TISH PLAYS THE GAME



MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

PIPCUB EDITIONS

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Mary Roberts Rinehart

THE AUTHOR



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1876 - 1958

AI-created interpretation after Theodore C. Marceau photograph, 1914; Library of Congress.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Roberts Rinehart

Mary Roberts Rinehart was an American novelist and journalist, born in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, in 1876. She trained as a nurse before becoming a professional writer. Her literary career grew to include mysteries, humorous stories, plays and reporting, reaching a large popular audience.

Her early successes included *The Circular Staircase* and *The Man in Lower Ten*. Rinehart found suspense in households, journeys and social relationships whose ordinary surfaces conceal danger. A narrator's incomplete understanding can make a familiar room or a casual conversation seem newly uncertain.

Her work extended beyond detective fiction. Travel and journalism brought her into contact with events and communities outside the domestic settings associated with some of her best-known novels. Her career shows the range available to a popular author working across magazines, books and the theatre.

Rinehart died in 1958. Her mysteries invite readers to follow both clues and the way those clues are withheld or misunderstood. The perspective of a participant can create intimacy while also limiting what is known. Attention to humour, social expectations and the management of suspense helps reveal how she turns everyday arrangements into the machinery of an unfolding mystery.

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by

Mary Roberts Rinehart



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TISH PLAYS THE GAME

We met Nettie Lynn on the street the other day, and she cut us all dead. Considering the sacrifices we had all made for her, especially our dear Tish, who cut a hole in her best rug on her account, this ungrateful conduct forces me to an explanation of certain events which have caused most unfair criticism. Whatever the results, it is never possible to impugn the motives behind Tish's actions.

As for the janitor of Tish's apartment house maintaining that the fruit jar buried in the floor was a portion of a still for manufacturing spirituous liquors, and making the statement that Tish's famous blackberry cordial for medicinal use was fifty per cent alcohol—I consider this beneath comment. The recipe from which this cordial is made was originated by Tish's Greataunt Priscilla, a painting of whom hangs, or rather did hang, over the mantel in Tish's living room.

The first notice Aggie and I received that Tish was embarked on one of her kindly crusades again was during a call from Charlie Sands. We had closed our cottage at Lake Penzance and Aggie was spending the winter with me. She had originally planned to go to Tish, but at the last moment Tish had changed her mind.

"You'd better go with Lizzie, Aggie," she said. "I don't always want to talk, and you do."

As Aggie had lost her upper teeth during an unfortunate incident at the lake, which I shall relate further on, and as my house was near her dentist's, she agreed without demur. To all seeming the indications were for a quiet winter, and save for an occasional stiffness in the arms, which Tish laid to neuritis, she seemed about as usual.

In October, however, Aggie and I received a visit from her nephew, and after we had given him some of the cordial and a plate of Aggie's nut wafers he said, "Well, revered and sainted aunts, what is the old girl up to now?"

We are not his aunts, but he so designates us. I regret to say that by "the old girl" he referred to his Aunt Letitia.

"Since the war," I said with dignity, "your Aunt Letitia has greatly changed, Charlie. We have both noticed it. The great drama is over, and she is now content to live on her memories."

I regret to say that he here exclaimed, "Like——she is! I'll bet you a dollar and a quarter she's up to something right now."

Aggie gave a little moan.

"You have no basis for such a statement," I said sternly. But he only took another wafer and more of our cordial. He was preventing a cold.

"All right," he said. "But I've had considerable experience, and she's too quiet. Besides, she asked me the other day if doubtful methods were justifiable to attain a righteous end!"

"What did you tell her?" Aggie inquired anxiously.

"I said they were not; but she didn't seem to believe me. Now mark my words: After every spell of quiet she has she goes out and gets in the papers. So don't say I haven't warned you."

But he had no real basis for his unjust suspicions, and after eating all the nut wafers in the house he went away.

"Just one thing," he said: "I was around there yesterday, and her place looked queer to me. I missed a lot of little things she used to have. You don't suppose she's selling them, do you?"

Well, Tish has plenty of money and that seemed unlikely. But Aggie and I went around that evening, and it was certainly true. Her Cousin Mary Evans' blue vases were gone from the mantel of the

living room, and her Grandaunt Priscilla's portrait was missing from over the fireplace. The china clock with wild roses on it that Aggie had painted herself had disappeared, and Tish herself had another attack of neuritis and had her right arm hung in a sling.

She was very noncommital when I commented on the bareness of the room.

"I'm sick of being cluttered up with truck," she said. "We surround our bodies with too many things, and cramp them. The human body is divine and beautiful, but we surround it with—er—china clocks and what not, and it deteriorates."

"Surround it with clothes, Tish," I suggested, but she waved me off.

"*Mens sana in corpore sano*," she said.

She had wrenched her left knee, too, it appeared, and so Hannah let us out. She went into the outside corridor with us and closed the door behind her.

"What did she say about her right arm and her left leg?" she inquired.

When we told her she merely sniffed.

"I'll bet she said she was sick of her aunt's picture and that clock, too," she said. "Well, she's lying, that's all."

