisements, or suggestions for the forthcoming issue.

In the wide-set, round, opened eyes of his small daughter, Herbert Buckley was the most wonderful person in the world. No stories were so enthralling as his. No songs so tuneful, no invention so fertile, no temper so sweet, no companionship so precious. And her nine happy years of life had shown her no better way of spending summer days or winter evenings than in journeying, led by his hand and guided by his voice, through the pleasant ways of Camelot and the shining times of chivalry.

Upon a morning later in this ninth summer of her life Mary was perched high up in an apple tree enjoying the day, the green apples, and herself. The day was a glorious one in mid July, the apples were of a wondrous greenness and hardness, and Mary, for the first time in many weeks, was free to enjoy her own society. A month ago a grandmother and a maiden aunt had descended out of the land which had until then given forth only letters, birthday presents, and Christmas cards. And they had proved to be not at all the idyllic creatures which these manifestations had seemed to prophesy, but a pair of very interfering old ladies with a manner of over-ruling Mary's gentle mother, brow-beating her genial father and cloistering herself.

This morning had contributed another female assuming airs of instant intimacy. She had gone up to the last remaining spare chamber, donned a costume all of crackling white linen, and had introduced herself, entirely uninvited, into the dim privacy of Mary's mother's room, whence Mary had been sternly banished.

"Another aunt!" was the outcast's instant inference, as in a moment of accountable preoccupation on the part of the elders she had escaped to her own happy and familiar country--the world of out-of-doors--where female relatives seldom intruded, and where the lovely things of life were waiting.

When she had consumed all the green apples her constitution would accept, and they seemed pitifully few to her more robust mind, she descended from the source of her refreshment and set out upon a comprehensive tour of her domain. She liked living upon the road to Camelot. It made life interesting to be within measurable distance of the knights and ladies who lived and played and loved in the many-towered city of which one could gain so clear a view from the topmost branches of the hickory tree in the upper pasture. She liked to crouch in the elder bushes where a lane, winding and green-arched, crossed a corner of the cornfield, and to wait, through the long, still summer mornings for Lancelot or Galahad or Tristram or some other of her friends to come pricking his way through the sunshine. She could hear the clinking of his golden armor, the whinnying of his steed, the soft brushing of the branches as they parted before his helmet or his spear; the rustling of the daisies against his great white charger's feet. And then there was the river "where the aspens dusk and quiver," and where barges laden with sweet ladies passed and left ripples of foam on the water and ripples of light laughter in the air as, brilliant and fair bedight, they went winding down to Camelot.

This morning she revisited all these hallowed spots. She thrilled on the very verge of the river and quivered amid the waving corn. She scaled the sentinel hickory and turned her eyes upon the Southern city. It was nearly a week since she had been allowed to wander so far afield, and Camelot seemed more than ever wonderful as it lay in the shimmering distance gleaming and glistening beyond the hills. Trails of smoke waved above all the towers, showing where Sir Beaumanis still served his kitchen apprenticeship for his knighthood and his place at the Table Round. Thousands of windows flashed back the light.

"I could get there," pondered Mary, "if God would send me that goat and wagon. I guess there's quite a demand for goats and wagons. I could dress my goat all up in skirts like the ladies dressed their palfreys, an' I'd wear my hair loose on my shoulders---it's real goldy when it's loose---an' my best hat. I guess Queen Guinevere would be real glad to see me. Oh, dear," she fretted as these visions came thronging back to her, "I wish Heaven would hurry up."

Between the pasture and the distant city she could distinguish the roofs of another of the havens of her dear desire---the house where the old ladies lived. Four old ladies there were, in the sweet autumn of their lives, and Mary's admiration of

them was as passionate as were all her psychic states. She never could be quite sure as to which of the four she most adored. There was the gentle Miss Ann, who taught her to recite verses of piercing and wilting sensibility; the brisk Miss Jane, who explained and demonstrated the construction of many an old-time cake or pastry; the silent Miss Agnes, who silently accepted assistance in her never-ending process of skeletonizing leaves and arranging them in prim designs upon cardboard, and the garrulous Miss Sabina, who, with a crochet needle, a hair-pin, a spool with four pins driven into it, knitting needles and other shining implements, could fashion, and teach Mary to fashion, weavings and spinings which might shame the most accomplished spider. Aided by her and by the re-enforced spool above mentioned, Mary had already achieved five dirty inches of red woollen reins for the expected goat. But the house was distant just three fields, a barb-wire fence, a low stone wall, and a cross bull, and Mary knew that her unaccustomed leisure could not be expected to endure long enough for so perilous a pilgrimage.

Her dissatisfied gaze wandered back to her quiet home surrounded by its neatly laid out meadows, cornfield, orchard, barns, and garden. And a shadow fell upon her wistful little face.

"That old aunt," she grumbled, "she makes me awful tired. She's always pokin' round an' callin' me."

