Aladdin O'Brien eBook

Aladdin O'Brien by Gouverneur Morris

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*** *Start of the project gutenberg* EBOOK *Aladdin* O’BRIEN ***

ALADDIN O’BRIEN

BY GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

BOOK I

“It was many and many a year ago,
  In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
  By the name of Annabel Lee.
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
  Than to love and be loved by me.
I was a child and she was a child”—

ALADDIN O’BRIEN

I

It was on the way home from Sunday-school that Aladdin had enticed Margaret to the forbidden river. She was not sure that he knew how to row, for he was prone to exaggerate his prowess at this and that, and she went because of the fine defiance of it, and because Aladdin exercised an irresistible fascination. He it was who could whistle the most engagingly through his front teeth; and he it was, when sad dogs of boys of the world were met behind the barn, who could blow the smoke of the fragrant grapevine through his nose, and swallow the same without alarm to himself or to his admirers. To be with him was in itself a soulful wickedness, a delicious and elevating lesson in

corruption. But to be with him when he had done wrong, and was sorry for it (as always when found out), that was enough to give one visions of freckled angels, and the sweetness of Paradise in May.

Aladdin brought the skiff into the float, stern first, with a bump. Pride sat high upon his freckled brow, and he whistled piercing notes.

“I can do it,” he said. “Now get in.”

Margaret embarked very gingerly and smoothed her dress carefully, before and after sitting down. It was a white and starchy dress of price, with little blue ribbons at the throat and wrists—such a dress as the little girl of a very poor papa will find laid out on the gilt and brocade chair beside her bed if she goes to sleep and wakes up in heaven.

“Only a little way, ’Laddin, please.”

The boy made half a dozen circular, jabbing strokes, and the skiff zigzagged out from the float. It was a fine blue day, cool as a cucumber, and across the river from the deserted shipyards, where, upon lofty beamings, stood all sorts of ships in all stages of composition, the frequent beeches and maples showed pink and red and yellow against the evergreen pines.

“It’s easy ’nough,” said Aladdin. And Margaret agreed in her mind, for it is the splash of deeds rather than the skill or power which impresses a lady. The little lady sat primly in the stern, her mitted paws folded; her eyes, innocent and immense, fastened admiringly upon the rowing boy.

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“Only ’bout’s far’s the cat-boat, ’Laddin, please,” she said. “I oughtn’t to of come ’t all.”

Somehow the cat-boat, anchored fifty yards out and straining back from her moorings, would not allow herself to be approached. For although Aladdin maintained a proper direction (at times), the ocean tide, setting rigidly in and overbearing the current of the river, was beginning to carry the skiff to some haven where she would not be.

Aladdin saw this and tried to go back, catching many crabs in the earnestness of his endeavor. Then the little girl, without being told, perceived that matters were not entirely in the hands of man, and began to look wistfully from Aladdin to the shore. After a while he stopped grinning, and then rowing.

“Can’t you get back, ’Laddin?” said the little girl.

“No,” said the boy, “I can’t.” He was all angel now, for he was being visited for wrong.

The little girl’s lips trembled and got white.

“I’m awful sorry, Margaret.”

“What’ll we do, ’Laddin?”

“Just sit still, ‘n’ whatever happens I’ll take care of you, Margaret.”

They were passing the shipyards with a steady sweep, but the offices were closed, the men at home, and no one saw the distressed expedition. The last yard of all was conspicuous by a three-master, finished, painted, sparred, ready for the fragrant bottle to be cracked on her nose, and the long shivering slide into the river. Then came a fine square, chimneyed house with sherry-glass-shaped elm-trees about it. The boy shouted to a man contorted under a load of wood. The man looked up and grinned vacantly, for he was not even half-witted. And they were swept on. Presently woods drew between them and the last traces of habitation,—gorgeous woods with intense splashes of color, standing upon clean rocks that emphatically divided the water from the land,—and they scurried into a region as untroubled by man as was Eden on the first morning. The little boy was not afraid, but so sorry and ashamed that he could have cried. The little girl, however, was even deeper down the throat of remorse, for she had sinned three times on Sunday,—first, she had spoken to the “inventor’s boy”; second, she had not “come straight home”; third, she had been seduced into a forbidden boat,—and there was no balm in Gilead; nor any forgiveness forever. She pictured her grand, dark father standing like a biblical allegory of “Hell and Damnation” within the somber leathern cube of his books, the fiercely white, whalebone cane upon which he and old brother gout leaned, and the vast gloomy centers at the bases of which glowed his savage eyes. She thought of the rolling bitter voice with which she had once heard him stiffen the backs of his constituents, and she was sore afraid. She

did not remember how much he loved her, or the impotence of his principles where she was concerned. And she did not recollect, for she had not been old enough to know, that the great bitter voice, with its heavy, telling sarcasm, had been lifted for humanity—-for more humanity upon earth.

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“Oh, ’Laddin,” she said suddenly, “I daren’t go home now.”

“Maybe we can get her in farther up,” said Aladdin, “and go home through the woods. That’ll be something, anyhow.”

Margaret shuddered. She thought of the thin aunt who gave her lessons upon the pianoforte—one of the elect, that aunt, who had never done wrong, and whom any halo would fit; who gave her to understand that the Almighty would raise Cain with any little girl who did not practise an hour every day, and pray Him, night and morning, to help her keep off the black notes when the white notes were intended. First there would be a reckoning with papa, then one with Aunt Marion, last with Almighty God, and afterward, horribile dictu, pitchforks for little Margaret, and a vivid incandescent state to be maintained through eternity at vast cost of pit-coal to a gentleman who carried over his arm, so as not to step on it, a long snaky tail with a point like a harpoon’s.

Meanwhile, Aladdin made sundry attempts to get the boat ashore, and failed signally. The current was as saucy as strong. Now it swept them into the very shade of the trees, and as hope rose hot in the boy’s heart and he began to stab the water with the oars, sent them skipping for the midriver. Occasionally a fish jumped to show how easy it was, and high overhead an eagle passed statelily in the wake of a cloud. After the eagle came a V of geese flying south, moving through the treacherous currents and whirlpools of the upper air as steadily and directly as a train upon its track. It seemed as if nature had conspired with her children to demonstrate to Margaret and Aladdin the facility of precise locomotion. The narrow deeps of the river ended where the shore rolled into a high knob of trees; above this it spread over the lower land into a great, shallow, swiftly currented lake, having in its midst a long turtlebacked island of dense woods and abrupt shores. Two currents met off the knob and formed in the direction of the island a long curve of spitting white. Aladdin rowed with great fervor.

“Do it if you can, ’Laddin,” said the little girl.

It seemed for one moment as if success were about to crown the boy’s effort, for he brought the boat to an exciting nearness to the shore; but that was all. The current said: “No, Aladdin, that is not just the place to land; come with me, and bring the boat and the young lady.” And Aladdin at once went with the current.

“Margaret,” he said, “I done my best.” He crossed his heart.

“I know you done your best, ’Laddin.” Margaret’s cheeks were on the brink of tears. “I know you done it.”

They were dancing sportively farther and farther from the shore. The water broke, now and again, and slapped the boat playfully.

“We ’ve come ’most three miles,” said Aladdin.

“I daren’t go back if I could now,” said Margaret.

Meanwhile Aladdin scanned the horizon far and wide to see if he could see anything of Antheus, tossed by the winds, or the Phrygian triremes, or Capys, or the ships having upon their lofty poops the arms of Caicus. There was no help in sight. Far and wide was the bubbling ruffled river, behind the mainland, and ahead the leafy island.

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“What’ll your father do, ’Laddin?”

Aladdin merely grinned, less by way of explaining what his father would do than of expressing to Margaret this: “Have courage; I am still with you.”

“’Laddin, we’re not going so fast.”

They had run into nominally still water, and the skiff was losing momentum.

“Maybe we’d better land on the island,” said Aladdin, “if we can, and wait till the tide turns; won’t be long now.”

Again he plied the oars, and this time with success. For after a little they came into the shadow of the island, the keel grunted upon sand, and they got out. There was a little crescent of white beach, with an occasional exclamatory green reed sticking from it, and above was a fine arch of birch and pine. They hauled up the boat as far as they could, and sat down to wait for the tide to turn. Firm earth, in spite of her awful spiritual forebodings, put Margaret in a more cheerful mood. Furthermore, the woods and the general mystery of islands were as inviting as Punch.

“It’s not much fun watching the tide come in,” she said after a time.

Aladdin got up.

“Let’s go away,” he said, “and come back. It never comes in if you watch for it to.”

Margaret arose, and they went into the woods.

A devil’s darning-needle came and buzzed for an instant on the bow of the skiff. A belated sandpiper flew into the cove, peeped, and flew out.

The tide rose a little and said:

“What is this heavy thing upon my back?”

Then it rose a little more.

“Why, it’s poor little sister boat stuck in the mud,” said the tide.

From far off came joyful crackling of twigs and the sounds of children at play.

The tide rose a little more and freed an end of the boat.

“That’s better,” said the boat, “ever so much better. I can almost float.”

Again the tide raised its broad shoulders a hair’s-breadth.

“Great!” said the boat. “Once more, Old Party!”

When the children came back, they found that poor little sister boat was gone, and in her stead all of their forgotten troubles had returned and were waiting for them, and looking them in the face.

II

It is absurdly difficult to get help in this world. If a lady puts her head out of a window and yells “Police,” she is considered funny, or if a man from the very bottom of his soul calls for help, he is commonly supposed to be drunk. Thus if, cast away upon an island, you should wave your handkerchief to people passing in a boat, they would imagine that you wanted to be friendly, and wave back; or, if they were New York aldermen out for a day’s fishing in the Sound, call you names. And so it was with Margaret and Aladdin. With shrill piping voices they called tearfully to a party sailing up the river from church, waved and waved, were answered in kind, and tasted the bitterest cup possible to the Crusoed.

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Then after much wandering in search of the boat it got to be hunger-time, and two small stomachs calling lustily for food did not add to the felicity of the situation.

With hunger-time came dusk, and afterward darkness, blacker than the tall hat of Margaret's father. For at the last moment nature had thought better of the fine weather which man had been enjoying for the past month, and drawn a vast curtain of inkiness over the luminaries from one horizon even unto the other, and sent a great puff of wet fog up the valley of the river from the ocean, so that teeth chattered and the ends of fingers became shriveled and bloodless. And had not vanity gone out with the entrance of sin, Margaret would have noticed that her tight little curls were looser and the once stately ostrich feather upon her Sunday hat, the envy of little girls whom the green monster possessed, as flabby as a long sermon.

Meanwhile the tide having turned, little sister boat made fine way of it down the river, and, burrowing in the fog, holding her breath as it were, and greatly assisted by the tide, slipped past the town unseen, and put for open sea, where it is to be supposed she enjoyed herself hugely and, finally, becoming a little skeleton of herself on unknown shores, was gathered up by somebody who wanted a pretty fire with green lights in it. The main point is that she went her selfish way undetected, so that the wide-lanterned search which presently arose for little Margaret tumbled and stumbled about clueless, and halted to take drinks, and came back about morning and lay down all day, and said it never did, which it certainly hadn't. All the to-do was over Margaret, for Aladdin had not been missed, and, even if he had, nobody would have looked for him. His father was at home bending over the model of the wonderful lamp which was to make his fortune, and over which he had been bending for fifteen rolling years. It had come to him, at about the time that he fell in love with Aladdin's mother, that a certain worthless biproduct of something would, if combined with something else and steeped in water, generate a certain gas, which, though desperately explosive, would burn with a flame as white as day. Over the perfection of this invention, with a brief honeymoon for vacation, he had spent fifteen years, a small fortune,—till he had nothing left, —the most of his health, and indeed everything but his conviction that it was a beautiful invention and sure of success. When Aladdin arrived, he was red and wrinkled, after the everlasting fashion of the human babe, and had no name, so because of the wonderful lamp they called him Aladdin. And that rendered his first school-days wretched and had nothing to do with the rest of his life, after the everlasting fashion of wonderful names. Aladdin's mother went out of the world in the very natural act of ushering his young brother into it, and he remembered her as a thin person who was not strictly honorable (for, having betrayed him with a kiss, she punished him for smoking) and had a headache. So there was nobody to miss Aladdin or to waste the valuable night in looking for him.

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About this time Margaret began to cry and Aladdin to comfort her, and they stumbled about in the woods trying to find —anything. After awhile they happened into a grassy glade between two steep rocks, and there agreeing to rest, scrunched into a depression of the rock on the right. And Margaret, her nose very red, her hat at an angle, and her head on Aladdin's shoulder, sobbed herself to sleep. And then, because being trusted is next to being God, and the most moving and gentlest condition possible, Aladdin, for the first time, felt the full measure of his crime in leading Margaret from the straight way home, and he pressed her close to him and stroked her draggled hair with his cold little hands and cried. Whenever she moved in sleep, his heart went out to her, and before the night was old he loved her forever.

Sleep did not come to Aladdin, who had suddenly become a father and a mother and a nurse and a brother and a lover and a man who must not be afraid. His coat was wrapped about Margaret, and his arms were wrapped about his coat, and the body of him shivered against the damp, cold shirt, which would come open in front because there was a button gone. The fog came in thicker and colder, and night with her strange noises moved slower and slower. There was an old loon out on the river, who would suddenly throw back his head and laugh for no reason at all. And once a great strange bird went rushing past, squeaking like a mouse; and once two bright eyes came, flashing out of the night and swung this way and that like signal-lanterns and disappeared. Aladdin gave himself up for lost and would have screamed if he had been alone.

Presently his throat began to tickle, then the base of his nose, then the bridge thereof, and then he felt for a handkerchief and found none. For a little while he maintained the proprieties by a gentle sniffling, finally by one great agonized snuff. It seemed after that as if he were to be left in peace. But no. His lips parted, his chin went up a little, his eyes closed, the tickling gave place to a sudden imperative ultimatum, and, when all was over, Margaret had waked.

They talked for a long time, for she could not go to sleep again, and Aladdin told her many things and kept her from crying, but he did not tell her about the awful bird or the more awful eyes. He told her about his little brother, and the yellow cat they had, and about the great city where he had once lived, and why he was called Aladdin. And when the real began to grow dim, he told her stories out of strange books that he had read, as he remembered them—first the story of Aladdin and then others.

"Once," began Aladdin, though his teeth were knocking together and his arms aching and his nose running—"once there was a man named Ali Baba, and he had forty thieves —"

III

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Even in the good north country, where the white breath of the melting icebergs takes turn and turn with diamond nights and days, people did not remember so thick a fog; nor was there a thicker recorded in any chapter of tradition. Indeed, if the expression be endurable, so black was the whiteness that it was difficult to know when morning came. There was a fresher shiver in the cold, the sensibility that tree-tops were stirring, a filmy distinction of objects near at hand, and the possibility that somewhere 'way back in the east the rosy fingers of dawn were spread upon a clear horizon. Collisions between ships at sea were reported, and many a good sailorman went down full fathom five to wait for the whistle of the Great Boatswain.

The little children on the island roused themselves and groped about among the chilled, dripping stems of the trees; they had no end in view, and no place to go, but motion was necessary for the lame legs and arms. Margaret had caught a frightful cold and Aladdin a worse, and they were hungrier than should be allowed. Now a jarred tree rained water down their necks, and now their faces went with a splash and sting into low-hanging plumes of leaves; often there would be a slip and a scrambling fall. And by the time Aladdin had done grimacing over a banged shin, Margaret would have a bruised anklebone to cry about. The poor little soul was very tired and penitent and cold and hurt and hungry, and she cried most of the time and was not to be comforted. But Aladdin bit his lips and held his head up and said it all would be well sometime. Perhaps, though he still had a little courage left, Aladdin was the more to be pitied of the two: he was not only desperately responsible for it all, but full of imagination and the horrible things he had read. Margaret, like most women, suffered a little from self-centration, and to her the trunk of a birch was just a nasty old wet tree, but to Aladdin it was the clammy limb of one drowned, and drawn from the waters to stand in eternal unrest. At length the stumbling progress brought them to a shore of the island: a slippery ledge of rock, past whose feet the water slipped hurriedly, steaming with fog as if it had been hot, two big leaning birches, and a ruddy mink that slipped like winking into a hole. The river, evident for only a few yards, became lost in the fog, and where they were could only be guessed, and which way the tide was setting could only be learned by experiment. Aladdin planted a twig at the precise edge of the water, and they sat down to watch. Stubbornly and unwillingly the water receded from the twig, and they knew that the tide was running out.

"That's the way home," said Aladdin. Margaret looked wistfully down-stream, her eyes as misty as the fog.

"If we had the boat we could go now," said Aladdin.

Then he sat moody, evolving enterprise, and neither spoke for a long time.

"Marg'ret," said Aladdin, at length, "help me find a big log near the water."

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“What you going to do, ’Laddin?”

“You ’ll see. Help look.”

They crept along the edge of the island, now among the close-growing trees and now on the bare strip between them and the water, until at length they came upon a big log, lying like some gnarled amphibian half in the river and half on the dry land.

“Help push,” said Aladdin.

They could move it only a little, not enough.

“Wait till I get a lever,” said Aladdin. He went, and came back with a long, stiff little birch, that, growing recklessly in the thin soil over a rock, had been willing to yield to the persuasion of a child and come up by the roots. And then, Margaret pushing her best, and Aladdin prying and grunting, the log was moved to within an ace of launching. Until now, for she was too young to understand about daring and unselfishness, Margaret had considered the log-launching as a game invented by Aladdin to while away the dreary time; but now she realized, from the look in the pale, set, freckly, almost comical face of the boy, that deeds more serious were afoot, and when he said, “Somebody’ll pick me up, sure, Marg’ret, and help me come back and get you,” she broke out crying afresh and said, “Don’t, ’Laddin! Doo-on’t, ’Laddin!”

“Don’t cry, Marg’ret,” said Aladdin, with a gulp. “I’d do more’n that for you, and I can swim a little, too—b-better’n I can row.”

“Oh, ’Laddin,” said Margaret, “it’s so cold in the water.”

“Shucks!” said Aladdin, whose teeth had been knocking all night. “She’s the stanch little craft” (he had the phrase of a book) “Good Luck. I’m the captain and you’re the builder’s daughter”—and so she was. “Chrissen ’er, Marg’et. Kiss her on the bow an’ say she’s the Good Luck.”

Then Margaret, her hat over one ear, and the draggled ostrich feather greatly in the way, knelt, and putting her arms about the shoreward end of the log, kissed it, and said in a drawn little voice

“The Good Luck.”

“And now, Margaret,” said Aladdin, “you must stay right here’ n’ not go ’way from the shore, so’s I can find you when I come back. But don’t just sit still all the time,—keep moving, so’s not to get any colder,—’n I’ll come back for you sure.”

Then, because he felt his courage failing, he said, “Good-by, Marg’ret,” and turning abruptly, waded in to his ankles and bent over the log to give it that final impetus which

was to set it adrift. In his heart were several things: the desire to make good, fear of the river, and, poignant and bitter, the feeling that Margaret did not understand. He was too young to believe that death might really be near him (almost reckless enough not to care if he had), but keenly aware that his undertaking was perilous enough to warrant a more adequate farewell. So he bent bitterly over the log and stiffened his back for the heave. It must be owned that Aladdin wanted more of a scene.

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"'Laddin, I forgot something. Come back."

He came, his white lips drawn into a sort of smile. Then they kissed each other on the mouth with the loud, innocent kiss of little children, and after that Aladdin felt that the river was only a river, the cold only cold, the danger only danger and flowers—more than flowers.

He moved the log easily and waded with it into the icy waters, until his feet were dragged from the bottom, and after one awful instant of total submersion the stanch little ship Good Luck and valiant Captain Kissed-by-Margaret were embarked on the voyage perilous. His left arm over and about the log, his legs kicking lustily like the legs of a frog, his right hand paddling desperately for stability, Aladdin disappeared into the fog. After a few minutes he became so freezing cold that he would have let go and drowned gladly if it had not been for the wonderful lamp which had been lighted in his heart.

Margaret, when she saw him borne from her by the irresistible current, cried out with all the illogic of her womanly little soul, "Come back, 'Laddin, come back!" and sank sobbing upon the empty shore.

IV

However imminent the peril of the man, it is the better part of chivalry to remain by the distressed lady, and though impotent to be of assistance, we must linger near Margaret, and watch her gradually rise from prone sobbing to a sitting attitude of tears. For a long time she sat crying on the empty shore, regarding for the most part black life and not at all the signs of cheerful change which were becoming evident in the atmosphere about her. The cold breath across her face and hands and needling through her shivering body, the increasing sounds of treetops in commotion, the recurring appearance of branches where before had been only an opaque vault, did little to inform her that the fog was about to lift. The rising wind merely made her the more miserable and alone. Nor was it until a disk of gold smote suddenly on the rock before her that she looked up and beheld a twinkle of blue sky. The fog puffed across the blue, the blue looked down again,—a bigger eye than before,—a wisp of fog filmed it again, and again it gleamed out, ever larger and always more blue. The good wind living far to the south had heard that in a few days a little girl was to be alone and comfortless upon a foggy island, and, hearing, had filled his vast chest with warmth and sunshine, and puffed out his merry cheeks and blown. The great breath sent the blue waves thundering upon the coral beaches of Florida, tore across the forests of palm and set them all waving hilariously, shook the merry orange-trees till they rattled, whistled through the dismal swamps of Georgia, swept, calling and shouting to itself, over the Carolinas, where clouds were hatching in men's minds, banked up the waters of the Chesapeake so that there was a great high tide and the ducks were sent scudding

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to the decoys of the nearest gunner, went roaring into the oaks and hickories of New York, warmed the veins of New England fruit-trees, and finally coming to the giant fog, rent it apart by handfuls as you pluck feathers from a goose, and hurled it this way and that, until once more the sky and land could look each other in the face. Then the great wind laughed and ceased. For a long time Margaret looked down the cleared face of the river, but there was no trace of Aladdin, and in life but one comfort: the sun was hot and she was getting warm.

After a time, in the woods directly behind where she sat hoping and fearing and trying to dry her tears, a gun sounded like an exclamation of hope. Had Aladdin by any incredible circumstance returned so soon? Mindful of his warning not to stray from where she was, Margaret stood up and called in a shrill little voice

“Here I am! Here I am!”

Silence in the woods immediately behind where Margaret stood hoping and fearing!

“Here I am!” she cried. And it had been piteous to hear, so small and shrill was the voice.

Presently, though much farther off, sounded the merry yapping bark of a little dog, and again, but this time like an echo of itself, the exclamation of hope—hope deferred.

“Here I am! Here—I—am!” called Margaret.

Then there was a long silence—so long that it seemed as if nothing in the world could have been so long. Margaret sat down gasping. The sun rose higher, the river ran on, and hope flew away. And just as hope had gone for good, the merry yapping of the dog broke out so near that Margaret jumped, and bang went the gun—like a promise of salvation. Instantly she was on her feet with her shrill,

“Here I am! Here I am!”

And this time came back a lusty young voice crying:

“I’m coming!”

And hard behind the voice leaves shook, and a boy came striding into the sunlight. In one hand he trailed a gun, and at his heels trotted a waggish spaniel of immense importance and infinitesimal size. In his other hand the boy carried by the legs a splendid cock-grouse, ruffled and hunger-compelling. The boy, perhaps two years older than Aladdin, was big and strong for his age, and bore his shining head like a young wood-god.

Margaret ran to him, telling her story as she went, but so incoherently that when she reached him she had to stop and begin over again.

“Then Senator St. John is your father?” said the boy at length. “You know, he’s a great friend of my father’s. My father’s name is Peter Manners, and he used to be a congressman for New York. Are you hungry?”

Margaret could only look it.

They sat down, and the boy took wonderful things out of his wonderful pockets—-sandwiches of egg and sandwiches of jam; and Margaret fell to.

“I live in New York,” said the boy, “but I’m staying with my cousins up the river. They told me there were partridges on this island, and I rowed down to try and get some, but I missed two.” The boy blushed most becomingly whenever he spoke, and his voice, and the way he said words, were different from anything Margaret had ever heard. And she admired him tremendously. And the boy, because she had spent a night on a desert island, which he never had, admired her in turn.

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“Maybe we’ll find ’Laddin on the way,” said Margaret, cheerfully, and she looked up with great eyes at her godlike young friend.

V

Meanwhile to Aladdin and his log divers things had occurred, but the wonderful lamp, burning low or high at the will of the river, had not gone out. Sliding through the smoking fog at three miles an hour, kicking and paddling, all had gone well for a while. Then, for he was more keen than Margaret to note the fog’s promise to lift, at the very moment when the shores began to appear and mark his course as favorable, at the very moment when the sun struck one end of the log, an eddy of the current struck the other, and sent the stanch little craft Good Luck and her captain by a wide curve back up the river. The backward journey was slow and tortuous, and twice when the Good Luck turned turtle, submerging Aladdin, he gave himself up for lost; but amidships of the island, fairly opposite to the spot where he had left Margaret, the log was again seized by the right current, and the voyage recommenced. But the same eddy seized them, and back they came, with only an arm stiffened by cold between Aladdin and death. The third descent of the river, however, was more propitious. The eddy, it is true, made a final snatch, but its fingers were weakened and its murderous intentions thwarted. They passed by the knob of trees at the narrowing of the river, and swept grandly toward the town. Past the first shipyard they tore unnoticed, but at the second a shouting arose, and a boat was slipped overboard and put after them. Strong hands dragged Aladdin from the water, and, gulp after gulp, water gushed from his mouth. Then they rowed him quickly to land, and the Good Luck, having done her duty, went down the river alone. Years after, could Aladdin have met with that log, he would have recognized it like the face of a friend, and would have embraced and kissed it, painted it white to stave off the decay of old age, and set it foremost among his Lares and Penates.