"Hannah!"

"I call it that. She's smashed them, and she's smashed her Grandfather Benton and the cut-glass salad bowl, and a window. And the folks below are talking something awful."

"Hannah! What do you mean?"

"I don't know," Hannah wailed, and burst into tears. "The things she says when she's locked me out! And the noise! You'd think she was killing a rat with the poker. There's welts an inch deep in the furniture, and part of the cornice is smashed. Neuritis! She's lamed herself, that's all."

"Maybe its a form of physical culture, Hannah," I suggested. "They jump about in that, you know."

"They don't aim to kick the ceiling and break it, do they?"

Well, that was quite true, and I'll admit that we went away very anxious. Aggie was inclined to return to the unfortunate incident of the janitor and the furnace pipe when Tish was learning to shoot in the basement some years ago, and to think that she had bought a muffler or whatever it is they put on guns to stop the noise, and was shooting in her flat. I myself inclined toward a boomerang, one of which Tish had seen thrown at a charity matinée, and which had much impressed her. In fact, I happened to know that she had tried it herself at least once, for on entering her sitting room one day unexpectedly my bonnet was cut off my head without the slightest warning. But Hannah had known about the boomerang, and there would have been no need of secrecy.

However, it was not long before Tish herself explained the mystery, and to do so now I shall return to the previous summer at Lake Penzance. When we arrived in June we found to our dismay that a new golf course had been laid out, and that what was called the tenth hole was immediately behind our cottage. On the very first day of our arrival a golf ball entered the kitchen window and struck Hannah, the maid, just below the breast bone, causing her to sit on the stove. She was three days in bed on her face and had to drink her broth by leaning out over the edge of the bed. This was serious enough, but when gentlemen at different times came to the cottage with parcels wrapped to look like extra shoes, and asked Tish to keep them in the refrigerator on the back porch, we were seriously annoyed. Especially after one of them broke and leaked into the ice-tea pitcher, and Aggie, who is very fond of iced tea, looked cross-eyed for almost half an hour.

Some of the language used, too, was most objectionable, and the innocent children who carried the clubs learned it, for I cannot possibly repeat what a very small urchin said to Tish when she offered him a quarter if he would learn the Shorter Catechism. And even our clergyman's wife—the Ostermaiers have a summer cottage near us—showed what we had observed was the moral deterioration caused by the game. For instance, one day she knocked a ball directly into our garbage can, which happened to have its lid off.

Owing to the vines she could not see us, and she hunted for some time, tearing at Aggie's cannas as though they were not there, and finally found her ball in the can.

"Do I pick it out or play it out, caddie?" she called.

"Cost you a shot to pick it out," said the caddie.

"I'll play it," she said. "Give me a spoon."

Well, it appeared that she did not mean a table spoon, although that was certainly what she needed, for he gave her a club, and she began to dig after the ball. She made eleven jabs at it, and then the can overturned.

"Oh, damm!" she said, and just then Aggie sneezed.

"Darn!" said Mrs. Ostermaier, trying to pretend that that was what she had said before. "Are you there, Miss Carberry?"

"I am," Tish replied grimly.

"I suppose you never expected to see me doing this!"

"Well," Tish said slowly, "if anyone had told me that I would find my clergyman's wife in my garbage can I might have been surprised. Hannah, bring Mrs. Ostermaier the coal shovel."

Looking back I perceive that our dear Tish's obsession dated from that incident, for when Mrs. Ostermaier had cleaned up and moved angrily away she left the old ball, covered with coffee grounds, on the path. I am inclined, too, to think that Tish made a few tentative attempts with the ball almost immediately, for I found my umbrella badly bent that night, and that something had cracked a cane left by Charlie Sands, which Aggie was in the habit of using as a pole when fishing from the dock. Strangely enough, however, her bitterness against the game seemed to grow, rather than decrease.

For instance, one day when Aggie was sitting on the edge of our little dock, fishing and reflecting, and Tish was out in the motor boat, she happened to see a caddie on the roof looking for a ball which had lodged there. She began at once to shout at him to get down and go away, and in her indignation forgot to slow down the engine. The boat therefore went directly through the dock and carried it away, including that portion on which Aggie was sitting. Fortunately Aggie always sat on an air cushion at such times, and as she landed in a sitting position she was able to remain balanced

until Tish could turn the boat around and come to the rescue. But the combination of the jar and of opening her mouth to yell unfortunately lost Aggie her upper set, as I have before mentioned.

But it was not long before dear Tish's argus eye had discovered a tragedy on the links. A very pretty girl played steadily, and always at such times a young man would skulk along, taking advantage of trees et cetera to keep out of her sight, while at the same time watching her hungrily. Now and then he varied his method by sitting on the shore of the lake. He would watch her until she came close, and then turn his head and look out over the water. And if ever I saw misery in a human face it was there.

Aggie's heart ached over him, and she carried him a cup of tea one afternoon. He seemed rather surprised, but took it, and Aggie said there was a sweetheart floating in it for him.