Such, indeed, seemed the present habit and intent of the prim lady who was approaching, alternately clanging a dinner-bell and calling in a tone of resolute sweetness:

"Mary, O Mary, dear."

Mary parted the branches of her tree and watched, but made no sound.

"Mary," repeated the oncoming relative, "Mary, I want to tell you something," and added as she spied her niece's abandoned sunbonnet on the grass, "I know you're here and I shall wait until you come to me."

"I *ain't* coming," announced the Dryad, and thereby disclosed her position, both actual and mental. "I suppose it's something I've done and I don't want to hear it, so there!" Then, her temper having been worn thin by much admonishing, she anticipated: "I *ain't* sorry I've been bad. I *ain't* ashamed to behave so when my mamma is sick in bed. And I don't care if you *do* tell my papa when he comes home to-night."

The intruding relative, discerning her, stopped and smiled. And the smile was as a banderilla to her niece's goaded spirit.

"Jiminy!" gasped that young person, "she's got a smile just like a teacher."

"Mary, dear," the intruder gushed, "God has sent you something."

The hickory flashed forth black and white and red. Mary stood upon the ground.

"Where are they?" she demanded.

"They?" repeated the lady. "There is only one."

"Why, I prayed for two. Which did he send?"

"Which do you think?" parried the lady. "Which do you hope it is?"

Even Mary's scorn was unprepared for this weak-mindedness. "The goat, of course," she responded curtly. "Is it the goat?"

"Goat!" gasped the scandalized aunt. "Goat! Why, God has sent you a baby sister, dear."

"A sister! a baby!" gasped Mary in her turn. "I don't *need* no sister. I prayed for a goat just as plain as plain. 'Dear God,' I says, 'please bless everybody, and make me a good girl, an' send me a goat an' wagon.' And they went an' changed it to a baby sister! Why, I never s'posed they made mistakes like that."

Crestfallen and puzzled she allowed herself to be led back to the darkened house where her grandmother met her with the heavenly substitute wrapped in flannel. And as she held it against the square and unresponsive bosom of her apron she realized how the "Bible gentleman" must have felt when he asked for bread and was given a stone.

During the weeks that followed, the weight of the stone grew heavier and heavier while the hunger for bread grew daily more acute. Not even the departure of interfering relatives could bring freedom, for the baby's stumpy arms bound Mary to the house as inexorably as bolts and bars could have done. She passed weary hours in a hushed room watching the baby, when outside the sun was shining, the birds calling, the apples waxing greener and larger, and the shining knights and ladies winding down to Camelot. She sat upon the porch, still beside the baby, while the river rippled, the wheatfields wimpled, and the cows came trailing down from the pasture, down from the upland pasture where the sentinel hickory stood and watched until the sun went down, and, one by one, the lights came out in distant Camelot. She listened for the light laughter of the ladies, the jingling of the golden armor, the swishing of the branches and of the waves. Listened all in vain, for Theodora, that gift of God, had powerful lungs and a passion for exercising them so that minor sounds were overwhelmed and only yells remained.

But the deprivation against which she most passionately rebelled was that of her father's society. Before the advent of Theodora she had been his constant companion. They were perfectly happy together, for the poet who at nineteen had burned to challenge the princes of the past and to mold the destinies of the future was, at twenty-nine, very nearly content to busy himself about the occurrences of the present and to edit a weekly paper in the town which had known and honored his father, and was proud of, if puzzled by, their well-informed debonair son. Even himself he sometimes puzzled. He knew that this was not to be his life's work, this chronicling of the very smallest beer, this gossip and friendliness and good cheer. But it served to fill his leisure and his modest exchequer until such time as he could finish his great tragedy and take his destined place among the writers of his time. Meanwhile, he told himself, with somewhat rueful humor, there was always an editor ready to think well of his minor poems and an audience ready to marvel at them, "which is more, my dear," he pointed out to his admiring wife, "than Burns could have said for himself---or Coleridge."

And when his confidence and his hopes flickered, as the strongest of hopes and confidence sometimes will, when his tragedy seemed far from completion, his paper paltry, and his life narrow, he could always look into his daughter's eyes and there find faith in himself and strength and sunny patience.

Formerly these fountains of perpetual youth had been beside him all the long days through. From village to village, from store to farm, they had jogged, side by side, in a lazy old buggy; he smoking long, silent pipes, perhaps, or entertaining his companion with tales and poems of the days of chivalry when men were brave and women fair and all the world was young. And, Mary, enthralled, enrapt, adoring her father, and seeing every picture conjured up by his sonorous rhythm or quaint phrase, was much more familiar with the deeds and gossip of King Arthur's court than with events of her own day and country.