For the present he was insensible. They put him naked into coarse, warm horse-blankets, and laid him before the great fire in the blacksmith’s shop across the road from the shipyard. And at the same time they sent one flying with a horse and buggy to the house of Hannibal St. John, for Aladdin had not passed into unconsciousness without partly completing his mission.

“Margaret—is—up—at—” he said, and darkness came.

At the moment when Aladdin came to, the door of the smithy was darkened by the tremendous figure of Hannibal St. John. Wrapped in his long black cloak, fastened at the throat by three links of steel chain, his face glowering and cavernous, the great man strode like a controlled storm through the awed underlings and stopped rigid at Aladdin’s side.

“Can the boy speak?” he said.

To Aladdin, looking up, there was neither pity nor mercy apparent in the senator’s face, and a great fear shook him. Would the wrath descend?

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“Do you know where my daughter is?”

The great rolling voice nearly broke between the “my” and the “daughter,” and the fear left Aladdin.

“Mister St. John,” he said, “she’s up at one of the islands. We went in a boat and couldn’t get back. If you’ll only get a boat and some one to row, I can take you right to her.” Then Aladdin knew that he had not said all there was to say. “Mister St. John,” said Aladdin, “I done it all.”

Men ran out of the smithy to prepare a boat.

“Who is this boy?” said St. John.

“It’s Aladdin O’Brien, the inventor’s boy,” said the smith.

“Are you strong enough to go with me, O’Brien?” said the senator.

“Yes, sir; I’ve got to go,” said Aladdin. “I said I’d come back for her.”

“Give him some whisky,” said St. John, in the voice of Jupiter saying “Poison him,” “and wrap him up warm, and bring him along.”

They embarked. Aladdin, cuddled in blankets, was laid in the bow, St. John, not deigning to sit, stood like a black tree-trunk in the stern, and amidships were four men to row.

A little distance up the river they met a boat coming down. In the stern sat Margaret, and at the oars her godlike young friend. Just over the bow appeared the snout and merry eyes of the spaniel, one of his delightful ears hanging over on each side.

“I am glad to see you alive,” said St. John to Margaret when the boats were within hailing distance, and to her friend he said, “Since you have brought her so far, be good enough to bring her the rest of the way.” And to his own rowers he said, “Go back.” When the boats came to land at the shipyard, Margaret’s father lifted her out and kissed her once on each cheek. Of the godlike boy he asked his name, and when he learned that it was Peter Manners and that his father was Peter Manners, he almost smiled, and he shook the boy’s hand.

“I will send word to your cousins up the river that you are with me,” he said, and thus was the invitation extended and accepted.

“O’Brien,” said the great man to Aladdin, “when you feel able, come to my house; I have something to say to you.”

Then Senator St. John, and Margaret, and Margaret's godlike young friend, and the spaniel got into the carriage that was waiting for them, and drove off. But Margaret turned and waved to Aladdin.

"Good-by, Aladdin!" she called.

VI

They helped Aladdin back to the smithy, for his only covering was a clumsy blanket; and there he put on his shrunken clothes, which meanwhile had dried. The kindly men pressed food on him, but he could not eat. He could only sit blankly by the fire and nurse the numb, overpowering pain in his heart. Another had succeeded where he had failed. Even at parting, just now, Margaret's eyes had not been for him, but for the stranger who had done so

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easily what he had not been able to do at all. The voyage down the river had been mere foolishness without result. He had not rescued his fair lady, but deserted her upon a desert island. For him no bouquets were flung, nor was there to be any clapping of hands. After a time he rose like one dreaming, and went slowly, for he was sick and weak, up to the great pillared house of Hannibal St. John. The senator in that stern voice of his had bade him come; nothing could be any worse than it was. He would go. He knocked, and they showed him into the library. It was four walls of leather books, an oak table neater than a pin, a huge chair covered with horsehair much worn, and a blazing fire of birch logs. Before the fire, one hand thrust into his coat, the other resting somewhat heavily upon the head of a whalebone cane, stood the senator. Far off Aladdin heard Margaret's laugh and with it another young laugh. Then he looked up like a little hunted thing into the senator's smoldering eyes.

"Sit down in that chair," said the senator, pointing with his cane to the only chair in the room. His voice had the effect of a strong muscular compulsion to which men at once yielded. Aladdin sat into the big chair, his toes swinging just clear of the ground. Then there was silence. Aladdin broke it.

"Is Margaret all right?" he gulped.

The senator disregarded the question. Having chosen his words, he said them.

"I do not know," he began, "what my daughter was doing in a boat with you. I do not object to her enjoying the society at proper times of suitable companions of her own age, but the society of those who lead her into temptation is not suitable." Aladdin fairly wilted under the glowering voice. "You will not be allowed to associate with her any more," said the senator. "I will speak to your father and see that he forbids it."

Aladdin climbed out of the chair, and stumbled blindly into the table. He had meant to find the door and go.

"Wait; I have not done," said the senator.

Aladdin turned and faced the enemy who was taking away the joy of life from him.

"In trying to atone for your fault," said the senator, "by imperiling your life, you did at once a foolhardy and a fine thing—one which I will do my best to repay at any time that you may see fit to call upon me. For the present you may find this of use." He held forward between his thumb and forefinger a twenty-dollar gold piece. Aladdin groped for words, and remembered a phrase which he had heard his own father return to a tormentor. He thrust his red hands into his tight pockets, and with trembling lips looked up.

“It’s a matter of pride,” he said, and walked out of the room. When he had gone the senator took from his pocket a leather purse, opened it, put back the gold piece, and carefully tied the string. Then far from any known key or tune the great man whistled a few notes. Could his constituents have heard, they would have known—and often had the subject been debated—that Hannibal St. John was human.

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Aladdin stood for a while upon the lofty pillared portico of the senator's house, and with a mist in his eyes looked away and away to where the cause of all his troubles flowed like a ribbon of silver through the bright-colored land. Grown men, having, in their whole lives, suffered less than Aladdin was at that moment suffering, have considered themselves heartbroken. The little boy shivered and toiled down the steps, between the tall box hedges lining the path, and out into the road. A late rose leaning over the garden fence gave up her leaves in a pink shower as he passed, and at the same instant all the glass in a window of the house opposite fell out with a smash. These events seemed perfectly natural to Aladdin, but when people, talking at the tops of their voices and gesticulating, began to run out of houses and make down the hill toward the town, he remembered that, just as the rose-leaves fell and just as the glass came out of the window-frame, he had been conscious of a distant thudding boom, and a jarring of the ground under his feet. So he joined in the stream of his neighbors, and ran with them down the hill to see what had happened.

Aladdin remembered little of that breathless run, and one thing only stood ever afterward vivid among his recollections. All the people were headed eagerly in one direction, but at the corner of the street in which Aladdin lived, an awkish, half-grown girl, her face contorted with terror, struggled against the tugging of two younger companions and screamed in a terrible voice:

"I don't wahnt to go! I don't wahnt to go!"

But they dragged her along. That girl had no father, and her mother walked the streets. She would never have any beauty nor any grace; she was dirt of the dirt, dirty, but she had a heart of mercy and could not bear to look upon suffering.

"I don't wahnt to go! I don't wahnt to go!" and now the scream was a shudder.

Aladdin's street was crowded to suffocation, and the front of the house where Aladdin lived was blown out, and men with grave faces were going about among the ruins looking for what was left of Aladdin's father.

A much littler boy than Aladdin stood in the yard of the house. In his arms folded high he clutched a yellow cat, who licked his cheek with her rough tongue. The littler boy kept crying, "'Laddin, 'Laddin!"

Aladdin took the little boy and the yellow cat all into one embrace, and people turned away their heads.

VII

In the ensuing two days Aladdin matured enormously, for though a kind neighbor took him in, together with his brother Jack and the yellow cat, he had suffered many things

and already sniffed the wolf at the door. The kind neighbor was a widow lady, whose husband, having been a master carpenter of retentive habits, had left her independently rich. She owned the white-and-green house in which she lived, the plot

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of ground, including a small front and a small back yard, upon which it stood, and she spent with some splendor a certain income of three hundred and eighty-two dollars a year. Every picture, every chair, every mantelpiece in the Widow Brackett's house was draped with a silk scarf. The parlor lamp had a glass shade upon which, painted in oils, by hand, were crimson moss-roses and scarlet poppies. A crushed plush spring rocker had goldenrod painted on back and seat, while two white-and-gold vases in precise positions on the mantel were filled with tight round bunches of immortelles, stained pink. Upon the marble-topped, carved-by-machine-walnut-legged table in the bay-window were things to be taken up by a visitor and examined. A white plate with a spreading of foreign postage-stamps, such as any boy collector has in quantities for exchange, was the first surprise: you were supposed to discover that the stamps were not real, but painted on the plate, and exclaim about it. A china basket contained most edible-looking fruit of the same material, and a huge album, not to be confounded with the family Bible upon which it rested, was filled with speaking likenesses of the Widow Brackett's relatives. The Bible beneath could have told when each was born, when many had died, and where many were buried. But nobody was ever allowed to look into the Widow Brackett's Bible for information mundane or spiritual, since the only result would have been showers of pressed ferns and flowers upon the carpet, which was not without well-pressed flowers and ferns of its own.

Very soon after the explosion of the wonderful lamp the Widow Brackett had taken Aladdin and Jack and the cat into her house and seen to it that they had a square meal. Early on the second day she came to the conclusion that if it could in any way be made worth her while, she would like to keep them until they grew up. And when the ground upon which Aladdin's father's house had stood was sold at auction for three hundred and eight dollars, she let it be known that if she could get that she would board the two little waifs until Aladdin was old enough to work. The court appointed two guardians. The guardians consulted for a few minutes over something brown in a glass, and promptly turned over the three hundred and eight dollars to the Widow Brackett; and the Widow Brackett almost as promptly made a few alterations in the up-stairs of her house the better to accommodate the orphans, tied a dirty white ribbon about the yellow cat's neck, and bought a derelict piano upon which her heart had been set for many months. She was no musician, but she loved a tightly closed piano with a scarf draped over the top, and thought that no parlor should be without one. Up to middle C, as Aladdin in time found out, the piano in question was not without musical pretensions, but above that any chord sounded like a nest of tin plates dropped on a wooden floor, and the intervals were those of no known scale nor fragment thereof. But in time he learned to draw pleasant things from the old piano and to accompany his shrill voice in song. As a matter of fact, he had no voice and never would have, but almost from the first he knew how to sing. It so happened that he was drawn to the piano by a singular thing: a note from his beloved.

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It came one morning thumb-marked about the sealing, and covered with the generous sprawl of her writing. It said:

Dear Aladdin: Do not say anything about this because I do not know if my father would like it but I am so sorry about your father blowing up and all your troubles and I want you to know how sory I am. I must stop now because I have to practis.

Your loving friend

Margaretst. *John*.

Aladdin was an exquisite speller, and the first thing he noticed about the letter was that it contained two words spelled wrong, and that he loved Margaret the better by two misspelled words, and that he had a lump in his throat.

He had found the letter by his plate at breakfast, and the eyes of Mrs. Brackett fastened upon it.

“I don’t know who ken have been writin’ to you,” she said.

“Neither do I,” said Aladdin, giving, as is proper, the direct lie to the remark inquisitive. He had put the letter in his pocket.

“Why don’t you open it and see?”

Aladdin blushed.

“Time enough after breakfast,” he said.

There was a silence.

“Jack’s eatin’ his breakfast; why ain’t you eatin’ yours?”

Aladdin fell upon his breakfast for the sake of peace. And Mrs. Brackett said no more. Some days later, for she was not to be denied in little matters or great, Mrs. Brackett found where Aladdin had hidden the letter, took it up, read it, sniffed, and put it back, with the remark that she never “see such carryin’s-on.”

Aladdin hid, and read his letter over and over; then an ominous silence having informed him that Mrs. Brackett had gone abroad, he stole into the parlor, perched on the piano-stool, and, like a second Columbus, began to discover things which other people have to be shown. The joy of his soul had to find expression, as often afterward the sorrow of it.

That winter Jack entered school in the lowest class, and the two little boys were to be seen going or coming in close comradeship, fair weather or foul. The yellow cat had affairs of gallantry, and bore to the family, at about Christmas-time, five yellow kittens, which nobody had the heart to drown, and about whose necks, at the age of eye-opening, the Widow Brackett tied little white ribbons in large bows.

Sometimes Aladdin saw Margaret, but only for a little.

So the years passed, and Aladdin turned his sixteenth year. He was very tall and very thin, energetic but not strong, very clever, but with less application than an uncoerced camel. To single him from other boys, he was full of music and visions. And rhymes were beginning to ring in his head.

A week came when the rhymes and the music went clean out of his head, which became as heavy as a scuttle full of coal, and he walked about heavily like an old man.

VIII

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One day, during the morning session of school, Aladdin's head got so heavy that he could hardly see, and he felt hot all over. He spoke to the teacher and was allowed to go home. Mrs. Brackett, when she saw him enter the yard, was in great alarm, for she at once supposed that he had done something awful, which was not out of the question, and suffered expulsion.

"What have you done?" she said.

"Nothing," said Aladdin. "I think I'm going to be sick."

Mrs. Brackett tossed her hands heavenward.

"What is the matter?" she cried.

"I don't know," said Aladdin. She followed him into the house and up the stairs, which he climbed heavily.

"Where do you feel bad, 'Laddin O'Brien?" she said sharply.

"It's my head, ma'am," said Aladdin. He went into his room and lay face down on the bed, having first dropped his schoolbooks on the floor, and began to talk fluently of kings' daughters and genii and copper bottles.

The Widow Brackett was an active woman of action. Flat-footed and hatless, but with incredible speed, she dashed down the stairs, out of the house, and up the street. She returned in five minutes with the doctor.

The doctor said, "Fever." It was quite evident that it was fever; but a doctor's word for it put everything on a comfortable and satisfactory footing.

"We must get him to bed," said the doctor. He made the attempt alone, but Aladdin struggled, and the doctor was old. Mrs. Brackett came to the rescue and, finally, they got Aladdin, no longer violent, into his bed, while the doctor, in a soft voice, said what maybe it was and what maybe it wasn't,—he leaned to a bilious fever,—and prescribed this and that as sovereign in any case. They darkened the room, and Aladdin was sick with typhoid fever for many weeks. He was delirious much too much, and Mrs. Brackett got thin with watching. Occasionally it seemed as if he might possibly live, but oftenest as if he would surely die.

In his delirium for the most part Aladdin dwelt upon Margaret, so that his love for her was an old story to Mrs. Brackett. One gay spring morning, after a terrible night, Aladdin's fever cooled a little, and he was able to talk in whispers.

"Mrs. Brackett," he said, "Mrs. Brackett."

She came hurriedly to the bed.

“I know you’re feelin’ better, ’Laddin O’Brien.”

He smiled up at her.

“Mrs. Brackett,” he said, “I dreamed that Margaret St. John came here to ask how I was —did she?”

Margaret hadn’t. She had not, so hedged was her life, even heard that Aladdin lay sick.

Mrs. Brackett lied nobly.

“She was here yesterday,” she said, “and that anxious to know all about you.”

Aladdin looked like one that had found peace.

“Thank you,” he said.

Mrs. Brackett raised his head, pillow and all, very gently, and gave him his medicine.

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“How’s Jack?” said Aladdin.

“He comes twice every day to ask about you,” said Mrs. Brackett. “He’s livin’ with my brother-in-law.”

“That’s good,” said Aladdin. He lay back and dozed. After a while he opened his eyes.

“Mrs. Brackett-”

“What is it, deary?” The good woman had been herself on the point of dozing, but was instantly alert.

“Am I going to die?”

“You goin’ to die!” She tried to make her voice indignant, but it broke.

“I want to know.”

“He wants to know, good land!” exclaimed Mrs. Brackett.

“If a man’s going to die,” said Aladdin, aeat-sixteen, “he wants to know, because he has things that have to be done.”

“Doctor said you wasn’t to talk much,” said Mrs. Brackett.

“If I’ve got to die,” said Aladdin, abruptly, “I’ve got to see Margaret.”

A woman in a blue wrapper, muddy slippers, her gray hair disheveled, hatless, her eyes bright and wild, burst suddenly upon Hannibal St. John where he sat in his library reading in the book called “Hesperides.”

“Senator St. John,” she began rapidly, “Aladdin O’Brien’s sick in my house, and the last thing he said was, ’I’ve got to see Margaret’; and he’s dyin’ wantin’ to see her, and I’ve come for her, and she’s got to come.”

It was a tribute to St. John’s genius that in spite of her incoherent utterance he understood precisely what the woman was driving at.

“You say he’s dying?” he said.

“Doctor’s given up hope. He’s had a relapse since this mornin’, and she’s got to come right now if she’s to see him at all.”

The senator hesitated for once.

“It’s got nothin’ to do with the proprieties,” said Mrs. Brackett, sternly, “nor what he was to her, nor her to him; it’s a plain case of humanity and—”

“What is the nature of the sickness?” asked the senator.

“It’s fever—”

“Is it contagious?” asked the senator.

“No, it ain’t!” almost shrieked the old lady. “And what if it was?”

“Of course if it were contagious she couldn’t go,” said the senator.

“It ain’t contagious, and, what’s more, he once laid down his life for her on the log, that time.”

“If you assure me the fever is not contagious—”

“You’ll let her come—”

“It seems nonsense,” said the senator. “They are only children, and I don’t want her to get silly ideas.”

“Only children!” exclaimed Mrs. Brackett. “Senator, give me the troubles of the grown-ups, childbirth, and losing the first-born with none to follow, the losing of husband and mother, and the approach of old age,—give me them and I’ll bear them, but spare me the sorrows and trials of little children which we grown-ups ain’t strong enough to bear. You can say I said so,” she finished defiantly.

The senator bowed in agreement.

“I believe you are right,” he said. “I will take you home in my carriage, Mrs.—”

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“Brackett,” said she, with pride.

The senator stepped into the hall and raised his voice the least trifle.

“Daughter!”

She answered from several rooms away, and came running. Her hands were inky, and she held a letter. She was no longer the timid little girl of the island, for somehow that escapade had emancipated her. She had waited for a few days in expectation of damnation, but, that failing to materialize, had turned over a leaf in her character, and became such a bully at home that the family and servants loved her more and more from day to day. She was fourteen at this time; altogether exquisite and charming and wayward.

“Aladdin O’Brien is very sick, daughter,” said the senator, “and we are going to see him.”

“And don’t tell him that you didn’t come to ask after him yesterday,” said Mrs. Brackett, defiantly, “because I said you did. I had my reasons,” she went on, “and you can say I said so.”

Margaret ran up-stairs to get her hat. She was almost wild with excitement and foreboding of she knew not what.

The letter which she had been writing fell from her hand. She picked it up, looked hastily at the superscription, “Mr. Peter Manners, Jr.,” and tore it into pieces.

IX

There is no doubt that Aladdin’s recovery dated from Margaret’s visit. The poor boy was too sick to say what he had planned, but Margaret sat by his bed for a while and held his hand, and said little abrupt conventional things that meant much more to them both, and that was enough. Besides, and under the guns of her father’s eyes, just before she went away she stooped and kissed him on the forehead, and that was more than enough to make anybody get over anything, Aladdin thought. So he slept a long cool sleep after Margaret had gone, and woke free of fever. As he lay gathering strength to sit up in bed, which treat had been promised him in ten days, Aladdin’s mind worked hard over the future, and what he could machinate in order one day to be almost worthy to kiss the dust under Margaret’s feet. She sent him flowers twice, but was not allowed to come and see him again.

Aladdin had awful struggles with the boredom of convalescence. He felt perfectly well, and they wouldn’t let him get up and out; everything forbidden he wanted to eat. And his one solace was the Brackett library. This was an extraordinary collection of books. They were seven, and how they got there nobody knows. The most important in the

collection was, in Mrs. Brackett's estimation, an odd volume of an encyclopedia, bound in tree-calf and labeled, "Safety-lamps to Stranglers." Next were four fat tomes in the German language on scientific subjects; these, provided that anybody had ever wanted to read them, had never succeeded in getting themselves read, but they had cuts and cuts which were fascinating to surmise about. The sixth book was the second volume of a romance called "The Headsman," by "the author of 'The Spy,'" and the seventh was a back-split edition of Poe's poems.

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The second volume of “The Headsman” went like cakes and syrup on a cold morning, for it was narrative, and then it was laid aside, because it was dull. The four German books had their cuts almost examined out of them, and the encyclopedia book, from “Safety-lamps to Stranglers,” practically had its contents torn out and devoured. In after life Aladdin could always speak with extraordinary fluency, feeling, and understanding on anything that began with S, such as Simeon Stylites and Senegambia. But the poems of Poe were what made his sickness worth while and put the call upon all his after life. We learn of the critics and professors of English that there are greater lyric poets than Poe. They will base this on technicalities and theories of what poetry has been and what poetry ought to be, and will not take into account the fact that of all of them—Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth when he is a poet at all, Heine, and the lyric body of Goethe and the rest—not one in proportion to the mass of his production so often leaves the ground and spreads wings as Poe,—

> If I might dwell
> Where Israfel
> Hath dwelt, and he where I,
> He might not sing so wildly well
> A mortal melody,
> While a bolder note than his might swell
> From my lyre within the sky,—

and that where they have, they have perhaps risen a little higher, but never have sung more hauntingly and clear. The wonderful sounds and the unearthly purity—the purity of a little child that has died—took Aladdin by the throat and shook up the imagination and music that had lain dormant within him; his father’s bent for invention clarified into a passion for creation. The first thing he read was three stanzas on the left-hand page where the book opened to his uneager hands, and his eyes, expectant of disappointment, —for up to that time, never having read any, he hated poetry,—fell on one of the five or six perfect poems in the world:

> Helen, thy beauty is to me
> Like those Nicean barks of yore
> That gently o’er a perfumed sea
> The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
> To his own native shore.
>
> On desperate seas long wont to roam,
> Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
> Thy naiad airs have brought me home
> To the glory that was Greece,
> And the grandeur that was Rome.

> Lo, in yon brilliant window-niche
> How statue-like I see thee stand,
> The agate lamp within thy hand!
> Ah, Psyche! From the regions which
> Are holy land.

And he knew that he had read the most exquisite, the most insouciant, and the most universal account of every man's heart's desire—Margaret as she would be when she grew tall. He knew little of the glory that was Greece or the grandeur that was Rome, but whatever they were, Margaret had all of them, and the hyacinth hair, very thick and clustery and beautiful, and the naiad airs. Ah, Psyche!

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And he read forward and back in the book, and after a little he knew that he had a soul, and that the only beautiful thing in the world is beauty, and the only sad thing, and that beauty is truth.

Open at the lines to Helen he laid the book face down upon his heart, with his hands clasped over it, and shut his eyes.

“Now I know what I’ve got to do,” he said. “Now I know what I’ve got to do.”

He dreamed away hours until suddenly the need of deeds set him bolt upright in bed, and he called to Mrs. Brackett to bring him pencil and paper. From that time on he was seldom without them, and, by turns reading and writing, entered with hope and fortitude into the challenging field of literature. And from the first, however ignorant and unkempt the effort, he wrote a kind of literature, for he buckled to no work that he knew, and was forever striving after an ideal (nebulous, indescribable, and far) of his own, and that is literature. Go to those who have wrought for—forever (without, of course, knowing it) and those who have wrought earnestly for the day, and these things you will find made the god in their machine: Raphael’s sonnets and Dante’s picture! Aladdin had no message, that he knew of, for the world, but the call of one of the arts was upon him; and he knew that willy-nilly he must answer that call as long as eyes could see, or hands hold pen, or tongue call for pencil and paper, money buy them, or theft procure them. He set himself stubbornly and courageously to the bitter-sweet task of learning to write.

“It must be like learning anything else,” he said, his eyes on a sheet of seemingly uncorrectable misbalances, “and just because I’m rotten at it now doesn’t prove that if I practise and practise, and try and try, and hope and hope, I won’t be some good sometime.”

He saw very clearly the squat dark tower itself in the midst of the chin-upon-hand hills, and the world and his friends sitting about to see him fail. He saw them, and he knew them all, and yet, with Childe Roland,

> Dauntless the slughorn to his lips he set,
> And blew.

And incidentally, when he got well and returned to school, he entered on a period of learning his lessons, for he thought that these might one day be of use to him in his chosen line.

X

Senator St. John, for he was at heart democratic, and heard little of Aladdin that was not to Aladdin’s credit, derigorized the taboo which he had once placed on Aladdin’s and

Margaret's friendship, and allowed the young man to come occasionally to the house, and occasionally loaned him books. Margaret was really at the bottom of this, but she stayed comfortably at the bottom, and teased her father to do the needful, and he, wrapped up in the great issues which were threatening to divide the country, complied. In those days the senator's interests extended far beyond his family, Margaret

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and the three powerful sons who were building a reputation for the firm of John St. John & Brothers, lawyers in Portland. He gave Aladdin leave to come and go, even smiled grimly as he did so, and, except at those moments when he met him face to face, forgot that Aladdin existed. Margaret enjoyed Aladdin hugely, and unconsciously sat for the heroine of every novel he began, and the inspiration of every verse that he wrote. When Aladdin reached his eighteenth year and Margaret her sixteenth there was such a delightful and strong friendship between them that the other young people of the town talked. Margaret in her heart of hearts was fonder of Aladdin than of anybody else—-when she was with him, or under the immediate influence of having been with him, for nobody else had such extraordinary ideas, or such a fund of amusing vitality, or such fascinating moods. Like every one with a touch of the Celt in him, Aladdin was by turns gloomiest and most unfortunate of all mortals upon whom the sun positively would not shine, or the gayest of the gay. From his droll manner of singing a song, to the seriousness with which he sometimes bore all the sufferings of all the world, he seemed to her a most complex and unusual individual. But his spells were of the instant, and her thoughts were very often on that beautiful young man, Manners, who, having completed his course at the law school, was coming to spend a month before he should begin to practise. Since his first visit years ago, Manners, now a grown man of twenty, had spent much of many of his vacations with the St. Johns. The senator was obliged, as well as his limitations would allow, to take the place of a mother to Margaret, and though it was barely guessable from his words or actions, he loved Peter Manners like a son, and had resolved, almost since the beginning, to end by having him for one. And the last time that Manners had visited them in Washington, St. John had seen to it that he shook hands with all the great men who were making history. Once the senator and Margaret had visited the Manners in New York. That had been a bitter time for Aladdin, for while all the others of his age were sniffing timidly at love and life, he had found his grand passion early and stuck to it, and was now blissful with hope and now acrid with jealousy. Peter Manners he hated with a green and jealous hatred. And if Peter Manners had any of the baser passions, he divined this, and hated Aladdin back, but rather contemptuously. They met occasionally, and the meetings, always in the presence of Margaret, were never very happy. She was woman enough to rejoice at being a bone of contention, and angel enough to hate seeing good times spoiled.

