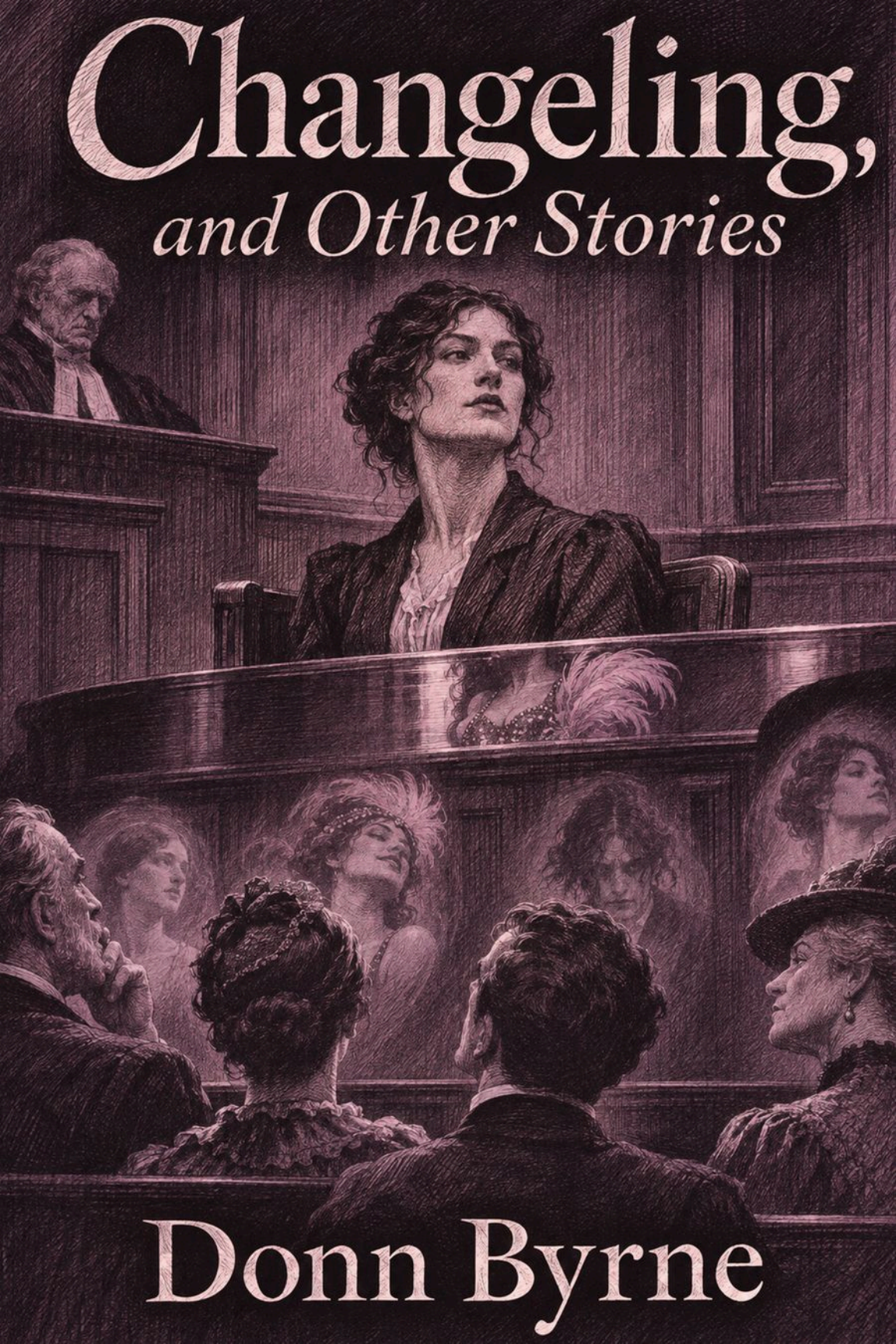
Changeling,

and Other Stories

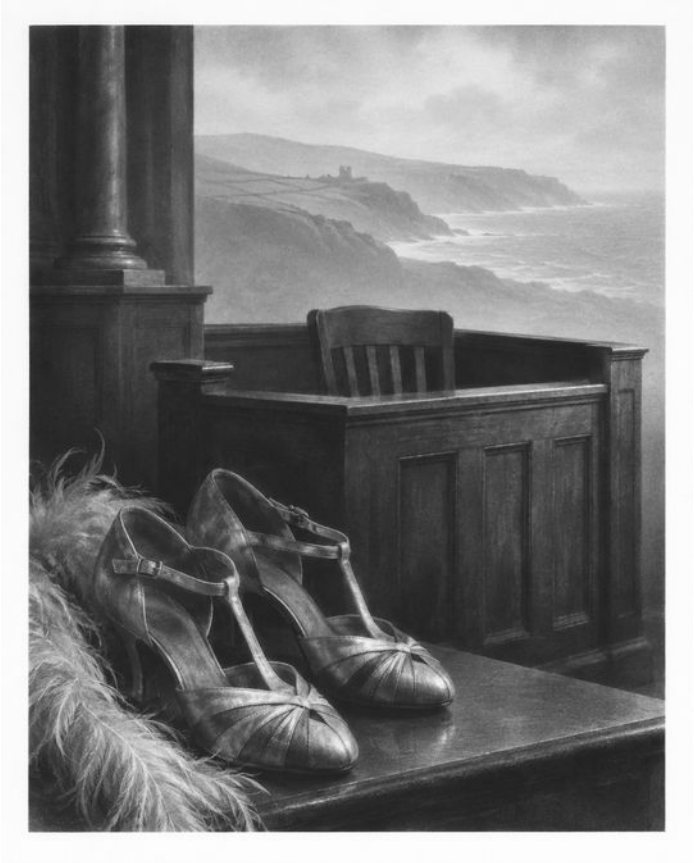


Donn Byrne

PIPCUB EDITIONS

Changeling, and Other Stories

Donn Byrne



Donn Byrne

1889 – 1928

Author vignette inspired by the published work.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Donn Byrne

Donn Byrne was a novelist and short-story writer closely associated with Ireland. Storytelling itself is often present in his fiction: a voice recalls a person, a place retains a memory, or an account passed from one listener to another acquires the quality of legend.

Byrne wrote for magazine readers as well as for readers of novels. His work moves readily between immediate social observation and a more lyrical register, especially when it turns to landscape and the claims of the past.

CHANGELING

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

DONN BYRNE

Author of "The Wind Bloweth," "Messer Marco Polo," etc.

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DEDICATION

So you are going to bring out a book of your stories, said the Old Poet.

I think I am, sir, said I.

I'm sorry for it, said the Old Poet, for it won't have a friend in the world.

When it comes to the publishing of books, people are always pessimistic, and, in my case, always right. Success, I am sufficient of a heretic to believe, matters little, but friendship a great deal. And I could as little think of sending a story friendless into the world as I would of sending a child, or horse, or dog. So "Changeling" itself I will put under the friendly hand of the Right Honorable the Lord Justice O'Connor, who will find law treated in it in a *dégagé* manner that will surprise even him. And "The Parliament at Thebes" I dedicate to Addison and Josephine Hanan.

For Bulmer and Clare Hobson, near Three-Rock Mountain, is "Delilah, Now It Was Dusk," and for Brinsley MacNamara, that splendid Irish novelist, "Wisdom Buildeth Her House." And "In Praise of Lady Margery Kyteler" for Arthur Somers Roche, in memory of a chivalrous kindness.

"Reynardine" for Miss OEnone Somerville and in memory of Martin Ross—their pens were one of the lost Irish glories. "Irish" for Jeffrey Farnol—none more than he loves and understands the Ring. And I am sorry there is not a story of war and its intricacies in the collection to dedicate to my friend Lieutenant-General J. J. O'Connell.

I have not by hundreds come to the end of those whom I love to think my friends; but so many of them are sportsmen that to dedicate stories to them would be like giving a two-year-old racer to a maiden and church-going lady, loading her with responsibility and embarrassment, so that—

So that the rest of the stories can go out and make friends for themselves, and if they can't, 't was surely a poor hand that wrote them.

Donn Byrne.

By the Cinque Ports,
England. 1923.

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CHANGELING AND OTHER STORIES

CHANGELING

I

To outward appearance the whole of the courtroom scene was drab, ordinary. There was the stuffy rectangle of a room, half dark in the January dusk, for all that the electric lights glowed with meager incandescence. There was the judge, in his robe, at the desk of the court. There were the jurymen, solemn as in church. There the court stenographers, bald, active as ants. There the men of the daily journals, more aloof, more judicial than the judge. There the press of morbid spectators, leaning forward like runners on the mark. There the policemen, court attendants, whatnot, relaxed of body, concentrated of eye, jealous of the dignity of the court as a house-dog of its master's home. Through the windows of the court could be seen the bulk of the Tombs, heavy, hopeless, horrible as the things whence it takes its chilly name.

The case of the people *versus* Anna Janssen for the murder of Alastair de Vries droned on.

The district attorney, youngish, slim, lithe, a little sinister—the impression of a hunting-dog all over him—was examining a witness, a rat-faced man who had something of the old-time bartender or private detective about him.

"It was your business, as attendant at the Oriental Garden, to see that order was kept?"

"Yes, sir."

"There was no semblance of disorder at all until you heard the shot fired?"

"No, sir."

"Mr. De Vries was at a table with a party?"

"Yes, sir."

"You heard the shot and you saw Mr. De Vries fall forward?"

"Yes, sir. Crumpled up, sort of."

"Then you ran to him?"

"Yes, sir."

"You saw the woman Janssen back of the hall with a revolver?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was she doing?"

"She was laughing."

"Was she drunk?"

"The laugh sounded drunk."

"Was she very much under the influence of liquor?"

"She could n't have been, else she would n't have got away."

"You are certain that it was the prisoner?"

All eyes in the court-room were turned to the prisoner in the dock. And there was in the sordid trial chamber a sense of great disturbance in the air, though, from the minds and personalities of all gathered there, there rose in gray tendrils a haze of doubt, of disbelief, of mystery.

She sat in the dock, in the sordid court-room, among the unseemly officers and the public, as a statue in some public square might stand above the rabble. Mature, magnificent, the prisoner seemed almost like some goddess from a Norse mythology.

First, her strange coloring made all catch their breath. Her face was tanned to an absolutely golden hue, and out of this work of delicate bronze there looked, calm and confident, two eyes that were blue as sea-water. Her eyebrows, her hair, were bleached by the sun until her eyebrows were two half-moons of silver, until her hair was the pale, beautiful gold of honey in dark lights and like vivid strands of live silver when the light fell on it. She had the strange, exotic appearance of the women of Saba Isle, the ancient colony of Holland sailors and Carib Indian belles, a small dot in the West Indies where there is a town on the top of a mountain, and life is as in the garden of the Hesperides.

It was not alone her coloring, her splendid face. From her there came such an aura of health, of spiritual strength, it seemed impossible that this woman was the chorus girl Janssen who had been the cast-off mistress of the rake and spendthrift De Vries, who had been drunk, who attended cabarets with wine-merchants and Broadway belles. This woman! Impossible! In her own calm eyes

there seemed also a look that said more: "This is ridiculous. I can't have done this. Why am I here? Why don't they get up and let me go?"

Even the rat-faced witness was perturbed.

"The prisoner in the dock?" he said with a sense of puzzled wonder. "The prisoner in the dock?"

"Well, don't mind the prisoner in the dock, then. It was the woman Janssen you saw."

"I am sure of that."

"You were well acquainted with her appearance. You couldn't have been mistaken?"

"No, sir, I could not have been mistaken. She was often at the Oriental with Mr. De Vries. Sometimes every night for a week. I could not have been mistaken. It was she shot Mr. De Vries."

The district attorney sat down, with a gesture of his hand toward Howard Donegan, the prisoner's counsel. With his massive body, with his massive head, with his cruel jurist's face, Howard Donegan was as much a part of the attraction for the public as was the prisoner, the notoriety of the ten-year-old case, the romantic capture of Annette Janssen. The great Irish-American was the foremost criminal lawyer of his day, all but invincible when defending a man or a woman with the slightest chance of escape, and right on his side. As a cross-examiner he was dreaded as the plague. The public would get the thrill of seeing a superbly cruel and magnificent performance when Donegan arose. Even now the rat-faced witness shook as with ague as Donegan turned casually toward him, with hooded eyes. But Donegan shook his head. He did not wish to cross-examine.

Even the judge was surprised.

"Did I hear aright?" He leaned forward, his fine mystic's face in lines of doubt and worry. "The counsel for the prisoner does not wish to cross-examine?"

"Your Honor heard aright. I will not cross-examine."

Through the big chamber there was a buzz of comment, of doubt, of all but horror. Was there nothing to be done for this woman? Even if she did kill De Vries, give her a sporting chance for her life!

"What is Donegan doing?" the public, the attendants, the newspaper reporters asked themselves with mistrust. Was he throwing her down?

There was a tensing in court, a tightening, as of drama. Already there was a sense in every one's chilled veins of the horrible harness of the electric chair. But Donegan only drowsed.

"You can step down," the Court told the witness.

The rat-faced man crept from the witness-box, white, shaking still with the fear of Donegan's eye. He tried to get a seat in the benches, but none would make room for him. And though he had only done his duty, and that at command of the law, there was about him, as he slunk from the room, the look there was about him who was surnamed Iscariot, as he crept from the garden on the Mount of Olives, on the world's most tragic dawn.... Like a story from some old book there unrolled before the public the history of Anna Janssen of ten, or twelve, or fifteen years before, in a New York we know no longer, so changed is it in that brief space. Then it was a riotous spendthrift, a glorious waster, hell-roaring, somehow lovable, and now it is a burgess of standing, with all the burgess virtues.

And the eyes of the court-room glistened as old names appeared like Falstaffian ghosts. The Poodle Dog, the German Village, the Holland House, the Knickerbocker. Gorgeous, blowsy, out of a dim past they rose for an instant. Baron Wilkins's and Nigger Mike's. And there was the thin clink of glasses across forgotten bars. And at three o'clock of a morning the flying wedge at Pat's was hurling some truculent guest to the sidewalk. And gunmen were gunmen then, not strike-breakers.

Old days, great days, and only a dozen years before. And John Barrymore was not *Richard III* but the comedian of "Are You a Mason?" And Mr. Chambers had written "The Danger Mark," and Lieutenant Becker still patrolled the streets. And Mannie Chappelle and Diamond Jim were still alive and merry, who are now dust, God rest them! And cops grafted and politics were corrupt, after the old and pleasant tradition. And out of the side door of saloons came the

old-fashioned drunkard, who with the old-fashioned ghost-story and the old-fashioned Christmas is laid to rest forevermore. And the voice of Dr. Parkhurst was heard through the land.

Ichabod! Gone is glory!

The night life of Paris was hectic, hysterical. The night life of Berlin was heavy, somehow sinister. But, lush, extravagant, now joyous, now *macabre*, the foam of New-World liquor, the night life of New York challenged the heavens with streaming rays, retiring only before the chaste, armored dawn. Like some Thousand and One Nights of some writer of the people, it challenged the imagination, it intrigued, it repelled. Overdone not seldom, often in bad taste, but virile, rude, and unabashed, it claimed recognition with brazen clamor.

And on this stage, and against this background, now leading woman to De Vries, now being supported by a caste of wasters, brokers, men about town, there moved Anna Janssen, the Swedish Beauty. Cast in the form and figure of a Norse goddess, fit for great epics, she was a figurante in a debauched side-show. Her eyes, which were blue as the sea and should have been pure and passionate as the sea, were drenched with wine, and her mouth, with its clear-cut outlines as of a woman of the painter Zorn's, which should have been firm as a budding flower, was relaxed and wet from kissing.

A woman of Broadway, hungered after and yet despised, she might have gone the accustomed path that leads from the chattering magnificence of Broadway to the sinister silence of Potter's Field. Down the old beaten decline toward sordid Death she could have gone, and none would have tried to stay her, none to help. And then the end. And the only result would have been a little chilling in the hearts of the newer Beauties of Broadway, a ghost whispering in their hearts the most terrible of epitaphs: The wages of sin is death. For a moment only. And some celebrity of Broadway might feel sad for an hour, with easy sentiment: "Poor Anna! And I knew her when she wore diamonds, and New York was at her feet!" Or some respectable citizen in his warm home might treasure secret,

ashamed memories, and never avow them. And some one might even seek out her grave to say a hurried prayer and make an offering of flowers. And the rest would be silence.

But that, in a mood of drunken pique, she shot and killed Alastair de Vries!

Of her life there is little to be said. It is a life that a thousand girls have lived. Admit the evidence which satisfied a judge in a trial of murder and it boils down to this: The daughter of a Brooklyn mechanic, she got a place in the chorus of a big musical comedy, and was flattered and courted by the blades of Broadway. And the one to whom she fell victim was Alastair de Vries, who had forsaken Fifth Avenue to travel westward to Broadway. Of the old patroon stock which had settled New Amsterdam and been lords of the manor along the Hudson before the English came, bankers and traders, soldiers and explorers, all there remained of them was one moneyed boy who saw adventure only in ruining the daughters of tradesmen where his forebears had seen it in hacking out the destiny of a New World.

Blond, rather chubby, not yet thirty, Alastair de Vries had already had a large biography in the Sunday papers and weeklies of gossip in New York. Annette Janssen was one of perhaps twenty conquests and she was not the last. She was the all but last.

He took her from the chorus, gave her everything she desired, made her for her brief life the semiannual queen of Broadway.

And then a small brunette came along, acclaimed as the Queen of the Ponies, and, turning like a flash, De Vries hurried to conquer the new arrival. And Anna shot him, not because of jealousy, not because she loved him, but just to make trouble.

There's her life for you. There are what the dazzling facts of her queendom of Broadway amount to. There they are, without their glitter and romance. Through the black magic of Sinister Alley they shine like fireflies, but, like fireflies, in the calm sanity of daytime they are nothing but grubby crawling things we flick from our palms with a *moue* of distaste....

Day followed day, and witness witness, and item by item the sordid chronicle was written. Each fact attested and proved to the satisfaction of the court, to the satisfaction of the public. It was a sort of journey toward a definite objective—a journey on which the public was invited to see Justice hearken to the call of the people of the State of New York.

There was no doubt about it. Coldly, callously, for a whim, in a moment of piqued vanity, a chorus girl had shot a gentleman.

And then in the mind of every one there loomed, as it approached nearer until its horrible lines, its terrifying aura were visible, the objective of the voyage—the dreadful electric chair.

"Why does n't Donegan do something? Why? Why? Why does n't he put up a fight at least?"

But Donegan drowsed on. Only when the prisoner in the dock threw him a swift look of appeal, as she did occasionally when some damning point was raised, did he drop the granite mask. Now and then her face would blanch under the tan, and her mouth quiver. And then would come a miracle in Donegan. Those harsh bulldog features would relax, the glinting eyes open, and over the hated face would play the smile of—oh, forty years ago—when he was just an innocent, likable Irish boy, and not a great jurist, whom communion with the sinister qualities of the law, and battles for life and liberty, and knowledge of strange strata in the minds of men, which is good for none to know, had transformed into a dark angel with a protective and flaming sword.

But the smile did n't reassure the public.

"Yes, he 's smiling. He 's confident, all right. But why does n't he do something?"

Had the people in the court-room read of this trial in their homes —read the bare facts, the testimony of witnesses, there was not one who would have wasted a second thought on Anna Janssen. Perhaps in the hearts of one or two there would have lingered the feeling that it was not right she should be strapped horribly in the chair. But that would have been chivalry, not justice. One and all would have said: "That is what the death penalty is for—to remove from human contact one who has no right to God's sunshine, and who has

arrogated to her vile and puny self the right of the Creator, the disposal of human life. Muffle her up. Hustle her away. Throw on the current and hide her in quicklime. Life is not for such as she!"

But between the woman whom the witnesses had drawn in black, sinister colors and the lady in the dock there was a continent of difference. True, she was the same height, the same figure, but for a healthy development of years. True, such marks of identification as Anna Janssen the chorus girl had, might be noted on the body of her who was a prisoner at the bar.

But the body of Anna Janssen the chorus girl was soft and white and made for sinister loving, while that of the woman in the dock was healthy and hard and tanned, after the fashion of Eve, whom the Lord God made in the garden. And Anna Janssen's had swayed alluringly with provocative sophistication, while the carriage of this woman was erect and of great dignity. And the eyes of the chorus girl had been full of evil knowledge and unhealthy flame, but this woman's had wistfulness and a strange mystery.

And in the heart of every one there rose a cry: "This is not the same woman. This is a good woman!"

There is a theory of an old medical school whose name—not that it matters—I regret to have forgotten. And it is this: that every seven years the human body changes. We have not the same bones, nor the same skin, the same muscles at thirty-five that we had at twenty-eight. They are worn out and are eliminated, and new tissue takes their place. It may be wrong, but it is a very taking theory. It explains to us how the track athlete of some years ago becomes the paunchy, bald-headed, repulsive man of to-day. It explains how the well-fed man of the world may turn into a harsh-faced monk. It explains to us how the soft, succubine chorus girl of a dozen years before became the splendid amazon that Anna Janssen is to-day.

And yet this may be wrong about the body. But about the mind (and there you have the inner person) there is one thing certain, not a theory but a fact—that people change completely. Like a child's slate, the mind is, on which a thousand things are written. The young take so much for granted; the old know. And gallantly they write this for a fact, that for a falsehood. But day by day they live

and learn, as the old saw goes. And simple equations become quadratic. And the writing on the slate is altered month by month, as new factors of life are realized. All is a correction, a readjustment.

This is gradual, but occasionally, very occasionally, by some mental or spiritual cataclysm all on the slate is sponged clear. And a new and startling departure takes its place. As we see in the inner personality of Anna Janssen the change from the petty arithmetic of Broadway, the venal crooked sums of Sinister Street, to the gigantic calculus of life as the Lord God conceived it, when He formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul....

The district attorney turned from his last witness to the twelve men in the box. "Gentlemen," he said, in the manner of a workman well satisfied with the progress of the job in hand, "I have proved the crime and proved the perpetrator, the circumstances, the setting, the motive. There is but one more thing to be done to clinch this case home like a nail in a horse's shoe. It is now ten years between the time this murder was committed and the bringing of the prisoner to the bar of justice. There is but one more thing to do to remove the smallest iota of doubt that the prisoner at the bar and Anna Janssen, Alastair de Vries's mistress, are one and the same person. And to prove this I shall call to the witness-stand the detective who arrested Anna Janssen in Tahiti, and in whose custody the prisoner has been from that day until she was brought to justice here—a period of nine years and four months in all."

"Officer Thomas McCarthy!"

"Officer Thomas McCarthy to the stand."

The public craned forward, and with that strange shifting sound that betokens an immensity of interest they settled themselves in their seats for the recital of the detective. Here was the great attraction of the trial—the story of McCarthy and Anna Janssen alone on a desert island, a murderess and the officer who arrested her. More than the morbid interest of the killing of De Vries, more than the realistic tale of old New York that was, more than the spectacle of a woman dicing for her life, more than the prospect of watching Donegan, the greatest of criminal lawyers, harass the

court, and pound the battered witnesses, and at last possibly and probably carry off the prisoner as in an old-time rescue from Tyburn, was the promised recital of the adventure in the lonely Southern sea. There had been one romantic story of it in one day of the papers, and then no more, for the matter would have called forth intense comment from the papers, arousing sympathy or hatred, and the case was *sub judice*.

But that one story stirred the imagination of the public. And the sordid tale told of a woman killing her fickle lover in an attack of offended vanity faded into a golden haze of romance. The scented smell of the tropics came to their nostrils, and their eyes saw golden sands and phosphorescent seas. And here the palms murmured with a rustle as of exotic silks, and the Bird of Paradise winged its iridescent flight through the opaque Marquesan dusk. And the spirits of strange gods moved upon the face of the waters....

Here was a setting for Scheherazade and here characters for a master writer: a patrolman of New York, young, athletic, unspoiled, canny with the knowledge of his native city, brave as only his kind is brave; and here a woman from the sloughs of the Tenderloin, an admitted beauty, a proven murderess.

What drama had happened in that isle of dreams, in that immense act of nine rolling years? And did she love him, or did she hate him? And had he succumbed to her, as Adam to Lilith in Eden, before Eve was? Or had he resisted her as Anthony of Egypt resisted the succuba in the desert near Fayum? And did she wheedle him with words sweeter than honey? Or did she curse him with strange black blasphemies? Or was it just one long, dumb vigil of hatred? Or had they become friends, hunter and hunted, marooned now on the islands of strange dead gods?

In God's name, what?

At any rate they would soon know.

"Officer Thomas McCarthy, this way!"

Then, of a sudden, up rose Howard Donegan. The judge on his bench, the jurymen, the prosecuting attorney, the court, the prisoner herself, all looked at him with a hesitant surprise. Somehow his action was surprisingly dramatic. He stood up slowly

and said nothing, but looked around. Into the drama of crime and romance, there was injected a new element, powerful, sluggish, but immensely sure.

"If it please the Court," went his heavy, significant voice, "may I say a few words?"

"It is hardly regular, at this period, Mr. Donegan," the judge said, puzzled. "Surely you will have an opportunity later on."

"The opportunity is opportune only now." Like some strange gargoyle in an old cathedral the great animal appeared. His eyes, under their threatening hoods, were black and beady like the eyes of some malevolent creature of the jungle. His mouth, a wide, thin slit, pouted like the mouth of a fish. His sedentary body was massive and grotesque like some monster of a mad artist's drawing. His voice creaked like unoiled machinery. But—God!—what power was there!

"Your Honor, men of the jury, and Mr. District Attorney, at any point I could have obstructed the course of this trial until all of you were weary in your chairs. I could have obfuscated facts and motives and testimony until you were as uncertain of truth as Pilate. The woman Wilkins—I could have shown that her word was no more to be depended on than the word of the village idiot. Mr. Howland Christy, De Vries's relative—I could have shaken him on the stand until he would have been uncertain of his testimony, for he is an honest man. And the usher of the cabaret—if I had concentrated on him, I could have made that whisky-sodden brain, that broken will, contradict everything he had said.

"But I did none of these things. I made no haze of doubt out of honest facts. For why? Because these facts are true. I grant them freely!"

There were a rustle and a murmur in the room. The public was suddenly aghast. What was this from Donegan? Treachery? Who ever heard of a counsel granting things like that? Good Lord! what was the man doing? The murmuring went on in spite of the judge's gavel, the attendants' cries.

Donegan swept the room with his black, minatory glance, and the murmuring died.

"Your Honor, Mr. District Attorney, men of the jury, a crime is not an instantaneous action. What goes before a crime is important, and not less important is what follows it. Has the affair been brooded over, or has it been the result of momentary passion, and has the deed been regarded with smug satisfaction, or with quaking horror?

"And what effect has this had on the prisoner, on the world, on its time? So many things have to be taken into consideration when we are adjudging the crime.

"Gentlemen, the law and legal procedure are as easy to comprehend as a child's primer. The office of the district attorney is to see that a malefactor is brought to justice. The office of the jury is to decide whether that action was or was not done. The object of the judge is to weigh, decide, and in the name of the people say what shall be done with a member of the community who has hurt the interests of the community by his or her action. The duty of the counsel for the prisoner is to see that his client is not traduced by false witnesses, nor his or her liberty endangered by unfacts.

"But the object of all in the court-room is to see that justice is done, though the heavens crumble.

"I have examined no witnesses. I shall examine none. But I ask this in the latitude of the Court, and in the name of that Justice whose servants we one and all are, as much myself, advocate for the prisoner, as the district attorney for the people of the State of New York, as the jury in the box, as the judge on his bench: that the next witness, Thomas McCarthy, shall be allowed to tell his own story in his own way, relating facts which may not seem germane to the case, but which I claim are as pertinent as the pistol with which the crime was committed or the *corpus delicti* itself. I ask this of the Court and I request the Court so to direct."

"This is hardly regular, Mr. Donegan."

"I ask this in the name of Justice!"

"This is a court of Justice, Mr. Donegan." The judge's manner had a slight rebuke. "But if the district attorney is agreeable—"

The district attorney, a little nettled, but rather awed before the tremendous purpose of Donegan, shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well, Mr. Donegan," the judge nodded. "The district attorney—" Donegan addressed the jury—"is calling Thomas McCarthy to prove the identity of Anna Janssen. He is an officer of the City of New York, a witness for the State of New York. The attorney has called him to prove that the prisoner in the dock is Anna Janssen. I shall not examine him. But when he has given his testimony for the district attorney he will have given his testimony for me.

"And I shall have proven that the chorus girl who killed Alastair de Vries is not the woman who stands in the dock!"

There was an instant's sighing from the courtroom, a momentary relaxation. So Donegan had fought and won his first fight, and now they were going to hear the History of the Spicy Isles. Now all the mystery would be lifted that had been hanging about the court-room like a necromancer's mist.

"Call Thomas McCarthy!" Donegan barked from the side of his mouth.

"Officer Thomas McCarthy."

"Thomas McCarthy to the stand!"

As he stood in the witness-box, McCarthy seemed to bulk tremendously in the room. As Anna Janssen seemed to fill the court spiritually, so he seemed to fill it physically. Emanations of strength, emanations of power came from him like current from a battery. He was not six feet tall, but so erect did he stand, so free was his carriage that he seemed to tower above all in the court-room. He was not a big man, but he suggested tremendous strength, so easily with the smallest movement did the sinews ripple beneath his coat. Brown as copper, his face had not the strange mystery of Anna Janssen's, because his eyes and hair were black, where hers were fair. Yet he was strange.

It was principally that he was out of place in his city clothes. One could have imagined him easily as some young athlete in the Olympic games, hurling the discus possibly, or flinging himself over the high jump. Or one might have suffered him in the clothes of summer in the country, soft rolling collar and roomy sport coat. But

in the "business suit" of some department-store, he seemed like an actor some inept stage manager had dressed. Grotesquely, a police badge was pinned to the lapel of his coat.

As he entered the box, Anna Janssen turned toward him with a swift outpouring of her eyes. It might have been interest, but it was warmer than interest. It might have been appeal, but it was more confident than appeal.

"You are plain-clothes officer Thomas McCarthy?" the district attorney examined.

"Yes, sir. Number eight thousand nine hundred and seventeen."

"Attached to police headquarters?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell us the circumstances under which you arrested the prisoner."

"The Commissioner—the Commissioner—" McCarthy began, faltered, suddenly stopped.

"Yes, the Commissioner."

But McCarthy seemed struck by sudden panic.

"Yes, yes!" the district attorney became irritable. "The Commissioner—" He rapped the table.

Donegan rose.

"McCarthy," he explained gently, "has had no one to talk to for seven years but my client. He finds it hard to get his words right. Take your time, McCarthy," he told the witness. "Close your eyes. Say it as if you were saying it to yourself."

The prisoner threw him a look of gratitude.

"I was on the vice squad under Inspector O'Gara." The witness found words at last. "One morning the Commissioner sends for me. It was when the trouble was on about the graft in the Raines-law hotels. The Commissioner looks at me kind of hard.

"'Are you on the square, McCarthy?' he says.

"'Yes, Commissioner, I 'm on the square,' I tells him.

"'It's news to me they 's any one on the square,' the Commissioner laughs kind o' mean.

"'Tell me, McCarthy, were you ever mixed up with a woman?' I gets chilled all over, because I thinks some one's trying to frame me.

"'No, sir. Never,' I answers.

"'Then why were n't you?'

"'I don't know,' I says, 'except it was my people were from Ireland and brought me up their own way. When I was a kid, Commissioner, I could go to confession without holding out, and I guess I can do it to-day.'

"'Oh, you 're one of them good Irish cops,' he sneers. 'I heard tell on them, but I never met one before.'

"'Well, you meet him now.' I looks him cold in the eye. And then I 'm sorry, because I sees he means nothing. He 's just sore.

"'Well, square cop,' he says, 'I got a job for you. Anna Janssen,' he says, 'is found. A rich guy hides her and brings her to Tahiti on his yacht. She's there now. The French authorities,' he says, 'have made a pinch. Go get her.'

"'All right,' I says, and turns to go.

"'Just a moment, McCarthy,' he says. 'I said: "Get her." You understand? Get her. And keep her. Was a man to try and escape on you, what would you do?'

"'I 'd shoot,' I says. 'I 'd bring him in, alive or dead.'

"'Well, shoot her.'

"'Oh, gee, Chief!' I says. 'I can't shoot a woman.'

"'Well, then, shoot yourself,' he says. 'At any rate, if you come home alone, come home cold storage. I 'll pay the freight. And that 'll be all,' he says.

"I goes to Paris, and from Paris to Marseilles—"

"That's all right, McCarthy," the district attorney waived. "It does n't matter how you went. Tell us what happened at Tahiti."

"In Tahiti something tells me all is not right. The steamer I come on docks in the morning and leaves that afternoon, and I hopes to make it with Janssen. Maybe it's because I can't get their French and our consul is not a well man, but they delay me until the steamer goes and then I 'm left flat. The extradition papers must be in order, they say. But there is too much of this belle-prisoner stuff.

"Well, all's finished and they takes me to her. 'Well, Janssen,' I says, 'we got you.' 'Now that you got me, what are you going to do with me?' she laughs; and every one laughs. Right away I see they 're all rooting for her, and they like me like a souse likes water.

"Honest, Judge, I don't blame them. They's few white women in that place and, such as they are, they 're not lookers. And the Kanaka girls, for all they are pretty as a picture, they ain't human and they *ain't* healthy, you know, as we white people think. Anna certainly had the looks, and was white, and had the pep, and they were all crazy about her. The Frenchmen are daffy about women, and they don't think nothing about a woman shooting a man—nothing at all.

"So they smiles at me and they says, 'You must see our beautiful island before you sail away with the belle prisoner!'

"'Your island is fine,' I tells them, 'and, no offense meant, but it's got nothing on Manhattan Island. And as for the belle prisoner,' I says, 'ain't you folks forgetting something? This dame is as nifty a little murderess as ever I sees.'

"'It was a crime passional,' they says, and they shrugs their shoulders.

"'Tell that to the judge,' I says. 'I 'm only the copper.'

"'Well,' they say, 'unfortunately Monsieur will have to enjoy our island for three weeks. The next liner will not be here until then.'

"'Oh, is that so?' I laughs. 'Well, let me tell you something. While you guys was examining the papers for your belle prisoner, I was doing a little scouting around the harbor. And they's a schooner leaving to-night for San Francisco. I guess that 'll do us all right.'

"'Impossible!' They go wild. 'A lady cannot travel—'

"'Cut the lady stuff,' I says. 'She's my prisoner.'

"She was a trading schooner, dealing in copra, oranges, cotton, mother-of-pearl, and such like, but once she must have been a fine yacht. There were state-rooms still aboard her, though now they were filled with junk for trading, but I made a deal with the captain and he cleans one out and fixes it up for Janssen. And then I takes Janssen down to the docks.

"Judge, you'd 'a' thought she'd saved the country instead of killing De Vries, the way they acted about that woman. They lined up on the docks of Papeete, all the men and a good many women, too. And they sang and they danced and they said good-by. 'When you get off, come back,' they says to her. They got on my nerves so much, I had all I could do not to laugh dirty, when they says that about getting off.

"Janssen looks at the boat, and looks at the people. And she goes crazy-mad. 'Damn you, damn you!' She turns on me. 'Only for you, I 'd not be going back!'

"'Yeh, only for me,' I says, 'you would n't have killed De Vries. It's all my fault, hey? Now, listen to me, Janssen. You 're my prisoner, and my prisoner you 'll remain. You had the game; now pay up, and stop hollering. You and I are from the same town, and I know you. You ought to know me a little better. I would n't have been sent for you if I had n't been able to take care of myself. All your French friends won't save you from a New York cop, once he 's out to get you. You 're beat, Janssen,' I tells her; 'you might as well give in.'

"She looks at me a long time.

"'I 'm not beat yet,' she says.

"The captain tells us he's going to stop at Nukahivo and a few other islands to take cargo aboard. He 's an old guy and sensible, and Janssen plays up to him to beat the band, so I takes no risks and keeps close. Even if he is an old guy and has n't any ambition, still and all, nobody likes a copper, and every one hates to see a prisoner taken home, especially if it's a woman. So I give Janssen and him no chance for private conversation. Once clear of the islands, I think, and all will be well. Janssen sees my game.

"'You don't give me much chance with the old fellow.'

"'No, ma'am,' I laughs. 'That's your business. I give you no chance. You 're beat, Janssen. What's the use of fooling yourself?'

"'Oh, I 've still got an ace in the hole. I 'm not beat yet!'

"She turns in early. 'I suppose you 're going to lock the door?' she asks me.

"'What's the use? They's other keys. The islands are near at hand, and they could put you off in a boat. I 'm not going to lock the door,' I tells her, 'but I 'm going to sleep outside it, up against it. It opens out, and the smallest movement will wake me up. You 're beat.'

"'All right! I 'm beat,' she says, and she turns in.

"I puts myself against the door, and falls asleep on the deck. It might have been ten minutes after it, but it was really hours, the door opens. It's the middle of the night, for the stars are high, and there 's nothing to be seen, and the waves keep lapping the bow of the schooner and she dips pretty like a cantering horse. And suddenly I 'm awake and lonely and wet with dew. I looks up and there 's Janssen above me, big and handsome and her eyes like the stars.

"'You 're not comfortable there, McCarthy,' she whispers.

"'I can't say as I 'm on a bed of roses,' I tells her.

"'Why don't you come inside?'

"'I don't know what you mean,' I says.

"'Never mind what I mean,' she laughs. 'Come on in.'

"'I think I 'll stay where I am,' I says kind of short.

"'I 'm not accustomed to having invitations like this refused.' There was a kind of jar in her voice.

"'They 's lots of things you 're not accustomed to, you better get accustomed to right away,' I says. 'You 're accustomed to fine hotels. Now you got to get used to the Tombs. You 're accustomed to lying down on couches. Now you got to get accustomed to sitting up, very straight, in a chair at Sing Sing.' I did n't want to be brutal toward her, Judge, but I did n't want her to be making passes like that at me.

"What she says to me then I could n't tell, Judge. But she closes the door with a slam and leaves me be.

"I notices the wind is getting kind o' high, and that when the schooner pitches she sort of jars, and that under the green light on the starboard sight of the boat the water is rushing past very quick. The boat is lying over and the sailors pass me quick as lightning and in the cordage the air is whining like a broken fiddle-string, but over it all I can hear Janssen cursing in her cabin, cursing just like the

II

As Officer McCarthy paused for an instant in his story the eyes of the court-room seemed by common consent to turn to Anna Janssen in the dock. The jury looked at her with knitted brows; the spectators with puzzled glances. It seemed impossible that this calm, majestic figure could once have acted the siren of the streets to the officer bringing her from her Tahitian sanctuary. Immobile, somehow immaculate, with strange superhuman dignity, she did not blush, she did not smile. Only a genre shadow of pain was about her eyes, such as creeps about the eyes of some one who remembers old, all-but-forgotten painful things of phases of life long by.

Out of those firm lips like a rose in bloom could blasphemy have flowed in a sluggish lecherous stream? Out of that glorious bronze throat, fit for Magnificats? It seemed impossible, was impossible.

The judge looked at her with moved, understanding eyes. The district attorney cast at her puzzled glances. Donegan looked neither at her, nor at anything. He just drowsed like a dog....

"All next day," McCarthy went on, "the blow grew worse. They reefed down sail until we were flying along under top and foresails. The funny thing was that here and there the sky was blue. You 'd have thought all was going to get fair in an hour or two, but it did n't. And the captain stood by the man at the wheel and looked worried.

"You had to shout to make yourself heard. 'Ain't it going to calm down, Captain?' I says.

"'I don't know,' he says. 'I wish to God I was out of these islands,' he says. 'If I was all alone in the middle of the Pacific, I would n't give a damn, but these here coral insects,' he says, 'they 're always building, and they sure do bother me. And these charts of the Marquesas,' he says, 'they ain't worth a damn. I wish I was out of these islands,' he says; 'I sure do.'

"'Oh, you 'll be all right, Cap,' I says.

"'You get for'a'd out o' here,' he barks at me.

"'I 'll talk to you later about that,' I says, but I goes off, because I see he 's worried.

"All we get to eat that day is a cup of coffee and a sandwich. And night comes and we 're still plunging on.

"And then we hear thunder.

"Janssen won't turn in. She 's scared, she says, and she sticks by me. And the thunder keeps up, and comes closer, and it gets very dark.

"'What's that?' Janssen says.

"'It strikes me it is n't thunder at all. It's some boat in distress firing a gun,' I tells her. 'It's too bad we can't do anything for them. But I don't think we can.'

"'I 'm afraid, McCarthy,' Janssen says. 'That's no gun.'

"'Maybe it's a lot of guns,' I says. 'Maybe it's the French navy practising. They take a funny night for it,' I says.

"'I 'm scared, McCarthy,' she whimpers, and comes close.

"'We 'll be all right,' I tells her.

"'I 'm scared,' she cries. 'Put your arms around me, McCarthy, please.'

"'Oh, come off!' I tells her. That game don't go, Janssen. What's the use?'

"'I 'm scared, honest. They's something going to happen.' The boat does a little jazz step, and the guns is right in our ears. And overhead, Judge, the stars were out. 'Please take me in your arms, McCarthy—just like I was your sister.'

"'Well, you ain't just like you was my sister. And they 's been too many arms around you for me to put mine. But you can hold on to me,' I says.

"And then my teeth come together with a jar and my spine is near driven through my skull, and something hits me on the head. And all the water in the world comes over me. And I know nothing."

The witness, it seemed, here underwent a strange dramatic transformation. Until now in his recital, his story had been a story all could understand, a policeman's story, told in a policeman's voice, in a policeman's words. To the court-room he was a figure within their ken, a person to warm the hearts of burgesses. Honest, homely, speaking in dialect, he stood in their eyes for the typical and honored defender of city families and city homes. Great figures, those men! They make heroism casual. We may call the New York police grafters; we may call them brutes and tyrants; we may call them the scum of Ireland. We can never call them cowards.

There is on record the case of—shall I say O'Kelly? A homicidal maniac, armed to the teeth, took refuge in a cellar. "And then what?" "I goes down into the cellar and I gets him out." "Good God! You went down alone into that dark hole after—" "Oh, that was not'in'; he was easy!"

You can have your great regiments—your Old Guard at Waterloo; your Rough Riders of San Juan Hill, your Black Watch, your Bashi-Bazouks; your Bersaglieri. Give me the New York police!

Up to now McCarthy had been only a New York policeman, telling in a dry way the facts of a case. But a new dignity arose in him of a sudden. He was no longer dealing with the processes of his profession but with big human phenomena. Until now he had been deferential to court and officers, a cog in the legal machine. Suddenly he assumed individuality, poise, dignity. He became bigger than the personnel of the case, as big as the woman in the dock. And curiously his language changed to fit the newer individuality, turning from the idioms of the sidewalks of New York to what we term, in that archaic phrase which has so much of dignity, the King's English.

"I came to," he resumed. "At first it was blackness and a terrible headache, and the thought in my brain: 'Where is Janssen? I've lost Janssen.' And then my head cleared, and my eyes opened. And I was lying on the sand in the dawn, and Janssen was bathing my head.

"'So there you are!' I said.

"And then it struck me. Where 's the ship?

"I got up on my elbow and looked around. We were on a strand, with trees behind us and a bay in front and the sun just coming up, bright as a golden eagle. In front of us was a sort of bay where the water was still and sparkling, like wine sparkles. And then I look out further. And there 's a sort of wall of crags between the bay and the sea, and on the other side of it the sea is pounding, pounding, pounding, like a man crazy with anger. *Swish! Crash! Boom!* And then I notice pieces of timber, a bale, a piece of cloth in the lagoon.

"The schooner 's gone, I understand. There 's been a wreck.

"'Where are the rest?' I ask Janssen.

"'There are no rest.' She throws her arms out. 'Just you and I!'

"Then after a while I said: 'We 're in a pretty bad way here—shipwrecked; without anything to eat; with a very small chance of rescue. We 're up against it. There is n't even water.'

"But she only laughed.

"'We 're not so bad as you 'd think,' she says. 'There 's water. I found it when I looked for something to bathe that cut on your head. And as for food, I 'd been in these islands a while before they put me in the—place—at Papeete. There 's bananas, and there 's cocoanuts, and there 's breadfruit. And that cove is full of fish.'

"'You can't eat fish raw,' I tell her.

"I 'm turning out my pockets then, leaving things in the sun to dry—my gun, with the shells out in a row; my watch; my knife; my pocketbook. She points at the watch.

"'You can make a fire with the crystal of that,' she says. 'Your bananas 'll do for the present. I 'll go off and get some. You need n't worry,' she says as she notices me looking at her. 'I can't get off the island.'

"After a while she comes back and sits down.

"'Do you know how you got ashore, McCarthy?'

"'I don't,' I answer. 'I know nothing.'

"'When the boat struck,' she tells me, 'you and I were washed over the reef. Something hit you on the head. But I pulled you in, McCarthy. You went down. You were out cold. I had a job, too,' she laughs nervously. 'Your hair is awfully short.'

"'Well, I got to thank you,' I said.

"'Don't mind thanking me,' she said. 'Tell me this!' She 's awfully serious. 'Don't you think a life is worth a life?'

"I say nothing to that.

"'Don't you, McCarthy?' she pleads.

"'I 'm sorry,' I tell her. 'I 'm awfully, awfully sorry, but I 've got to bring you in.'

"'You 're a hard man, McCarthy.'

"'I 'm not a hard man. I 'm just a man sworn in to do my job. I 'm just a man a big trust's been put in, and I can't fall down. Sis, you missed your chance,' I told her. 'You ought to have let me go down, when you saw me going. Then you 'd have been free. You ought to have stood clear and let me drown.'

"'Oh, I could n't do that!' she says.

"'Neither could I let you go!'

"In the afternoon I go around the island to see where we are. But from no point can I see land or a sail or anything. We are just on one of those Pacific atolls, as they call them, away from the line of everything but sailing-ships trading from isle to isle. I look everywhere—north, east, south, and west—and there is nothing but boiling sea, white, muddy, with birds fluttering, or floating in the air.

"The island itself is not more than ten miles square and there are rocks everywhere about it except around the cove where we landed, and that has a coral breakwater. The sand is bright and yellow like new gold, and on the island itself there is greenness that is nearly black. And you can see cocoanut-trees and banana-trees and oranges. And while I 'm standing there a little pig breaks through the underbrush and looks at me, and then flies off with a squeal. And for a moment my heart goes pit-a-pat because I think there are people on this island. A pig is a human thing. It's always been so near humans, it's nearly human itself. But a moment later something in me tells me there 's no one here. It's been put ashore, it and others, by some of the old whaling-ships that are gone now.

"I look around and I see the island, the sand like gold, the clean wind, the water in the cove as transparent as water in a glass; the fish in the water and the animals on the island, and the fruit on the trees. And the sun is bright and warm and full of life, and in the distance I can see Janssen. She has let her hair down and it covers her to the knees in a great shining cloak, like some wonderful fur cloak.

"And I think: There's many 's the old cop in New York—there 's many 's the millionaire, even—would like to finish his life alone in this paradise island, away from all trouble and worry and having everything he needs in sunshine that's more like wine than light, and with Janssen with him, when she has let down her hair.

"But I says to myself: You needn't think that way. You 're not old, nor disappointed. You 've got no reason to idle your life away. You 've got a job on hand. You 're a detective officer, and you 've got a prisoner, and you 're going to bring her home!

"I return to where Janssen is by the cove and I look for my knife and watch and gun. But my gun is n't there.

"'Do you know where my gun is?'

"She wheels around on me suddenly and points it at my head.

"'McCarthy,' she says, 'your word's good with me. Either tell me now you 'll let me go when we 're rescued or I 'll kill you.'

"'I can't,' I said. 'I won't. Now give me my gun and be sensible.'

"'I mean it,' she said. 'Let me off or I 'll kill you.'

"'I would n't be the first.'

"'Will you?'

"'No!' I says.

"I 'm watching the gun, to grab it if I can. Then I see a spat of fire like a match lighting. Then something burns my ear like red-hot iron. I hear the shot. I 'm sprung halfway round.

"I face up again.

"'You made a better job with De Vries,' I says, stupid-like.

"I 'm expecting the finisher, but she walks up to me and hands me the gun. She just looks at me, and her throat works, and then suddenly from her eyes run two big tears down to the corners of her

mouth and I turn away.

"'I 'm going to fix you a bed of banana-leaves, and then I 'm going to light a fire. Forget your troubles for a while. Think of this as a picnic.'

"But the tears still run down her face and she says nothing. I go off and get busy because I can't stand the sight of It. I 'm not feeling any too like a comedy, myself.

"'We 're sitting that night at a fire on the beach, and the thin new moon is up. A light breeze is in shore. Suddenly she turns to me.

"'You 're religious, McCarthy,' she says to me.

"'I 'm not exactly religious,' I say. 'I 'm like every one, I guess.'

"'You believe in God, McCarthy?'

"Nobody likes to talk much about things of that kind. You think about them, but you don't say them. And particularly you don't talk about them to a prisoner who 's up for murder, unless you 're one of those Holy Willie boys.

"'Who does n't?' I spars.

"'You believe—' her voice is serious—'that God takes care of you on this island?'

"That's what they say.'

"'Do you believe, McCarthy, that He knows me, takes care of me, cares for me?'

"I say nothing—because I can't see it. She 's too far out of the pale. I 'd like to tell her 'yes.' But I can't.

"'You don't believe, then, McCarthy—' her voice is just a husky whisper—'that there is any caring for me, anywhere.'

"'Oh, what's the use of bothering about that?'

"'You don't, then,' she said. 'You think I 'm too bad for—even—that.'

"I get up and shake myself. 'Maybe there's nothing to it, after all,' I tell her. But all of a sudden she is crying, her face down to the sand, as though her heart would break.

"I move away, because I 'm no good to her, and go down the strand a bit. The water laps the strand, and whispers in the trees, but I can hear Janssen crying still.

"I walk on and on. I hear the sea rumble on the rocks, and the whisper of the trees is louder. A turtle pluds into the water, and a cocoanut falls with a thud, but over it all I still can hear the voice of Janssen crying, little tearing cries, as though pieces of silk were being ripped from the main fabric with shrill protesting tragedy. It struck me that she herself was flaying her heart with brutal knout-like strokes, and that every red shred was moaning in protest: 'Don't, don't, don't!'...

"The new moon became the full moon, and waned and died," McCarthy went on. "But no help came.

"There was nothing to do but wait, and a policeman does n't mind waiting. All his life is waiting, except for a hint of action now and then. But I worried about Janssen.

"Janssen gave me no trouble. We talked just as friendly strangers might talk, waiting on a railroad platform. She got the bananas and the cocoanuts and the breadfruit, gathering them as they fell. I managed to kill a suckling pig now and then, and I rigged up a fishing-line from a piece of rope I unraveled that had come ashore from the wreck of the boat, and a pin Janssen gave me.

"There 's nothing I like to do better than fish, and I sit there and fish and think all the time. And little things come to me of the life in New York, and I worry over them. I never was a grafter. I never took a penny from any one when I was on the vice squad, in the way of protection, but there 's little things that worry me. As, for instance, when I go into a saloon for a drink, they never take my money. When an arrest is made, sometimes I find a bailsman for the prisoner, and they give me something as a favor. Or I sell tickets for this benefit or another, and nobody wants them, but nobody dares refuse. And I sit there in a few acres of coral in the Pacific Ocean and the sun rises in the east way over New York, and the moon sets in the west down China way. And the winds blow south from Japan or north from the edge of the world. And I think: It's very small. It's not worth a man's while.

"And while I 'm thinking Janssen is thinking, too. But what she 's thinking about, I can't figure. She 's very silent. And at times her mouth is n't hard at all, nor her eyes, either. And when she speaks

her eyes are on the ground and she 's very serious.

"'What are you thinking about, Janssen?' I ask.

"'McCarthy,' she says, 'did you ever, after a hard day's work, disappointed, clogged with dirt, come in and turn on a cold shower and suddenly feel better and cleaner—and be happy again?'

"'That's the only thing to do, on a day like that.'

"'Well, I feel,' she said, 'as if this island were that bath after the awful day of my life,' she said.

"At times I think, myself, that it must be getting on her nerves, this place. She 'll want the lights, the gaiety, the people, if only for a little space, before she faces her trial. Even the chair must be better for her than this waiting, I think.