So that while Mary, tied to the baby, yearned for the wide spaces of her freedom, Mr. Buckley, lonely in a dusty buggy, jogging over the familiar roads, thought longingly of a little figure in an irresponsible sunbonnet, and found it difficult to bear patiently with matronly neighbors, who congratulated him upon this arrangement, and assured him that his little play-fellow would now quickly outgrow her old-fashioned ways and become as other children, "which she would never have, Mr. Buckley, as long as you let her tag around with you and filled her head with impossible nonsense."

It was not a desire for any such alteration which made him acquiesce in the separation. It was a very grave concern for his wife's health, and a very sharp realization that, until he could devise some means of increasing his income, he could not afford to engage a more experienced nurse for the new arrival. He had no ideas of the suffering entailed upon his elder daughter. He was deceived, as was every one else, by the gentle uncomplainingness with which she waited upon Theodora, for whose existence she regarded herself as entirely to blame. Had she not, without consulting her parents, applied to high heaven for an increase in live stock, and was not the answer to this application, however inexact, manifestly her responsibility.

"They're awful good to me," she pondered. "They ain't scolded me a mite, an' I just know how they must feel about it. Mamma ain't had her health ever since that baby come, an' papa looks worried most to death. If they'd 'a' sent that goat an' wagon I could 'a' took mamma riding. Ain't prayers terrible when they go wrong!" And in gratitude for their forbearance she, erstwhile the companion, or at least the audience, of fealty knight and ladies, bowed her small head to the swathed and shapeless feet of heaven's error and became waiting woman to a flannel bundle.

Only her dreams remained to her. She could still look forward to the glorious time of "when I'm big." She could still unbind her dun-colored hair and shake it in the sun. She could still quiver with anticipation as she surveyed her brilliant future. A beautiful prince was coming to woo her. He would ride to the door and kneel upon the front porch while all his shining retinue filled the front yard and overflowed into the road. Then she would appear and, since these things were to happen in the days of her maturity, perhaps when she was twelve years old, she would be radiantly beautiful, and her hair would be all goldy gold and curly, and it would trail upon the ground a yard or two behind her as she walked. And the prince would be transfixed. And when he was all through being that---Mary often wondered what it was---he would arise and sing "Nicolette, the Bright of Brow," or some other disguised personality, while all his shining retinue would unsling hautboys and lyres and---and---mouth organs and play ravishing music.

And when she rode away to be the prince's bride and to rule his fair lands, her father and her mother should ride with her, all in the sunshine of the days "when I'm big"---the wonderful days "when I'm big."

Meanwhile, being but little, she served the flannel bundle even as Sir Beaumanis had served a yet lowlier apprenticeship. But she still stormed high heaven to rectify its mistake.

"And please, dear God, if you are all out of goats and wagons, send rabbits. But anyway come and take away this baby. My mamma ain't well enough to take care of it an' I can't spare the time. We don't need babies, but we do need that goat and wagon."

And the powers above, with a mismanagement which struck their petitioner dumb, sent a wagon---only a wagon---and it was a gocart for the baby, and Mary was to be the goat.

With this millstone tied about her neck she was allowed to look upon the scenes of her early freedom, and no inquisitor could have devised a more anguishing torture than that to which Mary's suffering and unsuspecting mother daily consigned her suffering and uncomplaining daughter.

"Walk slowly up and down the paths, dear, and don't leave your sister for a moment. Isn't it nice that you have somebody to play with now?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Mary. "But she ain't what I'd call playful."

"You used to be so much alone," Mrs. Buckley continued. Mary breathed sharply, and her mother kissed her sympathetically. "But now you always have your sister with you. Isn't it fine, dearie?"

"Yes, ma'am," repeated the victim, and bent her little energies to the treadmill task of wheeling the gocart to the orchard gate, where all wonders began, and then, with an effort as exhausting to the will as to the body, turning her back upon the lane, the river, and the sentinel tree, to trundle her Juggernaut between serried rows of cabbages and carrots.

Then slowly she began to hate, with a deep, abiding hatred, the flannel bundle. She loathed the very smell of flannel before Theodora was six short weeks old, and the sight of the diminutive laundry, which hung upon the line between the cherry trees, almost drove her to arson.

The shy, quick-darting creature---half child and half humming bird---was forced to drag that monstrous perambulator on all her expeditions. After a month's confinement to the garden, where knights and ladies never penetrate, she managed to bump her responsibility out into the orchard. But the glory was all in the treetops, and Mary soon grew restless under her mother's explicit directions. "Up and down the walks" meant imprisonment, despair. Theodora should have tried to make her role of Albatross as acceptable as it might be made to the long-suffering mariner about whose neck she hung, but she showed a callousness and a heartless selfishness which nothing could excuse. Mary would sometimes plead with all gentleness and courtesy for a few short moments' freedom.

"Theodora," she would begin, "Theodora, listen to me a minute," and the gift of God would make aimless pugilistic passes at her interlocutor.

"O Theodora, I'm awful tired of stayin' down here on the ground. Wouldn't you just as lieves play you was a mad bull an' I was a lady in a red dress?"