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But it was hard on Aladdin. He could go to her house almost when he liked, and be welcomed by her, but to her father and the rest of the household he was not especially welcome. They were always polite to him, and always considerate, and he felt—quite rightly—that he was merely tolerated, as a more or less presentable acquaintance of Margaret's. Manners, on the other hand, and it took less intuition to know it, was not only greatly welcome to Margaret, but to all the others—from the gardener up to the senator. Manners' distinction of manner, his wellbred, easy ways, his charmingly enunciative and gracious voice, together with his naive and simple nature, went far with people's hearts. Aladdin bitterly conceded every advantage to his rival except that of mind. To this, for he knew even in his humble moments that he himself had it, he clung tenaciously. Mrs. Brackett, with a sneaking admiration for Peter Manners, whom she had once seen on the street, had Aladdin's interests well in heart, and the lay of the matter well in hand. She put it like this to a friendly gossip:

"I guess' Laddin O'Brien's 'bout smaht enough to go a long ways further than fine clothes and money and a genealogical past will carry a body. He writes sometimes six and eight big sides of paper up in a day, and if he ain't content with that he just tears it up and goes at it again. There won't be anybody'll go further in this world than 'Laddin O'Brien, and you can say I said so—"

Here under oath of secrecy Mrs. Brackett lowered her voice and divulged a secret:

"He got a letter this mornin' sayin' that the Portland'spy' is goin' to print three poems he sent 'em, and enclosin' three dollars to pay for 'em. I guess beginnin' right now he could go along at that rate and make mebbe five or six hundred dollars a year. Poetry's nothin' to him; he can write it faster than you and I can baste."

At the very moment of this adoring act of divulgence Aladdin was in the parlor, giving his first taste of success a musical soul, and waiting—waiting—waiting until it should be late enough in the day for him to climb the hill to the St. Johns' and hand over the Big News to Margaret. And as he sat before the piano, demipatient and wholly joyful, his fingers twinkled the yellowed and black keys into fits of merriment, or, after an abrupt pause, built heap upon heap of bass chords. Then the mood would change and, to a whanging accompaniment, he would chant, recitative fashion, the three poems which alone he had made.

The day waned, and it was time to go and tell Margaret. His way lay past the railway-station, under the "Look out for the locomotive" sign, across the track, and up the hill. In the air was the exhilarating evening cool of June, and the fragrance of flowers, which in the north country, to make up for the shorter tale of their days, bloom bigger and smell sweeter than any other flowers in the world. Even in the dirty paved square fronting the station was a smell of summer and flowers. You could see people's faces lighten and sniff it, as they got out of the hot, cindery coaches of the five-forty, which had just rolled in.

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The St. Johns' fine pair of bays and their open carriage were drawn up beside the station. The horses were entering a spirited, ground-pawing protest against the vicinity of that alway inexplicable and snorting monster on wheels. On the platform, evidently waiting for some one to get off the train, stood St. John and Margaret. She looked much fresher and sweeter than a rose, and Aladdin noted that she was wearing her hair up for the first time. Her dress was a floaty white affair with a blue ribbon round it, and her beautiful, gay young face flushed with excitement and anticipation till it sparkled. There was a large crowd getting off the train, at that aggravating rate of progression with which people habitually leave a crowded public conveyance or a theater, and Margaret and her father were looking through the windows of the cars to see if they could catch a glimpse of whom they sought. Suddenly the senator broke into a smile and waved his cane. The action was so unusual for him that it looked grotesque. Margaret stood on tiptoe and waved her hand, and a presentiment came to Aladdin and took away all his joy.

Peter Manners, looking fresh and clean in spite of his long, dusty ride, got off the train and made a hilarious rush for his friends. He shook hands with Margaret, then with the senator, and turned again to Margaret. She was altogether too pretty, and much too glad to see him. In the excitement of the moment it couldn't be borne, and he kissed her. Then they both laughed, and the senator laughed, for he was glad. He put his great hand on Manners' shoulder, and laughing and talking, the three went to the carriage. Then the senator remembered that the checks had been forgotten, and against a voluble protest he secured them from Manners, and went after an expressman. Having found the expressman—one of his constituents and a power in the town,—he handed him the checks, a fifty-cent piece, and a ponderous joke as old as Xerxes, at which the expressman roared. Manners stood by the carriage and looked at Margaret. "Lord God," he thought, "it has come at last!" and they grinned at each other.

"Mmm!" said Margaret, who stood for the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome. She had not expected to be so glad to see him.

Meanwhile Aladdin had turned and was going home.

Margaret caught sight of his back, and the pitiful little droop in the usually erect shoulders, and she divined like a flash, and called after him. He pretended not to hear and went on. In his pocket was the editor's letter which he had designed to show her. It had lain down and died.

"Why does that man hate me so?" said Manners.

A little of the joy of meeting had gone. A cloud passed over the sun, and the earth was darkened. Many drops of rain began to fall, each making a distinct splash as it struck.

One began to smell the disturbed dust. But the flowers continued to send up their incense to heaven, and Manners put his light overcoat about Margaret.

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XI

Aladdin had a large acquaintance in the town among all sorts of men, and, as he went home sorrowfully in the rain, he met a youth, older than himself, who had an evil notoriety; for being born with brains, of respectable people, and propitiously launched on the world, he had begun in his early teens, and in the face of the most heartrending solicitude, to drink himself to death. The miserable part of it was that everybody loved him when he was sober, and out of consideration to his family still asked him to the best that the town could do in the way of parties and entertainments. He was a good-looking young man with a big frame and a pale face. His real name was William Addison Larch, but he was better known as “Beau Larch.” He had a nervous, engaging smile, of which he made frequent use.

“My word, Aladdin,” he said, “you look sick as a dog. Come with me and take a snifter for it.”

Aladdin hesitated a moment. And as soon as he had thoroughly made up his mind that it was wrong to say so, he said:

“I believe I will.” The Celt in him was feeling suicidal. They went into the ground-floor room of a house where liquor was sold.

“For me, whisky,” said Beau Larch.

“The same for me,” said Aladdin, with something suspiciously like a gulp. The first drink which a man takes against his better judgment is a grisly epoch in his life. Aladdin realized this, and was at once miserable and willing that it should be so.

“To those that love us!” said Beau Larch.

Aladdin put down his liquor without grimace or gasp.

Beau Larch paid.

In Aladdin’s pocket were three dollars, the first mile-post on the steep road to his ideal. He felt, to be sure that they were there.

“Now you ’ll have one with me,” he said.

When the sudden rain-storm had rained and thundered and lightened itself out, they went to another saloon, and from there to the Boat Club, of which Beau Larch was a member and whither he asked Aladdin to supper. Fishes and lobsters and clams were the staple articles of Boat Club suppers, and over savory messes of these, helped down with much whisky and water, Aladdin and Beau Larch made the evening spin. Aladdin,

talking eagerly and with the naivete of a child, wondered why he had never liked this man so much before. And Larch told the somewhat abject story of his life three times with an introduction of much racy anecdote.

Aladdin's head held surprisingly well. Every now and then he would hand himself an inward congratulation on the alertness and clearness of his mind, and think what a fine constitution he must have. They got to singing after a while, and reciting poems, of which each knew a quantity by heart. And, oddly enough, Aladdin, though he had been brought up to speak sound American, developed in his cups, and afterward clung to, in moments of exhilaration or excitement, an indescribably faint but perfectly distinct Hibernian accent. It was the heritage to which he was heir, and made his eager and earnest rendering of "Annabel Lee" so pathetic that Beau Larch wept, and knocked a glass off the table. . . .

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Men came and sat with them, and Aladdin discovered in himself what he had hitherto never suspected—the power of becoming heart-to-heart friends with strangers in two seconds.

Aladdin was never able to remember just how or when or with whom they left the Boat Club. He only remembered walking and walking and talking and talking, and finally arguing a knotty question, on which all defended the same side, and then sitting down on the steps of a house in a low quarter of the town, and pouring the ramifications of all his troubles into the thoroughly sympathetic if somewhat noncomprehending ears of Beau Larch. He talked long and became drunker as he talked, while Larch became soberer. Then Aladdin remembered that the door at the top of the steps had opened, and a frowzy head had been stuck out, and that a brassy voice, with something at once pathetic and wheedling in it, had said:

“Aren’t you coming in, boys?”

Then Aladdin remembered that Beau Larch and he had had angry words, and that Beau Larch had told him not to make an ass of himself, and for heaven’s sake to go home. To which Aladdin had retorted that he was old enough to know what was good for him, and hated the world and didn’t give a damn who knew it, and wouldn’t go home. Aladdin could swear that after that he only closed his eyes for a second to shut out something or other, and that when he opened them, the reverberation of a door closing was in his ears. But for all that Beau Larch had gone, and was to be seen neither up the street nor down. Although his own was past mending, Beau Larch, drunk as he was, had done a good deed that night, for he had guarded a precious innocence against the assaults of a drunken little Irish boy who was feeling down about something—a girl named something or other, Beau Larch thought, and another boy named something or other. The next day Beau had forgotten even that much.

Aladdin thought that Larch was hiding in jest. He arose unsteadily and wandered off in search of him. After a time he found himself before the door of his own house. There were lights in the parlor, and Aladdin became almost sober. He realized with a thrill of stricken conscience that Mrs. Brackett was sitting up for him, and he was afraid. He tried the front door and found it unlocked. He went in. On the right, the door leading into the parlor stood open. On the table burned a lamp. Beside the table in the crushed plush rocker sat Mrs. Brackett. Her spectacles were pushed high up on her forehead. Her eyes were closed, and her mouth was slightly open. From the corners of her eyes red marks ran down her cheeks. Her thin gray hair was in disarray. In her lap, open, lay her huge family Bible; a spray of pressed maidenhair fern marked the place.

Aladdin, somewhat sobered by now, and already stung with the anguish of remorse, tiptoed into the parlor and softly blew out the light; but the instant before he did so he glanced down at the Bible in the good lady’s lap and saw that she had been reading about the prodigal son. Great tears ran out of Aladdin’s eyes. He went up-stairs,

weeping and on tiptoe, and as he passed the door of his brother’s room he heard a stir within.

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“Is that you, ’Laddin?”

“Sssh, darlint,” said Aladdin; “you’ll wake Mother Brackett.”

In his own room there was a lamp burning low, and on his bureau was a note for him from Margaret:

Dear Aladdin: Papa wants you to come up and have supper with us. Peter Manners is here, and I think it will be fun. Please do come, and remember a lot of foolish songs to sing. Why wouldn’t you speak to me? It hurts so when you act like that . . . .

Aladdin, kissing the note, went down on his knees and twice began to pray, “O God—O God!” He could say no more, but all the penitence and heartburnings of his soul were in his prayer. Later he lay on his bed staring into a darkness which moved in wheels, and he kept saying to the darkness:

“Neither the angels in Heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.”

Late in the still morning he awoke, grieving and hurt, for he did not see how he should ever face Mrs. Brackett, or his brother, or Margaret, or himself, or anybody ever again.

XII

There was in town at this time what passed for a comic-opera troupe, and Margaret and her father, by way of doing honor to their guest, invited all the young people to go to the performance and attend a supper afterward. The party occupied the three foremost rows in the music-hall, and Aladdin sat next to Margaret, and Manners sat upon the other side.

The hero of the piece was a jovial big rascal with a spirited voice, and much byplay which kept his good-natured audience in titters—from the young gentlemen and little shrieks—from the young ladies. Mr. Blythoe, the hero, when the curtain had fallen upon what the management was pleased to call the second act, consented, in response to continued applause, due to a double back somersault and two appropriate remarks fired off in midair (this was his great psychic moment), to make a little speech and sing a song. His speech, though syntactically erratic, was delivered in a loud, frank way that won everybody’s heart, and in closing he said:

“Three nights ago I met with a young feller in this tow—city [applause], and when we had taken one together for luck [titters from the young gentlemen, who wanted one another to know that they knew what he meant], he made me the loan of the song I’m a-

going to sing. He made up the words and the tune of this song hisself, and he's right here in this audience." This gave an opportunity for some buffoonery among the young gentlemen. Mr. Blythoe looked for one instant straight at Aladdin, and Aladdin went into a cold sweat, for he began to recollect that somewhere on a certain awful night he had taken drinks with Mr. Blythoe and had sung him songs. Mr. Blythoe went on:

"This young gentleman said I specially wasn't to mention his name, and I won't, but I want all you ladies and gentlemen to know that this here beautiful ballad was composed right here in this tow—city [applause] by a citizen of this city. And here goes."

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Then Mr. Blythoe did a wonderful thing. Much was owing to the words and air, but a little something to the way in which Mr. Blythoe sang. He took his audience with the first bar, and had some of them crying when he was through. And the song should have been silly. It was about a gay, gay young dog of a crow, that left the flock and went to a sunny land and lived a mad, mad life; and finally, penitent and old, came home to the north country and saw his old playmates in the distance circling about the old pine-tree, but was too weak to reach them, or to call loud enough for them to hear, and so lay down and died, died, died. The tune was the sweetest little plaintive wail, and at the end of each stanza it died, died, till you had to cry.

Mr. Blythoe received tremendous applause, but refused to encore. He winked to Aladdin and bowed himself off. Then Aladdin executed an unparalleled blush. He could feel it start in the small of his back and spread all over him—up under the roots of his hair to the top of his head. He should have felt proud, instead of which he was suffused with shame. Margaret caught sight of his face.

“What is it, Aladdin?” she said in a whisper.

“Nothing.”

“Won’t you tell me?”

“It’s nothing.” He got redder and redder.

“Please.”

With downcast eyes he shook his head. She looked at him dubiously and a little pathetically for a moment. Then she said, “Silly goose,” and turned to Manners.

“Poor old crow!” said Manners. “I had one, Margaret, when I was little; he had his wings clipped and used to follow me like a dog, and one day he saw some of his old friends out on the salt-marsh, and he hopped out to talk it over with them, and they set upon him and killed him. And I couldn’t get there quick enough to help him—I beg your pardon.” He picked up a fan and handed it to the girl on his left, and she, having dropped it on purpose, blushed, thanked him, and giggled. Manners turned to Margaret again. “Ever since then,” he said, “when I have a gun in my hand and see a crow, I want to kill him for the sake of the crows that killed mine, and to let him go for the sake of mine, who was such a nice old fellow. So it’s an awful problem.”

Aladdin sat and looked straight before him. “Is real fame as awful as this?” he thought.

Somebody clapped him on the shoulder, and a hearty voice, something the worse for wear, said loudly in his ear, “Bully, Aladdin, bully!”

Aladdin looked up and recognized that bad companion, Beau Larch.

“That’s all right,” Aladdin tried to say, but Mr. Larch would not be downed.

“Wasn’t it bully, Margaret?” he said.

“Oh—hallo—hallo, Beau!” said she, starting and turning round and collecting her wits. “What? Wasn’t what bully?”

Aladdin frowned at Larch with all the forbiddingness that he could muster, but Larch was imperturbable.

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“Why, Aladdin’s song!” he said. “You know, the one about the old crow—the one the man just sang.”

Here a young lady, over whom Beau Larch was leaning, confided to her escort in an audible, nervous voice that she knew Beau Larch had been drinking, but she wouldn’t say why she knew —anybody could see he had; and then she sniffed with her nose by way of indicating that seeing was not the only or best method of telling.

“You don’t mean to say—“said Margaret to Aladdin, and looked him in the eyes. “Why, Aladdin!” she said. And then: “Peter—Peter—’Laddin wrote it, he did. Isn’t it gr-reat!”

And Peter, rising to the occasion, said, “Bully,” and “I thought it was great,” with such absolute frankness and sincerity that Aladdin’s heart almost warmed toward him. It was presently known all over the house that Aladdin had written the song. And some of the more clownish of the young people called for Author, Author. Aladdin hung his head.

At supper at the St. Johns’ later was a crisp, brisk gentleman with grayish hair, who talked in a pleasant, dry way. Aladdin learned that it was Mr. Blankinship, editor and proprietor of the Portland “Spy.” Almost immediately on learning this important item, he saw Mr. Blankinship exchange a word with Margaret and come toward him.

“Mr. O’Brien?”

“Yes, sir.”

“The same that sent us three poems a while ago?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you wrote that song we heard to-night?”

“Yes, sir.” Aladdin was now fiery red.

“What do you do for a living?”

“I’ve just finished school,” said Aladdin. “And I don’t know what to do.”

“Newspaper work appeal to you?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Timid as a coot,” thought Mr. Blankinship.

“Write easily?” he said. “Fast—short words?”

Aladdin thought a moment. “Yes, sir,” he said coolly.

“Less timid than a coot,” thought Mr. Blankinship.

“Willing to live in Portland?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I’ll give you five dollars a week and give you a trial.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Can you get moved and start work Monday?”

“Yes, sir.”

Mr. Blankinship smiled cheerfully.

“Pretty entertainment, isn’t it?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, O’Brien, see you Monday; hope we get on.” Mr. Blankinship nodded pleasantly and passed up the room to the punch, muttering as he went, “Writes better than talks—-dash of genius—more or less timid than a coot.”

Aladdin went quickly to find Margaret. He traced her to the pantry, where she was hurrying the servant who had charge of the ice-cream. Aladdin waited until the servant had gone out with a heaping tray.

“Margaret,” he said, “I’m going away to live.”

He spoke in the flat, colorless voice with which a little child announces that it has hurt itself.

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“What do you mean, Aladdin?” She changed color slightly.

“Only that I’ve got to make a living, Margaret, and it’s on a paper, so I ought to be glad.”

“Aren’t you glad, Aladdin?”

“A little.”

“Aladdin—”

“Margaret—O Margaret—”

She read in his eyes what was coming.

“Not now, Aladdin,” she said.

“Not now—dear Aladdin.”

“Then you know?”

“I’ve always known, Aladdin, and been grateful and that proud.”

“Will there never be any chance for me, Margaret?”

“Aladdin, I think I like you better than anybody else in the world—”

“Darling—” he had never supposed that it could be said so easily; he leaned toward her.

“No,” she said suddenly; “I’ve got to go and see after all those foolish people.”

“Just for the sake of old times, and now, and new times—”

She hesitated, reddened a little, and then, as sweetly and innocently as a child, put up her lips for him to kiss.

XIII

Hannibal St. John’s campaign for reelection to the senatorship was, owing to a grievous error in tact, of doubtful issue. A hue and cry arose against him among his constituents, and things in general fell out so unhappily that it looked toward the close of the contest as if he would be obliged to sit idle and dangle his heels, while the two halves of the country, pushing against each other, were rising in the middle like the hinge of a toggle-joint into the most momentous crisis in the nation’s history. It looked as if the strong man, with his almost blasphemous intolerance of disunion, his columnlike power of supporting, and his incomparable intellect, was to stand in the background and watch

the nightmare play from afar. He fought for his place in the forefront of the battle with a great fervor of bitterness, and the possibility of defeat weighed upon his glowering soul like a premature day of judgment. He knew himself to be the one man for the opportunity, and could his true feelings have found utterance, they would have said, “Damn us everlastingly in hell, but don’t shelve us now!”

Opposed to St. John was a Mr. Bispham, of about quarter his height intellectually and integrally—a politician, simple, who went to war for loot. But he was blessed with a tremendous voice and an inexhaustible store of elemental, fundamental humor, upon the waves of which the ship bearing his banner floated high. It seemed that because of one glaring exhibition of tactlessness, and a lack of humor, a really important, valuable, and honest man was to lose the chance of serving his country to a designing whipper-snapper, who was without even the saving grace of violent and virulent prejudices. And so the world goes. It seemed at one time that St. John’s chance was a ghost of a chance, and his friends, sons, and relatives, toiling headstrong by night and day,

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were brought up at the verge of despair. To make the situation even more difficult, St. John himself was prostrated with the gout, so that his telling oratory and commanding personality could not be brought to bear. Margaret was never far from her father's side, and she worked like a dog for him, writing to dictation till her hands became almost useless, and when the spasms of pain were great, leaving her work to kiss his old brow.

It was at this time that people all over the State began to take up a song with an inimitably catching tune. The words of this song held up Mr. Bispham in so shrewdly true and farcically humorous a light that even his own star began to titter and threatened to slip from its high place in the heavens. The song fell so absolutely on the head of the nail that Mr. Bispham, when he heard it for the first time, was convulsed with anger and talked of horse-whips. The second time he heard it, he drew himself up with dignity and pretended not to notice, and the third time he broke into a cold sweat, for he began to be afraid of those words and that tune. At a mass-meeting, while in the midst of a voluble harangue, somebody in the back of the hall punctuated—an absurd statement, which otherwise might have passed unnoticed, by whistling the first bar of the song. Mr. Bispham faced the tittering like a man, and endeavored to rehabilitate himself. But his hands had slipped on the handle of the audience, and the forensic rosin of Demosthenes would not have enabled him to regain his grip. He was cruelly assured of the fact by the hostile and ready-witted whistler. Again Mr. Bispham absurded. This time the tune broke out in all parts of the hall and was itself punctuated by catcalls and sotto-voce insults delivered with terrific shouts. Mr. Bispham's speech was hurriedly finished, and the peroration came down as flat as a skater who tries a grape-vine for the first time. He left the hall hurriedly, pale and nervous. The tune followed him down the street and haunted him to his room. The alarming takingness of it had gotten in at his ear, and as he was savagely undressing he caught himself in the traitorous act of humming it to himself.

Among others to leave the hall was a tall, slim young man with freckles across the bridge of his nose and very bright blue eyes. A party of young men accompanied him, and all were a little noisy, and, as they made the street, broke lustily into the campaign song. People said, "That's him," "That's O'Brien," "That's Aladdin O'Brien," "That's the man wrote it," and the like. The young men disappeared down the street singing at the tops of their voices, with interlardations of turbulent, mocking laughter.

Aladdin's song went all over the North, and his name became known in the land.

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Hannibal St. John was not musical. There were only four tunes, and three of them were variations of “Carry Me Back to Old Virginia,” that he recognized when he heard them. As he lay on his bed of pain, he heard the shrill whistle of his gardener piping in the garden below. Unconsciously the senator’s well hand marked the time. All day, as he came and went about his business, the gardener kept whistling that tune, and the senator heard and reheard ever with increasing pleasure. And this was an extraordinary thing, for it was as difficult or nearly so to move Hannibal St. John with music as it must have been for Orpheus to get himself approached by rocks and stones and trees, and far more difficult than it ever was for the Pied Piper to achieve a following of brats and rats.

Margaret had been for a drive with a girl friend. She came home and to her father’s side in great spirits.

“Oh, papa,” she cried, “will you do me a favor?”

She read consent.

“Claire has got the wonderfulest song, and I want you to let her come in and sing it for you.”

“A song?” said the senator, doubtfully.

“Papa de-e-ear, please.”

He smiled grimly.

“If Claire will not be shocked by my appearance,” he said against hope.

“Rubbish,” cried Margaret, and flew out of the room.

There were a few preliminary gasps and giggles in the hall, and the two maidens, as sedate and demure as mice, entered. Claire was a little party, with vivacious manners and a comical little upturned face.

“How do you do, senator?” she said. “I’m so sorry you’re laid up. Isn’t it lovely out?” She advanced and shook his well hand.

“Won’t you take a chair?” said the senator.

“I just ran in for a moment. Margaret and I thought maybe you’d like to hear the new campaign song that everybody’s singing. My brother brought it up from Portland—” she paused, out of breath.

“It would afford me great pleasure,” said the senator.

And forthwith Claire sang in a rollicking voice. The tune was the same as that which the gardener had been whistling. St. John recognized it in spite of the difference in the mediums and smiled. Then he smiled because of the words, and presently he laughed. It was the first real pleasure he had had in many a day.

“Everybody is wild about it,” said Claire, when she had finished.

The senator was shaking with laughter.

“That’s good,” he said, “that’s good.”

“Papa,” said Margaret, when Claire had gone, “who do you think wrote that song?”

“I don’t know,” said the senator. “But it’s good.”

“Aladdin wrote it,” said Margaret.

“Upon my word!” said the senator.

Margaret knelt and threw her arms about her father’s neck and blushed a lovely blush.

“Isn’t it splendid?”

There was a ring at the front door, and a telegram was brought in.

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“Read it, Peggy,” said the senator. He used that name only when moved about something. The despatch was from the senator’s youngest son, Hannibal, and read:

Do not worry; we are singing Bispham up a tree.

“And Aladdin wrote the song!” cried Margaret. “Aladdin wrote it!”

The senator’s face clouded for a moment. He forced the cloud to pass.

“We must thank him,” he said. “We must thank him.”

Senator St. John was reelected by a small majority. Everybody admitted that it was due to Aladdin O’Brien’s song. It was impossible to disguise the engaging childishness of the vote.