"A mermaid, eh?" he said. "Well, I'm for her then. Mermaids haven't any legs, and hence can't play golf, I take it." But he looked out over the lake again and resumed his bitter expression. "You can't tell, though. They may have a water variety, like polo." He sighed and drank the tea absently, but after that he cheered somewhat and finally he asked Aggie a question.

"I wish you'd look at me," he said. "I want an outside opinion. Do I look like a golf hazard?"

"A what?" said Aggie.

"Would you think the sight of me would cut ten yards off a drive, or a foot off a putt?" he demanded.

"You look very nice, I'm sure," Aggie replied. But he only got up and shook the sand off himself and stared after the girl.

"That's it," he said. "Very nice! You've hit it." Then he turned on her savagely, to her great surprise. "If I weren't so blamed nice I'd set off a dozen sticks of dynamite on this crazy links and blow myself up with the last one."

Aggie thought he was a little mad.

We saw him frequently after that, never with the girl, but he began to play the game himself. He took some lessons, too, but Tish had to protest for the way he and the professional talked to each

other. Mr. McNab would show him how to fix his feet and even arrange his fingers on the club handle. Then he would drive, and the ball would roll a few feet and stop.

"Well, I suppose I waggled my ear that time, or something," he would say.

"Keep your eye on the ball!" Mr. McNab would yell, dancing about. "Ye've got no strength of character, mon."

"Let me kick it, then. I'll send it farther."

After that they would quarrel, and Tish would have to close the windows.

But Tish's interest in golf was still purely that of the onlooker. This is shown by the fact that at this time and following the incident of the dock she decided that we must all learn to swim. That this very decision was to involve us in the fate of the young man, whose name was Bobby Anderson, could not have been foreseen, or that that involvement would land us in various difficulties and a police station.

Tish approached the swimming matter in her usual convincing way.

"Man," she said, "has conquered all the elements—earth, air and water. He walks. He flies. He swims—or should. The normal human being to-day should be as much at home in water as in the air, and vice versa, to follow the great purpose."

"If that's the great purpose we would have both wings and fins," said Aggie rather truculently, for she saw what was coming. But Tish ignored her.

"Water," she went on, "is sustaining. Hence boats. It is as easy to float the human body as a ship."

"Is it?" Aggie demanded. "I didn't float so you could notice it the night you backed the car into the lake."

"You didn't try," Tish said sternly. "You opened your mouth to yell, and that was the equivalent of a leak in a ship. I didn't say a leaking boat would float, did I?"

We thought that might end it, but it did not. When we went upstairs to bed we heard her filling the tub, and shortly after that she called us into the bathroom. She was lying extended in the tub,

with a Turkish towel covering her, and she showed us how, by holding her breath, she simply had to stay on top of the water.

"I advise you both," she said, "to make this experiment to-night. It will give you confidence to-morrow."

We went out and closed the door, and Aggie clutched me by the arm.

"I'll die first, Lizzie," she said. "I don't intend to learn to swim, and I won't. A fortune teller told me to beware of water, and that lake's full of tin cans."

"She was floating in the tub, Aggie," I said to comfort her, although I felt a certain uneasiness myself.

"Then that's where I'll do my swimming," Aggie retorted, and retired to her room.

The small incident of the next day would not belong in this narrative were it not that it introduced us to a better acquaintance with the Anderson boy, and so led to what follows. For let Charlie Sands say what he will, and he was very unpleasant, the truth remains that our dear Tish's motives were of the highest and purest, and what we attempted was to save the happiness of two young lives.

Be that as it may, on the following morning Tish came to breakfast in a mackintosh and bedroom slippers, with an old knitted sweater and the bloomers belonging to her camping outfit beneath. She insisted after the meal that we similarly attire ourselves, and sat on the veranda while we did so, reading a book on the art of swimming, which she had had for some time.

Although she was her usual calm and forceful self both Aggie and I were very nervous, and for fear of the chill Aggie took a small quantity of blackberry cordial. She felt better after that and would have jumped off the end of the dock, but Tish restrained her, advising her to wet her wrists first and thus to regulate and not shock the pulse.

Tish waded out, majestically indifferent, and we trailed after her. Of what followed I am not quite sure. I know, when we were out to our necks, and either I had stepped on a broken bottle or something had bitten me, she turned and said:

"This will do. I am going to float, Lizzie. Give me time to come to the surface."

She then took a long breath and threw herself back into the water, disappearing at once. I waited for some time, but only a foot emerged, and that only for a second. I might have grown anxious, but it happened that just then Aggie yelled that there was a leech on her, sucking her blood, and I turned to offer her assistance. One way and another it was some time before I turned to look again at Tish—and she had not come up. The water was in a state of turmoil, however, and now and then a hand or a leg emerged.

I was uncertain what to do. Tish does not like to have her plans disarranged, and she had certainly requested me to give her time. I could not be certain, moreover, how much time would be required. While I was debating the matter I was astonished to hear a violent splashing near at hand, and to see Mr. Anderson, fully dressed, approaching us. He said nothing, but waited until Tish's foot again reappeared, and then caught it, thus bringing her to the surface.