Theodora, after some space spent in apparent contemplation, would wave a cheerful acquiescence.

"An' then I'll be scared of you, an' I'll run away an' climb as high as anything in the hickory tree up there on the hill. Let's play it right now, Theodora. There's something I want to see up there."

Taking her sister's bland smile for ratification and agreement, Mary would set about her personification, shed her apron lest its damaged appearance convict her in older eyes, and speed toward her goal. But the mad bull's shrieks of protest and repudiation would startle every bit of chivalry for miles and miles around.

Several experiences of this nature taught Mary, that, in dealing with infants of changeable and rudimentary mind, honesty was an impossible policy and candor a very boomerang, which returned and smote one with savage force. So she stooped to guile and detested the flannel all the more deeply because of the state to which it was debasing an upright conscience and a high sense of honor.

At first her lapses from the right were all negative. She neglected the gift of God. She would abandon it, always in a safe and shady spot and always with its covers smoothly tucked in, its wobbly parasol adjusted at the proper angle, and always with a large piece of wood tied to the perambulator's handle by a labyrinth of elastic strings. These Mary had drawn from abandoned garters, sling shots, and other mysterious sources, and they allowed the wood to jerk unsteadily

up and down, and to soothe the unsuspecting Theodora with a spasmodic rhythm very like the ministrations of her preoccupied nurse.

Meanwhile the nurse would be far afield upon her own concerns, and Theodora was never one of them. The river, the lane, the tall hickory knew her again and again. Camelot shone out across the miles of hill and tree and valley. But the river was silent and the lane empty, and Camelot seemed very far as autumn cleared the air. Perhaps this was because knights and ladies manifest themselves only to the pure of heart. Perhaps because Mary was always either consciously or subconsciously listening for the recalling shrieks of the abandoned and disprized gift of God.

"Stop it, I tell you," she admonished her purple-faced and convulsive charge one afternoon when all the world was gold. "Stop it, or mamma will be coming after us, and making us stay on the back porch." But Theodora, in the boastfulness of her new lungs, yelled uninterruptedly on. Then did Mary try cajolery. She removed her sister from the perambulator and staggered back in a sitting posture with suddenness and force. The jar gave Theodora pause, and Mary crammed the silence full of promise. "If you'll stop yellin' now I'll see that my prince husband lets you be a goose-girl on the hills behind our palace. Its awful nice being a goose-girl," she hastened to add lest the prospect fail to charm. "If I didn't have to marry that prince an' be a queen I guess I'd been a goose-girl myself. Yes, sir, it's lovely work on the hills behind a palace with all the knights ridin' by an' sayin', 'Fair maid, did'st see a boar pass by this way?' You don't have to be afraid---you'd never have to see one. In all the books the goose-girls didn't never see no boars, and the knights gave 'em a piece of gold an' smiled on 'em, and the sunshine shined on 'em, an' they had a lovely time."

Having stumbled into the road to peace of conscience, Mary trod it bravely and joyously. Theodora's future rank increased with the decrease of her present comfort, but her posts, though lofty and remunerative, were never such as would bring her into intimate contact with the person of the queen.

She was betrothed to the son of a noble, and very distant, house after an afternoon when the perambulator, ill-trained to cross-country work, balked at the first stone wall on the way to the old ladies' house. It was then dragged backward for a judicious distance and faced at the obstacle at a mad gallop. Umbrella down, handle up, wheels madly whirring, it was forced to the jump.

Again it refused, reared high into the air, stood for an instant upon its hind wheels and then fell supinely on its side, shedding its blankets, its pillows, and Theodora upon the cold, hard stones.

After that her rise was rapid, and the distance separating her from her sister's elaborate court more perilous and more beset with seas and boars and mountains and robbers. She was allowed to wed her high-born betrothed when she had been forgotten for three hours while Mary learned a heart-rending poem commencing, "Oh, hath she then failed in her troth, the beautiful maid I adore?" until even Miss Susan could only weep in intense enjoyment and could suggest; no improvement in the recitation.

On another occasion Mary was obliged to borrow the perambulator for the conveyance of leaves and branches with which to build a bower withal; and Theodora, having been established in unfortunate proximity to an ant hill, was thoroughly explored by its inhabitants ere her ministering sister realized that her cries and agitation were anything more than her usual attitude of protest against whatever chanced to be going on. By the time the bower was finished and the perambulator ready for its customary occupant that young person was in a position to claim heavy damages.

"Don't you care," said Mary cheerfully, as she relieved Theodora from the excessive animation. "I can make it up to you when I'm big. My prince husband---I guess he'd better be a king by that time---will go over to your country an' kill your husband's father an' his grandfather an' all the kings an' princes until there's nobody only your husband to be king. Then you'll be a queen you see, an' live in a palace. So now hush up." And one future majesty was rocked upside down by

another until the royal face of the younger queen was purple and her voice was still.