"'Are n't you getting lonely, Janssen?' I ask. 'Does n't this get on your nerves—having nobody to talk to?' We never speak any more about the murder or the trial.

"'Why, no, McCarthy!'

"'I should have thought,' I say, 'that after the gaiety you knew you 'd find this a terrible trial.'

"'McCarthy,' she said suddenly, 'were you ever at Saranac?'

"'I 've passed through it.'

"'Did you ever see the poor people there, quiet, waiting, glad to be alive, just being healed? Well, I 'm like those.'

"I don't notice for a while the change that is coming over Janssen. I see things on the outside of people. I don't see them on the inside. I 'm a detective. I just think maybe she 's got the blues, Maybe she's worried. But one afternoon she comes to me and springs a new one.

"'McCarthy,' she says, 'would you mind every afternoon keeping away for an hour or so from the cove?'

"'What's the idea?' I says.

"'Well, I used to be a good swimmer,' she says, 'and I 'm going to practise, and I have n't got any bathing-suit,' she says, 'not even tights. So you 'd better keep away.'

"I think to myself: 'This is a queer thing for any one as tough as they tell me Janssen is, to come out with.' And I wonder if she means exactly the opposite of what she says. She wants me, I half

figure, to hang around. And maybe she thinks I 'll fall for her. And if I do, she has me, I say to myself.

"And then I look up at her, and I see her eyes, and I never was so ashamed before or since.

"'All right, Janssen,' I say.

"'Thanks, McCarthy!'

"A week later she borrows my knife.

"'My clothes are in rags, McCarthy,' she says, 'so it's back to the Garden of Eden for me. I got to dress up like these wahinies down here. Don't laugh at me, McCarthy; promise me you won't.'

"'Not too much Garden of Eden, now,' I warn her.

"'Don't worry!' she laughs. And next morning you could have knocked me down with a straw, as they say. She has strung together big green banana-leaves with fiber, and made a knee-length skirt of them. And under her arms and about her is a little closed jacket of leaves, and that great golden cloak of her hair falls around, rippling and shimmering.

"'How do I look, McCarthy?'

"'You look fine,' I tell her. 'You look like a picture, you sure do. You might be in a stage play,' I tell her, 'only you 're so fine and modest.' She blushes pretty as a girl of sixteen, until it was a shock to me to remember that she was my prisoner for the crime of murder. And I look at myself, feel my chin, see how my suit is going. 'You make me feel like a bum.'

"The months pass and two sails go by.

"One I see in the early evening. A few very fleecy clouds shuttle in and out before the sun, and the great sea is purple, and the sand takes on a deep hue like the color of a gold coin that's been in circulation for years, mellow and reddish-like. And the green of the trees is so green you can feel it. And on the horizon is a native boat with a lateen sail that is orange-colored.

"I see it. I make no effort. I can do nothing. But it seems to me that it is unreal. It is not there. It is just a dream. It is unreal as the island is to me, unreal as my old life is to me, unreal as everything is —except Janssen.

"But a week later another boat comes, and this time it is n't unreal. Squat and bulky, it is a tramp steamer headed down New Zealand way. It passes not more than three miles off, and very ugly it is upon the sea, its funnel belching out black smoke that is like an insult to the shining seas. I have a bonfire ready-made and go to it with my burning-glass. And Janssen stands by and looks at me.

"'Do I have to go back, McCarthy?' she asks.

"'You got to go back and face the music, Janssen.' And I lights the fire.

"I get everything ready to board, but the steamer pays no attention. They go straight ahead. Maybe they think it's just natives, but at any rate they don't put about or anything. I go to the edge of the water and shout to them. I go into it up to my waist and whistle and snap my fingers and call to it, as I would to a dog, but they pay no attention. And then I give up.

"'I 'm sorry, McCarthy,' Janssen says.

"'What are you sorry for?' I asks her. 'You ought to be glad.'

"'I am glad,' she says. 'I 'm glad for myself, but I 'm sorry for your sake, McCarthy. I 'm really sorry.'

"One night we 're setting by the fire in the moonlight, and I 'm trying to figure out how the natives build their huts, because I want to build one for Janssen. There 's a queer sort of rain in these islands. Sometimes in a bright sky a cloud will pass, very high, very quick, and the rain comes down like bullets. You can hear it thunder in the leaves, and rattle over the sea like pistol shots. And it's not so pleasant after a while. It's over in a minute or so, but Janssen ought to have some place when it comes.

"And Janssen is sitting there as quiet as anything, making figures in the sand and saying nothing. She turns to me.

"'McCarthy,' she says, 'did I really kill Alec de Vries?'

"'You killed him dead.'

"'It seems like a dream to me, a bad dream in the night.'

"'If you had waited and looked at that corpse, you 'd have known it was no dream.'

"'And because I killed a man that was no use to any one I 've got to go back.'

"'You 've got to go back, all right,' I tell her.

"'Well, do you know, it's only fair,' she says. 'You 've called the tune, and danced it, and you 've got to pay the fiddler. But I 'm scared, McCarthy. I 'm terribly scared. It would be very easy for me to jump in the water or borrow your gun some night. Think of it. They put metal on your legs and strap you into a chair, and they put a cap over your head. And, then a man, as human as yourself, pushes a switch, and just as if he were putting out a light, he puts out the light of your life, the same light that's in himself.... And all in the cold gray morning....'

"'Tell you something, kid—' I had this on my mind for a while. 'I don't think they 'll burn you. We 'll get you a good lawyer when we go back and you 'll get off with a long stretch up the river.'

"'But don't you see, McCarthy,' she laughs nervously, 'that that's worse still? A person does something, as I 've done, because his mind and his—his self—are full of nooks and crannies, dust and cobwebs, bad feelings, passions. And he flies away. And maybe in the desert or the mountains a great wind comes and cleanses him. And he mends the shattered self together.

"'But the silly judge and the silly police go after him, and they send him to prison, and he sits there in the darkness and the wheels of his head go around. And the cobwebs collect again, and the grime from the other people comes off on him. And in the end he is worse than he was in the beginning.

"'I 'd rather die, McCarthy—die, all in the cold gray morning.'

"A month after this Janssen falls ill. Perhaps it's a gust of rain that's made her ill. Perhaps it's some of the berries or the fish or something. But at any rate, there she lies, white and near dead, all the life gone from her. There 's nothing I can do for her much but try to cheer her up and move her when she 's tired of lying in one position.

"'You 've got to get well, Janssen,' I say to her. 'You 've got to make an effort.'

"'But why?' she asks. 'Why shouldn't I die?'

"'That's no way to talk.'

"'What has life got for me?' she asks bitterly. 'The electric chair?'

"'You 've got nothing to worry about,' I say. 'It 'll be only a few years up the river and then out again, and the good old days.'

"'I won't live for that,' she says.

"'Well, listen,' I joke with her. 'You 're not going to make me come all the way across the world for you, and then not bring you home. You 're not going to throw me down, kid; be game.'

"'I 'd like to oblige you, McCarthy,' she smiles; 'but even for that I won't stay alive. Can't you think of any other reason?'

"'It would be awful lonely, if you were to go,' I say; and I mean it. 'Awful, awful lonely. I 'm getting very fond of you, Janssen.'

"'That's better,' she says, and pats my hand.

III

Without, the gray January dusk had crept into the cañons of New York and given the narrow streets, the crenelated buildings, the moving trucks, the pedestrians a semblance of unreality, as though they were being seen through a mist raised by some necromancer at the call of a wretched man. Through the windows of the court-room the Tombs were still evident, but the building had become unreal. It was like some ogre's castle in a fairy-tale for children, very terrible, but not really there.

The judge, the jury, the attendants, all the court had somehow lost entity as a court. It was no more a court than a house in a play is a house. It was just a formula embracing a hundred or so human beings. And one felt also that this was not in New York. There was no atmosphere of New York. New York might be a cloak and a disguise, but the minds and personalities of all were on a golden island on shining seas.

And they didn't see McCarthy in the witness-box, nor Janssen in the dock, but by the cove where the water was so translucent that one could see, fathom on fathom deep, the rainbow fish below....

"She gets better day by day, and I 'm so glad I could sing," continued the officer, speaking more easily as practice came after his seven years of silence. "She sits on the beach and health comes to her with the wind, and little by little the flush comes in her cheek, and life ferments, and her hair that has become dank ripples and flows, as a still sea stirs up with a breeze. And soon she 's swimming again. But there 's little of the old Janssen left. All her movements are grave. At times she sits thinking, and her brow is working with thought. At other times she smiles. Just a dignified little smile.

"And soon after she gets well, she saves my life a second time.

"This is how it happens. I 'm fishing one day and my line and hook get caught down in the coral. And I don't want to lose that hook. Hooks are n't easy to make. So I says: 'I 'll go down after that hook.'

"I shoot in and go swimming down through the water, and I hang on to the coral with one hand, and unloose the hook with the other. I 'm about ready to come up when in the water between me and the sun I can see a shadow like a boat. For a moment I think it's a boat, and come up with a rush. But half-way up I know it's no boat. And in the warm water I go cold as ice.

"I 'm more than half-way up, and I have no chance of shouting, splashing, making a noise, the way you frighten them off. And suddenly I know the big fellow sees me. I can feel the vibration of his swirl in the water as he turns off to a point where he can come rushing at me.

"'It's good-by, McCarthy!' I say to myself, and turn to face him. And then I hear a *plung-h* into the water the moment he's ready to turn over and come at me. And Janssen comes shooting down.

"She has a stone or something in her hand drawn back and lets him have it just on the soft point of the nose, the only place you can hurt those fellows. One crack! And the big coward turns and slinks off just like a dog that's been kicked.

"When we get ashore I 'm just as mad as I can be. The idea of her taking a chance like that!

"'Haven't you got any sense at all?' I bawl her out. 'What do you mean, taking a chance like that? What do you think a shark is? A mackerel? Maybe you think he wouldn't touch you? Maybe you think he's a gentleman? He's not. If brains were money,' I say, 'I don't think you could buy a subway ticket. Never do that, or anything like that again. Mind your own business!'

"But she 's crying and laughing together. She walks off, now sobbing, now laughing. I run after her.

"'Not that from the bottom of my heart I 'm not grateful to you, but you must never again—'

"But she laughs and she sobs:

"'Go away, McCarthy. Go away. Please go away!'

"All this time I know I 'm very fond of Janssen, and something tells me Janssen is of me, though God knows why. But we say nothing. At times it's hard to talk. And I look at her and think. If things were only different, how I could love that girl! But here she is, a prisoner, and I 'm her keeper. It's a pity. It's a pity, even, she's changed. It makes it awful hard for me.

"But I can't keep my eyes off her. She stands on the beach, the wind rustling her green garment, and rippling her hair. Very beautiful. And a little butterfly, from God knows where, is fluttering about her. Now it's in her hair, now about her throat. And curiously it comes to light on her lips.

"'You look awfully pretty, Janssen,' I say, 'with that butterfly.'

"She smiles at me, kind of queerly.

"'You 're a brave man, McCarthy,' she says, 'the bravest man I ever knew. You 're strong. You 're tremendous. Yes, you 're brave. But this little butterfly, that in all its body has n't the strength of one single hair of your head, whose brief life is but a single day, is braver than you, McCarthy, braver far than you.'

"'I don't understand you, Janssen.'

"But I understand her all right.

"And the days roll by, roll by, and nothing changes, nothing comes to us. Once or twice we see sails. Once a full-rigged ship under bare poles runs before a gale. And once in the distance we see a schooner heeling to the breeze.

"We are not speaking much to each other. There is a feeling of strangeness in the air. And at night I 'm worried-like. The trees rustle. The waves lap. There is great darkness. And for all we are the only two people in that island, yet I feel at night somehow we are not alone. Unseen, shadowy people are about us, in the sea, in the air. Once there were millions on these islands and now there are few. Once they were a great strong race, and now they are a timid handful. And I imagine that in the dark of the moon the brown tribes reassemble and put to sea in their war-canoes, and walk on the beaches that are so like Paradise.

"And there are great temples on these islands, but their gods are no more. And may they not too walk in the night-time with terrible, silent stride?

"The Cross of Christ is between me and all harm. I believe that, and I know it, and I am not afraid. But I am unquiet, nevertheless.

"And if I am unquiet, what of Janssen, wide-eyed through the night?

"At last one night I take my courage in both hands. Janssen is sitting in the moonlight by the cove, and for the first time I ever heard her she is singing a little something. Her voice is somehow like a boy's.

"'Janssen!' I stand and look at her.

"'Yes, McCarthy.' She turns and looks at me.

"'Janssen, when we go back,' I say, 'and when what has to be will be done, and when all is over, the morning you are free, I 'll be waiting at the gate for you. I 'll want you to marry me and come to me.'

"'You love me, McCarthy?'

"'Yes,' I said, 'I love you, Janssen.'

"'I love you, too, McCarthy. I suppose you know.'

"All this time she never looks at me, but out on the moonlit cove.

"'But if we never get off this island,' she says after a little while, 'we never get married.'

"'How can we?' I say. 'There is none to marry us.'

"She is speaking slowly, seriously, in the moonlight, and every word she says has the weight of sincerity.

"'Do you believe, McCarthy, that the church and all the people there and the organ and the rice make a marriage? Are all these necessary, McCarthy? Tell me, please.'

"'No.' I think it out. 'The only one necessary is the clergyman.'

"'Because he is the representative of—God?'

"'Yes,' I say in a minute or so, 'because he is there for—God.'

"'And yet God is everywhere? Knows all? Sees everything? Reads the inside of our hearts as easily as the clergyman reads our faces?'

"'That is what they say, Janssen. That is—what—we believe—'

"There is silence. Then she sinks to her knees in the sand in the moonlight.

"'Kneel down, McCarthy, and give me your hands.' I kneel and give her my hands without protest—her voice is so commanding, so sincere. And there is a strange thing between us now. All the time before if I touch her I feel strength flowing from me to her, but to-night when I hold her hands there is an even level.

"'If God wishes to hear us to-night, then we are married.'

"'But,' I say, 'Janssen, how do we know if He hears us, gives His consent?'

"Her eyes wander over the island, over the sea. She points suddenly to the lagoon.

"'See, McCarthy. See, under the moon there, that big turtle. He is uncertain where to go.' I look and I see the little black head like a dot on the water and the widening ripple as he swims around. 'See the boatswain bird's rock.' I saw the flat square surface in the cove. 'If he swims to and mounts that rock, then it will be a sign we have been heard and—He has given His consent.'

"'But he will never come to the rock, dear Janssen,' I say. 'He is going out with the tide.'

"'McCarthy,' she says a little scornfully, 'you are the good man, the untarnished one, the one who was brought up to believe, and you do not. And I, the bad woman, the murderess, the worse than Magdalen because I never loved until now, I believe. I believe and know.'

"And then her belief came to me and I turned to see the great turtle. He swam around and around and the moon shot the little ripples in gleaming silk. And at last I could bear it no longer, and I lowered my head; but Janssen still watched with her head high. And I could feel her hands tremble, and then crisp, and then tremble, and suddenly grow firm and fine and powerful.

"'Look, McCarthy, look!' Her voice rang like a bell. 'He is come to —he is on the rock.'"

"And I raised my head, too, and I saw the Miracle of the Turtle....

"And so we were married, and dwelt as happy as we could be, until the brig *Angela Scofield* put in for water and rescued us, and I brought Janssen back to the bar of justice, as I was bound under oath to do."

Here McCarthy stopped, and all knew he would say no more. Indeed, it seemed as if he could physically say no more, for the man seemed overcome. All the tenseness of him was gone and the prisoner and he looked at each other in a strange, pathetic, and trusting way, smiling with dry mouths and wet eyes. All in the court-room felt suddenly abashed, as a cynic might feel before the eyes of a child.

And suddenly in every one's mind there were translated his simple words, "And so we were married, and dwelt as happy as we could be," into pictures that were not pictures but chords, harmony and counterpoint, not for the mind's eye but for the heart's feeling. There they had been by a cove on Paradise Island, loving each other not joyously but simply and sincerely and with great strength.

They could see them, strong and fine, by the translucent water of the cove, under the golden sun on the golden sands, in a place as beautiful as the garden the Lord God planted in Eden. And as over that first garden, so over this one did a storm brood like an owl.

What terror she must have gone through, with the prison gate continually before her! What temptations must he have undergone with his wife by him, and the thought in his head that one day he must bring her back to stand trial for the killing of a man!

In God's name, what was the use to them of shining seas and golden sands, trees green as green banners, moons of Paradise and scented tropic winds, while tragedy was in the air, electric as a storm?

"You can step down, McCarthy," the district attorney said. And turning to the court he spread out his hands.

"The case of the people rests."

"The case for Anna Janssen rests," countered Howard Donegan.

For a long time there was a pause, that was accentuated into uncomfortable drama by the ticking of the court clock. It was as though an angel of silence were passing. The jury looked uncomfortable. The district attorney bit his nails. The spectators looked at one another in mental disorientation. It might have been the first bar of justice with no precedent to follow, no set of rules, so suddenly had all the machinery stalled. Only Howard Donegan drowsed an....

The judge was the first to come to himself. He rustled papers. He rapped for order. He turned to the jury.

"Gentlemen," he began, "the case for the people rests and the counsel for the prisoner rests his case also. It has now arrived to make a decision.

"You jurymen have only one duty to perform, and a bounden duty it is. You have got to decide one fact. Did Anna Janssen kill Alastair de Vries?

"Were Anna Janssen before you, the lowest of the low, gutter-soiled, evil, a menace to the community, and did not kill De Vries, then you would have to bring in a verdict of 'not guilty,' no matter how much enmity you felt to her. No matter what she is before you now, no matter what sympathy you feel for her, you must bring in a verdict of 'guilty' if you are certain she killed De Vries.

"Now, gentlemen, there can be no reasonable doubt of this. Even the prisoner herself admits it. So I must instruct you to bring in a verdict of guilty."

The jury looked at one another, amazed, a little scared. They turned to the foreman, a fine, florid personage, with a fan-shaped red beard, a man who ought to be equal to every occasion, so it seemed. They turned to him as a sheep turns to a bellwether. He rose to his feet.

"But this woman is changed," he objected. "She is not the same—"

"That is not germane to your offices," the judge answered severely. "You weigh facts. I weigh justice, Your affair is between Alastair de Vries and Anna Janssen. De Vries is now in the hands of his God. Janssen is in mine. Though I am the arbiter of legal form, yet also I am the personation of Equity. God has judged De Vries; I, with the voice of God, shall judge Anna Janssen. Consider your verdict."

"If we bring in a verdict of 'not guilty—'" the foreman suggested.

"If you do—" the judge was cold as steel—"you have done an unpardonable thing. You have betrayed the people of New York, whose representatives you are. You have brought into disrepute the law of your city. And women will kill men with the hope of obtaining lax verdicts. Moreover, on legal grounds, I shall declare this no trial. And the prisoner will go through the ordeal again."

"Well, if that's the way—" The foreman looked around embarrassedly at the jury. The jury seemed to put implicit faith in him. "We will not have to leave the box!"

"Clerk of the Court," called the judge....

"Prisoner, look on the jury. Jury, look on the prisoner. What say ye, have ye arrived at a verdict?"

"We have."

"What say ye: is the prisoner guilty or not guilty?"

"Well, this woman killed De Vries, but—"

"Guilty or not guilty?" judge demanded.

"Guilty!"

"Prisoner—" the judge turned to Janssen—"you have committed a murder. You have been adjudged guilty of it by a jury of your peers.

"It is now my duty to sentence you to a punishment not fitting the crime of murder but fitting such circumstances before and after as come within the scope of the foresight of Equity. You have taken a life and your life is hostage to the law.

"It now rests with me to decide what I shall do with this life that is in my hands and forfeit to the justice of the community; not only what is the best thing for the community, but what is the best thing for you. Shall I extinguish it, that it shall be no longer a danger to living men, a danger to your own immortal soul? Or shall I dispose of it otherwise, as my inspiration directs?

"Prisoner, I give you back that life, but I sentence you to imprisonment for its natural term."

There was a moment's pregnant silence in the court. Then a quick bourdon hum of anger. Suddenly came riot. The prisoner wilted. The jury stood up in protest. The spectators rose on threatening feet.

The judge raised his hand. He was suddenly clothed in the majesty of Solomon.

"Prisoner, I have made inquiries and there is owing to your husband his salary for ten years, which he will collect. He will then take you and have this marriage made legal. He will then take you from the place where you now are to the place whence you came, to your island down the Pacific, and you will live there, happy ever after, is the wish of this court of justice."

There came suddenly from the throats of all a mighty cheering. For an instant the attendants sought to keep order, but they soon desisted, themselves to join the joyous clamor. The sound bellied from the court-room and into the street. Pedestrians stopped and horses started. All looked at one another in amazement. Out of the court-room of tragedy had issued springtime carnival. One expected at any moment to hear chiming bells.

THE BARNACLE GOOSE

I

He might have been a hundred years away, he thought, as he sped along the road on the jaunting-car; he might have been a hundred years away instead of a meager dozen, so strange did everything appear to him. Every turn of the way, every stone, every smoking farm-house, every green field, was new. Even the sea to the right of him, beside which he had played for nineteen years, was dramatically unexpected. Faintly the whole landscape came back to him; hazily, as though he were seeing for the first time a scene that had been inadequately described in a book.

First, there was the road itself, broad, undulating, rising and falling, like an artist's fancy. Then, right and left, fields of delicate blue-green corn, soft as no carpet could be; and great meadows of hay, sprinkled with white and red clover; long stretches of potatoes with delicate pink and mauve flowers; and here and there a gnarled apple orchard. Huge chestnut trees lined the way, and mellow farm-houses showed cozily, with their dun thatched roofs. Cows grazed in the distance—shining, mottled Jerseys and stocky Kerrys, black as ink.

In the background the purple Mourne Mountains loomed like strange giants; and beside him the sea plashed musically, with a sound reminiscent of the chiming of bells. It was all surprisingly mellow, surprisingly rich, like the land which the spies of Joshua reported to lie past the Jordan's banks. Grant's eyebrows raised in puzzlement.

The brick-faced driver looked at him with a horseman's shrewd eyes.

"I knew you the first time I put eyes on you," he said in his clipped Ulster accent. "You 're Thomas Grant's son—Willie John—that went away to America twelve years ago last March. And why should n't I know you? Many 's the time I drove you when you were that high." He gave the dapper little mare a flick of the whip. "I suppose you 'll be settling down and staying at home now?" he asked.

"No; I don't think I will," Grant answered; and he smiled as he heard his voice slip into the musical singsong it had n't known for many years. "I 'll be going back in a month or so."

They whipped along past the sea for another mile, the little mare's hoofs striking the white road as true and as staccato as drumsticks. A strip of salt-marsh spun toward them. Eastward, over the sea, a flock of birds hove. Their wings flapped wearily, and as they flew landward they uttered faint whimpering cries.

"The wild geese." The driver pointed them out with his whip. "They're coming back to the marsh. They 're queer birds."

Grant watched them as they came. Their cries came sharp and complaining through the air, high-pitched, querulous, turbulent. And still there seemed to be something satisfied in them, like the sobbing of a child who has received what he wants but cannot stop for a moment.

"I often heard my grandfather say—and it's little he did n't know about birds," the driver went on "that there is n't a queerer bird in the world than the barnacle goose. The moment they can fly they 'll leave the country. My grandfather saw them in Egypt, and he saw them in France, traveling all the time; but they can never get the taste of the Irish marshes out of their mouths, and they come back. The young ones go and the old ones stay. Even a bird does n't get sense until it's taught."

They swept from the highway into a narrower road, and Grant's heart jumped a little, for he recognized it, broader though it was, and greener its hedges and smoother its surface than he had thought it. The sun was going down and a soft bronze twilight was beginning to settle. A little river ran past to the sea through the lush meadowland, and for an instant he saw the shimmer of a trout as it leaped for a fly. And from everywhere came the scent of clover.

They had turned, almost before he noticed it, into the yard of the farm-house, and again the sense of surprise struck Grant like a blow. Of course he remembered everything now—the long white-washed farm-house, thatched with golden straw, with the sweet-pea and ivy clustering about its walls; the massive slated stable and byre; the barn to the rear of that, in the orchard; the white dairy near the big iron gates with its cinder churning table; the giant ricks

of hay back of it all; the dogs running in the yard—sheep-dog and setter and greyhound—the two farm-hands stopping to look at him solemnly as he came through the gates; the thick servant-girl hurrying out of the front door as she heard the grinding of wheels. It was so different from what he had thought it was that he caught his breath in shamed embarrassment.

A tall young fellow with red hair and a humorous twist to his mouth came strolling from the stables. He wore a tweed coat and riding-breeches and boots. He stopped short and looked at the car.

"It's Willie John!" he shouted.

He swung across the yard like a flash and grasped Grant's hand in something that felt like a vise. He slammed his returned brother a terrific blow on the shoulder.

"Willie John! I 'm glad to see you!"

Grant's father came out of the house, a spare Titan of a man, hair shot through with gray and a great bronzed hawk's face. He pushed Joe aside and caught Grant by the shoulders. He was inarticulate for a moment.

"You 're back again, Willie John," he said simply and quietly; but behind the simple words Grant felt there was a wealth of welcome and of pleasure that David could not psalm. The elder Grant looked round toward the house. "Sarah Ann," he called, "here 's Willie John!"

She came out through the door with a quick, trembling step, a very little woman to be the mother of two such powerful men and the wife of a giant—a little woman of fifty, with the face of a russet apple, with fine lacework about the corners of her eyes, hair a delicate gray, like rich silk, and a girl's mouth and eyes. She had Grant in her arms in an instant, as though he were no more than a boy. Slowly she looked at him. "My son! Willie John!" she murmured.

They took him into the house, and they looked at him again; and they talked to him for hours, the mother with her eyes shining like stars, the father with that steadfast, proud expression on his face, the brother Joe in his riotous, loud-voiced way.

It was a welcome that overwhelmed Grant; that took him off his feet, like a great wave, and sent him spinning; that warmed him with a flame, setting his heart alight.

But there was something disappointing and strange about it all. They were just content and happy to have him. He had come back to their hearts after twelve years. They did n't care where he had been or how he had prospered. He might have just come from the next townland. He might have come back a pauper. Their welcome would have been the same warm, hearty thing.

And he had imagined something so very different! He had pictured the land he was returning to as a thriftless waste. His own home he had never thought of as the richly comfortable place it was. He had seen himself returning in triumph from beyond the seas, laden with treasure, like Columbus returning with the wealth of Borinquen, or like the legendary Irish lad who married the Spanish king's daughter and returned to his impoverished people in a coach-and-four.

He had imagined himself telling them of the wonders of New York,—tales as marvelous as any of the thousand and one told in Oriental bazaars,—of the buildings that tower as high as the Irish mountains; of the river of light that is Broadway; of the shop windows on Fifth Avenue, each of which holds a king's ransom; of the motley throngs in New York, greater in number than all Ireland holds; of the struggle and competition in which he, their son and brother, had won a sound business worth ten thousand dollars.

He wanted to tell them of his own epic. He wanted to be questioned; to be admired. And they did none of that. They were only glad to have him back. And he was disappointed!

II

It was after the March fairs, twelve years ago, that he had gone to America. He had taken over a drove of cattle to Liverpool for his father and uncles, had delivered them and received the purchase money. There was one small venture of his own among the lot—a

calf that he had raised to be a personable heifer, and that brought him in nine pounds. Along the docks he saw a liner bound for New York, a great leviathan, like a city. The thing hypnotized him by its vastness.

"I 'm going to America," he said out loud on the pier; and in a great glow he took his passage and sent home the purchase money for the cattle.

He did not know at the time what the impulse was that sent him abroad, and he did not trouble to analyze it. Later he found a motive, and it was a false one. He might have asked his father, who had gone in an ancient high moment to fight as a Papal Zouave against the onrush of the Neapolitan cohorts on Rome. He might have asked his red- and curly-headed brother Joe, who had once shipped from Newry to Iceland, and to Archangel, in Russia, and to Vladivostok, coming home by way of the China Seas. And, again, he might have asked the downy young of the barnacle goose, who wing their way down southward when the first black frost comes. All these could have told him.

He had very little difficulty in finding something to do in New York, for a stocky, healthy man, with honesty written all over a clean-cut face and looking unabashed from clear gray eyes, is an acquisition to any employer. They put him to work on a street-car, conducting and taking in the fares with assiduous honesty. The ten or twelve dollars a week he made, and what he got for them, compared very unfavorably with the healthful comfort and clean sea air of home. But the adventure of the New World held his attention until home became an affectionate and dull memory. And letters to and from Ireland were rare.

He stood, in his stocking feet, as fine a specimen of strength and health as there is outside the ranks of professional athletes; he was good-looking in an impersonal way; to doubt his honesty was impossible against the evidence of those gray eyes; but he had been allotted no more than the usual share of brains. Wherefore, it took three years for the New York idea to get home, which was to put money in his purse. He went about it in the way one should expect

of him. He sought a position that gave reasonable promise of advancement. A great chain of grocery stores gave him an assistantship in one of its shops.

"Hard work, and saving your money," he said to himself, "that's the way you get on in the world."

And he got on, with his dogged persistence. Six years of that, with the money he had saved, and he had set himself up in business on his own account, in an out-of-the-way avenue, on the road to Coney Island—a squat two-story building with an apartment upstairs and his shop below. A long, bare street, newly bedded, with grayish-white apartment-houses on each hand, so new that the mortar still lay in ugly flecks about the sidewalk.

Opposite him a newly fitted chemist's shop showed garishly with its green and red lights. A valet's store was beside him, and here and there in the avenue gaps showed where the real-estate men had not yet found capitalists to erect stores or flats. It was very bleak and new, and somehow lonely; but in his own store he was happy and busy all day long. He had had his name put on the glass window—William J. Grant—in angular gold letters; and inside he and his assistant, a sallow Scotch boy, attended customers, a lean but constant string. They took loaves from the glass case on the counter, or dug butter from the cool, moist vat, or ground coffee in the red mill that suggested a ceremonial vessel in a Hindu temple. He wished the people in Ireland could see him now.

"Ay!" he would say. "I think this would open their eyes."

He had heard much about Ireland and talked much about it since he came to America—a great deal more than he had ever heard or talked about it at home. And in his eyes now it had taken on a dim, distorted shape and spirit. The physical contours of it he had forgotten—the lush green hillsides, the fruitful orchards, the kine heavy with fat, the dim, warm houses—all these were to him as though they had never been. Instead of them, he saw a frail, worn country, with a vague spiritual light emanating from it, like the light from the face of a man who knows that death is near him and is resigned to it. The people about him mentioned it with sympathetic

voices. They spoke of the poverty of it, with a sort of contemptuous affection. And little by little Grant came to think of it in that way, too, as one thinks of a poor but worthy relative.

"There 's no doubt to it," he would say to himself; "a man doesn't get a chance there. He has to come over here." And he would look about his store with proud satisfaction.

He began to think even of his own home as a place that the poisonous finger of poverty had touched; and for a year now, and more, he had thought of returning to see it. Maybe he could do something for the people at home. A few pounds would come in useful. And, apart from that, he could tell them some things that would help them along. He would make them "get a move on," as the New York phrase went. Perhaps he would take Joe, his brother, out and give him a chance to show what he had in him. Perhaps they might all come out with him—the father and mother too.

"Ay! Why not!" he would argue. "Why shouldn't they? What's there for them in Ireland?"

He ruminated over the idea every day as he came from work to the brown stone boarding-house where he lived, in Schermerhorn Street, a dingy, unpalatable sort of place that had become a home to him. There were employees of department-stores there; and an occasional theatrical couple stayed a week in it, a week electric with criticism. In the summer evenings the boarders sat on the stoop, and in the winter they congregated inside to be played to in insufficient light on a tinkling piano. For Grant the place had a metropolitan quality that others sought in the great hotels.

And, with the same care he had used in mapping out his business career, he watched for somebody to marry.

He found her in the boarding-house—a trim and rather pale girl, who acted as though she were twenty and looked twenty-eight, but whom the Vital Statistics Bureau had registered as having been born thirty years before. Her hair was black and glossy, and her eyes were big and black and lustrous; her face, outside those features, was the face of a hundred others. But what captivated Grant about her was her chicness, her quality of being up-to-the-minute in dress and deed and word. Grant liked the flare of her wide skirts and the gray suede shoes lacing up the sides. He liked the faint powder on her

face, and her carefully cultured eyebrows. He liked her talk of skating and of the new theatrical pieces, and her ability to do the latest twirls in the one-step. Her name was Miss Levine—Ada Levine.

"It's not every man could have a wife like that!" he told himself; and he thought of the awe in which his people in Ireland would behold her.

She talked to him interestedly of his prospects and the trend of business in his direction; and that pleased him, for, what with that interest and with the training she received in the department-store where she worked, she would be exactly what he needed to get on in the world. He told her of his intention of going back home for a month, of putting the store in the care of a friend of his from the old business where he had worked.

"And when I come back," he said, "I 'd like to say something to you." She sat on the steps quietly and lowered her eyes demurely. "That is," he continued, "if nobody gets there before me."

She looked up at him and smiled.

"That's a date," she agreed.

His heart expanded blithely. Everything was settled now. Life showed in front of him like a straight line. A wife like that! And his thriving business! Now he would go back to Ireland and show them something!

III

He had been home for a month and he had made no move toward returning—not that it was ever out of his mind for an instant, but it pleased him to stay there and savor the ripe mellow ness of everything as he might savor a fruit. Summer was fairly in and the yellow blossoms had fallen from the gorse, but roses were blooming in every garden, great creamy ones and others with the vivid red of an autumn sunset.

The horse-chestnuts were heavy with balloons of white flowers, and every evening the bees returned drowsy from the heather of the purple mountains. There was something in it all that he had missed for years and that he was greedy for.

At first he had gone about, a splendid figure, in the clothes he had brought with him from America: suits of fine broadcloth, and buttoned shoes, and a watch that was held in place by a fob. But nobody seemed impressed by this splendor and a few were covertly amused; and suddenly he had discarded it in a sort of shame, returning to the rich tweeds of his own people. He had helped a little about the farm, finding again a lost aptitude in milking a cow and in handling a horse in a dog-cart. He had gone to the fairs and put in a shrewd word here and there on the price of a colt. He had gaped in wonder at the antics of the Punch-and-Judy show and had listened to the croon of the ballad-singer. He lost sixpences with the trick-of-the-loop man and with the artist of the three cards. All through it he tried to keep in his mind and on his face the attitude of a grown-up who is playing a child's game, a patronizing superiority.

"If they could only see this at Coney Island," he thought, "they would laugh their heads off."

And he tried to remember as enjoyable the days he had spent there in search of amusement, returning in the evening a battered and limp and irritated rag.

It was the evening of the Newry Fair when he began to think seriously of returning. They were all sitting in the great stone-flagged kitchen of the farm-house. From the long deal table in the middle of the room a huge lamp filled the space with creamy light, and in the lighted fireplace a kettle purred, hanging from its crane. The kitchen rafters were black and amber from the smoke of four generations, and below them hung at intervals long flitches of bacon. Over the mantel were the guns he remembered from his boyhood—his father's double-barreled fowling-piece with the long, true barrels; his grandfather's old musket; and the flintlock his great-grandfather had borne when he went out with Lord Edward in '98.

His father sat by the table, reading a paper diligently, and he was surprised to see how hale the old man looked; he was sixty now and looked fifteen years younger. His mother fussed about with a pannikin of milk, followed by three mewing kittens, while in a corner of the room Joe was binding whipcord about the handle of a fishing-rod, occasionally making it swish through the air with a keen sibilant sound like the hiss of a snake.

"I think I 'll be going back soon," Grant said suddenly. "I think I 'd better be getting along."

His mother looked at him sharply, but said nothing. Joe lowered his rod. His father raised his eyes from his paper.

"And what would you be doing that for?" he asked slowly. "Sure, I thought you were going to stay with us."

"I can't be doing that," Grant answered easily. "I 've got my business over there. And I 've got to be making my way in the world."

"And why can't you stay and do it here?" the old man went on.

"Ah, sure, what would I be doing here?" Grant began impatiently. "There 's nothing for a man here. On the other side I 've got a place of my own, made by my own hands in twelve years. That's something, is n't it?"

"There 's no use talking to you," his father said resignedly. "If you must go, you must go. But if you were wise, Willie John, you would take whatever money you 've made in America and buy that place of Peter McKenna's down the road. You 'd get it cheap now. And after I 'm gone the farm goes to you and Joe. If you have n't got enough money I 'll lend it to you."

"No, thank you," Grant replied a little surlily. "I 'll get back to my own place."

"Ah, well—" his father turned back to his paper—"have it your own way."

Joe sent the rod swishing through the air a couple of times. He turned to Grant with a quick smile.

"It's not back to your business you want to be getting, Willie John," he laughed. "You want to be getting back to where the good times are. In a week or two you 'll be walking up Broadway, looking

at the big buildings you do be telling about. Or going down Fifth Avenue, maybe, riding in a motor-car. Or hanging round all day drinking highballs with the millionaires. That's what you will be after. Business!"

Grant turned on him with a sudden gust of anger.

"I want to tell you something, Joe," he whipped back: "I'm up in the morning at half-past six. I 've got the place open by eight. It's seldom I 'm through before ten at night—and twelve of a Saturday night. Do you know, this is the first holiday I 've had for twelve years, barring Sundays and bank holidays! And on them I 'm too tired to do anything. I 'm as hard worked as you are."

"I 'm afraid you 're worse," the brother replied. He looked keenly at the hitch of the whipcord to the haft of the rod. "It's seldom we can't get a day off when there 's a fair on, or a good horse-race, or a coursing-match. What would life be if we couldn't?" He swished the rod through the air again. "And as for your father—" he took a sidelong smiling look at the old man—"he 's hardly ever at home now since they elected him to the County Council."

"To get on in the world," Grant said sententiously, "you 've got to work night, noon, and morning. There's no time for flying round to places of amusement, and chucking away hard-earned money. That's what's wrong with all this country."

Joe looked up at the rafters heavy with flitches of bacon; at the kettle purring on its crane. He glanced through the window to where the full haggard lay. His ever-ready smile crept about his eyes.

"Oh, I hardly think we 'll starve for a while," he laughed. "Will we, mother?"

The little old lady with the kittens smiled and shook her head.

"I 'm not saying anything," she said.

There was the sound of a gate clanging and the chime of voices. A dog growled and then broke into a bark of welcome. The voices came nearer to the door. Joe rose to open it. The mother put her head on one side to listen.

"Do you know who that is, Willie John?" she asked.

"No," Grant answered, "I do not."

"It 's Eunice Doran," she said. She waited an instant. A smile crept over her face. "Larry Doran's daughter, from beyond the hill."

"Oh, to be sure; I remember her," Grant smiled back.

Of course he did—a lank, gray-eyed girl, with a habit of staring you out of countenance. The last time he had seen her she was fifteen, with long arms and legs that seemed eternally in the way; and he recalled, with a smile, how in those days he had been a little in love with her, and they had passed many queer, awkward moments together.

A funny, pathetic thing! And as he thought of it a shutter in his mind opened and he saw again the girl he had left on the stoop in Schermerhorn Street, with her chic way and flashing eyes.

He wondered what she would think if she knew he had once had a boyish affair with this simple thing from his own townland; and he blushed in imagining her teasing laughter.

He warmed with a glow of pride as he thought of her,—of Miss Levine, as he somehow always called her to himself,—of her marvelous clothes, of her manicured hands and wonderful eyebrows, of her appreciation of the latest effort of a cinematograph comedian, and her up-to-dateness with the last flivver joke. He smiled, too, as he thought of the wonder with which this poor country girl would regard the metropolitan divinity.

She came into the room slowly; and, though he could distinguish little of her features or form, he felt a sense of shock, for somehow he had expected a lanky, overgrown girl with arms and hands like the awkward legs of a foal—and what he saw was a tall woman, as tall as he, who moved with the slow dignity of a queen.

She threw her cloak off and Joe took it from her, and as it fell Grant caught one instantaneous glimpse of her that effectually wiped the Brooklyn girl from his mind, like a sponge passing over a chalked slate. He saw first the great mass of black hair knotted at the back of her head, which seemed less like hair than a splash of dim, vivid color; and from a side view he saw the small nose, with the sensitive nostrils, as clearly cut as the nose on an intaglio; and the line of chin sweeping down, as it were, in one soft, firm stroke. That was all he saw for a minute—that and the flush on her cheeks.

"How are you?" she said to his mother. "And how are you, Mr. Grant? And Joe?" She turned to Grant, looked at him for an instant and put out her hand. "And this is Willie John," she said. "You 've been a long time away, Willie John."

He saw, as he looked at her, how very gray her eyes were, and how very deep—like orifices through which light shone—and how very steady. He noticed that her mouth was firm, and that she seemed to have lived each instant of her twenty-seven years; and still she was a woman with the first flush of beauty on her. She turned away to talk to his mother and he saw for the first time that her servant-girl was with her. So engrossed had he been with her entry, and so shocked by seeing her beauty, that he had seen only her.

"I 'm going to have the flax pulled on the ten-acre," she was saying —and Grant felt every syllable of her low contralto strike him clear and compelling—"so I 'm asking the neighbors fair and early. My father 's dead, Willie John—" she turned to Grant for a moment —"and I 've the place on my hands."

"Ay; I heard that, Eunice," he said. "I was sorry to hear it."

"You 'll be going back soon?" she asked.

"I 'll be going back very soon now," he said. "In a couple of weeks at most."

"I 've been wanting him to stay and settle down," his father broke in; "but there 's no use talking to him."

"Ah, there's nothing for a man here," he answered disgustedly. "It's on the other side a man gets his chance—ay, and a woman, too, for that matter."

"Is that so?" Eunice uttered; and she caught him with her serious gray eyes.

"There was Joe Carragher's daughter, from Balleek," he instanced; "you knew her well. She went over six years ago and now she 's a lady's maid in one of the big houses on Fifth Avenue. A grand position!"

"Is that so?" she repeated; her eyes had narrowed a little and she was studying him intently.

"Then there was Patrick Hagan, the brother of the captain in the Dublin Fusiliers. He 's got a saloon on Third Avenue and does a grand business."

"That's the devil's business, Willie John," his mother said quietly.

It was the first time since he came back that he had seen her without a smile on her lips.

"It's different on the other side, I tell you," Grant commented with asperity. "And there's Barney Doyle, that went over before me; he 's head waiter in one of the big places on Broadway. Do you know that fellow makes as much as seventy dollars a week in tips? Seventy dollars! Fourteen pounds!"

"His father was a great lawyer." Old Grant shook his head. "God be good to him! They called him the Star of the North."

"Fourteen pounds a week—in tips!"

Grant thought he could detect a chill, contemptuous tone in the Doran girl's voice; but he put the thought out of his head, for why should she be contemptuous? She drew her blue cloak about her.

"I think I 'll be going," she said.

"I 'll leave you a bit of the road," Grant offered.

They went out and down the loaning. Overhead a great white moon showed, a great silver plate of a thing whose beams scintillated in minute gossamer threads. Before them the road ran, as white as the moon, and everything showed in a faint purple—trees, fields, the singing river on the left of them, and the hill that rose between them and the sea. A little breeze was stirring and they could hear a soft soughing from the trees and a murmur from the beach. Somewhere behind them, on the Yellow Road probably, a corn-crake was venting its harmoniously raucous cry.

They stopped and looked about them. Beneath them the great plain of Louth lay, which Maeve of Connaught had once raided at the head of a hundred thousand men. And as Grant looked at it in the subtle moonlight the memory of forgotten legends came to him in vague uncoördinated fragments. There was Slieve Gullion behind him, where Cuala, the great artificer, hammered on his magic anvil night and day, and up whose slopes Finn MacCool had pursued the white deer without horns.

And in front of him was the sea, where for thrice three hundred years the Children of Lir had mourned in the guise of white swans. And on the hill beside him was the fortress of Bricriu of the poisoned tongue, whose satires killed men and withered the leaves on the green trees. Suddenly he heard Eunice's voice addressing him.

"I suppose you 've done well for yourself, Willie John?" she asked.

"Ay; I 've done well," he told her. "I 've got a business over there worth ten thousand dollars. And I 've built it up in twelve years."

"Ten thousand dollars!" she mused. "Two thousand pounds; that's a good deal. That's half as much as your brother Joe made, and it's a great deal more than I have myself."

"Brother Joe made!" he muttered in a tone of amazement.

"Yes—your brother Joe made," she answered naïvely. "He 's made as much as four thousand pounds trading in cattle between here and England, and buying horses for the Italian Government."

"Twenty thousand dollars!" Grant said, dumb-founded. "Brother Joe!"

"And you 've more than I have," she continued mercilessly. "The Cliff Farm is worth only eighteen hundred pounds. That's only nine thousand of your dollars."

He answered nothing, for a quick sense of shame suddenly suffused him when he remembered how much he had talked, and the others keeping so dumb. Something began tumbling very fast about him. They went up the hill and suddenly the sea stretched before them, sheer through to England, a vast surface of shimmering ripples, where the moon touched, and here and there white curling waves. And beneath them it murmured on the beach in a steady crooning. The breeze blew landward and pressed about them firmly in a cool, even motion. To the right the Cliff Farm lay, softly white, and a faint scent came down from its orchard. The servant-girl passed through the gate and up toward the house.

"America 's a great country!" Grant said aloud.

He did not know why he said it. Perhaps it was because he could find nothing else to say, and perhaps it was a sort of incantation, conjuring away the doubts that were rising in his mind.

Eunice made no answer. And as he looked at her, standing there in the moonlight and the breeze, the old affection he had for her a dozen years ago rose within him, and he wondered whether he should n't put his arm about her and kiss her for old times' sake. But the idea left him as soon as it came, for the thought of trifling with her seemed a desecration.

"It's a great place!" he said again lamely.

She swung around upon him suddenly, savagely, her head tilted, her eyes flashing. The cloak behind her stood backward with the breeze; and as he watched her, amazed, petrified almost, the thought of dead ancient Irish women flashed through his brain—Maeve, the fighting queen of Connaught; and Deirdre, who dashed herself dead against a rock; and Grainne, the king's daughter, who fled to follow Diarmuid of the Spears.

"Then why don't you stay there?" she uttered passionately.

"Why don't I stay there?" he repeated blankly.

"Why don't you stay there?" she said again. "You come back here—you and your like—with a smile on your mouth and a sneer in your eye. You come back here in your fine clothes, that you 've sweated day and night for, and taken charity to get—ay, charity! What's tips but charity?—And you lord it round for a while and tell us what fools we are—and patronize us. Patronize us!"

She swung round and fronted the low-lying land with the faint blue heat haze of summer over it, touched into silver in the June moon. The muscles of her throat were throbbing. She was poised on her feet like a bird ready for flight.

"Look down there at your father's farm," she told him. Her hand stretched toward it and her gray eyes blazed in his face. "Look at it well! Look at the corn that's green, and the rye ripening, and the stacked haggard. Look at the trees in the orchard and the fruit hanging from them, and the river alive with trout, and the mountain with its grouse and hares. And then go back to your grand business and fumble the halfpence in your greasy till!"

He said nothing. Mechanically his eyes followed her hand where it pointed, and every word ate its meaning into his brain as if etched by strong acid.

"Ay!" he said dully.

"Have you eyes to see, man?" She bent toward him with her hands outstretched and her face aflame with anger. "Or have you ears to hear? Or has groping for coppers made you blind like a mole? Or the tinkle of tuppences deafened you the like of a bat?"

"I 've got eyes," he answered sullenly.

"Use them, then!" she snapped. "And when you go back to your grand business, stop making a poor mouth about Ireland. Don't whine the like of a beggar in the street. Stop your talk about poverty-stricken Ireland, and oppressed Ireland and lazy Ireland. We 've got money here as well as you, for all your grand business; and we've got pride; and we 've got strength. And we don't want anybody talking about our sorrows, and the nations pitying us in the four corners of the earth."

He said nothing, but his face had gone white; and every now and then he winced, as though he had been caught by a whip. He wished to Heaven she would stop; and still, back in him, something had awakened that yearned to be lashed into life.

"I heard you wanted your father and mother to go back to America with you and partake of the grand business. Look at that farm-house again. Your grandfather built that with granite hewn from his own quarry. And you want them to leave that and to go off with you and grub in a huckster's booth! God's glory and the blue sky over us!"

There was the rapid flapping of wings and they saw a wedge of birds in the moonlight. Suddenly they caught the shrill clamor of the barnacle goose.

"Even the birds," she uttered with scorn, "even the birds have sense. They 're happy when they get back from roving. Not like you and your like, Willie John. If you want to go, go! And God go with you! If you want to stay, stay—and you're welcome. But don't come back for a while, croaking like a magpie chattering over a ruined hearth."

She turned to him, and the agitation and passion seemed to leave her by a great effort of will. Her hands unclenched and her voice grew calm, with even a queer crooning melody in it; but her bosom

heaved tumultuously.

"I liked you once, Willie John," she said. "I thought there was the makings of a big man in you. I mind the time at the football, and you running down the field like a hare, and no one to catch or trip you. And at the fairs I mind you putting the horses through their paces like a jockey born. And at throwing the weight there was no one of your size or years that could best you. Ay! I mind you, and your dogs following you, and your head high up in the air. I thought well of you that time, Willie John. I thought there was no one like you." She raised herself to her full height and looked at him squarely. "But now," she said, "I 'd rather have a stray tinker that does be traveling the roads."

And scornfully she left him.

IV

He came into the kitchen, two evenings later, from the parlor. His father sat by the table, reading his paper. His mother pottered about the turf fire, teasing it into flame. In a corner Joe sat, polishing the barrel of a breech-loading fowling-piece with an old rag. His father caught the glimpse of paper in his hand.

"Were you writing, Willie John?"

"Ay," Grant answered; "I was writing a letter to America."

He moved toward the fireplace and turned slowly about again to his father.

"You were saying," he asked, "that that place of McKenna's was for sale. I wonder how much he 'd want for it."

"He 'd take four thousand pounds," his father answered. "Maybe less."

"I 'm afraid I have n't got that much." Grant shook his head. "I 've only two thousand."

"We can lend you the difference, Willie John," Joe broke in. He squinted down the barrel of the rifle. "Can't we, Dad?"

"Ay sure!" his father answered.

"I 'm much obliged to both of you," Grant said.

He reached for his hat.

"Are you going out, Willie John?" his mother asked.

"I thought I 'd go up and call on Eunice Doran," Grant answered her. "I might as well be neighborly."

He went out, and there was silence in the kitchen for a few minutes. Joe clicked the lock of the gun.

"Do you mind that wild gander I put a ring on three years ago?" he asked his father. "It's back again. I saw it over the marshes to-day."

"It 'll take a mate and settle down in the marsh now." His father nodded. "It took it three years to find out that home is a good place. It's a queer, silly bird—the barnacle goose."

A little ripple of laughter came from the mother's lips as she stood over and poked the turf. The elder Grant looked up, astonished.

"What are you laughing at, Sarah Ann?" he inquired.

"I was thinking," she answered.

"What was it you were thinking about?" he pursued.

"Oh nothing!" she parried. "I was just thinking."

And she went on teasing the fire, while a subtle, affectionate smile played about the corners of her eyes.

BELFASTERS

> "Oh, I'll go down unto Belfast to see that seaport gay."—A COUNTRY POET.

To him the whole conversation, the whole setting, the whole event, was unreal as ghosts are unreal, or objects on a foggy night. Here was this woman, who had been so nigh to him, and to whom he had been so much, talking of leaving him, in as matter-of-fact a manner as though she were speaking of taking a street-car. Here

was the murk of a February evening in Belfast, the minute rain yellowing the street-lamps; the cable-cars rushing by brusquely and short-temperedly, a "get out of the way and be damned to you!" in their crashing, abrupt passage. She was thinking of leaving him, she was thinking of leaving him for good, all because of a strike, mind you! just for nothing more than a strike!

"Well, I 'd best be going," she said.

"Well—" He shifted from one foot to the other. "I think it's very foolish of you," he said.

She smiled, as he looked at her, that strange secret smile of hers that meant she had drawn into herself. He knew every expression on her face—for a year now.

"What is it you want me to do?" he asked for the fourth time.

"Give the workers in the mill what they want. They ask only bare justice. A couple o' shillings a week! What is it to you?"