For some time she merely stood with her mouth open and her eyes closed. But at last she was able to breathe and to speak, and in spite of my affection for her I still resent the fact that her first words were in anger.

"Lizzie, you are a fool!" she said.

"You said to give you time, Tish."

"Well, you did!" she snapped. "Time to drown." She then turned to Mr. Anderson and said, "Take me in, please. And go slowly. I think I've swallowed a fish."

I got her into the cottage and to bed, and for an hour or two she maintained that she had swallowed a fish and could feel it flopping about inside her. But after a time the sensation ceased and she said that either she had been mistaken or it had died. She was very cold to me.

Mr. Anderson called that afternoon to inquire for her, and we took him to her room. But at first he said very little, and continually consulted his watch and then glanced out the window toward the links. Finally he put the watch away and drew a long breath.

"Four-seven," he said despondently. "Just on time, like a train! You can't beat it."

"What is on time?" Tish asked.

"It's a personal matter," he observed, and lapsed into a gloomy silence.

Aggie went to the window, and I followed. The pretty girl had sent her ball neatly onto the green and, trotting over after it, proceeded briskly to give it a knock and drop it into the cup. He looked up at us with hopeless eyes.

"Holed in one, I suppose?" he inquired.

"She only knocked it once and it went in," Aggie said.

"It would." His voice was very bitter. "She's the champion of this part of the country. She's got fourteen silver cups, two salad bowls, a card tray and a soup tureen, all trophies. She's never been known to slice, pull or foozle. When she gets her eye on the ball it's there for keeps. Outside of that, she's a nice girl."

"Why don't you learn the game yourself?" Tish demanded.

"Because I can't. I've tried. You must have heard me trying. I can't even caddie for her. I look at her and lose the ball, and it has got to a stage now where the mere sight of me on the links costs her a stroke a hole. I'll be frank with you," he added after a slight pause. "I'm in love with her. Outside of golf hours she likes me too. But the damned game—sorry, I apologize—the miserable game is separating us. If she'd break her arm or something," he finished savagely, "I'd have a chance."

There was a thoughtful gleam in Tish's eye when he fell into gloomy silence.

"Isn't there any remedy?" she asked.

"Not while she's champion. A good beating would help, but who's to beat her?"

"You can't?"

"Listen," he said. "In the last few months, here and at home, I've had ninety golf lessons, have driven three thousand six hundred balls, of which I lost four hundred and ninety-six, have broken three

drivers, one niblick and one putter. I ask you," he concluded drearily, "did you ever hear before of anyone breaking a putter?"

The thoughtful look was still in Tish's eye when he left, but she said nothing. A day or two after, we watched him with Mr. McNab, and although he was standing with his back to the house when he drove, we heard a crash overhead and the sheet-iron affair which makes the stove draw was knocked from the chimney and fell to the ground.

He saw us and waved a hand at the wreckage.

"Sorry," he called. "I keep a roofer now for these small emergencies and I'll send him over." Then he looked at Mr. McNab, who had sat down on a bunker and had buried his face in his hands.

"Come now, McNab," he said. "Cheer up; I've thought of a way. If I'm going to drive behind me, all I have to do is to play the game backwards."

Mr. McNab said nothing. He got up, gave him a furious glance, and then with his hands behind him and his head bent went back toward the clubhouse. Mr. Anderson watched him go, teed another ball and made a terrific lunge at it. It rose, curved and went into the lake.

"Last ball!" he called to us cheerfully. "Got one to lend me?"

I sincerely hope I am not doing Tish an injustice, but she certainly said we had not. Yet Mrs. Ostermaier's ball——But she may have lost it. I do not know.

It was Aggie who introduced us to Nettie Lynn, the girl in the case. Aggie is possibly quicker than the rest of us to understand the feminine side of a love affair, for Aggie was at one time engaged to a Mr. Wiggins, a gentleman who had pursued his calling as master roofer on and finally off a roof. [More than once that summer Tish had observed how useful he would have been to us at that time, as we were constantly having broken slates, and as the water spout was completely stopped with balls.] And Aggie maintained that Nettie Lynn really cared for Mr. Anderson.

"If Mr. Wiggins were living," she said gently, "and if I played golf, if he appeared unexpectedly while I was knocking the ball or whatever it is they do to it, if I really cared—and you know, Tish, I

did—I am sure I should play very badly."

"You don't need all those ifs to reach that conclusion," Tish said coldly.

A day or two later Aggie stopped Miss Lynn and offered her some orangeade, and she turned out to be very pleasant and friendly. But when Tish had got the conversation switched to Mr. Anderson she was cool and somewhat scornful.

"Bobby?" she said, lifting her eyebrows. "Isn't he screamingly funny on the links!"

"He's a very fine young man," Tish observed, eying her steadily.

"He has no temperament."

"He has a good disposition. That's something."

"Oh, yes," she admitted carelessly. "He's as gentle as a lamb."