Mary found it more difficult to quiet her new and painful agnosticism, and in her efforts to reconcile dogma with manifestation she evolved a series of theological and economical questions which surprised her father and made her mother's head reel. She further manifested a courteous attention when the minister came to call, and she engaged him in spiritual converse until he writhed again. For a space her investigations led her no whither, and then, without warning, the man of peace solved her dilemma and shed light upon her path.

A neighbor ripe in years and good works had died. The funeral was over and the man of God had stopped to rest in the pleasant shade of Mrs. Buckley's trees and in the pleasant sound of Mrs. Buckley's voice. Mary, the gocart, and Theodora completed the group, and the minister spoke.

"A good man," he repeated, "Ah, Mrs. Buckley, he will be sadly missed! But the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be---"

"When?" demanded Mary breathlessly. "When does he take away?"

"In His own good time."

"When's that?"

"'Tis not for sinful man to say. He sends His message to the man in the pride of his youth or to the babe in its cradle. He reaches forth His hand and takes away."

"But when---" Mary was beginning when her mother, familiar with the Socratic nature of her daughter's conversation and its exhaustive effect upon the interlocutor, interposed a remark which guided the current of talk out of heavenly channels and back to the material plain.

But Mary had learned all that she cared to know. It was not necessary that she should suffer the exactions of the baby or subject her family to them. The Lord had given and would take away! The minister had said so, and the minister knew all about the Lord. And if the powers above were not ready to send for the baby, it would be easy enough to deposit it in the Lord's own house, which showed its white spire beyond the first turn in the road which led to Camelot. There the Lord would find it and take it away. This would be, she reflected, the quiet, dignified, lady-like thing to do. And the morrow, she decided, would be an admirable day on which to do it.

Therefore, on the morrow she carefully decked Theodora in small finery, hung garlands of red and yellow maple leaves upon the perambulator, twined chains of winter-green berries about its handle, tied a bunch of gorgeous golden rod to its parasol, and trundled it by devious and obscure ways to the sacred precincts of God's house.

"They look real well," she commented. "If I was sure about that goat I might keep the cart, but it really ain't the right kind for a goat. I guess I'd better take 'em back just like they are an' when the Lord sees how I got 'em all fancied up, he'll know I ain't a careless child, an' maybe I'd get that goat after all."

So the disprized little gifts of God were bumped up the church steps, wheeled up the aisle, and bestowed in a prominent spot before the chancel rail. Some one was playing soft music at the unseen organ, but Mary accepted soft music as a phenomenon natural to churches, and failed to connect it with human agency. Sedately she set out Theodora's bows and ruffles to the best advantage. Carefully she rearranged the floral decorations of the perambulator, and set her elastic understudy in erratic motion. Complacently she surveyed the whole and walked out into the sunshine---free. And

presently the minister, the intricacies of a new hymn reconciled to the disabilities of a lack of ear and a lack of training, came out into the body of the church, where the gifts of God, bland in smiles and enwreathed in verdure, were waiting to be taken away.

"Mrs. Buckley's baby," was his first thought. "I wonder where that queer little Mary is," was his second. And his third, it came when he was tired of waiting for some solution of his second, was an embarrassed realization that he would be obliged to take his unexpected guest home to its mother. And the quiet town of Arcady rocked upon its foundations as he did it.

"In the church," marveled Mrs. Buckley. "How careless of Mary!" she apologized, and "How good of you!" she smiled. "No, I'm not in the least worried. She always had a way of trotting off to her own diversions when she was not with her father. And lately she has been astonishingly patient about spending her time with baby. I have felt quite guilty, about it. But after to-day she will be free, as Mr. Buckley has found a nurse to relieve her. He was beginning to grow desperate about Mary and me---said we neither of us had a moment to waste on him---and yet could not find a nurse whom we felt we could afford. And yesterday a young woman walked into his office to put an advertisement in his paper for just such a position as we had to offer. She is a German, wants to learn English, and she will be here this afternoon."

"Perhaps your little girl resented her coming," he suggested vaguely. "Perhaps that was the reason."

"Mary resentful!" laughed Mrs. Buckley.

"She doesn't, bless her gentle little heart, know the meaning of the word. Besides which we haven't told her about the girl, as we are rather looking forward to that first interview, and wondering how Mary will acquit herself in a conversational Waterloo. She can't, you know, make life miserable and information bitter to a German who speaks no English. 'Ja' or 'nein' alternately and interchangeably may baffle even her skill in questioning."

Mary, meanwhile, was hurrying along the way to Camelot. She had not planned the expedition in advance. Rather, it was the inevitable reaction toward license which marks the success of any revolution. She had cast off the bonds of the baby carriage, her time and her life were her own, and the road stretched white and straight toward Camelot.