"I will not." He shook his head. His great red beard shook too.

"You 're a hard man, Aleck," she said softly. "You 're no' exactly human. And you 're getting on, Aleck. You 're no' young any more. Be a wee bit soft, man. It's no shame."

"I will not."

"Ah, well!" She stepped toward the curb, ready to signal a car. He followed her with his look. Of all the women in his life she had been most to him:—she, just a working-girl! He was fond of her. He was more than in love with her. His feeling towards her was no phenomenon but an accepted fact. He admired her, too, which was more than he did any woman, though she had been more to him than any but a wife should be. He admired her for that too—she had gone into the relation so calmly, so open-mindedly, so fearlessly. He admired her; in her was no slight, common blood.

"But, Jennie, I can't leave you like that."

She turned to face him. He was abashed by her steadfast brown eyes.

"Why for no'?" she asked. "Aleck, I 'm no lassie that's been fooled. What is between us, Aleck, is because I liked you and I knew you liked me. Don't let that bother your head. I 've done you no hurt, Aleck, nor you me. That's our own affair."

"But why break like this? What for?"

"For this, Aleck. You 're the owner and the master. I 'm a worker. I 've always been a worker. You mind I 've never taken a thing from you, Aleck. I 'm one of the people you 're fighting, Aleck, and I stick by my folks. While this fight's on, Aleck, you and I are finished. That's the way I feel, Aleck. I can't change it."

"You're foolish!"

"I don't think I am." This time she signaled the car. It stopped with its ill-tempered, hurried air.

"When'll I see you again?"

"When you do what my folks ask in justice, Aleck, and not before." And she was gone.

He stood for a few minutes in the rain. A touch of panic seized him. For a year he had not been so lonely. He felt he was on the verge of doing a foolish thing.

"I will not!" he said doggedly.

He turned down the road sullenly. A great desire was on him to catch the next car and intercept her at a changing-station.

"Stop making a fool o' yourself," he said to himself. "You 'll do no such thing."

He plugged on steadily, unmindful of where he was going. He was aboil with perturbation.

"I ha'e gi'en them a couple o' raises this year a'ready!"

He was blind to everything but the action of the workers of his mill, of his father's mill, of his grandfather's mill, defying him openly and stubbornly. And now they had to take Jeanie Lindsay from him, the only woman he had liked wholly in all his days.

"To hell with them!" he said savagely. His red beard bristled.

He stopped suddenly. He shook his fist at an arc-lamp.

"I 'll close the mill," he muttered aloud. "I 'll close down. I will so. I 've just had enough o' it. They ha'e no softie in Aleck Robe'son. I 'll close it. Be damned but I will! I will! I will so!"

From Aleck Robertson's earliest infancy he had been bred to the mill, as his father had been by his father before him. It is a small, compact building, off the Falls Road, the Robertson mill is,

harboring not more than four hundred employees. But their fame is not in Belfast alone. Many the royal house in Europe before the war had its bride's linen from the Robertson factory. It is a small mill, as it should be, with a small door, and on a by-street is the lintel with the name "Robert Robertson & His Son, Founded 1803."

A queer family, these Robertsons of Belfast, very solid, very stubborn. In five generations there has been but one son to the family, and no daughters. "The Scottish weaver-bird, laying but one egg," some dry doctor dubbed them. So they be. They are a tall, solid dynasty, marrying toward middle age a bride solid as themselves. Young Aleck, red-bearded and rangy, could remember his father, as tall and rangy as he, and bearded, too, as his grandfather was, both silent, speculative men, students of the Shorter Catechism, and shrewd observers of life, possessors of the trust of glossy linen. They had their duties: to mind their own business; to take care of the mill, and to make fine cloth.

"They can see the linen in the flax, they Robertsons!" a workman of theirs once boasted, and it was true.

At Portrush golf-club you may hear about him. "The championship of Ireland," they tell me, "Captain Macneill got it then and he held it for three years and then your Uncle Simon for a year, and then Mr. Campbell o' Kilkee, and then—who was it, then?—the linen man of Belfast—what the deuce is his name? Robson? Robinson? Robertson, that's it! You'd hardly remember him; he was not a showy player, not an affable man, but sound! Ah, damned sound!"

At his school they have difficulty in recalling him. The president remembers him vaguely as a solemn youth with freckles and gigantic hands.

They seem to have gone through life, he and his mill, with one object in the world—to produce linen that is the pride of Ulster. They have each their worthy, definite place in the world. On him there rests the mill, a legacy as important and dynastic in its way as one of the former German principalities. He toured Ireland studying flax. He saw it raise its bluish green stems in spring, soft as down. He saw it rise and the wind ruffle and bend it, like still water. He saw the strange blue flower break out on it, as blue as a near star. It

was plucked from the ground in summer time, acres and acres of it plucked carefully by a numerous population, and stacked like corn. And the nights after the flax-pulling there would be great joy-making in the villages, dancing and singing and drinking and love-making under the inscrutable Irish stars. It was taken then to the dikes and left rotting in the water, while mephitic gases rolled over the country-side. It was then scutched in the scutch-mills, where wheels run by water, by men with querulous dispositions and hacking consumptive coughs. To him and his like it came then, in soft, glossy, whitish strands, like the hair of Scandinavian women. He turned it over to his operatives, weavers and throwsters and pickers, men hunchbacked from bending over their looms, and women very free in their ways and not often pretty. Now it covered the stubborn hills of Ulster and soon it covered the groaning tables of kings.

"It's an unco thing, the flax!" his Scots-Irish workmen used to say. Aleck Robertson had the same thought, when he considered, though he never phrased it, that the prosperity and good fame and management of his linen-mill was his religion.

Life for him flowed by in a groove as regular and as well fitting as one of the bands on his own looms. Since his father died, ten years ago, he had been following the same routine, getting up in the morning, in the club where he stayed, and going to work, taking a street-car—though the Robertson firm was famous, it was not rich—attending to the work, and coming back in the evenings to spend the time with a few friends over a tumbler of Scotch.

"Why for do you no' take a wife and settle down, Aleck?" an occasional friend asked him.

"Och, I 'm all right as I am," he would answer.

Life at thirty-eight had become for Aleck Robertson a succession of minor hedonisms. He liked the sting of the shower-bath in the morning, the goodly taste of breakfast. He liked to hear the bustle and rumble of the works as he entered. He liked his lunch. He enjoyed his game of golf, and his occasional holidays in Scotland, or France, where he patronized the bathing-beaches, and played for small stakes at *petits chevaux*. Every week he attended a music-hall, and occasionally he was seen as escort to a minor actress.

"Aleck!" some of his cronies said. "He's a card!"

He had, for such girls as were not frightened by his beard and his position, a queer, provocative glint in his eye, which they would savor and giggle at.

"He 's a pleasant fellow, Mr. Robertson," they agreed. "He could be fine and pleasant to a girl he liked, I 'll warrant you! They do say —" and here some immaterial scandal was told.

It was strange how he ran across Jean Lindsay, for he made it a rule to have nothing to do socially—if one could call it socially—with the girls in the mill. He had noticed her a few times about the place —a stately sort of girl with calm brow and eyes. He admired the fine figure she had—the shapely arms and rich bosom. A woman, that! None of your fragile dolls! And twice he had seen her leave the works at quitting time, a figure in a Paisley shawl and skirt and blouse, none of the cheap finery of the mill worker.

"Yon 's a fine girl!" he thought, and forgot her.

It was one night on Cave Hill he discovered her again, a soft June night with a half-moon in the sky. He had been out for a tramp and sat down to watch the city beneath him. He heard a rustle in the heather beside him. He got up immediately.

"I beg your pardon." He noticed suddenly a girl looking at him, seated not ten yards away. "I did n't know there was any one here."

"It's all right, Mr. Robertson." The voice was calm and self-possessed as that of any woman of the great world. He had to look a few instants before he recognized her.

"You 've seen me at the works," she explained.

"Why, of course I have," he remembered. "What are you doing here all alone?"

"Oh, I like to come up of an evening among the heather," she told him. "It's a bonny wee flower. I don't wonder the bees love it. The Danes," she added slowly, "used to make a heather ale, but that's gone now. It must have tasted fine."

"It's a queer hour to come here."

"It's a lot of other time I have," she replied, "and I tending your weavers from all but dawn until the fall o' day! I like it this time, though, for you see things now you would n't see in the daytime.

You can hear the plover at night, calling like children. And just now a badger passed me, gray as a gaffer. I bees waiting, too," she said, and she smiled, "when the moon comes up to see the fairies dancing on the hillside. There must be a lot o' the child in me," she explained, "because I do be thinking long."

"There's not many girls come up here their lonesome."

"There 's none think me beauty enough to come with."

"Thon 's a town of blind men." And they both laughed.

"Maybe I 'm not missing much."

"By God! You are!" And he leaned forward and kissed her.

That night when he went home, thinking over the kissing and the laughing and the gentle caresses, the thing that impressed him most was how natural it all had been. She had received it all, and he had given it, as though it were just like the scented heather, and the wind and the moon. He met her another night by careful chance, and again there was all of the child in her, eagerness and pensiveness and artless kissing and bubbling laughter. He could feel her eyes laugh.

He met her a third time on the great hill above the town, and this time it was by appointment. She had become a great pleasantness to him, a greater pleasantness than he could ever have imagined before, there was something so apart from the world. The thought of meeting that night made his great chest heave involuntarily.

That night he sensed, when he met her, she was all woman, not child alone. He kissed her and they sat down in the springy heather bells. She was silent.

"It's been a long day," she said at length, "a long, long day." She looked at him and smiled.

He turned to catch her up to him. She held him at the length of her arm.

"What is your name?" she asked. "Your first name?"

"Aleck."

"Do you mean true, Aleck?" Not only her mouth, but her eyes, her whole being was questioning. "Aleck, do you mean true?"

"Ay! I mean true."

And he had became her lover, her secret lover.

For one whole year she was a delight and a mystery to him. There was not in him, though, the whirling passion that makes for love epics. It was just good for him to know her. Had he been twenty he would have married her, nor been content until he had her bound by candle, book, and bell. But he was in his thirties now, and steady and solid and wise. She asked nothing of him. She accompanied him here and there, to Bangor, to Antrim Glens, dressed in modest decency. Their relation she accepted with dignity. She was not possessive, as a commoner woman might be. She was not fulsome in her affection for him. It was very restrained.

"I like you well, Aleck," was all she uttered. "I like you fine, my big red man."

At the works she never noticed him, nor he her. Once, indeed, he had wanted her to leave and take a little house somewhere, but her eyes had flashed terribly at the first words.

"I 'm sorry, Jeanie," he faltered. "I 'm queer and sorry."

"You hurt me," she confessed. "You did so." She relented at his distress. "Ah, sure, don't take on about it. A wee word—it comes out so easy. I should not have looked so fierce. But I know you did n't mean to belittle me, Aleck."

He could never quite understand her. No woman in his life had ever acted so. There had been venal women, and foolish women, and women whom other women would instinctively recognize as evil. But Jean was a mixture of the opposites of these things, and she was also Jean.

He loved to stand and watch her. She reminded him of a picture he had once seen—one of a series of four depicting the seasons; and Jean resembled the one called "Autumn," a figure of a woman in a purple Grecian robe walking through a wood of falling leaves, a mature woman, with kindliness and wisdom in her eyes, and a certain proud grace to her. Jean often looked like that.

She thought, too, in a simple way. Her opinions were definite as rocks.

"It's no' right, Aleck!" She would raise her brown eyes calmly and fearlessly to him, discussing a manner of trading or a phase of municipal politics.

She had only one fault to find with him. She would pat his head and say:

"There 's only one thing about you, Aleck, you 're not exactly human. There 's a wee thing missing somewhere, red fellow. They workers of yours, they 're no more in your eye than the machinery they handle. I 'd like to have you a wee bit softer, Aleck. I would so."

"I 'm soft enough toward you," he would object.

"It's no' the same thing, mannie. You 're soft toward me because I 'm close to you. But outside that you 're hard. You don't see people. You must n't think with the head, Aleck. You must think a wee bit wi' the heart. Na, na! Toward every one, I mean."

He often regretted, in his club at night, after leaving her, that she was not the sort of person he could marry. It would be so pleasant to have a house with her in it, the fine big woman, with the wise head and the warm heart, with the temperament rich as wine. She would go well in a house of her own, fitting in it naturally, as some fine old clock would, or some mellow furniture of long ago. And to be greeted by her in the evening—

"It would be queer and pleasant," he thought in his stilted Belfast idiom. "Och, ay! It would that!"

But she was not the manner of woman the Robertsons married. His dead fathers would turn in their graves were he to pick a wife from out the mill-hands.

The august and chaste and cold assembly of the Robertson wives had no room in it for anything as warm and handsome and as plebeian as Jean. The wives the Robertsons chose were of their own rank, meager spinsters with a little money, with the accomplishments of gentlewomen, the playing of certain tunes on the piano, the knitting of afghans, the speaking of a prim English instead of Belfast Scots—an acidulous gentility.

Ay! If it hadn't been so!

The interview with the foreman had been stormy. It became furious. It had ended disastrously, so disastrously he did n't care a tinker's curse.

"I ha'e gi'en you two raises a'ready, and here you 're back for more. Be damned to it, men, is it the king's mint you take me for?"

"Ay, you ha' gi'en us the raises, Mister Aleck, but the rents ha' raised again. There 's no place to flit to tha' 's cheaper. The price o' food is unchristian—"

"Is that my fault?"

"Na! Na! It's no' your fault. It's just the times. And there 's childer comin'—"

"Is that my fault?"

"Ah, Mister Aleck, be reasonable! We got to live. Down at Richardson's mill they 're gi'en the third raise. And at the United—"

"Now, listen to me, men," he roared like a maddened bull. "You 've got to make a choice. Either get on with what you have, or I 'll close the mill. I swear to my God I 'll close the mill."

"We 've got to live," the men said sullenly. An old workman stepped out.

"Mister Aleck," he pleaded, "I 've worked for your da all my life, and I was a wee nipper when your grandfa'er was here. I mind him well. You 've got neither chick nor child, and if you have n't, the mill goes wi' you—"

Good God! So it did. He had never thought of that.

"—so it is n't as though you wanted the money—"

"I will not!" One part of his brain formulated the reply and his lips uttered it. The other part was busy on this new discovery, that with him the mills died. Of course they did.

"Well, then, be damned to you! Close your mill!"

"Be damned to the whole lot of you! Take your week's notice from the day. Saturday week the mill closes, and I swear to my God it never opens again."

Why should it, he asked himself when they were gone, why should it?

He sat back after they had left him and for an instant the magnitude of the thought that there would be no successor shook him physically, left him all of a tremble. He had never thought of it before, incredible as that may seem.

"No! There'll be no other. I'm the last." He lighted a match to put to his pipe, but he let it go out. "I 'm the last."

All his life, at this moment, seemed shattered—the comfortable running order of it junked into a grotesque and cold puzzle, as a complicated engine will be ruined by a thunderbolt. The mills were gone, for he would not give in to any raise, and Jeanie Lindsay too—she was so much to him, so much that she obtruded herself on every thought he had.

For the first time in his existence, sitting on the ruin, it occurred to him after all what a poor thing this complicated mechanism had been. He could remember his boyhood, a drear Sabbatical term of years, spent with a bearded father and a thin, acidulous mother. At school he had not been liked.

"It was no' so pleasant, now that I come to think of it."

And he was supposed to approach a strict spinster in marriage, that the destiny of the Robertsons should be accomplished; to be intimate with a frigid stranger, that another lonely and not-liked boy would be brought into the world, between a dour father and a mother of marked gentility, in a house that was cold no matter how warm the summer, and dark though the sun shone.

"I will not!"

The face of the Lindsay girl came between him and the tepid vision he had conjured, as in some motion-picture device. And he saw her warmth and bonniness, her slow laughter, her calm eyes. Why, under God's name, must she be born in a region where the Robertson tradition did not pick? Why must she be so desirable, and eligible wives so insipid?

"Ah, be damned to her!" he snapped viciously. "The whole thing can go to the de'il. It's a dog's life, that's what it is, and I 'm through. Ay, I am so."

For a year he wandered across Europe, and to and fro in it. He saw Denmark and Jutland, and though he had sworn good-by to linen, he could not help examining the quality of the flax grown there, and he did n't think much of it—as no good Belfast man should. He visited Holland and approved the industrious population, but adjudged them "o'er pleased wi' themsel's." Paris he knew before, but it palled on him now. One of his old dreams had been to go there with Jeanie Lindsay. "It's kind o' empty," he thought. England rather irritated him. People there, knowing he came from Ireland, wished to know what he thought of Home Rule and were shocked when they heard it. He went north to Scotland for golf, and the flat Scot accent made him homesick for Belfast.

"I think I 'll just run over to see how the old town 's getting on." The truth was, though he would n't acknowledge it to himself, he wanted to get news of Jeanie Lindsay. How was she? And was she the same as ever? And was she—the thought stabbed him strangely—laughing her slow laugh and looking her calm look for some other than he?

News he got of her quickly and with a vengeance. Going across Donegal Place he was tapped on the arm.

"I 'd like a wee word wi' you, Mr. Aleck Robertson."

He saw beside him a compact figure with a set jaw and savage eyes. He was mostly cognizant of the eyes. They blazed at him with unconcealed hatred.

"And who may you be?"

"You 'll know me fine afore I 'm through with you, Aleck Robertson. I 'm Tom Lindsay, Jeanie Lindsay's brother."

Robertson forgot the eyes in the question that jumped to his lips. He held out his hand.

"I ha'e heard her speak o' you. You 're the one that went to Newcastle, to the shipbuilding. And how 's Jean?"

Lindsay struck the proffered hand down.

"She 's the way you left her, wi' this difference: There 's a bastard o' yours on her arm this four months. And do you know what I 'm going to do to you for that, Aleck Robertson? I 'm going to kill you!"

"Wi' a baby!"

"Wi' a baby o' yours!"

"Wi' a baby o' mine!" Robertson was plainly dazed.

"You were no' expecting that, maybe?"

"No! I was no' expecting that." The big man tried to pull his faculties together.

"And where is she now? She 's no' gone away, is she?"

"No! She 's no' gone away. And she 's not where she might be, for all you did—in the poor-house! Nor tramping the streets, selling matches! No! She 's at home. In her father's house—"

"At home, you say?"

"She 's at home." Tom Lindsay put himself in Robertson's way. "And, now, listen to me—"

The red-bearded man shoved Tom aside as though he were a troublesome bush in the path.

"Will you get to hell out o' my way," he roared, "afore I gi'e you a clout on the lug?"

He started at breakneck speed down the street. The brother looked after him silently, his jaw loose with wonder.

He pushed aside the little gate in front of the garden and though he knocked at the door, he tried it, so impatient was he for entry, and finding it on the latch, he opened it as a gust of wind might. In the hall he met her coming to answer the knock, and suddenly as he saw her, all the bluster and the heartiness went out of him, and his knees turned to water and there was a great catch in his throat. He wanted to see her only, but the baby she had on her arm was she also, both of them one. It suddenly occurred to him that he too was a part of her, all three of them one. And he felt suddenly as Saul must have felt when, going toward Damascus, he was stricken to the earth.

She smiled at his perturbation. "I 'm glad to see you, Aleck." Calmly she shifted the child to her left arm. She put out her hand to him and he caught it and held on to it as a foundering sailor hangs on to a thrown line. She led him to the parlor.

"Have you no word," she smiled, "for me and this wee fellow o' yours?"

He looked at the both of them, she more like Ceres, the autumn spirit, than ever, buxom and wise and calmly happy, and the little thing of down and fluttering life in her arms, soft as a newly hatched chick, he sensed.

"When," he asked, and his voice in his own ears was hoarse as the cawing of a rook, "when are you going to marry me?"

"I 'm no' so sure," she said calmly, "that I 'm going to marry you at all."

"You 're going to marry me, Jeanie, and I 'll start the mill again, and we 'll all be fine—"

"And you 'll gi'e the working people the raises they're entitled to?"

"I will not," he flashed out suddenly, as of old. "They 're entitled to nothing."

"Then I'll ha' nothing to do wi' you." She looked at him calmly. "Nor will this wee fellow. I 'm a working-woman, Aleck, and he 's a working-woman's son. We 're no' your kind."

He saw the baby's face now, crumpled with sleep. Very like an old man's face it seemed to him, and yet there was something indefinably pulling about it.

"The wee workin'-fellow!" There was such a pathetic touch to the idea.

"By God!" he blurted suddenly. "I'll gi'e them the mill!"

She smiled again. "The wee thing then was missing in you, Aleck —I think you got it now. And I 'll marry you, Aleck, just when you say. It's no' too soon," she added simply.

For a minute he was sunk in abstraction while she patted his hand with the old, familiar gesture. He raised his head and spoke with conviction.

"You know, Jeanie, you know, it's queer to think that an hour ago I had no idea of all this. You and thon wee fellow, and the mill's working again and a' right between me and the men. I had made an

end, and now there 'll be no end. You know, it seems ordained in a manner of speaking. Ay, as it were, ordained. It does," he said. "It does that. Ay, indeed. It does so."

THE KEEPER OF THE BRIDGE

I

Every time he came back, after a brief visit in the South American capital, to the gorge where he was building the great bridge, Lovat's heart would throb and his throat swell with pride as he looked at the great stone structure spanning the Andean chasm. First the little train would come puffing and straining up the grade, on the iron path between the lavish tropic greenery. Then there were the peaks of mountains, daring the sky, their tops lightly muffled with snow. *Nevada*, went the Spanish word, soft as the snow itself. Then, imminent, one felt, was the drop of the gorge, a dramatic descent that stopped the heart in its rhythmic beating. "Here is the end!" one said. And then the bridge!

Soaring, splendid, slender, strong, its arches spanning the tumbling river beneath, the great bridge ran like a rainbow from mountain to mountain. Lovat thought of it, with its lightness, its perfection, its spurning of the ground, as a spirit that crossed with winged unwetted feet the challenging river beneath. It suggested, somehow, Artemis in the dusk, with a tongue of fire above her proud brow.

The wonder and the miracle of it never failed to thrill him. All the harsh practical details of his work, details of thrust and strain, of fitting springer to pier, and voussoir to springer, of the curve of intrados, of the strength of abutments, never took away from him the sense that he had done, was doing, a great and practical thing. These mountains, that composition of jungle, that smashing drop to the turbulent river, the snarling waters themselves—all these were the work of the Great Mason, the detail of his Divine Hand. So they

were when and so they had remained since the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them, and He rested on the seventh day from all the work which He had made.

But a day would come, the Master of the Masons knew and had ordained, when the welter of passionate nature would subside, and the small race of mankind He had fashioned would reach a place of progress in their journey when this would have to be bridged. Then one of His prentice men would do it. And Lovat experienced a sense of holiness that he had been the chosen one.

Lovat looked at the bridge with wonder and with pride each time he returned, but each time he returned he felt somehow that the bridge had been jealous of his absence, resented it, became temperamental as a woman. Whilst he was there everything was right. There were accidents, of course, but they were the recognized risks of a great venture, the ordinary failure of the human factor in a Titanic equation. But when he was away strange things happened. Now an unaccountable error in laying this or that, now a sudden collapse of machinery, now a terrible accident to the native workmen. But when he was there, all was well. It seemed as if the bridge demanded all his time, all his talent, all his attention.

It occurred to him there was a sort of contest between him and the bridge, a sort of quiet, deadly fight, as between a man and a spirited horse he is riding in a steeplechase. He felt, too, that all the strange things about him knew it—the surly river, the whispering jungle, the majestic mountains, the cold observant stars. These could tell him what it was, for they had observed all things, seeing history begin and peoples fade and nations rise. They had seen great prehistoric animals flap wings terrible and dark as a demon's. They had seen these things die and be forgotten. They were of nature and knew humanity, and they could tell him, if they wished.

But they told nothing. They observed the cruel law of silence, which all nature knows and dead men learn. The business was his and the bridge's. Let the twain fight it out.

"I 'm getting morbid, up here in the mountains," Lovat complained, and he turned abruptly to think of a month from now, when Cecily would come south from New York to marry him in Cartagena, and to be with him for the last days before the bridge

was opened. Her dark, serious eyes and cloudy hair and serious smiling mouth were before him, but the shadow of the bridge rose between him and the vision of her like a barred door....

II

There were two mysteries in Simon Lovat's life. One was how he, a poor Highland Scots-born boy, reared in abject poverty, had ever come to be the great architect he was. And the other was how he had become engaged to Cecily Stanford, Gamaliel Stanford's only daughter, and Gamaliel Stanford was a millionaire.

He hated to think of his infancy in the little Argyle town where he was born. He hated even to think of his boyhood in New York. People, he felt, would n't understand it. They might talk of being hungry, but did they know what hunger for years was, abject hunger, malnutrition? Did these well-fed men who talked of hardship know, could they conceive of a family to whom for years a nickel meant the difference between butter on bread and dry bread? They talked of slums, and dirt, and poverty, but he kept his mouth closed. Were he to tell them what he knew of these—he himself—might they not draw back from him as they would draw back with a shudder from a man who had been close to lepers? Fine words mean so little in this world.

All his life until seven years ago, when he was twenty-five, had been a succession of cold ill-fed days, relieved by the magic thrill of bridges.

There had been a viaduct here, a railroad span there, an Egyptian arch somewhere else in Argyle that would vibrate some chord within him. A rainbow would flush him with sudden beauty. And in New York the wonder of the bridges made up for heartburnings and disappointments. The gossamer span to Brooklyn affected him like a long note on a hunting-horn. At times human weaknesses would boil within him, as when he thought with rage that other boys and men must be uplifted by the prizes and scholarships they won, feeling the pride of combat and of victory, but to him they meant

only the wherewithal to live for himself and his mother and sisters. Other boys were welcomed with feastings when they had achieved success, but success meant to him only the filling of famished hands —not that he grudged it, God knows! but one hungers for a little praise, a little recognition, as one hungers for food. And then had come the days of obscurity, working for others until Gamaliel Stanford, the big, bluff builder, had recognized his genius and given him his chance. He did fine work for Stanford.

Stanford, the self-made millionaire, wished after the fashion of his kind to patronize the genius he had found, and so he brought him here, brought him there, to his club, to golf-links, to his house. And there Lovat met Cecily, Stanford's daughter....

III

At thirty-one Lovat met people with ease, for they meant little to him, men or women. Men, outside his own profession, were mere figures to him. They did n't count. He spoke to them in the chit-chat of the day, and when they mentioned architecture, he changed the subject deftly. The alembication of engineering and art they could n't understand, so why talk of it? Women he didn't mind so much. They had a soft place in his heart, because they had been good to him as a boy and child whom there had been few to care for.... And he had had his little love-affairs, natural as the phases of the moon— calf-love, sentiment, adoration, passion. They had loitered, knocked, passed by. None had ever touched that inmost self of him to whom God had once called and said seriously: "You are to build bridges."

And then he saw Cecily Stanford coming toward him with her serious shining eyes.

IV

She did not say to him the ordinary, obvious things a woman says when she meets a man. She held his hand for an instant and looked at him.

"When I saw the bridge you built at Indian Ford," she told him, "I was afraid to meet you. Afraid I might be disappointed in what you were. You might have been a chunky, merry man who treats his genius as a favorite, halloing to it when needed, proud of it, patronizingly modest. Or you might have been an angular, unsure man, jealous of his talent's fame, comparing it as one compares horses. But you are just you, Simon Lovat, and your bridge is you, and you are your bridge. I 'm blessed to see you this day."

As he watched her he seemed to be watching not a woman but some fine spirit that struck a silver note in its movement. Like a silver flame in the dusk she appeared to him. There was so much spirit to her that nothing else really mattered. The strain of Highland mysticism in him gave him an uncanny power of seeing people as they were, not as they seemed to the outward eye. He could look at a certain man and say to himself with certainty, "At death that man dies," or at some sweet-faced woman, repressed, waiting, and know, "At death this woman's life begins." He saw Cecily Stanford and said: "This woman endures forever. She lives now and she will live always."

And then from the spirit within his eyes went to the body without, as one might look first at some gracious womanhood and be all eyes for her presence, forgetting for the nonce the queenly satins that clothed it. He saw her hair, like a blue cloud. Her eyes he knew. He saw the skilful symmetry of face, a little, longish face with lips half open, eagerly. He sensed the littleness of her figure, the long, firm line from knee to ankle, the small bosom, the loveliness of arms. He saw the firm, sensitive hands.

And yet she might have been nothing to him but a gracious memory, as of some splendid day, but that she was whole-heartedly interested in and understood the importance of bridges. Some generous arch, or some line of a writer's might have turned her heart that way once, and set her on that broad masonic road the

charm of which endures a lifetime. A book may trouble or a picture inspire one, but those are of the spirit. But a bridge is of spirit and body. One sees the architect, one sees the art, one sees the courage and grandeur and beauty. A history of bridges is a history of the world, of its wars, its commerce, its progress. And the thoughts about it are without end.

And she could speak of all that to him. She understood the mystic errand of the builder of bridges, which is to be the servant of unborn men. Old wisdom that had been lost was reborn in her. She could feel why the heads of a great religion should call themselves proudly sovereign pontiffs—pontiff, *pontifex*, builder of bridges. She could understand the reverence that stirred in Highlanders when they crossed a bridge and removed their bonnets. "God bless the builder of the bridge!" their prayer went.

She could understand the ideals of an ancient age, when a community of monks called themselves the Pontist Brothers, the *Frères Pontifes*. Modest, white-robed, they built bridges of great fame, they operated ferry-boats, they fed and housed pilgrims. But their greatest care was the building and upkeep of bridges. Before Pius II suppressed them, they built the Pont Saint-Esprit over the Rhone, one of the largest stone bridges in the world; a thousand meters long, it is, with twenty-six great arches. Surely their spirits guard it still!

She could understand the arrogant cry of the Roman architect when he finished the great Alcantare over the Tagus. "*Pontem perpetui mansurum in saecula mundi*," Lacer smiled. "It shall see the end of the world." The Saracen trampled and Charles V rebuilt it. Wellington's troops blew it up, and the Carlists fought on its Titanic arches. All these causes are forgotten now. But the bridge, the bridge remains.

And because she understood these things, she understood Simon Lovat, and got close to his heart, which none had ever been near.

V

Lovat told her his fear that never again would great stone bridges be built. The days of beauty in bridges were past, like the days of chivalry. Long steel suspension bridges, with their infinity of metal triangles, or marvels of carpentry, such as the Portage Bridge over the Genesee. But never again would they build bridges such as the Romans did, like the dreadful Pont du Gard at Nîmes.

"They will, Simon," she told him. "You will build like that."

"Never, Cecily. Never again!"

"Yes, Simon. I know."

"All those days are gone, Cecily."

"Not for you." The conviction would shine from her eyes. "I know it here—" she touched her head—"and here—" she touched her bosom.

And he was persuaded somehow that she was right, though his head told him she could not be, for cement and steel are cheaper and quicker, and only cheapness and rapidity obtain now that people no longer dream of to-morrow. And the soldier's honor and the sailor's courage, and the writer's fire and the builder's genius—yes, and the dreams of great merchants, too, Lovat grimaced—are curbed and roweled by the huckster's purse. Impossible! But somehow because she believed it, the thought took form and substance in his heart, that one day he would build a great bridge—of stone.

How they came so close to each other, neither knew. It was just as natural as a tree growing out of the green ground. They came so close that they could be silent, each with the other, for a long time, each knowing, feeling what the other thought. Then they would smile at each other with a strange seriousness....

One afternoon, in the December dusk, his heart opened suddenly, and all, all the horror of his early years came rushing like a flood from a broken dam. Why he told her he didn't know. He didn't believe it possible to tell any one. Yet here he was, standing by the window of the drawing-room, looking out at the street glistening

with fog, while she sat huddled in a great arm-chair by the log fire. And out of his lips in harsh staccato sentences came the sordidness of his infant days....

"... We were pleased when we found it. And Joan took it under a shawl and went out. But we had forgotten that the pawnbroker closed at six. So there was nothing to eat until he should open in the morning.... We all cried...."

He was interrupted by her terrible fit of sobbing. Suddenly he came out of his tragic vision.

"I 'm sorry I should have horrified you," he said, aghast. "I don't know what came over me to tell such things. I 'll go."

But she was in his arms, weeping bitterly. "To think that you and I should have been in the same city! And I had everything, and you nothing. You hungry! Cold! Oh, Simon! Simon!" Though they were as close as this, as close as birds in a nest are, yet there had never been between them any talk of marriage, any talk of life other than they were leading that week. He knew he loved her tremendously, but fear of refusal and Scots pride because he was poor kept the question in his heart. And she, because she was modest as she was brave, never said anything, though she knew, she knew...

At last the miracle happened. Two South American commonwealths, with the hearts of children and the bravery of men, decided to span the Andes with an immense bridge. They saw only peaceful progress in front of them, not war. The bridge was to be of stone, because stone was plentiful and labor cheap, and to bring steel up the mountain gorge would be a wasteful undertaking. First a German architect was to have the work, for they had the foothold there, and then an Englishman stepped in confidently. But old Gamaliel Stanford had his friends in New York, heads of great fruit companies and immense agricultural-machinery syndicates, and banks powerful as nations. So Simon Lovat was chosen.

When he and Cecily were told, he was dumb. She said nothing, but her shining eyes spoke, and she sat and watched the proud throw of his head as he thought of arches as powerful as the Romans', of great spans one hundred and fifty feet in width, of

voussoirs weighing each eighty tons of stone. Suddenly he knew her eyes were showering him with joy and confidence, and he put out his hand fearfully.

"When this is done, Cecily—" he was red as a school-boy—"would you—could you—will you marry me?"

"Whom else could I marry, dearest one?" she answered simply.

VI

Now they were married and moved into their house, a cool bungalow on the green hills. Love and passion abode with them, silent and strong and clean as the winds on the great bridge below. Above them of nights was the immense mosaic of the stars—the stars of the North, and the stars Northerners knew not; the Southern Cross, the false cross and the True, and an infinity of little worlds to southward yet unnamed, and which mariners had marked with quaint Greek letters in their charts. When the moon arose it was tremendously near, as near as Africa, so they could distinguish the immense blue mountains and the dips and whorls of her to whom poets had given fanciful, colorful names: the Bay of Rainbows, the Green Lagoon. And all about them at night were movement and mystery,—the screeching of parakeets, the chattering and whistling of monkeys,—and in the dark green jungle there was rustling, as of pied serpents, and crackling, as of jaguars with limbs of flame.

And then the dawn would come, and the earth, a mysterious womanhood by night, would enter with the sun as a gracious lady. Clothed in glistening green, and jeweled with humming-birds and the sheen of parrots, she was like some barbaric princess of ancient days, such as Balkis, Queen of Sheba, must have been when she went forth from Arabia Felix to view the magnificence of Solomon the king.

There was mystery at night and there was majesty in the daytime, and that all of nature, and then a little path of the mountainside, a little turn, a pace a big man could make, and there arose suddenly

concentration and genius, the bridge. One felt stunned at seeing it; a man might catch his breath and swear, a woman might cry, so great was its drama. Arch by white arch it spanned the tropic gulf, and above it, straight as an arrow, ran the line of roadway. Superb and splendid and slender, it joined the green-clad mountains, as the web of a master spider joins two branches of a tree. Very high it was, "so high that it was dreadful," the words of Ezekiel came to one's mind, and beneath it now swirled, now weltered the tropic river, on its way to join the Amazon, greatest of waters.

And yet somehow the bridge loitered, refused to be finished, brooded, sulked. So much did it fight against him that had it not been for his wife Cecily, time and time again Lovat would have lost heart.

But she was there with him, and in some hidden mystical way she had to do with the bridge. One look at her, one touch of her, and he regained courage and patience. Silently and strong she moved by his side, by day in her man's breeches and gaiters and sport coat, by night in her dark-blue garment with its rolling collar of white, somehow like a monk's but of line and beauty. Very like a flower she was, a Northern flower, straight and slender and supple and velvety, and strong. Yes, she had to do with the bridge, for he had only to look into her serious smiling eyes, and to him, through her, out of somewhere, flowed strength and wisdom.

Yes, she had to do with the bridge, he knew. Her being here was not fortuitous. That she was a young bride on her honeymoon in an enchanted land, was not, as it is to most women, the only thing in the world. They were two lovers, but they were oblivious of all things, sympathized with by all things. The bridge was there. And between him and her and the bridge there existed some strange link of destiny. There were three of them. Two of them were happy, but the bridge was sullen. Two of them were uncertain, but the bridge was sure.

VII

Out of dumb rock and lifeless iron the bridge arose. First these were only amorphous objects, and then through the fire of genius was evoked an entity. The bridge had a personality strong as a man's, as houses have personalities, and some trees. It rose there strong and slim and beautiful and of use to men, but terrible as an army with banners. And though Simon Lovat and his wife Cecily said nothing to each other about it, yet there arose in both their minds that the bridge demanded and needed something. And ancient lore of bridges came to them in lightning flashes of memory—old stories of terror that told of human sacrifice before a bridge would stand. What ancient mysticism made the priests of the Pons Sublicius of olden Rome throw dummies of human beings into the Tiber on festal days? What horror of old made British Vortigern build his castle over the dead body of a murdered boy? Even in China of to-day, a pig was thrown into the river in times of flood, that the bridge should hold. And gnarled old masons told tales....

Old wives' tales! Ancient vile superstition! And yet, what wisdom had departed from the world since ancient days! Not spiritual wisdom alone but material wisdom. How were the great blocks of the pyramids raised? We were n't certain of that! The mighty things of Easter Island, yes, and the great stone legacies of the Incas! We did n't know. And the progress of the world was not spiritual. It was material. And we were n't even certain of material things.

Why did they do it, Lovat pondered! Was it a sacrifice to the bridge itself? A tribute to the idol they had made with their own hands? Hardly! For that would be the idea of barbarians, and barbarians never built great bridges. Was it a sacrifice to the cruelty of the great elements that might endanger the bridge? Possibly. And yet storm was so powerful and so cruel when it felt that way that nothing would hinder it. What was it? He did n't know.

And yet the bridge demanded, needed something.

Cecily felt it,, too, he knew, for she spoke one evening in the lamplight, with averted eyes.

"Dearest one, it sounds a silly question, but why are you building the bridge?"

"Because it's my work, Cecily, to build bridges." He felt what she meant.

"Dearest one, if the bridge were to fall, you would be heartbroken, would n't you?"

"I 'm afraid I should, Cecily."

"Why, dearest one? Is it because you are proud of your bridge? That you want generations to remember you by your bridge?"

"No, Cecily," he thought seriously, "it is n't that. I—I 'm just a helper of the Master Mason, and if the bridge were to fall, I should feel I was a poor, an unworthy helper. That's how I feel, Cecily. That's why I should be heart-broken."

She put down the sewing work she was doing, and came to him, her eyes misty. She took his hands. She knelt by his side.

"I know, my lover," she whispered, a little huskily, "but your bridge will never fall. Believe it, dearest one. Believe it night and day."

But the bridge bothered him. And all her wise courage could not still its silent clamor. He could watch the ant-like battalions of men as they laid stone on stone, chanting in the guttural Chibcha as the bridge-builders of Persia chanted when they built the Perl-i-Khaju at Ispahan. But above their voices came the silent voice of the bridge, loud as thunder. Until he could stand it no longer.

"What is it you want? In God's name what do you want?"

"You know."

"I don't know."

"Ta-wak knew when he builded the great wall of China."

"I don't know."

"King Cheops knew when he builded his great pyramid at Ghizeh."

"But I don't know."

"The Romans knew when they raised the bridges of Gaul. You know, building me."

"I don't know. I won't know." Lovat broke from the place, his forehead damp with perspiration. And as he went toward his cottage, it seemed to him that the jungle and the mountains and all

the creatures of the wilds were watching with their inhuman apathetic eyes the Titanic struggle between himself and the thing he had conceived into being, out of lifeless iron and dumb stone.

VIII

For two days in the South American city Lovat now raged like a madman, now was limp and gray as if all life had left. The storm crashed like artillery. The wind swirled in terrific outshoots of uncontrolled power. Rain whorled like a water-burst. And all the time there ran through Lovat's head the unending, pounding rhythm: "The bridge! The bridge is down! Is down! The bridge! The bridge is down!" Statesmen and ministers looked at him in pity, forgetting the country's loss in the great grief of the artist.

Cecily he was n't worried about. He knew she was all right. There was an army to take care of her there, and their home was solid, would last against the deluge.

Three days ago and no warning of this cataclysm.

And now, to-day! To-day was like the Day of Judgment. To be sure, a half-crazy astronomer had predicted the end of the world, and sane scientists had pooh-poohed it, saying that there might be bad weather from the stellar conjunctions, but outside of that—nothing. And then, suddenly, this immensity of flood. Down in the lowlands, on the shore of the Caribbees, there had been havoc past imagining. Whole towns were swept away. There had been no chance of getting in touch with the bridge. All telegraph wires were down.

Now it was Wednesday, and on Sunday he had left to discuss some details of the opening with the ministry and he had asked Cecily to come with him, but she would not go.

"Lover, no," she had said; "I would rather stay here by the bridge."

"But, Cecily, you have n't been away from here in two months. Would n't you like to come to the city? There 'll be clothes to buy and people to see, and an opera from Madrid. Come, Cecily."

"Dearest one, no!" she had refused. She smiled. "One of us must stay by the bridge."

"But, Cecily—"

"No! No!"

She loved the bridge as much as he.

On the little platform of the working railroad station he had said good-by to her. The train started and she ran alongside.

"Stop the train!" she cried.

He pulled the emergency cord.

"What is it, Cecily? Changing your mind?"

"Dearest one, I just want to kiss you again before you go. Just once more. I 'm a silly woman."

"Come with me, Cecily. Come as you are. We can get you clothes in town."

"No, lover. I must stay and take care of your bridge. I don't mind who 's looking, lover. Just—kiss me again."

Had she some premonition of the disaster? Did that spiritual wisdom which we call intuition, tell her of ruin that was hovering like a hawk? Poor Cecily! How heartbroken she'd be. Her eyes, her poor eyes, would be burnt with crying. Poor Cecily! Perhaps he could make her believe it did n't matter. Nothing mattered so long as he had her. Ah, but it did! He would never build another bridge. He might do mighty structures of iron and cement, immense feats of engineering, but never a great stone bridge again. Never again!... Poor Cecily!

IX

He had steeled himself to see it all, and on Saturday when the storm had subsided, and the little train started up the mountainside, his face was a gray mask, and the nearer the top he came, the more impassive, the grayer was his face. A little turn of a boulder and he knew he 'd see the ruin. A few piles and the welter of the swollen river attacking them. His eyes were open, but he saw nothing. The official beside him suddenly screamed.

"My God! Excellency! The bridge!"

"Yes, I know. The bridge is down."

"The bridge is there. Excellency, the bridge is there!"

All Lovat could do was to laugh, a vacant laugh. Yes, it was there. But it was so impossible. The sun suddenly flashed behind it, and he saw the arrogant white structure soar like a bird, joining green hill to green hill. Beneath it rolled an unknown river, not the tumbling, snarling river of a week before, but a brown concave current, become gigantic, flying northward to the greatest of waters and carrying on its thewed back death and desolation. There was something that looked like a man and then an ox. And here was the wreckage of a homestead. And there was a jaguar and here was a great serpent of the jungle, and now a horse and here a gigantic tree. But the bridge spurned the river, floated on it like a swan. Lovat jumped off on the platform.

"It holds! It stays!" he cried exultantly. He rushed toward the house. "Cecily, it holds!"

But he felt, as he flung open the door, that the house was empty.

"Cecily! Where are you, Cecily?"

There was no one there but a weeping, terrified maid.

"Where is Madame? Where is your señora?"

But she only wept and wrung her hands. Lovat, half crazy, yanked her to her feet, and shook her.

"Where is Madame?

"Cecily! Cecily!"

He ran outside. It suddenly occurred to him that all his men had made way for him from the station, with silent pitying eyes. Why, they should have been cheering, too, but for something—

"Cecily! Cecily!" He ran around the little house.

One of the big Inca foreman detached himself from a standing group, and stood in front of the frenzied man.

"Excellency," he said, "there's no good calling Madame. Madame has left us."

"Left us? What do you mean?"

"Excellency—" the big Indian threw his hands toward the river —"the bridge is there, but Madame has left us. Don't you understand?"

With numbing force the blow descended on Lovat.

"The bridge took her, you mean."

"No, señor. She left us."

Lovat suddenly straightened up.

"Mason, what do you mean?"

"Señor, when the wind came and the flood, the men quit. The wind shrieked through the arches. The river rose and attacked the piers. And the bridge groaned, and we left. It was the will of God, we thought. He did n't want this chasm joined.

"And I came up toward your house, señor, to see if everything was right there. I met Madame on the path. She had her big black cloak on.

"'You had better go back, señora,' I said.

"'I am going to the bridge,' she said.

"'But it is growing black as night, señora; you had better go back.'

"'Stand aside, Vicente,' was all she said. And there was something in her eyes that made me give way. She went on.

"Excellency, I loved Madame, as did every one here. And she liked me. And I was your man. I followed her down the path. I caught up to her at the bridge. It was blue dark, like twilight. The bridge was quivering. I caught the edge of her cape.

"'What are you going to do, señora?'

"'Stand aside, Vicente.'

"'You are crazy, señora!' I cried out.

"'No, Vicente, I am wise.'

"'You must n't, señora!'

"'I must, Vicente.'

"'Let me, señora,' I pleaded.

"'Vicente,' she said, 'you 've done your work on the bridge. Now I must do mine.'

"I could n't stop her, Excellency. Something in the face, in the eyes—I don't know—I dropped on my knees. She moved over the bridge.

"Excellency, from the time she was on it the bridge stopped quivering, the wind hushed. I saw her drop her cloak as she stood in the center. I saw her step forward, sure, unafraid. And for an instant I saw her, like a blossom in the wind....

"And so, Excellency, the bridge stands, will always stand...."

X

So there it was, all finished, all done, and for the last time Lovat looked at it, saw the green mountains, the tumbling river, the white span of the bridge. But the bridge and he were finished now. His work was done.

The little Latin-American official touched his elbow deferentially.

"Excellency, the train!"

"Yes, the train," Lovat repeated mechanically. His companion looked at him with grave sympathy. Only three months ago Lovat was a young and happy bridegroom. To-day the builder was a grave gray-haired man.

Yes, the bridge was done, Lovat knew. A little while ago it was just the product of his hand and genius and will, a thing of himself. But now it was a fulfilled entity, with its own duties, its own uses, its

own destiny. Over it went trains joining country to country and sea to sea. Over it went the loping Latin people. Over it went the little patient burros, pannier-laden. In confidence all went over it.

"It will stand." Lovat knew. "It will always stand."

But there was no high note of proud achievement in his thought. It would not stand because of skill in building or strength in masonry. But because there guarded it one whose pleading sacrificial fingers would unclench the angry hand of God. Flood and thunder and immense winds would spare it because of that guardian like a white flame, to whose unselfishness selfish nature must do reverence.

The official ventured to recall him:

"Excellency!"

"Just one more moment!"

He had a vision of her for the moment, and his throat quivered and his eyes were uncertain. He saw her in her white, billowing gown, with her dark head and face like a flower. Two brown shy little children were standing fearful of the bridge, and she knelt to them. "Come, darlings," he could hear the deep remembered voice. She led them confidently across his bridge, and as she led them she smiled to him.

Well, he must go. There was other work to be done, other bridges to build, until the time the Master of the Masons told him to rest. He must be about his work.

"All our life is work," he said to himself as he boarded the train. "All our love is comradeship."

Well, there was work to be done, and there was comradeship. She would always be with him now, being dead....

IN PRAISE OF LADY MARGERY KYTELER

I

All those things I dreamed about, and I thousands of miles away, are there still: the house, half farm-house and half castle, at one end an ancient military tower, at the other a thatched cottage; all the trees—the ash, the elms, the chestnut with the dark-green foliage and the prickly bulb containing the polished mahogany fruit, the rowan-trees with the gallant red berries, bitter as death, the copper beech with the foliage of lace and the fuzzy brown nuts, the apple- and pear-trees, and the trees of cherries that the birds do be ever after.

The lawns that were once shaven so closely are now rectangles of high sweet grass where the bees are seeking. And the tennis-courts, where once was the laughter of young girls—those, too, are knee-high in grass, swaying in the soft Irish wind. And here and there is a gallant yew-tree, blackly green. Roses still cling to the wall, and around all the walls are riots of flowers.

The low greenhouses are still there, under whose glass roofs grew great purple grapes, and where row on row of exotic flowers grew and delicate ferns whose names are unknown to me, so much closer are men and horses to me than flowers and ferns. Ivy is on the walls, soft-looking as velvet, and the winds and rains have been kind to the lodge and the stables. The walls are still white and a little moss is on the slates of them, and a soft and gentle grass is between the cobbled stones.

And the deep well is there. And everywhere are birds and bees. The bees are wild now, who once lived in skips of yellow straw, and their nests are in the long grass, and there, too, is the meadowlark, and under the eaves the swallows flit. And here the robin is safe with his impudent eye, and the blackbird of the yellow bill. And everywhere the throaty murmur of the wood-pigeons, the thrum of their wings.

Eh! There it is all still, at the foot of the soft and purple mountains—the Sugarloaves, the Big Sugarloaf and the Little, and the hill called Kitty Gallagher's, and the Scalp with its slender tower and the sweet shoulder of Three Rock Mountain. And below—one

could pitch a stone nearly—is Dublin, the abiding city. There the Liffey, rippling gently to the sea. And one can almost see St. Patrick's, where great Swift was Dean, and Trinity, where poor Goldsmith and fearless Burke were students. The broad streets, the princely squares. And there Robert Emmet was hanged for treason against our Sovereign Lord the King, His Crown and Majesty, and Lord Edward, the rebel Geraldine, was stabbed. And there is Clontarf, where Brian the High King fought the red Danes, fought and died, but fought and conquered. And there Howth, where Iseult, the Dublin princess, sailed to marry Mark in rugged Cornwall, sailed with Tristram....

Eh! There from Mount Kyteler one can see it all—the soft dreaming mountains, the sad weeping city. And here where was once the laughter of young women, the barking of dogs, the neighing of horses, the shouting of lads—here is silence, but for the husky note of the wood-pigeon, the little thunder of his wings, and the droning of the seeking bees. All, all are dead, but here is no desolation. There is the sweet gentleness of remembered twilights, and the copper beech rustles, and the rowan nods, and the apple-trees murmur with their antique boughs: "Is it yourself is in it, Ronnie? Is it yourself, long lad? And it is long you've stayed away from us in foreign lands and bitter seas. And it's Lady Margery you 're looking for? And Paddy the Pipes? You mind him, do you so? And Jacky Sullivan—ah, the great lad! Sure, they 've just left this minute, laughing fellow. Gone to see the old earl, they have. Sure, you'll be following them, and seeing them all soon. Over the mountains they went, a wee ways. You 'll see them all soon, very soon, a wheen of years...."

Not for long will be this sweet silence, this soft, dim loneliness. Soon will be business of courts, justices sitting in wig and gown. And Mount Kyteler will die, and its name be forgotten. Sad history will pass and affairs proceed in their inexorable ordinance. And where once great Norman fighters charged in mail, and Elizabethan nobles ruffled, and the old red-faced earl swore when the gout was on him, and of late Lady Margery moved over lawns and walks with her sweet, sad-faced dignity, will be three or four little farms, their

smoke blue against the purple of Three Rock Mountain. And the lawns will turn to fields of blue corn, and fat cattle will graze where once was a maze of flowers.

And all the crops will prosper there. And the children that are born of the farmer folk will be happy as the birds in the trees. There will be no blight on the milk the cows give, and there will be great luck on the stock of the kindly land. Always will there be prodigal bees and the dancing of swallows.

There are houses and lands that are kindly, and places that are sinister, fields that are surly, meadows that are sweetly generous. Old things, if we watch them, have a very human quality, and that is because they have been intimately connected with people who have these qualities themselves. One influences one's surroundings so much. Whirling sparks of personality fall from us and charge what we have usually by us. On all the estate came such a current of sweetness that even the thieving wood-pigeons grew generous, leaving the young trees alone.