Tish talked it over after she had gone. She said that the girl was all right, but that conceit over her game had ruined her, and that the only cure was for Bobby to learn and then beat her to death in a tournament or something, but that Bobby evidently couldn't learn, and so that was that. She then fell into one of those deep silences during which her splendid mind covers enormous ranges of thought, and ended by saying something to the effect that if one could use a broom one should be able to do something else.

We closed up the cottage soon after and returned to town.

Now and then we saw Nettie Lynn on the street, and once Tish asked us to dinner and we found Bobby Anderson there. He said he had discovered a place in a department store to practice during the winter, with a net to catch the balls, but that owing to his unfortunate tendencies he had driven a ball into the well of the store, where it had descended four stories and hit a manager on the back. He was bent over bowing to a customer or it would have struck his head and killed him.

"She was there," he said despondently. "She used to think I was only a plain fool. Now she says I'm dangerous, and that I ought to take out a license for carrying weapons before I pick up a club."

"I don't know why you want to marry her," Tish said in a sharp voice.

"I don't either," he agreed. "But I do. That's the hell—I beg your pardon—that's the deuce of it."

It was following this meeting that the mysterious events occurred with which I commenced this narrative. And though there may be no connection it was only a day or two later that I read aloud to Aggie an item in a newspaper stating that an elderly woman who refused to give her name had sent a golf ball through the practice net in a downtown store and that the ball had broken and sent off a fire alarm, with the result that the sprinkling system, which was a new type and not dependent on heat, had been turned on in three departments. I do know, however, that Tish's new velvet hat was never seen from that time on, and that on our shopping excursions she never entered that particular store.

In coming now to the events which led up to the reason for Nettie Lynn cutting us, and to Charlie Sands' commentary that his wonderful aunt, Letitia Carberry, should remember the commandment which says that honesty is the best policy—I am sure he was joking, for that is not one of the great Commandments—I feel that a certain explanation is due. This explanation is not an apology for dear Tish, but a statement of her point of view.

Letitia Carberry has a certain magnificence of comprehension. If in this magnificence she loses sight of small things, if she occasionally uses perhaps unworthy methods to a worthy end, it is because to her they are not important. It is only the end that counts.

She has, too, a certain secrecy. But that is because of a nobility which says in effect that by planning alone she assumes sole responsibility. I think also that she has little confidence in Aggie and myself, finding us but weak vessels into which she pours in due time the overflow from her own exuberant vitality and intelligence.

With this in mind I shall now relate the small events of the winter. They were merely straws, showing the direction of the wind of Tish's mind. And I dare say we were not observant. For instance, we reached Tish's apartment one afternoon to find the janitor there in a very ugly frame of mind. "You threw something out of this window, Miss Carberry," he said, "and don't be after denying it."

"What did I throw out of the window?" Tish demanded loftily. "Produce it."

"If it wasn't that it bounced and went over the fence," he said, "I'd be saying it was a flat-iron. That parrot just squawked once and turned over."

"Good riddance, too," Tish observed. "The other tenants ought to send me a vote of thanks."

"Six milk bottles on Number Three's fire escape," the janitor went on, counting on his fingers; "the wash line broke for Number One and all the clothes dirty, and old Mr. Ferguson leaning out to spit and almost killed—it's no vote of thanks you'll be getting."

When she had got rid of him Tish was her usual cool and dignified self. She offered no explanation and we asked for none. And for a month or so nothing happened. Tish distributed her usual list of improving books at the Sunday-school Christmas treat, and we packed our customary baskets for the poor. On Christmas Eve we sang our usual carols before the homes of our friends, and except for one mischance, owing to not knowing that the Pages had rented their house, all was symbolic of the peace and good will of the festive period. At the Pages', however, a very unpleasant person asked us for —— sake to go away and let him sleep.

But shortly after the holidays Tish made a proposition to us, and stated that it was a portion of a plan to bring about the happiness of two young and unhappy people.

"In developing this plan," she said, "it is essential that we all be in the best of physical condition; what I believe is known technically as in the pink. You two, for instance, must be able to walk for considerable distances, carrying a weight of some size."

"What do you mean by 'in the pink'?" Aggie asked suspiciously.

"What you are not," Tish said with a certain scorn. "How many muscles have you got?"

"All I need," said Aggie rather acidly.

"And of all you have, can you use one muscle, outside of the ordinary ones that carry you about?"

"I don't need to."

"Have you ever stood up, naked to the air, and felt shame at your flaccid muscles and your puny strength?"

"Really, Tish!" I protested. "I'll walk if you insist. But I don't have to take off my clothes and feel shame at my flabbiness to do it."

She softened at that, and it ended by our agreeing to fall in with her mysterious plan by going to a physical trainer. I confess to a certain tremor when we went for our first induction into the profundities of bodily development. There was a sign outside, with a large picture of a gentleman with enormous shoulders and a pigeon breast, and beneath it were the words: "I will make you a better man." But Tish was confident and calm.