It was afternoon and the sun was near its setting when at last she reached the towered city and found it in all ways delightful but in some surprising. She was prepared for the moat and for the drawbridge across it, but not for the exceeding dirtiness of its water and the dinginess of its barges. She had expected it to be wider and perhaps cleaner, and the castles struck her as being ill-adapted to resist siege and the shocks of war since nearly all their walls were windows. And through these windows she caught glimpses of the strangest interiors which ever palaces boasted. Miles and acres of bare wooden tables stood under the shade of straight iron trees. From the trees black ribbons depended. In the treetops there were wheels and shining iron bars, and all about the tables there were other iron bars and bolts and bands of greasy leather.

"I don't see a round table anywhere," she reflected. "What do you s'pose they do with all those little square ones?" She sought the answer to this question through many a dirty pane and many a high-walled street. But the palaces and the streets were empty and the explorer discovered with a quick-sinking heart and confidence that she was alone and hungry and very far from home. She was treading close upon the verge of tears when her path debouched upon the central square of Camelot. And straightway she forgot her doubts and puzzlements, her hunger and her increasing weariness, for she had found "The Court." Across a fair green plaisance, all seemly beset with flower and shrub, the wide doors of a church stood open. Tall palaces were all about, and in every window, on every step, on the green benches which dotted the plaisance, on every possible elevation or post of observation, the good folk of Camelot stood or hung or even fought,

to watch the procession of beauty and chivalry as it came foaming down the steps, broke into eddies, and disappeared among the thronging carriages. Mary found it quite easy to identify the illustrious personages in the procession when once she had realized that they would, of course, not be in armor on a summer's afternoon, and at what even, to her inexperienced eyes, was manifestly a wedding.

First to emerge was a group of the younger knights, frock-coated, silk-hatted, pale gray of waistcoat and gloves, white and effulgent of *boutonniere*. Excitement, almost riot, resulted among the much-caparisoned horses, the much-favored coachmen, and the much-beribboned equipages of state. But the noise increased to clamor and eagerness to violence when an ethereal figure in floating tulle and clinging lace was led out into the afternoon light by a more resplendent edition of black-coated, gray-trousered knighthood.

The next wave was all of pink chiffon and nodding plumes. The first wave, after trickling about the carriages and the coachmen, receded up the steps again to be lost and mingled in the third, and then both swept down to the carriages again and were absorbed. Then the steady tide of departing royalty set in. Then horses plunged, elderly knights fussed, court ladies commented upon the heat, the bride, the presents, or their neighbors. Then the bride's father mopped his brow and the bridegroom's mother wept a little. Then there was much shaking or waving of hands or of handkerchiefs. Then the bridal carriage began to move, the bride began to smile, and rice and flowers and confetti and good wishes and slippers filled the air. Then other carriages followed, then the good folk of Camelot followed, an aged man closed the wide church doors, and the square was left to the sparrows, pink sunshine, confetti, rice, and Mary.

The little pilgrim's sunbonnet was hanging down her back, her hair was loose upon her shoulders, "an' real goldy" where it caught the sun, and her eyes were wide and deep with happiness and faith. She crossed the wide plaisance and stood upon the steps, she gathered up three white roses and a shred of lace, she sat down to rest upon the topmost step, she laid her cheek against the inhospitable doors, and, in the language of the stories she loved so well, "so fell she on sleep" with the tired flowers in her tired hands.

And there Herbert Buckley found her. He had traveled far afield on that autumn afternoon; but it is not every day that the daughter of the owner of one-half the mills in a manufacturing town is married to the owner of the other half, and when such things do occur to the accompaniment of illustrious visitors, a half-holiday in all the mills, perfect weather, and unlimited hospitality, it behooves the progressive journalist and reporter for miles around to sing "haste to the wedding," and to draw largely upon his adjectives and his fountain pen. The editorial staff of the *Arcady Herald-Journal* turned homeward, and was evolving phrases in which to describe that gala day when his eye caught the color of a familiar little sunbonnet, the outline of a familiar little figure. But such a drooping little sunbonnet! Such a relaxed little figure! Such a weary little face! And such a wildly impossible place in which to find a little daughter. Then he remembered having seen Miss Ann and Miss Agnes among the spectators and his wonder changed to indignation.

It was nearly dark when Mary opened her eyes again and found herself sheltered in her father's arm and rocked by the old familiar motion of the buggy.

"And then," she prompted sleepily as her old habit was, "what did they do then?"

"They were married," his quiet voice replied.

"And then?"

"Oh, then they went away together and lived happily ever after."

For some space there was silence and a star came out. Mary watched it drowsily and then drowsily began:

"When I was to Camelot---"

"Where?" demanded her father.

"When I was to Camelot," she repeated, cuddling close to him as if to show that there were dearer places than that gorgeous city, "I saw a knight and a lady getting married. And lots of other knights were there---they didn't wear their fighting clothes---and lots of other ladies, pink ones. An' Arthur wore a stovepipe hat an' Guinevere wore a white dress, an' she had white feathers in her crown. An' Lancelot, he was there, all getting married. Daddy, dear," she broke off to question, "were you ever to Camelot?"