Will she ever come back here when Mount Kyteler is gone, and the little whitewashed farmhouses are an outpost against the heather of Three Rock Mountain? I think she will. She will have so much beauty to know, now she is dead, that she will not begrudge the loss of the flower gardens and the courts where tennis was played. Apple-trees and flowers will be hers wherever she is, and perhaps the same ones—who can say no? Yet I can see her come to visit the whitewashed houses in the hushed summer twilight, when the daisies have tucked in their modest heads and only the great foam of the hawthorn billows over the country-side. On some warm little breeze from Three Rock Mountain she will come. And horses in their stalls will know her, and the kine will turn their heads to her, lowing gently, and the dogs will bark joyously, and some little child on the floor will stand up suddenly and run forward, its arms outstretched, bubbles of laughter beating from the tiny lips....

II

Now when the last Lord Kyteler died, there was very little fuss made. Another poverty-stricken Irish peer gone. He had n't been rich enough to own an estate large enough for tenants to squabble on. A few farms here and there through the country, Mount Kyteler itself, not worth a tremendous amount. He was the last lord of one of these very, very old families who had been lost in the back-wash of Irish history. Once Kytelers had fought in the Holy Land under Richard the Lion-Hearted and had fought later under Irish viceroys against the O'Bernes and O'Tooles and O'Moores of the Wicklow hills; and antiquarians remembered that Dame Alice Kyteler was the most sinister witch of all Ireland, and was burned at the stake in Kilkenny many centuries before. But it was a matter of politics more than demonology, though undoubtedly Dame Alice was second only to Gilles de Rais, murderer and Marshal of France, in worship of evil idols and in sinister sacrifice....

It was one of these old names that should have died out, when the medieval chivalry of Europe died, Knights Templar and sporting Norman bishops and morbid medieval ladies. But it existed, as many things exist in Ireland and are forgotten in Europe and never known in America,—strange Christian customs, strange pagan beliefs,—and "It" the most horrible of all horrible ghosts.

They were a poor family, as poor is understood in Ireland. That is, they had money enough for all necessities and many luxuries. They had money enough for food, for clothes, for a few good horses for conveyance and hunting, and they could go to the viceregal court at Dublin Castle and be decent figures there. But they could not keep racehorses, which is really a great hardship if you are Irish, and they could not afford to live in London as an Irish nobleman should live, which should be as a very great nobleman indeed. They were as well off as a rich farmer, and they had a title, and they were not intolerably proud.

If you were to meet a very red-faced man in tweeds and with a heavy stick, at the Curragh races, betting modest sovereigns, and were told that he was the Earl of Mount Kyteler, you would feel that there was something wrong. He had not that terrible courtesy of the

earls and better sort of dukes which makes you feel like a clodhopper, no matter from which particular Irish king you claim direct descent. He was too human, too decent an old skate; you chuckled when you thought of a coronet cocked rakishly over that red, weather-beaten face.

Oh, but Lady Margery! that was different!

Her appearance I could describe to you: the close-bound black hair, the face like some rain-washed flower, the dark luminous eyes and laughing lips, the balanced neck, the body that was half boy's and half young woman's. All that means nothing, but if I say that when she appeared there was a chime like an old silver bell, such antique sweetness came upon the air ... the feet that never seemed to touch the ground, her long, white, quiet hands. How that old-world title fitted her, described her! Not demure miss, not buxom mistress, but the Lady Margery Kyteler.

How important it is for me to bring her back, to have her real for an instant in the clear air! But not as a necromancer under the glittering stars, with circle and acolyte, fire, sword, and crown, saying terrible words—Here be the symbols of secret things, the flags and banners of God the Conqueror, the weapons to compel the aerial potencies—and have that sweet face come white and fearful in the gray dawn. I would have her seen with her merry smile, her feet that moved lightly, as to hidden music, her long quiet hands. For all her boyish strong body, there was such harmony and light, one knew that beyond the body was something that would not die with the years—no more than the sun dies when it drops into the sea, or the sweet, friendly moon. To see her was more than miracles; she convinced better than the fathers of the church.

Very unconsciously she did all this. And very embarrassed she would have been and a little mad she would have thought one, had she been told she was an argument for eternity. Know her to be eternal, but see her playing with a terrier, pulling its tail, its ears, and clipping it deftly under the jaw as it snapped playfully. Or stroking the sleek neck of a horse, and talking to it as horses love to be talked to, or kneeling to comfort some crying child of the people, and wooing it back to happiness by being very happy herself....

III

Now by the ordinance of time and nature the old earl was quietly gathered to his forbears—to Gilles de Kyteler, who came over to Ireland with Strongbow; to Piers Kyteler, who could run against a horse for five miles; to Dame Alice Kyteler, whose name is still used to frighten little children; to Fulke, or the bastard Kyteler, who joined with Silken Thomas in rebellion; Hugh, who lost the family money in the South Sea Bubble; to another Pierce, who backed Boxer Donelly, the Irishman, against the English champion, Cooper, for a thousand pounds—and won!—to Hugh, who grew rare tulips, and to Patrick, of whom it was said he was the stupidest man in Ireland. Some one has written a book about the family; possibly it's worth reading, probably not.

And now of the family of the Earls of Mount Kyteler there was only one left, the Lady Margery Kyteler, and she was alone in the world.

Except for the ordinary natural grief for the old earl, whom she loved and liked, she did n't mind being alone. Mount Kyteler had now only seven servants, an ancient cook and two equally ancient maids, a gardener so ancient as to need an assistant, who was himself so verging on the ancient that it was a puzzle as to what assistance he could give. There were a couple of lads in the stable, lads of fifty, a groom, and a coachman, the coachman assuming the livery of butler on great occasions, such as in Horse Show Week. Ancient grumbling people they all were, who were united only in this, that they loved her. Among themselves there were always ancient grudges, present fights. And instead of her ruling them, they ruled her with a terrible tyranny.

The old cook below-stairs was forever complaining of the great work to be done, and refusing to have any help given her.

"Is it bringing in another you 'd be and me here child and woman for fifty years? Twelve years old I was when they brought me into the pantry and set me to cleaning knives, and now it's on top of me

you 'd be bringing some streel you 'd be getting out of a register's office, a woman does be following the tinkers to the Country Wicklow, mad with love. Och, to think of the insult put on me this day! *Wirra, is thrue*!"

"Sure, it 's only to help you, Peggy."

"And what help would I be needing, me that's the fine, supple woman, in the prime o' my years! Ne'er a day over sixty I am, and thirty hard years' work in me still."

"But you were complaining, Peggy."

"Sure, 't was only to keep my mind active I was."

The old gardener could be terrible, with his face like an apple and his bent back. He watched her as he might watch a thieving boy.

"Now, if it's a thing you 'd be wanting chrysanthemums, my lady, would n't it be the right and proper thing for you to be coming to me, that's the head gardener of this garden, and if it's a thing there 's chrysanthemums in it, you 'll get them, and if it's a thing there 's no chrysanthemums in it, you won't."

"I thought I 'd save you trouble, Darby."

"And what trouble would you be saving me, my Lady, by destroying the symmetry of the design? All the work that 's on me, and ne'er a hand's turn do I get from the young fellow that's the assistant. Devil the hand's turn he 's done in all the forty-three years he 's been here, barring playing the bagpipes in the greenhouse and talking about the good ould times. I mind the time your grandfather was in it, my Lady—a real gentleman him. He would n't put a hand on an apple, or a gooseberry itself, without asking the head gardener's permission."

Also were the two ancient maids problems in their way. They were forever sniffing at each other, and complaining of each other to Margery.

"If your Ladyship would be so kind as to give Rose Ann a tip about her conduct, 't would be a mercy so. For the queer way she does be acting with the postman is no credit to this house at all. New ribbons in her cap, indeed, looking for love, when she ought to be making her peace with God and man."

But Rose Ann had the same story.

"If your Ladyship pleases, a wee word to Ellen would not be out of the way. 'T is the postman, your Ladyship, has been complaining bitterly. 'Ma'am,' says he to me, 'would you be telling a secret?' 'If so be as I know it,' says I, 'I will.' 'Is that one,' says he, 'right in her head?' 'Is it Ellen you mean?' says I. '"T is that same,' says he. '"T is that has been puzzling myself, but why do you ask?' say I. '"T is the dirty look she has in her eye,' says he, 'and the queer conversation is at her. '"T is the world's wonder you never married," she does be telling me, "and you the fine lad you are."' Your Ladyship should speak to her. You should so."

"I will, Rose Ann."

But worst of all were the quarrels between the coachman and the groom. The coachman was a fine, florid man, and the groom was a wizened little troll who had once been a jockey. The coachman was always in decent black, the groom in corduroys. They were forever arguing on everything, from politics to horses. Once Lady Margery had come into the yard to see the groom stepping around like a bantam boxer, his hands up, his feet tapping the ground like a dancer's.

"Put up your hands!" he was shouting. "Put up your hands!"

"Go 'way t' the divil out o' that!"

"Come on if you 're fit! Come on if you 're man enough! I 'll give you a beating you 've been spoiling for for the last thirty years."

"Go 'way t' the divil out o' that!"

"I will not go 'way out o' that. It's fight I want. I 'm boiling mad for one clout at your ugly gob."

"Will you whisht!" The coachman had seen Lady Margery.

"I will not whisht. Put up your hands! I 'll not stop till I 'm dug out of ye!"

"Kelleher, Brady, what's this?"

The groom dropped his fighting attitude and pulled off his cap.

'"T is just a foolish wee argument we were having, m'lady. I was telling this bloody old cod—begging your pardon, m'lady, for giving him his right name—that Lynchehaun the murderer was by rights a cousin to my mother's people, and he said that it was n't in either

side of my family to produce a fine murdering man like the same Lynchehaun. So I up and gives him a tip about himself and his drunken old mother...."

"Kelleher!"

"Not that I know anything about her, m'lady, but I just thought that if he had any pride, it would cut him to the quick!"

IV

Nobody in the world but herself, she thought often, could have kept them. But if she sent them away, where would they go? The old gardener—could he last away from the soil he had tended with the care of parents?

And the maids would be lost in a modern world. And for all that the two men in the stable fought, they loved each other in a strange way. She couldn't pension them off; and, also, they got their work done in a surprisingly efficient manner.

And, besides, she could not see new servants in the old house. The maids were as much part of the place as the portraits of dead Kytelers on the walls. They had blended into a mellow composition. They all loved her in their queer selfish way, depended on her for vitality. She could hardly go on visits any more, so much did they grumble. "Sure, it is n't to England you 'd be going, my lady, and the grand house you have of your own!" And not only the servants but the old drowsing dog, Sheila, the little Scottie bitch, who was drawing on fourteen years old and nearly blind, and the foxhound puppies, who waited for her when she was n't there, and ancient Fenian, the old steeplechaser, who was near ending his days. All these laid imploring hands on her.

Her mother she had not known, the countess dying when Margery was not yet two; and the earl had never married again. But the house had been a mother to her. The deep drawing-room, the heavy formal dining-room, the little sitting-room so bright. There was no place in the world so comfortable as the drawing-room of Mount Kyteler in the winter evenings, with the portraits blinking in

the light of candles in their silver sticks and the glimmer of the sea-coal in the grate. And her own room at night, on moonlight nights, whence she could see Dublin Bay shine silver and the dark trees bending in the breeze from Three Rock Mountain.

Every tree she knew; every tree had for her a personality. The copper beech was friendly and kindly, the rowan-trees aloof but kindly, the oaks majestic but clumsily kindly; the apple-trees were smiling. All the flowers she knew, all the shrubs. They had seen her stumble as a child of two, they had seen her rollick as a child of seven, they had seen her dream at ten, and grow ugly at twelve, and grow pretty in her late teens, and at twenty beautiful, and now beautiful and assured.

In no other country than Ireland, in no other city than Dublin could such beauty and grace exist alone in an old house. They would have fêted her, made merry with her, married her. A young beauty in an ancient house with grizzled servants. But in Ireland a great beauty has so many competitors for the songs of the poets, the passion of the young men. There is the biting excitement of treason, politics charged with lightning. There are the far places of the world calling to Irish adventurers. There are careers calling for vitality and ambition. And what young woman dare presume to bother poets when there are great purple mountains to enthrall them, and wooded glens and the crashing sea? And winds like wine. The crooning of great romantic ghosts. And an Irish poet is not a pale man to be comforted by women, but a lithe, muscular man with a sword.

Also, in Ireland is little marriage or giving in marriage, if we except the peasantry and the very poor. The young men spread their wings to go abroad, and when they return it is usually with a foreign bride, so that there are convents innumerable in that country, also many mad women at large, as in politics. Unless a girl is very rich she has little chance of a happy marriage. A title may help her, curates and captains in the army having a belief that the daughters of earls will help them to preferment; also, it sounds well, they think —the Reverend Septimus and Lady Jones, Captain and Lady Plantagenet Murphy. There are sadder things in Ireland than the weeping skies.

But though the right of marriage may be often denied them, young Irish girls have always their inalienable right of dreams. Soft winds and nodding flowers and sun going down on the western hills, and with the twilight comes always a love. Out of the blue twilight and soft wind they weave a magical life of love that will be always young, of a world that will be ever kind, of little dark children and loyal friends, of the pageantry of foreign cities, of triumphs for their own beauty and the lover's ability. The skies are always blue in their dreams, and tragedies there are none, nor any sordidness. And they grow old so peacefully in their dreams, so gracefully, and death comes so gently, so kindly—the lover always by, always young, always loving.... Out of the blue twilight and soft wind they dream their dreams, and they never notice that the blue of the twilight has become a threatening black, and the soft wind has withdrawn in itself with the set sun, as a flower does, and all of a sudden it has grown cold, damp, and lonely and cold.

The dream of Margery was around Mount Kyteler. It seemed to her that the house, and the garden and the trees, and the old servants, and the drowsing dogs, and the ancient steeplechaser out to grass were all part of the French nursery, "*La Belle au Bois Dormant*," "The Beauty in the Sleeping Wood." And one day the princely lover would come, breaking through the hedge of Irish stillness, and Mount Kyteler would bloom again. The backs of the gardeners would straighten and the maids become young again. And by some strange magical process the steeplechaser would again win races, and the old dog win ribbons, and children would stumble under the tall trees, as she had stumbled twenty years before. All this would happen with the coming of the prince, all this she could see, but his features she could not plainly see. Only she knew this, that his face would be shining with love and smiles.

V

So that when she met him she did not recognize him at first, nor for many days afterward. On his face were puzzlement and a frown. A clean-cut, red-headed man, he was standing in the road on a frosty November morning, when she was out walking a brace of foxhound puppies. The puppies seemed delighted at the sight of him, all but tearing the leash from her hand.

"Could you tell me," he asked, "where Tallaght is?" He pulled the ears of the foxhound puppies.

"You 're in Tallaght," she said.

He looked incredulously at the scattered houses.

"Is this—"

"Yes. Is there any place in particular you 're looking for?"

"No," he said, "just Tallaght."

"Well, you have Tallaght." She laughed a little at his rueful expression. "You seem surprised."

"I am," he laughed. "For many years, when I was a child, I have been hearing about Tallaght, until it had assumed tremendous proportions for me, and now—"

"Abroad?"

"Yes."

"Australia?"

"No. America."

"What are you looking for? The old homestead?"

"No," he said; "I don't think there ever was an old homestead. There might have been a little cabin somewhere, but it was n't here." He laughed. "I 'll tell you. My father was an old Fenian, and he was at Tallaght when they gathered to descend on Dublin, but for some reason or other the battle was not fought, nor the enemy driven into the sea, nor anything. And my father, with a lot of others, fled to America. But I had an impression of a mountain pass and camp fires and great guns."

"It rained all night, did n't it? Did your father say?"

"No, he never mentioned the rain."

She liked this man, she told herself directly. The big, clean look of him, his gray eyes and red hair, his splendid teeth. Also there was something about him so easy. He was Irish; no mistaking that. But pleasant, fine Irish. It was not always you met them pleasant and sincere. And this man was sincere. This man was not inimical. They would make a nice pair, she thought simply, he big and clear-eyed and red, herself slim and dark.

"Could I bother you again?" he asked. "How do I get to the railway station?"

"I 'm going that way, if you care to come."

There was a nice chivalry about him; she felt that as they walked together. Was that American? she wondered.

"May I ask you something? Are most Americans like you?"

"Yes," he said, "of course."

She was puzzled. She had an impression that all Americans were called "Silas" and twanged, "I guess." Also, they chewed gum. There was something wrong.

"You are n't called Silas, are you?"

"No; Richard. Did you think all Americans were called Silas?"

"Something like that," she admitted. And they looked at each other and laughed. She had a joyous feeling that the maids at home would disapprove of this strongly. And that the old gardeners would tremble with rage. But the dogs approved.

"What sort of time are you having in Ireland?"

"Not so good," he admitted. "I 've been here a week, and the only friends I 've made are cab-drivers. Also, I have a bowing acquaintance with a head waiter."

"Cab-drivers are good fun," she ruminated.

They were at the station now.

"Look here," she said suddenly as she was leaving: "if you are having a rotten time like that in Dublin, and know nobody, it must be lonely! I wonder—" She looked at him fearlessly. "Look here: if you 'd care to, come out and see me at Mount Kyteler—my name 's Kyteler. There are dogs and horses and an old house you might like to see."

"May I? Thanks. My name's O'Conor. I 'll come, then, Miss Kyteler."

"Lady Margery Kyteler."

"Do I call you all that? Lady Margery Kyteler?"

"No. Just Lady Margery."

"Lady Margery! That's nice."

When he came, he came with a great armful of flowers, which Margery received with a smile and courtesy, and turned over to Rose Ann. He seemed scrubbed, so glistening was he. How like an old friend he was, with his firm handshake and laughing eyes.

"Now," he said, "I 'd like the worst over."

"What is the worst?"

"Oh, meeting people. Your relatives. The Lady This and the Lady That, and the countess, and the duke. Above all, the duke."

"There are none," she said. "I live here by myself."

"All by yourself, in this big house?"

"Yes."

"Might I ask, are you married?"

"No-o-o," she pondered. "Um, no."

He looked at her incredulously. He had never in his life seen any one so beautiful, he thought. The small face, the soft and sweet and smiling dark eyes, the hair like a perfumed dark cap on a head whose sweet shape he could imagine. And the supple figure in the frock that was close in the bosom and belled like a dancer's from the waist down.

"Well, that beats—" he murmured.

"Beats hell, doesn't it?" She finished for him.

"These old pictures, some of them are good." She smiled. "That's Gilles de Kyteler—not the one who came with Strongbow but a later one. And that's Fulke Kyteler, who rebelled with Silken Thomas, and tried to burn the Archbishop of Cashel in his own cathedral. They were very disappointed when they found the archbishop had slipped out. And that—" she pointed to a polished oval of black stone, framed in antique silver—"is Dame Alice Kyteler's magical mirror. She was the greatest of the Irish witches."

She gave him tea and listened to him talk of America and of his work there. He was some sort of engineer, building bridges. She got an impression of him standing on an artifice of some kind, with plans in his hand, directing a whole crowd of workmen. He had been in Brazil and in China.

"You must be a good engineer," she said in her direct way.

"I 'm supposed to be a very good engineer," he laughed.

"Do you make a great deal of money?"

"A good deal. Not a great deal."

"I 'm glad," she said. He looked at her in surprise. She was dusting her fingers daintily, but her eyes smiled. She was really glad. And he said to himself, "My soul! we 're friends."

She took him into the garden, and he laughed.

"And I brought you flowers." There was a little shade of disappointment in his laugh.

"Indeed and indeed—" she looked him in the eyes and lied sweetly —""Twas I needed them, for it's the devil and all for me to get any flowers out of my own garden. My two old gardeners are that mean! Darby 'd begrudge me a daisy for fear it 'd leave an unsightly gap in the grass. There he is, watching me for fear I 'll pull a leaf. Darby, this is Mr. O'Conor, and I 'm showing him the garden."

"If he 'd come fifteen years ago, your Ladyship, or even ten years ago, he 'd have seen the like would have made his heart glad. But in the latter years, with the bad weather that's in it, now too much rain and now not enough rain at all, and the wind that nothing is a shelter against, and the soil that's growing poor, for all the time that's spent on it, till it's hard to rear anything, even a head o' cabbage itself—m'lady, will you for God's sake leave off pulling at that hedge?"

She took him to see old Fenian in the paddock, and she liked the way he pulled the jumper's ears, ran his firm hand down the fetlocks.

"Was he a great horse?"

"Nearly the greatest of his day," she answered. "He never won a Grand National, but was third twice and second once. He had a great heart. No horse tried harder. The people loved him....

Kelleher, this is Mr. O'Conor, from America."

"From America, is it, your Ladyship? Oh, sure, they 've fine horses over there. But they 've got to come to us for the hunters. Begging your Ladyship's pardon, but was your Honor ever in Kansas City?"

"I was."

"D' your Honor ever meet a man named Hannigan out there? Red Hannigan, they called him, a holy terror for bloody murder, the same man was."

"I don't think so."

"He was n't as red as your Honor—begging your pardon—but sandy like. And he carried his head on one side on account of a belt in the gob he got in a wee argument out at the Lamb Doyle's."

"He must have gone when I got there."

"He must have, your Honor, or you 'd have met him. A genius for horses, the same Red. 'T was he cured Colonel Nolan's charger of biting. 'Roast a leg of lamb,' he told them, 'and take it out of the oven mad hot, and when he offers to bite,' says he, let him bite into that. By God! he 'll never bite again.' And he never did."

Came at last the time for leaving.

"I wonder," he ventured, "I wonder if I could get you to come in and have dinner and go to the theater. I don't know what kind of a theater it is, but would you?"

How like a flower she herself was, he thought—the white stalk of her dress, the sweet face, the dark head! She frowned. His heart sank.

"I don't see how I could," she said. "I 've got to get back here. I usually take the dinners and theaters in a quarterly debauch of one week. No, I don't see how ..."

His heart sank a little farther. Was this definitely good-by?

"No, but I 'll tell you what you could do, if you 'd care to. Come out on Saturday and take me to the Leopardstown races. I 'm sick of going alone."

His heart rose.

"And come back and have dinner with me instead."

His heart sang.

Came now a day of wonder. Day of Leopardstown, frosty morning and road glistening like pewter, and the grass crackling underfoot, stiff with hoar. The little race-course at the foot of the mountains. Crowds stamping in the friendly cold. The horses jibbing, curving under their jockeys at the starting-wire. Flash of jockeys' colors, gold and green, red and white, all sorts of blue—sky, sea, St. Patrick's. The drop of the flag. The flying wedge of stretching mounts and huddled riders. Thunder of hoofs coming to jumps, hurdling, lightning spring and over, larruping canter toward the next, smack of crop, over, by Heaven! The hedge now and the five-barred gate, and the stretch toward the judges' stand. A mad cheering and the clanging of a great bell. The favorite 's won!

A little hush, a rush to the ring to see the horses for the next race. She wore a great frieze coat, like a man's, and a riding-hat, like a man's too. At a little distance she seemed like a boy in clothes too big for him, and as one came nearer, one noticed, between the collar and the brim of the hat, the sweet narrow neck and the hair gathered up like some very little girl's. There was something heart-pulling in it, like a child's curled fingers. And then she turned, and her face showed, pointed like a cub fox's. The cheeks flushed with the cold, the lips with a merry smile, her eyes with a deeper smile—there were so many there who knew her, and to whom O'Conor was presented, including an Irish duchess, with a voice like a saw, who rasped; "H' a' yo?" and then wailed, "My God! D' yo' ever see such a God-forsaken bunch o' mokes in all your life?" And a tall, thin baronet who asked him was he one of the O'Conors of Baltimore, to which he replied, no, that he was one of the O'Conors of Forty-seventh Street and Seventh Avenue. "Ah, yes! Ah, yes!" There was a French cavalry officer buying horses in Ireland, a dark, thin man with a heavy mustache, who looked more like a New York plain-clothes policeman than a hero of Algiers. Also, there was Mr. Kelly.

Margery had noticed a great rangy gelding in the ring. He looked to have the power of a steam-engine.

"See?"

O'Conor nodded.

"Flying Fish."

A large red-faced man with a stout ash plant was passing.

"Oh, Mr. Kelly!"

"Ah, sure, Lady Margery!"

"Do you know anything of Flying Fish?" She lowered her voice. "Is he a good horse?"

"He is. And he is n't."

"Might he win this race?"

"He might. And he might n't."

"You 're not telling me much."

"I am," he looked wise, "and I am n't," he looked wiser.

"Good enough," she said. "Come," she told O'Conor.

Bookies crying raucously in the little ring. Signaling of touts. Milling of people.

"I 'll lay two to one the field," a booky was shouting. His eyes were all but out of his cheeks. His shoulders hunched with effort. His voice exploded as though thrown against a wall, and he atomized a fine spray before him. "I 'll lay three to one bar one; I'll lay four to one bar two. I'll lay even money Munster Pride. Even money Irish Dragoon. Four to one Little Dorrit. Seven to two Carnation. Here, four to one Carnation. Eight to one Murderer's Pet. Twelve to one Irish Gentility. I 'll lay twenty to one—twenty to one Thunderbolt. Twenty-five to one Flying Fish—"

"How much, Joe Jack?"

"Is it you, Lady Margery? God love you. I'll lay you thirty to one Flying Fish. How much will you take?"

"Ten pounds' worth."

"Three hundred and ten pounds Flying Fish, Lady Margery Kyteler. I hope you win, m'lady. I do so there I 'll lay two to one the field. I 'll lay three to one bar one. I 'll lay four to one bar two—"

Dropping of flag and clatter of bell. There they were in the distance, flying down the regulation. They rise to the ditch, three abreast. Canter again—the water jump. The lump becomes a line. And who's ahead? Can you see? Carnation! Ah, my jewel Carnation! And now the bank. There's a horse down. Thunderbolt! Ah, be damned to the same Thunderbolt! Is that the gray ahead? It is so! Is it Flying Fish is in it? Flying Fish it is, and he running like a hare! 'T

is win in a canter he will. They 're coming to the hedge. Ah! what is it, Mister? Flying Fish it is, and he stopping dead. A dead stop he 's made, and the jockey pasting the ribs out of him. Ah, he 's on now, but in the heel of the hunt he is! Carnation wins. Carnation—ah, my sweet wee lady!

They passed the post, Flying Fish bringing up the rear with a supercilious arrogance.

"Fish!" Margery wrinkled her nose in disgust. "Fish was good."

And "There goes my new hat!" she wailed. And who should pass by but Mr. Kelly. Out of his red face peered an inquisitive gray eye.

"You didn't?" he said.

"I did."

"How much?"

"Ten pounds."

"Ah, well," he decided cruelly; "It'll teach you." And he passed on.

"Well, the devil scald you!" she called after him, "and your thick ignorance!"

Last race and the end of the day. He swung her lightly to the side-car. Firm elbows, rounded arms, and how light she was, elastic! A woman in a shawl and a battered sailor-hat stood with folded arms and began a street ballad:

"Bold Robert Emmet, the darling of Ireland!
Bold Robert Emmet, he died with a smile!
Farewell, my company-ions both loyal and loving!
A hero I 'll die for the Emerald Isle."

Margery was grinning above the press of the people, O'Conor turned and dug his hand in his pocket. Threw the woman a large silver coin.

"Well, may God keep and preserve you, my fine noble red-headed man! And the sweet lady beside you—may God bless her! And may you live comfortable and die happy, the both of you, and leave behind you a dozen of the finest children."

"Drive on! Drive on!" O'Conor implored.

"Is it over the heads of the decent people you 'd have me drive, then?" asked the jarvey, in abrupt horror.

"And of the twelve may six of them be like yourself, fine and red-headed, and six like herself, sweet and dark. Ah, 't is the fine man you have, my sweet mistress!"

O'Conor saw the scarlet of her face against the black hair. Eh, Lord, how beautiful she was!

VI

The click of the wicket-gate and he was gone, and down the frosty road his firm step was echoing. She stood at the long drawing-room window and listened. Eh, what a moon! And to-night the hare would be out on Three Rock Mountain, and the red fox pad toward the chicken-coops—the rogue of the world! And on the mountain lakes southward there would be a lid of mist hovering, blue mist and dark mountains and the white moon!

And under the moon her own garden, her own house lay so quietly sleeping. Crisp lawn and the graveled paths and the high wall and the greenhouses glistening, and the yew-trees against the wall. And the bigger trees of the garden, the oak and ash, and the rowan-trees—the mountain-ash, they called it in England—all the trees that were silent now, even the wind being still. The low dining-room that spread out at right angles, and was thatched like an old-time cottage—how sweet it seemed from here! And the stables, where the horses were in their stalls, and the coachman and groom slept. The little lodge where the gardeners were, a huddle of ivy. Oh, the sweet domain!

It seemed to her, when the old place and the servants slept, and the dogs were curled up sleeping, and the horses in their stalls, that she somehow was the guardian and protector of all this. The old servants were not afraid because a Kyteler still lived, and they knew they would be cared for, their whimsies understood. There being no strong man to stand against the encroachments of the world, what was better than her own sweet virginity? She could conceive of nothing harming the place or people when she was there. Even the spirits of the hills would pass it by gently; the dark Irish things that

frighten folk in their sleep, the rumble of the death-coach, the wailing banshee, the thud of the Pooka's terrible hooves—none of them had power while she was there.

Would she always protect it—or would there be some one else? she mused. A big man. She turned from the window and went toward the fire. The face she had seen all day in reality was with her now in vision of the fire—the face with the strong jaw, the gray eyes, bronzed head, and red curls. How every one had looked at him, she remembered proudly, at the race-course to-day! How fine he was! How strong, too! She had been a feather to him when he swung her up on the car. And when his hands had caught her elbows and her feet left the ground, her heart jumped, fluttered....

And how nice he was! When the old rip of a battered singer had wished them a multitude of children, he had blushed like a girl.

And when he had lifted her from the car, he had held her for the fraction of a second in the air. He had thought she did n't notice it—and she had been afraid he would hear her heart beating, so loudly did it hammer in her breast. When she had turned him over to Rose Ann, to take to her father's old room and turned and gone into her own, she had closed her door and leaned against it, and said to herself, "Margery, this man 's in love with you!" and then, in a lower, hushed tone, "And, Margery, you 're in love with him!"

And all by herself she had blushed terribly and felt in a wild panic. "He will see it," she said; "he will know." But then she said, "No, he will not; I won't let him." And a song had come into her heart. A great pride and wonder filled her. She felt she should be dressed in soft scarlet robes, in some symbolic vestment of wonder and joy. But she came down to dinner in a demure white frock, her hair done very demurely, her eyes demure. And all the time her heart was bubbling with sweet, low laughter, and saying, "Do you know, Margery, this man 's in love with you, and he does n't know you know it. And you 're in love with him, and he does n't know that either. And we won't tell him, Margery, will we? We 'll let him find out for himself."

All through dinner and after, she got him to talk of where he had been—Brazil and China—and of New York, where he was born and which he loved. She watched him over the sullen saffron candlelight,

and she thought, "He 's got a noble head," and again irrelevently, "You could n't muss that hair of his, no matter how much you tried. Those short red curls would spring back. I 'd like to try." And again she wondered, "Will he try to kiss me when he says good night? And what shall I do? Shall I kiss him back, or give him a piece of my mind? And if I give him a piece of my mind he may never come again. And if I kiss him he 'll think very little of me. It's awfully hard." And again, "Ah, he won't try," she said. "He would n't in my own house. And, besides, he 's really in love. I know it."

And he had only shaken hands with her, and said he was going soon, and might he come to see her before he went? And her heart sank, and she said, yes, she 'd be very sorry if he did n't. And he said, When? And she pondered over a possible engagement that did n't matter at all, and said, Tuesday, then, and her heart murmured disconsolately. Two long days.

Through dinner and after she thought she had only been thinking of his strong, eager face, but now he was gone, all he had said she remembered. And she thought of hot China, and the sun-baked South, and the yellow rivers. And of Brazil with all its forests, and the speckled snakes, and the whistling monkeys, and the egrets standing by the fountains, and the little armadillo lumbering across the roads. And of New York, the vital city, with its houses challenging the thunder of summer skies, its explosion of light when evening came, its hurrying myriads, keen-eyed, alert. Against all these backgrounds she could see his clean-cut, gray-eyed face, and she could see herself small and slight, looking up at him in wonder and pride.

"I could go with him anywhere," she whispered.

And then something seemed to call: "Margery!"

She looked up. There was nothing there, but the dimmed loved room obtruded itself upon her, and through the moonlit window she could see the antique trees, and the silver glint to the greenhouses, and in a clairvoyant instant she could see the old men sleeping after the day's work, and the ancient maids, and Fenian in his paddock, and poor Sheila, and the foxhounds. She knew what called.

"Margery!"

"Yes, dears."

"Oh, Lady Margery!"

"Hush, now. It's all right."

She had thought that to-night she would sleep as a child sleeps, and try to recapture the magic day in dreams. And be so happy. But the voice of the trees, and the murmur of the old house, and the pleading eyes of dog and horse, and the wailing tyranny of the sleeping aging folk shocked her into the knowledge that there was a sterner thing than dreaming before her. To-night she would not sleep.

"Margery! Lady Margery!"

"Yes. Yes."

"You couldn't, little mistress, you couldn't.'

"Hush, hearts, hush. I will not go away."

VII

He was very handsome, very erect, very noble there, standing by the old fireplace. He was not merry to-night, so he was going to ask her to marry him, she knew. And in the black and white of evening things, bronzed face and curling hair, he looked the equal of any old Kyteler on the wall. And he had more than they had, she felt—abounding energy. She was very pretty herself to-night, too, she knew, and stately a little.

He was hurting, hurting her badly, for he was speaking now of South Africa, where he was going. And he was carefully telling her how wonderful he had heard that country was: the mass of Table Mountain and the rolling hills, the great acres of grapes, the miles of veldt with the white Boer farmhouses, the sun forever shining, hunting such as she had never dreamed of, great, majestic storms.

"You 'd like it; you 'd like it ever so much."

"Oh, I don't know," she lied. "Ireland is a lot to me."

He was telling her clumsily, shamefacedly of another thing—of a lucky chance he had had in Brazil many years ago, a chance he had taken laughingly, and that had made him indecently rich, and he still a very young man. She understood.

She moved away, and began hunting for a piece of music, so that her back was to him.

"Did you ever think," she said, "of settling down in Ireland? You 're Irish, you know.

"And it's not a bad place," she went on before he answered. "It's a sort of sportsman's paradise. Fishing and hunting and race-courses. And sailing. And if you get tired you can run over to London, or Paris, or Madrid.

"Oh, damn!" she said, "I can't find that thing at all!" She was trembling from head to heel. "Why don't you marry some nice Irish girl and settle down?"

"Oh, I could n't settle down in Ireland."

"No?"

"There 's my work to do."

"But you just said you were rich."

"That's no excuse for not working."

"I thought—I don't know."

"No, I 'd be a very poor sort," he laughed, "if I stopped work because I was rich. I 'd have no self-respect—"

"No?" she said dully. The trembling had passed now. She was just numb, numb and dead.

"But as to marrying an Irish girl, Lady Margery—Margery—"

She stood up and turned about. She was smiling quizzically.

"You 're not proposing to marry me, are you?"

"Yes."

"Don't. Don't, O'Conor," she said. "Please don't."

"Why?"

"Because of this—" she looked at him squarely—"I like you. I like you immensely. To me you 're everything a man should be, but just —I don't seem to see you that way. I don't love—do you see? And I

don't think I ever could. No. I never could."

"Well, that's straight. Thanks."

"Are we friends still?"

"Of course, but—" He smiled. "Do you mind if I go?"

"I 'll see you out myself.

"O'Conor," she half whispered in the hall, "I'm an awful son of a gun. I should love you—you 're so fine, so decent, so—so everything—but I don't. I 'm sure I could never love any one. I 'm a very selfish woman, I sometimes think. It wouldn't have been worth while marrying me."

"You're not selfish, and you're very sweet, Margery."

"No, no! Shall I see you again?"

"I 'm afraid not. To-morrow I go to London, and from there to Africa."

"O'Conor, will you do something for me because we are friends?"

"Yes."

"Will you send me pictures of South Africa, and an occasional one of you, because we are friends?"

"Yes, Margery."

"And, O'Conor, if twenty years from now you want to settle down, come to me and let me find you a nice girl to marry—oh! the nicest girl in the world—or if you are sick or crippled, come."

He smiled.

"Promise me."

"All right, Margery. I will." He put out his hand.

"O'Conor," she said. Again she was trembling, but her voice—thank God!—her voice was all right. "I know you 're disappointed, and—O'Conor, would it help if you kissed me?"

"No," he said, "I 'm afraid it would hurt more. So I won't."

"I suppose it would hurt more." She stepped forward and put out her hand. "I am always your friend, O'Conor, your assured friend. And good-by now, O'Conor, and God bless you wherever you go!"

"And you too, Margery."

"You 'll come back, O'Conor, if you 're sick or hurt, or want to settle down, and talk to me about it—your friend, O'Conor, your little Irish friend. You won't forget?"

"I 'll never forget."

He walked down the path under the cloud-touched moon. Would he look back? No, he would n't. He did n't. Oh, there went a man!

VIII

She heard the wicket-gate close, and in her heart she knew that she would never again see him. No gray eyes any more, nor curly hair. Her face had become now a white and quivering mask. She snatched a cloak up and, wrapping it round her, she went blindly into the garden.

She began to shake with great silent sobs. Her face was wet now, and she could n't see. She sank at the roots of the mountain-ash.

"Rowan-tree, rowan-tree!" she cried, "I shall never see him any more!"

And as she sobbed, a little breeze came from the Three Rock Mountain, and all the trees in the garden murmured gently. The great ash unbent, the elm swayed, and the little apple-trees nodded with compassion. All the shrubs in the garden rustled.

Hush—hush! Hush—hush! Hush—hush!

"Oh, rowan-tree! rowan-tree!"

Hush—hush! Hush—hush!

The moon came gently from behind a great saffron-edged cloud and seemed to bend toward her. Its rays poured sweetly toward the dark head. A rabbit had come somehow into the garden and sat up near her, its ears lop, its pink nose twitching.

See—see! See—see! See—see! The trees were like kindly muses. The sobbing ceased as she watched, as a child's sobbing might.

It scampered off now, for in the kennel the foxhound puppies had wakened—her step or some cry of hers, maybe—and were snuffling and whining to get at her. And from the stables came the rap-rap of

Fenian's hoofs, uneasy in his stall.

"I must go in," she said.

Her hand patted the bark of the rowan-tree, and she turned to go into the old house that had been there so many centuries and was there still, sheltering the complement of aging, tyrannous servants in their peaceful sleep, and was beckoning her, she felt, beckoning her to its wide lap....

REYNARDINE

I

The big gray hunter caracoled under him, and with a vicious twitch of curb and snaffle Morgan brought him to stand. He smacked the croup and touched the gelding's fore thigh with the toe of his riding boot until the great hunter stood like a horse in an illustration. Then Morgan turned around.

About him was the cold gray of an Irish morning in November. Woolly, dull, frost on the roads and a touch of easting to the wind—a perfect day for hunting. Forward of him a hundred and fifty yards the hounds were circling around the copse, while the leaders were inside, raising the red fox. Through the gray branches of the wood, gaunt as witches' arms, the pink of the whipper-in's coat showed like a Hallowe'en candle back of a screen. And here and there were knots of the hunt, talking to one another as neighbors talk. There were the women's fluting voices; there was the men's deep laughter. All were friendly, toward one another, toward the world, toward the red fox himself, friendly toward every one except Morgan. Well, to blazes with them, Morgan swore to himself. What the blazes did he care about them—a crowd of country squires and young army men, of stray farmers, and an occasional doctor or parson. What did they amount to, anyway? he 'd like to know.

And yet, he had thought they would be different. It had all been twenty years ago, and he 'd been away all that time, and he 'd been only two days back. But they 'd never forgotten. What haters they were, these Irish! What implacable enemies! What brought him back, anyhow? He could have been happy in America. Or hunting in England. What he 'd come back for was the red Irish fox.

"Steady, blast you!" he warned the big hunter.

"There he goes!" some woman cried, and "No, Janet, no!" a friend laughed. Janet! That would be Janet Conyers. And Janet Conyers must be forty now, and here she was still riding to hounds. Yes, he recognized a full dozen of them. Good Lord! Did people live as long as that? There was old Sir John Burroughs, spare as a lance, and old McGinty, who owned the Mill Farm. Yes, and the Master of Munsterbeg was there, red-faced, hale, all of sixty. And that Grecian profile—was n't that Di Connors, who was now Baroness Rothlin? And the big gaunt man with the hook nose, was n't that Ian More Campbell of the Antrim glens? Poet and soldier and horseman. Morgan felt a tremor of fear before the great Ulster Scot.

There was the yelp of a foxhound and a roar of anger. The thundering master of the hounds was turning on an inoffensive stranger.

"What the—what the—what the blazes do you mean, sir, riding over hounds in that manner? What hunt do you belong to, anyhow?"

"I don't belong to any hunt."

"Well, what the—what did you come out here for, anyhow?"

"My medical man told me I needed fresh air and exercise, and I thought—"

"You thought! You thought! Why in blazes don't you buy a bellows and stick it up your nose? You 'd get all the fresh air and exercise you want, but—"

There was a roar of laughter from the field, and above it rose Morgan's deep basso, like the bourdon note of an organ. But the instant the field noted his laughter, their laughter died.

Morgan smothered a curse and moved fifty yards down where he could get a flying start away from the rush of hunting. How they hated him, resented him, he felt, and yet he had killed no man, stolen no money, betrayed no woman. They hated him as much as they had loved and admired his wife Reynardine. Queer! Queer! He was the one they should love and she was the one they should have felt aloof toward. For he was the steeplechaser, the horseman, the hunter of foxes, and she was of a family whose tradition it was never to hunt or harry a fox, but to protect and aid it. You would have thought it would be the other way around; that they would have liked him and been cool or indifferent toward Reynardine, these hunting women, these sporting men. But no!

And that was twenty years ago, and they hated still. Twenty years! War and famine and pestilence had raged through the world. But they remained the same, these Irish gentlefolk. Yes, it was all of twenty years, nearly to a day, since he had left for foreign parts, and Reynardine, his wife, had died.

II

"Cop forard away!" went the ringing formula of the huntsmen. "Cop forard away!" A long wail on the horn. The covert had been drawn blank.

Two sharp notes and a halloing. "Yo ho, Tinker! Yo ho! Tim! Forard, hounds, forard!" And the pack of hounds began to move like a slow wave toward the distant woodland. The hunt followed at a slow trot....

Her name had been Petronilla, but through the country-side she was known as Reynardine, partly because of the Irish folk-song she could sing so well, with its haunting minors, its suggestion of superhuman music. He could see her slight form still, spiritual, virginal in the Irish twilight. He could hear her pulsating contralto voice:

"If by chance you look for me
  Perhaps you 'll not me find,
For I 'll be in my castle—
  Enquire for Reynardine."

No, he would n't look for her, though he knew where she was. She was in her castle, for sure! Her deep and narrow castle in the ancient, disused Cistercian monastery where the Fitzpauls buried their dead. Tier on tier the old Norman-Irish family lay, with their strange names, Fulke and Gilles, Milo, Tortulf, Bertran. There they lay with their carved effigies, dogs at their feet and swords at their side—old Crusaders. There they lay, ancient harriers of the Irish clans, Arnold and Eudo. There they lay, old peers of the Irish parliament, Robert, Gerald and Byssak. There lay the newer landlords, Jenico and Maurice. There they lay, dead as their tradition. There they lay, and be damned to them, Morgan thought! All there was left of them now was one daughter, his and Reynardine's, whom he had seen only once, in swaddling-clothes, and whom, he trusted, he would never see again.

"If by chance you look for me," her song had gone. "Look for you," Morgan sneered. "I 'll be in my castle!" "Well, you can stay there, wife!" he sneered.

He 'd never look for her, even though he could see the monastery where she slept from where he sat on his horse's back....

They had come to a woodland upwind and the hunt had slowed down to a walk. The hounds were being urged in by the pink-coated huntsman. He heard the short note of the huntsman to wake the fox, saw the pack pour in like a stream....

III

He had come out this morning, his second morning in the country, to hunt, to kill the fox, to enjoy the sport he loved with what had become a mania. And now his day was being spoiled by old black

memories. Perhaps it was the Abbey where Reynardine slept that nudged him with ghostly concentration, perhaps it was the field that ignored him as though he did not exist, perhaps it was the proximity of the fox itself—he had n't seen or hunted an Irish fox for twenty years. But he was troubled as a man is troubled by imminent disaster. He wished they 'd get on.

"Wind him, boys. Wind him. Yooi, get him out. Joyous! Tinker! Marvan! Leu in!"

But there was naught but the crash of whins, and the whirring of pheasants as they rose. There rose the huntsman's clear call:

"Yo hote back. Yooi over try back!" And the blast of the horn as he turned to draw the woodland again.

Twenty years ago! Could it have been only twenty years ago that he had met and married and parted from Reynardine? It was so misty, so vague, he had come to think of it as centuries before. He had come north from Dublin, a boy of twenty-two, just out of Trinity, son of old Jasper Morgan who had made a half-dozen fortunes in remounts for the South African War, grandson of Ed Morgan who had been ostler and stableman and later livery-keeper at Kingstown. And because he rode hard and well he was admitted everywhere. There is no democracy as open as that of the Ulster clans. A baron from William the Conqueror's invasion, or an Irish chieftain whose ancestors were Druidists yields precedence to any man who can do a thing better than he.... At a hunt ball young Morgan met Petronilla Fitzpaul, who was known through the country as Reynardine.

She was just at the momentous instant when a girl turns woman, that strange first of three tides in a woman's life. And the first tide breathlessly waited, curled, flowed in as he came. Very slight, very dark-haired, very deep-eyed, she was spared the ancestral Norman traits. She had n't the eagle beak of her brothers, or their intent scowling brows. She was a little thing of kindliness and deep emotions. One felt it in the face, somehow like a pansy, one felt it in her eyes, one felt it in her hands....

She liked him. He was new to her. She liked his dash. She liked, as gentlewomen will, the faint flavor of vulgarity in him. It was new to her. She liked the dash of his clothes. His assurance overcame her.

She liked him. And she was at the mystic tide of her life. She thought she loved him.

And what intrigued Morgan was the spirit within. Some faint conception of her beauty and mystery penetrated to him. No man is interested in a woman bodily, no matter how much he thinks he is. He is interested in cosmic womanhood, or in the one spiritual entity that actuates the body. And before Morgan was a thread of flame that might lead him now down a formal garden, rhythmic with the murmur of bees, now through a woodland where the thrush sang in the branches, now through a Roman crypt, mysterious and sanctified. He was like a barbarian who has found a great jewel, topaz or opal or sapphire, the light of which enthralls him, but of whose value and use he is ignorant....

Her brothers and her father were not inclined to view a marriage between them with favor. It was not because of his lack of lineage, but because the points of view were so different. They saw a gulf. But Reynardine dissuaded them.

"Brothers dear and my father, cannot I, cannot we all—" she put her hands out toward them—"make him see our way, take our things to his heart?"

They were all great hulking men, her father and her brothers, Ulick, Garrett, Gilchrist, Kevin, and she was the only woman of them—her mother had died so long ago!—and she was so little, so pleading! They were as wax in her hands.

"You know, dears—" she hung her head—"I love this man."

"Do what your heart says, Reynardine," they gave her the precept they obeyed themselves with such success and chivalry. And they frowned the family frown. "If she can do so much with us, what can't she do with him!" they reasoned in their simple way. Alas! poor gentlemen!

There was an immensity of pride in Morgan's heart, apart from pride in his young wife, to be allied to a family such as the Fitzpauls. Twice they had refused duchies. They were so old they went back into the mists of Norman tradition. They had the quaint customs of their sort, and strange superstitions, such as all Irish families have—

superstitions being but ancient mystic conceptions of nature, and customs observed so often through the centuries that their shadows became facts.

But of all quaint customs, their friendship to the fox was strangest of all. Their crest was a fox courant, and over no square foot of their lands could a fox be hunted. Great horsemen they were, but none had ever followed the hounds in a hunt. Perhaps some old Fitzpaul, seeing all people concentrated on ridding the land of the fox, had pitied the little red hunted one, and given it protection. Perhaps by some accident of border warfare a fox had deflected the chase from a hunted Fitzpaul and so earned the family gratitude. Perhaps this. Perhaps that. What did it matter?

Yes, a quaint observance, this trait of the Fitzpauls. An idiosyncrasy, a person might put it, such as a woman's objection to mice, or the energy of Henry Bergh—God rest him!—who fought that the law should protect horses from maltreatment. But what was queerer still, was their power over the foxes. Foxes greeted a Fitzpaul joyously, barking and wagging their tails like dogs—foxes, the most suspicious of all animals of the field. The Fitzpauls had some strange rhythmic power over foxes, as some people have over dogs. And yet, though this was mysterious, it was not so immensely mysterious. Some trainers are born with power over man-eating tigers, some men can handle snakes, some can sooth stampeding cattle. Morgan remembered hearing his father speak of Whistler Sullivan, who was called in when all hope of breaking a horse was gone. A mean, ferret-faced man, he would steal into the stall where a man-eating horse was tied and hackled, closing the door behind him, and a half-hour later he would bring the horse out. The horse would be coved and dripping with sweat, and never afterward would it balk or bolt or rear. And the Whistler had never laid a hand on him. He had only talked or hissed. People were afraid of the Whistler; the peasantry declared he had bargained his soul with the devil; but he had only power over horses, as the Fitzpauls had over the foxes of the field.

Well, that was all explicable, within the range of human knowledge. It was extraordinary, but that was all. But there was an eerier thing yet about that family. Other families had their banshees,

their ghostly pipes, their drummers on battlements to portend or announce approaching death. But when a Fitzpaul died,—so went the tradition, so it had been attested by living men, so it had happened within a wheen of years,—the lawns were peopled with foxes at the dusk of day. Not spectral things, but foxes of the field and wood who gathered to bid their protectors God-speed on their strange, strange journey. They knew of death as bee-keepers say bees know. They made no sound but for the rustle of the grass and the faint thudding of their pads. But they were there. And a passing peasant might see them and raise his hat.

"God be good to the Fitzpauls," he would pray. "'T is they are good to the poor!"

A strange thing that of the foxes, a thing not understood. How little, after all did we know of animals! But to blazes with that! Morgan swore. Animals were n't here to be understood. Animals were here to be used, a horse to be ridden; a hound to hunt with; a fox to be chased to the death—as he was here to ride and hunt and chase to-day; as he had done always; as he had done when Reynardine, his wife, lived....

A bird rose shrieking from the copse, and suddenly a hound gave tongue, and then another, and then the pack cried as one dog. There was a blast of the horn.

"Gone away!" came the cheer of the huntsman. "Away! Away!"

Then fifty horses thundered.

IV

First there was the minute red flash of the fox, slipping through the furze like a serpent, then the dappled flood of hounds, tails up, giving tongue like bells, then the master of the hunt on his great brown steeplechaser, then the huntsman, gay in pink, leather-faced with puckered eyes, on his little black mare. Then came the bunched hunt, the crash of ditches, the crackle of brambles, the thunder over turf, the *splosh-splosh* over plowed land. There was the cheering of the country-side.

There a woman was down at a fence and men stopped to help her. There a riderless horse went by, mane tossing, stirrups flying. Now a groan, now a curse. The country-side flew by as in a motion picture. Patch of brown, patch of green, patch of gray, like a crazy-quilt. The crack of hunting crops, the *ppk* of spurs. "Tally-ho, boys! tally-ho! On hounds! On!"

Morgan with certainty crept ahead of the field, not a hundred yards behind master and huntsman. Beneath him the great gray moved like a steam-engine. A little steadying forward, a rush and a thud, and they were over. Now a ditch was taken with a clatter, now a fence cleared nicely, now through a blackthorn hedge, Morgan's arm up to protect his eyes. Five minutes! Seven. Eight minutes! Nine. Ten, by the Lord Harry! And suddenly they were at Kyle na Maroo—Dead Men's Wood. And the hounds were sniffing, wailing, at check.

An old earth-stopper, wizened, purple-lipped, like a grave-digger of "Hamlet," appeared like a troll.

"Into the wood he went, your Honor," he addressed the master. "Into the wood the Red One went, your Honor, like a man diving into his own house."

"Are all the holes stopped, Mickey Dan?"