XIV

As he went to his desk in the back room of the Portland “Spy” offices the morning after the election, Aladdin had an evil headache, and a subconscious hope that nobody would speak to him suddenly. He felt that his arms and legs might drop off if anybody did, and he could have sworn that he saw a gray sparrow with blue eyes run into a dark corner, and turn into a mouse. But he was quite free from penitence, as the occasion of this last offense had been joy and triumph, whereas that of his first had been sorrow. He lighted a bad cigar, put off his editorial till later, and covered a whole sheet of paper with pictures like these:

(Transcriber’s note: These are simple sketches of birds and animals.)

He looked back with a certain smug satisfaction upon a hilarious evening beginning with a dinner at the club, which some of the older adherents of St. John had given him in gratitude for the part he had taken in the campaign. He remembered that he had not given a bad exhibition, and that noble prophecies had been made of his future by gentlemen in their cups, and that he himself, when just far enough gone to be courageous without being silly, had made a snappy little speech of thanks which had been received with great applause, and that later he had sung his campaign song and others, and that finally, in company with an ex-judge, whose hat was also decorated with a wreath of smilax, he had rolled amiably about the town in a hack, going from one place where drinks could be gotten to another, and singing with great fervor and patriotism:

Zhohn Brownzh bozhy liezh a mole-ring in zhe grave.

Aladdin thought over these things with pleasure, for he had fallen under the dangerous flattery of older men, and with less pleasure of the editorial which it was his immediate

business to write. His brisk, crisp chief, Mr. Blankinship, came in for a moment, walking testily and looking like the deuce.

“So you’ve showed up, Aladdin, have you?” he said. “That’s young blood. If any question of politics—I mean policy —arises, I leave it absolutely to you. I’m going back to bed. Can’t you stop smoking that rotten cigar?”

Aladdin laughed aloud, and Mr. Blankinship endeavored to smile.

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“Somewhere,” he said, “in this transcendentally beautiful continent, Aladdin, there may be some one that feels worse than I do, but I doubt it.” He turned to go.

“Won’t Mr. Orde be here either?” said Aladdin.

“No; he’s home in bed. You’re editor-in-chief and everything else for the day, see? And I wish I was dead.” Mr. Blankinship nodded, very slightly, for it hurt, and went out.

The misery of others is a great cure: with the first sight of Mr. Blankinship, Aladdin’s headache had gone, and he now pounced upon fresh paper, got a notion out of the God-knows-where, wrote his editorial at full speed, and finished it without once removing the cigar from his mouth.

He had just done when the shrewd, inky little boy, who did everything about the “Spy” offices which nobody else would do, entered and said that a gentleman wanted to speak with Mr. O’Brien. Aladdin had the gentleman shown up, and recognized the oldest of Hannibal St. John’s sons; he knew them well by sight, but it so. happened that he had never met them. They were the three biggest and most clean-cut young men in Maine, measuring between six feet three and four; erect, massive, utterly composed, and, if anything, a little stronger than so many dray-horses. They were notable shots, great fishermen, and the whole State was beginning to speculate with excitement about their respective futures and the present almost glittering success of the law firm which they composed. The oldest was the tallest and the strongest. He had been known to break horseshoes and to tear a silver dollar in two. Iron was as sealing-wax in his huge hands. His habits were Spartan. The second son was almost a replica of the first—a little darker and a little less vivid. The third was like the others; but his face was handsomer, and not so strong. He was of a more gentle and winning disposition, for his life was not ignorant of the frailties. The girl to whom he had been engaged had died, and that had left a kind of sweetness, almost beseechingness, in his manner, very engaging in so tall and strong a man.

“Mr. O’Brien?” said John St. John.

Aladdin arose and held out his long, slender hand.

Aladdin had a way of moving which was very individual to himself, a slight, ever so slight, exaggeration of stride and gesture, a kind of captivating awkwardness and diffidence that was on the borderland of grace and assurance. Like all slender people who work much with their heads, he had a strong grip, but he felt that his hand was as inconsistent as an eel when St. John’s closed over it.

“I came in for a moment,” said St. John, “to say that we are all exceedingly grateful to you. Your song was a great factor in my father’s reelection to the Senate. But we do not hold so much by the song as by the good will which you showed us in writing it. I

want you to understand and believe that if I can ever be of the slightest service to you, I will go very far to render it."

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“I’m as obliged as I can be,” said Aladdin. “It’s mighty good of you to come and talk to me like this, and except for the good will I have toward all your family, I don’t deserve it a bit.”

When John St. John had gone, the inky boy came to announce that another gentleman wished to speak with Mr. O’Brien.

The second gentleman proved to be the second brother, Hamilton St. John.

“Mr. O’Brien?” said he.

Aladdin shook hands with him.

“I came in for a moment,” said Hamilton St. John, “for the pleasure of telling you how tremendously grateful we all are to you for your song, which was such a big factor in my father’s redirection to the Senate. But I want to say, too, that we’re more grateful for your good will than for the song, and if I can ever do you a service, I want you to feel perfectly free to come and ask it of me, whatever it is.”

Aladdin could have laughed for joy. Margaret did not seem so far away as sometimes.

“I’m as obliged as I can be,” he said. “It’s mighty good of you to come and talk to me like this, and except for the good will I have toward all your family, I don’t deserve it a bit, but I appreciate it just the same.”

Presently Hamilton St. John departed.

Again the inky boy, and this time grinning.

“There’s a gentleman would like to speak with you, sir,” he said.

“Show him in,” said Aladdin.

Hannibal St. John, Jr., entered.

“O’Brien,” he said, “I’ve often heard my sister Margaret speak about you, and I’ve been meaning for ever so long to look you up. And I wish I’d done it before I had such an awfully good excuse as that song of yours, because I don’t know how to thank you, quite. But I want you to understand that if at any time—rubbish, you know what I mean. Come up to the club, and we’ll make a drink and talk things over.”

He drew Aladdin’s arm into his, and they went out.

Aladdin had never before felt so near Margaret.

He returned to the office in half an hour, happy and a slave. Hannibal St. John, Jr., had won the heart right out of him in ten minutes. He sat musing and dreaming. Was he to be one of those chosen?

“Gentleman to see you, sir.”

“Show him in.”

The inky snickered and hurried out. He could be heard saying with importance, “This way, sir. Look out for that press, sir. It’s very dark in here, sir.” And then, like a smart flunky in a house of condition, he appeared again at the door and announced

“Senator Hannibal St. John.”

Aladdin sprang up.

The senator, still suffering from the gout, and leaning heavily on his whalebone cane, limped majestically in. There was an amiability on his face, which Aladdin had never seen there before. He placed a chair for his distinguished guest. The senator removed his high hat and stood it upon the edge of Aladdin’s desk.

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“My boy,” he said,—the word tingled from Aladdin’s ears to his heart, for it was a word of great approachment and unbending,—“I am very grateful for your efforts in my behalf. I will place honor where honor is due, and say that I owe my recent reflection to the United States Senate not so much to my more experienced political friends as to you. The present crisis in the affairs of the nation calls for men of feeling and honor, and not for politicians. I hope that you will not misconstrue me into a braggart if I say from the bottom of my heart I believe that, in returning a man of integrity and tradition to his seat in the Congress of the nation, you have rendered a service to the nation.”

The senator paused, and Aladdin, still standing, waited for him to finish.

“After a week,” said the senator, “I shall return to my duties in Washington. In the meanwhile, Margaret” (he had hitherto always referred to her before Aladdin as “my daughter”) “and I are keeping open house, and if it will give you pleasure we shall be charmed” (the word fell from the senator’s lips like a complete poem) “to have you make us a visit. Two of my sons will be at home, and other young people.”

“Indeed, and it will give me pleasure!” cried Aladdin, falling into the least suspicion of a brogue.

“I will write a line to your chief,” continued the senator, “and I have reason to believe that he will see you excused. We shall expect you to-morrow by the fourthirty.”

“I’m ever so much obliged, sir,” said Aladdin.

“My boy,” said the senator, gravely, after a full minute’s pause, “we are all concerned in your future, which promises to be a brilliant one. It rests with you. But, if an old man may be permitted a word of caution, it would be this: Let your chief recreation lie in your work; leave the other things. Do I make myself clear enough?” (Aladdin nodded guiltily.) “Leave the frailties to the dullards of this world.”

He rose to go.

“My young friend,” said the senator, “you have my best wishes.”

Grimacing with the pain in his foot, limping badly, but always stately and impressive,—-almost superimpending,—Hannibal St. John moved slowly out of the office.

XV

The weather turned suddenly gusty and cold, and that afternoon it began to snow, and it kept on snowing. All night fine dry flakes fell in unexampled profusion, and by morning the face of the land was many inches deep. Nor did the snow then cease. All the morning it continued to fall with vigor. The train by which Aladdin was to go to the St.

Johns' left at two-thirty, arriving there two hours later; and it was with numb feet and stinging ears that he entered the car reserved for smokers, and, bundling in a somewhat threadbare over coat, endeavored to make himself comfortable for the journey. As the train creaked and jerked out of the protecting station, the storm smote upon the windows with a noise like thrown sand, and a back draft down the chimney of the iron stove in one end of the car sent out puffs of smutty smoke at whatever points the various castings of the stove came together with insufficient snugness. There were but half a dozen people in the whole train.

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“Troubles, old man,” said Aladdin, for so he was in the habit of addressing himself at moments of self-communication, “this is going to be the slowest kind of a trip, but we’re going to enjoy every minute of it, because it’s taking us to the place where we would be-God bless her!”

Aladdin took a cigar from his breast pocket.

“Troubles,” said he, “may I offer you a smoke? What? Oh, you’re very much obliged and don’t mind if you do. There you are, then.” Aladdin sent out a great puff of white smoke; this turned into a blue wraith, drifted down the aisle, between the seats, gathering momentum as it went, and finally, with the rapidity of a mint julep mounting a sucked straw (that isn’t split) and spun long and fine, it was drawn through a puncture of the isinglass in the stove door and went up the chimney in company with other smoke, and out into the storm. Aladdin, full of anticipation and glee, smoked away with great spirit. Presently, for the car was empty but for himself, Aladdin launched into the rollicking air of “Red Renard”

“Three scarlet huntsmen rode up to White Plains
With a carol of voices and jangle of chains,
For the morning was blue and the morning was fair,
And the word ran, “Red Renard” is waiting us there.”

He puffed at his cigar a moment to be sure that its fire should not flag, and sang on:

“The first scarlet huntsman blew into his horn,
Lirala, Lovely Morning, I’m glad I was born”;
The second red huntsman he whistled an air,
And the third sang, “Red Renard” is waiting us there.”

“Just such weather as this, Troubles,” he said, looking out into the swirl of snow. “Just the beautifulest kind of cross-country weather!” He sang on:

Three lovely ladies they met at the meet,
With whips in their hands and with boots on their feet;
And the gentlemen lifted their hats with a cheer,
As the girls said, “Red Renard is waiting you here.”

He quickened into the stanza he liked best:

Three scarlet huntsmen rode off by the side
Of three lovely ladies on horses of pride.
Said the first, “Call me Ellen”; the second, “I’m Claire”;
Said the third, “I’m Red Renard—so called from my hair.”

The train, which had been running more slowly, drew up with a chug, and some minutes passed before it again gathered itself and lurched on.

“That’s all right,” said Aladdin. He was quite warm now, and thoroughly happy.

Three scarlet huntsmen rode home from White Plains,
With its mud on their boots, and its girls on their brains;
And the first sang of Ellen, the second of Claire,
But the third sang, “Red Renard is waiting back there.”

He made a waggish face to finish with:

Three scarlet huntsmen got into frock-coats,
And they pinched their poor feet, and they tortured their throats;
And the first married Ellen, the second wed Claire,
While the third said, “Re Renar izh waishing back zhere.”

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He assumed the expression for a moment of one astutely drunk.

“A bas!” he said, for this much of the French language was his to command, and no more. He turned and attempted to look out. He yawned. Presently he threw away the reeking butt of his cigar, closed his eyes, and fell asleep.

The water below the veranda was alive with struggling fishes in high hats and frock-coats. Each fish had a label painted across his back with his name and address neatly printed on it, and each fish was struggling to reach a tiny minnow-hook, naked of bait, which dangled just out of reach above the water. The baitless hook was connected by a fine line (who ever heard of baiting a line at the wrong end?) with Margaret’s hand. She had on a white dress stamped with big pink roses, and there was a pale-green ribbon round the middle of it; her hair was done up for the first time, and she was leaning over the railing, which was made of safety-lamps and stranglers alternately, painted light blue, regarding the struggling fishes with a look at once full of curiosity and pity. Presently one of the fishes’ labels soaked off, and went hurtling out to sea, with the fish weeping bitterly and following at express speed, until in less than one moment both label and fish were hull down below the horizon. Then another label washed off, and then another and another, and fish after fish, in varying states of distraction, followed after and disappeared, until all you could see were two, whereof the one was labeled Manners and the other O’Brien (these continued to fight for the hook), and all you could hear was Neptune, from down, down, down in the sea, saying coquettishly to Cleopatra, “I’m Red Renard—so called from my hair.” And then all of a sudden valiant Captain Kissed-by-Margaret went by on a log writing mottos for the wives of famous men. And then Manners and O’Brien, struggling desperately to drown each other, sank down, down, down, and Cleopatra could be heard saying perfectly logically to Neptune, “You didn’t!” And then there was a tremendous shower of roses, and the dream went out like a candle.

Aladdin opened his eyes and stroked his chin. He was troubled about the dream. The senator had spoken to him of “others.” Could Peter Manners possibly be there? Was that the especial demolishment that fate held in store for him? He was very wide awake now.

At times, owing to the opaqueness of the storm, it was impossible to see out of the car window. But there were moments when a sudden rush of wind blew a path for the eye, and by such occasional pictures—little long of the instantaneous—one could follow the progress of the blizzard. Aladdin saw a huddle of sheep big with snow; then a man getting into a house by the window; an ancient apple-tree with a huge limb torn off; two telegraph poles that leaned toward each other, like one man fixing another’s cravat; and he caught glimpses of wires broken, loosened,

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snarled, and fuzzy with snow. Then the train crawled over a remembered trestle, and Aladdin knew that he was within four miles of his station, and within three of the St. Johns' house by the best of short cuts across country. He looked precisely in its direction, and kissed his fingers to Margaret, and wondered what she was doing. Then there was a rumbling, jumping jar, and the train stopped. Minute after minute went by. Aladdin waited impatiently for the train to start. The conductor passed hurriedly through.

"What's up?" called Aladdin after him.

"Up!" cried the conductor. "We're off the track."

"Can't we go on to-night?"

"Nup!" The conductor passed out of the car and banged the door.

"Got to sit here all night!" said Aladdin. "Not much! Get up, Troubles! If you don't think I know the way about here, you can stay by the stove. I'm going to walk."

Aladdin and Troubles rose, buttoned their coat, left the car, and set out in the direction of the St. Johns'. Aladdin's watch at starting read five o'clock.

"Our luggage is all checked, Troubles," he said, "and all we've got to face is the idea of walking three miles through very disagreeable weather, over a broad path that we know like the palm of our hand (which we don't know as well as we might), arriving late, wet to the skin, and without a change of clothes. On the other hand, we shall deserve a long drink and much sympathy. As for you, Troubles, you're the best company I know, and all is well."

The first scarlet huntsman blew into his horn,
"Lirala, Lovely Morning, I'm glad I was born."

XVI

At first the way, lying through waist-high fir scrub, was pretty bad underfoot, but beyond was a stretch of fine timber, where the trees had done much to arrest the snow, and the going was not so severe. Aladdin calculated that he should make the distance in an hour and a half; and when the wood ended, he looked at his watch and found that the first mile, together with only twenty-five minutes, was behind him.

"That's the rate of an hour and a quarter, Troubles," he said. "And that's good time. Are you listening?"

But following the wood was a great open space of country pitched up from the surrounding levels, and naked to every fury of nature. Across that upland the wind blew a wicked gale, scarifying the tops of knolls to the brown, dead grass, and filling the hollows flush with snow. At times, to keep from being blown over, it was necessary to lean against the gusts. Aladdin was conscious of not making very rapid progress, but there was something exhilarating in the wildness, the bitter cold, and the roar of the wind; it had an effect as of sea thundering upon beach, great views from mountain-tops, black wild nights, the coming of thunder and freshness after intense heat, or any of the thousand and one vaster demonstrations of nature. Now and again Aladdin sang snatches of song:

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Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight
In sunshine and shadow
Journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of El Dorado.

Or from “The Mole of Marimolena”

I was turning fifty-odd when the everlasting God
Smote a path of molten gold across the blue,
Says, “There’s many million men would have done the like again,
But you didn’t, and, my man, there’s hope for you.

“Start sheets and sail for the Mole—
For the old rotten Mole of Marimolena;
There’s maybe some one there
That you’re longing to treat fair,
On the dismal, woeful Mole of Marimolena.”

And other deep-sea chanteys,—the one in which the pirate found the Lady in the C-a-a-bin and slivered off her head, or back to Red Renard, or further to his own campaign song, and furthest of all to the bad, bad young dog of a crow. Then he got quite out of breath, and pausing for a moment to catch it, noted for the first time the extreme bitterness of the cold. It stung the face like insects. “Woof!” he said. “And now for lost time.”

Again he stepped out, but with each step the snow became deeper, and presently he floundered in to his waist. “Must be a ditch!” he said, turning a little to the right and exclaiming, “Thought so!” as the wading got shallower. Whereupon he stepped into a deep hole and fell. After plunging and plowing about, it was brought home to him that he had lost the path. Even at that the difficulty remained one of hard walking alone, for he had been familiar with that country since childhood, and knew the precise direction in which it was necessary for him to locomote. It was a pity that the only structure in the vicinity was an ancient and deserted house,—it lay just off there,—as he should have liked to have warmed himself by a good fire before going farther. He remembered that there were a partly preserved stove in the deserted house, broken laths, and nailed boards, and swathes of curious old wall-papers, layer upon layer, which, dampening and rotting from the wall, hung raggedly down. He had once explored the house with Margaret, and it seemed almost wise to go to the place and make a fire. But on account of the delay involved and the approach of darkness, he discarded the notion, and, a little impatient at being badly used by a neighborhood he knew so well, struggled on.

“Troubles,” he said, “what sort of a storm is this anyway? Did you ever see anything quite like it round here? Because I never did. It must be like those things they have out West, when millions of poor little baa-sheeps and horses and cattles freeze to death. I’d hate to be a horse out in this, but I wish I had one. I—”

If, as a child, you have ever slipped, though only an inch, while climbing over roofs, you will know that sudden, stabbing, sinking feeling that came to Aladdin and stopped the beating of his heart by the hairbreadth of a second. He had been proceeding chin on breast, and head bent against the wind, or he would have seen it before, for it was a notable landmark in that part of the world, and showed him that he had been making way, not toward his destination, but toward the wilderness.

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He gazed up at the great black blasted pine, its waist the height of a tall tree, and its two lonely lightning-scathed and white arms stretched out like a malediction; and for a moment he had to take himself in hand. After a little he mastered the fear that had seized him.

“It’s only a poor old lonely vegetable out in the cold,” he said. “And it shows us exactly where we are and exactly which way we have to go.”

He set himself right, and, with head lowered and hands clenched, again started on. But he was beginning to be very much bored, and sensible that his legs were not accustomed to being used so hard. Furthermore, there was a little difficulty—not by any means an insurmountable one—in steering straight, because of the constantly varying point of the compass in which the wind blew. He went on for a long time . . . .

He began to look for the high ground to decline, as it should, about now, if it was the high ground he took it for. “I ought to be getting somewhere,” he said.

And, God help him! tired out, half frozen and very foot-sore, he was getting somewhere, for, glancing up, he again beheld the gigantic and demoniac shape of the blasted pine.

It is on prairies and among mountains, far from the habitations of men, that man is most readily terrified before nature, and not on the three-mile primrose way from a railway accident to a house-party. But for a moment cold terror struck at Aladdin like a serpent, and the marrow in his bones froze. Before he could succeed in reducing this awful feeling to one of acute anxiety alone, he had to talk to himself and explain things as to a child.

“Then it is true, Troubles, old man,” he said, “about a person’s tendency to go to the left. That’s interesting, isn’t it? But what do we care? Being gifted with a certain (flighty, it is true) intelligence, we will simply take pains, and every step pull a little to the right; and that will make us go straight. Come now-keep thinking about it-every step!”

As the end of the day approached, a lull came in the gale, and the snow fell less freely. The consequently widened horizon of vision was eminently comforting, and Aladdin’s unpleasant feeling of anxiety almost disappeared.

Suddenly he was aware of a red horse.

XVII

It was standing almost leg-clear, in an angle of what seemed a drifted-over snake-fence. Its ugly, Roman-nosed head was thrown up and out, as if about to neigh.

“Poor beastie,” said Aladdin, after a start. “You must be direfful cold, but we’ll ride you, and that will make you warm, and us cold, and we’ll all get along faster.”

Drawing near, he began to gentle the horse and call it pet names. It was a huge brute, over seventeen hands high, and Aladdin, aided only by a rickety fence, and a pair of legs that would hardly support him, was appalled by the idea of having to climb to that lofty eminence, its back. Without doubt he was dreadfully tired.

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“The fence will help, old man” he said. “Here, you, pay attention and get over.” He tried to insinuate himself between the horse and the fence, but the horse did not seem inclined to move.

“Get over, you!” he said, and gave a shove. The horse moved a little, very unwillingly. “Farther yet,” said Aladdin: “Get over, you, get over.” Again he shoved; this time harder. He slapped the great shoulder with his open hand. And again the horse moved, but very slowly. “You’re an unwilling brute, aren’t you?” he said angrily.

For answer the thing tottered, and, to his horror, began to fall, at first slowly, but ever with accelerating speed, until, in the exact attitude in which it had stood by the fence,—-the great Roman-nosed head thrown up and out, as if to neigh,—he beheld the horse stretched before him on the ground, and noted for the first time the awful death-like glint of the yellow teeth through the parting of the lips.

He went very gravely from that place, for he had been looking upon death by freezing, and he himself was terribly cold, terribly tired, and—he admitted it now—completely lost.

But he went on for a long time—four or five hundred years. And it grew darker and colder.

He began to talk to himself, to try and steady himself, as he had done ever since childhood at forsaken times.

“Troubles,” he said, “You’re full of troubles, aren’t you, old man? You always were. But this is the worst. You can’t walk very much farther, can you? I can’t. And if you don’t get helped by some one pretty soon, you’re going to come to the end of your troubles. And, Troubles, do you know, I think that’s what’s going to happen to you and me, and I want you to stand up to it if it comes [gulp] and face it like a man. Now let’s rest a little, Troubles, will we?”

Troubles and Aladdin rested a little. When the rest was over they could hardly move, and they began to see the end of a young man that they had hoped would live a long time and be very happy. They went on.

“Troubles,” said Aladdin, “do you suppose she knows that we are out here, perhaps dying? We would know if she were, wouldn’t we? And do you think she cares? Liar, you know she cares, and a lot. She wouldn’t be she if she didn’t care. But we didn’t think that all the years of waiting and hoping and loving and trying to be something would end like this, did we, Troubles? We thought that it might end with the godlike Manners (whom we wouldn’t help if he were freezing to death, would we?), but not like this—O Lord God, not like this! . . . And we weren’t sure it would end with Manners; we were going to fight it out to a mighty good finish, weren’t we, Troubles? But now it’s going to end in a mighty good storm, and you’re going to die for all your troubles,

Troubles . . . And I’m talking to you so that we won’t lose our sand, even if we are afraid to die, and there’s no one looking on.”

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Though Aladdin stopped making talk in his head, the talk kept going on by itself; and he suddenly shouted aloud for it to stop. Then he began to whimper and shiver, for he thought that his mind was going.

Presently he shook himself.

“Troubles,” he said, “we’ve only a little farther to go—just as far as our feet will carry us, and no farther. That’s the proper way to finish. And for God’s sake keep sane. We won’t give her up yet!”

Ten steps and years passed.

“Troubles,” said Aladdin, “we’re going to call for help, and if it don’t come, which it won’t, we’re going to try and be calm. It seems simplest and looks best to be calm.”

Aladdin stood there crying aloud for the help of man, but it did not come. And then he cried for the help of God. And he stood there waiting—waiting for it to come.

“We must help ourselves, Troubles,” he said, with a desperate effort to be calm. “We’ve got ten steps left in us. Now, then, one—two—”

During the taking of those ten steps the snow ceased entirely to fall, and black night enveloped the earth.

Aladdin was all numb, and he wished to sleep, but he made the ten steps into eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, before his limbs refused to act, and he fell forward in the snow. He managed to raise himself and crawl a little way. He saw a light afar off, and guessing that it must be an angel, held out his hands to it—and one of them encountered a something in the dark.

Even through his thick mitten it felt round and smooth and colder than his fingers, like a ball of ice. Then Aladdin laughed aloud, for he knew that his last walk upon earth had been in the form of a silly circle. He had returned to the dead horse, and his gloved hand was resting upon its frozen eye. He shrieked with laughter and became heavy with a desire to sleep.

He sank deliciously down, and began to see showers of roses, when it flashed upon him that this was not sleep, but death.

It was like lifting prodigious dumb-bells to get his eyes to open, and a return to consciousness was like the stabbing of knives. But he opened his eyes and roused himself.

“I won’t give her up yet,” he cried.

And then, by the help of God Almighty, he crawled the whole length of the horse.

And fell asleep.