"Oh, yes, I was there," he answered, "but it was a great many years ago."

"Did you find roses?" she asked, exhibiting her wilted treasures.

"I found your mother there, my dear."

"And then, what did you do then?"

"Well, then we were married and lived happily ever after."

"And then--?"

"There was you, and we lived happier ever after."

And Mary fell on sleep again in the shelter of her father's arm while the stars came out and the glow of joyant Camelot lit all the southern sky.

GREAT OAKS FROM LITTLE ACORNS

Among the influences which, in America, promote harmony between alien races, the public school plays a most important part. The children, the teachers, the parents---whether of emigrant or native origin---the relatives and friends in distant countries, are all brought more or less under its amalgamating influences. In the schoolroom the child finds friends and playmates belonging to races widely different from his own; there Greek meets not only Greek, but Turk, American, Irish, German, French, English, Italian and Hungarian, and representatives of every other nation under the sun. The lion lying down with the lamb was nothing to it, because the lamb, though its feelings are not enlarged upon, must have been distinctly uncomfortable. But in the schoolroom Jew and Gentile work and play together; and black and white learn love and knowledge side by side.

And long after more formal instruction has faded with the passing of the years a man of, perhaps, German origin will think kindly of the whole irresponsible Irish race when he remembers little Bridget O'Connor, who sat across the aisle in the old Cherry Street school, her quick temper and her swift remorse.

Of course, all these nationalities are rarely encountered in one district, but a teacher often finds herself responsible for fifty children representing five or six of them. In the lower grades eight or ten may be so lately arrived as to speak no English. The teacher presiding over this polyglot community is often, herself, of foreign birth, yet they get on very well together, are very fond of one another, and very happy. The little foreigners, assisted by their more well-informed comrades, learn the language of the land, I regret to say that it is often tinged with the language of the Bowery, in from six to twelve weeks, six weeks for the Jews, and twelve for the slower among the Germans' children. And again, it will

be difficult to stir Otto Schmidt, at any stage of his career, into antagonism against the Jewish race, when he remembers the patience and loving kindness with which Maxie Fishandler labored with him and guided his first steps through the wilderness of the English tongue.

These indirect but constant influences are undeniably the strongest, but at school the child is taught in history of the heroism and the strength of men and nations other than his own; he learns, with some degree of consternation, that Christopher Columbus was a "Dago," George Washington an officer in the English Army, and Christ, our Lord, a Jew. Geography, as it is now taught with copious illustrations and descriptions, shows undreamed-of beauties in countries hitherto despised. And gradually, as the pupils move on from class to class, they learn true democracy and man's brotherhood to man.

But the work of the American public school does not stop with the children who come directly under its control. The board of education reaches, as no other organization does, the great mass of the population. All the other boards and departments established for the help and guidance of these people only succeed in badgering and frightening them. They are met, even at Ellis Island, by the board of health and they are subjected to all kinds of disagreeable and humiliating experiences culminating sometimes in quarantine and sometimes in deportation. Even after they have passed the barrier of the emigration office, the monster still pursues them. It disinfects their houses, it confiscates the rotten fish and vegetables which they hopefully display on their push-carts, it objects to their wrenching off and selling the plumbing appliances in their apartments, it interferes with them in twenty ways a day and hedges them round about with a hundred laws which they can only learn, as Parnell advised a follower to learn the rules of the House of Commons, by breaking them.

Then comes the department of street cleaning, with its extraordinary ideas of the use of a thoroughfare. The new-comer is taught that the street is not the place for dead cats and cabbage stalks, and other trifles for which he has no further use. Neither may it be used, except with restrictions, as a bedroom or a nursery. The emigrant, puzzled but obliging, picks his progeny out of the gutter and lays it on the fire-escape. He then makes acquaintance of the fire department, and listens to its heated arguments. So perhaps he, still willing to please, reclaims the dead cat and the cabbage stalk, and proceeds to cremate them in the privacy of the back yard. Again the fire department, this time in snorting and horrible form, descends upon him. And all these manifestations of freedom are attended by the blue-coated police who interdict the few relaxations unprovided for by the other powers. These human monsters confiscate stilettos and razors; discourage pocket-picking, brick-throwing, the gathering of crowds and the general enjoyment of life. Their name is legion. Their appetite for figs, dates, oranges and bananas and graft is insatiable; they are omnipresent; they are argus-eyed; and their speech is always, "Keep movin' there. Keep movin'." And all these baneful influences may be summoned and set in action by another, but worse than all of them, known as the Gerry Society. This tyrant denies the parent's right in his own child, forbids him to allow a minor to work in sweatshop, store, or even on the stage, and enforces these commands, even to the extreme of removing the child altogether and putting it in an institution.