The first day, however, was indeed trying. We found, for instance, that we were expected to take off all our clothing and to put on one-piece jersey garments, without skirts or sleeves, and reaching only to the knees. As if this were not enough, the woman attendant said when we were ready "In you go, dearies," and shoved us into a large bare room where a man was standing with his chest thrown out, and wearing only a pair of trousers and a shirt which had shrunk to almost nothing. Aggie clutched me by the arm.

"I've got to have stockings, Lizzie!" she whispered. "I don't feel decent."

But the woman had closed the door, and Tish was explaining that we wished full and general muscular development.

"The human body," she said, "instantly responds to care and guidance, and what we wish is simply to acquire perfect coördination. 'The easy slip of muscles underneath the polished skin,' as some poet has put it."

"Yeah," said the man. "All right. Lie down in a row on the mat, and when I count, raise the right leg in the air and drop it. Keep on doing it. I'll tell you when to stop."

"Lizzie!" Aggie threw at me in an agony. "Lizzie, I simply can't!"

"Quick," said the trainer. "I've got four pounds to take off a welterweight this afternoon. Right leg, ladies. Up, down; one, two ——"

Never since the time in Canada when Aggie and I were taking a bath in the lake, and a fisherman came and fished from a boat for two hours while we sat in the icy water to our necks, have I suffered such misery.

"Other leg," said the trainer. And later: "Right leg up, cross, up, down. Left leg up, cross, up, down." Aside from the lack of dignity of the performance came very soon the excruciating ache of our weary flesh. Limb by limb and muscle by muscle he made us work, and when we were completely exhausted on the mat he stood us up on our feet in a row and looked us over.

"You've got a long way to go, ladies," he said sternly. "It's a gosh-awful shame the way you women neglect your bodies. Hold in the abdomen and throw out the chest. Balance easily on the ball of the foot. Now touch the floor with the finger tips, as I do."

"Young man," I protested, "I haven't been able to do that since I was sixteen."

"Well, you've had a long rest," he said coldly. "Put your feet apart. That'll help."

When the lesson was over we staggered out, and Aggie leaned against a wall and moaned. "It's too much, Tish," she said feebly. "I'm all right with my clothes on, and anyhow, I'm satisfied as I am. I'm the one to please, not that wretch in there."

Tish, however, had got her breath and said that she felt like a new woman, and that blood had got to parts of her it had never reached before. But Aggie went sound asleep in the cabinet bath and had to be assisted to the cold shower. I mention this tendency of hers to sleep, as it caused us some trouble later on.

In the meantime Tish was keeping in touch with the two young people. She asked Nettie Lynn to dinner one night, and seemed greatly interested in her golf methods. One thing that seemed particularly to interest her was Miss Lynn's device for keeping her head down and her eye on the ball.

"After I have driven," she said, "I make it a rule to count five before looking up."

"How do you see where the ball has gone?" Tish asked.

"That is the caddie's business."

"I see," Tish observed thoughtfully, and proceeded for some moments to make pills of her bread and knock them with her fork, holding her head down as she did so.

Another thing which she found absorbing was Miss Lynn's statement that a sound or movement while she drove was fatal, and that even a shadow thrown on the ball while putting decreased her accuracy.

By the end of February we had become accustomed to the exercises and now went through them with a certain sprightliness, turning back somersaults with ease, and I myself now being able to place my flat hand on the floor while standing. Owing to the cabinet baths I had lost considerable flesh and my skin seemed a trifle large for me in places, while Aggie looked, as dear Tish said, like a picked spare rib.

At the end of February, however, our training came to an abrupt end, owing to a certain absent-mindedness on Tish's part. Tish and Aggie had gone to the gymnasium without me, and at ten o'clock that night I telephoned Tish to ask if Aggie was spending the night with her. To my surprise Tish said nothing for a moment, and then asked me in a strained voice to put on my things at once and meet her at the door to the gymnasium building.

Quick as I was, she was there before me, hammering at the door of the building, which appeared dark and deserted. It appeared that the woman had gone home early with a cold, and that Tish had agreed to unfasten the bath cabinet and let Aggie out at a certain time, but that she had remembered leaving the electric iron turned on at home and had hurried away, leaving Aggie asleep and helpless in the cabinet.

The thought of our dear Aggie, perspiring her life away, made us desperate, and on finding no response from within the building Tish led the way to an alleyway at the side and was able to reach the fire escape. With mixed emotions I watched her valiant figure disappear, and then returned to the main entrance, through which I expected her to reappear with our unhappy friend.

But we were again unfortunate. A few moments later the door indeed was opened, but to give exit to Tish in the grasp of a very rude and violent watchman, who immediately blew loudly on a whistle. I saw at once that Tish meant to give no explanation which would involve taking a strange man into the cabinet room, where

our hapless Aggie was completely disrobed and helpless; and to add to our difficulties three policemen came running and immediately placed us under arrest.

Fortunately the station house was near, and we were saved the ignominy of a police wagon. Tish at once asked permission to telephone Charlie Sands, and as he is the night editor of a newspaper he was able to come at once. But Tish was of course reticent as to her errand before so many men, and he grew slightly impatient.