XVIII

It was a miserable, undressed thing wrapped in a horse-blanket and a buffalo-robe that woke up in front of a red-hot stove and remembered that it used to be Aladdin O'Brien. It had a dreadful headache, and could smell whisky and feel warm, and that for a long time was about all. Then it noticed that the wall opposite was ragged with loosened wall-paper and in places stripped of plaster, so that the lathing showed through, and that in its own head—no, in the room beyond the wall—an impatient stamping noise

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of iron on wood was occurring at intervals. Then it managed to turn its head, and it saw a big, beautiful man sitting on the end of an old soapbox and smoking a pipe. Then it was seized with a wrenching sickness, and the big man came quickly and held its head and was very good to it, and it felt better and went to sleep. After a while it descended into the Red Sea, with the avowed intention of calling Neptune Red Renard to his face, and when it got to the bottom, which was of red brick sprinkled with white door-knobs that people kept diving for, it became frightened and ran and ran until it came to the bottom of an iceberg, that had roots like a hyacinth bulb and was looking for a place to plant itself, and it climbed up to the top of the iceberg, which was all bulrushes, and said, “I beg your pardon, but I forgot; I must go back and make my apologies.” Then it woke up and spoke in a weak voice.

“Peter Manners,” said Aladdin, “come here.”

Manners came and sat on the floor beside him.

“Feel better now?” he said.

“Tell me—“said Aladdin.

“Oh, stuff!” said Manners.

“Manners,” said Aladdin, “you don’t look as if you hated me any more.”

“You sleep,” said Manners. “That’s what you need.”

Aladdin thought for a long time and tried to remember what he wanted to say, and shutting his eyes, to think better, fell asleep.

For the third time he awoke. Manners was back on the soap-box, still as a sphinx, and smoking his pipe.

“Please come and talk some more,” said Aladdin.

Again Manners came.

“Tell me about it,” said Aladdin.

“You be good and go to sleep,” said Manners.

“What time is it?”

“Nearly morning.”

“Still storming?”

“No; stars out and warmer.”

Aladdin thought a moment.

“Manners,” he said, “please talk to me. How did you find me?”

“Simply enough,” said Manners. “I took the senator’s cutter out for a little drive, and got lost. Then I heard somebody laughing, and I stumbled over you and your horse; that’s all. How the devil did you manage to lose your saddle and bridle?”

“It was a dead horse,” said Aladdin, and he shivered at the recollection.

“Quite so,” said Manners.

“It was the funniest thing,” said Aladdin, and again he shuddered with a kind of reminiscent revolt. “I pushed it, and it fell over frozen to death.” He was conscious of talking nonsense.

“Wait a minute, Manners,” he said. “I’ll be sensible in a minute.”

Presently he told Manners about the horse.

“I saw alight just then,” he said, “and I thought it was an angel.”

“It was I,” said Manners, naively.

“Yes, Manners, it was you,” said Aladdin.

He thought about an angel turning out to be Manners for a long time. Then a terrible recollection came to him, and, in a voice shaking with remorse and self-incrimination, he cried:

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“God help me, Manners, I would have let you freeze.”

Manners pulled at his pipe.

“Manners,” said Aladdin, “it’s true I know it’s true, because, for all I knew, I was dying when I said it.”

Manners shook his head.

“Oh, no,” said Manners.

“Make me think that,” said Aladdin, with a quaver. “Please make me think that if you can, for, God help me, I think I would have let you freeze.”

“When I found you,” said Manners, “I—I was sorry that the Lord hadn’t sent somebody else to you, and me to somebody else. That was because you always hated me with no very good reason, and a man hates to be hated, and so, to be quite honest, I hated you back.”

“Right,” said Aladdin, “right.”

Light began to come in through the windows, whose broken panes Manners had stopped with crumpled wall-paper.

“But when I got you here,” said Manners, “and began to work over you, you stopped being Aladdin O’Brien, and were just a man in trouble.”

“Yes,” said Aladdin, “it must be like that. It’s got to be like that.”

“At first,” said Manners, “I worked because it seemed the proper thing to do, and then I got interested, and then it became terrible to think that you might die.”

“Yes,” said Aladdin. His face was ghastly in the pre-sunrise light.

“You wouldn’t get warm for hours,” said Manners, “and I got so tired that I couldn’t rub any more, and so I stripped and got into the blankets with you, and tried to keep you as warm as I could that way.”

He paused to relight his pipe.

Aladdin stared up at the tattered ceiling with wide, wondering eyes.

“When you got warm,” said Manners, “I gave you all the rest of the whisky, and I’m sorry it made you sick, and now you’re as fit as a fiddle.”

“Fit-as-a-fiddle,” said Aladdin, slowly, as the wonder grew. And then he began to cry like a little child. Manners waited till he had done, and then wiped his face for him.

“So you see,” said Manners, simply, though with difficulty, —for he was a man shy, to terror, of discussing his own feelings,—“I can’t help liking you now, and—and I hope you won’t feel so hard toward me any more.”

“I feel hard toward you!” said Aladdin. “Oh, Manners!” he cried. “I thought all along that you were just a man that knew about horses and dogs, but I see, I see; and I’m not going to worship anybody any more except you and God, I’m not!”

Then he had another great long, hot cry. Manners waited patiently till it was over.

“Manners,” said Aladdin, in a choky, hoarse voice, “I think you’re different from what you used to be. You look as if—as if you ’d got the love of mankind in you.”

Manners did not answer. He appeared to be thinking of something wonderful.

“Do you think that’s it?” cried Aladdin.

Manners did not answer.

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“Can’t I get it, too?” Aladdin cried. “Have I got to be little and mean always? So help me, Manners, I don’t love any one but you and her.”

“You ’re not fit to talk,” said Manners, with great gentleness. “You go to sleep.” He arose, and going to the door of the house, opened it a little way and looked out.

“It’s warm as toast out, Aladdin,” he called. “There’s going to be a big thaw.” He closed the door and went into the next room, and Aladdin could hear him talking to the horse. After a little he came back.

“Greener says that she never was better stalled,” he said.

“Manners,” said Aladdin, “have I been raving?”

“Not been riding quite straight,” said Manners.

“How soon are we going to start?” said Aladdin.

“We’ve got to wait till the snow’s pretty well melted,” said Manners. “About noon, I think.”

Then, because he was very tired and sick and weak, and perhaps a trifle delirious, Aladdin asked Manners if he would mind holding his hand. Manners took the hand in his, and a thrill ran up Aladdin’s arm and all over him, till it settled deliciously about his heart, and he slept.

The sun rose, and dazzling beams of light filled the room.

BOOK II

“In this combat no man can imagine, unless he had seen and heard as I did, what yelling and hideous roaring Apollyon made all the time of the fight, he spake like a Dragon; and on the other side, what sighs and groans burst from Christian’s heart. I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword: then indeed he did smile and look upward.”

XIX

Senator St. John, attended by Margaret, her maid, and a physician, had made the arduous journey from Washington to Portland without too much fatigue, and it seemed reasonable to suppose that a long rest in his comfortable house, far from the turmoil of public affairs, would do much to reinstate his body after the savage attack of gout with

complications to which it had been subjected during six long weeks. Arrived at Portland, he was driven to the house of his old friend Mr. Blankinship, and helped to bed. Next morning he was seized with acute pains in the region of the heart, and though his valiant mind refused for a single moment to tolerate the thought that the end might be near, was persuaded to send for his daughter and his sons.

Margaret was in the parlor with Aladdin. It was April, and the whole land dripped. Through the open window, for the day was warm, the moisture of the soaked ground and trees was almost audible. Margaret had much to say to Aladdin, and he to her; they had not met for several months.

“I want to hear about Peter,” said Aladdin—“all about him. He met you, of course, and got you across the city?”

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“Yes, and his father came, too,” said Margaret. “Such an old dear—you never saw him, did you? He’s taller than Peter, but much thinner, and a great aristocrat. He’s the only man I ever saw that has more presence than papa. He looks like a fine old bird, and you can see his skull very plainly—especially when he laughs, if you know what I mean. And he’s really witty. He knows all about you and wants you to go and stay with them sometime.” Aladdin sighed for the pure delight of hearing Margaret’s voice running on and on. He was busy looking at her, and did not pay the slightest attention to what she said. “And the girl came to lunch, Aladdin, and she is so pretty, but not a bit serene like Peter, and the men are all wild about her, but she doesn’t care that—”

“Doesn’t she?” said Aladdin, annoyingly.

“No, she doesn’t!” said Margaret, tartly. “She says she’s going to be a horse-breaker or a nurse, and all the while she kept making eyes at brother John, and he lost his poise entirely and smirked and blushed, and I shouldn’t wonder a bit if he’d made up his mind to marry her, and if he has he will—”

Aladdin caught at the gist of the last sentence. “Is that all that’s necessary?” he said. “Has a man only got to make up his mind to marry a certain girl?”

“It’s all brother John would have to do,” said Margaret, provokingly.

“Admitting that,” said Aladdin, “how about the other men?”

“Why,” said Margaret, “I suppose that if a man really and truly makes up his mind to get the girl he wants, he’ll get her.”

She looked at him with a grand innocence. Aladdin’s heart leaped a little.

“But suppose two men made up their minds,” said Aladdin, “to get the same girl.”

“That would just prove the rule,” said Margaret, refusing to see any personal application, “because one of them would get her, and the other would be the exception.”

“Would the one who spoke first have an advantage?” said Aladdin. “Suppose he’d wanted her ever so long, and had tried to succeed because of her, and”—he was warming to the subject, which meant much to him—“had never known that there was any other girl in the world, and had pinned all his faith and hope on her, would he have any advantage?”

“I don’t know,” said Margaret, rather dreamily.

“Because if he would—” Aladdin reached forward and took one of her hands in his two.

She let it lie there, and for a moment they looked into each other's eyes. Margaret withdrew her hand.

"I know—I know," she said. "But you mustn't say it, 'Laddin dear, because—somehow I feel that there are heaps of things to be considered before either of us ought to think of that. And how can we be quite sure? Anyway, if it's going to happen—it will happen. And that's all I'm going to say, 'Laddin."

"Tell me," he said gently, "what the trouble is, dear. Is it this: do you think you care for me, and aren't sure? Is that it?"

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She nodded gravely. Aladdin took a long breath.

“Well,” he said finally, “I believe I love you well enough, Margaret, to hope that you get the man who will make you happiest. I don’t know,” he went on rather gloomily, “that I’m exactly calculated to make anybody happy, but,” he concluded, with a quavering smile, “I’d like to try.” They shook hands like the two very old friends they were.

“We’ll always be that, anyway,” said Margaret.

“Always,” said Aladdin.

“Mademoiselle!” Eugenie opened the parlor door and looked cautiously in, after the manner of the French domestic.

“What is it?” said Margaret in French.

Aladdin listened with intense admiration, for he did not understand a word.

“Monsieur does not carry himself so well,” said Eugenie, “and he asks if mademoiselle will have the goodness to mount a moment to his room.”

“I’ll go at once.” Margaret rose. “Papa’s worse,” she said to Aladdin. “Will you wait?”

“I am so sorry,” said Aladdin. “No, I can’t wait; I have to get out the paper. I”—he smiled—“am announcing to an eager public what general, in my expert opinion, is best fitted to command the armies of the United States.”

“Of course there’ll be fighting.”

“Of course — and in a day or two. Good-by.”

“Good-by.”

“I’ll come round later and inquire about your father. Give him my love.”

Margaret ran up-stairs to her father’s room. He was in great pain, but perfectly calm and collected. As Margaret entered, the doctor went out, and she was alone with her father.

“Are you feeling badly, dear?” she said.

“I am feeling more easy than a moment ago,” said the senator. “Bring a chair over here, Peggy; we must have a little talk.”

She brought a little upright chair and sat down facing him, her right hand nestling over one of his.

“The doctor,” said the senator, “considers that my condition is critical.”

“Papa”

“I disagree with him. I shall, I believe, live to see the end of this civil riot, but I cannot be sure. So it behooves me to ask my dear daughter a question.” St. John asked it with eagerness. “Which is it to be, Peggy?”

She blushed deeply.

“You are interested in Aladdin O’Brien?”

Her head drooped a little.

“Yes, papa.”

The senator sighed.

“Thank you, dear,” he said. “That is all I wanted to know. I had hoped that it would be otherwise. Peggy,” he said, “I love that other young man like a son.”

“Peter?”

“I have always hoped that you would see him as I have seen him. I would be happy if I thought that I could leave you in such strong young hands. I trust him absolutely.”

“Papa.”

“Well, dear?”

“You don’t like Aladdin?”

“He is not steady, Margaret.” The simple word was pregnant with meaning as it fell from the senator.

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“You don’t mean that he—that he’s like—”

“Yes, dear; I should not wish my youngest son to marry.”

“Poor boy,” said Margaret, softly.

“It’s the Irish in him,” said the senator. “He must do all things to extremes. There, in a word, lies all his strength and all his weakness.”

“You would be sorry if I married Aladdin?”

“I should be afraid for your happiness. Do you love him?”

“I am not sure, papa.”

“You are fond of Peter, aren’t you?”

She leaned forward till her cheek touched his.

“Next to you and ’Laddin.”

The senator patted her shoulder, and thus they remained for some time.

A great shouting arose in the neighborhood.

The senator sat bolt upright in bed. His nostrils began to quiver. He was like an old war-horse that hears bugles.

“Sumter?” he cried. “Sumter? Do I hear Sumter?”

The shouting became louder.

“Sumter?” he cried. “Have they fired upon Sumter?”

Margaret flew to the window and threw it open. It acted upon the shouting like the big swell of an organ, and the cries of excitement filled the room to bursting. South Carolina had clenched her hand and struck the flag in the face.

The doctor rushed in. He paused flabbergasted at sight of the man whom he had supposed to be dying.

“Great God, man!” cried the senator, “can’t you get my clothes?”

When he was dressed they brought him his whalebone stick.

“Damn it, I can walk!” said he, and he broke the faithful old thing over a knee that had not been bent for a month.

XX

New fervor of enlistment took place, and among the first to enlist was Aladdin, and when his regiment met for organization he was unanimously elected major. He had many friends.

At first he thought that his duty did not lie where his heart lay, because of his brother Jack, now fourteen, whom he had to support. And then, the old promises coming to mind, he presented himself one morning before Senator St. John.

“Senator,” he said, “you promised to do me a favor if I should ever ask it.”

The senator thought of Margaret and trembled.

“I have come to ask it.”

“Well, sir?”

“I want to enlist, sir, but if I do there’s nobody to look after Jack.”

Again the senator thought of Margaret, and his heart warmed.

“He shall live in my house, sir,” said the senator, “as a member of my family, sir.”

“God bless you, sir!” cried Aladdin.

In a state of dancing glee he darted off to the “Spy” office to see his chief.

Mr. Blankinship was leaning against the post of the street door, reading his own editorial in the morning issue.

“Hallo, Mr. Blankinship!” cried Aladdin.

“Hallo, Aladdin!” cried Mr. Blankinship, grinning at his favorite. “Late as usual.”

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“And for the last time, sir.”

“I know of only one good reason for such a statement.”

“It’s it, sir!”

Mr. Blankinship folded his paper carefully. His eyes were red, for he had been up late the night before.

“I’d go, too,” he said simply, “if it wasn’t for the mother.”

The firm of John St. John & Brothers sat in its office. The head of the firm was gorgeous in a new uniform; he had hurried up from New York (where he had been paying vigorous court to Ellen Manners, whom he had made up his mind to marry) in order, as oldest, biggest, and strongest, to enlist for the family in one of the home regiments. There lingered on his lips the thrill of a kiss half stolen, half yielded, while in his pockets were a number of telegrams since received, and the usually grave and stern young man was jocular and bantering. The two younger members of the firm were correspondingly savage.

“For God’s sake, clear out of here,” said Hamilton. “Your shingle’s down. Bul and I are running this office now.”

“Well, it’s the chance of your lives, boys,” said the frisky colonel. “I’ll have forgotten the law by the time I come back.”

“Hope you may choke, John,” said Hannibal, sweetly.

“Don’t allow smoking in here, do you, boys?” He got no answer. It was a hard-and-fast rule which he himself had instituted.

“Well, here goes.” He lighted a huge cigar and puffed it insolently about the office. He surveyed himself in the cracked mirror.

“Cursed if a uniform isn’t becoming to a man!” he said.

“Chicken!” said Hamilton.

“Puppy!” said Hannibal.

“Titmouse!” said Hamilton.

“Ant!” said Hannibal.

John’s grin widened.

“Boys,” he said, “you’ve got one swell looker in the family, anyway, and you ought to be glad of that.”

The boys exchanged glances.

Hannibal had upon his desk a pen-wiper which consisted of a small sponge heavy with the ink of wiped pens. Hamilton had beneath his desk an odd rubber boot which served him as a scrap-basket. These ornamental missiles took John St. John in the back of the head at about the same moment, the weight and impetus of the boot knocking the cigar clean out of his mouth, so that it dashed itself against the mirror.

The gallant colonel turned, still grinning. “Which threw the boot?” said he.

“I did,” said Hamilton.

“Then you get the first licking.”

Hamilton met his brother’s hostile if grinning advance with the hardest blow that he could strike him over the left eye. Then they clenched, and Hannibal joined the fray. The three brothers, roaring with laughter, proceeded to inflict as much damage to each other and the office as they jointly could. Over and under they squirmed and contorted, hitting, tripping, falling and rising. Desks went over, lawbooks strewed the floor, ink ran, and finally the bust of George Washington, which had stood over the inner door since the foundation of the firm, came down with a crash.

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By this time the three brothers were helpless with laughter. The combat ceased, and they sat upon the floor to survey the damage.

“You can’t handle the old man yet, boys,” said the colonel. His left eye was closed, and his new uniform looked like the ribbons hung on a May-pole.

Hamilton was bleeding at the nose. Hannibal’s lip was split. The three looked at each other and shook with laughter.

“I’m inclined to think we’ve had a healthy bringing-up,” said Hamilton between gasps.

“Better move, colonel,” said Hannibal; “you’re sitting in a pool of ink.”

“So I am,” said the colonel, as the cold struck through his new trousers.

The laughter broke out afresh.

Beau Larch, in the uniform of a private, appeared at the door.

“Hallo, Beau!”

“Come in.”

“Take a hand?”

“Thank you, no,” said Beau. “I just dropped in to tell you fellows that we’ve just had a hell of a licking at Bull Run.”

“Us!” said the colonel, rising.

“Us!” said Hamilton. “Licked!”

“Us!” said Hannibal.

“And I’ve got other news, too,” said Beau, bashfully. “If I stop drinking till my year’s up, and don’t ever drink any more, Claire says she’ll marry me.”

Hannibal was the first to shake his hand.

“Boys,” said Beau, “I hope if any of you ever sees me touch a drop you’ll strike me dead.”

He went out.

“I’m going to find out about this,” said John; “what did he say the name of the licking was?”

“Bull Run.”

“Bull Run. And I’ll come back and tell you.”

He was starting to descend the steep stairs to the street, when he caught the sound of snickers and creeping footsteps behind him. He turned like a panther, but was not in time. The heavily driven toes of the right boots of the younger St. Johns lifted him clear of the stairs, and clean to the bottom of them. There he sat, his uniform a thing of the past, his left eye blackening and closed, and roars of laughter shaking him.

But Hamilton and Hannibal put the office more or less to rights, and sat down gloomily at their respective desks. Up till now they had faced being left behind, but this licking was too much. Each brooded over it, while pretending to be up to the ears in work. Hamilton wrote a letter, sealed it, addressed it, and presently rose.

“Bul,” he said, and to Hannibal the whole manoeuver smacked suspicious, “I’m going to run up and see the old man for a few minutes.”

“All right,” said Hannibal.

Hamilton reached the door and turned.

“By the way,” he said, “I left a letter on my desk; wish you’d put a stamp on it and mail it.”

He went out.

Hannibal felt very lonely and fidgety.

“I think I’ll just mail that letter and get it off my mind,” he said.

He put on his hat, licked a stamp, and crossed to his brother’s desk. The letter was there, right enough, but it did not require a stamp, for on it was written but one word, and that word was Hannibal.

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Hannibal tore open the envelop and read:

Dear old Bul :I can't stand it any longer, but you'll try and not be mad with me for running off and leaving you to keep up the old place alone, and damn it, Bul, two of us ought to go anyway . . . .

The letter ran on for a little in the same strain. Hannibal put the letter in his pocket, and sat down at his brother's desk.

"It will kill the old man if we all go," he said. "And of all three I'm the one with the best rights to go and get shot."

He took from somewhere in his clothes a little gold locket, flat and plain. Each of the St. John boys had carried one since their mother's death. Facing her picture each had had engraved the motto which he had chosen for himself to be his watchword in life. In John's locket was engraved, "In fortis vinces"; in Hamilton's, "Deo volente"; and in Hannibal's, "Carpe diem." But in Hannibal's locket there was another picture besides that of his mother. He opened the locket with his thumb-nails and laid it on the desk before him. Presently his eyes dimmed, and he looked beyond the locket.

Hamilton St. John's ink-well was a globe of glass, with a hole like a thimble in the top to contain ink. Hannibal found himself looking at this, and noting the perfect miniature reproduction of the big calendar on the wall, as it was refracted by the glass. With his thoughts far away, his eyes continued to look at the neat little curly calendar in the ink-well. Presently it seemed to him that it was not a calendar at all, but just a patch of bright green color—a patch of bright green that became grass, an acre of it, a ten-acre field, a great field gay with trampled flowers, rolling hills, woods, meadows, fences, streams. Then he saw, lying thickly over a fair region, broken guns, exploded cannons, torn flags, horses and men contorted and sprung in death; everywhere death and demolition. He wandered over the field and came presently upon himself, scorched, mangled, and dead under the wheel of a cannon.

After a little it seemed to him that the field of battle shrank until it became again the calendar. But there was something odd about that calendar; the dates were queer. It read July, right enough; but this was the year 1861, whereas the calendar bore the date 1863. And why was there a cross to mark the third day of July? Hannibal came to with a shock; but he could have sworn that he had not been asleep.

"God is very—very good!" he said solemnly.

Then he opened his pen-knife, and scratched a deep line of erasure through the "Carpe diem" in his locket, and underneath, cutting with great pains, he inserted a date, "July 3, 1863," and the words "Nunc dimittis." Below that he cut "Te Deum laudamus."

He looked once more at the picture of his mother and at the picture that was not of his mother, shut the little gold case, and put it back in his pocket.

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Then he inked on the white inside of a paper-box cover, in large letters, these words:

This office will not be opened until the end of the war.

That office was never opened again.

XXI

The lives of sixty million people had become suddenly full of drill, organization, uniforms, military music, flags, hatred, love, and self-sacrifice, and the nations of the Old World stood about, note-book in hand, like so many medical students at a clinic: could a heart, cut in two, continue to supply a body with blood after the soul had been withdrawn? And the nations of the Old World hoped that there would be enough fresh meat left on the carcass for them to feed on, when the experiment should be at an end. Mother England was particularly hungry, and dearly hoped to have the sucking of the eggs which she herself had laid.

It was a great time for young men, and Margaret shed secret tears on behalf of five of them. It had fallen upon her to tell the old man that his three sons had enlisted, and that task had tortured her for an hour before she had dared go and accomplish it.

“Papa,” she said, “Ham has enlisted, and so has Bul.”

The senator had not moved a muscle.

“It was only a question of time,” he said. “I wish that I had begotten a dozen others.”

He had borrowed her well-marked Bible from old Mrs. Blankinship and read Isaiah at a gulp. Then he had sought out his boys and bantered them on their new clothes.

Margaret sat very still for a long time after the interview with her father. She knew that Bul, whom she loved best of her brothers, was going to be killed. She had never before seen his face so serenely happy as when he came to tell her that he had sworn in, nor had she ever before seen that unexplainable phenomenon, known variously as fate, doom, numbered, Nemesis, written upon a face. And there were others who might be taken.

Aladdin came in for a moment to give her the news. He was nervous with enthusiasm, and had been working like a horse. His regiment was to leave Friday for the front; he could stay but a minute; he had only dashed in on his way to drill. Would she care to come? Quite right; there was nothing much to look at. He talked as cheerfully and as rapidly as a mountain brook runs. And then he gave his best piece of news, and looked almost handsome as he gave it.

“Peter’s here,” he said. “He’s outside talking to the senator. He looks simply stunning, and he’s a whole lot of things on a staff—assistant adjutant-general with the rank of a colonel; and he’s floated up here on a dash against time to say good-by to us.”

Aladdin’s face puckered.

“You and Peter and I, Margaret,” he said, “Lord, what a muddle!”

“I’m terribly blue, old man,” said Margaret, “and it hurts to have you say things like that.”

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Instantly Aladdin was all concern.

“You know I wouldn’t hurt you purposely,” he said, “but I’m terribly blue, too, dear, and one tries to keep up and says asinine things, and”—he smiled, and his smile was very winning—“is at once forgiven by an old dear.”

She held out her hand and gave his a friendly squeeze.

“You old darling!” he said, and ran out.

She followed him into the hall, and met Manners, who had just parted from the senator at the front door. His uniform was wonderfully becoming.

“Is it Peter?”

They shook hands.

“Never,” she said, “have I seen anything so beautiful!”

Peter blushed (looking even more beautiful, for he hated to be talked about).

“Where was ’Laddin going?” he said. “He went by me like a shot out of a gun, and had only time to pull my hat over my eyes and squeal Peeeter.”

“He’s very important now,” said Margaret, “and wonders how anybody can want to write things and be a poet or a musician when there are real things to do in the world.”

Peter looked at his watch.

“Isn’t that the least bit rude?” said Margaret.

“No,” said Peter; “my train back leaves in one hour, and I could better afford to lose my chances of heaven. I had no business to come, as it was. But I had to come.”

Margaret sighed. She had hoped that it would not happen so soon. He followed her into the parlor and closed the door behind him.

“First, Margaret,” he said, “I’m going to tell you something that may surprise you a little. It did me; it was so sudden. My sister Ellen is going to be married.”

“Ellen!” exclaimed Margaret. “Why, she always said—” “It’s only been arranged in the last few days,” said Peter, “by many telegrams. I was told to tell you.”

“Is he nice?”

“Yes. He’s a good chap.”

“Rich?”

“Well—rather rising than rich.”