In sharp contrast to all these ogres, the board of education shines benignant and bland. Here is power making itself manifest in the form of young ladies, kindly of eye and speech, who take a sweet and friendly interest in the children and all that concerns them. Woman meets woman and no policeman interferes. The little ones are cared for, instructed, kept out of mischief for five hours a day, taught the language and customs of the country in which they are to make their living or their fortunes; and generally, though the board of education does not insist upon it, they are cherished and watched over. Doctors attend them, nurses wait upon them, dentists torture them, oculists test them.

Friendships frequently spring up between parent and teacher, and it often lies in the power of the latter to be of service by giving either advice or more substantial aid. At Mothers' meetings the cultivation of tolerance still goes on. There, women of widely different class and nationality, meet on the common ground of their children's welfare. Then there are roof gardens, recreation piers and parks, barges and excursions, all designed to help the poorer part of the city's

population--without regard to creed or nationality--to bear and to help their children to bear the killing heat of summer. So Jew and Gentile, black and white, commingle; and gradually old hostilities are forgotten or corrected. The board of education provides night schools for adults and free lectures upon every conceivable interesting topic, including the history and geography and natural history of distant lands. Travelers always draw large audiences to their lectures.

The children soon learn to read well enough to translate the American papers and there are always newspapers in the different vernaculars, so that the emigrant soon becomes interested not only in the news of his own country, but in the multitudinous topics which go to make up American life. He soon grasps at least the outlines of politics, national and international, and before he can speak English he will address an audience of his fellow countrymen on "Our Glorious American Institutions."

It is not only the emigrant parent who profits by the work of the public school. The American parent also finds himself, or generally herself, brought into friendly contact with the foreign teachers and the foreign friends of her children. The New York public school system culminates in the Normal College, which trains women as teachers, and the College of the City of New York, which offers courses to young men in the profession of law, engineering, teaching, and, besides, a course in business training. The commencement at these institutions brings strangely contrasted parents together in a common interest and a common pride. The students seem much like one another, but the parents are so widely dissimilar as to make the similarity of their offspring an amazing fact for contemplation. Mothers with shawls over their heads and work-distorted hands sit beside mothers in Parisian costumes, and the silk-clad woman is generally clever enough to appreciate and to admire the spirit which strengthened her weary neighbor through all the years of self-denial, labor, poverty and often hunger, which were necessary to pay for the leisure and the education of son or daughter. The feeling of inferiority, of uselessness, which this realization entails may humiliate the idle woman but it is bound to do her good. It will certainly deprive her conversation of sweeping criticisms on lives and conditions unknown to her. It will also utterly do away with many of her prejudices against the foreigner and it will make the "Let them eat cake" attitude impossible.

And so the child, the parent, the teacher and the home-staying relative are brought to feel their kinship with all the world through the agency of the public school, but the teacher learns the lesson most fully, most consciously. The value to the cause of peace and good-will in the community of an army of thousands of educated men and women holding views such as these cannot easily be over-estimated. The teachers, too, are often aliens and nearly always of a race different from their pupils, yet you will rarely meet a teacher who is not delighted with her charges.

"Do come," they always say, "and see my little Italians, or Irish, or German, or picaninnies; they are the sweetest little things," or, if they be teachers of a higher grade, "They are the cleverest and the most charming children." They are all clever in their different ways, and they are all charming to those who know them, and the work of the public school is to make this charm and cleverness appreciated, so that race misunderstandings in the adult populations may grow fewer and fewer.

The only dissatisfied teacher I ever encountered was a girl of old Knickerbocker blood, who was considered by her relatives to be too fragile and refined to teach any children except the darlings of the upper West side, where some of the rich are democratic enough to patronize the public school. From what we heard of her experiences, "patronize" is quite the proper word to use in this connection. A group of us, classmates, had been comparing notes and asked her from what country her charges came. "Oh, they are just kids," she answered dejectedly, "ordinary every-day kids, with Dutch cut hair, Russian blouses, belts at the knee line, sandals, and nurses to convey them to and from school. You never saw anything so tiresome."

It grew finally so tiresome that she applied for a transfer, and took the Knickerbocker spirit down to the Jewish quarter, where it gladdened the young Jacobs, Rachaels, Isadors and Rebeccas entrusted to her care. Her place among the nursery

pets was taken by a dark-eyed Russian girl, who found the uptown babies, the despised "just kids," as entertaining, as lovable, and as instructive as the Knickerbocker girl found the Jews. Well, and so they are all of them, lovable, entertaining and instructive, and the man or woman who goes among them with an open heart and eye will find much material for thought and humility, and one function of the public school is to promote this understanding and appreciation. It has done wonders in the past, and every year finds it better equipped for its work of amalgamation. The making of an American citizen is its stated function, but its graduates will be citizens not only of America. In sympathy, at least, they will be citizens of the world.

FINIS