"Stopped is it, your Honor. Sure they 're stopped as if they were the burrows of the devil himself and the saints to be out hunting him on the judgment-day. Stopped is it? Sure, a worm itself could n't get in or out of them the way I 'm after stopping them with interest and grand care—"

"All right, Mickey Dan!" The master interrupted. "Hoick in!" He ordered the huntsmen.

"Leu in, boys, leu in. Tinker! David! Dermot! Ranger! Tally in, beauties! Tally in!"

Morgan pulled up his hunter and turned around to watch the field come up, no longer bunched, but straggling now. The burst to check had been too much for them. His horse was still fresh, his seat easy. He had done a notable thing, following so closely on the master's mount—the great racer that had won the Grand National—and the huntsman's mare, fleet as a greyhound, with so little weight up.

Morgan desired a word of commendation, even a look of envy. But they took no notice of him. He might have been some old fox-hunter, invisible, long dead, riding a specter horse, over some well-remembered run, for all the attention they paid him. To them he was n't there; he did n't exist.

And because of Reynardine.

And what had he done to Reynardine? It was n't his fault. It was hers. She was in love with him, and then she turned and was not. Was it his fault that a woman was fickle?

Yes, she was in love with him. He could even yet see her dark murmuring eyes in the golden light of the candles, as she set there in her white frock and sang to him, her beautifully cut ivory hands plucking haunting melody from a pianoforte as from some old-time clavichord.

"Sun and dark I followed her,
  Her eyes did brightly shine:
She took me o'er the mountains,
  Did my sweet Reynardine.
If by chance you look for me
  Perhaps you'll not me find—"

Oh, damn! What did she ever come into his life for, anyway! She didn't want a man. She wanted a poet. Crazy! That's what she was, crazy as a coot. He supposed her daughter—their daughter—was as crazy as she!

First of all there 'd been the trouble about the hunting. She never said a word about it, but her face had blanched the first morning he saddled up for the Lonth. She had expected him, he laughed, to have the same crazy notions as her family. And her face had been drawn with pain when he came back in the evening. And she had said nothing. Too proud. Too damn crazy and too proud!

That evening he had asked her to play "Reynardine"—not that he liked the tune; he'd rather have had something popular, something with body to it, none of your blasted wailing folk-songs. But he just

thought it might please her to have him ask. She shook her head, and plunged into Chopin.

"I don't think I could play—'Reynardine'—to-night," she said.

And she had never played or sung "Reynardine" to him again.

She and her folk had such darn queer notions. They thought more of a horse under them than themselves. They went to infinite pains and immense time to train a green horse or break in a dog where another person with a flick of spurs or, a crack of the whip could do it in half the time. True, they did it well. But, after all, you did n't make human friendships with animals. You made them do what you wanted to; or if they did n't— That was a man's way.

But people are queer, some of them. One man is proud that his horse whinnies in the stall when he hears the beloved footstep. And some men give friendship to dogs they never give to women, and their hearts break when a hound dies. And to some folk the birds of the air will come and eat out of their hand, so confident are the birds. And the death of a rabbit is a great tragedy to children. There is a virgin glade in nearly all folks' hearts where neither blood nor marriage wander, but the love of animals possesses. It is some mystic link in the chain of creation.

But he never had it. Never could understand it, Morgan thought. After all, man is the lord of creation, Morgan decided—that's true isn't it?—and all living things were for him to use. He had all rights over them, even to life and death. That was how some folks looked at it—not crazy people like the Fitzpauls.

And Reynardine did n't like the way he broke horses. Reynardine did n't like the way he shot pheasants. She was a queer girl, but—God!—she was very beautiful!

Well, that was the whole story of it; they did n't get on. There grew a gulf between them, and was that his fault? he asked. Was it his fault he was n't insane? Was it his fault he was too much of a man for her?

And when she was to have a child, she expected so much of him. She never asked of course—oh, no! She would never ask for anything, but she followed him with dumb eyes. What did she expect, anyhow? It was no man's job to hang around a gravid

woman all the time, holding her hand. A million women in the world were bearing children. What was there to it, after all? Every one did it.

And then she had run home. Let her run. Crazy coot!

And when she was dying and sent for him, did he refuse to go and see her, as many a man would have done? No, he went. He remembered well the soft April twilight; the dim white figure in the great bed, with the haunting eyes. And her four big brothers standing around with set, grim faces.

"My husband," she had said, "for anything I did to you here, for any way I hurt, will you please forgive me?"

"That's all right, Reynardine," he said. "We were just not suited. And I forgive you." Then, awkwardly: "I'm sorry to see you this way, Reynardine."

A light had gone out of her face:

"Then—good-by!" Her hand unclasped from his.

"Good-by!" he had said uncomfortably, and turned to go. He noticed three of the brothers look at the senior, Gilchrist, meaningly. Gilchrist turned to go after him. A cold shiver had gone down Morgan's spine. His knees trembled. And then came the very soft voice:

"Gilchrist, and brothers dear, in a minute maybe I 'll have gone with the twilight, and I shall not be able to talk to you again, ever again, with these human lips. And I 'm going to ask you just one more favor, brothers dear, my brothers. Please do it for your sister. Let my—let this man go!"

Then Gilchrist threw open the door.

"This is no place for you," he had said. "Go!"

A crazy breed! He had never heard from them again. Never had they asked him to see or support his daughter. He had even forgotten her name. But he did n't want to see her. He wanted to see no more of the Fitzpaul blood. She was living in the old place, he understood, which was hers now.

Well, let her—

But—funny! He could never get out of his mind's eye the vision of his wife sitting by the great piano, plucking out the ancient melody:

"If by chance you look for me
Perhaps you 'll not me find,
For I 'll be in my castle—"

The hounds shifted, grew keen. "Ay! Ay!" came the tongue of the finder. Scent was picked up again. "Ay! Ay! Ay!" went the pack, heads up, tails straight. There was a red flash ahead in the grassy field.

"Come up, Finn!" the master shoved his great horse onward.

"Ay! Ay! Ay!" They were off. "Ay! Ay! Ay!" Seventy hounds and forty horsemen. "Ay! Ay! Ay!" And one red fox running for his life. "Ay! Ay!" A dead fox or a broken neck! "Ay! Ay! Ay!"

V

For years he had been looking forward to this first fox-hunt in Ireland, and now with the red speck ahead of him, and the flood of hounds following it, and the great gray between his knees, it occurred to him that he was not enjoying it. Never was a morning better for hunting, never a keener scent, never a better pack; never had he pushed as powerful, as sure-footed a horse at a fence. Behind him the field fell, was blown, dropped out, until there were hardly a half-dozen left. And he was close on the master of the hunt, close on the huntsman, close on the pack. Yet there was something in it that took the thrill away and left a leaden depression instead.

She would n't go out of his mind, would Reynardine. What was that daughter of hers—and his—like? Like her mother, he 'd be bound, every inch of her a Fitzpaul. Hardly any of his blood there. His only were the mechanics of procreation; she was not his

daughter. Nothing lifeful of him had fused with the soul of Reynardine to perform the ineffable miracle. No, she would be all her mother—all Fitzpaul.

God! how he hated that name of Fitzpaul! How he hated Reynardine, who had made him feel like a cur, though he wouldn't admit it! How he had hated those four big brothers, who had made him feel afraid—an unforgivable thing!

Well, they were dead, he laughed, all dead. Gilchrist had died on Nevison's expedition to the pole, and he lay somewhere in the immaculate Arctic snows with the inscription his comrades had written on a simple cross: "Here lies a very gallant Irish gentleman." And Kevin had died fighting the Turks in Asia. And Ulick! Ulick was somewhere in the depths of the Irish sea, where he went out with the coast-guards to rescue a vessel in distress. And Garrett was funniest of all. He was killed defending a woman of the people from her drunken husband in a Dublin slum. All dead! Serve them right, too. They were always doing something that never got them anywhere. Fools!

He had hated them in life, and he hated them in death. But now their bodies were in dissolution, there was nothing concrete to hate, and, by some strange symbolism, he had come to hate what in his mind was most closely allied to the family, the fox that was their crest, the fox that had their protection. He hated it. He hunted it. He wanted to kill it. The day on which a fox was killed was to him a red-letter day. He felt somehow that he had killed a Fitzpaul.

Foxes took on for him now a strange, sinister entity. By thinking much of them, he had come to think of them as a quasi-human, supernormal race. There was something strange about them, anyway. Cleverest of all the beasts of the field, with their cunning they outwitted men. They were strange in their likes and dislikes. Their only friend was the dull-witted badger, a dark personality, too, whose burrows they used, with whom they often lived. They would eat fruit and shellfish. And though they killed birds, they would not touch a dead bird of prey. They had tabus as strict as a Maori's. Strange, mystical laws.

Very sinister they seemed to Morgan. Once in America he had seen Michi Itow, the Japanese, dance his dance of the fox. And there was something terrible in it, something so mysteriously awful that he all but rose in his seat, the cry of the pack ringing from his throat: "Ay! Ay! Ay! ... Ay! Ay!"

And he had a dreadful waking dream, of an acre of foxes watching him in the twilight, never moving, still on their pads. Just their pointed muzzles, their baleful, luminous eyes....

He had hunted foxes everywhere since he left Ireland. In Canada, where he had many a good kill. In England, where the sport was too ladida, too much of a social gathering to please. In America, in Maryland, where they hunted the gray fox, with hounds stag crossed with fox, but seldom killed. He could n't stand their way of hunting. The Marylanders did n't care to kill, and they had dubbed their favorite foxes with endearing nicknames. No! That was ridiculous! What he wanted was an Irish hunt—fine horses and good riders, and keen hounds, and a dead fox at the end of the day.

He looked up from the pack as they swung through a plowed field. The fox had swung in a circle and was running to where it had started. There was Cashelshane, King John's castle. There was Owana Ma ach Meg, the river of the little trout! There was Crock Na Mero, the hill of the querns! There was—there was the abbey where the Fitzpauls, where Reynardine slept.

"If by chance you look for me
  Perhaps you 'll not me find,
For I 'll be in my castle—"

A great castle that, he laughed, six feet underground.... Damn it! Were those hounds checked again?

VI

A piece of bog in process of reclamation—there the fox had taken refuge. He might be lying in some clump of grass. He might have slipped into one of the many drains the strong farmer had made in his attempt to make arable land of what was morass. Here and there were green patches, still dangerous, where a whole hunt might be engulfed. Neither the master nor the huntsman cared to chance their mounts in that treacherous sward. They halloed the hounds to and fro.

"Leu in, lads, leu in! Ranger, Rambler, Tinker, Tim! On to him, beauties, on to him!"

But the hounds were at fault, utterly. They howled with baffled desire. They went to and fro, sterns twitching, noses aground. Two or three beaten hunters turned up, their horses gone, their fire quenched, sitting dully in the saddle, thankful for the respite of check.

"We 've overrun," the huntsman grumbled.

"I 'm afraid so, Willie John," the master nodded. But some secondary sense told Morgan the fox was there. He had gone to ground and the hounds had failed to mark him.

"Try a short up-wind cast," the master directed.

The hounds were halloed out, and as they swung to the left, Morgan noticed the red shadow flit along a ditch, slip through a hedge. He spurred his horse in excitement.

"Yoi doit!" Morgan called. "View halloo!" But some trick of wind muffled his voice. Behind him three hundred yards away the hounds were following the huntsman about, heads up.

The fox was tired, his brush heavy with mud and dragging as he ran. Behind him Morgan thundered alone. He damned the huntsman. He damned the hounds.

"They 're going to miss, blast their stupid heads!" But he kept on. His hope was that the fox would turn, and the huntsman and hounds see him, and coming up, finish the day's work.

But the fox kept onward. Now across a plowed field, now across fallow land. Here a fence, here a ditch, here a hedge. What was the use of following him, with no hounds? But a mania arose in Morgan's brain, and he could n't bear to drop the chase now, so near to completion. A vast anger arose in him. He felt he had been betrayed. Never was a huntsman so stupid. Never hounds so bad.

The fox ahead of him put on a new spurt, and Morgan dug his heels into his horse's flanks. Where was it heading for?

He looked up for a moment and saw the four-foot crumbling wall of the old abbey. So there 's where it thought sanctuary might be found. The fox sought the protection of the Fitzpauls, even now they were dead.

A sinister grin passed over Morgan's face. Of a sudden he felt diabolical. Others might respect that sanctuary, but not he! He was n't crazy with sentiment. A hunter, he! He 'd hunt it over the legions of dead Fitzpauls. He 'd hunt it over Reynardine's grave, by God! How would she like that? Eh? He 'd kill that fox if he had to run it blind and throttle it with his bare hands.

"I 'll get you," he laughed.

The fox gathered itself for a last effort. He saw the whirl of its brush, saw it leap, disappear....

Morgan steadied his hunter for an instant. Suddenly gave it reins and spurs. Looked up, as it flew toward the wall.

From his height he could see within and his hair rose in a dreadful chill. For standing there was a white figure, with a book in her hand. Against the white dress the red fox cowered. The face was the face of Reynardine. The years were the years of Reynardine. The eyes were the eyes of Reynardine, black, deep, dilated with fear.

"Reynardine! Reynardine!" A cry of terror broke from him.

An immense panic seized him, and his hands checked the horse as it rose to the jump—a savage jerk on curb and snaffle. The gray was already in the air. Its hind legs came down uncertain. Its great bulk fell backward. Fear flooded him like cold water. In an instant he knew his neck would be broken like a dry twig. Christ! There it went! Snap!

VII

"Dark childeen, what is wrong with you? What is wrong? There was a wing in my heart until I saw you coming."

"Nurse Ellen, there 's a man dead at the abbey. I saw him die, with my two eyes."

"*O alanna veg*! Is it any one we know? It isn't the master, is it, or Sir Maurice?"

"No, Nurse Ellen, no! It's no one I know. I was sitting reading by Mother's grave, and a wee red fox, a wee hunted fox, ran up to me for help. And then the man came jumping the wall, and his horse reared and he was killed. I never saw him before, but we know him, Nurse Ellen. I know we do."

"Why dotey child? Why do you say so?"

"He saw me and he took me for Mother, Nurse Ellen. He called, 'Reynardine!'"

"Was he a dour, black man, child of grace? Would you be afraid of him, and he alive?"

"Yes, that's he, Nurse Ellen. Who is it we know?"

"It's no one we know, *a lanna*. No one at all."

"But he called, 'Reynardine!'"

"You only think so, dark childeen, you trembling there and standing by your mother's grave. A trick your mind played you, *machree dheelish*. He was no one you know, or nothing to you. Only a strange man was it, a strange bad man."

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

I

It must be for the thousandth time now he was sitting down at the neat table looking out on the little lawn, and trying to get his ideas together, trying to get something new, something startling, that would awaken these hard-boiled men who had control of theaters, magazines, publishing houses to the sense that he was alive, worth while, valuable. If he could only think up a new detective, or—or something.

Any other than he would have given up the game long ago, but he knew he had talent—he would n't go quite so far as to say genius, but great talent. It was no use their turning him down all the time. He was certain they never read the stuff.

He was certain, too, there was some trick, some knack he had n't discovered. Just some little trick. These men of national, international fame—he could see from their faces they had no especial brains, any more than he had.

But just some little trick he could n't get.

He had taken courses in writing, gone to schools of journalism, and here were all his manuscripts with neat rejection slips; here was what he thought the great American novel battered and dog-eared, a study of the temptations of a girl in the great city; and here was his crook drama, that some filthy reader had marked with the rim of a coffee cup. It was enough to make a man quit.

But he would n't quit. He 'd be as big as the biggest of them. He, too, would have his pictures in the papers, not gaunt and bitter as most of them seemed, but pleasant, dignified, literary. And his picture would look like an author's, with its well-marked features, its masculine little mustache, its intellectual glasses. And he, too, would be interviewed. And he, too, would sign contracts involving great sums of money. And there would be gossip about him, too, in the papers, where in Florida he was spending the winter vacation, what he was doing in summer.

He would n't quit. Had n't they all said at school and college he was cut out to be a writer? Had n't he gone to Europe for six months? And, what was more, had n't he the money his father, the hardware man, had left him? Had n't he his home? He could stick it out.

His home! His wife! If instead of these few trees, this lawn, the outlook of the quiet sound, if instead of here he lived somewhere in the welter of affairs, wouldn't he be better? Somewhere things changed, where one did not have to go three quarters of an hour in a train to the theater. Down town in New York. Only trees and grass and water and sky here. Nothing to write about.

And his wife, Berenice—oh, she was a sweet girl, a nice girl, but—hadn't he perhaps made a mistake? She was so good and wholesome! Too much? Would n't it have been better to be married to—to an actress, or a sculptress, or—or something. Some one who could feel things; who would n't smile, and be nice. Berenice was all right, but—

And his mother. She was a nice, darling person, but—she did n't just understand. She was just a mother, like anybody's mother: If she could feel the great complex things! But she was just loving, and everything he did was right.

Berenice, and his mother ... the trees, the water ... essential barrenness of life ... nothing to write about ... so unfair.

II

Because Barry had hinted it annoyed him to have her in the house while he was trying to write, Berenice had decided to go out for an hour or so, to give the poor lad a chance. And for a few minutes it bothered her to be idling, whereas there were so many little things that needed her attention. A house became so weary. It needed a flick of the hand here and there, a touch to flowers. But the white road, and the arching blue-green trees, and the drift of the dogwood—a cloud, not a flower, did it seem, so delicately balanced was it in the May air—all these took her eyes, and the immense miracle of

spring drew her thoughts from the gracious artifice of the house. How gently, how imperceptibly it came, a little curling wave of the west wind, and the clearly pitched note of an adventuring bird! It was like the moon, spring was; a clear thin line of silver in the gray sky, like the minute green of the waking willow-tree, and it grew ... under your eyes was its sweet benevolence. And it was hard to go to sleep at night, so much was being accomplished, for fear you would miss some phase of the return of beauty. Oh, the little birds ... so fussy, so intense about their nests. The showers like great sheets of silver; and after each the slim trees were more like pretty ladies, and the great thick trees like pleasant stalwart men. And the flowers came shyly, demurely, just as young girls might come; just as she herself, Berenice, felt, acted when she was fifteen, and was brought into a roomful of strange people.

And she stopped for an instant at the dark pool where the little turtles were busy, swimming to and fro, a clear-cut, fine line on the dusky water, a minute head with crystalline beads of eyes, just showing ... and if they thought you were watching them they dived—a flick and they were gone—and if you saw clearly enough you could notice their flippers waggle slowly as they made for the downy bed of the pool. And some kept fearfully quiet, sitting on stones, or on logs, and at any quick movement you made, they plumped like stones. And the great trees around so much alive, so patient... She could understand how poets of an older, simpler age saw dryads in them. Pan she could not understand, nor satyrs, but dryads were sib to her, young shy women in garments of apple-green. You could tell a good picture of a tree from a bad one that way: some had dryads in them and some were only wood.

So many thoughts were in her, so keenly did she feel a kinship with the trees, with the singing birds, with the west wind that cleared the air, that she wished she had some one to speak to about it. But a great shyness... And perhaps, even, it could n't be said in words, perhaps music. Well, hardly even that. She had tried to speak to Barry about it. But Barry had kissed her and thought her a moonstruck kid, as he said. Poor Barry! Directors of periodicals were so hard on him! It was dreadful to hurt him that way. Though she confessed the treason with a shock to herself, she found it hard,

well-nigh impossible, to read what he wrote. It was hard for her to understand artificial women and noble men. All she knew was nature, and that was not artificial. Nor was it noble, either, she thought; it had just a sweet, harmonious kindliness. There could be nobility only where ignominy existed too—and in nature was no ignominy. She wished she knew more about men and women, for Barry's sake, to understand these matters he wrote of, passion and crime. But dramatic passion seemed so needless in her eyes, and crime was so sickly; she just felt a pity for it, a sense that they, poor people, must be crazy to do such things. Oh, she wished she understood—could help him! She remembered when, over a year ago, a little periodical had decided to print one of his writings, the letter came as the first snowflakes fell. And she could not feel excited with him, because in her heart, beyond her control, was some strange rhythm. The snow, the soft and harmonious snow ... and in her head was a picture of nursery days, of pine-trees under a delicate white weight, and old Saint Nicholas, whom little children called Santa Claus, driving through a fleecy world ... his red cheeks, his white beard, his reindeer with the silver tinkling bells. And reindeer brought the thought to her of squat, hairy Laplanders, fishing solemnly near the Pole, through a little hole they had cut in the ice, while away in the background ambled a great polar bear. A very terrible animal it must be, but one always thought of it as gentle as some big old dog.

Oh, she wished she were a better woman, a woman who had her husband's interests at heart! People said a woman could make a man. She wondered how. And it was said of some that their husbands owed their careers all to them. How? But how? And even if she knew, her terrible shyness... She could be intimate with dogs, and horses, and solemn, aloof kine. But words did n't come to her somehow. It was such a drawback!

And when he was disappointed, she stood there, dumb as a stone. Nothing would formulate. All she could think of was to lift his hand and kiss it quietly, and oftentimes a tear would come because he was hurt. But she could say nothing that would make things seem easy. All she could think of would be to take him out in the dusky night, and look in silence at the stars. All the immensity of gleaming

worlds ... so scattered, so varied, and not one ugliness. And one felt drawn out of oneself toward the beautiful, terrific heavens, and all the worries and troubles seemed of less consequence than the droning of a bee. A little sum of money lost, a petty ambition frustrated, a cheap man's jibe, those hurt for a moment, but how little they mattered under the clouds of stars!

And if she could take him out and be silent with him, while the crickets sang and the little frogs croaked their funny dissonant harmony, and earth rolled along eastward under the arching heavens... But maybe he was right—she was only a funny dreaming kid.

She had come to the sound now, and quiet as a lake the broad stretch of water was before her. And here and there was a steamer, and southward a spluttering tug pulling a line of barges rigged with square auxiliary sails. Her mind leaped forward to eight weeks from then, when the regattas would begin, and from all parts of the sound, from north of it, Marblehead even, the boats would come with white curving sails to fight for supremacy. Great forty-footers, and the smaller thirties, and the fast P-boats with their immense Bermuda rigs, and little handicap sloops, and cat-boats manned by boys in bathing-suits, all scurrying, swishing, all in turn jibing, coming about, jockeying to go over the line with the gun.

And then, too, soon the great blind porpoises would come gamboling, shining like negroes, follow-my-leader. And the bluefish would run. And on the rocks the querulous bird population would screech and chatter. And one would look out for the boats going to New Bedford and to Fall River ... their calm progress like a steady horse's, and their lights. And the great lumber schooners would come down from Nova Scotia, with their blue-eyed, taciturn sailors, to anchor at City Island.

A little quiver underneath her heart reminded her. How should she tell Barry she was going to have a little baby? When should she tell him, and what should she say? She must be careful. She must n't disturb his work. And would he be happy about it? Or would he—would he—she bit her lips suddenly—would he not be pleased?

III

It seemed to her that it was all one with the coming of the springtime, the budding of the flowers, and the westward wind—the miracle of the baby. One was first one's own sentient self, bending to the wind with the trees, breasting the curling waves of summer, and patiently listening to the song of some ambitious bird, and, before you knew how, a little thing had come nestling under your wing. The flowers had made you sister, and the wind protected you, and the grass was careful lest your foot should touch a stone. Whence did it come, the little life that was delicate as the petal of the apple-blossom, soft as a little bird asleep in a nest? In summer one felt it had come over the bending grasses and between the gentle rains, and the robins did it reverence. And in spring it was borne on the first generous, delicate wind, and the trees nodded their highest, newest boughs. And in autumn the Brown Woman of the Woods brought it, while the little chipmunks stared. In winter it came with a shaft of the loud, aggressive sun. However? Wherever? But one moment you were yourself, alone, with only your own problems. And suddenly you had been trusted with something softer than flowers, more precious than diamonds, a little molecule of life itself. Such a trust!

Every woman had a little dream about her child. A woman of the tenements might see in a little parcel of flesh and blood a one-day president of her great republic. And another might see in him a minister of God bearing a light to thousands. And a third would see in a little daughter a voice that would gush forth in immense harmony. And some who knew the bitter tooth of want would dream of their children as powerful merchants, with great cars and yachts. Such rosy stories do women think in their heads.

But all Berenice could imagine was the little daughter of fair tresses in her small bed at the close of day, when the short Occidental twilight hovered like a bird, and night came trudging westward with dun feet. Below in their drawing-room people would be assembled for dinner or for the playing of cards, laughter and candle-light, and the glow of an open hearth, and tobacco sending up bluish-gray smoke from little tubes. But Berenice would be alone

with the fair child in the dim nursery, putting her to sleep and teaching her the rhyme that is a child's first prayer and, at the same time, a charm against evil spirits; against great bulks in the darkness that make little children scream; against strange gray women who take small humans from the warm beds mothers put them in and whisk them to deep, underground burrows where trolls and misshapen demons are, replacing them with wizened, ill-natured changelings. Against all the powers of darkness the little prayer was potent:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
And if I die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take!"

And then, reverently:

"Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
Guard the bed that I lie on!"

And when the small eyes were closed and the minute mouth had taken on the sweet smile of sleeping, and the hands had relaxed into white, starry flowers, she would steal downstairs to her guests, to the gracious room where sleek, well-bred women and kindly, burly men were gathered to dine in company or to play cards, where the bluish smoke rose in whorls from the white tubes of tobacco, and there was soft candle-light and tinkling glass. And she would feel happy there, secure. There would be no apprehension in her. For above, at the four corners of the bed where the minute humanity slept were four figures of great power, four lumbering grizzled fisherman—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John!

IV

The old lady watched Berenice walk down the road, pausing for a moment in her beautiful needlework to admire her young daughter-in-law's slim, willowy figure, the eager pose of her head, her brown, beautifully plaited hair. The apple-green of her dress and the blue-green of the trees—she made such a beautiful picture, and the old lady shook her head and sighed.

And one might imagine the old lady saying: When I was young I was as lissome as that, as pretty, had as eager a head. Time flies, and we grow old. Ah, the fine days of young womanhood!

But that was not in her mind at all: she shook her head because she knew the heartaches, the difficulties, the terrors the young girl must go through before she attained to the reward of women—wisdom and peace.

For they all came to that in the latter end, the old lady thought—the girls who started out dancing, and the girls whose eyes were troubled with thought, and the girls deep as rivers, and the shallow girls who angled for a honeyed word. And life, like some deft schoolmistress, caught them and taught them and put wisdom in their heads, and in their hearts little modest flowers, like forget-me-nots. And the sad girls learned laughter from little children on the floor, and the wayward ones learned loyalty from trouble, and great emotional currents put depths into the shallow ones. And life seemed so hard, the present so brutal, the future terrible as an army with banners—but one day it was gone. All was past. And in retrospect it seemed so little pain to have had, to learn such a great lesson, to come to such a sweet place! If one came through it, it was so much worth while.

The hazards one made so much of ... Oh! Did n't she know!

It seemed to her as she looked back now very strange that all the little tragedies of her life appeared to have faded and all the happiness intensified; and this was peculiar, for at the time the pain seemed so poignant and the happiness so diverse, so hard to grasp. A night at a theater, for instance, twenty years ago, and a dinner before it, and a supper afterward—how queer one could remember all that! Even the tunes the orchestra played, the clothes one wore,

what this man said, how this woman looked. And one thought of the night young Barry, below, writing, was so near to death; and the utter terror, the tragedy of that time had faded. And one remembered only how pretty he looked, how kind the doctor was, how Mr. Valance, her husband, had put his hand on her shoulder in his big, kindly way.

If young people knew how these things came out, they would n't worry so much, but there was no use telling them. They would have to find out for themselves.

She had never been one to admire nature, had the old lady, but one thing she did know: she knew people and she knew life. Berenice was all right, a very fine girl for all her romantic thoughts, but Barry worried her occasionally. He was so intense about his career of writing. And she felt in her heart that if was not going to be a success. One knew, somehow. For instance this: she could tell whether or not a novice was going to be a great pianist, because she could see him as a master, if he were ever to arrive; his power, his aloofness, his concentration. She could see a merchant. She supposed it was a gift, just feeling what people were.

And her son Barry below—she could not see him. And she was n't going to tell him, either. Men were queer. They bore grudges, even to their mothers. It was better to let him fight himself out, and be conquered, drop; and then pick himself up, and think it over, and go to something else, with a pang and more wisdom. And month by month the disappointment would pass, until the ramping of his early days was no more to him than a quaint gesture. And years later he would meet some great author for a moment, and be very courteous, a little shy with him. But he would never tell him of the struggle on his own account, never mention a word—ah, she knew, she knew!

Barry would be all right. Only—only he must be broken. All humans must be broken, as Mr. Valance, her husband, had said horses are. And some horses are great race-horses, and some are hacks, and some hunters, and some just simply for use. But all have to be broken. And they are nearly all kind, nearly all good, as human beings are. For nearly all men and women are good, the old lady thought. One had to know their hearts,—their appearance, their

gestures meant nothing,—and their hearts ought to have a chance to grow. And then they would all be good. Those who were n't had had the growth of their hearts stunted somehow. And they were n't to be hated, but pitied, poor things.

If any one, any young person, were to know what her thoughts were—the old lady smiled—she would say she had known no trouble in life, was shallow, did not understand the tragedy of things.

Well, she had had her share of life; her troubles as well as the rest of them. She had been a very sensitive girl. When she married Mr. Valance, her husband, she had hardly known him,—for such was the custom in her day, that he should satisfy her parents of his affection rather than herself,—and when the day came to leave her father and mother and her four brothers and her sisters, to leave the house she had known since she was born, to leave her own virginal room, and go away with a strange, terrifying, fascinating man—why, it was like jumping into the sea without knowing how to swim. In those days young girls did not know, were scared. And yet everything had been all right. She loved Mr. Valance, her husband. No two could ever have been closer than she and he. And she smiled at the terror of her leaving the home.

And before Barry was born—oh, the ghastly nights, the ghastly, ghastly nights, of lying awake and fearing, fearing, and the hideous unimaginable dreams! And the birth itself, the surge of pain like some cruel, driving knife, and strength ebbing in a fast flood! And came kind unconsciousness, and when she woke there was a sort of white peace in her, and the little dark-haired boy, by some beneficent magic, was on the nurse's broad lap. And the strange miracle of how she had forgotten all the pain so soon ... how little it seemed, how natural! And how ready she would have been again. A little daughter, she had thought—how nice it would be! But it was n't to be.

And when Mr. Valance, her husband, had died, for her had come, she thought, the end of the world. Yet now all she could remember were the peace and trust in his quiet face, when all had gone. And into the room where she was alone with him there came the quiet message that all was well. And the hearts of people were so warm. The doctor himself, who had seen so many die one would have

thought he would have become callous, was so unaffectedly kind. Even people one had thought were enemies—or not enemies but just careless of one—showed a warmth, an understanding.

And she had thought it impossible for her ever to be on the world alone; but somewhence strength had come to her, and poise; and all the fears she had when Mr. Valance, her husband, was alive, were dead now, she a widow. Lonely and down in grief at times, but afraid never!

And she thought to herself, with a queer little smile, of the times when in the dark of the night, by the eerie Long Island waters, she had gone out, crying in a little misery, praying, wishing that Mr. Valance, her husband, would appear to her, that she might once more hear the beloved voice, sense the big dignity, perhaps feel the kindly hand upon her shoulder. But she waited in vain. Nothing came to her cries, her prayers, her wishes. But when she came in again, she felt she had emptied her heart of longing and loneliness, and all the familiar furnishings of her rooms spoke to her tactfully and friendly.

She smiled, because now she recognized—however she did it she did not know—that what she wanted could not possibly be granted. Just for her alone an exception could not be made against the seemingly cruel, tremendously wise law that the dead should be silent. Everything was so wise, so ordered. And if one were to know exactly, the merchant would leave his shop, the seamstress her broidery, the workman his lathe. So it was kept a curtain of mystery, with a little hedge of terror before it.

All was well. Life and death, all in good hands.

She had often thought to herself, sitting there, as an old person might, that things did not seem as well as they were in her young days. But on second thoughts she discovered they were just the same. Life was a constant, as Mr. Valance, her husband used to say of things. Oftentimes while she sat in a corner and heard young people talk, she was amused, for they seemed to think she knew nothing of modern life. And life could not be modern or ancient. Life was a constant, as Mr. Valance, her husband, used to say. They had only manufactured new terms, discovered new angles. She smiled as she thought of their talks of psychoanalysis; of how one

was very complex; and how one must get rid of obsessions by discovering them and talking about them to a specialist. One did the same in her day. One called the obsessions troubles, and on one's knees one poured one's heart out to God. And their talk of psychic things—why, when she was a grown woman, did n't they have the queer Eddys in Vermont, and that strange Russian woman, Madame Blavatsky, and Home, the medium, who floated through a window, feet first! And she was sure that when she was young there was just as intricate card games as bridge. And their talk of Socialism and man's rights! Did they forget that Lincoln freed the slaves? Ah, the young!

She remembered a man saying—an old man—that what was wrong with the new generation was this: they left nothing to God. They wanted to do everything their own way. Fifty years ago, he said, every one was cognizant of God.

But were they? pondered the old lady. Yes, they went to church. But did n't they go just because one went, as nowadays one goes to the movies? A habit. And did the rounded sentences of the ministers mean anything to the young? No. And the hymns—they were just melodies. One sang them, as young boys sang college songs. It was only when one was grown, man or woman tall, and the great wolves of the world harried one, harried until one could sense their white teeth, their red slavering mouths, and there was a blank wall and no escape—it was only then one felt the Immense Hand. And rarely afterward did one speak of it. It seemed like a strange secret order, being initiated to God. She was sure that it was like that to-day, as it was fifty years ago, as it must ever have been, as it must ever be.

Looking up from her sewing an instant, she saw Berenice coming toward the house. It must be later than she thought. It must be lunch-time. They must make Barry, poor boy, stop now. Brain work was so fatiguing and he should n't overdo it.

She paused for a breath, watching the brown head, the apple-green dress. She knew the girl's secret, though Berenice had never said anything, hinted at all about a baby. But the little exalted look in the eyes—

"I must say a prayer to-night," thought the old lady.

He got up from the desk. No! it was no use. Nothing would come to-day. Another fruitless morning. If he could only find the trick those fellows had!

Yes, but they all had something to write about, and he had nothing: this wretched urban setting, this calm, uninteresting sound. And he knew nobody. There was no encouragement, no inspiration. His mother, dear old lady—she knew nothing, could tell him nothing. And his wife—she was a dear girl, and he loved her, but— Oh, there was nothing to write about; no drama; no people of drama.

WISDOM BUILDETH HER HOUSE

I

Whilst her great train was picking its way carefully from the mountain-tops of Abyssinia, eight thousand treacherous feet of height, to the littoral of the Red Sea, the slim brown queen had experienced only impatience. In the cool quietness of her mountain home it had seemed the most natural thing in the world to arise and visit the young king of the Jews. On every step of the long journey downhill it had seemed natural. In her own country it seemed right she should do as she had chosen. But now they had left Abyssinia, left the great tropical forests with the gigantic candelabra trees, left the arid cactus-covered plains, left the pleasant green valleys where water trilled and the boxwood trees and wild roses and water cress grew, and had come to arid Ailet by the Red Sea. And here were great stretches of sand and mimosa, here half-naked, cunning black men, here a heat like a pall, here the brooding mystery of Egypt, that knows all things and is silent to questioning.

A different world, and in the different atmosphere there came a faltering, a waver into the heart of Balkis. Was she a fool? For two miles her royal train stretched. First, the fighting men in their short white robes, graceful, powerful as cats; then the line of laden camels

with tinkling bells; then the great black elephants with their gleaming black skin, their gleaming white tusks, their painted trappings; then the litters of her women; then her own litter; a welter of attendants, bearing the provisions of the journey and the present she was bringing to Solomon, the young king of the Jews: spices; and gold of Ophir; and large diamonds from the Abyssinian mines; apes—great red-faced baboons that had the strength of ten men, and delicate blue monkeys, pretty as birds; and peacocks that outdid precious stones in the shimmer of their colors; and tusks of ivory, large as the branches of great trees.... Her heart wavered, and for an instant it occurred to her in panic to go back. But if she returned now, she would be dissatisfied all her life, and grow inward, and become maybe hard as a stone, and that was against nature, for all things grow outward, as a tree grows outward, to fill up the empty spaces of Death....

"No! no! I shall go on."

Up in the cool mountains decision had seemed so natural, action so easy. But below in humid Egypt subtleties of thought seemed native to the weak Nilotic breeze, and she could see herself as though she were another woman. She could see her orphaned childhood, when the care of all her counselors was to have her gracious and kind, and sweet as a small bird's song. They had instructed her that queens are not made by crowns, but by graciousness and strength and courtesy, so that any beholder might know she was a queen were she dressed in the garments of her humblest slave. And she had grown older into young maidenhood, and wise old heads had helped her govern and take care of her wild mountain folk, and came a few years more and she was twenty-two, and the counselors were too old to counsel, being either querulous old men or dotards, living in forgotten days, and Balkis herself had to rule, being queen. To be queen alone would have been simple.

But being queen, she was lonely, and being gracious and just, she was wise, and being wise, questions arose in her like a spring of well water. Thought rose like a hawk and swept in widening gyres, but arrived nowhere. Thought and emotion were with her in the red Afric dawn. Thought and emotion were with her like the flickering lightning and terrible thunder of the Abyssinian hills. Thought and

emotion came with blue mountainy twilight. And there was none to share them. None to ask. None to satisfy. Being a queen, there was none she might consort with but kings and queens, and the kings of the states about her were shrewd political men, who could not understand what a young girl felt, and her young womanhood quivering like the jessamy bough.... Their eyes would be on the riches of Ethiopia; so they were out.... And the queens of Africa, outside herself, were not queens, but tribal chieftainesses, half priestess and half prostitute, Amazonian, untutored.... She could not talk to them.

And so she had decided there was nothing for her to do but to govern justly, to grow old gracefully, to weep a little in private, to find it hard to go asleep of nights, to look forward to death as a sentry awaits the dawn, until a swart Egyptian trader had brought word of the new king of the Jews, now David was gone. A boy he was, they said, a strange dreaming boy, with none of his father's delight in war, and with a gift of strange inspired wisdom. She was told the story of two women, that were harlots, and how they each claimed a certain child as theirs, and of Solomon's judgment.

"And how old is the young king of the Jews?" Sheba asked.

"Twenty-three or twenty-four."

"A year or so older than I."

And she was told how Hiram, King of Tyre, that shrewd man, was a friend to the young prince, and how the arrogant Pharaoh of Egypt conceived it worth his while to make a treaty with him.

"And is he married?"

"No, Sheba, he is not married," the trader vouched....

II

The girl in her said: "Go back. They will think you are seeking love. They will think that with your white teeth, your sloe-black eyes, your color of fine bronze, your body, lithe and sleek and graceful as a cat's, you want love from the king of the Jews." And all her face

flushed at that thought, and she debated whether she should send for the captain general of the fighting men and tell him to face his troops about and return to her Ethiopia. But the queen in her rose and said: "What care I what they say? Does Sheba need the love of any lowland king, or plead for alliance? Sheba is Sheba, and what Sheba does is Sheba's business." And the woman of her brooded softly: "I will go on. Somewhere there is an answer to all the questions, and if he does n't know the answer, perhaps he can help me to find them."

"And perhaps he has questions of his own," she said, "and I can help him answer those." A sad boyhood, she had heard his was, with his father David droning psalms in his latter days, busy at his prayers as a potter at his lathe, calling for mercy for his own soul.... And his mother, the queen, who had once been wife to Uriah the Hittite, a strange, mad old woman who walked about the palace, gibbering to herself, her face and fingers twisting, all the white beauty that had dazzled David upon the roof of the king's house turned now to an awesome gray rugosity.... A house of fear, Sheba thought, a house of silence, and she understood how Solomon could have become so wise, for wisdom comes with the quiet tongue....

Wisdom he had, according to all reporters, but the wisdom she had heard about was wisdom of the head and of the body. Had he wisdom of the heart? Did he understand why one was now quiet as a well, now turbulent as the sea? Did he understand why peace should come in a soft blue garment, and suddenly irritation rise in angry red? Did he understand what it was that dragged at the heart so, pulling it, it seemed, toward the furtherest star? And could he resolve her what she was to do with herself? Govern she must and govern wisely, but outside of that was she always to be so lonely—she who was so young and strong and beautiful? The slave girl with the fatherless baby had more than she, the queen. The housewife grinding the family corn. Each could escape into some one else, had a refuge—all but Sheba, the queen....

"I must go on."

And so her great and gorgeous train went on through the desert, crunch of camels' pads, shuffle of marching men, thud of lumbering elephants, screaming of peacocks, chattering of apes.... They passed

the shimmering sands, and came to the black high rocks. They passed sluggish Nile, and came to the roaring cataracts. They came to the city of hawks and the city of Venus and the city of sacred crocodiles. They came to Thebes with its gigantic figures, each of a single stone. They came into the desert again, steering at night by the stars as mariners do. They came to the great Lake Moeris, which the Egyptians control by locks. They came to Memphis. They passed the giant labyrinth. They passed the three great pyramids. They passed the Sphinx. They came to the Great Delta. They crossed to Ais. They came to Joppa. They wended toward Jerusalem in the cool of the dawn....

III

She was in no wise impressed, somehow, by his ceremonial officers. They lacked dignity and were familiar. Nor did Solomon's great captains please her. They were not fighters; they were strategists. They played with companies as the Persians played chess with pawns. Her own men were her ideal of soldiers, copper-colored, muscled like panthers; they would crash into an opposing army like their native lightning, or they would die doggedly, their backs to the wall, their heads broken, the blood streaming into their eyes.... Nor did all the magnificence of the king's house please her.... There was too much, too quickly acquired, and jumbled, no composition. The Egyptians had more magnificent things, and grouped them better. Her eyes flickered from the hall to the pale young king on his throne. Beside him, standing, was Nathan, the principal officer, and the king's friend, a great frame of a man, fanatical. And there was silence.

"I am Balkis, Queen of Sheba," she said and threw back her veil. Solomon cast an uneasy glance at the prophet by his side.

"She is come to prove you with hard questions," Nathan spoke.

For an instant Balkis all but laughed. Behind her stood her fighting men, in exact ranks, rather contemptuous. Around the hall the men of Judah and Israel fluttered. Winked at, nudged one

another. "From Abyssinia she comes, to ask him questions. See what a king we have! A great people, we!" It was so like a showman with a marvel to exhibit! "Ask him, ask him anything you like. Go on. Ask him." The cadaverous prophet! The white, young king. A swift stab of pathos went into Sheba's heart. Poor lad! Poor king! Poor mummer!

She smiled in the corner of her veil. She was supposed to ask questions, he to answer them. Well, let the mummery go on!

"O King," her voice rang out, "what is sweeter than honey?"

"The love of pious children."

"O King, what is sharper than poison?"

"The tongue."

"O King, what is the pleasantest of days?"

"The day of profit on merchandise."

"O King, what is the debt the most stubborn debtor denies not?"

"The debt is death."

"O King, what is death in life?"

"It is poverty."

"O King, what is the disease that may not be healed?"

"It is evil nature."

She was rather ashamed for herself and for him, and her great Ethiopians were puzzled. But it was so evident that the poor white king's hold on his people was this trick of wisdom. She must help him. She remembered quickly what history she knew of his folk.

"O King," she asked, "what woman was born of man alone?"

"Eve was born of Adam."

"O King, what spot of lowland is it upon which the sun shone once, but will never again shine until judgment-day?"

"The bottom of the Red Sea, which clave asunder for Moses. Then the sun shone on the bottom and will never again shine until judgment-day."

"O King, what thing was it whose first state was wood and whose last life?"

"The rod of Aaron, which became a writhing serpent."

She spread her slim copper hands, she bowed her sleek black head, as in homage.

"It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom.

"Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came and mine eyes had seen it, and behold the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

"Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee and that hear thy wisdom!"

And all through the king's hall went the flutter of his subjects: "Did n't I tell you? Did n't we say so? A fine king we 've got. All the way from Abyssinia she came to prove him. And he answered her everything. A great king! A fine king! Make no mistake!"

She moved toward the troubled young king with a smile.

"I would now commune with you on what is in my heart, great Solomon. Let us commune alone."

His eyes probed her. He saw her kindliness to him. A fleeting little smile answered her smile. He rose to meet her. The giant prophet caught him by the wrist.

"My son, attend unto my wisdom," he whispered fiercely....

"The lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil.

"But her end is bitter as wormwood—"

She caught his whispered words, and her proud head went up, her sloe-black eyes flashed.

"I am Balkis, Queen of Sheba."

For an instant they regarded each other with hatred in their eyes. Sheba turned.

"Men," she called to her bodyguard.

The slim brown Ethiopes tensed their statue-like pose. There was a *swish* as the short Abyssinian swords came from the oxhide scabbards.

"But I said nothing of you, great Balkis," Nathan suddenly fawned. "I spoke only of bad women. You are a good woman, Balkis, a virtuous woman. And a virtuous woman is like a crown, great

Balkis, of gold, yea of fine gold—"

"So!"

IV

They went out alone into the garden of the figs and pomegranates. The bright sun of early noon came down like a shower of gold. The doves made their faint thunder. The locust span his tiny wheel. From afar off, where the temple was a-building, came the clink of hammer on stone, the thud of ax on wood, the yo-hoing, the grunts, the curses of the workmen as they hoisted a beam into place.... And Solomon was shy as a girl....

"You are wondering why I came," Balkis said. "Will you sit down with me?" They sat under a great cedar-tree. The pigeons thundered. The bees droned among the apricots. The lizard flashed upon the wall. "I wonder myself.... But you can tell me, Solomon. You are so wise."

"Am I?" There was a little note of bitterness in his voice.

"Are n't you?"

"I don't know," he said. "I—I don't know."

"But all the questions that are put, you answer them. All the matters of judgment you pass on. Of course you are wise, Solomon."

"It is easy, Balkis, very easy, that sort of wisdom, for Nathan, as far back as I can remember, has been dinning precepts and examples into my ears. And at times, when things are difficult, comes a little inspiration, like a little unpremeditated bar on a musician's psaltery. And the tricks of reading a riddle are no more than the mason's tricks of arranging stones. If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. And if that is wisdom, then I have wisdom. But I know not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child."

"Poor Solomon!"

"O Balkis, I wanted to go out with the young men, and to understand what they all understand and I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; to hunt and fish with them and know the way of a ship in the midst of the sea. But I never could, Balkis, for while still a boy Nathan made of me a man, an old wise man. Woe to thee, O land, he prophesied, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning! So I 've always been a man, Balkis, a wise old man."

"Dear, poor Solomon! Never were young."

"Never, dear Balkis, never. I must never be young, never do a wild boyish thing. Dead flies cause the ointment of an apothecary to send forth a stinking savor; so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor. O Balkis, the long wise days!"

"Poor Solomon! Poor dear Solomon!"

"O Balkis," he cried suddenly, "you came from afar to hear my wisdom, and you heard a little mouse-like noise. And you wanted to commune with me on what was in your heart, and I 've shown you my own heart, that is like a troubled pool. Madness is in my heart while I live, and after that I go to the dead. O Balkis, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

"Hush! hush dear Solomon!"

And very suddenly his body broke in sobs, and his dark head fell on her leaning shoulder. There was a mist in her Arab eyes as she held him, as she patted him:

"Hush, dear Solomon!"

V

And in the dusk of day, when the master masons and their helpers had gone, he brought her to the temple he was building to his god, the great temple that Hiram, the trader king of Tyre, was embellishing for the reward of twenty cities in the land of Galilee.

And Balkis's eyes flashed with anger at the cunning of the Phoenician king. It was such a shame to take advantage of the boy! Poor wise-foolish king! He was like a child showing his toys.

"See these brass bases, Balkis, with the borders of lions and oxen and cherubim. And the brazen wheels at each base. They say there are cunning brass-workers in India, but surely there is no more beautiful work than this. Surely they cannot beat this."

"Of course not, my dearest. Of course not."

"And come with me, Balkis, to where the watchmen are, and I will show you marvels such as you never saw before: an altar of gold and a table of gold and ten candlesticks of pure gold with the flowers and the lamps and the tongs of gold; and bowls and snuffers and basins and the spoons and the censers of pure gold. Come."

They went toward the king's house. On the way Solomon stopped suddenly and looked at his temple.

"O Balkis," he asked, "you have come through Egypt. How much bigger is my temple than the pyramids and labyrinth? I 've heard so much of them."

"Bigger?"

"Yes, how much bigger?"

She looked at the little building, twenty cubits broad, sixty cubits long. Twelve paces one way, forty another. For an instant laughter bubbled in her, but gave way to pathos, and her sloe-black eyes were wet again. O poor lad!

"Is it very much bigger than the pyramids, Balkis?" he asked eagerly.

"Oh, lots bigger. Much."

"Why, Balkis, you are crying. Are you lonely?"

"Yes, a little homesick," she lied again.

He came toward her and kissed her, in kindness, but the touch of lips fired, startled them both, sent their blood pounding in the soft Syrian gloom.

"O Balkis!" his voice trembled. "O Balkis!"

"Solomon!" she uttered softly. "Dear Solomon!"

VI

Around the king's house the little winds of springtime hovered, the little moon of May was in the air. Came the rustle of the grasses, and the minor of the frogs, and the barking of cub foxes. All the constellations hung in a cloud and the sickled moon was in the west—stars and moon and purple night sky, like some rude mosaic. And from the king's room came the pale gold of candles and the murmur of voices in exaltation. And beneath the king's casement Nathan writhed in fear and anger and pain.

"O Balkis," came Solomon's voice, "you are wonderful. You are like a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.

"Your cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, your neck with chains of gold."

"O Solomon," her voice half whispered, half chanted, "a bundle of myrrh are you unto me. My well beloved! He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

"My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engadi."

"Balkis, you are fair, my beloved; behold, you are fair, you have dove's eyes ... fair, yea, pleasant...."

"As the apple-trees among the trees of the wood, Solomon, so are you among the sons of man. I sat down under your shadow with great delight, and your fruit was sweet to my taste. O dear Solomon, your eyes are closing. You are drowsy. Sleep, heart. O ye daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please."

"I am not sleepy, Balkis; I am only thinking. O beloved, if we could only go away from here. Go away together—rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

"For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

"The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come; and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;

"The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise my love, my fair one and come away."

"O Solomon, if you only would," came Balkis's voice, pleading. "Listen, my beloved. In Africa I have a great kingdom, and it could be greater did I want it so. It is on a high mountain and its fortifications are the lightnings on the hills. And from the hills my men can sweep down on all Africa. And there is reverence for me from the giant Ethiops and from the pygmies of the warm forests. Come with me, Solomon, come with me to a cooler, fairer kingdom. In the lowlands there are vineyards, and the vines flourish, and the tender grapes appear, and the pomegranates put forth; there will I give thee my loves.

"And the mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.

"O Solomon, come to Africa. Come to Africa with Sheba."

"O Balkis, what of my people, my poor people?"

"They can come, too, Solomon. There is welcome for them. They crossed the Red Sea once; they can cross it again."

"But my temple, Balkis?"

"O Solomon, listen. I will set the Abyssinian millions against the Pharaoh of Egypt, and they will make Egypt a waste land, as they did once before. And they will bring back the Egyptians in bondage, and the Egyptians will build you a temple, Solomon, a temple worthy of you, for the Egyptians are cunning builders. They will exceed their pyramids. For you I will conquer Egypt, Solomon.

"O Balkis, you are beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem. But you are terrible, Balkis, terrible as an army with banners."

"That is nothing, Solomon. That is the smallest gage of love. O Solomon, I have found something in my heart. I have found love. Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown love; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

"Come with me, Solomon. Make haste, my beloved. Be like to a roe or a young hart on the mountains of spices. Come to Africa."

He arose and paced the floor. Without, Nathan could hear the troubled footsteps.

"I am afraid, Balkis. I am afraid."

"Of what, dearest one?"

"Afraid, just, Balkis. Afraid of Nathan, afraid of the new strange land. Afraid for the temple. Afraid of God."

"Afraid? Do not be afraid, Solomon. Awake, O north wind," she chanted, "and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

Solomon stood by the window in distress, eager, afraid.

"Hiram, King of Tyre, will be angry."

"The King of Tyre," Sheba laughed, "will not be angry with me. Hiram is shrewd. He is a trader, not a fighting man."