“Who is it?”

“Your brother John.”

“My dear Peter—”

“No—I never did, either!”

“Isn’t that splendid!”

Peter pulled a grave face.

“Yes—and no,” he said.

“I hope you’re not going to be insolent,” said Margaret.

“It depends on what you call insolent. My father, you see, objects very much to having Ellen go out of the family, but he says that he can learn to bear that if the only other girl in the world will come into the family.”

Manners’ voice had become husky toward the last of the sentence, and perhaps not husky so much as hungry. Margaret knew better than to say anything of the kind, but she couldn’t help looking as innocent as a child and saying:

“Won’t she?”

“How do I know?” said Peter. “I have come to ask her.”

He looked so very strong and manly and frank that Margaret, whose world had been terribly blue recently, was half tempted to throw herself into his arms and cry.

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“O Peter!” she said pitifully.

He came and sat beside her on the sofa, and drew her close to him.

“My darling,” he said brokenly.

A great sense of trust and security stole over Margaret, but she knew that it was not love. Yet for a moment she hesitated, for she knew that if she took this man, his arm would always be about her, and he would always—always—always be good to her. As she sat there, not trusting herself to speak, she had her first doubt of Aladdin, and she wondered if he loved her as much—as much as he loved Aladdin. Then she felt like a traitor.

For a little neither could find any words to say. So still they sat that Margaret could hear the muffled ticking of Peter’s watch. At length Peter spoke.

“What shall I tell my father?” he said.

“Tell him—” said Margaret, and her voice broke.

“Aren’t you sure, darling—is that it?”

She nodded with tears in her eyes.

He took his arm from round her waist, and she felt very lonely.

“But I’m always going to love you,” he said.

She felt still more alone.

“Peter,” she said, “I can’t explain things very well, but I —I—don’t want you to go away feeling as if—”

Manners’ eyes lifted up.

“As if it was all over?” he asked eagerly.

“Almost that, Peter,” she said. “I—I can’t say yes now—but God knows, Peter, perhaps sometime—I—I can.”

She was thinking of the flighty and moody Aladdin, who had loved her so long, and whom (she suddenly realized in spite of the words just spoken) she loved back with all her heart and soul.

Honor rose hot in her to give Peter a final answer now and forever—no. But she looked into his eyes and could not. He looked at his watch.

“Margaret dear,” he said, “I’ve got to go. Thanks for everything, and for the hope and all, and—and I may never see you again, but if I do, will you give me my answer then?”

“I will,” said Margaret, “when I see you again.”

They rose.

“May I kiss you, Margaret?” he said.

“Certainly, Peter.”

He kissed her on the cheek, and went away with her tears on his lips.

A newly organized fife-and-drum corps marched by struggling with “The Girl I Left Behind Me.”

In those days the most strangled rendering of that tune would bring lumps into the throats of those that heard.

XXII

Hannible and Hamilton were privates in the nth regiment, Aladdin was major, and John was colonel. If any of them had the slightest military knowledge, it was Aladdin. Not in vain had he mastered the encyclopedia from Safety-lamps to Stranglers. He could explain with strange words and in long, balanced sentences everything about the British army that began with an S, except only those things whose second letter

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stood farther down in the alphabet than T. But the elements of knowledge kept dropping in, at first on perfunctory calls, visitors that disappeared when you turned to speak with them, but that later came to stay. The four young men were like children with a “roll-the-seven-number-eight-shot-into-the-middle” puzzle. They could make a great rattling with the shot, and control their tempers; that was about all. Later they were to form units in the most efficient and intelligent large body of men that the world ever saw, with the possible exception of the armies it was to be pitted against; but those, it must be owned, were usually smaller, though, in the ability of their commanders to form concentration, often of three times the size. They learned that it is cheaper to let a company sleep in tents upon hard ground of a rainy night than to lodge them in a neighboring hotel at one’s own expense, and that going the rounds in pitch-darkness grows less thrilling in exact ratio to the number of times you do it, and finally, even in sight of the enemy’s lines, becomes as boring as waltzing with a girl you don’t like. They began to learn that cleanliness is next to godliness only in times of peace, and that food is the one god, and the stomach his only prophet. They learned that the most difficult of all duties is to keep the face straight when the horse of a brother officer who mounts for the first time is surprised to vehemence by its first experience with a brass band.

Aladdin was absolutely equal to the occasion, and developed an astonishing talent for play-acting, and, it is to be feared, strutted a little, both in the bosom of his soul and on the parade-ground. It was only when he looked at two of the “tall men on the right,” Hamilton and Hannibal St. John, who had chosen humble parts that they might serve under their brother, that he felt properly small and resented himself. Sometimes, too, he searched his past life and could find in it only one brave deed, his swim down the river, and he wondered with an awful wonder what he would do when the firing began. He need not have troubled: he was of too curious and inquiring a disposition to be afraid of most things. And he was yet to see proved on many Southern fields that a coward is, if anything, a rarer bird than a white quail. Only once in action did Aladdin see a man really show the white feather. The man had gone into the army from a grocery-store, and was a very thin, small specimen with a very big, bulbous head; and, like many others of his class, proved to be a perfect fire-eater in battle, and a regular buzzard to escape fever and find food. But during the famous seven days before Richmond a retreat was ordered of a part of the line which the Buzzard helped compose, and he was confronted by the necessity, for his friends were hastening him from behind, of crossing a gully by means of a somewhat slender fallen tree. It was then that Aladdin saw him show fear.

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Bullets tore up the bark of the tree, and pine needles, clipped from the trees overhead, fell in showers. But he did not mind that. It was the slenderness and instability of the fallen tree that froze the marrow in his bones: would it bear his one hundred and twenty-four pounds, or would it precipitate him, an awful drop of ten feet, into the softest of muds at the bottom of the gully, where a sickeningly striped but in reality harmless water-snake lay coiled?

Finally, pale and shaking, he ventured on the log, got half-way across, turned giddy, and fell with such a howl of terror that it was only equaled in vehemence by the efforts of the snake to get out of the way. After which the Buzzard picked himself up, scrambled out, and continued his retreat, scraping his muddied boots among the fallen leaves as he went. "Some talk of Alexander and some of Hercules," but it may be that an exceedingly giddy elevation coupled with a serpent would have made shivering children of both those heroes. To each his own fear. Margaret's and Aladdin's was the same they both feared Aladdin.

That afternoon the regiment was to leave for the front, and Aladdin went to bid Margaret good-by. She and her father were still staying with the Blankinships.

They had a very satisfactory talk, beginning with the beginning of things, and going over their long friendship, laughing, remembering, and regretting. Jack was to live with the St. Johns, and they talked much of him, and of old Mrs. Brackett, and of affairs at home. Jack about this time was in the seventh hell of despair, for his extreme youth had prevented him from bringing to its triumphant conclusion a pleasant little surprise, consisting of a blue uniform, which he had planned for himself and others. No love of country stirred the bosom of the guileless Jack; only hatred of certain books out of which he was obliged to learn many useless things, such as reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic. Besides, word had come to him that persimmons were to be had for the picking and chickens for the broiling in that country toward which the troops were heading. And much also had he heard concerning the beauty of Southern maidens, and of the striped watermelons in the watermelon-patch. And so he was to be left behind, and God was not good.

Toward the end their talk got very serious.

"I'm going to turn over a new leaf," said Aladdin, "and be better things, Margaret, and you must save up a lot of pride to have in me if I do, and perhaps it will all come right in the end."

"You know how fond I am of you," said Margaret, "and because I am, and because you're all the big things that are hard to be, I want you to be all the little things that ought to be so easy to be. That doesn't seem very plain, but I mean—"

“I know exactly what you mean,” said Aladdin. “Don’t you suppose I know myself pretty well by this time, and how far I’ve got to climb before I have a ghost of a right to tell you what I tell you every time I look at you?”

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Aladdin rose.

“Margaret,” he said, “this time I’m going like an old friend. If I make good and live steady, as I mean to do, I shall come back like a lover. Meanwhile you shall think all things over, and if you think that you can care for me, you shall tell me so when I come back. And if you conclude that you can’t, you shall tell me. I’m not going to ask you to marry me now, because in no way am I in a position to. But if I come back and say to you, ’Margaret, I have turned into a man at last,’ you will know that I am telling the truth and am in a position to ask anything I please. For I shall come back without a cent, but with a character, and that’s everything. I shall not drink any more, and every night I shall pray to God to help me believe in Him. But, Margaret, I may not come back at all. If I don’t it will be for one of two reasons. Either I shall fail in becoming worthy to kiss the dust under your blessed feet, or I shall be killed. In the first case, I beg that you will pray for me; but in the second I pray that you will forget all that was bad in me and only remember what was good. And so, darling—” his voice broke, “because I am a little afraid of death and terribly afraid of myself—”

She came obediently into his arms, and knew what it was to be kissed by the man she loved.

“Aladdin,” she said, “promise that nothing except—”

“Death?” said Aladdin.

“—that nothing, nothing except death—shall keep you from coming back.”

“If I live,” said Aladdin, “I will come back.”

Everybody of education knows that Lucy Locket lost her pocket and that Betty Pringle found it without a penny “in it” (to rhyme with “found it “), but everybody does not know that the aforementioned Lucy Locket had a tune composed for her benefit that has thrilled the hearts of more sons of the young republic when stepping to battle than any other tune, past, present, or to come. There is a martial vigor and a tear in “The Girl I Left Behind Me”; some feet cannot help falling into rhythm when they hear the “British Grenadiers”; North and South alike are possessed with a do-or-die madness when the wild notes of “Dixie” rush from the brass; and “John Brown’s Body” will cause the dumb to sing. But it is the farcical little quickstep known by the ridiculous name of “Yankee Doodle” which the nations would do well to consider when straining the patience of the peace-loving and United States.

And so they marched down the street to the station, and the tall men walked on the right and the little men on the left, and the small boys trotted alongside, and the brand-new flags flung out, and bouquets were thrown, and there were cheers from the heart up all along the line. But ever the saucy fifes sang, and the drums gaily beat

Yankee Doodle came to town
Riding on a pony,
Stuck a feather in his Hat,
And called it macaroni.

At the station the emotions attendant on departure found but one voice. The mother said to the son what the sweetheart said to the lover, and the sister to the brother. Nor was this in any manner different from what the brother, lover, and son said to the sister, sweetheart, and mother. It was the last sentence which bleeding hearts supply to lips at moments of farewell:

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“Write to me.”

And the supercilious little quickstep went on:

Yankee Doodle came to town
Riding on a pony,
Stuck a feather in his Hat,
And called it macaroni.

XXIII

A tongue of land with Richmond (built, like another capital beginning with R, on many hills) for its major root, and a fortification vulgarly supposed to be of the gentler sex for its tip, is formed by the yellow flow of the James and York rivers. To land an army upon the tip of this tongue, march the length of it and extract the root, after reducing it to a reminiscence, was the wise plan of the powers early in the year 1862. To march an army of preponderous strength through level and fertile country, flanked by friendly war-ships and backed by unassailable credit; to meet and overcome a much smaller and far less rich army, intrenched behind earthworks of doubtful formidableness, and finally to besiege and capture an isolated city of more historic than strategic advantages, seemed on the face of it as easy as rolling a barrel downhill or eating when hungry. But the level, fertile country was discovered to be very muddy, its supply of rain from heaven unparalleled in nature, its streams as deadly as arsenic, and its topography utterly different from that assigned to it in any known geography. Furthermore, in its woods, and it was nearly all woods, dwelt far more mosquitos than there are lost souls in Hades, and each mosquito had a hollow spike in his head through which he not only could but would squirt, with or without provocation, the triple compound essence of malaria into veins brought up on oxygen, and on water through which you could see the pebbles at the bottom. A bosom friend of the mosquito, and some say his paramour, was little Miss Tick. Of the two she was considerably the more hellish, and forsook her dwelling-places in the woods for the warm flesh of soldiers where it is rosiest, next the skin. The body, arms, and legs of Miss Tick could be scratched to nothing by poisonous finger-nails, but her detached head was eternal, and through eternity she bit and gnawed and sometimes laughed in the hollow of her black soul. For the horses, mules, and cattle there were shrubs which disagreed with them, and gigantic horse-flies. And for the general at the head of the vast body of irritation there was an opposing army whose numbers he overrated, and whose whereabouts he kept discovering suddenly. It is said that during the Peninsular campaign the buzzards were so well nourished that they raised a second brood.

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While the army was still in the vicinity of Fort Monroe, numbers of officers secured leave to ride over to Newport News and view the traces of the recent and celebrated naval fight, which was to relegate wooden battle-ships to the fireplace. Aladdin was among those to go. At this time he was in great spirits, for it had been brought home to him that he was one of the elect, one of those infinitely rare and godlike creatures whom mosquitos do not bite nor ticks molest. His nights were as peaceful as the grave, and the poisonous drinking-waters glanced from his rubber constitution. Besides, he had forsaken his regimental duties to enjoy a life of constant variety upon the staff of a general, and had begun to feel at home on horseback. It was one of those radiant, smiling days, which later on were to become rarer than charity, and the woods were positively festive with sunshine. And the temperature was precisely that which brings to a young man's fancy thoughts of love. So that it was in the nature of a shock to come suddenly upon the shore and behold for the first time the finality of war. There was no visible glory about it. What had happened to the Cumberland and the Congress was disappointingly like what would happen to two ships destroyed in shallow water. The masts of the Cumberland, slightly off the vertical and still rigged, projected for half their length from the yellow surface of the river. That was all. Some distance to the left and half submerged was a blackened and charred mass that bore some resemblance to a ship that had once been proud and tall, and known by the name of Congress. That was all. Aladdin had hoped that war would be a little more like the pictures.

As he rode back, pondering, toward the encampment, however, he came upon something which was truly an earnest of what was to come. There were so many buzzards perched in the trees of a certain wood that he turned in to see what they had. He came upon it suddenly, just beyond a cheerful bush of holly, and the buzzards stepped reluctantly back until he had looked. It was only a horse. Some of the buzzards, heavy with food, raised their eyelids heavily and looked at Aladdin, and then lapsed back into filthy sleep. Others, not yet satiated, looked upon him querulously, and suggested as much as looks can suggest that he go, and trouble them no more. Others, the newly arrived and ravenous, swooped above the trees, so that dark circles were drawn over the fallen sunlight. Now a buzzard opened and closed its wings, and now one looked from the horse to Aladdin, and back, fretfully, to the horse. There seemed to be hundreds of them, dark and dirty, with raw heads and eyelids. Aladdin sat solemn and motionless upon his horse, but he could feel the cold sweat of horror running down his sides from under his arms, and the bristling of his hair. He wanted to make a great noise, to shout, to do anything, but he did not dare. It would have

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been breaking the rules. In that assembly no sound was allowed, for the meeting was unholy and wicked and worked with hurried stealth, so that the attention of God should not be drawn. Aladdin knew that he had no right to be there, that without knocking he had entered the bedroom of horror and found her naked in the arms of lust. He turned and rode away shivering and without looking back. He had not ridden the distance between two forest trees before the carcass was again black with the descending birds, and the blood streamed to their bills.

The Peninsular campaign developed four kinds of men: the survivors, the wounded, the dead, and the missing. When the campaign was over Aladdin sometimes woke starting in the night to think of those missing and of what he had seen in the woods.

XXIV

The tedious locomotion of an army and the incessant reluctance of the battle to be met will try a sinner; but a scarcity of tobacco and constantly wet feet will try a saint. Aladdin was somewhat of both. But in the fidgety gloom which presently settled upon man and beast, his, great Irish gift of cheerfulness shone like a star. He even gave up longing for promotion, and strained his mind to the cracking-point for humorous verses and catching tunes. He went singing up the Peninsula, and thumped the gay banjo by the camp-fire, and was greatly beloved by the foot-sore and sick. He had given up worrying about what he would do in battle, for there were much more important things to think about.

Battles are to soldiers what Christmas trees are to children: you must wait, wait, and wait for them, and forever wait; and when they do come the presents are apt to be a little tawdry. And you are only envied by the other little children who didn't really see what you really got. The most comforting man in the army was one minister of the gospel, and the most annoying was another. The first had the divine gift of story-telling and laughter, and the second thanked God because the soldiers had run out of their best friend, tobacco, which he described through his nose as "filthy weed," "vile narcotic," or "pernicious hell-plant." And they both served the Lord as hard as they could—and they both suffered from dysentery.

As the days passed and the temperature of the army rose, and its digestion became permanently impaired, Aladdin, by giving out, and constantly, all that was best in himself, became gradually exhausted. He found himself telling stories as many as three times to the same man, and he began to steal from the poets and musicians that he knew in order to keep abreast of his own original powers of production. He even went so far as to draw inspiration from men of uneven heights stood in line: he would hum the intervals as scored by their heads on an imaginary staff and fashion his tune

accordingly, but this tended to a somewhat compressed range and was not always happy in its results. His efforts, however, were appreciated, and the emaciated young Irishman became a most exceptional prophet, and received honor in his own land.

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For the rest, being a staff-officer, he was kept busy and rode hundreds of extra miles through the rain. It was a large army, as inexperienced as it was large, and it stood in great need of being kept in contact with itself. If you lived at one end of it and wanted to know what was going on at the other end, you had to travel about as far as from New York to New Haven. The army proper, marching by fours, stretched away through the wet lands for forty miles. A fly-bitten tail of ambulances and wagons, with six miserable horses or six perfectly happy mules attached to each, added another twenty miles. At the not always attained rate of fifteen miles a day the army could pass a given point in four days. To the gods in Olympus it would have appeared to have all the characteristic color and shape of an angleworm, without, however, enjoying that reptile's excellent good health. If the armies of Washington, Cornwallis, Clive, Pizarro, Cortes, and Christian de Wet had been added to it, they would have passed unnoticed in the crowd. And the recurring fear of the general in command of this army was that the army he sought would prove to be twice as big. So speculation was active between the York and James rivers.

In the minds of the soldiers a thousand years passed, and then there was a little fight, and they learned that they were soldiers. And so did the other army. Another thousand years passed, and it seemed tactful to change bases. Accordingly, that which had been arduously established on a muddy river called the Chickahominy (and it was very far from either of those two good things) was forsaken, and the host began to be moved toward the James. This move would have been more smoothly accomplished if the enemy had not interfered. They, however, insisted upon making history, turning a change of base into a nominal retreat, and begetting in themselves a brass-bound and untamable spirit which it took vast wealth and several years to humble. From Gaines's Mill to the awful brow of Malvern Hill there were thunder and death. Forty thousand men were somewhat needlessly killed, wounded, or (as one paradoxical account has it) "found missing."

Aladdin missed the fight at Malvern Hill and became wounded in a non-bellicose fashion. His general desired to make a remark to another general, and writing it on a piece of thin yellow paper, gave it to him to deliver. He rode off to the tune of axes,—for a Maine regiment was putting in an hour in undoing the stately work of a hundred years,—trotted fifteen miles peacefully enough, delivered his general's remark, and started back. Then came night and a sticky mist. Then the impossibility of finding the way. Aladdin rode on and on, courageously if not wisely, and came in time to the dimly discernible outbuildings of a Virginia mansion. They stood huddled dark and wet in the mist, which was turning to rain, and there was no sign of life in or about them. Aladdin passed them and turned into an

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alley of great trees. By looking skyward he could keep to the road they bounded. As he drew near the mansion itself a great smell of box and roses filled his nostrils with fragrance. But to him, standing under the pillared portico and knocking upon the door, came no word of welcome and no stir of lights. He gave it up in disgust, mounted, and rode back through the rich mud to the stables. Had he looked over his shoulder he might have seen a face at one of the windows of the house.

He found a door of one of the stables unlocked, and went in, leading his horse. Within there was a smell of hay. He closed the door behind him, unsaddled, and fell to groping about in the dark. He wanted several armfuls of that hay, and he couldn't find them. The hay kept calling to his nose, "Here I am, here I am"; but when he got there, it was hiding somewhere else. It was like a game of blindman's-buff. Then he heard the munching of his horse and knew that the sought was found. He moved toward the horse, stepped on a rotten planking, and fell through the floor. Something caught his chin violently as he went through, and in a pool of filthy water, one leg doubled and broken under him, he passed the night as tranquilly as if he had been dosed with laudanum.

XXV

Aladdin came to consciousness in the early morning. He was about as sick as a man can be this side of actual dissolution, and the pain in his broken leg was as sharp as a scream. He lay groaning and doubled in the filthy half-inch of water into which he had fallen. About him was darkness, but overhead a glimmer of light showed a jagged and cruel hole in the planking of the stable floor. Very slowly, for his agony was unspeakable, he came to a realization of what had happened. He called for help, and his voice was thick and unresonant, like the voice of a drunken man. His horse heard him and neighed. Now and again he lapsed into semi-unconsciousness, and time passed without track. Hours passed, when suddenly the glimmer above him brightened, and he heard light footsteps and the cackling of hens. He called for help. Instantly there was silence. It continued a long time. Then he heard a voice like soft music, and the voice said, "Who's there?"

A shadow came between him and the light, and a fair face that was darkened looked down upon him.

"For God's sake take care," he said. "Those boards are rotten."

"You 're a Yankee, aren't you?" said the voice, sweetly.

"Yes," said Aladdin, "and I'm badly hurt."

The voice laughed.

“Hurt, are you?” it said.

“I think I’ve broken my leg,” said Aladdin. “Can you get some one to help me out of this?”

“Reckon you’re all right down there,” said the voice.

Aladdin revolved the brutality of it in his mind.

“Do you mean to say that you’re not going to help me?” he said.

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“Help you? Why should I?”

Aladdin groaned, and could have killed himself for groaning.

“If you don’t help me,” he said, and his voice broke, for he was suffering tortures, “I’ll die before long.”

A perfectly cool and cruel “Well?” came back to him.

“You won’t help me?”

“No.”

Anger surged in his heart, but he spoke with measured sarcasm.

“Then,” he said, “will you at least do me the favor of getting from between me and God’s light? If I die, I may go to hell, but I prefer not to see devils this side of it, thank you.”

The girl went away, but presently came back. She lowered something to him on a string. “I got it out of one of your holsters,” she said.

Aladdin’s fingers closed on the butt of a revolver.

“It may save you a certain amount of hunger and pain,” she said. “When you are dead, we will give it to one of our men, and your horse too. He’s a beauty.”

“I hope to God he may—” began Aladdin.

“Pretty!” said the girl.

She went away, and he heard her clucking to the chickens. After a time she came back. Aladdin was waiting with a plan.

“Don’t move,” he said, “or you’ll be shot.”

“Rubbish!” said the girl. She leaned casually back from the hole, and he could hear her moving away and clucking to the chickens. Again she returned.

“Thank you for not shooting,” she said.

There was no answer.

“Are you dead?” she said.

When he came to, there was a bright light in Aladdin’s eyes, for a lantern swung just to the left of his head.

“I thought you were dead,” said the girl, still from her point of advantage. The lantern’s light was in her face, too, and Aladdin saw that it was beautiful.

“Won’t you help me?” he said plaintively.

“Were you ever told that you had nice eyes?” said the girl.

Aladdin groaned.

“It bores you to be told that?”

“My dear young lady,” said Aladdin, “if you were as kind as you are beautiful—”

“How about your horse kicking me to a certain place? That was what you started to say, you know.”

“Lady—lady,” said Aladdin, “if you only knew how I’m suffering, and I’m just an ordinary young man with a sweetheart at home, and I don’t want to die in this hole. And now that I look at you,” he said, “I see that you’re not so much a girl as an armful of roses.”

“Are you by any chance—Irish?” said the girl, with a laugh.

“Faith and of ahm that,” said Aladdin, lapsing into full brogue; “oi’m a hireling sojer, mahm, and no inimy av yours, mahm.”

“What will you do for me if I help you?” said the girl.

“Anything,” said Aladdin.

“Will you say ’God save Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America,’ and sing ’Dixie’—that is, if you can keep a tune. ’Dixie’’s rather hard.”

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“I’ll ’God bless Jefferson Davis and every future President of the Confederate States, if there are any,’ ten million times, if you’ll help me out, and—”

“Will you promise not to fight any more?”

A long silence.

“No.”

“You needn’t do the other things either,” said the girl, presently. Her voice, oddly enough, was husky.

“I thought it would be good to see a Yankee suffer,” she said after a while, “but it isn’t.”

“If you could let a ladder down,” said Aladdin, “I might be able to get up it.”

“I’ll get one,” said the girl. Then she appeared to reflect. “No,” she said; “we must wait till dark. There are people about, and they’d kill you. Can you live in that hole till dark?”

“If you could throw down a lot of hay,” said Aladdin. “It’s very wet down here and hard.”

The girl went, and came with a bundle of hay.

“Look out for the lantern,” she called, and threw the hay down to him. She brought, in all, seven large bundles and was starting for the eighth, when, by a special act of Providence, the flooring gave again, and she made an excellent imitation of Aladdin’s shute on the previous evening. By good fortune, however, she landed on the soft hay and was not hurt beyond a few scratches.

“Did you notice,” she said, with a little gasp, “that I didn’t scream?”

“You aren’t hurt, are you?” said Aladdin.

“No,” she said; “but—do you realize that we can’t get out, now?”

She made a bed of the hay.

“You crawl over on that,” she said.

Aladdin bit his lips and groaned as he moved.

“It’s really broken, isn’t it?” said the girl. Aladdin lay back gasping.

“You poor boy,” she said.

XXVI

The girl borrowed Aladdin's pocket-knife and began whittling at a fragment of board. Then she tore several yards of ruffle from her white petticoat, cut his trouser leg off below the knee, cut the lacings of his boot, and bandaged his broken leg to the splint she had made. All that was against a series of most courteous protests, made in a tearful voice.

When she had done, Aladdin took her hand in his and kissed the fingers.

"They're the smallest sisters of mercy I ever saw," said he. She made no attempt to withdraw her hand.