"All right," he said. "I know you were in the building. I know how you got in. But why? I don't think you were after lead pipe or boxing gloves, but these men do."

"I left something there, Charlie."

"Go a little further. What did you leave there?"

"I can't tell you. But I've got to go back there at once. Every moment now——"

"Get this," said Charlie Sands sternly: "Either you come over with the story or you'll be locked up. And I'm bound to say I think you ought to be."

In the end Tish told the unhappy facts, and two reporters, the sergeant and the policemen were all deeply moved. Several got out their handkerchiefs, and the sergeant turned quite red in the face. One and all they insisted on helping to release our poor Aggie, and most of them escorted us back to the building, only remaining in the corridor at our request while we entered the cabinet room.

Although we had expected to find Aggie in a parboiled condition the first thing which greeted us was a violent sneeze.

"Aggie!" I called desperately.

She sneezed again, and then said in a faint voice, "Hurry up. I'b dearly frozed."

We learned later that the man in charge had turned off all the electricity when he left, from a switch outside, and that Aggie had perspired copiously and been on the verge of apoplexy until six o'clock, and had nearly frozen to death afterwards. Tish draped a sheet around the cabinet, and the policemen et cetera came in.

Aggie gave a scream when she saw them, but it was proper enough, with only her head showing, and they went out at once to let her get her clothing on.

Before he put us in a taxicab that night Charlie Sands spoke to Tish with unjustifiable bitterness.

"I have given the watchman twenty dollars for that tooth you loosened, Aunt Tish," he said. "And I've got to set up some food for the rest of this outfit. Say, fifty dollars, for which you'd better send me a check." He then slammed the door, but opened it immediately. "I just want to add this," he said: "If my revered grandfather has turned over in his grave as much as I think he has, he must be one of the liveliest corpses underground."

I am happy to record that Aggie suffered nothing more than a heavy cold in the head. But she called Tish up the next morning and with unwonted asperity said, "I do thig, Tish, that you bight have put a strig aroud your figer or sobethig, to rebeber be by!"

It was but a week or two after this that Tish called me up and asked me to go to her apartment quickly, and to bring some arnica from the drug store. I went as quickly as possible, to find Hannah on the couch in the sitting room moaning loudly, and Tish putting hot flannels on her knee cap.

"It's broken, Miss Tish," she groaned. "I know it is."

"Nonsense," said Tish. "Anyhow I called to you to stay out."

In the center of the room was a queer sort of machine, with a pole on an iron base and a dial at the top, and a ball fastened to a wire. There was a golf club on the floor.

Later on, when Hannah had been helped to her room and an arnica compress adjusted, Tish took me back and pointed to the machine.

"Two hundred and twenty yards, Lizzie," she said, "and would have registered more but for Hannah's leg. That's driving."

She then sat down and told me the entire plan. She had been working all winter, and was now confident that she could defeat Nettie Lynn. She had, after her first experience in the department store, limited herself—in another store—to approach shots. For

driving she had used the machine. For putting she had cut a round hole in the carpet and had sawed an opening in the floor beneath, in which she had placed a wide-mouthed jar.

"My worst trouble, Lizzie," she said, "was lifting my head. But I have solved it. See here."

She then produced a short leather strap, one end of which she fastened to her belt and the other she held in her teeth. She had almost lost a front tooth at the beginning, she said, but that phase was over.

"I don't even need it any more," she told me. "To-morrow I shall commence placing an egg on the back of my neck as I stoop, and that with a feeling of perfect security."

She then looked at me with her serene and confident glance.

"It has been hard work, Lizzie," she said. "It is not over. It is even possible that I may call on you to do things which your ethical sense will at first reject. But remember this, and then decide: The happiness of two young and tender hearts is at stake."

She seemed glad of a confidante, and asked me to keep a record of some six practice shots, as shown by the dial on the machine. I have this paper before me as I write:

1st drive, 230 yards. Slight pull.

2nd drive, 245 yards. Direct.

3rd drive, 300 yards. Slice.

4th drive, 310 yards. Direct.

5th drive. Wire broke.

6th drive. Wire broke again. Ball went through window pane. Probably hit dog, as considerable howling outside.

She then showed me her clubs, of which she had some forty-six, not all of which, however, she approved of. It was at that time that dear Tish taught me the names of some of them, such as niblick, stymie, cleek, mashie, putter, stance, and brassie, and observed mysteriously that I would need my knowledge later on. She also advised that before going back to Penzance we walk increasing distances every day.

"Because," she said, "I shall need my two devoted friends this summer; need them perhaps as never before."

I am bound to confess, however, that on our return to Penzance Tish's first outdoor work at golf was a disappointment. She had a small ritual when getting ready; thus she would say, firmly, suiting the action to the phrase: "Tee ball. Feet in line with ball, advance right foot six inches, place club, overlap right thumb over left thumb, drop arms, left wrist rigid, head down, eye on the ball, shoulders steady, body still. Drive!" Having driven she then stood and counted five slowly before looking up.