"Are you sure, Sheba?"

"Yes, certain."

"Then I will—then I will—"

The voice of Nathan rose under him in an angry whisper:

"There was a young man void of understanding, ... and there met him a woman subtle of heart.

"And she caught him and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him:

"'I have peace offerings with me....

"'I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt.

"'I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon....'

"With her fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.

"He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.

"Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not it is for his life...."

"O Balkis, do you hear anything? Do you hear anything without the window? Do you hear a hissing as of a serpent aroused?"

"I hear nothing, Solomon. I hear nothing but the little murmur of the trees. Come from the window. Come over here and kiss me with the kisses of your mouth, for your love is better than wine. Put your left hand under my head, Solomon, and let your right embrace me —"

"Don't you hear anything, Balkis? Are you sure?"

"There is nothing, Solomon, O white and ruddy, O chiefest among ten thousand."

"No, there is nothing. I thought for a moment—"

Again the voice of Nathan came like the strokes of a sword:

"... O King, attend to the words of my mouth.

"Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths.

"For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her.

"Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

"Oh!" went a long shudder from the king.

"What is it, Solomon? Does anything affright you?"

"No, no, Balkis."

"Then come over to me, Solomon. Come where I can see your face. Your countenance is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. Come."

"Remember your father, David," came the voice beneath the window, "son of Jesse, turned from wisdom. Remember how his chiefest joy, Absalom his son, died. Remember how he stood against God, the prophet of the Lord, and the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed, three days' time; and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men.

"And the angel of the Lord stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it.... Remember!"

"Oh!"

"What is it, dearest? What is wrong? Have I done anything to offend you, to hurt you?"

"Remember Samson, judge of Israel, and how he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah, and he told her all his heart.

"And remember his end, how the Lord was departed from him, and the Philistines took him and put out his eyes—"

"O-o-o-o-h!"

"—and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass—"

"A-a-a-a-h!"

"Solomon, dearest Solomon, why do you cry?"

"—and he did grind in the prison house ... and make them sport...."

With a loud cry the young king burst from the room and fled down the corridors, his, feet pattering like the feet of foxes on the run, his heart crying out in sudden terror. "Where are you going, Solomon? Where are you gone?" came the voice of the young queen. "O head of most fine gold, O eyes of doves, O cheeks as a bed of spices, whither are you gone? O lips like lilies, O hands as gold rings, why do you leave me?" So all night long she cried, and wandered aimlessly. "You called me your sister, your spouse, your love, your dove, your undefiled," she wept piteously, "and now you are gone." She went through the garden, while Nathan crouched in the undergrowth. "You were like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant, and now you are gone." She wandered through the dark streets. "O locks that are curly and black as a raven, where are you now?" And the dawn broke and the shadows fled away, and still she cried: "O Solomon, where are you, Solomon? Make haste, my beloved!" But he never came. "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" she asked the watchman. But they drove her away. "O ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, tell him, that I am sick of love..." But he never came.

VII

Without, there were the grunts of her men as they strapped the packs of the elephants, the snarl of camels as they rose to their pads and turned to bite at their loads, the shuffle of the troops as they lined for the long night march, the quick gruff orders of the captains, the canter of horses. Within, Sheba stood very erect in the great hall. The poor white king writhed on his throne. Nathan stood by his side, erect and afraid.

"And I said—" Sheba's voice was quiet—"oh, you who were as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find you without, I would kiss you, I would not be despised.

"For I thought I was set as a seal upon your arm, and that your love was as strong as death.

"I rose and went about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I sought you, whom I thought my soul loved, but I found you not.

"The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veils from me—

"Me, Sheba!" Her eyes flashed. Solomon quailed in his seat. The prophet made a propitiatory gesture.

"Oh, do not fear, Nathan." Sheba smiled. "I came not to conquer, but to find wisdom. I found it."

She paused an instant.

"Before I go, let me give you, Solomon, called the wise, some wisdom of the heart. And you, Nathan the prophet, let me prophesy. You might have had one woman, Solomon, to love you all your life, but the day will come when you will seek my face among a thousand women, and never have me. You might have a temple that would have made the pyramids seem like outhouses, but one day your temple will be a little broken wall. And your people might have been the conquerors of Africa, but one day they will be helots in the Babylonian land. You have the wisdom of the shrewd and pious, Solomon, that can never meet the generous hand with the grateful heart."

She turned and swept out of the hall. At the gates she stopped and bowed mockingly.

"O King, live forever!"

VIII

All afternoon the east wind had been blowing, cold, bitter as aloes, and a great cloud-bank raced after the sun westward, until only a little space in the western horizon was clear where the sun went down. The voices of the land were stilled, the minute thunder of the pigeons, the whirring of crickets. Nor had the leaves of the trees their lively murmur, but stood fast and flat, like set sails. One could hardly believe that the winter was past and summer coming, for all was dreary, dreary....

Against the great red mushroom of the setting sun, the last of the homing caravan of Sheba showed. In the mind's eyes of the young king and the old prophet as they stood by the unbeauty of stone and brick and gray mortar that was the unfinished temple, they could see the angry camels, the lumbering elephants, the dancing horses, the swinging men, and the brown comeliness of the young queen's handmaidens, the straight backs of her fighting men. And the wind from the east blew through the land, blew through the heart of Solomon.... In a minute now they would disappear over the desert's edge. All seemed somehow tragical, like sailors leaving a great stricken ship, or glory passing from the land of its abiding....

"Oh, Nathan," pleaded the young king, "tell me she lied. Tell me I shall not have a thousand women and be a bitter, loose old man."

"O King, you shall find a virtuous woman. And her price will be far above rubies."

"Will she be as kind as Sheba was?"

"She will arise while it is yet night, and give meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.... She will consider a field and buy it: with the fruit of her hands she will plant a vineyard."

"Will she be as well-favored, as beautiful as—as Sheba was?"

"Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

"I suppose so. I suppose—you are right, Nathan, but—" The last of the caravan disappeared over the edge of the desert, and as though it were accompanying them, being a friend to them, the sun disappeared, too. A great coldness and darkness and dreariness came over the land, so that Solomon looked up in surprise. There was no moon....

THE PARLIAMENT AT THEBES

All around us, now, is the occult night of Egypt, and we sense that we are in a place we have known in dreams and desires, and perhaps seen a drawing of in some childhood's book. Before us we sense—we do not see, so little light does the moon behind the rolling clouds give us—an immensity of sand. In some places there are little hills; and in others billows as of the sea, and here a rude terrace, and there a minute cliff. Everywhere is the sand; live sand, not dead. And westward, we know, it rolls onward like the sea, through the width of Africa, through the Sahara, reaches Timbuktu, the secret city, and the jungle takes up the land, and rolls to the Gold Coast, where the Atlantic booms in great, curling surf.

And south of us is Africa, too, the crags of Abyssinia, the great belt of Rhodesia, and the plains where Kaffirs dig for diamonds, and the great veldts the Boers have tamed, and Table Mountain, that old navigators know, and the cape they have called Good Hope. And southward and eastward is the pearly haze of Madagascar.

And north of us the desert slopes away to where Alexandria was, to where the still Mediterranean is, which has no tides, and Tyre and Sidon flourished, that now are dead; and Carthage of the Phoenicians was, whence black Hannibal set forth against the eagles of Rome—and was conquered and yet lives, so great his name is.

And here was the empire of the Moors, the slim bronze people who struck Spain in a great shattering wave, and from whom Charlemagne got glory in battle.

All these are dead now, and the moon shines over dead cities, dead heroes, and great empires that are dead, and buried under shifting silver sands. But the land we are in is not dead; eternal Africa, eternal Egypt.

And where we are now, it is old, the events of history being like the trivialities of a summer day. We sense that Egypt is older than Mohammed, whose revelation is law there now, and older than the Little Lord who fled hither from Palestine with Joseph and Mary, older than the painted kings who sleep in pyramids; older than the pyramids themselves; older than the Hebrews who helped build them; older than Moses, who revolted and used black magic against the Pharaoh of his time; older than the tradition of yellow shaven priests; older than Isis and Osiris whom they worshiped with polished ritual—older, and younger, than this; eternal.

Above our heads now there is an occasional beam of the moon, and in front of us the plain of sand that extends to the little hillocks and minute cliffs the wind has made. And back of us is the broad and shallow Nile, where we hear an occasional lap of a little wave, and a splash as of some small fish jumping. And here and there are isolated palm-trees.

And there are no men, anywhere, but there is a sense of men. We know there are men in the cities to the north of us, men and women dancing in great blazing hotels, men on great liners going eastward through the canal De Lesseps made, men south of us at camp fires in the jungle, men west of us on caravans to Timbuktu. But here, and near here, men there are none.

There is a pocket of clearness in the clouds for a second and the moon shines through, and we see on the plain before us such assembly of life as only Noah saw when he took the creatures of the world in seven by seven and two by two, on board his great ship. In a great orderly gathering they are there, patient, silent. The bears are there, the brown bear, and the little black bear. And the moorland ponies, and the deer are there, great elks with horns like sails, and the little deer of parks, and they of the cat tribe, with sleek

furs and green eyes, and the fox with his brush, and the lanky, wide-eyed hare, and the rabbit children do be loving. They are all gathered there.

And the kine of the field are there, patient, stupid-looking. And the great monster of the river, the hippopotamus, and the armored creature that has the horn on its nose. And the last of the buffaloes. And the great springing thing of Australia that carries its young in a pouch, it is there. And the solemn sheep.

And back of that is an infinity of little creatures, the furry little creatures of the woods, who run when approached. They are there. All, all are silent, patient, a little puzzled, one fancies.

In front of this gathering, forward and a little apart, is a manner of deputation. The lion, who pads around a little, and in whose eyes there is anger. The great black and amber tiger, who is still but for the significant movement of the immense tail, and the elephant, that seems like some gigantic carven thing. And the crocodile lies in the sand, like some black sea-beaten log. And the polar bear is there with black dots for eyes. And the horse is still as in a stall. And next to the elephant the dog sits.

And they are all there, gathered for some occult reason, in the night of Egypt, under the thin twilight of the clouded moon.

And another beam of moonlight comes, and we see that the Angel of the Lord has appeared somewhence and stands before them.

As we see the Angel of the Lord, one of the illusions of our childhood vanishes. He is not a shining figure armed with terror and majesty. True, he has wings and a sword and a white robe, and is of stature above mortal. But, on the other hand, he has a great red beard, and his fingers are gnarled. There is something shy in his appearance, and kindly. And about him there is something of disappointment. One gets the impression that once he was a very great angel indeed, but in latter centuries he has drifted into a sort of back-water.

If he were a man and not an angel, with his red beard and gnarled fingers and shy ways, he might be an old-fashioned farmer who cared more for his land than for the price of corn, and who would allow no tractors or mechanical appliances on his place, still having

faith in the firm hands of workmen, and the strength and canniness of horses. He is evidently embarrassed, and not quite at home, and it is easily seen that he is more accustomed to looking at the crack in a horse's frog, and tending sick ewes, and herding homeless dogs, than facing emotional tension such as seems to be present.

He comes forward shyly, his brow wrinkled in an embarrassed smile. And the dog smiles back at him, opening a laughing mouth and wagging its tail. And the horse gives a little whinny. But the rest are silent. The elephant regarding him with a sort of kindly contempt, and the crocodile watching him with ophidian distrust. But the lion is warm with anger and the tiger dangerously cold with it. The great white bear is serious.

The Angel of the Lord speaks. His voice is soft and his speech halting. And we have a sudden chill of horror as we recognize his accent as Irish. Not quite Southern Irish, and not distinguishably Northern Irish—neutral Irish.

"Well, now, this is an unusual thing, an out-of-the-way thing, I might say.... I ... I hope I see you all well?"

There is a rustle of the little creatures back of the deputation. And in the circle before the angel the dog is wagging his tail, and the horse throwing up his head. But silence.

"I take it there is something on all your minds, so! Well, let you speak up, now, and let me hear what it is. It isn't the weather: that's elegant. And it can't be the crops. I was talking to the Angel of the Crops last night, and devil a better season has he seen since the night of the big wind."

He gets no answer.

"It's queer and shy you 've got all of a sudden. And why should you be shy with me? Sure there 's never anything come between us since I was put over you. And have n't I always been your friend? Let one of you speak up, now. How about yourself?" He turns to the lion. "The king of beasts, they call you. Let you be speaking, now, for the crowd."

All around us now is the occult night of Egypt. Live sand and the little wind among the hillocks, and back of us the antique Nile. Here first was magic. And here first the half-gods were worshiped under

the guise of beasts; of the cat and of the crocodile, and of others. And here is the monument of the half-god, the Sphinx, that is woman and animal, beauty and terror.

And as we listen, the beasts speak, and to our human mechanics the deep vibrations are translated into human sounds, and the voice of the lion is as the voice of some great one of our race speaking in anger. And in the deep rumble we can hear thunder:

"In the place where I live by the great lake there is lately come a man." So the lion! "He is a trading man. His legs are bandy. He is rarely shaven. In the morning his eyes are bleary. He blinks at the green light of dawn.

"And in the green glade where he is come he has builded a house. He has littered the ground with mangled boughs of trees, with papers, with tin cans which are emptied of his food. And the winds cannot clean that place, nor the rains wash the obscenity away.

"And all day long this man sits behind his counter in the little shop and barters with the black man, giving knives and beads and cloth for the skins of the animals whom it is allotted to the black man to kill. And giving him white man's liquor.

"And the white man drinks his own liquor, and when his heart is high with it, he takes his rifle and comes to seek me—for he has to seek me; I and all the clean things of the land avoid him, so little kin is he to us.

"And if he kills me for his sport, my lioness will come and he will kill her, too, and what shall become of our little tawny cubs?

"Why should this man come into our clean land, and make unbeautiful the dells, and stalk me that he may boast to other drinking men: 'I have killed the king of beasts'?"

"Ay! Ay!" The angel is disturbed. "He does make the place look bad. And true for you, he does go after you. I understand. I understand fully, but—"

And now the tiger has arisen, and his speech comes sibilant, with a little snarl:

"They who come up the Hooghly are not unshaved but clean. They are precise, languid men. They come for gain in the country. They do not barter in shops, but gain comes to them. They govern,

and for being governed the brown men of India pay tribute and tax.

"And when the languid men from over the sea grow tired of governing, they go out to seek adventure. They send out the brown Indian men on foot to rouse me from the jungle sleep. And they follow with guns on our brother the elephant, and when I am driven into the open, and stand there dazed with the sun, they shoot at me from the back of our brother the elephant.

"And was it for this I was made, given great emerald eyes, given amber skin with great black stripes, given silken muscles, and claws like knives, to be driven out of my warm green jungle into the blinding sun, and be killed by languid men?"

"Well, now, you know what they say; if they did n't kill you, you 'd kill them."

"How many have I killed, except in defense? Is it sport for me to leave the cool, moonlit glades, and come to the hot cities to kill men? If I want fighting, are there not the wild boar and my brother the elephant? And if I want food, is man as succulent as the young kid?"

"Ay, there 's a lot in that. And what is your complaint?" He turned to the great carven elephant.

"I am the wisest, the strongest, the most dignified of all. I live on the shoots of young trees, and raid sometimes the crops, but I kill nothing except in terror or defense. And once they sought me out in the secret places for great ivory teeth, and there was great danger. And it was either kill or be killed.

"And now they trap me with cunning. Now there are helot elephants trained to decoy the brethren of the warm woods, and traps to hold us. And when they have made us fast they starve us cruelly. And they bring us across waters and exhibit us, and the clown and the yokel pay their copper pennies to gaze at the wise and strong in captivity. And some greasy man pouches the wages of our prison. Was it for this we were made wise and kindly and strong?"

The angel is embarrassed. He looks right and left. He turns in relief to the great white bear:

"Sure, now, what complaint can you have? There 's nobody going to shoot at you from the back of the elephant. And there's no man going to open a shop where you are. Begor, 't is few customers he 'd have barring the sea-gulls. And whenever you get killed, 't is your own fault. It's your curiosity brings you to where they can get a shot at you. If you 'd stick around your icebergs you 'd be better off. Sure, you lead the life of a lord's lady. What brings you here at all?"

"I come for the little seals, and our sister the whale. They cannot walk. And they are in great trouble."

"I know. I know. Sure, my heart's just in chains for them."

"The seals huddle on the rocks with their young. They huddle and tremble, and each sinister boat in the Arctic seas is a menace. And the seas are wide, and the patrols are few."

"I know. I know."

"The black boats come, and the men with rifles."

"Ah, now, don't be talking! Don't I know!"

"And our sister the whale skulks in black seas—she who once greeted the sun in the morning. And now seldom appears—who once loved to bask like a cat. She is haunted in her own ocean until she cannot show her steaming fountains. And as a people, she is a slender people, and will soon die."

"A great and terrible loss, surely. Sure, I 'm trying to forget, and you 're reminding me. And you?"

"I have no complaint," uttered the crocodile. "They rarely kill me with guns. They seldom capture me. And there are always small black children bathing in the Nile. And boats get upset often. I have no complaint," he leered.

"Do you know—" the angel is severe—"I never liked you. And what use you are on this earth is more than I can see. Do you know," he said, "I 've half a mind to hoof you back into the river. I have so. Now, here 's one has a complaint." He turned to the horse. But the horse shook its head.

"No complaint, and you the hardest-worked of them all! And the rest of these lazy devils doing nothing but lolling around in the sun. And you, my darling?"

The dog uttered a joyous bark.

"You have no complaints, either."

"Except," the dog pleaded, "that they should n't muzzle me in the heat of the day."

"Well, now, boys—" the angel was awkward with his hands—"I take it you 've all got a complaint to make against man. You object, I infer, to his shooting at you with guns, except, as he is entitled to, in self-defense. And I take it our friend the elephant also objects to being exhibited. On the whole, you object to the present attitude of man. Now, what do you want me to do?"

"We want you," the lion said, "to have God make man stop attacking us."

"Well, now—" the angel shifts from one foot to the other—"well, now, you 've touched on a very delicate situation. On all subjects, of course, you 'll find God kind—I might say, to a degree. But the subject of Man is just a wee bit touchy.

"God, you know, is very much interested in Man. He thinks a lot of man, and He is very much inclined to let man have his own way.

"So whether He 'd listen to a complaint against man or not, I don't rightly know. Personally, between me and you, I think it might be dangerous to put it that way.

"But I 'll tell you what I 'll do. I 'll wait until some fine day when they tell me He 's in good humor, when He's pleased about Man having thought out some new fine scheme, or made a discovery, and then I 'll tackle Him, nice and easy.

"Yes, I 'll take it up some day, and I 'll see what I can do. I 'm sure if I can get Him in a good humor, I can do something. Will that satisfy you?"

"It will not," said the animals.

"Well, then, what do you want me to do?"

"We want you," the tiger's sibilant purr came, "to go from us to God now, to-night."

"Och! have sense! You don't know what you 're asking. I suppose you think I 've only got to knock at the door and ask God to come out and talk it over, and offer Him a pinch of snuff, maybe, and ask

Him how the weather 's agreeing with Him. Do you know this wee earth is only one of a million? Of course you can't comprehend that, being only animals and having no reason."

There is something like a snort from the elephant. The Angel of the Lord ventures a timid glance in that direction, but says nothing. The angel is rather in awe of the elephant, as a mother might be of a genius child. He switches to a different point:

"Besides, I suppose you think there are only a few angels of us in it—myself and the Angel of the Changing Seasons, and the Angel of the Growing Crops, and the Angel of the Rivers and Streams, and the Angel of the Five Oceans. Well, let me tell you, there's archangels, and there's powers and dominions, and cherubim and seraphim, and God knows what else. And there's angels you never heard of: there's the Angel of the Progress of Education, and there 's the Angel of Economic Conditions, and the Angel of Atomic Energy. All very clever fellows—geniuses, you might say. And there 's the Angel of Arts and Crafts, a sloppy-looking lad I would n't be caught talking to.

"And there 's English angels, all very superior, and Italian angels, slick as be-damned; and Russian angels are always sighing and groaning and drinking tea; and American angels, brisk lads would convince a dying man he was the devil and all for strength and energy. And me nothing but a poor sort of fellow that knows nothing but animals; you see, I 'd better be keeping my mouth shut in that kind of assembly.

"I 'll tell you what I will do. I 'll get through my work early, and contrive to hang around the squares and gardens of heaven, and any one of these days the Grand Man Himself will be passing by and He 'll see the glint of my old red whiskers, and He 'll stop the archangels and the powers and dominions, and come over, so kindly He is."

"'Where have you been hiding yourself, Michael John?' He 'll say. 'And how's all your care?'

"'They 're fine, Sir. They 're grand,' I 'll say. 'Sure, 't is to the queen's taste they are—barring a wee bit of trouble that's not worth mentioning.'

"'And, sure, what's troubling you, my poor lad?'

""'T is not worth troubling your Deity about. 'T is not so!'

"'Out with it now, Michael John!' Himself will say.

""'T is that my little people, Sir, do be worrying hard that man is after them a bit strong, and if Yourself would just direct him to be a wee bit easy'—and I 'll tell Him what you all say.

"Is n't that the jewel of a plan? Is n't that the great scheme entirely?"

"We think it's rotten!" champed the crocodile.

"Well, that's all I can do," the angel told them. "If you 've got a better plan—"

"We have decided," the lion rumbled, "that if you could do nothing, we could. We can stalk man as he stalks us. We will not wait for him to come out; we will descend upon him. We will lie in wait for him in the way. I shall come to the villages with my kind and the spotted leopards that purr like the rumbling of drums, and the striped hissing snakes; and the rhinoceros shall lumber through the streets, and the great river-horse shall no longer avoid his frail boats but seek them."

"And my brother the elephant will crush him beneath his terrible knees," the tiger snarled, "and trample his little houses. And the wild boar with tusks like knives will strike at him from the ground. And from the jungle I will come forth with the moon, and when dawn comes there will be wailing, if any are left to wail, and the small winged things of the jungle will assault him night and day, and there will be terror through the land."

"And there will be terror through the sea," the white bear prophesied. "Our sister the whale will no longer flee but fight, and the sails of ships will quiver and the bulwarks give. And we will push icebergs in the paths of iron ships. The millions and millions of herring and cod will help. And the swordfish will founder the life-boats. And out of the gray-green depths of the sea the devil-fish will arise, his long, seeking tentacles over the gunnels—"

"Oh, childer, childer dear!" the angel implored.

"And our cousins the birds will help us," the lion took up the litany. "The eagle and the hawk in their strength, and even the little sparrows in their number. They will buffet with wings, they will

peck with their sharp beaks, the innumerable folk of the air."

"And from the North," the tiger promised, "the wolves will come out with their red eyes, their slavering fangs, and the fox will revolt, with his teeth sharp as a dog's."

"And the things of the field will revolt," the bear went on, "the patient kine, the sheep and goats, and the vibrations of battle will put panic on the horse so that he will smash his traces with his hoofs, and smash men's heads. And the turmoil will craze the dog, so that he will attack those he loves."

"For God's sake, children dear, will you stop breaking my heart!"

"Death and terror on the land!" prophesied the lion.

"Death and terror on the sea!" promised the great white bear.

"My dears, will you let me put sense at you? Will you listen to me a moment?" the angel pleaded. "'T is for your own sakes I ask. Will you just listen?

"What will become of you if you do all this?

"Don't you know that man will come against you with all his weapons and mechanical contrivances, his poison gas and his torpedoes, and wipe you off the face of your own earth? Childer dear, you have no idea of the terrible fellow he is at all. Myself, angel and all as I am, when I see some of those fellows coming hell-for-leather in their motor-cars, I leap like a hare out of their way, I do so. And oftentimes I 'm shaking in the legs for hours after it. I don't mind telling you. He 'll kill you surely, childer dear."

"He 'll kill us anyway," fluted the elephant. "What matter to-day or to-morrow or a century from now? We die. What of the Irish elk, with horns like banners, so proud in his green pastures? What of the great buffalo, lord of the plains?—where is he? If we die, let us die together, fighting shoulder to shoulder!"

"Besides, maybe it's worse than man you 'd have."

"What is worse than man?"

"Maybe God Himself would come down against you, maybe," the angel's voice falls to a sacred whisper; "maybe He will uncover His face!"

There is a movement of awe, or terror among the animals. The silent multitude back of the speakers rustles like leaves. The lion speaks:

"Even that we will brave, if we cannot have justice."

For a little while they look at one another in awed tension. The animals are frightened, the angel is frightened. One would think they were terrified by their temerity, and were awaiting the avenging thunder of God. The angel plucks up courage. He gives a little nervous laugh.

"Now, here we are, my dear little people, making fools of ourselves as usual; letting our feelings run away with us. You 'd think it was at a political meeting you were, with you giving out manifestos and ultimatums, and wanting to die.

"Let us get down, now, to facts. Let us examine what material we have, and draw deductions.

"We were all agreed that we are here by the wisdom of God, and being here in that wise, are subject to his wishes in every way. Even old Go-by-the-ground—" he looks at the crocodile—"knows that."

"Now, from what I 've heard from the angels who are higher up,—from them, let me tell you, that are absolutely on the inside,—God designs to make out of man the perfect being. He intends to combine your bravery—" he turns to the lion—"and your wisdom—" to the elephant—"with your beauty"; he is addressing the tiger.

"What about me?" champs the crocodile.

"Och, be damned to you! Man," he goes on didactically, "is essentially a creature of progress. He is the only being that builds houses—"

From the background comes a shrill squeak from the beaver.

"I mean houses with rooms—"

There is the angry droning of bees.

"What I mean is this: houses with fireplaces and pots and pans and what not. None of us will deny," he finishes lamely, "the enormous progress of man."

"I deny it," the lion stormed. "Can I forget the great black armies of the South, the glistening men with the silver armlets and the short keen spears? Not even of me were they afraid, those! Their drums resounded through veldt and plain, They asked only of the earth what they needed for their good. And when they hunted they hunted fair. They matched their strength against our speed. And their knowledge against our knowledge. And at night they sang and they danced beneath the moon.

"And now they are farm servants to the men who come overseas. They are not clean, as they once were. Their bodies that once were naked and glistening are caked with mud and covered with rags. And some of them are driven into the bowels of the earth, and the sunlight and the moonlight they were born to is kept from them. And they dig diamonds for men who are not satisfied with the luster of stars. And they who once fought me in the open with a spear now skulk with a gun."

"I remember an India that was," the tiger snarled, "a land of rajahs and temples, of brown dancing girls and men who played little flutes. They grew the green sugar-cane, and cotton they might spin on great wooden wheels. And their smiths hammered brass into strange antique shapes. And they worshiped God with singing and dancing in cool temples.

"What are the rajahs now, that once were the wonder of the earth, but little helot princes? And the ranees—the cinnamon-colored queens with the minute silver bells upon their bud-like toes—but despised native women? Are the bazaars filled with the quaint work of smiths? No, but with the meretricious trinkets of the West. And black-coated men seek to turn them from native immemorial gods. And the machine that throws pictures the mummers make, fights against the music and the dancing and the temple bells.

"The beauty I stand for is passing away."

"In Burma, whence I come," said the elephant, "there are jungles deeper than the jungle of Africa, or the Indian jungles. Great mossy trees, and painted flowers, and great brown rivers rolling to the sea. And the men there are beautiful as women, and the women beautiful as flowers.

"And once they paddled down the great brown river in glistening black canoes. They wore great gaudy sashes and had a flower in their teeth or a flower in their hair. Under the shadow of the great trees they paddled. And when they saw me they made reverence, saying, 'Our lord, the elephant!' On little reeds they made sweet, plaintive music.

"And now the great ancient trees are being cut down, and floated on the bosom of the hurt brown rivers. And the peace of the jungle is disturbed with the cough of the motor-boat, and oil is heavy on the warm jungle smells. And the men, beautiful as women, are clothed in soiled white garments; the rounded child-like bodies of the brown women chafe under a huddle of clothes. And when I am observed, the white man asks, demands, the help of the little brown men to hunt me, to whom they once did reverence, and I seem to hear no more sweet, plaintive music.

"From the quiet river I have seen the painted barges of the Pharaohs move along under the sweeps of the negro slaves. Color and majesty and dignity. And the shaven priests chanted their litanies at the change of the moon. And from the Sahara the desert tribes brought tribute and treasure to Egypt, the men with the white horses and the black tents. And the nodding dromedaries and camels and their tinkling bells. And the kings raised their pyramids, and the multitude of men like ants listened at sunrise to the great masonic prayer. And they left the Sphinx to denote their mystery. And Cleopatra, who was Lilith reborn, played with Rome for a doll.

"All these things have I seen: the magic of great Moses, and the flight of the Little God of Galilee; the perfumed Pharaohs; the sinister yellow priests; the gnarled masons at their secret prayers; and Cleopatra brown as a berry, magnificent as jewels, venomous as a snake; and the sculptor at work on the Sphinx.

"And now tourists unwrap the great kings, and hucksters chaffer where once the trains of the prince-merchants of Tyre passed, and we shall never see a Cleopatra any more.

"But I am not complaining. Men do not swim as well as in the elder days, nor handle a boat as surely."

"I know nothing of painted Pharaohs," said the great white bear, "nor anything of Indian queens. In the North are neither kings nor masons, but day and night and ice, and a little people. In summer is the great sun, white light, and grass that is green for a little, and the thunder of breaking bergs, and in winter no sun but the flaming aurora and the white illimitable miles!

"And the swarthy little people were happy then. In the long nights they sang, and they bowed to the gods in boulder and stream, and set out in the little kayaks on the Arctic seas to hunt the great solemn walrus, or they set off in sledges through the pathless wastes. They were a brave people, a healthy people.

"And came the boats hunting our sister the whale, and the whales taught the little swarthy people progress, and everywhere now they are cunning and degraded and crusted with sin, and a great plague makes them spit blood, and waste to nothingness, and die."

They all looked at the horse, but the horse was silent.

"Look back in the folds of your memory," the lion prompted. "Look back well! Can you not remember the great races in the Roman circus? Listen a little! Can you not hear the trumpets of Agincourt?"

"And you, little brother—" the bear swung his ponderous head toward the dog—"was there not a time when you lay before a fire in a rush-strewn hall? And now the houses are too little. They tell me—I do not know. And did you not once run barking joyously beside man on his horse? And now horses are out of fashion, are they not, little comrade? And the cars are too fast for your short legs."

There is another silence, and the angel looks at them piteously.

"I wish to my God I had some of them clever fellows here could argue with you. I never was much good in an argument, anyway, never having had the education. But let me tell you there 's angels could prove to you you 're all wrong. I wish they 'd come here and talk to you, but I don't suppose they 'd care much about us and our wee affairs. But—but how about music," he hazarded, "and poetry? Ay, and poetry."

"As to music—" the elephant threw up his trunk in a sneer—"what music can he make comparable to the birds of summer—the sun going down, and each bird with its separate song, blending into a gently-colored symphony, and the chime of the waves with it, and the rustle of the branches in the sundown breeze?"

"Ay, but poetry."

"It will need poetry," thundered the lion, "more poetry than can be ever written, to equalize the making ugly of earth. The great cliffs shamed by mean houses, and the splendid glades ruined that a train may pass. And the mouths of rivers spoiled by the slag of mills. And great noble trees hacked down. How many an epic to pay for a great forest dying, shepherd? How many a lyric for a tree where little trusting birds had their home?"

The angel throws out his hands abruptly.

"You have me," he says. "You have me!"

He braces with decision, rises to his full height, and suddenly there is nobleness.

"Well, which is it to be?" he asked. "Will you follow my plan, or do you insist I go immediately?"

"We insist."

He pauses an instant.

"Very well. I 'll go," he says. "I 'll go."

He looks all around the gathering. In spite of his decision, and his bracing, there is a great emotion brewing in him.

"Now, before I go, let me tell some of you something. Do you, Philip—" he turns to the bear—"be getting back North as fast as you can. You poor fellow, you must be murdered with the heat entirely, and you with the Arctic furs on. You 'll catch your death here. And as for you," he warns the crocodile, "don't be obstinate, there 's a good fellow! Keep to the water, and you 'll be all right. It's only when you get out, they can get after you. And my little friends the beavers—where are they? Childer, can you hear me?"

"But what's all this about?" asks the elephant.

"It's just for fear I 'm not coming back."

"But why aren't you coming back?" the lion growls.

"Och, it's just a notion. Are the beavers there at all, at all?"

"No, just a moment!" The tiger is on his feet. "I want to hear more of this. What do you mean by notion? You aren't thinking of leaving us?"

There is a quick commotion, a little shudder among all the animals in the background.

"Well, now—" the angel is embarrassed—"it's a hard errand I have before me, and what will be at the end of the chapter no one knows. I to be arguing with the Great Man, and demanding your rights, and He to be losing His temper with me—there 's no knowing. So to be on the safe side, I 'll just say good-by to you now. Many 's the pleasant hour we 've known and springtime coming, and many's the little day we 've spent together and winter roaring through the chilly air."

"But He never loses His temper, does he? He 's always mild."

"Oh, childer dear, ye little know! You all know the Black Man, and when you get the cold wind of his coming you scurry away. He was an angel once, the greatest of them all. Lucifer, they called him, so I 've heard old angels say, and the Hebrew or something for Him who does be bearing light, such a gorgeous angel he was. But one day he and some of his lads began to argue with the Great Man, and before the words were half out of their mouths they were tumbling through the blue spaces of the stars, condemned to eternal hell-fire. Sure, you see them yourselves on Hallowe'en, and them roaring up and down the world, and screeching fit to split the sky."

A moan of terror ran through the massed animals. The dog raised his head and howled.

"And the wee half-god we all know, him with the horns of the goat, that does the piping in the valleys of spring—sure, he was an angel once. But something went contrary on him, and now he dare n't show his face on heaven or earth, but hides in the branches as wild as a squirrel."

And a little shudder of pity arose.

"Ay, and there was others. There was a crowd of reckless fellows in the days before the flood—or after it; I don't know which—and they came from heaven to court the daughters of men, such grand

women they had in those days. And the Lord God heard of it, and He stood up and looked at them, and he said just one word. They 've never been heard of since. One minute they were there, and the next was emptiness.

"Mind you, I 'm not saying anything like that will happen to me, for Himself has always been kindness to me. It's always 'How are you, Michael John?' and 'Don't you ever take a rest at all?' and 'Sometime I 'll have to take a day and come down and see yourself and the wee ones!' But just, if I don't come back, don't think I 've taken a better job. Sure, I 'd never desert you, my wee darlings. It's just maybe I 'm getting a wee bit of discipline."

"I think—" the elephant seemed husky in the throat—"your own plan might be best—to wait for an opportunity and just suggest."

"Better say nothing at all," growled the lion.

"No, childer dear; I 'd better just go ahead. I will confess it was timid of me not to go in the first place. It was thinking of my old skin I was, and I should be ashamed of myself. Sure, there 's no disgrace in asking for fair play, and you 've been sorely tried. I 'll go."

"No, no, no!" wailed the animals.

"No, your own plan was wise," the elephant insisted. "If anything happened to you, what would become of us?"

"Yes, what would become of us?" the little ones wailed.

"Do you honestly think my own plan's wiser? You 're not saying that to save me from trouble?"

"We're not," the lion said. And "Of course not," added the tiger.

"Just slip in a word when you can," from the elephant.

"Honestly, now, it would be best." The angel was relieved. "I can talk about your loyalty; and, sure, I can remind him of the kine that gave shelter to the Wee Relative in Bethlehem, and the donkey that was proud to carry His weight; and I 'll remind Him, too, that I 've never asked a favor yet, and if He could just see His way—"

"Well," the elephant thought aloud, "I 've got to be getting back to Burma."

"I 'm going your way," said the tiger.

"There 's nothing to keep me up further," said the lion.

"I 'm very much obliged to you all—" the angel was abashed with emotion—"for not insisting. And it's lucky I am," said he, "to have decent beasts to deal with and not man. For man would have insisted I 'd go, and not given a tinker's curse what would have happened me."

"Ay, man!" sneers the great white bear.

"For God's sake Philip, will you be getting home out of this, before I have you sick on my hands! And as for you, Go-by-the-Ground, get back to the river or I 'll sink my foot in your tail. Go on now! Be off with you!"

There is a *shuff-shuff-shuff* over the sand as the beasts scatter, going east, north, west, and south. The angel stands watching them as they go. Only the horse and the dog remain, the horse nudges him on the shoulder with its mouth, the dog puts a cold nose into his hand.

"Och, my darlings!"

DELILAH, NOW IT WAS DUSK

I

Beneath her balcony, in the delicate spring night, the life of Gaza flowed gently as a calm river. Eastward the green hills of Canaan were, Delilah knew, and in imagination she could see the soft blue down of the budding corn, the clouds of flowers, the piping green of the vines, the darkness of the olive-trees. And in the west a little moon was, while as yet the sun had not gone down, a little blade of silver, like one sweet note on a flute. It made one wish to be young again, to be a child....

The lamps of Gaza were not lighted. None was eager to go within, and below there was still the jingle of camel bells, the padding of donkeys, the nervous clatter of some horse's hoofs as a desert rider sought to guide his mount in the filled streets. Languid, supercilious

Egyptians strolled in the provincial ways; desert men, their eyes suspicious as hawk's, moved warily hither and thither; her own countrymen, the squat, cheerful Philistines, half townsman and half mariner, walked briskly; mysterious, aloof Phoenicians; an occasional strange seaman from Gaul, come eastward with his ship for a cargo from Asia Minor; and now came the "Hough-hough! Hough-hough!" of herdsmen, and dappled kine went by, belabored with sticks, and as she looked, Delilah saw the group of Israelites who owned them.

From the street they saw her, and their eyes blazed fury. They pointed her out to one another, with quick, wide gestures, and she could hear the gutturals of their denunciation.... Oh, yes, they remembered Samson, after twenty years! Remembered him almost as well as she!

II

She had been thinking of him only that minute, too. It was strange, but at this time, each year, his memory, his image came to her, so that she could say in winter, "On the second moon of spring there will be flowers, and an air like wine, and the Mediterranean fishers will overhaul their gear, and I shall think of Samson," and she was the only person in Philistia who could remember him clearly.

Some old magistrate perhaps, or captain of civic guard might, their memory jogged, recall the Hebrew rebel, and say: "Wasn't there a Samson once, a great red-bearded man, who was supposed to have killed a lion with his bare hands? Or perhaps I am thinking of some of the black African giants, wrestlers or circus men. I don't know. But I seem to recall the name."

And about him, among his own people, had arisen a great myth, as will arise among desert peoples and they telling stories by the fire. The old guerilla captain had become a national hero to them, and they had magnified his raids out of all proportion to reality.

And when they thought in the desert tents of the destiny of their people, and longed for the day when the then rich southwestern country would be theirs by either conquest or penetration, they said, "If Samson had lived... If Samson had n't gone wrong..."

And Delilah they cursed bitterly, even after twenty years, and they saw her not as Samson's wife, but as some strange perfumed woman who had enticed him and sold him to his enemies. Even the little children were taught to curse her. And all she had done was to adore him, and love him, and to care for and pity him when he had grown old and blind and astray in the head.

Oh well, what did it matter what they said!

Three men there had been in her life: her childhood's sweetheart in her native valley of Sorek, the slim lad who was to have married her and settled down in the valley to lead the idyllic life of country lovers. But he had gone to Egypt, and been infested with ambition, and they had grown apart and never married. And now in Egypt he was a suave administrator, very close to the Pharoah, a great man.

And there had been Samson.

And there was her present husband, small, hawk-eyed, taciturn, the greatest of the Oriental sea-captains, who knew the Mediterranean as other men knew the lake of Galilee, who had passed through the straits known to the Greeks as the pillars of Hercules, and been north to Ibernia, the land of forests and savage, hairy Celts, and bearded druid priests with sinister eyes, and to other lands where the Phoenicians had great tin mines. A quiet, efficient man, he!

To her husband she gave admiration and a fond devotion. To the boy of her youth she had given her heart in a burst of virginal music. But to the rough Hebrew rebel, a stranger to her race, in religion, in every mode of life, she had given an immensity of love....

III

In her face now, that once had a proud, singing beauty, were dignity and power and wisdom. Strands of gray in her hair and shadows near her eyes. In all Gaza, in all Philistia, there was not one to refuse her reverence, excepting, of course, the strange gipsy people who contended she had ruined their champion and lord.

A queer people, they! A strange, inimical folk, who had come into Canaan out of Egypt, headed by magicians who had cloven the Red Sea—so they claimed—and their hand was against the dwellers in Canaan. For centuries now they had been an irritating minor political problem, and when the question of relations with Egypt sagged, or there was a lull in the discussion of the great trade route to the East, the matter of the Israelites always arose. Here they had harried a town; there squatted on a public common. And war on a large scale was impossible against them. Send armies to subdue them, and they became separate desert units, like any other tribes. And before the armies had returned to their garrisons, the Israelites were back. The Philistines, with their suave Egyptian tolerance, could only smile. What could one do against a people of that kind?

For centuries now, they had remained turbulent, cunning, breakers of the peace, with Philistia rather contemptuous of them, rather proud, not unaffectionate. No nation in the world had a problem quite like them. And the more kindly, more tolerant Philistia became, the greater the hatred of the Israelites. For years they would dwell at peace in Philistine cities, then a strange national pique would come on them, and they would march out into the desert chanting to their harsh God, blaming themselves cruelly for having lived in comfort, and prophets would arise among them who said bitter things, lashing them with a white fury, and agitators would preach war, and it was then Philistia had to be careful and send troops out, for one never knew the moment that the young men would make a raid on a township or an estate of vineyards. A sharp clash, a little guerilla warfare, and all would be over. Wise old politicians claimed that every time the Israelites were defeated, they gained a little more ground, but politicians were always pessimists. And, also, what matter if they did?

Delilah remembered that as a child in her father's house in the valley Sorek she had been brought up to the belief that all Israelites were riotous, dissatisfied. They were splendid herdsmen, but beyond that they had no virtues. And the little Hebrew children were looked down upon, because they were so poor. Oh! the cruel snobbishness of little children! A race apart, an inferior race, Delilah thought in her youth, and had smiled at the thought of their crude, melodramatic god, of whom they walked in fear. Their god was so limited, so concrete. None of the symbolism of Daigon, half man and half fish, whom the Mediterranean sailors thanked when the great silver draughts weighed down their nets; none of Baal, god of the sun, the fecund divinity who increased the herds of kine, and whose rays nurtured the soil and brought forth the sweet blue grass; none of the grace of Ashtoreth, the goddess of the dusky night, the terror and the delight and the mystery, the goddess of the ripe breasts and great passionate eyes....

So Delilah viewed them with little interest and not a little contempt, a turbulent, annoying, ignorant, clever people; their quaint folk-songs and dances, their peculiar religious revivals, their passionate hatreds... Undependable—that is what they were.

Came her youth and her growing into womanhood.... She wondered sometimes if he of her young days, for all his closeness to the Pharaoh of Egypt, his Egyptian palace, his Egyptian wife, ever remembered the warm green days of Sorek, and how they had grown together from fifteen to twenty-three.

Nothing had ever been said between them of marriage, but it was accepted by them that they would marry, as it was accepted that the sun shines, and with night come the stars. They might have been two girls together, or they might have been two boys, so sweet was the friendship between them.

The adventure of life unclosing itself came to them together—all the beauty of the world, the wild smiling flowers, the sun dropping over the hills, the clamor of birds in spring as they raided the seeded fields, the little fish that jumped in the pools when the winds stilled and evening came—all that was a tremendous bond. Even now when

she thought of places in the valley of her childhood she could picture them only as background for his calm young face. They seemed natural, the blossoming of apple-trees and her young lover's face.

And Delilah's dreams—five years of dreaming, of the governing of a house, and the regiment of maid-servants, of little children. Five years dreaming! And he had gone into Egypt and had never come back. Only stories returned, of his success, of his offices, of his wife....

She had thought, being a young woman then, that what was killed with such a tremendous shock was her love, but she knew now, now that she was nine-and-forty years, that what had died was a dream. She had been shocked, disoriented, and her life, which had been so carefully planned, suddenly had no more meaning.

It had made a woman of her, though, and made her proud. She must have something to do, to think about. Love and all thoughts of love she put aside. In order to escape from herself she began to study people, questions of the day, this, that. It was probably the woman loving the underdog that turned her eyes on the question of the poor Hebrew, rather than to the glory of Egypt, or the power of the merchant cities.

She became their friend, and they came to know her. Probably they robbed her a little, but the cost was so small compared to the luxury of escape.... All her friends smiled at her hobby and spoke of the Israelites as "Delilah's Hebrews," and they wondered how a woman of her looks and standing should bother with these things. Why did n't she get married, they asked? Or was she becoming queer? One of these strange women who took more interest in public affairs than a home. So many of them were becoming that way.

But Delilah only smiled. They were her anodyne. She liked their strange folk-dances; their wailing, nostalgic songs. And their legends—there was about them a quaintness and simplicity she loved—Adam and Eve in the garden; the story of Noah and his ark; the naïve legend of Babel; and the newer history of the leader who had been found by the Egyptian princess in the bulrushes—what was his name? Moses! That was it.... How simple they were, how refreshingly simple, the dear things!

IV

It had often seemed to her a strange thing, as she sat thinking, how all one labors to learn passes easily away, and what one feels remains, welcome or no. All the book-learning of her early years had gone, but there would never go the memory of her first blushing kiss, and though it was six-and-twenty years since he had gone from her life, yet the thought of the Philistine boy who was now a grandee of Egypt—that remained.

So, likewise, all she had learned of the Hebrews was gone; now a legend, now a saying would come back to her, some proverb or a piece of ritual, but like a bar from a tune one has forgotten. But everything she felt, everything she had known of great Samson remained with her. One learns things and one lives things. The things written in the head fade out and die, but the words on the heart bite deeper and deeper.... She could remember every kiss he had given, the immense madness he had evoked.... O God, was it possible that she, so calm now, so respected, so wise, had once shaken like a leaf at his voice? Her knees had trembled; her heart had fought in her breast like a caged bird; her throat had gone dry....

Before she met him, she knew him by repute, a huge, turbulent man of immense strength, who had often been in trouble with the Philistine authorities.... In the tribal troubles, some years before, his name had been very prominent. He had married a Philistine girl in Timnath, and there had been a riot at the wedding, over a question of dowry, or something of the kind, and some of the girl's Philistine relations had been killed. A sort of vendetta had arisen and Samson had declared war against the nation. He had proceeded to burn the corn stacked in the fields; there was a strange rumor that he had captured an immensity of foxes and, tying burning brands to their tails, had loosed them among the harvest.

Then, of course, from a family quarrel it had become a national affair and Samson was proscribed. Prodigious stories were told of his strength and valor, of his defeating patrols single-handed, and

refuging on the rocks of Etom. The Hebrews were asked to give him up to authority, and brought him to Lehi bound. But there he burst his cords, such immense strength had he, and escaped after slaying twenty men in a hand-to-hand fight. Then he had become a bandit of the hills on whose head a price was set.

Around him a romance grew, as will about all mountain chiefs, to which Samson lived up most gallantly. Careless of disguise, careless of danger, he had come, with his great red beard and his hair floating to his hips, into Gaza itself once, to see a woman. The watchmen were told, and the city gates were locked while they searched for him, but he crashed through the gates with his terrific shoulders and made his way to Hebron. It was said he carried parts of the ironwork with him to make weapons.

All this had happened years before, and all the border warfare was over, and Samson was no longer a proscribed bandit but a great man of the Hebrews, leaping suddenly into fame and holding fame and power as such men will. He no longer raided harvests and kine, nor came to Gaza secretly, but now he walked like a conqueror. It was said that it irked him that everything was so peaceful and quiet, and he regretted the old roaming days. To the Hebrews he was a great figure, a champion.

Delilah had never understood how they made a champion out of this guerilla fighter, but when she saw him for the first time she understood. He came to thank her for the interest she had taken in his race.

"You have been good to my people," his voice thundered. "I thank you."

Herself, a tall woman, had to look up like a child to him, and herself, no small woman, felt a reed beside that vast muscular bulk. She had two impressions of him, his immense masculine quality, and his tremendously arrogant manner. For everything Philistine he seemed to hold a tremendous contempt. He had beaten the Philistines, and physically he thought little enough of them.

It seemed a little flaunting to her, at first, that great cape of red hair, of which he was so very proud, so very careful. In a smaller man it would have been effeminate, but in him it was a trait of

virility, like a lion's mane. Beside him his followers, his clansmen, seemed so frail, so puny. No wonder they watched him with those adoring eyes. No wonder they exhibited him, so proud they were.

To Delilah, it was a wonder and an irritation that she should be so moved, so thrown off her axis mentally and emotionally by the presence of this great hairy man. All her senses were jangled suddenly. One part of her, the Philistine lady, smiled in a little patronizing contempt for the unconcealed boastfulness of his words, for his insulting glance at the passers-by.

But another, a strange Delilah clamored:

"No matter what he says, let him speak on. My heart opens at his voice.... Let him contemn all men with his arrogant eye, but let him not contemn me!"

The Philistine lady had a little disgust for the way he laid his hand on the heads and the shoulders of his followers, pawing them clumsily. But the new Delilah clamored:

"If he lays his hand on me, I shall faint to the ground and die!" And a burning shame rose in her, and her face reddened. And she said to herself, "God! God! I have suddenly gone mad!"

All her culture, her tradition, all the fine conventions of her life, seemed suddenly to vanish, become nothing, before this immense male. All the men of her life, friends, her young false lover, relatives seemed like puppets beside him—their shaven faces, their polished speech, their carefulness of dress and demeanor. The rufous giant had appeared, and "Away," he seemed to have cried, and they had whirled off, like blown feathers.

If she were troubled, he was troubled too. The directness of him read her perturbation. A great desire rose in the turbulent hillsman to be near her, to know her body and soul. He was accustomed to women, to love women, but never had he known a woman such as this—a beautiful groomed lady who possessed all that was a wonder to him, riches and foreign breeding and a strange, sweet culture. His wife of Timneth had been only a country girl, and his sweethearts of the hills had been tribeswomen, agile, angry as cats, like some hard, harsh fruit, and the women he had known in Gaza were venal

women, for every man. But this was a great lady—and she loved him. A great pride, and a great wonder, and desire rose in him. He was stupefied as she.

They looked at each other, each reading the other's thought, until their throats became dry, and all words were just trivial sounds, meaning nothing. Dumb and wondrous he was, and she dumb and bowing with shame. How they parted was to her a mystery, but that their hands touched, and at the touch all her bone and flesh seemed to go liquid, and her knees trembled as with an immensity of fear. And nothing seemed stable in the world but his great hot hand, that trembled too....

Bowed with shame she was, troubled, blind in purpose, all the familiar things of her house and lands were now unfamiliar, unimportant. The long day dragged, and in her heart was a storm, like a hot wind from the desert. She refuged in her inner rooms, in the coolness of her inner rooms, but that brought no relief, and restlessly she must come out again. The Asian sun crept slowly from east to west, but Delilah remained in a dull maze. "Am I ill?" she asked. "Am I stricken with some strange disease?" But no. "I am insane," she thought. "I must put it out of my head. I must n't think." Slowly, slowly the day wheeled by; but out of her head it would not go. And her face went white and slowly she whispered to herself: "I am a bad woman. I never knew before. Oh, shame, shame and woe! I am an evil woman!"

The Asian sun dropped into the hissing sea, and came the soft Syrian dusk, and the swift coolth of the night. The heat of mind and body went with the heat of the day. There remained only a deep longing, that seemed to be a nostalgia of the infinite. Without, the night was blue, there was only a little wind among the apple-trees, and all the flowers had closed until dawn should come, but the birds were unsilent and the earth itself was restless, now spring was here.

The night wind cooled her sweet brow and ruffled the dark perfumed hair at her temples. The cool night wind, like cool water. Then arose in Delilah a desire for it, and she wandered out among the vines and apple-trees, touching them, as she passed, in sympathy, for it seemed to her that they must share her yearning. Though all was darkness, yet all was not rest. Somewhere the sheep

were grazing, and she could imagine the gods of the nearer East walking the earth, the passionate, seeking gods, the ever-young ones; they walked beside her, their slim, brown, beautiful bodies, their liquid eyes. All the longing of the night came to her lips in a little song—an air, and faltering, unthought words.

"O Spring, which begins now," went the throbbing contralto.

There was a rustle among the trees. Her heart stopped beating.