"It was stupid of me to fall through," she said.

"Isn't there any possible way of getting out?"

"No; the walls are stone."

"O Lord!" said Aladdin.

"I'm glad I repented before I fell through," said the girl.

"So am I," said Aladdin.

"What were you doing in our stable?" said the girl.

"I got lost, and came in for shelter."

"You came to the house first. I heard you knocking, and saw you from the window. But I wouldn't let you in, because my father and brother were away, and besides, I knew you were a Yankee."

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“It was too dark to see my uniform.”

“I could tell by the way you rode.”

“Is it as bad as that?”

“No—but it’s different.”

The girl laid her hand on Aladdin’s forehead.

“You’ve got fever,” she said.

“It doesn’t matter,” said Aladdin, politely.

“Does your leg hurt awfully?”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“Did any one ever tell you that you were very civil for a Yankee?”

“It doesn’t matter,” said Aladdin.

She looked at him shrewdly, and saw that the light of reason had gone out of his eyes. She wetted her handkerchief with the cold, filthy water spread over the cellar floor and laid it on his forehead. Aladdin spoke ramblingly or kept silence. Every now and then the girl freshened the handkerchief, and presently Aladdin fell into a troubled sleep.

When he awoke his mind was quite clear. The lantern still burned, but faintly, for the air in the cellar was becoming heavy. Beside him on the straw the girl lay sleeping. And overhead footsteps sounded on the stable floor. He remembered what the girl had said about the people who would kill him if they found him, and blew out the lantern. Then, his hand over her mouth, he waked the girl.

“Don’t make a noise,” he said. “Listen.”

The girl sat up on the straw.

“I’ll call,” she whispered presently, “and pretend you’re not here.”

“But the horse?”

“I’ll lie about him.”

She raised her voice.

“Who’s there?” she called.

“It’s I—Calvert. Where are you?”

“Listen,” she answered; “I’ve fallen through the floor into the cellar. Don’t you see where it’s broken?”

The footsteps approached.

“You’re not hurt, are you?”

“No; but don’t come too close, don’t try to look down; the floor’s frightfully rickety. Isn’t there a ladder there somewhere?”

A man laughed.

“Wait,” he said. They heard his footsteps and laughter receding. Presently the bottom of a ladder appeared through the hole in the floor.

“Look out for your head,” said the man.

The girl rose and guided the ladder clear of Aladdin’s head.

“What have you done with the Yankee’s horse?” she called.

“He’s here.”

“Where’s the Yankee, do you suppose?”

“We think he must have run off into the woods.”

“That’s what I thought.”

The girl began to mount the ladder.

“I’m coming up,” she said.

She disappeared, and the ladder was withdrawn.

She came back after a long time, and there were men with her.

“It’s all right, Yankee,” she called down the hole. “They’re your own men, and I’m the prisoner now.”

The ladder reappeared, and two friendly men in blue came down into the cellar.

“Good God!” they said. “It’s Aladdin O’Brien!”

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Hannibal St. John and Beau Larch lifted Aladdin tenderly and took him out of his prison.

Outside, tents were being pitched in the dark, and there was a sound of axes. Fires glowed here and there through the woods and over the fields, and troops kept pouring into the plantation. They laid Aladdin on a heap of hay and went to bring a stretcher. The girl sat down beside him.

“You’ll be all right now,” she said.

“Yes,” said Aladdin.

“And go home to your sweetheart.”

“Yes,” said Aladdin, and he thought of the tall violets on the banks of the Maine brooks, and the freshness of the sea.

“What is her name?” said the girl.

“Margaret,” said Aladdin.

“Mine’s Ellen,” said the girl, and it seemed as if she sighed.

Aladdin took her hand.

“You ’ve been very good to me,” he said, and his voice grew tender, for she was very beautiful, “and I’ll never forget you,” he said.

“Oh, me!” said the girl, and there was a silence between them.

“I tried to help you,” said the girl, faintly, “but I wasn’t very good at it.”

“You were an angel,” said Aladdin.

“I don’t suppose we’ll ever see each other again, will we?” said the girl.

“I don’t know,” said Aladdin. “Perhaps I’ll come back some day.”

“It’s very silly of me—“said the girl.

“What?” said Aladdin.

“Nothing.”

He closed his eyes, for he was very weak. It seemed as if a great sweetness came close to his face, and he could have sworn that something wet and hot fell lightly on his

forehead; but when he opened his eyes, the girl was sitting aloof, her face in the shadow.

“I dreamed just then,” said Aladdin, “that something wonderful happened to me. Did it?”

“What would you consider wonderful?”

Aladdin laid a finger on his forehead; he drew it away and saw that the tip was wet.

“I couldn’t very well say,” he said.

The girl bent over him.

“It nearly happened,” she said.

“You are very wonderful and beautiful,” said Aladdin.

Her eyes were like stars, and she leaned closer.

“Are you going to go on fighting against my people?” she said.

Roses lay for a moment on his lips.

“Are you?”

He made no sign. If she had kissed him again he would have renounced his birthright and his love.

“God bless and keep you, Yankee,” she said.

Tears rushed out of Aladdin’s eyes.

“They’re coming to take you away,” she said. “Good-by.”

“Kiss me again,” said Aladdin, hoarsely.

She looked at him quietly for some moments.

“And your sweetheart?” she said.

Aladdin covered his face with his arm.

“Poor little traitor,” said the girl, sadly. She rose and, without looking back, moved slowly up the road toward the house.

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Nor did Aladdin ever see her again, but in after years the smell of box or roses would bring into his mind the wonderful face of her, and the music of her voice.

In the delirium which was upon him all that night, he harped to the surgeon of Ellen, and in the morning fell asleep.

“Haec olim meminisse juvabit,” said the surgeon, as rain-clouded dawn rose whitely in the east.

XXVII

Aladdin was jolted miserably down the Peninsula in a white ambulance, which mules dragged through knee-deep mud and over flowing, corduroy roads. He had fever in his whole body, anguish in one leg, and hardly a wish to live. But at Fort Monroe the breezes came hurrying from the sea, like so many unfailing doctors, and blew his fever back inland where it belonged. He lay under a live-oak on the parade ground and once more received the joy of life into his heart. When he was well enough to limp about, they gave him leave to go home; and he went down into a ship, and sailed away up the laughing Chesapeake, and up the broad Potomac to Washington. There he rested during one night, and in the morning took train for New York. The train was full of sick and wounded going home, and there was a great cheerfulness upon them all. Men joined by the brotherhood of common experience talked loudly, smoked hard, and drank deep. There was tremendous boasting and the accounting of unrivaled adventures. In Aladdin’s car, however, there was one man who did not join in the fellowship, for he was too sick. He had been a big man and strong, but he looked like a ghost made of white gossamer and violet shadows. His own mother would not have recognized him. He lay back into the corner of a seat with averted face and closed eyes. The more decent-minded endeavored, on his account, to impose upon the noisy a degree of quiet, but their efforts were unavailing. Aladdin, drumming with his nails upon the windowpane, fell presently into soft song:

Give me three breaths of pleasure
After three deaths of pain,
And make me not remeasure
The ways that were in vain.

Men grew silent and gathered to hear, for Aladdin’s fame as a maker of songs had spread over the whole army, and he was called the Minstrel Major. He felt his audience and sang louder. The very sick man turned a little so that he, too, could hear. Only the occasional striking of a match or the surreptitious drawing of a cork interrupted. The stately tune moved on:

The first breath shall be laughter,
The second shall be wine;
And there shall follow after
A kiss that shall be mine.

Somehow all the homing hearts were set to beating.

Roses with dewfall laden
One garden grows for me;
I call them kisses, maiden,
And gather them from thee.

The very sick man turned fully, and there was a glad light of recognition in his eyes.

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Give me three kisses only—
Then let the storm break o'er
The vessel beached and lonely
Upon the lonely shore.

If Aladdin's singing ever moved anybody particularly, it was Aladdin, and that was why it moved other people. He sang on with tears in his voice

Give me three breaths of pleasure
After three deaths of pain,
And I will no more treasure
The hopes that are in vain.

There was silence for a moment, more engaging than applause, and then applause. Aladdin was in his element, and he wondered what he would best sing next if they should ask him to sing again, and this they immediately did. The train was jolting along between Baltimore and Philadelphia. There was much beer in the bellies of the sick and wounded, and much sentiment in their hearts. Aladdin's finger was always on the pulse of his audience, and he began with relish:

Oh, shut and dark her window is
In the dark house on the hill,
But I have come up through the lilac walk
To the lilt of the whippoorwill,
With the old years tugging at my hands
And my heart which is her heart still.

There was another man in the car whose whole life centered about a house on a hill with a lilac walk leading up to it. He was the very sick man, and a shadow of red color came into his cheeks.

They said, "You must come to the house once more,
Ere the tale of your years be done,
You must stand and look up at her window again,
Ere the sands of your life are run,
As the night-time follows the lost daytime,
And the heart goes down with the sun."

There were tears in the very sick man's eyes, for the future was hidden from him. Aladdin sang on:

Though her window be darkest of every one,
In the dark house on the hill,
Yet I turn to it here from this ruin of grass,

She has leaned on that window's sill,
And dark it is, but there is, there is
An echo of light there still!

There was great applause from the drunk and sentimental. And Aladdin lowered his eyes until it was over. When he raised them it was to encounter those of the very sick man. Aladdin sprang to his feet with a cry and went limping down the aisle.

"Peter," he cried, "by all that's holy!"

All the tenderness of the Celt gushed into Aladdin's heart as he realized the pitiful condition and shocking emaciation of his friend. He put his arm gently about him, and thus they sat until the journey's end. In New York they separated.

Aladdin rested that night and boarded an early morning train for Boston. He settled himself contentedly behind a newspaper, and fell to gathering news of the army. But it was difficult to read. A sentence beginning like this: "Rumors of a savage engagement between the light horse under" would shape itself like this: "I am going to see Margaret to-morrow—to-morrow—to-morrow—I am going to see Margaret to-morrow-tomorrow—and God is good—is good—is good."

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Oddly enough, there was another man in the car who was having precisely the same difficulty in deciphering his newspaper. At about the same time they both gave up the attempt; and their eyes met. And they laughed aloud. And presently, seated together, they fell into good talk, but each refrained pointedly from asking the other where he was going.

With a splendid assumption of innocence, they drove together across Boston, and remarking nothing on the coincidence, each distinctly heard the other checking his luggage for Portland, Maine.

Side by side they rolled out of Portland and saw familiar trees and hills go by. Presently Aladdin chuckled:

“Where are you going, Peter, anyway?” he said.

“Just where you are,” said Peter.

XXVIII

Peter,” said Aladdin, presently, “it seems to me that for two such old friends we are lacking in confidence. I know precisely what you are thinking about, and you know precisely what I am. We mustn’t play the jealous rivals to the last; and to put it plainly, Peter, if God is going to be good to you instead of me, why, I’m going to try and thank God just the same. A personal disappointment is a purely private matter and has no license to upset old ties and affections. Does it occur to you that we are after the same thing and that one of us isn’t going to get it?”

“We won’t let it make any difference,” said Peter, stoutly.

“That’s just it,” said Aladdin. “We mustn’t.”

“The situation—“Peter began.

“Is none the less difficult, I know. Here we are with a certain amount of leave to occupy as we each see fit. And, unfortunately, there’s only one thing which seems fit to either of us. And, equally unfortunately, it’s something we can’t hold hands and do at the same time. Shall I go straight from the station to Mrs. Brackett’s and wait until you’ve had your say, Peter?—not that I want to wait very long,” he added.

“That wouldn’t be at all fair,” said Peter.

“Do you mind,” said Aladdin after a pause, “telling me about what your chances are?”

Peter reddened uncomfortably.

“I’m afraid they’re not very good, ’Laddin,” he said. “She —she said she wasn’t sure. And that’s a good deal more apt to mean nothing than everything, but I can’t straighten my life out till I’m sure.”

“My chances,” said Aladdin, critically, “shouldn’t by rights be anywhere near as good as yours, but as long as they remain chances I feel just the same as you do about yours, and want to get things straightened out. But if I were any kind of a man, I’d drop it, because I’m not in her class.”

“Nonsense,” said Peter.

“No, I’m not,” said Aladdin, gloomily. “I know that. But, Peter, what is a man going to do, a single, solitary, pretty much good-for-nothing man, with three great bouncing Fates lined up against him?”

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Peter laughed his big, frank laugh.

“Shall we chuck the whole thing,” said Aladdin, “until it’s time to go back to the army?”

“No,” said Peter, “that would be shirking; it’s got to be settled one way or another very quickly.” He became grave again.

“I think so, too, Peter,” said Aladdin. “And I think that if she takes one of us it will be a great sorrow for the other.”

“And for her,” said Peter, quietly.

“Perhaps,” said Aladdin, whimsically, “she won’t take either of us.”

“That,” said Peter, “should be a great sorrow for us both.”

“I know,” said Aladdin. “Anyway, there’s got to be sorrow.”

“I think I shall bear it better,” said Peter, “if she takes you, ’Laddin.”

A flash of comparison between his somewhat morbid and warped self and the bigness and nobility of his friend passed through Aladdin’s mind. He glanced covertly at the strong, emaciated face beside him, and noted the steadiness and purity of the eyes. A little quixotic flame, springing like an orchid from nothing, blazed suddenly in his heart, and for the instant he was the better man of the two.

“I hope she takes you, Peter,” he said.

They rolled on through the midsummer woods, heavy with bright leaves and waist-deep with bracken; little brooks, clean as whistles, piped away among immaculate stones, and limpid light broken by delicious shadows fell over all.

“Who shall ask her first?” said Aladdin. Peter smiled. “Shall we toss for it?” said Aladdin. Peter laughed gaily. “Do you really want it to be like that?” he said.

“What’s the use of our being friends,” said Aladdin, “if we are not going to back each other up in this of all things?”

“Right!” said Peter. “But you ought to have the first show because you mentioned it first.”

“Rubbish!” said Aladdin. “We’ll toss, but not now; we’ll wait till we get there.”

Peter looked at his watch.

“Nearly in,” he said.

“Yes,” said Aladdin. “I know by the woods.”

“Did you telegraph, by any chance?” said Peter. “Because I didn’t.”

“Nor I,” said Aladdin; “I didn’t want to be met.”

“Nor I,” said Peter.

The sick man and the lame man will take hands and hobble up the hill,” said Aladdin. “And whatever happens, they mustn’t let anything make any difference.”

“No,” said Peter, “they mustn’t.”

XXIX

Our veterans walked painfully through the town and up the hill; nor were they suffered to go in peace, for right and left they were recognized, and people rushed up to shake them by the hands and ask news of such an one, and if Peter’s bullet was still in him, and if it was true, which of course they saw it wasn’t, that Aladdin had a wooden leg. Aladdin, it must be owned, enjoyed these demonstrations, and in spite of his lameness strutted a little. But Peter, white from the after effects of his wound and weary with the long travel, did not enjoy them at all. Then the steep pitch of the hill was almost too much for him, and now and again he was obliged to stop and rest.

Page 72

The St. Johns' house stood among lilacs and back from the street by the breadth of a small garden. In the rear were large grounds, fields, and even woods. The place had two entrances, one immediately in front of the house for people on foot, and the other, a quarter of a mile distant, for people driving. This latter, opening from a joyous country lane of blackberry-vines and goldenrod, passed between two prodigious round stones, and S-ed into a dark and stately wood. Trees, standing gladly where God had set them, made a screen, impenetrable to the eye, between the gateway and the house.

Here Peter and Aladdin halted, while Aladdin sent a coin spinning into the air.

"Heads!" called Peter.

Aladdin let the piece fall to the ground, and they bent over it eagerly.

"After you," said Peter, for the coin read, "Tails."

Aladdin picked up the coin, and hurled it far away among the trees.

"That's our joint sacrifice to the gods, Peter," he said.

Peter gave him five cents.

"My share," he said.

"Peter," said Aladdin, "I will ask her the first chance I get, and if there's nothing in it for me, I will go away and leave the road clear for you. Come."

"No," said Peter; "you've got your chance now. And here I wait until you send me news."

"Lord!" said Aladdin, "has it got to be as sudden as this?"

"Let's get it over," said Peter.

"Very good," said Aladdin. "I'll go. But, Peter, whatever happens, I won't keep you long in suspense."

"Good man," said Peter.

Aladdin turned his face to the house like a man measuring a distance. He drew a deep breath.

"Well—here goes," he said, and took two steps.

"Wait, 'Laddin," said Peter.

Aladdin turned.

“Can I have your pipe?”

“Of course.”

Aladdin turned over his pipe and pouch. “I’m afraid it’s a little bitter,” he said.

Again he started up the drive; but Peter ran after him.

“’Laddin,” he cried, “wait—I forgot something.”

Aladdin came back to meet him.

“Aladdin,” said Peter, “I forgot something.” He held out his hand, and Aladdin squeezed it.

“Aladdin,” said Peter, “from the bottom of my heart I wish you luck.”

When they separated again there were tears in the eyes of both.

Just before the curtain of trees quite closed the view of the gate, Aladdin turned to look at Peter. Peter sat upon one of the big stones that marked the entrance, smoking and smoking. He had thrown aside his hat, and his hair shone in the sun. There was a kind of wistfulness in his poise, and his calm, pure eyes were lifted toward the open sky. A great hero-worship surged in Aladdin’s heart, and he thought that there was nothing that he would not do for such a friend. “He gave you your life once,” said a little voice in Aladdin’s heart; “give him his. He is worth a million of you; don’t stand in his way.”

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Aladdin turned and went on, and the well-known house came into view, but he saw only the splendid, wistful man at the gate, waiting calmly, as a gentleman should, for life or death, and smoking smoking.

Even as he made his resolve, a lump of self-pity rose in Aladdin's throat. That was the old Adam in him, the base clay out of which springs the fair flower of self-sacrifice.

He tried a variety of smiles, for he wished to be easy in the difficult part which he had so suddenly, and in the face of all the old years, elected to play. "He must know by the look of me," said Aladdin, "that I do not love her any more, for, God help me, I can't say it."

He found her on the broad rear veranda of the house. And instead of going up to her and taking her in his arms,—for he had planned this meeting often, as the stars could tell, he stood rooted, and said:

"Hallo, Margaret!"

He acted better than he knew, for the great light which had blazed for one instant in her eyes on first seeing him went out like a snuffed candle, and he did not see it or know that it had blazed. Therefore his own cruelty was hidden from him, and his part became easier to play. They shook hands, and even then, if he had not been blinded with the egotism of self-sacrifice, he might have seen. That was his last chance. For Margaret's heart cried to her, "It is over," and in believing it, suddenly, and as she thought forever, an older sweetness came in her face.

"You've changed, Aladdin," she said.

"Yes, I'm thinner, if possible," said Aladdin, "almost willowy. Do you think it's becoming?"

"I am not sure," said Margaret. "The fact remains that I'm more than glad to see you."

Aladdin fumbled for speech.

"I'm still a little lame, you see," he said apologetically, and took several steps to show.

"Very!" said Margaret, in such a voice that Aladdin wondered what she meant.

"But it doesn't hurt any more."

"Then that's all right."

"Where's Jack?" he asked at length.

Margaret became very grave.

“I’m afraid we’ve betrayed our trust, Aladdin,” she said. “Because only yesterday he slipped away and left a little note to say that he was going to enlist. We’re very much distressed about it.”

“Perhaps it’s better so,” said Aladdin, “if he really wanted to go. Did he leave any address?”

“None whatever; he simply vanished.”

“Ungrateful little brute!” said Aladdin. Then he bethought him of Peter. “I’ll come back later, Margaret,” he said, “but it behooves me to go and look up the good Mrs. Brackett.”

He hardly knew how he got out of the house. He felt like a criminal who has been let off by the judge.

The sun was now low, and the shadows long and black. Aladdin found Peter where he had left him, balancing on the great stone at the entrance, and sending up clouds of smoke. He rose when he saw Aladdin, and he looked paler and more worn. “Peter,” said Aladdin, “from the bottom of my heart I wish you luck.”

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Aladdin had never seen just such a look as came into Peter's eyes; at once they were full of infinite pity, and at peace with the whole world.

"Peter," said Aladdin, "give me back my pipe." His voice broke in spite of himself, for he had given up golden things. "I—" he said, "I'll wait here a little while, but if—if all goes well, Peter, don't you bother to come back."

They clasped hands long and in silence. Then Peter turned with a gulp, and, his weakness a thing of the past, went striding up the driveway. But Aladdin sat down to wait. And now a great piping of tree-frogs arose in all that country. Aladdin waited for a long time. He waited until the day gave way to twilight and the sun went down. He waited until the twilight turned to dark and the stars came out. He waited until, after all the years of waiting and longing, his heart was finally at peace. And then he rose to go.

For Peter had not yet come.

Book III

"Where are the tall men that marched on the right,
That marched to the battle so handsome and tall?
They 've been left to mark the places where they saw the foemen's faces,
For the fever and the lead took them all, Jenny Orde,
The fever and the lead took them all.

"I found him in the forefront of the battle, Kenny Orde,
With the bullets spitting up the ground around him,
And the sweat was on his brow, and his lips were on his sword,
And his life was going from him when I found him.

"We lowered him to rest, Jenny Orde,
With your picture on his breast, Jenny Orde,
And the rumble of pursuit was the regiment's salute
To the man that loved you best, Jenny Orde."

XXX

As a dam breaking gives free passage to the imprisoned waters, and they rush out victoriously, so Vicksburg, starving and crumbling in the West, was about to open her gates and set the Father of Waters free forever. That was where the Union hammer, grasped so firmly by strong fingers that their knuckles turned white, was striking the heaviest blows upon the cracking skull of the Confederacy. On the other hand, Chancellorsville had verged upon disaster, and the powers of Europe were waiting for one more Confederate victory in order to declare the blockade of Southern ports at an

end, and to float a Southern loan. That a Confederate victory was to be feared, the presence in Northern territory of Lee, grasping the handle of a sword, whose splendid blade was seventy thousand men concentrated, testified. That Lee had lost the best finger of his right hand at Chancellorsville was but job's comfort to the threatened government at Washington. That government was still, after years of stern fighting, trying generals and finding them wanting. But now the Fates, in secret conclave, weighed the lots of Union and Disunion; and that of Disunion, though glittering and brilliant like gold, sank heavily to the ground, as a great eagle whose wing is broken by the hunter's bullet comes surely if fiercely down, to be put to death.

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Early on the morning of July 1, 1863, Lee found himself in the neighborhood of a small and obscure town named Gettysburg. A military invasion is the process of occupying in succession a series of towns. To occupy Gettysburg, which seemed as possible as eating breakfast, Lee sent forward a division of a corps, and followed leisurely with all his forces. But Gettysburg and the ridges to the west of Gettysburg were already occupied by two brigades of cavalry, and those, with a cockiness begotten of big lumps of armed friends approaching from the rear, determined to go on occupying. This, in a spirit of great courage, with slowly increasing forces, against rapidly increasing forces, they did, until the brisk and pliant skirmish which opened the business of the day had grown so in weight and ferocity that it was evident to the least astute that the decisive battle of the New World was being fought.

XXXI

There was a pretty girl in Manchester, Maryland (possibly several, but one was particularly pretty), and Aladdin, together with several young officers (nearly all officers were young in that war) of the Sixth Army Corps, rather flattered himself that he was making an impression. He was all for making impressions in those days. Margaret was engaged to marry Peter—and a pretty girl was a pretty girl. The pretty girl of Manchester had several girls and several officers to tea on a certain evening, and they remained till midnight, making a great deal of noise and flirting outrageously in dark corners. Two of the girls got themselves kissed, and two of the officers got their ears boxed, and later a glove each to stick in their hat-bands. At midnight the party broke up with regret, and the young officers, seeking their quarters, turned in, and were presently sleeping the sleep of the constant in heart. But Aladdin did not dream about the pretty girl of Manchester, Maryland. When he could not help himself—under the disadvantage of sleep, when suddenly awakened, or when left alone—his mind harped upon Margaret. And often the chords of the harping were sad chords. But on this particular night he dreamed well. He dreamed that her little feet did wrong and fled for safety unto him. What the wrong was he knew in his dream, but never afterward—only that it was a dreadful, unforgivable wrong, not to be condoned, even by a lover. But in his dream Aladdin was more than her lover, and could condone anything. So he hid her feet in his hands until those who came to arrest them had passed, and then he waked to find that his hands were empty, and the delicious dream over. He waked also to find that it was still dark, and that the Sixth Army Corps was to march to a place called Taneytown, where General Meade had headquarters. He made ready and presently was riding by his general at the head of a creaking column, under the starry sky. In the great hush and cool that is before a July dawn, God showed himself to the men, and they sang the “Battle-hymn of the Republic,” but it sounded sweetly and yearningly, as if sung by thousands of lovers:

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Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword
His truth is marching on.

The full sunlight gives man poise and shows him the practical side of things, but in the early morning and late at night man is seldom quite rational. He weakly allows himself to dwell upon what was not, is not, and will not be. And so Aladdin, during the first period of that march, pretended that Margaret was to be his and that all was well.

A short distance out of Manchester the column met with orders from General Meade and was turned westward toward Gettysburg. With the orders came details of the first day's fight, and Aladdin learned of the officer bringing them, for he was a Maine man, that Hamilton St. John was among the dead. Aladdin and the officer talked long of the poor boy, for both had known him well. They said that he had not been as brilliant as John, nor as winning as Hannibal, but so honest and reliable, so friendly and unselfish. They went over his good qualities again and again, and spoke of his great strength and purity, and of other things which men hold best in men.