"Is some one there? Who is there? Who?" But she knew well who was there.

"Who is it? Who is it?"

She saw the great bulk in the blue night, like a giant, like some great giant of the earth.

"It is I—Samson."

"What—how—" Words would not come to her. Nor would words mean anything. "Why—"

She put out her hands—she knew not for what reason, perhaps to thrust him away—her slim white hands in the dusk. He seized them. Once again she throbbed from head to foot, and her knees became weak, and all of her melted. And she fell forward, will having left her, on the great bearded chest.

"I am dying," she murmured. "O my God, I die!"

V

Now they were married; and he had come to live in her house, the low, pleasant house in the valley of Sorek, the white and cool house.... Without, the Syrian flowers grew in the garden, the white and blue and little red flowers, the bees droned.... Cool dairies and enclosures with great stacks of corn; and in the meadows the dappled kine grazed, and on the hillsides the heavy-fleeced sheep. Within, her hand maidens tended the whirring spinning-wheels, and all the graciousness of a great house was there, cool water-jars that Persian potters had made, and stuffs from Damascus, and rugs on the walls from cunning Eastern looms, and furniture fashioned

by the proud Syrian craftsmen. Her house had been a house loved by all, the young Philistine poets and elder statesmen and calm, subtle priests. And the strain and weariness of affairs had come on them, they would say: "Let us go out to Delilah's house at Sorek, and rest in the orchard of the bees." ... But now, now Samson was there, and things were different.

Through all Philistia the news had gone, that Delilah had become infatuated with and married the guerilla leader, and the young men stormed. Was she mad? Or what had he done to her? And an immense disgust arose in them. Delilah, to marry that! Delilah, of all women! Delilah, beautiful, gifted, with all her tradition, to be bound to this ragamuffin warrior! This fatuous boaster, with his red hair of comedy, and yokel whiskers! How disgusting, how degrading! And they had offered her all their hearts and poetry, and she had chosen this. O Delilah! Delilah!

Older men and women said nothing. Some of them understood. The freakish and terrible lightning that passion is, and how it strikes. In some women that is what strong drink is to men, a mocker and a raging thing. A pity, though, Delilah... And the priests shook their heads. It will not last, they said, and her heart will be broken.

Though it was pain to them, still they came to see her, to let her know that nothing mattered, she was their friend always.... They had to suffer seeing the great red one at the head of the table, hearing his jokes and reminiscences. And solemnly he would speak of his birth, and claim supernatural happenings at it, angels appearing and going up in pillars of fire.... And the company made awkward comments, and Delilah lowered her eyes....

Sometimes a great rage against the Philistines would take him, and he would give vent to it by telling at the table of his fight at Ramath-leki when he had annihilated the Philistine patrol with the first weapon to hand, a great bone he had found in the desert sands. After many years and much telling he had exaggerated the deed out of all proportion, until from ten it had become a thousand men.

"And do you know what that bone was?" He would put his immense hands on the table and lean forward.

"The jawbone of an ass," he roared with the thunderous laughter. "Ho! ho! The jawbone of an ass. With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men."

But worse than his rage and boasting was his good humor. When they spoke to Delilah of some new poet in Tyre, or of some subtle new writings of the Egyptians he would break in with his terrible question: "Did they know any riddles?" And without waiting for an answer he would tell them of the sinister conundrum he had propounded on the occasion of his first marriage. It seems, as he told it, that when he was courting his first wife, who they all knew "had turned out no good," he explained as he patted Delilah's hand, he met a young lion at Timnath, and it roared at him, and he caught it up and rent it, "and I had nothing but my two hands." He transacted his business, and went home, and when he was coming for the wedding, he looked to see if the lion's carcass was there where he had thrown it, and it was still there, and a swarm of bees and honey were in it, and the honey was good. "Fine eating," he told them.

At the marriage feast he proposed a riddle, wagering thirty fine linen sheets and thirty changes of garments that the guests would not answer in seven days. "And if you can't find it out, you pay me thirty sheets and thirty changes of garments," he laughed. "They were all Philistines, and all thought themselves clever fellows.

"So I said: 'Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. Expound me that,' said I, 'or pay up. Or pay up,' said I."

And he looked around the table, silent, a great grin under his red beard.

"And did they expound it?" Some one asked at length.

"They did. 'What is sweeter than honey?' they answered, with a smile on their faces, 'and what is stronger than a lion?' They got around the wife, do you see, and she gave them the answer.' I told them that, too. 'If you had not plowed with my heifer,' said I, 'you had not found out my riddle.' So I lost the wager."

"And did you pay up?"

"I did. And that's funnier than the riddle. I went down to Ashkelon, and killed thirty men there, and took their belongings, and gave the thirty changes of garments to them that found out the riddle. So it cost me nothing, do you see, and I kept my word.

"But I never looked at the wife after. I could n't. I took a kind of hate against her. She married another fellow."

A great embarrassment arose among all the company, so full of shame were they for their hostess; but over her fine, sweet face no shadow passed. She might have been married to a king, so calm and dignified she was. A great lady, she!

She understood now, looking back, how pathetic a figure the red giant was, had she only had the eyes, the wisdom to see then. He was so lost among the suave, sophisticated Philistines, who could hurt more with a word than he could with his great brawny hands. Beneath his swelling thews he was only a child. He wanted to be as important as the guests in her house. Feeling they despised him for his origin, and his manners, his boastfulness and his arrogance were only a defense.

Little by little now Delilah's friends disappeared, and she was glad of it, for she hated to see Samson despised, disliked and their pitying looks for her hurt her terribly. And the days of peace were dreadful to him; his, too, the tragedy of the soldier now that war was over, and no more exhilaration, keenness, importance. The tolerance of his old enemies was an insult to him. On their hatred he had thriven. Their hatred made him important. If their hatred went, he would no longer be the great Samson, he would only be a giant of the hills.

He could n't believe they did n't hate him—how could they do otherwise, he having killed so many?—and a great suspicion arose in him. They were a noted race for stratagems, these Philistines, and might they not now be planning something against him? Delilah, for instance! It was strange, he thought, how a woman of her standing should marry him like that. He could n't understand. He must watch her.

He was forever, also, meeting his old tribesmen, seeing them more now than ever, for he would run to them when oppressed by the Philistine atmosphere. And the Philistines as a whole they

regarded as deadly enemies. They never believed in their peaceful intentions. Though they were in a way proud of Samson's great marriage, yet they distrusted it. And by hint and innuendo they sought to put him on his guard. He nodded importantly. He did n't need to be told about the Philistines, he said; he'd keep his eye on them. "Had anything...?" they crowded around him. Well, he wasn't saying, but he was watching; he smiled. His wife? Let them not worry; he did n't trust women very far.

And relieved, and once more raised in importance and self-esteem, he would swagger back to the house.

Sometimes, too, in Delilah's place, he would be seized with a great desire to make friends with the young Philistines; and when Delilah wasn't there, he would show off his immense strength, felling an ox with one blow of his fist. Once he had himself bound with seven green withes, stouter than rope, stronger than chains, and with a cruel burst of strength stood free, snapping them as though they were threads. And once he had his arms bound with new rope, breaking the bond without any effort. But his greatest triumph was having his hair woven into a great spinning-wheel and fastened to the pin, and walking away took with him the pin of the beam, and the web. But the Philistines had seen more intricate and showy feats of strength by the Egyptians' black slaves. And it did not impress them over-much. No matter what he did, he could not get into sympathy with them. He was a stranger in his wife's house. Also he could not understand why she should seem humiliated by these displays. Did not a woman love a strong man? Shouldn't she be proud? Well, why was n't she?

Somehow the story of these trials of strength reached the Hebrew settlements, and they construed it that the Philistines were seeking to take him. When he came among them, magniloquent, magnificent, they questioned him and he gave no answer, letting them believe that his old enemies were spreading nets for him. A great terror arose in them. And they tried to persuade him to come back to them. But he would n't. He was equal to all their stratagems, he hinted. "But the women!" they said, "nothing passes the cunning of a woman. Better leave her, Samson; better leave her now."

"The woman pleases me well." And he would n't be moved.

The woman pleased him, but he did n't love her; and he displeased her, but she loved him. In Delilah's heart was so much aching love for him, such depth of passion, that at times she was ashamed. It seemed to her that she had given everything in her to this man. No matter how displeased she was, no matter how humiliated by his boastings, by his circus tricks, when night came, and he put out his hand to her, all the irritation of the day passed, and her being sang.

She had chosen her husband, and what she had chosen was her own business. No matter how queer he was, she could n't have him laughed at.... So they stayed away, and she was glad of it and little by little the great wonder of her marriage provoked no more passion, no more discussion. Only when a stranger appeared, or some old friend, and asked in the public assemblies of Delilah, and the incongruous marriage was once more brought up and discussed. Shoulders shrugged.

"And is she happy?"

"We don't know. We don't see much of her any more."

A new strange element came up in this isolation: Samson did n't like being left alone by the Philistines. Somewhere in his mind arose the theory that it was a new insult, a new harm. He grew short with his wife; became irritable; nothing pleased him. He was not a farmer, a warrior he! he complained. He was entitled to relaxation, amusement, conversation. He was no vegetable—

"Then, Samson, you would like people here?"

He did n't like to be left alone, as though he had the plague, or treated as though he were nobody, by God!

"Then they shall come, Samson."

But ah! there was something, he objected. He did n't like this damned superciliousness, this accursed Philistine superiority—

"You imagine it, Samson. You are too sensitive, my big lover."

"Then they are not superior? are not better than I?"

"Of course not, great Samson. In every way you are as good as they, the same as they. You would look the same as they, only better-looking, more magnificent, if only—"

"If only what?"

"Oh, don't be angry with me, lover, if I tell you. There is only one thing remarkable about you; one thing they can criticize. If only your hair—"

"Ha! my hair!"

"O Lover, without it, you would look so great and splendid, and dignified. There would be nothing to criticize."

"But Delilah, my strength is in my hair."

"O lover, lover, don't be silly!"

"Also, my parents took a vow—"

"But darling, your parents never knew you were to be such a great man, and that you would have to command respect from the nation —"

"Of course, of course. But, Delilah, if my strength goes—"

"Dearest, it won't go. How could it?"

"And they won't have anything to criticize then! Ha! Then off it comes!"

She was so happy, the tears came into her eyes. This strange desire to wear his hair long as a woman's had been a bugbear to her. This foppishness, freakishness, superstition, whatever it was, it made him remarkable. She could n't suffer to have men smile at him.

"If you only knew how happy you make me!"

He was ludicrously nervous as she shore off the great red braids. He was more, he was frightened. The burden gone, he strolled casually around, picked up a little bar of iron at the fireplace, twisted it to form a loop, was satisfied. Glanced at himself in the long metal mirror, smiled.

"I think it suits me well."

A thrill of delight came to Delilah, a new, a younger Samson had appeared. Her heart went pit-a-pat.... A great dignity sat on him now, and he weighed his words at the table. Gone with his hair was his old arrogance, and seemingly his race hatred.... The Philistines spoke among themselves, wondering how she had done it. This

quiet, well-groomed man, remarkable only for his size and height, could this be the same red rebel whom they had known a few short months ago? A wonderful woman.

But when the Hebrews heard of it, a great chill fell on their hearts, and they wrung their hands. "They have cut off our Samson's hair. Oh, woe!" they cried. "The woman enticed him, and he a Nazarite unto God from his mother's womb. Oh, woe! Oh, woe! Gone is his strength now, and gone is glory!" But the red one, all agog with his new worldliness, paid no heed to them, went never near them.

For some brief weeks Delilah knew happiness such as she never believed possible in earth or heaven.... So fine, so strong he looked, so greatly he acted, so—so fully he loved.... Of course it could n't have lasted, she knew now. How fast catastrophe!

Quietly he said one day: "How soon it gets dark! Night falls faster than it used. An hour ago the sun was shining, and now it is dark."

She felt as if some cruel fingers had seized her heart, her throat. She froze to the ground.

"What did you say?"

"I say, why don't the maidens bring lights?"

"Not yet, dear heart.... Let us stay in the warm dusk. Wait, I take your hand."

A few days later he stumbled and all but fell, was clumsy. She flew to his side.

"My eyes," he said, "a touch of sun. Nothing particular." But she sent for a physician.

"It's nothing," Samson said. "Something I 've eaten. I 'll go to sleep."

"Dear Samson, to please me." The physician examined his eyes.

"Well?" Delilah drew him aside.

"The early days in the desert.... He is going blind."

"Is there no hope, no cure?"

"None."

A little laugh of agony came from her. Great Samson blind! The little lover blind!... Oh, God!...

"Shall we tell him?"

"No, no!" she burst out. Maybe there was some mistake! "No. We sha'n't tell him."

A few days later came a great bellow from the garden!

"The sun has gone out of the sky," she heard him exalt. "The day of wrath is on us. The God of the Hebrews will judge the just and the unjust. O Philistines, your day has come. The sun has gone out of the sky."

She flew to him, her feet hardly touching the grass.

"The sun has gone out of the sky," he chanted; "now is silence, but soon the mountains will rend, the cliffs fall, and the Lord God of Hosts will appear in thunder!"

"Oh, Samson, Samson!" Her face was a wet mask of tears. Her arms went quickly about him. "Listen, Samson!"

"Delilah, the sun has gone out of the sky!"

"Samson, Samson, you are great, you are big, you are brave. Be brave now, heart of hearts—"

"The Day of Days is here. The sun has gone out of the sky."

"Worse, my darling, worse. Worse than that the sun should be gone from the sky. The sun, Samson, the sun—the sun has gone out of your eyes!"

VI

"Then I am blind," he said quietly, after a little while.

"Dearest, I shall be eyes for you, watching, wary. Oh, poor, poor Samson, put your head on my shoulder, your eyes close to my heart. You shall see with my heart. I give it to you to see with.... Cry, Samson, if you must, cry on my shoulder." She sought to draw him closer to the haven of her breast. But he had stiffened, and his great hand and arm had stiffened. He just moved her ponderously aside.... He raised his head to the autumn sky, and a great bellow came from his chest.

"The Philistines are upon me. They have put out my eyes."

"Samson! Dear heart, listen—"

"They have shaven the seven locks of my head. They have taken my strength from me. They have put out my eyes."

"Samson, Samson, listen. It is I, Delilah. Don't you know me?"

His great roar had brought out the household, and men from the hillside, and stopped folk on the road. And they all came running now thinking some murder was being done.

"I know you, Delilah. I know you well. The Lords of the Philistines gave you silver to entice me. I knew you, and the Lord departed from me."

"Samson, don't! Don't, Samson!"

"Away, harlot!" And he struck at her blindly. Only the tips of his fingers touched her shoulder, but the force of them sent her to the ground. Her household crouched to spring.

"For God's sake, no!" she almost screamed at them.

"The Philistines are upon me. They have put out my eyes!" he roared. He went stumbling piteously through the orchard, the trunks of the trees hurtling him, the branches striking his defenseless face. Somehow he gained the road: "Delilah, the great whore, enticed me, and the Lords of the Philistines put out my eyes —" his piteous bellow was like the crying of some stricken animal. Delilah called a serving-lad.

"Go after my lord Samson," she said, "and lead him whithersoever he wishes."

All afternoon and evening, and late into the night she sat white and stricken, waiting for his step, waiting for news of him. In the darkness a horse galloped up. An officer of the Philistines sought her.

"Have you news of Samson?"

"Yes, Delilah. He is in Gaza, in the prison-house."

"In the prison-house! What has he done?"

"He has done nothing, Delilah, he is—he is mad and blind, and would come in. We tried to send him home to you, but he wouldn't come. And he would n't go to the Hebrews. We were afraid of

something happening to him, so we took him in.... What shall we do, Delilah?"

"Would you—would you let him stay?"

"If you wish it, Delilah."

"He will be least unhappy there."

She knew somehow, in her heart, that never again would she lie in his arms, never again be wife to the husband in him. She would take him back, take him back gladly. Though no longer had she great passion for him—that had died when he struck and insulted her before her servants. She had a great pity and affection for the poor driven man. She was the only one who understood him. "Ah, poor man! poor man!" she cried. And in some ways he was only a child.

In a few days she went down to the prison house. The officials brought her to where he was grinding corn in the yard.

"We put him at it, Delilah, to keep his mind off his trouble." She nodded.

"Samson," she called. He moved his head slightly.

"Don't you know me, Samson?"

"I know you. You are the harlot Delilah, who enticed me, and gave me into the hands of the Lords of the Philistines. Delilah, I know you well."

"Samson, will you come home to my house? Let me make you comfortable there."

"You would put out my tongue, Delilah, and burn off my hands, as you put out my eyes. I know you, Delilah!"

"Then will you go to the Hebrews?"

"No!" he replied sullenly.

A sudden rush of tears to her eyes made her go out. She could no longer bear to look upon him. He had been so strong once, so courageous. He had looked in the sun's eye. And now, blind and broken—oh, poor dear! ... She stumbled as she went.

At the door of the prison house the governor shuffled uncomfortably: "We shall be very good to him, Delilah, as kind as we know how," he uttered.

There was a great lump in her throat, so she could say nothing. But he got his thanks from her twisted smile, her wet eyes....

VII

And now she was alone in her house, and to her mute surprise, everything went on: grasses grew, cows lowed at the milking hour, the fleece grew on sheep and had to be sheared, the grapes ripened on the vines. And she lived, still. Her hair did not become gray, nor her face take on any mark of tragedy, only a new sweetness, and strength. And her love and her marriage was now nothing but a strange story of a strange woman and a strange man. Not quite a story, even, but a collection of incidents that might be important and again might not. And the great love she had experienced had become nebulous, was drifting away, so that she could hardly believe she had not seen it in others, but for its intimacy, its great intimacy.... And he was more nebulous to her than if he were dead....

She heard of him. She heard that from the prison walls he harangued his white-faced, scared tribesmen, reviling his hosts, and above all reviling her, telling the secrets of her love as the machinations of some evil woman, and referring to her visit, saying that her heart was merry and that she had come to have him make her sport.... But after a little while none paid attention to him, so stale become miracles, except his own tribesmen. It was only the chatter of some crazed religious patriot; people shrugged their shoulders, and forgot soon who Delilah was, never imagining the great lady of Sorek as having been wife and lover to this poor crazed giant, though they had known it to be true. Everything strange grows commonplace with days, and with more days grows negligible.

So passed a year....

Just when she had become reconciled to this strange situation, herself honored and in luxury, her husband mad and blind and insisting on being a prisoner of the Philistines, just when she had

striven to make and succeeded in making this seem a normal, a usual thing, a courier from Gaza came.... What his business was she never imagined.

"Delilah, Samson is dead!"

"Samson!" It never even chilled her, so ridiculous did such a statement seem. "Samson is in Gaza."

"I come from Gaza, Delilah, and Samson is dead."

"Samson dead?" That turbulent temperament, that immense vitality, that gigantic frame,—surely there was one whom Death could not touch, at least for nearly a century, when he would be old and weak and tired. But not now! No! "What do you mean?"

"Delilah, Samson was wandering through the town. He had asked the master of the prison-house if he might go to see the new temple of Daigon. Though he could n't see, he wanted to feel it, its pillars and stone. A little lad brought him. And there was a scaffolding in front on which three men were working, and he knocked against it, and felt the pillars, and stopped....

"And he put his hands on two of the pillars of the scaffolding, and listened to the workmen above, and then called out: 'O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my eyes.'

"And he took hold of the two middle pillars of the scaffolding—"

"Oh!" Delilah's voice came in a long moan. "Oh! my poor love! my poor lord! oh! ... The workmen," she asked, "were they—killed?"

"One was lamed and one bruised and one had a shoulder smashed, but only Samson, Delilah, is dead."

"Samson is dead!" she said dully. And then she quickened. "Are you sure that he isn't only stunned?"

"No, Delilah; Samson is dead."

"I shall go with you...."

They had taken him into a cool corner of the temple, and when she saw him there was no longer doubt in her, or—or hope. He lay there with a great dignity, a new majesty, all the pain and

baffledness had gone from his face and the poor empty eyes were closed....

And she sank to her knees, and took his head on them, she saw with a little glad wringing of the heart that once more the great golden cloak of hair had grown ...

"Delilah, where is he to—stay?" The captain of the guards leaned toward her.

"Not with us, kinsman. He might n't rest. He will sleep with his own."

"Then shall I tell his brethren, and the house of his father to come?"

"Do, kinsman," she said. She turned her head to the shadows. "Tell them to come and take him," she said.

She was like a woman in stone but for her strained voice, and for the fingers twisting, twisting, twisting under the red-gold cloak of hair. "Go now and tell them," she said. "Tell them, but don't let them come," she said, "for—for just a little while...."

And now night had come, and the little lamps of Gaza burned clear in the blue softness. The sun had gone down in the west, and the silver blade of the moon had all but followed. Delilah felt cold and stiff, and there were tears in her heart that would not come to her eyes for relief. The heaviness of an old sorrow, it never went, and she did n't know if she wanted it to go.... She rose to go within.

"Delilah, the great harlot," a raucous voice accused her from the blackness of the street. "She enticed our lord Samson and made him sleep on her knees—and she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death—"

She stopped and listened. Venom was sprayed against her from the street. Hatred arose like a pillar. Suddenly the tears came, the welcome tears, and gratitude went in a white shaft from her to the bitter men in the streets, for this: that after so many years great Samson was not forgotten, that he lived in their mind and hearts still, as in hers.

A QUATRAIN OF LING TAI FU'S

Because of his perfect, or nearly perfect, English there were many who believed that Li Sin was only masquerading as a Chinaman. Because of the slightly slit Mongol eyes, and the swarthy color of his skin, there were others who explained his enigma by guessing he was a half-breed. It never occurred to either party that Li Sin had been sent to Eton, in England, at the age of thirteen, and that from Eton he had gone to Oxford. They would not have believed it if you told them. There is a dogma abroad to the effect that every Chinaman must of necessity speak English like a Cantonese laundryman or like an attendant at a chop-suey restaurant.

It never occurred to them, either, that Li Sin was a Manchu duke, with a genealogy that extended back to the days of Tang. It never occurred to them that the slant-eyed Manchu was as big a physician as any of the high-priced practitioners on the Avenue. To the descendants of fur-peddlers and deck-scrubbers who graced the Social Register, or to the millionaires of Long Island who had soared into the financial heavens on an accidental oil-spout or who had amassed their fortunes by the less reputable forms of mine-grabbing —to these, and to their wives and daughters, Li Sin was merely a tradesman or shopkeeper. It did not particularly matter to them that his shop on Fifth Avenue was filled with little gold Buddhas whose eyes were fine emeralds, with pieces of lacquer which it had taken an artist his lifetime to do, with peachblow vases transparent as a hand against the sun, with porcelains sheer as fine silks, with cloisonne jars that made staid experts rave like men in liquor. But the strictures of the ignorant did not worry Li Sin in the least. He would only raise his eyebrows and smile his bland, inscrutable smile.

Li Sin has left Fifth Avenue now, and in his store, which was in those days a temple of truth as well as a temple of beauty, a very lying and exceedingly dishonest Armenian reigns. In his own city of Tientsin the Manchu lives in stately leisure. He has reverted to his own name, Hsien Po, which is great in Manchu annals. He has reverted to his Manchu dress of brocaded blouse and silken trousers, to his mandarin's cap with its mandarin's button. He is

very proud of his pear gardens, and he divides his time between walking in them, reading the analects of Confucius, and giving the benefit of his marvelous medical knowledge gratuitously to the poor. He is happy, I hope, for if ever a man deserved to be happy, it is he.

He is gone now, is Li Sin, but I can see him as plainly as though he were standing beside me. A rather squat sort of man, with a squarish face and high cheek-bones. His shining black hair was parted smoothly at the side, and there was a look of health in the transparent quality of his brown skin and in the whites of his slanting eyes. There was always a quiet smile on his lips, and he wore the tweed and broadcloth of America with as much ease as the blouse and silken trousers of his own land. The only Oriental hint in his clothes was the suppressed gorgeousness of his neckties. He roamed about the great store, passing an occasional word with the attendants or stopping to greet a favorite customer, which was an honor. The customers were much in awe of Li Sin. There were incidents that had taught them to respect him.

There was the incident of the amateur pottery expert who happened to be also a millionaire. He noticed a vase of delicate blue jade.

"Oh, Li Sin," he said, "I want that. That's a wonderful piece of Ming."

"It's not Ming," the Manchu told him.

"I tell you it is Ming!" the young millionaire insisted. "I 'll buy it."

"I 'm afraid you won't, Mr. Rensselaer," the Manchu answered blandly. "I won't sell it to you."

"Then you 'll sell me nothing, ever again," Rensselaer decreed in a passion.

"Oh, very well," Li Sin smiled.

To Morganstern, the munitions magnate, he was much shorter. The bulky financier rushed into the store rolling a cigar about his fat lips. He wanted a rug, he said, an expensive one, the best in the store. Li Sin smiled a trifle cynically and pointed out something on the wall.

"A Persian thirteenth-century," he explained curtly. "Used to belong to a shah of Persia. It costs seventeen thousand dollars."

"I 'll take it," Morganstern nodded. "I want something for the bedroom floor."

"But, dear sir," Li Sin expostulated, "one does n't put that on the floor. One hangs it on a wall."

"I don't care a damn." The munitions man drew out his check-book. "Anything good enough for the shah of Persia's wall is good enough for my feet."

"My good sir—" Li Sin's voice was as bland as ever—"you are making a mistake. There are several grass-rug emporiums on Second Avenue. Go into the next drug store and look one up in a telephone-book. Take a trolley across Fifty-ninth Street. They 'll sell you one, and you can carry it home beneath your arm." And abruptly he left Morganstern.

These things created a legend about Li Sin that will never die on the Avenue. Cynics say that it was good advertising, and brought people who liked to be insulted. But we, who knew the Manchu, were certain that was the last thing he had in mind. Peculiar as Li Sin's business habits were, more peculiar still were his friends. Among them might be counted a European ambassador in Washington, a great heavy-weight wrestler, a little Roman Catholic priest, a head waiter in a restaurant. All of these people he liked for some quality that his shrewd eyes had discovered. And last but not least was Irene Johns.

She had come into the store one soft spring morning, looking for a birthday present for her mother, something inexpensive, she said, about two dollars, all—she laughed merrily—she could afford. Perhaps it was that gurgling laugh of hers, that limpid, hurried, harmonious scale, that drew Li Sin's attention. But he came forward with a suggestion when she and the salesman became nonplused at the problem of finding something pretty, good and worth two dollars.

"Perhaps I can help," he smiled.

She impressed him with her appearance as much as with her laugh. There was something so ethereal about her that she seemed less a being of flesh and blood than the disembodied spirit of spring. Her fair hair, her starlit purple eyes, her eager, half-closed small mouth with its glint of little teeth, her slim neck stood out against her heather costume and black, sweeping hat like a softly modulated light. She was so little, so slender, that she seemed as delicate as a snowflake. She moved with the lightness of a feather stirring along the ground. And yet, Li Sin saw with his physician's eye, she was not fragile. She was as healthy as an athlete.

"I think I can find you something," he said.

He did. In the rear of the store he discovered a roughly hammered silver brooch from Bokhara, a marvel of intricacy and sweeping lines; he had bought it in Bokhara himself for two rubles. The thing had interested him.

"But this must be more than two dollars!" She spoke in wonder.

"I paid one dollar for it in Bokhara, and I am exacting a dollar profit for it, which is not too little," the Manchu answered gravely.

By what peculiar, invisible steps their friendship ripened it would be impossible to detail; but ripen it did. The fresh, fair American beauty, slim and beautiful as a Tanagra figurine, and the squat, middle-aged Mongol liked each other, came to appreciate each other. She had an inborn love for beautiful things, and he was never weary of showing her the treasures of his store. He showed her strange, exotic jewels, collected by dead kings and queens—chrysoberyls that were at times the strange green of olives and at other times red like a setting sun, topazes with the yellow of aged wine, sunstones that glowed with a tremulous golden red, carbuncles that flashed into explosive stars of scarlet, peridots and milky moonstones, a ruby that the King of Ceylon had owned, and an emerald that had once belonged to the unhappy Queen of Scots. Irene Johns would gasp at the sight of these things.

"They 're so beautiful!" she would say. "They make the tears come to my eyes!"

That was enough for Li Sin, that gasp of appreciation. He loved the things so much himself. He had hunted his treasures up and down the earth and to and fro in it, and he wanted them to be gazed on with the appreciative eye rather than with the cold look of barter and exchange. He liked this little twenty-year-old woman, because she had the spirit of beauty within her, and because she seemed so fair and fresh and unprotected. And she liked the swarthy Mongol, not for his strange, exotic setting, but for the sheer kindliness of him, the great, expansive benevolence and his consummate courtesy, which after all was nothing but the birthright of a Manchu prince.

There could be no question of love between them, for many reasons, and never a thought of it passed their minds. She might have been something like a niece to him, and he her benevolent uncle. They never met outside his store.

He drew from her the story of what of life she had known, carefully, gently, like the skilled surgeon extracting a splinter from flesh. The daughter of a naval surgeon who had died while she was still young,—and who, Li Sin shrewdly guessed, had been somewhat of a blackguard,—she lived poorly with her mother, on a meager pension. She had been brought up decently, educated well, at what must have been a terrible expense to the mother. She had not been married, beautiful as she was, because she had not mixed with people who were to be regarded as beneath her in social rank. The people of her own station were too poor to marry offhand—but there was a young ensign she mentioned as having met once or twice, and there was a faint blush on her cheeks as she spoke of it. For the illustrious and the moneyed she had either too little fortune or too little lineage. And that was all.

"Too bad!" Li Sin murmured to himself, and his thoughts would have done credit to the most adroit of schatchen. "Too bad!"

She would breeze in, if such a word may be used of her who was as gentle as a zephyr, bringing always with her the sweetness of spring.

"Good morning!" she would greet him eagerly. "I wonder if we could find something—I want a clasp for my hair, for evening wear—something frightfully inexpensive."

"I think we might find it." Li Sin would smile, and he would find it. He took her money, and gave her the article at a just profit on what he had paid for it. The only thing gratuitous he gave her was the travel and the adventure necessary to pick his wonderful trifles up. Of this he said nothing, and she was none the wiser.

There came the day when she entered a little excited, a little afraid, a little nervous. She wanted something more expensive than usual. She was going out that night, she explained, with somebody.

"I am going to be married soon," she blurted out. "I am engaged."

"To whom?" Li Sin asked quietly.

"A friend of my father's," she answered blushingly. "Roderick Dreghorn, the ivory-hunter."

"I wonder if I might ask you to do something," Li Sin said slowly, "and that is: will you bring your fiancé here some day so that I may congratulate him?"

"I should love to," she said; and she left him, excitedly happy, Li Sin saw; but he also noticed that she seemed a little terrified, a little aghast.

I have told the story of Li Sin to many people, now that he is gone to his own home and is happy there with his poor and his pear-trees, and some of them have believed me because they know China and the manner of man Li Sin is, and some of them have believed me because they know I abhor lies as I abhor the devil. But many cannot understand it. They cannot see why a Manchu duke should become a merchant on Fifth Avenue.

"And if he is as great a doctor as you say—" they object.

There is a passage in Isaiah, I believe, which speaks of Tyre, "whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth." Marco Polo, that ancient Venetian, says of Cathay, that there, of all professions the most esteemed is that of merchant. It is above arms, he says, above learning. And what obtained in the Yellow Empire when Hoang-ti led his people across the desert in the misty dawn of time obtains to-day, from the outer sea to the confines of Mongolia. An ancient and honorable thing it is, a fit profession for princes, a thing pregnant with ideals of honesty and

fair dealing, a clean thing. There is nothing anomalous to the eye in Li Sin, a Manchu duke, unearthing the treasures of forgotten days for the New World, and exacting a just profit for the work.

As for the medicine, that was another matter. I could no more imagine Li Sin accepting money for his healing art than I can imagine him stealing alms from a blind beggar. The thing was far too holy for him. There in that glass-topped studio in his house on Fifth Avenue, above the great treasure-store, he studied his science with the enthusiasm of an amateur pursuing a hobby. A queer place it was, with its retorts and vials, its glinting instruments, its Rontgen-ray apparatus, its tubes of deadly serum and of healing drugs. And beside these were the quaint adjuncts of Oriental healing: the twisted tubes of herbs, instruments that seemed like an alchemist's dream, medicines of black, occult art as well as of benevolence, secret, untraceable poisons, liquids which, it is whispered, would bring the dead to life for minutes, which would drive men mad.

Ask the taciturn Lee Fong, on Mott Street, that slant-eyed millionaire. Ask the leaders of the Hip Sing. At the Five Companies of San Francisco, inquire. They will speak of Li Sin as a demigod of medicine.

One has n't to go as far as that to find out. There is a tenement-house on Hudson Street, where the Bracalellos live. There is a romping child there called Beata. For years she was an object of research to physicians in hospitals, because of her twisted spine. Nothing could be done, they decided. They were wrong. Li Sin saw the white-cheeked child carried in the subway on a horrible metal stretcher, strapped to it. It hurt him—the illnesses of children always hurt him. He took charge of her. She romps about now as other children do. There are many cases of that kind.

But above all in my mind there is the tragic case of Mrs. Madge Eaton, who is now happy as a woman farmer on Long Island. Li Sin discovered her creeping up an alleyway to die from hunger, shame, and heartbreak. Against all protestation he took her home. Her story was tragic and very sordid. She had married John Eaton, a man who had come up to Maine for a holiday. He had brought her to New York. In a month he had sent her out to work. She fell ill.

Eaton deserted her, taking with him all her jewelry, all her money, all her clothes. When she was discovered, she was sent to a hospital, and when she emerged from there, she found herself without courage to kill herself and without the wherewithal to live. The police sent her to jail two weeks later. When she came out, Li Sin found her, broken, hungry, terrified, wanting to die and yet without courage to face the river.

He cured her. He brought her back to life and hope and strength. By some means he instilled into that frail and timid heart the courage of a lioness. But he did one thing, unknown to her, of which she might not have approved.

There was a tripartite function of Li Sin's: Firstly there was that of the merchant, whose duty it was to discover and barter rare and costly things. Secondly came the physician's, to heal body and mind. Thirdly came that of the Manchu prince, to dispense justice.

He called Hong Kop, his body-servant, to him—that subtle and inscrutable Cantonese. He looked at the card on which he had scribbled an address, an address he had extracted from Mrs. Eaton.

"Hong Kop, you will go at once to Colon, in Panama," he announced.

The Cantonese nodded.

"You will go to this address—a gambling-house—and there you will pick up the trail of John Eaton. You will pick up the trail and follow it until you find him. And when you do find him—"

He paused for an instant. Again the Cantonese bowed.

"You will kill him, Hong Kop."

Six feet tall, spare as a lance, tanned to a deep brown, hatchet-faced and yet handsome in some daredevil, hypnotic way, with eyes that glinted with the vindictive sheen of a rifle-barrel, mouth twisted slightly,—enough to show the cruelty hidden within—Roderick Dreghorn lounged into the store with Irene Johns. There was an amused smile on his powerful face, as though it pleased him whimsically to accompany his fiancée on a shopping expedition, to meet her queer friends.

"Li Sin," she said, "this is the man I am going to marry."

The Manchu smiled gravely. Dreghorn watched him with an amused, contemptuous glance.

"There is no need to wish felicity," said Li Sin, courteously, "to the future husband of Miss Johns." And Dreghorn nodded in an offhand way. The hunter turned to the girl.

"Didn't you want to get something here?" he asked, "some silk or something?" Li Sin noted beneath the man's soft tones the concealed edge that could cut on occasion like a rawhide whip. Rapidly Li Sin was summing the man up in his mind: forty-five, he decided, a man of the world, a gentleman born, an utter blackguard, a man who had done and seen evil things. He had money, too—witness the plain but expensive cut of his brown tweeds. Li Sin noted quickly a faint scar on the temple that he knew to be an old bullet-wound, and a weal across the fingers of the right hand that only a long knife could have made.

"Would you care to come and help Miss Johns select the silk?" Li Sin asked. Dreghorn smiled, and there was a lift to the left corner of his mouth that showed the teeth. It was like a dog's threatening snarl.

"I don't think so," he drawled. "I am not interested in any products of the yellow or black countries."

"Indeed!" Li Sin murmured.

Excitedly, at the end of the store, Irene Johns told her story. Dreghorn—in a moment of boredom, Li Sin judged—had dropped in to see the family of the man he had known fifteen years before in Hongkong. He had heard of Mrs. Johns and her daughter from some casual acquaintance. Li Sin smiled; the casual acquaintance had spoken of the daughter's beauty, most probably. Mr. Dreghorn had been so kind to all of them! He had taken them out, had showered presents on them, had in the end asked her to marry him.

"Indeed!" Li Sin thought, and he encouraged her to go on.

He was so big, so powerful, she hinted. He had done big things, had had great adventures. She seemed a little aghast as she mentioned that. He was so compelling, she said.

"She is not in love," thought Li Sin. "She is hypnotized."

He was going on one more expedition, she told the Manchu. After that, he was coming home to settle down. They would have a house in the country, a farm.

"Agh!" Li Sin exclaimed to himself. So that was it. The old, old story, as old as Cain: the rake, the scoundrel, after sucking the world dry of wickedness, wanted a wife, home, and children. Li Sin could understand how the girl's purity, her lightness, her youth, had appealed to the world-worn rascal. He could understand the visions the man had—the sweet, hawthorn-scented dreams. It was like a murderer seeking to wash the blood from his hands with God's pure water.

They left. Li Sin escorted them courteously to the door.

"Good-by!" he wished them.

"Good-by, my yellow friend," Dreghorn answered contemptuously. Irene Johns did not hear it.

Li Sin went above to his apartment. He clapped his hands for Hong Kop.

"You will go down to where you know, Hong Kop, to the house of Ling Wah Lee—"

The Cantonese made his eternal bow.

"And you will have him find out for me, Hong Kop, all there is to be known about Roderick Dreghorn, hunter of ivory, with a bullet-mark on the forehead and a weal on the right hand, the weal of a Burmese knife."

There is a doctrine in one of the faiths that man is born in original sin, and that unless he is cleansed by sacrament he is until the end of time the property of the evil one. There is an article of dogma in the same faith that one may become possessed of demons. If this is true, then never a sacrament was said over Dreghorn, nor ever was he confronted with the exorcist's mystic and terrible formula. Hell seemed to have employed him all his life and to have made him its brain and hand. The first of the story was bad enough, with its record of treachery, of gainful crimes in the dark lands, of murders concealed and never explained. Even Li Sin's worldly-wise mind was shocked by Hong Kop's report. There was the incident in the Belgian

Congo when Dreghorn, allied with a corrupt Belgian official, burned a village with all the inhabitants, shooting down those who tried to escape from the flames. They had not produced enough ivory.

"Even madness will not explain that!" Li Sin shook his head.

There was the incident during the period of the Boxer chaos in Yuen-Lau, when Dreghorn and an associate had tortured an old mandarin, hoping to make him unearth treasure. They had given him the torture of the bowstring, and the water torture, and the torture of red metal at his feet.

"And he an old man," Li Sin thought, "four-score and five!"

There was the incident in Mombasaland when the fiendish natives had captured a lone hunter of ivory, had crucified him on the ground, smeared with honey for the ants, delirious under the smashing sun. Dreghorn could have rescued him, for he was well armed and had a large party of natives. But he contented himself with stealing the man's ivory and leaving him there to die.

"That is one thing for which there is no punishment," Li Sin thought. "No punishment is equal in horror."

Li Sin read another incident, and he read no farther. It was the story of Marie Tirlemont, called *Flancs-de-neige*, whom Dreghorn had brought with him from Maxim's in Paris, down to the Congo. She had ceased to amuse Dreghorn a hundred miles south of Leopoldville, and he had abandoned her alone, in a village of black beasts.

And now Dreghorn, Li Sin mused, wanted to marry. He wanted to marry this fair little American girl, pure and delicate as the petal of a primrose, light and shimmering and gay as iridescence on water—to make a home with her, to have her bear children.

He called for Hong Kop.

"What is the profit of crime, Hong Kop?" he asked.

The Cantonese thought for a moment.

"The profit of crime is death," he answered.

"Death is a sweet and gentle thing, Hong Kop," his master mused. "It comes to the old like a gentle and sweet-scented sleep. It comes to the suffering like a grateful anodyne. On others it falls so quickly

and surely that there is no pain. It is not the profit of crime, Hong Kop, except for those who wish much to live."

He mused again, joining his finger-tips together and knitting his brows.

"Unless, instead of being a sweet sleep, it is a nightmare, Hong Kop! Unless, instead of being an anodyne, it is a horror! Unless it comes accompanied by a huge and monstrous fear, a terror that clutches the heartstrings, a fear that kills!"

He was going away on the morrow, Dreghorn said. He would be away for six months, and then he would return, and they would be married. He wanted to buy her something before he left, a ring or a bracelet.

"But she wanted to buy it here," he sneered at Li Sin.

"I wanted to buy it here," she replied warmly, "because here I can get the most beautiful things in the world."

"If you care for that yellow junk," Dreghorn laughed shortly.

"Roderick!" she protested quickly. She was pained through and through. Li Sin smiled reassuringly at her. But Dreghorn wandered on.

"Anything you want," he told Irene; "anything that pleases you."

As he watched him, Li Sin became convinced that the man was in love, head over heels in, as a boy might be. The hunter became garrulous, under his feelings, as under the influence of a drug.

"She spoke of getting the house at Huntingdon decorated in some Oriental style," Dreghorn laughed. "She can have it if she wants it. But I don't see why she could n't have it done in honest white style."

Li Sin smiled blandly as ever. He might have been receiving a compliment.

"You don't seem to have a high opinion of Asia or Africa," he remarked casually.

"I have no use for any color except white," Dreghorn answered brutally. "Black, yellow, brown, or red."

"It is a harsh thing," Li Sin reproved him. Irene Johns stood by, pale, nervous, and hurt. "It is a grievous thing to wound the body, but it is a more grievous thing to wound the soul. And to wound it unjustly is more grievous still."

"I deal in facts," Dreghorn laughed.

"May I show you a fact?" Li Sin went on. "You have been in China, and if I mistake not, you read Chinese."

"Among my many accomplishments," Dreghorn sneered, "is the reading of Chinese."

Irene looked at him with a sort of fearful agony in her eyes. She had never seen his brutality creep out before, and she was shocked at the sight of him lolling across the counter and striving his utmost to hurt the smiling Manchu. Li Sin took up a book from behind him, a broad, thin book, the stiff parchment pages of which were edged with gold. He opened it carefully. The leaves had the stiffness of steel.

"These are the verses of Ling Tai Fu, of Tientsin," the Manchu said, "a poet of the last century who had traveled into Russia. He complains bitterly of the same prejudice, and he deals with facts, which you deal with. Here is his poem 'The Return.' Perhaps you will translate it."

Dreghorn looked down the page smilingly.

> "They have laughed at me, they of the North—me, of the race of Chang!
> Because of my skin like an autumn leaf, because of my slitted eyes,
> Because they were white as the sun, they said, white as light!
> And yet—whiter than white is the leper.
>
> White is the hibiscus tree with fluttering blossoms, white as they!
> But whiter than it is the snow which numbs its roots in the ground!
> White are the men of the North as the sun, white as light!
> And yet—whiter than white is the leper."

Dreghorn laughed easily. Irene shivered with a shock of horror. Li Sin smiled.

"Those are facts," the Manchu said.

"Is there any more of this?" the hunter asked. He turned over the leaf.

"No more," Li Sin answered. "I should have warned you about those leaves. You have cut your hand."

Dreghorn looked at his left thumb. The edge of the book-leaf had sheared into it as sharp and as painlessly as the edge of a razor. A few minute drops of blood showed on the skin.

"You had better have a little peroxide," Li Sin suggested.

"I 'm not a child," Dreghorn laughed. "It is n't anything. Come on, Irene."

They left the store together, and, as was his wont with favored customers, Li Sin saw them to the door. The girl was flushed deep with mortification, and she shot the Manchu a mute appeal of apology. Dreghorn smiled again.

"*Au revoir*, my poetical friend," he laughed.

"Good-by!" answered Li Sin, gravely.

Li Sin saw little of Irene Johns for the next six weeks. Once she came into the store, but she was nervous and flushed, as though she thought the Manchu would hold against her the insults Dreghorn had offered him. But he took pains to show her that he and she were as close friends as ever. She was silently grateful, but still nervous.

"Mr. Dreghorn will be back in six months?" the Manchu said.

"In six months," she answered listlessly. "He is gone to Abyssinia."

"And you will be married soon after?"

"Immediately he comes back, he insists," she said.

The glamour and hypnotism and force of the man's presence no longer enthralled her, Li Sin could see. She was fearful of the step she was taking. But she was certain it was going to take place. Once Dreghorn returned, the quality of his masterfulness would grind down all opposition, even were she to show any.

"I want you to come in soon," Li Sin told her. "I have some things coming from Peking that I want you to see."

But she did not come in. In place of her there entered the store, six weeks after Dreghorn had sailed, a tall, heavily built young man with a tanned face, heavy jaw, and gray eyes. He asked for Mr. Sin.

"I am Li Sin," the Manchu told him.

"My name is Gray, surgeon on the Cunarder Hibernia, between New York and Algiers. Miss Johns asked me to tell you something, and she would like to see you, if it is not asking too much. She is prostrated at home. Her fiancé is dead."

"Mr. Dreghorn is dead!" Li Sin commented simply. "How?"

"He came out of the smoking-room one night, after talking to me about his intended," the surgeon went on glibly. He seemed to be repeating something he had rehearsed. "We were off Algiers, and though the night was fine, a cross-sea was running. He said he would not turn in for a half-hour yet, and the last I saw of him he was leaning against the starboard rail of the boat-deck. We never saw anything more of him. There can be no doubt that he fell overboard."

Li Sin studied him for a few minutes silently.

"Dr. Gray," he said simply, "you will pardon a man who is twenty years older than you, and who has seen much of the world and much of life, but—that is not what happened. Dr. Gray, how did Dreghorn die?"

He continued looking at the young surgeon. The man was evidently under a great strain.

"I know Miss Johns," Li Sin went on, "and I knew Dreghorn."

"If you know Miss Johns," the young surgeon blurted out suddenly, "you know the best and most beautiful woman I have ever seen; and if you knew Dreghorn, you knew the damnedest scoundrel unhanged."

"That, too, I know," said Li Sin.

He waited an instant. The surgeon was uncomfortably silent.

"Dr. Gray," the Manchu insisted, "of what did Dreghorn die?"

"If you want to know, and have the right to know," Gray burst out savagely, "the man died because he had contracted the most virulent case of leprosy I have ever seen in the tropics. How he did it, God only knows. He was quite well when he left New York except for a rash on his left hand. He must have been impregnated with some horrible virus. In a few days I had to manacle him in his cabin. For a week the man was a shrieking maniac. I thought something might be done when we got to port. There was no chance. In Algiers they would have put him in the leper colony. So one night I took him up to the boat-deck and let him go overboard."

There was an instant's silence.

"I knew of the man," the doctor said bitterly, "and I can't even pray to God for his soul!"

"But I must!" said Li Sin.

"You will go up and see Miss Johns," the surgeon reminded him. "She will get over it."

"She will get over it, and be happy, and marry a good man," the Manchu told him. "I will go to see her." And they parted.

He went upstairs to his apartment, very slowly, very calmly. He sat down and thought for a while. Softly he clapped his hands. The silent Cantonese came.

"Hong Kop," he asked, "tell me, Hong Kop, you who are young, how does love come?"

In fluting, sibilant Cantonese the servant answered:

"There is beauty," he said, "and it calls to manliness with the call of cymbals. They meet and wing upward, as Chung Tzu wrote, 'like a hymn recited softly at the death of day.'"

"There is beauty, and there is manliness!" the Manchu mused. "There is Irene Johns, and there is—" He smiled an instant, and became as grave as ever again. "You will go to Brooklyn, to the Navy Yard, Hong Kop, and you will find for me an ensign called Nelson. You will find where he is, Hong Kop....

"I am getting old, Hong Kop, I am getting old. The pear gardens of Tientsin are bursting into silver and mauve. Birds from the outer sea are winging northward. Again with the spring the musicians

tune their lutes of jade. The throbbing chords do not awaken me, Hong Kop. Hong Kop, I am old."

He rose wearily.

"Call the gray limousine, Hong Kop," he directed, "and then go on your errand."

He stretched his arms out for his fur coat, but suddenly he remembered something. He went upstairs to the glass-roofed laboratory; taking a parcel from a bronze chest, and unwrapping the antiseptic-soaked coverings, he brought out a book, a broad, thin book, the stiff parchment pages of which were edged with gold. Carefully he lighted the muffle-furnace, and carefully he placed the volume in it. And while he waited for the volume to be consumed, softly he began to recite a quatrain from it, a quatrain of Ling Tai Fu's:

> "White is the hibiscus tree with fluttering blossoms, white as they!
> But whiter than it is the snow which numbs its roots in the ground!
> White are the men of the North as the sun, white as light!
> And yet—whiter than white is the leper."

"IRISH"

Eastward the line of Twenty-fourth Street flowed evenly like a sluggish river, hazy, dim, antique, mottled by the lights of the little shops, of blotches and shafts of yellow illumination from the glass panels of the old houses, iron railings, and small scrofulous gardens. Past the old houses, at the juncture of Seventh Avenue and the street, came an irregular blaze, a sort of ocher ray from a cellar where an Italian had a coal, ice, and wood business; the glare of the cigar store; the thin ray of the news-stand kept by the fat, rather dirty old German woman; the pale, sinister windows of the Chinese restaurant, and the arrogant blaze from Slavin's saloon.

At no time did the street appear so well as it did now, in the dusk of the early New York spring. The darkness, which was not full darkness but a sort of blue mantle, threw a veil of illusion over it, and through the veil the lights came softly. Before the dusk it was crude realism, and when night fell there would be sinister shadows. But now it had a little beauty. It was like a picture a painter might have done some centuries ago, an unimportant and rather brutal picture, and time and grime and proper lighting had given it such value that one would pause before it for an instant, not knowing why the charm.

The old man sitting in the doorway of one of the little houses with the yellowish patch of grass surrounded by a warped iron railing hated the street, with the dull, cold hatred of old men. Yet he could n't get away from it. Often his son had suggested, and his wife when she was alive had suggested that they move to the country. "Yerra, do ye call that country?" he had snarled at the mention of Westchester, and Long and Staten islands; and that had killed the suggestion and they had tried to have him move up-town, to Harlem, but, "Yerra, what would I be doing up there?" he had rasped. The son had spoken of the pleasant places in Brooklyn, out Flatbush way. "Yerra, is it Brooklyn?" What impression he had of that worthy borough is hard to imagine, but he spoke with devastating contempt.

The truth was, the old man was wedded to Twenty-fourth Street. He was like some of his race who have ancient, uncomely wives whom they despise and hate but without whom they cannot live. There was the place it was fated for him to be. There was the shop where he got shaved every morning. There was the saloon where he had his three drinks a day, regular as the clock—one before lunch, one before dinner, and one before he went to bed. There was the news-stand where he snapped the daily paper from the hands of the old German woman. If an elevated train on Seventh Avenue were late, he would notice it. He had decided to be there, and there he remained.

To the eye the old man was a forbidding, a cold figure. It was more this forbidding and cold quality that made him old, rather than years. He could not have been much over fifty. But this fixity of

habit, this impression of being a monument, had endowed him with antiquity. He was not a big man, but he gave the impression of size, of importance. His hair was gray, and that gave him dignity. His eye was of a colorless, aloof blue, the blue of ice. His gaunt, clean-shaven face had something ecclesiastical about it. His clothes were always a decent and expensive black, and a heavy gold watch-chain spanned his vest. He had always a stick by his side. His shoes were good and roomy, and somewhat old-fashioned. His hat was of black, hard felt, not a derby, nor yet a high hat, but one of those things that suggest property and respectability, and somehow land. His name was Mr. McCann.

The social standing of Mr. McCann on Twenty-fourth Street was something of a phenomenon. Every one accorded him a sort of a terrified respect. The Italian coal-and-wood man; the German newsdealer; the man in the cigar store where he indulged in his only vulgarity, plug tobacco, which he cut with a penknife and crumbled in the palm of his hand; the bartender in Slavin's who fixed his drinks to a nicety and had a cheery and respectful "Well, Mr. McCann?" for his each entry. The street recognized he was of them, but immensely superior. He was not a gentleman, so the respect was not from caste to caste but something much more real. None ever became familiar with him, nor would any sane man think of insulting him. Aloof and stern, with terrible dignity, he moved through the street. Even the children hushed as he drew near.

None in the street ever examined their hearts or minds as to why he was paid their tribute of respect. If they had they would have found no reason for it, but they would have paid it to him all the same. He was Mr. McCann.

And this was all the more strange because he was father of Irish Mike McCann, between whom and the middle-weight boxing championship of the world there stood only two men. Irish they loved; were proud of. But it was n't to the father of Irish that the respect was paid. It was to Mr. McCann.

A very strange thing about Mr. McCann was this: that he could only know time and space and circumstances in relation to himself. As thus: Seventh Avenue was not Seventh Avenue to him, a

muscular, grimy street that plodded for a space on the west side of Manhattan, crashed northward through the Twenties, galloped toward Forty-second, crossed Broadway recklessly, and at Fifty-ninth met the armed front of the park, died. To Mr. McCann it was only an artery that crossed his street. Also, winter was not winter, not the keenness of frost, the tumbling, swirling miracle of the snow, but just the time when he put on his overcoat. Nor did summer mean the blossoming of the boughs to him nor the happy population on the river and the beach, and the little Italians with their ice-cream carts, nor children crooning over great segments of watermelon, but just a time when it was oppressively hot. And great national events only marked points in his life. He would not say, for instance, that he was married about the time of the war with Spain, but that the Maine was sunk about the time he was married.

All his life was under his eyes, like a map one knows perfectly—a rectangular pattern. There were no whorls, no arabesques. There were no delicate shadings, no great purple splash, but precise black and white. There were no gaps he had jumped, to be a mystery in his latter years. All was evident.

He could see himself in his boyhood on the Irish hills, among the plain farmer family he was born of. He could place his father, plain old tiller of the soil, always smoking a clay pipe; his mother, warm-hearted, bustling, a great one for baking bread; his brothers and sisters, honest clods. But he himself seemed to have been born superior, was superior. There was no mystery. It was a fact. He accepted it. And from him his mother accepted it.

And by his mother it was impressed on the whole family that their son and brother Dennis was superior. For him better clothes, easier work, and when he decided that farm life was not for him, no objection was made to the sending of him to college in Cork. But after a couple of years there he had made no progress with studies, and it seemed to him that the studies were not worth while. And he returned home.

They had tried to get a government office for him then, a very small one. But that also required examinations, which he did not seem able to pass. So that a great contempt for books grew up

within him. And then he grew convinced that Ireland had not enough opportunity for him. And the family got the money to send him to America.

The years at the college in Cork had intensified his sense of superiority so that when he came to America he felt that the Irish he met there were a very inferior people. And nothing about the city pleased him; everything was much better in Ireland, he decided, and he said Ireland was a wonderful country—the only thing wrong with it was the people. And the queer thing about it was that the Irish in New York agreed with him. His few years at Cork gave them the impression he had accumulated learning, and the race has a medieval respect for books and writing.

"True for you, Mr. McCann, true for you," they would answer his remarks on the inferiority of the Irish Irish. "But what can you expect and the centuries of oppression they have been under?"

"If they had independence enough, there would have been no oppression." "Ay, there 's a lot in what you say, Mr. McCann."

His superiority disarmed them, cowed them. If one of themselves, or a foreigner had uttered the words, I can imagine the rush, the dull thud, the door being taken from its hinges, the mournful procession to the widow's house.

This aloofness, this superiority helped him, or, rather, made him, in the business he had chosen—life-insurance. The wisdom he uttered about life and death to a race who considers life only as the antechamber of eternity impressed his hearers, and they were afraid, too, not to take out policies from this superior, frigid, and evidently authoritative young man.

His superiority also brought him a wife, a timid, warm-hearted girl who brought a tidy sum of money as a fortune, which he spent upon himself.

She was terrified of him and very much in love with him for years. And then the love went and the terror remained. She bore him three children, two sons and a daughter. And in due time she died. But not until life had run pleasantly and respectfully for her husband, for all that he despised it, not as vanity and affliction of spirit but as inferiority and irritation.

And one son died, and a while after her mother's death Moyra, the daughter, ran away, contracting a very inferior marriage with a brakeman on the Pennsylvania Railroad. And the time came when the old man had to retire from the field of insurance, new methods, new companies coming in. The native Irish died of consumption and pneumonia, and the Irish-Americans cared not a tinker's curse for superiority. So his kingdom vanished. And Poles, and French, and Italians, and the folk who came from Palestine by way of Russia, and even Chinese, jostled him. And he was left with a great sense of superiority and a growing sense of futility and one son, "the brilliant Irish-American middle-weight, contender for the world's championship, 'Irish' Mike McCann!"

All that was needed now, the old man felt, to crown a useful and superior life was a material reward. Money he did n't care for—he had all he wanted, decent clothes, a house, tobacco, his three drinks a day; and "The Advocate," an Irish weekly, he read for news of people in Cork, puzzling out this genealogy and that. As, for instance, he would read of a Patrick Murphy fined for drunkenness at Youghal, and he would say: "I wonder now, would that be a son of ould James Murphy of Ballinure. Sure, I would n't put it past him. A damned drunken family they always were." Or a name in litigation would strike him. "Them Hamiltons were always the ones for going to law. A dirty connection!" If a pier or a piece of public property were being builded, his comment was: "I wonder who's getting the money out of that." If a political speech were reported he would sneer: "Yerra, John Redmond and them fellows ought to be ashamed of themselves, and them plundering the people, with their tongue in their cheek." "The Advocate" was a great comfort to him.

He often thought, as he was reading it, of how much he would like to return to Ireland and show the ignorant the fruits of a superior life led in hard work and wisdom. But for that he would have to show something tangible—even money would not be enough, so queer those people were. To impress them at all he would have to have a title of some kind: Alderman, or Judge, or Sheriff, "the Honorable Dennis McCann," and to have that he would need to have gone into politics, and that was not a career for him. To

succeed there he would have to be able to mix with the common people, drink with them, be hail-fellow-well-met with a crowd of the dirtiest kind of Irish. No, he could never have done that.

No, but his son might have. Sure, why could n't he? Wasn't he reared right among them? And though he came from a superior house, sure, that would only be an advantage. They would look up to him as well as be friends with him. And with the brains he ought to have, considering his father, there was no office in the land for which he could n't be fitted. Surrogate, or mayor, or governor, even! What was to prevent him if he 'd been the sort of child he ought to have been?

And if he had been that, there would have been a monument for the old man. There would have been a justification for his life—not that he felt he needed any, but just to show. And people would have recognized how much the young one owed to the old one. Then he could have gone back to Ireland for a visit; he would n't have stayed there; it was a good country to come from, as he always said. But even the ignorant common people would have given him credit. He could hear them now talking to his son: "Ah, sure, if your Honor's father had had the chances you had, sure it is n't Mayor of New York he 'd be, but President of America." "Yerra, 't is easy to see where you got the brains, my lad. A chip of the ould block." "Dennis McCann's son and him governor of the Empire State. Well, you can thank God for your father, my bould boyo."

There would have been an evidence for him, an evidence he was entitled to.

And look you the dirty trick had been played on him. Instead of the son who would crown his gray hairs with honor, who would justify him, he was father to a common prize-fighter, a man who was not looked on with respect by any. The idol, perhaps, of the New York Irish, but of the ignorant Irish. True, he was a good boy; he didn't drink. But neither did his father except in reason. He was generous with his money, but, after all, what was money? Always smiling, always laughing. "Sonny" they called him and "Irish"; that was no way to attain dignity. Even the Italian coal-ice-and-wood man called him "Irish." The old man would like to see any one call himself "Irish."

And he could n't listen to any reason. The old man had an opening for him in business up-town. A friend of his, an undertaker, a very superior man, who only did the best kind of trade, had offered young Michael a chance. But the prize-fighter had laughed.

"In a way I 'm in that line of business myself. Why change?"

The old man had shaken with rage.

"Get out of my sight, you impertinent pup!"

What were they thinking of him in Ireland at all, at all? Some one, of course, would write home and tell all about it. And if his name, that should be treated with respect, came up, some one would laugh: "Ould Dennis McCann! Ah, sure, what's he, anyway? Sure, his son's only a common fighter."

He could never get away from it; was never let get away from it. Why, even to-night now, not a half-mile away at Madison Square Garden, Michael was fighting. And a great fuss they were making about it, too. Some Italian he was fighting, and if he won he was to get a fight with the champion. He 'd probably win—he always did—and beat the champion, too. And the end of it would be the honorable name would be dragged more through the dirt of the newspapers.

"I wonder will he forget to bring home 'The Advocate,'" the old man thought. "He 'd better not."

Before the bell had gone for the first round, before the referee had called them together for instructions, before even the gloves were laced on him, "Irish" knew he was a beaten man.

Below him—he could see from his corner of the ring—the great garden was packed, a yellowish gray foam of faces above the dark liquid of bodies. Above those the galleries were great ovals lined with faces. And here and there were little tendrils of smoke. And the red caps of attendants. And occasionally the flash of metal buttons as police and firemen hovered in the aisles.

And at the shelf around the ringside reporters with their pencils and paper, and telegraphers with their clicking instruments. The timekeeper, fingering watch and gong. In another corner of the ring the thin, lugubrious referee—himself once a famous lightweight.

And everywhere lights, that in a minute or so would go out, and there would be only a great blue one over the ring. And over the house was the rippling hush that at any instant would burst into a great volume of cheers; a deep roar as of gunnery.

Across the ring, in his corner, the Italian middle-weight lolled, chatting with his seconds. Irish could occasionally glimpse the olive body; the dark hair and eyes; the even, grim face, unmarked save for the marred left ear and the minute flattening of the nose.

"... between the leading contenders of the world's middleweight championship, Nick Chip [so they had Americanized Niccolo Chiapetta] of Buffalo, and Irish Mike McCann...." and the sentence was lost in the roar of the Garden.

As he came to the center of the ring for the referee's instructions, to hear the interpretation of the rules of hitting while holding and about what was and what was not a clinch, he studied the alert, smiling Italian. Yes, Chip was far and away the best man he had ever met; too good for him, much too good. If he had only waited a year, waited six months, even; five or six months more of stiff, good fighting and he could have taken the Italian easily. A little more experience and a little more confidence if he could only have waited.

But he could n't wait; he could n't afford to. Neither he nor the old man could afford to.

They shook hands and returned to their corners. The whistle blew, ordering the seconds out.

"Don't box him, Irish. Stay with him. Get in close, and when you get him open, bam! See, just bam!" Old Maher, his trainer, whispered as he ducked out. "See, no fancy stuff. Just sock him. How are you feeling, Irish?"

"Fine."

"At 'a baby!"

Bong-g-h! He turned and walked to the center of the ring.

The Italian had dropped into his usual unorthodox pose. His open right glove fiddling gently at the air, his left arm crooked, the glove resting against his left thigh. He moved around the ring gently, like a good woman dancer. About him was an immense economy of movement. He seemed wide open—a mark for any boxer's left hand.

But Irish knew better. The Latin would sway back from the punch and counter like lightning. The old champion was wise to lie low and not to fight this man until he was compelled to.

If he could only spar him into a corner and rush him there, taking the punches on the chance of smashing him on the ropes.... But the Italian glided around like a ghost. He might have been some sort of a wraith for shadow-boxing, except for the confident, concentrated eyes.

A minute's fiddling, shifting of position, light sparring. The creaking of the boards the *shuff-shuff-shuff* of feet.

"Ah, why don't you walk in and kill him, Irish? He's only a Guinea!" came a voice from the gallery.

"He 's a yellow. He 's a yellow, da Irish," an Italian supporter jeered.

"Irish" could wait no longer. He feinted with his left, feinted again. The left shot out, missed the jaw, came home high on the head. The right missed the ribs and crashed on the Latin's back. A punch jarred Irish on the jaw. An uppercut ripped home under his heart. At close quarters the Italian was slippery as an eel. The garden roared delight at the Irish lad's punches, but Irish knew they were not effective. And the Italian had hurt him; slightly, but hurt him.

A spar, another pawing rush; light, smart blows on the ropes. "Break! break!" the cry of the referee. Creaking of ropes and whining of boards. A patter of applause as the round came to an end. A chatter of voices as the light went up. The clicking of telegraph instruments.

"At 'a boy! Keep after him," Maher greeted.

As he sat down in his corner Irish was grim. Yes, the Italian was too good for him; he had been afraid of this: that the Italian would outgeneral him into attacking all the time. A little more experience, the fights that mean a hundred times the theory, and he would have lain back and forced Chip to stand up and face him instead of sniping him on the run. The confidence of six or seven more fights and it would n't have mattered to him what the gallery was

shouting, what the ringside thought. He could have made Chip stand up and fight, and in a round or so the Garden would have been with him.

If he had only had a little more experience—if only he had been able to wait!

Ah, well, what was the use of grousing! He was here to fight.

"Can't you rough him up a little in the clinch, Irish?" Maher whispered.

"No, I 'll fight him fair."

"Just a little to get his goat."

"No."

The lights went out, leaving only the great glare of the ring. The whistle blew; clatter of buckets and bottles. The seconds clambered down. The gong clashed shudderingly. The second round.

He walked slowly forward over the white canvas under the bluish white arc-light, to meet his man, and then suddenly from his walk he jumped, as some jungle thing might jump. He jumped without setting, without any boxer's poise. Right for the poised, alive body he jumped. And his hands hooked for drive and uppercut. He could feel the sense of shock as they both went home, but to unvital points. The left hand thudded on the neck. The right crashed on the Italian's left arm. He was in close now, driving short lefts and rights to the body, but he was handling something that bent and sprang back like a whalebone, that moved, swayed with suppleness like some Spanish or Argentine dancer, and soon elbows locked his arms subtly, and he could do nothing.

"Come on, break!" The referee was trotting about the ring like a working terrier. Peering, moving from right to left. "Break! Break!" His voice had the peculiar whine of a dog on a scent.

He stood back, sparred a moment. Again Irish rushed. He felt on either side of his face sharp pains as of slaps with the open hand on the cheeks. Irritating things. He could feel the Latin shake as the left hand caught him flush on the ear. A tattoo like taps of little hammers played at his body. Irish's right glove came full into the

Italian's ribs. He could feel the rush of air through the Italian's teeth. He brought the hand up with a short chop on the Italian's neck. A scuffle; a semi-wrestle. And again his arms were locked.

"Come on, boys! Come on! Break quick!"

They stood apart, sparred. Irish feinted with the left hand. Feinted with the right. Changed feet quickly, right foot foremost now. Pivoted home with the left hand—Joe Walcott's punch. The Italian side-stepped, and caught him on the ear as he swung to the ropes. Irish turned quickly. A flurry of gloves. Light lead and counter. Clinch.

"You're good, Nick!"

"Y 'ain't so bad yourself, Irish."

As the bell finished the round and he walked toward his corner, he was surprised, looking down at himself, to find angry red welts on his body where what he thought was a light tattoo had been beaten....

Yes, he thought between rounds, another little while, another pound of experience, and for all his cunning, his generalship, he could have beaten Nick. And then between him and the championship there would have been only the champion, and the old champion's day was past. He was getting fat, and satisfied, and drinking—and that was bad! And going around the country to Boston and New Orleans and Seattle, beating third-raters and then mainly on points, and lying low, very low indeed, whenever Nick Chip's name was mentioned, or even his, Irish Mike McCann's. Only another six months and he could have taken on the men the champion had beaten: Paul Kennedy of Pittsburgh, and the clever Jewish lad who went by the Irish name of Al Murphy—that fight would have taught him a lot—and the Alabama Kid, the hunched Negro middle-weight who hit like a flail, and Chicago Johnny Kelly —who fought with his right hand first, a hard lad to reach, but he could have beaten him. Could have beaten them all.

He wanted to be champion—knew he could be, with time and experience. And what there was for him in the championship was not personal glory and not money, but a strange pride of ease that was hard to explain. All he could do well was this athletic feat of

fighting with gloves. There was intuition, a sort of gift. His body balanced right. His left hand moved easily. His right was always in position. All his fights he had won easily. But he had never been up against any one as good as this Italian veteran.

It seemed to him only right that an Irishman—or an Irish-American, which was better still—should hold the middle-weight and heavy-weight championships. Fighting—clean, hard struggle—was the destiny apportioned to them. He knew enough of the history of his race to remember they had fought under every banner in Europe—the Irish Brigade at Fontenoy, and the men who were in the Pope's Zouaves, and Russia and Germany knew them, and the great regiments the English had, Munsters and Leinsters and Enniskillen Dragoons, and in New York was the beloved Sixty-ninth, the Fighting Sixty-ninth.

Vaguely in his mind there were thoughts which he could not translate into words, it not being his craft, that there was some connection between the men who fought in a padded ring with gloves and the men who went gallantly into battle with two flags above their heads, the flag they served faithfully and the little wisp of green they loved. The men in the ring stood for the green in the field, perhaps. And we should see in the Irish boxer what the cheering ranks of Irish going into battle were. Fight squarely in the ring, fight gallantly, fight to the last drop, and win gallantly and lose gallantly. And let no man say: There is a dirty or mean fighter. And let no man say: There is a coward.

There were Irish names in the ring that made old men's hearts flutter and young men wish they had been born years before. Old John L. Sullivan (God rest the gallant battered bones!) and Tom Sharkey of Dundalk, who never knew when he was beaten, and old Peter Maher, who was somewhere in the house. And there was another name in the mist of past days, the name of a middle-weight champion who had been greatest and most gallant of them all, the elder Jack Dempsey, the Non-pareil. None like him, none! Irish of the Irish, most gallant of them all, he sleeps in a green grave in the West somewhere, and in all men's hearts.

And Irish had thought humbly to fill the Non-pareil's shoes, to fight as hard as he fought, to win as chivalrously, to lose as well, and in his corner as he fought the ghost of the great Nonpareil would be. And the roar of the house as he would walk out at the referee's call, the champion, Irish-American, in his tights of green, and around his waist the starry Western flag.

Ah, well!

The shrill cut of the whistle, and the chief second leaned forward and wiped his face.

"Fift' round, Irish. Keep at him, boy!"

The gong, and the hushed house.

He noticed now that the Italian fighter was no longer resting his left hand semi-casually on his hip, kept up no longer his poise of an Argentine dancer. The Buffalo man's left hand was extended like an iron bar, his shoulder hunched to his jaw for a shield, his head sunk low, as a turtle's head is half-drawn under its carapace; his feet well apart. The man's oily black hair was a tangled mop, and on his ribs were red blotches. His lips were set in a wide line. His black, ophidian eyes snapped and glowed. His poised right hand flickered like a snake's tongue.

And he was punching, punching as hard as he could, hitting squarely with knuckles and every ounce of weight—careless of the economy of the ring that tells a man to save his hands, for a boxer's hands are a boxer's life, and every hurt sinew, every broken knuckle, every jarred delicate bone counts in the long run. The Italian was hitting, hitting like a trip-hammer, hitting for his title.

They faced each other, the Italian poised, drawn like a bowstring, aiming like a sharpshooter, Irish, jigging on his toes, careless of guarding, feinting with the right hand, breaking ground, feinting with the left, feinting with the right again, and then a sudden plunging rush. The jar to his neck as the Italian's straight left caught him flush on the mouth, the whirling crash of infighting, the wrestling clinch. No longer the referee called, "Break! break!" but tore at them with hysterical hands. A tacit understanding grew

between them to protect at all times, and as they drew apart they hooked and uppercutted, Irish with an insane mood of fighting, the Italian with a quick deliberation: *Snap! Snap!* the punches.

Patter of feet, and creak of the boards, and little whine of the ropes. The great blue light overhead, the click of the telegraph instruments below. The running feet of the referee and the nervous patting of his hands, *clop! clop!* The seconds with their eyes glued on the fighting men, and their hands sparring in sympathy. The mooing roar of the crowd and their louder tense silence. And the regular gong, the short respite, hardly a second it seemed, though the interval was a minute—and the gong again.

Once they were so carried away they paid no attention to it, but fought on. Only the referee parted them. Irish held out his glove in apology and they shook hands. The garden seemed to shake to the cheering.

Whip of lead in the tenth round, crash of counter, deep sock of infighting. Clinch; break. A half-second's inattention on the Italian's part, and the left hand of Irish crashed home to the jaw.

Himself did not understand what had happened until he noticed the crumpled figure on the boards and heard the referee:

"Get back, McCann. Get back! ... One! ... two..." An immense hysteria of sound filled the house. Men jumped on seats. The telegraph instruments clattered madly. Somewhere near the ring was a fist fight.

"Three!"

The crumpled figure twitched. At four it was dragging itself to its hands. The glazed eyes blinked. Life returned. The Italian shook his head. At seven he was on his hands and knees, his head clearing. At eight he was kneeling on one knee, one glove resting on boards. God! how long the seconds were, Irish thought.

"Nine!" Slowly the Italian rose.

The Garden was no longer filled with human beings but with instruments of baritone sound. It hit the roof, rebounded, whirled, surged. All about Irish was sound, sound. In front of him the Italian weak at the knees. The referee hunched like a bowler. Irish jumped

in, fists swinging. His fists met crossed arms, elbows, shoulders, but not jaw or head. And suddenly the Italian was clinging to him, as a terrified cat will cling—he could n't tear himself loose. It took the referee and him to tear the Italian away.

Insane with the din, blind with excitement, he rushed again to meet the beautiful diagonal coverup, left arm across heart and plexus, right crooked about throat and jaw. Again the clinging of the cat. And he felt the Italian growing stronger. It was like a dead man coming to life again. Life was flowing slowly back to shoulders, from shoulders to arms and hands, to hips and knees.

He stood back to consider this miracle, to think what to do next. Two shaking lefts caught him in the face.

And the gong rang and his chance was gone.

Yes another six months and he could have won. He would have known how to keep his head, how to finish the Italian crisply. He had him out, out clean. Another punch would have finished it. And he had n't experience enough—another six months.

Well, what was the use of grousing! It could n't be helped. He could n't pass the fight up when it was offered to him. Right at home, and so much money.

The money had been needed for the home and the old man. It was funny how much a home cost even on Twenty-fourth Street, and the old man was used to a certain way of living. He liked to have a cook, and a girl to do the work around the house. That was the way it was in Ireland. And the old man needed his decent clothes and his spending money for his little drink and his tobacco and papers, and things like that. He couldn't very well put the old man in lodgings. He wasn't accustomed to that. He wanted his home and the cook and girl. He always was accustomed to it, and why should n't he have it?

But a house took an awful lot of money. For what the house cost he and the old man could have stayed at a swell hotel. But the old man liked to be by himself. You could n't blame him; the old man was entitled to a home. He was a queer, crusty sort, the old man. No harm in him, you know, but just could n't get on.

And for all that people thought, a boxer's money was n't easy. A middle-weight did n't get the money light-weights and heavy-weights got. If he 'd won the championship—ah, that was all right! Let it go! But when you split fifty-fifty with your manager, there was only half of what you fought for; and there was expenses, too. You had to travel a lot, and be nice to people, too. You had to spend a lot in saloons, though you never drank yourself. Keep your end up with the crowd. And there was always old fighters out of luck, and some of them had families, too. You could n't refuse them even if you 'd wanted to. And who 's going to help out a fighter except a fighter? And there was always a lot of poor folks.

It seemed a pity, even for the money end, not to have waited. If he 'd waited he 'd have had the championship, and then he 'd have been fixed for life.

If his old man had been a different kind of old man he 'd have gone to him and said: "Hey, old timer, how about going easy on the jack for a while, hey? Just lay off a bit until I get things right. Gi' me another half-dozen fights under my belt, see, and I 'll drop this Guinea cold. And then the champion 'll have to give me a fight—the papers 'll make him, and you know what he is. He 's a bum. So what do you say we get us a couple o' rooms, hey, and go easy for a while? What do you say?"

A different kind of old man would have said: "Sure. We 'll take our time, and we 'll knock this Guinea for a row of jam-jars. And as for the champion, it's a cinch."

But he was n't that kind of old man. He did n't hold with this fighting, nohow. He had no use for it. And he was n't the kind of old guy you could talk to. Irish thought he must have had a hard time in his life.

Ah, well; he was entitled to a good time now. Let him have his own way. Irish could always make money. It did n't matter so much, after all, did it? The only thing that hurt him was that he would never draw the Stars and Stripes through the green Irish tights....

And he could have, if he 'd had only six months.

Irish was aware now as he answered the bell that his bolt was shot. The high pitch of concentration had gone. With the dropping of the Italian, and the Italian's escape, he had reached the high point of his fighting, and now must go down. His punch would be heavy still, but it would lack the terrific speed, the speed of shock, that carries a knock-out. And the effect of the cumulation of blows from the Italian sharpshooter was beginning to tell. Through the bruises on his body and neck and the puffiness of his face, energy was flowing out of him like water from some pierced vessel. The stinging lefts to his face had made it hard for him to breathe, and his hands were swollen inside his gloves, and all of a sudden his legs were tired.

Into ten rounds of whirlwind fighting he had foolishly put everything, gambled energy and hands and brain.

And he sensed with a great sinking of his heart that Chip was drawing ahead of him now, drawing away from him in the contest, with the inevitableness of the winner drawing away from the beaten man, forging ahead while the other plods hopelessly on.... With the quick telepathy of the ring the Italian knew Irish had cracked, that he was gone. And now the energy he had saved by making his man come to him he could use, he must use. For that knock-down in the tenth was a high score of points against him. And he was afraid of a draw. He would have to fight Irish again. Not again! He must knock him out.

He met the futile rushes with stinging lefts. At close quarters he ripped home his hands mercilessly. As they drew apart he stalked his man. *Smack! Smack!* It was no hard matter to avoid the rushing of Irish. God! what a glutton Irish was! What he could take without going down!

Mechanically, stolidly, dully, Irish boxed. All about him now was the hoarse murmur of speculation, and the din of it dazed him a little, and the light. And from a cut in his forehead the blood was running into his eyes.

Four times the gong crashed, the end and opening of a round, and the end and opening of another round. Dully he went to his corner. The splash of water in his face did not revive him, nor the current from the whipping towels, nor the slapping of his legs.

"Don't let him knock you out, Irish. Hold him. Only two more rounds. Don't let him knock you out." Maher's fierce whisper hit at his ear-drums. So it was as bad as that, hey?

"Hold on to him, kid. Don't fight him. Hold him."

The bell rang. They pushed him to his seat. Wearily he moved toward the center of the ring.

"Look out!" some one called.

The Italian had sprung from his corner with the spring of a cat. And Irish felt surprisedly that he had been struck with two terrific hammers on the jaw. And as he wondered who had hit him his knees buckled surprisingly, and he was on his hands and knees on the floor.

And he heard some one say: "... three ... four..." He struggled to his feet. Somewhere Maher was shouting. "Take the count, Irish." Irish dully wondered what he meant.

And now Chip was in front of him, concentrated, poised. And once more the hammer crashed on the jaw. And he tumbled to the boards on his side.

He was very dull, very dazed. For a while he knew nothing. And then he understood; the referee pumping his hand up and down, and the roar of the crowd.

"Eight!"

As he moved he felt the ropes, and blindly he groped for them, pulling himself to his feet somehow. About him the din surged. The referee stepped back. The Italian was pawing at the referee's arm, protesting. Irish understood. Chip wanted the fight stopped, did n't want to hit him any more. Ah, he was a good kid, Chip was.

And then the ring slithered underneath him; the hand grasping the rope grew lifeless, let go; and the lights went out for him; and Irish crashed forward on his face.

The old man looked at the battered face above the blue serge suit.

"Well," he said, "it must have been a grand fight entirely!"

"It was a great fight," Irish grinned, "and a good man won."

"Meaning yourself?"

"No, meaning the Guinea."

"So you were beat, eh?" the old man jeered. "I never thought you were much good at it."

"Ah, I don't know." And Irish grinned again.

"Tell me," the old man snapped, "did you bring me 'The Advocate'?"

"I did." And Irish handed it over.

"'T is a wonder you remembered it," the old man snarled. "And the fine lacing you 're after taking!"

And Irish grinned again. Wasn't he a queer, grumpy old man!

BY ORDEAL OF JUSTICE

Very much as though he were entering a disreputable place, Matthew Kerrigan slipped furtively from the taxicab into the hallway of the old New York mansion made over into an apartment-house. He stood at the door, portly, important, wrapped in his fur coat. He pushed the button marked "Mr. Sergius." A young Russian butler admitted him.

"Just say a Mr. Smith," Kerrigan announced importantly. Across the Russian boy's harsh features there was the shadow of contempt. He reappeared in an instant and held open a door for Kerrigan.

Kerrigan had been expecting something of the dark, perfumed, cheap interior of a palmist's studio; or the meretricious mystery of a clairvoyant apartment with its crystal glass on faded velvet. Even Kerrigan's untrained Broadwayish mind was awe-struck by the huge, somber living-room into which he was ushered. He sensed, rather than understood, the richness of the pictures and hangings, the beautiful ceiling. Only in books and papers had he seen anything like the great white borzoi lying before the roaring fireplace like a patient cat. The man he had come to see was sitting by the fire; dead-white features against a black background. Lean, emaciated,

with his full black beard, black cassock, and high black headdress of the Greek monk, he seemed more spirit than body. He looked at Kerrigan with the insolence of a prince.

"Yes?" He did not ask Kerrigan to sit down.

Kerrigan had planned a neat speech, somewhat humorous, cynical, patronizing, but it had fled from his memory. He felt a sort of vague terror, as though this man were probing, uninvited, inside his soul and mind.

"I heard—down-town—" he muttered.

"Yes!" the monk said impatiently. "What do you want me to do?"

"I wondered, Mr.—ah, Mr.—"

"Brother Sergius!"

"I wondered, Brother Sergius, if it were possible to hold converse—or see—or have some communication—some certain communication—with a person who 's been dead some time, some fourteen years—"

The monk was looking at him keenly. What had this well-fed business man, with the sweeping mustache and obviously massaged face, to do with the dim inhabitants of Death?

"How did this man die?" the monk Sergius asked.

"By accident," Matthew Kerrigan answered. "He drowned himself."

"What interest have you in him?"

"They say he killed himself on account of me," Kerrigan's voice broke out as though he were pleading to a judge. "It's not true!"

"You don't know whether it's true or not?" The Greek monk was studying Kerrigan's terrified features.

"Can it be done?" Kerrigan was surprised at himself, so hoarse his voice sounded, so sincere his tones. "I must know about it. Can it be done?"

"It can be done." The monk nodded.

"If there 's any fee—" Kerrigan suggested.

"There is no fee." The monk laughed contemptuously. "I act for the good of souls, when it is necessary." He watched Kerrigan intently for some minutes. "On Monday morning—at two in the

morning—if the weather is clear, I will send for you. Leave your name and address with the butler." And he turned again to the book he was reading, oblivious of Kerrigan, as a great lord might be of the peasant standing awkward and awe-stricken in his presence.

Financial agents admire Matthew Kerrigan. He is the sort of person who gives them no trouble. They are more cordial toward him than they are toward great bankers or great Wall Street men. For great bank-presidents and stock-manipulators wage terrific and lyrical battles on the terrain of commerce, and though there are great Leipzigs and Jenas, there are also great Waterloos. But Kerrigan is safe. He takes no chances. His factories in Yonkers purr, day in, day out, making by the million that simple fastening device for women's corsets that has made him several fortunes.

"That's the way to make money," they will tell you. "Just hit upon something simple and necessary, like a hair-pin or a shoe-horn, that no other person has thought of. Make it and sell it to the public and bank your money in gilt-edged securities. Look at Matthew Kerrigan! And not fifteen years ago he was a clerk in an accountant's office."

Along Broadway, too, he is known favorably, in that happy-go-easy circle of minor actors, wine-merchants, and women aspirants for the stage and movies. Head waiters are deferential, and slightly contemptuous toward him. He is a good spender, and yet— There is something repulsive, unhealthy in the way he enjoys food and drink and looks at women.

"Six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven, which are an abomination unto him": and the first is haughty eyes. I cannot conceive that as denoting the light that shines from eyes lit from a sense of high and noble lineage, of chivalrous ideals, of just power. I translate it by the eyes of Matthew Kerrigan—those gray, full orbs which look about a room stating that there is no man present whose equal and superior Kerrigan is now. Eyes which tell you Kerrigan has money, and is prepared to spend money for what he wants. You know that man will get good measure for his money—shrewdness and sophistication gleam from them in a wary, reptilian way.

"They may call this the Rube City," Morgenthal, the little real-estate broker, announced at the Elks' Club, "but, believe me, there 's one guy in town they can't put anything over on, and that's Kerrigan. He 's wise. I tell you, boy, he 's wise. Did you hear about that baby at the Winter Garden that tried to pull that hard-luck story on him? You didn't, eh? Well, let me tell you something: She got hers...."

There is one other place you may collect facts about Matthew Kerrigan and that is the down-town lunch-rooms of the financial district—uncomfortable, clattering places where you eat on a high stool at a counter and compute the price of your meal to the cashier as you go out. There is a race of clerks there, old men, natty but shabby of dress, pinched in the face, gray-headed, stoop-shouldered. Some of them are bitter and many are garrulous. They specialize in the early histories of well-known men.

"I remember him when he was a bum in the street," they will tell you of nearly all of them; "when he had n't got a nickle for a shoe-shine. Did you ever hear how he got on his feet?" And then will follow either a sordid or a criminal story. And from them you can learn the story of Matthew Kerrigan and Leonard Holt.

An office friend had told Kerrigan of an eccentric inventor who lived out in his home town of Englewood, a poor, poverty-stricken, scatter-brained mechanic who plodded in a broken-down cottage on the outskirts of Englewood at magnificent and foolish dreams, such as aviation and perpetual motion. When Kerrigan went out to see his friend he was taken, on a rainy afternoon, to pass the dull hours, on a visit to the man Holt. Beyond an occasional dunning tradesman, who sneered at him, and an occasional equally poor friend who remonstrated with him and urged him to take a position in a factory, Holt saw no one. And when Kerrigan was introduced, he talked like a starved fanatic. Tall; loosely built, as though his jointures were precarious; stooped; with great greasy hands; sandy-haired; with burning blue eyes and a high forehead, and a listless mouth and chin—one might have been pardoned for believing him an impractical fool. He pointed out a large system of wheels and pulleys, of weights and springs. It was the perpetual-motion model on which he was working.

"But I thought perpetual motion had been given up as impossible," Kerrigan objected.

"They have been making strides toward it," Holt answered. "The *Struttapparat* was a great advance. Of course a small quantity of radium is necessary. But, still, energy may be—it is just possible—created mechanically. They disprove perpetual motion by the hypothesis of the conservation of energy, which is not proven—"

And so he went on at great length in his jerky sentences, while Kerrigan listened, picking up things and dropping them boredly—a Bunsen burner, a pair of pliers, a tripod—what not. He lifted two pieces of asbestos, clamped queerly together by two long pieces of flexible metal. As he toyed with it the thing came apart in his hands. A snap, and it was together again. Kerrigan looked up in interest.

"What's this for?"

"A little fastening trick. Of no practical use—except, perhaps, for women's corsets!" Holt laughed. Kerrigan was silent.

"Patented?" he suggested, after a while.

"Everything I have is patented," Holt said with a touch of pride.

"May I bring it along," Kerrigan asked, "to show it to a friend?"

"Why, certainly!" Holt nodded. "Now, if you understand that the energy develops in geometric progression—"

And very efficiently did Matthew Kerrigan show Holt's fastening device to his friend—a prominent banker who had never heard of Kerrigan before, but had always money to sink, at a price, in worthy enterprises. Kerrigan returned to Holt.

"There may be something in that little thing of yours. Will you take a hundred dollars for it outright?"

But that intuition which sometimes warns the unworldly minded, and that mulish obstinacy which some men have, made Holt stand out for a share of the profits, and unwillingly Kerrigan and his associate had to allow it.

"It's a hold-up," they complained to each other bitterly, "but we can't do anything about it!"

So Holt was admitted to the profits of his patent, and for a while he dreamed dreams of wealth untellable; a wealth that would enable him to send his motherless three-year-old daughter to boarding-school and college and leave him in peace to work, with all appliances to hand—*Stuttapparat* and radium and everything—at the problem which had baffled scientific dreamers since the dawn of intelligence.

"The model on a big scale," he figured, "would cost ten thousand dollars—" and on his visions went, unhampered, unselfish, unpractical. He wanted to benefit the world by his discovery—and to get a little applause, a little credit.

I don't know how they do these things, but they do them, and they must do them skilfully, for they evade the law, the iron law which insists on justice for all men. Kerrigan laid his hand feelingly on Holt's shoulder.

"I 'm sorry, old man," he said with that sincere stop in his voice. "We made a mistake. It's not practical."

Holt had received many blows, and was nearly impervious to them. He smiled wistfully.

"Perhaps I can do something," Kerrigan continued. "I might get a little for your rights from some one who will take a chance. I should like you to get something for it. I led you to believe so much in it—"

They were very generous, for they knew there were millions ahead of them, so they gave Holt a thousand dollars, and he buckled to again at his grotesque machine. A few weeks later some well-intentioned Christian told him the truth and commented fulsomely on what a fool Holt was. The last blow was the fatal one. It split his heart in two.

Methodically he made arrangements for his child to be brought up in a convent, and he left what money he had for the purpose. He took the train to New York and crossing on the ferry-boat he climbed to the upper deck. He sat huddled up in a corner, gray and shabby of clothes, gray and shabby of face, until the boat was half-way over. He stood up on the seat and jumped, and the noise his jump made was drowned in the clatter of the paddles.

Tall, lank, oblivious, unpractical—your economist will tell you that the man was of no value to the community, and was better dead. And your religious person will tell you that the crime of suicide merits hell-fire. But somehow I feel that for these poor men with the light heads and the light bodies, and the heavy, heavy hearts, there is somewhere Understanding and Great Tenderness....

All this they will tell you, the garrulous and bitter old men, and while they inveigh against Kerrigan, you see somewhere in their eyes a glint of admiration and of envy. The arena of Wall Street differs little from the arena of Neronic Rome; *væ victis* is the motto and the rule of the game. And before you can leave them in contemptuous horror they will tap you on the knee, gloatingly dramatic.

"And now Kerrigan is going to marry Holt's daughter! Can you beat it? Can you beat that?"

He had gone—perhaps out of curiosity, perhaps out of the depths of sentimentality that men of his type have somewhere in the bottom of their hearts—with his cousin, the chubby little minister of religion, to the prize-giving at the convent in Newark. The bishop was there, and a play of Dunsany's was given; a few poems recited, and a song or two sung.

His eye had been attracted all through the exercises by a tall girl in a white dress with a blue sash—a slim girl with hazel eyes and light-brown hair who in the distance had the profile of a Saint Cecilia—a Saint Cecilia with a somewhat broad, honest mouth and good firm teeth.

"That's an attractive girl," he told his cousin.

The little cherubic minister, who worried in secret about his cousin's soul, was delighted. He dreamed often of having his cousin Matthew reformed by the influence of some sweet woman. A Dominican religious brought her forward.

"Miss Holt, Miss Agnes Holt." Kerrigan was introduced to her. He talked banalities to her for a half-hour, when she shyly took her leave of him, blushing furiously under the glances of her

schoolmates. When he was alone Kerrigan smiled queerly, with a distant look in his eyes.

At forty-five there comes always to a man of Kerrigan's type, with the first gray hairs, the fear of age. There will be an inevitable day when he will no longer attract women, and when, in the bars and about the clubs, he will be referred to as an old man of another generation, and there arises in his mind the fear of loneliness in the fifties and the sixties, with Death hurrying breathlessly toward him day by day. The only thing to do then is to begin anew with a young wife, far away from the swirl of the city.

"It's the only life," they say pathetically; "a wife and kiddies, a little bit of land somewhere, away from all this stuff." And they wave their hands at the gleaming glasses and the pictures on the bar-room walls. "There's nothing to it," they aver; and they drink up and have another one.

He met the religious as he was going away.

"That Miss Holt," he said, "is a very attractive girl." It was the only adjective he knew to fit her.

"Yes," the nun agreed. "We all like her. She 's been with us nearly all her life. Her father died when she was young. He was an inventor; Leonard Holt was his name."

"The name is familiar." Kerrigan was shocked, but his self-restraint was superb. "Died after some business depression, if I remember aright?"

"He was murdered!" The little religious's eyes flashed magnificently. "Murdered! In the way of business!"

Kerrigan had heard that word used of Holt's end more than once. But the fourteen years had been full ones, and the matter had not troubled him much—things like that happened so often. And, besides, it was not true. A murder predicates a murderer, and he was no murderer. It was all a business arrangement. And the man could n't stand the gaff. That was all!

"All rotten foolishness!" he swore. But somehow, this last time, perhaps on account of the dramatic meeting with the daughter, it would not go out of his head.

And no more would go out of his head the thought and picture of Agnes Holt in her white dress and blue sash, with her Saint Cecilia profile. She haunted him night and day. At that period, peculiar in a man as the late thirties are in women, he fell in love, or in what for him would pass for love. In all his selfish business career he had known intimately no woman like her, and her aloof, unrifled virginity struck him like a blinding flash of light.

"After all," he said, in the manner of his kind, "there is nothing on God's earth like a sweet, pure woman!"

And for days he thought about her and about love, not as a young man might, in a burning equation with factors of living flame, but in the smoldering symbols of maturity, which are so long in the consuming and so hard to quench. He would go away from Broadway—"quit the whole condemned shooting-match," as he weirdly termed it—and take a place in Westchester or Long Island, a good, comfortable house with grounds to it. They would be glad to have him in such a community. He would be one of the village trustees; run for president. And he would fashion a new life there with a young and beautiful bride, whom everybody would envy him. There would be children, too. Undoubtedly there would be children.

"She 'll be glad to get away from the convent," he thought shrewdly. And, after all, perhaps he had treated Holt a bit shabbily. He would make up for it in the way he would treat his daughter. She should wear diamonds.

"I 'm thinking of marrying and settling down, Father John," he told the little clergyman one day.

"I 'm glad to hear of it, Cousin Matthew," he said, rubbing his plump little hands, his cherub's face beaming benignantly. "I 'm delighted. I am so!" He shook his finger waggishly. "And I think I know the young lady, too."

"It's the little Holt girl we met at the convent that day."

"You must come over and meet her again," Father John planned. "I 'll talk to the Mother Superior."

And so, with due chaperonage, Kerrigan met Agnes Holt several times, and each time he became more impressed with her. She would say little, blushing mostly, and playing with something in her

lap. She understood vaguely that this portly, mustached man was thinking of marrying her, but that denoted nothing to her, so cloistered had her life been.

"Yes," or "No," or "Thank you," was nearly the limit of her conversation, and she had difficulty in not adding "sir." At times she would accompany him, with Father John, to a matinée in New York to see a carefully chosen family production, or to have tea at the less-worldly restaurants. Occasionally she would burst out with a naïve exclamation.

"I once rode in a Fifth Avenue bus with Sister Mary Joseph," was the sort of thing she would vouchsafe.

"If you were n't to marry her," Father John said, "she would enter the convent as a lay sister."

More and more as he met her Kerrigan's mind was taken up by the idea of her father. The contour of her face; a certain look of her eye; a light in her hair when the sun shone on it, would recall the inventor, and immediately within him would rise a measure of uneasiness which he could not get rid of. He once asked her if she remembered him.

"He died when I was young, very young," she said. "An accident in a ferry-boat. I have spent all my life with the sisters."

As he went to and from the convent, he often met the religious who had spoken of Holt's death as murder. And as often as he met her, so often would his mind revert to that sinister word, and he would find himself arguing about it internally, as though he were defending himself in a court of law. He would try to shake off the mood.

"Of all the blamed foolishness!" he would tell himself angrily.

But the idea would persist, and, growing morbid about it, he found himself reading carefully the charges of judges in cases of homicide. He went to the public library and conned upon the subject in encyclopedias. He read of the magnificent fair play in trial by jury.

"I guess that settles it," he told himself. "There 's nothing to it."

He went on, however, and, reading farther, he came on the ancient custom of trial by ordeal of justice—of the test of a man's innocence by touching the dead body of a murdered man. If the person suspected were guilty, blood would exude from the corpse. A couplet of Shakespeare's was quoted—from the play of "Richard III":

> O, gentlemen, see, see! dead Henry's wounds
> Open their congeal'd mouths and bleed afresh!

The thing made his flesh creep. He read of the grisly test of the dead hand, and of the ordeal by fire and the ordeal by poison.

"There 's no sense to that!" he muttered angrily, and little beads of perspiration gathered on his brow. Even the innocent would waver under such a test. Trial by jury—that was the sensible way.

And then, one day, in a bleak sitting-room in the convent, he proposed to Agnes Holt.

"Agnes—" he cleared his throat, and he was honestly husky—"I suppose you have understood that my intentions toward you had a wedding in view. I can make you very happy."

"I must talk to the Mother Superior," she said, blushing furiously, her voice low.

He took her hand, and, opening a case, put a ring on her finger.

"I have talked to the Mother Superior, myself," he told her, "and that is all right." He drew her toward him, trembling a little, and on her forehead, with his mustached lips, he kissed her. He was suddenly still, and strangely cold. The touch of that skin reminded him of his last hand-shake with Leonard Holt.

"I must put an end to this obsession!" he told himself angrily, that night at his hotel, and he poured himself stiff drinks of Bourbon. Should he tell Father John? No! he decided. He knew Father John well for a relative and a friend and a genial companion with lovable peccadillos. But he knew, too, that the little clergyman could thunder with the thunder of Sinai. Marry the daughter of a man in

whose death he was implicated! Never would Father John consent. The cleric would not understand. What could a priest know of business?

"It's no use going to him," Kerrigan decided.

He stopped a moment, thinking. And, half-laughing and half-nervous, he remembered a conversation with a friend of his, a great Wall Street operator, who combined the shrewdness of his kind with his kind's superstition, and had recourse in moments of tension to clairvoyants and tarot cards. He told Kerrigan of M. Sergius.

"He's a Greek monk—been expelled from Mount Athos for practising magic. What that man can tell you—"

"I suppose the next thing you 'll tell me is that he raises spirits."

"Listen! You just ask Cabot Montgomery how they found that will of Van Vleet's. Just ask him."

"There's one born every minute," Kerrigan laughed, "and some of 'em live."

"Listen, brother," Kerrigan was told, "this man does it for nothing. Do you get me? For nothing! If it's important enough he 'll do it. If not, outside. This is none of your country-fair crystal-gazers."

In Kerrigan, too, was that strain of superstition that all men laugh at and all men have. And right now as he sat in a mental, spiritual whirlwind, the memory of that conversation came to him as a preserver. After all, if he put things to the test— Of course it was foolish; it was ridiculous, but still— Nothing could come of it, by any manner of means, and yet—

"What's the harm?" he laughed.

At his time of life, he smiled, to put himself in the hands of a charlatan, to conjure up a spirit! In this century, with the telephone by his bedside, with the electric light overhead, to patronize a mumming magician! Nothing would, could happen.

But that nothing would be his answer. It would mean that his life was free forever, purged of the foolish innuendos, the lunatic accusations of outsiders; the morbid worries of his own abnormal mind. Free to go ahead and be married, and to live happily ever after.

When the butler had come for him silently, in the big blue limousine, one fine night of stars, he had gone with a little tremor in his veins. What would Father John and the gentle nuns and his little betrothed think of this mad excursion? Well, he had thrown down a gauntlet to Fate, and he would go through with it, regardless of the empty issue. There was a witticism on his lips as he entered the apartment; but the witticism froze.

Silently the butler ushered him into a dim room lighted by tapers. In a corner, silent, were Sergius and four young men. In the middle of the floor was a strange geometric design of circles and squares.

"Your butler just came for me—" Kerrigan felt the need of saying something, no matter how banal. In a sort of awe Kerrigan noted the white garments of the former monk, and of his disciples; the white shoes embroidered in red; the white crowns with the Hebrew letters.

"Do you still wish to go ahead with this?" the Russian asked him.

"Of course," Kerrigan uttered. His own voice seemed strange in his ears.

"You are to obey me in all things." The ex-monk's voice had a terrible hidden menace in it, "and if you move out of that circle you are worse than a dead man! Follow me."

They moved forward through an opening into the strange geometric design, and behind them on silent feet came the four attendants. Kerrigan noticed in a sort of daze the sword they carried, the trumpet, the book, and the lighted taper. About him, outside the circle, were strange paper symbols that seemed to cut him off from the world of sane and living men. The Magus lit a circle of censers about the outer square. He closed the circle and lifted one on high. He swung it toward the four corners of the square. An attendant handed him a sword. He stuck it in the ground. Another handed him a trumpet. He blew it brazenly.

"O Lord! Hear my prayer, and let my cry come unto Thee...."

Queer little whorls of smoke mounted through the air from the censers. The attendants had retired to the four points of the compass. The Magus raised the bare sword. His voice vibrated like

an organ:

"O ye spirits! Ye I conjure by the power, wisdom, and virtue of the Spirit of God ... by the Holy Name of God Eheith ... by which Adam, having invoked, acquired the knowledge of all created things ... by the invisible name Yod, which had Abel invoked he would have escaped from the hand of Cain, his brother...."

It seemed to Kerrigan, standing there that about this circle was something that was not life, and that it was cut off from the security of things without as an island is cut off by water. About it the incense rose in shadowy vapors. The lights of the candles became dulled to a pale, diaphanous gold. There was something terrible about it all. He had imagined a grisly, morbid thing of quackery. This he could have stood smiling. But cold, stern majesty of ritual made his heart contract, as it might be oppressed in the nave of some great cathedral.

"... By the Two Tables of the Law; by the Seven Burning Candlesticks; by the Holy of Holies where only the High Priest may go..."

He wanted to raise his voice, to tell the man to stop this mummery. He wanted to walk to the door and slam it contemptuously, and to walk home through the cool mundane air. That would be an end for him of all this morbidness. But somehow he could not go. It was as though he were held by hypnosis to the spot.

"... That spirit who was known here as Leonard Holt, and with whom this man, for a sufficient reason, would converse. I conjure and invoke him in the name of the Lord Adonai. I conjure him in the name of the god El, strong and powerful...."

Fear arose in Kerrigan like a cold marsh vapor. He had come there in a braggadocio test of fate, to something whose being and name he knew not; to face it man to man, and to abide by the result. But he seemed now to be, as it were, in a dock, not to argue but to be judged, by that vagueness against which he had thrown down the gauntlet.

The Magus had fallen to his knees. Before him a disciple held an open book and a taper.

"In the name of Him who hath made the heavens and the earth, and who hath measured them in the hollow of His hand, enclosing the earth in three of His fingers..."

Without those circles now, Kerrigan imagined, things were hovering with a force as of a great wind. Things hurtled themselves against the mystic, powerful symbols like troopers against an impregnable fortalice. No longer was he certain that nothing could happen. If in a minute now, at any instant, the Thing that was being called would come, not the vacuous, impractical body, but a terrible being armed with the awful majesty of the dead, standing before him accusingly, with terrible eyes—standing like a flaming weapon between Kerrigan and the daughter who was flesh of him, who they said was murdered ... If! If! If! If! His skin contracted in a tense horripilation. His breath came shallow and panting, like that of a strained dog.

The Magus stood up. Again the sword flashed in his hand. He laid his hand on his heart. His voice rang vibrant with power. The acolytes bowed their heads.

"Here be the symbols of secret things—the standards, the banners, the ensigns of God the Conqueror; the arms of the Almighty One to compel the aerial potencies. I command absolutely —"

Across Kerrigan's mind thoughts raced like skipping rabbits; like reels of living pictures. He was being tried! His wrists shook as the blood pulsed through. Tried! Tried by ordeal of justice! By the terrible thing that made a dead man's wounds open when you touched him. By ordeal of justice! That was it. He felt his face contract into a horrible grimace. By ordeal of justice! There was a weight on his chest of as huge granite blocks, very cold. He could n't breathe. Through his heart there ran a pain like a knife....

"... By their power and virtue that he come near to us, into our presence from whatsoever part of the world he may be in—"

"Master!" An acolyte stepped forward and touched the exorcist's white samite sleeve. He pointed to the crumpled figure in the circle. "Master, this man is dead!"

Colophon

Changeling, and Other Stories
Donn Byrne

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