And now they were riding with the sun in their eyes, and white dust rolled up from the swift feet of horses and men. Wild roses and new-mown grass filled the air with delightful fragrance, and such fields as were uncut blazed with daisies and buttercups. Over the trimmed lawns about homesteads yellow dandelions shone like stars in a green sky. Men, women, and children left their occupations, and stood with open mouths and wide eyes to see the soldiers pass. The sun rose higher and the day became most hot, but steadily, unflinchingly as the ticking of a clock, the swift, bleeding, valiant feet of the Sixth Army Corps stepped off the miles. And the men stretched their ears to hear the mumbled distant thunder of artillery—that voice of battle which says so much and tells so little to those far off. The Sixth Corps felt that it was expected to decide a battle upon Northern soil for the North, and marching in that buoyant hope, left scarcely a man, broken with fatigue and disappointment, among the wild flowers by the side of the way.

If you have ever ridden from Cairo to the Pyramids you will remember that at five miles' distance they look as huge as at a hundred yards, and that it is not until you actually touch them with your hand that you even begin to realize how wonderfully huge they really are. It was so with the thunders of Gettysburg. They sounded no louder, and they connoted no more to the column now in the immediate vicinage of the battle, than they had to its far-distant ears. But presently the column halted behind a circle of hills, and beheld white smoke pouring heavenward as if a fissure had opened in the earth and was giving forth steam. And they beheld in the heavens themselves tiny, fleecy white clouds and motionless rings, and they knew that shells were bursting and men falling upon the slopes beyond the hills.

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A frenzy of eagerness seized upon the tired feet, and they pressed upward, lightly, like dancers' feet. Straps creaked upon straining breasts, and sweat ran in bubbles. Then the head of the column reached the ridge of a hill, and its leaders saw through smarting eyes a great horseshoe of sudden death.

XXXII

That morning Peter Manners had received a letter, but he had not had a chance to open and read it. It was a letter that belonged next to his heart, as he judged by the writing, and next to his heart, in a secure pocket, he placed it, there to lie and give him strength and courage for the cruel day's work, and something besides the coming of night to look forward to. For the rest, he went among the lines, and smiled like a boy released from school to see how silently and savagely they fought.

The Sixth Corps rested wherever there was shade along the banks of Rock Creek, and gathered strength and breath for whatever work should be assigned to it.

Aladdin, sharing a cherry-pie with a friend, shivered with excitement, for there was a terrific and ever-increasing discharge of cannons and muskets on the left, and it seemed that the time to go forward again and win glory was at hand. Presently one came riding back from the battle. His face was shining with delight, and, sitting like a centaur to the fiery plunges of his horse, he swung his hat and shouted. It was Sedgwick's chief of staff, McMahon, and he brought glorious news, for he said that the corps was to move toward the heavy firing, where the fighting was most severe.

Then the whole corps sprang to its feet and went forward, tearing down the fences in its path and trampling the long grass in the fields. A mile away the long, flowery slopes ended in a knobbed hill revealed through smoke. That was Little Round Top, and its possession meant victory or defeat. The corps was halted and two regiments were sent forward up the long slope. To them the minutes seemed moments. They went like a wave over the crest to the right of the hill, and poured down into the valley beyond. Here the blue flood of men banked against a stone wall, spreading to right and left, as the waters of a stream spread the length of a dam. Then they began to fire dreadfully into the faces of their enemy, and to curse terribly, as is proper in battle. Bullets stung the long line like wasps, and men bit the sod.

Aladdin was ordered to ride up Little Round Top for information. Half-way up he left his horse among the boulders and finished the laborious ascent on foot. At the summit he came upon a leaderless battery loading and firing like clockwork, and he saw that the rocks were strewn with dead men in light-blue Zouave uniforms, who looked as if they had fallen in a shower from the clouds. Many had their faces caved in with stones, and terrible rents showed where the bayonet had been at work, for in this battle men

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had fought hand to hand like cave-dwellers. Bullets hit the rocks with. stinging blows, and round shot screamed in the air. Sometimes a dead man would be lifted from where he lay and hurled backward, while every instant men cried hoarsely and joined the dead. In the midst of this thunder and carnage, Aladdin came suddenly upon Peter, smiling like a favorite at a dance, and shouted to him. They grinned at each other, and as Aladdin grinned he looked about to see where he could be of use, and sprang toward a gun half of whose crew had been blasted to death by a bursting shell. The sweat ran down his face, and already it was black with burning powder. The flash of the guns set fire to the clothing of the dead and wounded who lay in front, and on the recoil the iron-shod wheels broke the bones of those lying behind. It was impossible to know how the fight was going. It was only possible to go on fighting.

There was a voice in front of the battery that kept calling so terribly for water that it turned cold the stomachs of those that heard. It came from a Confederate, a general officer, who had been wounded in the spine. Occasionally it was possible to see him through the smoke. Sometimes a convulsion seized him, and he beat the ground with his whole body, as a great fish that has been drawn from the water beats the deck of a vessel. It was terrible to look at and hear. Bullets and shot tore the ground about the man and showered him with dust and stones. Aladdin shook his canteen and heard the swish of water. It seemed to him, and his knees turned to water at the thought, that he must go out into that place swept by the fire of both sides, and give relief to his enemy. He did not want to go, and fear shook him; but he threw down the rammer which he had been serving, and drawing breath in long gasps, took a step forward. His resolve came too late. A blue figure slipped by him and went down the slope at a run. It was Manners. They saw him kneel by the dying Confederate in the bright sunlight, and then smoke swept between like a wave of fog. The red flashes of the guns went crashing into the smoke, and on all sides men fell. But presently there came a star-shaped explosion in the midst of the smoke, hurling it back, and they saw Manners again. He was staggering about with his hands over his eyes, and blood was running through his fingers. Even as they looked, a shot struck him in the back, and he came down. They saw his splendid square chest heaving, and knew that he was not yet dead. Then the smoke closed in, but this time another figure was hidden by the smoke. For no sooner did Aladdin see Peter fall than he sprang forward like a hound from the leash. Aladdin kneeled by Manners, and as he kneeled a bullet struck his hat from his head, and a round shot, smashing into the rocky ground a dozen feet away, filled his eyes with dirt and sparks. There was a pungent smell of brimstone from the furious concussions of iron

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against rock. A bullet struck the handle of Aladdin's sword and broke it. He unstopped his canteen and pressed the nozzle to Manners' lips. Manners sucked eagerly, like an infant at its mother's breast. A bullet struck the canteen and dashed it to pieces. The crashing of the cannon was like close thunder, and the air sang like the strings of an instrument. But Aladdin, so cool and collected he was, might have been the target for praises and roses flung by beauties. He put his lips close to Peter's ear, and spoke loudly, for the noise of battle was deafening.

"Is it much, darlint?"

Manners turned his bleeding eyes toward Aladdin.

"Go back, you damn little fool!" he said.

"Peter, Peter," said Aladdin, "can't you see?"

"No, I can't. I'm no use now. Go back; go back and give 'em hell!"

Aladdin endeavored to raise Peter in his arms, but was not strong enough.

"I can't lift you, I can't lift you," he said.

"You can't," said Peter. "Bless you for coming, and go back."

"Shut up, will you?" cried Aladdin, savagely. "Where are you hit?"

"In the back," said Peter, "and I'm done for."

"The hell you are!" said Aladdin. Tears hotter than blood were running out of his eyes. "What can I do for you, Peter?" he said in a husky voice.

Manners' blackened fingers fumbled at the buttons of his coat, but he had not the strength to undo them.

"It's there, 'Laddin," he said.

"What's there?" said Aladdin. He undid the coat with swift, clever fingers.

"Let me hold it in my hands," said Peter.

"Is it this—this letter—this letter from Margaret?" asked Aladdin, chokingly, for he saw that the letter had not been opened.

A shower of dirt and stones fell upon them, and a shell burst with a sharp crash above their heads.

“Yes,” said Peter. “Give it to me. I can’t ever read it now.”

“I can read it for you,” said Aladdin. He was struggling with a sob that wanted to tear his throat.

“Will you? Will you?” cried Peter, and he smiled like a beautiful child.

“Sure I will,” said Aladdin.

With the palm of his hand he pressed back the streaming sweat from his forehead twice and three times. Then, having wiped his hands upon his knees, he drew the battered fragment of his sword, and using it as a paper-knife, opened the letter carefully, as a man opens letters which are not to be destroyed. Then his stomach turned cold and his tongue grew thick and burred. For the letter which Margaret had written to her lover was more cruel than the shell which had blinded his eyes and the bullet which was taking his life.

“’Laddin—” this in a fearful voice.

“Yes.”

“Thank God. I thought you’d been hit. Why don’t you read?”

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Aladdin's eyes, used to reading in blocks of lines rather than a word at a time, had at one glance taken in the purport of Margaret's letter, and his wits had gone from him. She called herself every base and cruel name, and she prayed her lover to forgive her, but she had never had the right to tell him that she would marry him, for she had never loved him in that way. She said that, God forgive her, she could not keep up the false position any longer, and she wished she was dead.

"There's a man at the bottom of this," thought Aladdin. He caught a glimpse of Peter's poor, bloody face and choked.

"I—it—the sheets are mixed," he said presently. "I'm trying to find the beginning. There are eight pages," he went on, fighting for time," and they 're folded all wrong, and they're not numbered or anything."

Peter waited patiently while Aladdin fumbled with the sheets and tried, to the cracking-point, to master the confusion in his mind.

Suddenly God sent light, and he could have laughed aloud. Not in vain had he pursued the muse and sought after the true romance in the far country where she sweeps her skirts beyond the fingers of men. Not in vain had he rolled the arduous ink-pots and striven manfully for the right word and the telling phrase. The chance had come, and the years of preparation had not been thrown away. He knew that he was going to make good at last. His throat cleared of itself, and the choking phlegm disappeared as if before a hot flame of joy. His voice came from between his trembling lips clear as a bell, and the thunder of battle rolled back from the plain of his consciousness, as, slowly, tenderly, and helped by God, he began to speak those eight closely lined pages which she should have written.

"My Heart's Darling—" he began, and there followed a molten stream of golden and sacred words.

And the very soul of Manners shouted aloud, for the girl was speaking to him as she had never spoken before.

XXXIII

When the fighting was over for that day, Aladdin wrote as follows to Margaret:

Margaret dear: Peter was shot down to-day, while doing more than his duty by his enemies and by his country and by himself, which was always his way. He will not live very long, and you must come to him if it is in any way possible. His love for you makes other loves seem very little, and I think it would be better that you should walk the streets than that you should refuse to come to him now. He had a letter from you, which God, knowing about, blinded him so that he could not read it, and he believes that you

love him and are faithful to him. It is very merciful of God to let him believe that. He must not be undeceived now, and you must come and be lovely to him and pretend and pretend, and make his dying beautiful. I have the right to ask this of you, for, next to Peter,

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I was the one that loved you most. And when I made you think I didn't I lied. I lied because I felt that I was not worthy, and I loved you enough to want you to belong to the best man God ever made, and I loved him too. And that was why it was. I tell you because I think you must have wondered about it sometimes. But it was very hard to do, and because I did it, and because Peter is what he is, you must come to him now. If God will continue to be merciful, you will get here in time. I hope I may be on hand to see you, but I do not know. Hamilton is gone, and Peter is going, and there will be a terrible battle to-morrow, and thousands of poor lads will lie on this field forever. And here, one way or another, the war will be decided. I have not the heart to write to you any more, my darling. You will come to Peter, I know, and all will be as well as it can be. I pray to God that I too shall live to see you again, and I ask him to bless you and keep you for ever and ever. Always I see your dear face before me in the battle, and sometimes at night God lets me dream of you. I am without dogma, sweetest of all possible sweethearts, but this creed I say over and over, and this creed I believe: I believe in one God, Maker of heaven and Margaret.

Angels guard you, darling.

Aladdin.
Gettysburg, July 2, 1863.

XXXIV

On the morning of the third day of July, young Hannibal St. John shaved his face clean and put himself into a new uniform. The old nth Maine was no longer a regiment, but a name of sufficient glory. On three occasions it had been shot to pieces, and after the third the remaining tens were absorbed by other regiments. Hannibal's father had obtained for him a lieutenancy in the United States artillery, Beau Larch was second lieutenant in another Maine regiment, and John, the old and honored colonel of the nth, was now, like Aladdin, serving on a staff.

The battle began with a movement against Johnson on the Confederate left, and one against Longstreet on their right.

That against Longstreet became known in history as Farnsworth's charge, and Aladdin saw it from the signal-station on Little Round Top.

It was a series of blue lines, whose relations to one another could not be justly estimated, because of the wooded nature of the ground, which ran out into open places before fences and woods that spat red fire, and became thinner and of less extension,

as if they had been made of wax and were melting under the blaze of the July sun. In that charge Farnsworth fell and achieved glory.

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Aladdin held a field-glass to his eyes with trembling hands, and watched the cruel mowing of the blue flowers. Sometimes he recognized a man that he knew, and saw him die for his country. Three times he saw John St. John in the forefront of the battle. The first time he was riding a glorious black horse, of spirit and proportions to correspond with those of the hero himself. The second time he was on foot, running forward with a-halt in his stride, hatless, and carrying a great battle-flag. Upon the top of it gleamed a gold eagle, that nodded toward the enemy. A dozen blue-coated soldiers, straggling like the finishers in a long-distance race, followed him with bayonets fixed. The little loose knot of men ran across a field toward a stone wall that bounded it upon the other side. Then white smoke burst from the wall, and they were cut down to the last man. The smoke cleared, and Aladdin saw John lying above the great flag which he had carried. A figure in gray leaped the stone wall and ran out to him, stooped, and seizing the staff of the flag in both hands, braced his hands and endeavored to draw it from beneath the great body of the hero. But it would not come, and as he bent closer to obtain a better hold, the back of a great clenched hand struck him across the jaw, and he fell like a log. Other men in gray leaped the wall and ran out. The flag came easily now, for St. John was dead; but so was the gray brother, for his comrades raised him, and his head hung back over his left shoulder, and they saw that his neck had been broken like a dry stick.

Aladdin had not been sent to that place to mourn, but to gain information. Twice and three times he wiped his eyes clear of tears, and then he swept his faltering glass along the lines of the enemy, until, ranged in their center, he beheld a great semicircle of a hundred and more iron and brass cannons, and movements of troops. Then Aladdin scrambled down from Little Round Top to report what he had seen in the center of the Confederate lines.

At one o’clock the Confederate batteries, one hundred and fifteen pieces in all, opened their tremendous fire upon the center of the Union lines. Eighty cannons roared back at them with defiant thunder, and the blue sky became hidden by smoke. Among the Union batteries horses began to run loose, cannons to be splintered like fire-wood, and caissons to explode. At these moments men, horses, fragments of men and horses, stones, earth, and things living and things dead were hurled high into the air with great blasts of flame and smoke, and it was possible to hear miles of exultant yells from the hills opposite. But fresh cannon were brought lumbering up at the gallop and rolled into the places of those dismantled, shot and shell and canister and powder were rushed forward from the reserve, and the grim, silent infantry, the great lumbermen of Maine and Vermont, the shrill-voiced regiments from New York, the shrewd farmers of Ohio and Massachusetts, the deliberate Pennsylvanians, and the rest, lay closely, wherever there was shelter, and moistened their lips, and gripped their rifles, and waited—waited.

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For two hours that terrible cannonading was maintained. The men who served the guns looked like stokers of ships, for, such was the heat, many of them, casting away first one piece of clothing and then another, were half naked, and black sweat glistened in streams on their chests and backs. As sight-seers crowd in eagerly by one door of a building where there is an exhibition, and come reluctantly out by another and go their ways, so the reserves kept pressing to the front, and the wounded maintained an unceasing reluctant stream to the rear.

A little before three o'clock Hannibal St. John had his right knee smashed by the exploding of a caisson, and fell behind one of the guns of his battery. He was so sure that he was to be killed on this day that it had never occurred to him that he might be trivially wounded and carried to the rear in safety. An expression of almost comical chagrin came over his face, for life was nothing to him, and somewhere far above the smoke a goodly welcome awaited him: that he knew. Men came with a stretcher to carry him off, but he cursed them roundly and struggled to his well knee. The cannon behind which he had fallen was about to be discharged.

"Give 'em hell!" cried Hannibal.

As he spoke, the piece was fired, and leaping back on the recoil, as a frenzied horse that breaks its halter, one of the wheels struck him a terrible blow on the body, breaking all the ribs on that side and killing him instantly. His face wore a glad smile, and afterward, when Aladdin found him and took the gold locket from his pocket, and read the inscription written, a great wonder seized men:

> July 3, 1863.
> Nunc dimittis.
> Te Deum laudamus.

Thus in one battle fell the three strong hostages which an old man had given to fortune.

XXXV

Three o'clock the Union batteries were ordered to be silent, for it was well known to those in command that presently there would be a powerful attack by infantry, for which the cannonade was supposed to have paved the way with death and disorder, and it was necessary that the pieces should be kept cool in order to be in efficient condition to grapple with and suppress this attack. Sometimes a regiment, stung to a frenzy of courage by bullets and the death of comrades, will rise from its trench without the volition of its officers, and go frantically forward against overwhelming odds. A different effect of an almost identical psychological process is patience. Men will sometimes lie as quietly under a rain of bullets, in order to get in one effective shot at an enemy, as cattle in the hot months will lie under a rain of water to get cool. It was so now. The

whole Union army was seized by a kind of bloody deliberation and lay like statues of men, while, for quarter of an hour more, the Confederates continued to thunder from their guns. Now and again a man felt lovingly the long black tube of a cannon to see if its temperature was falling. Others came hurrying from the rear with relays of powder, shot, shell, and canister.

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It seemed now to the Confederate leaders that the Union batteries had been silenced, and that the time had come for Pickett, the Ney of the South, to go forward with all his forces. Only Longstreet demurred and protested against the charge. When Pickett asked him for the order to advance he turned away his head sorrowfully and would not speak. Then Pickett, that great leader of men, who was one half daring and one half magnetism and all hero, said proudly: “I shall go forward, sir.” And turned to his lovers.

Silence and smoke hung over Gettysburg.

Presently out of the smoke on the Confederate side came three lines of gray a mile long. Battle-flags nodded at intervals, and swords blazed in the sun.

Very deliberately and with pains about aiming, the Union batteries began to hurl solid shot against the gray advance. Soon holes were bitten here and there, and occasionally a flag went down, to be instantly snatched up and waved defiantly. When Pickett, Pettigrew, and the splendid brigade of Cadmus Wilcox had reached the bottom of the valley, their organization was as unbroken as a parade. But there shell, instead of round shot, met them, and men tasted death by fives and tens. But the lines, drawing together, closed the spaces left by mortality, and the flags began to approach each other. Then the gray men began to come up the slope, and there were thousands of them. But shell yielded to canister, and the muskets of the infantry sent out death in leaden showers, so that the great charge began to melt like wax over heat, and the flags hung close together like a trophy of battle in a chapel. But still the gray men came. And now, in a storm of flame and smoke, they reached the foremost cannons of the Union line, and planted their flags. So much were they permitted for the glory of a lost cause. For a little, men killed one another with the butts of guns, with bayonets, and with stones, and then, as the overdrip of a wave broken upon an iron coast trickles back through the stones of the beach to the ocean, so all that was left of Pickett’s great charge trickled back down the slope, driblets of gray, running blood. For a little while longer the firing continued. Battle-flags were gathered, and thrown together in sheaves. There was a little broken cheering, and to all intents and purposes the great war was at an end.

Aladdin, broken with grief and fatigue, went picking his way among the dead and wounded. He had lost Peter and Hannibal in that battle, and Hamilton and John were dead; he alone remained, and it was not just. He felt that the Great Reaper had spared the weed among the flowers, and he was bitter against the Great Reaper. But there was one more sorrow reserved for Aladdin, and he was to blaspheme against the God that made him.

There was still desultory firing from both armies. As when, on the Fourth of July, you set off a whole bunch of firecrackers, there is at first a crackling roar, and afterward a little explosion here and a little explosion there, so Gettysburg must have sounded to the gods in Olympus. Thunder-clouds begotten of the intense heat rolled across the

heavens from east to west, accentuating the streaming glory of the setting sun, and now distant thunder rumbled, with a sound as of artillery crossing a bridge. Drops of rain fell here and there.

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Aladdin heard himself called by name, "'Laddin, 'Laddin."

As quickly as the brain is advertised of an insect's sting, so quickly did Aladdin recognize the voice and know that his brother. Jack was calling to him. He turned, and saw a little freckled boy, in a uniform much too big for him, trailing a large musket.

"Jack!" he cried, and rushed toward him with outstretched arms. "You little beggar, what are you doin' here?"

Jack grinned like one confessing to a successful theft of apples belonging to a cross farmer. And then God saw fit to take away his life. He dropped suddenly, and there came a rapid pool of blood where his face had been. With his arms wrapped about the little figure that a moment before had been so warlike and gay, Aladdin turned toward the heavens a face of white flint.

"I believe in one God, Maker of hell!" he cried.

Thunder rumbled and rolled slowly across the battle-field from east, to west.

"I believe in one God, Maker of hell!" cried Aladdin, "Father of injustice and doer of hellish deeds! I believe in two damnations, the damnation of the living and the damnation of the dead."

He turned to the little boy in his arms, and terrible sobs shook his body, so that it appeared as if he was vomiting. After a while he turned his convulsed face again to the sky.

"Come down," he cried, "come down, you—"

Far down the hill there was a puff of white smoke, and a merciful bullet, glancing from a rock, struck Aladdin on the head with sufficient force to stretch him senseless upon the ground.

When the news of Gettysburg reached the Northern cities, lights were placed in every window, and horns were blown as at the coming of a new year. Senator Hannibal St. John had lost his three boys and the hopes of his old age in that terrible fight, but he caused his Washington house to be illuminated from basement to garret.

And then he walked out in the streets alone, and the tears ran down his old cheeks.

XXXVI

There had been a wedding in the hospital tent. Margaret bent over Peter and kissed him goodby. She was in deep black, and by her side loomed a great, dark figure,

whose eyes were like caverns in the depths of which burned coals. The great, dark man leaned heavily upon a stick, and did not seem conscious of what was going on. The minister who had performed the ceremony stood with averted face. Every now and then he moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue. The wounded in neighboring cots turned pitiful eyes upon the girl in black, for she was most lovely—and very sad. Occasionally a throat was cleared.

“When you come, darling,” said the dying man, “there will be an end of sorrow.”

“There will be an end of sorrow,” echoed the girl. She bent closer to him, and kissed him again.

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“It is very wonderful to have been loved,” said Peter. Then his face became still and very beautiful. A smile, innocent like that of a little child, lingered upon his lips, and his blind eyes closed.

St. John laid his hand upon Margaret’s shoulder.

A man, very tall and lean and homely, entered the tent. He was clad in an exceedingly long and ill-fitting frock-coat. Upon his head was a high black hat, somewhat the worse for wear. He turned a pair of very gentle and pitying eyes slowly over those in the tent.

Aladdin, his head almost concealed by bandages, sat suddenly upright in a neighboring cot. A wild, unreasoning light was in his eyes, and marking time with his hand, he burst suddenly into the “Battlehymn of the Republic”

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call
retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.

He sang on, and the wounded joined him with weak voices:

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me;
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,

While God is marching on.

The tall man who had entered, to whom every death was nearer than his own, and to whom the suffering of others was as a crucifixion, removed the silk hat from his head, and wiped his forehead with a colored handkerchief.

Margaret knelt by Aladdin and held his unconscious form in her arms.

Outside, the earth was bathing in exquisite sunshine.

XXXVII

It was not long before Aladdin got back the strength of his body, but the gray bullet which had come in answer to his cry against God, even as the lightning came to Amyas Leigh, in that romance to which it is so good to bow, had injured the delicate mechanism of his brain, so that it seemed as if he would go down to the grave without memory of things past, or power upon the hour. Indeed, the war ended before the surgeons spoke of an operation which might restore his mind. He went under the knife a little child, his

head full of pictures, playthings, and fear of the alphabet; he came forth made over, and turned clear, wondering eyes to the girl at his side. And he held her hand while she bridged over the years for him in her sweet voice.

He learned that she had married Peter, making his death peaceful, and he God-blessed her for so doing, while the tears ran down his cheeks.

But much of Aladdin that had slept so long was to wake no more. For it was spring when he woke, and waking, he fell in love with all living things.

One day he sat with Margaret on the porch of a familiar house, and looked upon a familiar river that flowed silverly beyond the dark trees.

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Senator St. John, very old and very moving, came heavily out of the house, and laid his hands upon the shoulders of Margaret and Aladdin. It was like a benediction.

“I have been thinking,” said the senator, very slowly, and in the voice of an old man, “that God has left some flowers in my garden.”

“Roses?” said Aladdin, and he looked at Margaret.

“Roses perhaps,” said the senator, “and withal some bittersweet, but, better than these, and more, he has left me heart’s-ease. This little flower,” continued the senator, “is sown in times of great doubt and sorrow and trouble, and it will grow only for a good gardener, one who has learned to bow patiently in all things to God’s will, and to set his feet valiantly against the stony way which God appoints. I call Margaret ‘Heart’s-ease,’ and I call you, too, ‘Heart’s-ease,’ Aladdin, for you are becoming like a son to me in my declining years. Consider the river, how it flows,” said the old man, “smoothly to the sea, asking no questions, and making no lamentations against the length of its days, and receiving cheerfully into the steadfast current of its going alike the bitter waters and the sweet.”

We have forgotten Aladdin’s songs and the tunes which he made, for the people’s ear is not tuned to them any more. But that is a little thing. It is pleasant to think of that night when, the knocking of his heart against his ribs louder than the knocking of his hand upon her door, he carried to Margaret’s side the wonderful lamp which, years before, had been lighted within him, and which, burning always, now high, now low, like the rising and falling tides in the river, had at length consumed whatever in his nature was little or base, until there was nothing left save those precious qualities, love and charity, which fire cannot calcine nor cold freeze. Also it is pleasant to think that little children came of their love and sang about their everlasting fire.