At first, however, she did not hit the ball, or would send it only a short distance. But she worked all day, every day, and we soon saw a great improvement. As she had prophesied, she used us a great deal. For instance, to steady her nerves she would have us speak to her when driving, and even fire a revolver out toward the lake.

We were obliged to stop this, however, for we were in the habit of using the barrel buoy of the people next door to shoot at, until we learned that it was really not a buoy at all, but some fine old whiskey which they were thus concealing, and which leaked out through the bullet holes.

We were glad to find that Nettie Lynn and Bobby were better friends than they had been the year before, and to see his relief when Tish told him to give up his attempts at golf altogether.

"I shall defeat her so ignominiously, Bobby," she said, "that she will never wish to hear of the game again."

"You're a great woman, Miss Carberry," he said solemnly.

"But you, too, must do your part."

"Sure I'll do my part. Name it to me, and that is all."

But he looked grave when she told him.

"First of all," she said, "you are to quarrel with her the night before the finals. Violently."

"Oh, I say!"

"Second, when she is crushed with defeat you are to extract a promise, an oath if you like, that she is through with golf."

"You don't know her," he said. "Might as well expect her to be through with her right hand."

But he agreed to think it over and, going out to the lake front, sat for a long time lost in thought. When he came back he agreed, but despondently.

"She may love me after all this," he said, "but I'm darned if I think she'll like me."

But he cheered up later and planned the things they could do when they were both free of golf and had some time to themselves. And Mr. McNab going by at that moment, he made a most disrespectful gesture at his back.

It is painful, in view of what followed, to recall his happiness at that time.

I must confess that Aggie and I were still in the dark as to our part in the tournament. And our confusion as time went on was increased by Tish's attitude toward her caddie. On her first attempt he had been impertinent enough, goodness knows, and Tish had been obliged to reprove him.

"Your business here, young man," she said, "is to keep your eye on the ball."

"That's just what you're not doing," he said smartly. "Lemme show you."

Tish said afterwards that it was purely an accident, for he broke every rule of stance and so on, but before she realized his intention he had taken the club from her hand and sent the ball entirely out of sight.

"That's the way," he said. "Whale 'em!"

But recently her attitude to him had changed. She would bring him in and give him cake and ginger ale, and she paid him far too much. When Hannah showed her disapproval he made faces at her behind Tish's back, and once he actually put his thumb to his nose. To every remonstrance Tish made but one reply.

"Develop the larger viewpoint," she would observe, "and remember this: I do nothing without a purpose."

"Then stop him making snoots at me," said Hannah. "I'll poison him, that's what I'll do."

Thus our days went on. The hours of light Tish spent on the links. In the evenings her busy fingers were not idle, for she was making herself some knickerbockers from an old pair of trousers which Charlie Sands had left at the cottage, cutting them off below the knee and inserting elastic in the hem, while Aggie and I, by the shade of our lamp, knitted each a long woolen stocking to complete the outfit.

It was on such an evening that Tish finally revealed her plan, that plan which has caused so much unfavorable comment since. The best answer to that criticism is Tish's own statement to us that night.

"Frankly," she admitted, "the girl can beat me. But if she does she will continue on her headstrong way, strewing unhappiness hither and yon. She must not win!"

Briefly the plan she outlined was based on the undermining of Nettie's morale. Thus, Aggie sneezes during the hay-fever season at the mere sight of a sunflower. She was to keep one in her pocket, and at a signal from Tish was to sniff at it, holding back the resultant sneeze, however, until the champion was about to drive.

"I'll be thirty yards behind, with the crowd, won't I?" Aggie asked.

"You will be beside her," Tish replied solemnly. "On the day of the finals the caddies will go on a strike, and I shall insist that a strange caddie will spoil my game, and ask for you."

It appeared that I was to do nothing save to engage Mr. McNab in conversation at certain times and thus distract his attention, the signal for this being Tish placing her right hand in her trousers pocket. For a sneeze from Aggie the signal was Tish coughing once.

"At all times, Aggie," she finished, "I shall expect you to keep ahead of us, and as near Nettie Lynn's ball as possible. The undulating nature of the ground is in our favor, and will make it possible now and then for you to move it into a less favorable position. If at the fourteenth hole you can kick it into the creek it will be very helpful."

Aggie was then rehearsed in the signals, and did very well indeed.

Mr. McNab was an occasional visitor those days. He was watching Tish's game with interest.

"Ye'll never beat the champion, ma'm," he would say, "but ye take the game o' gowf as it should be taken, wi' humility and prayer."

More than once he referred to Bobby Anderson, saying that he was the only complete failure of his experience, and that given a proper chance he would make a golfer of him yet.

"The mon has aye the build of a gowfer," he would say wistfully.

It is tragic now to remember that incident of the day before the opening of the tournament, when Bobby came to our cottage and we all ceremoniously proceeded to the end of the dock and flung his various clubs, shoes, balls, cap and bag into the lake, and then ate a picnic supper on the shore. When the moon came up he talked of the future in glowing terms.

"I feel in my bones, Miss Tish," he said, "that you will beat her. And I know her; she won't stand being defeated, especially by——" Here he coughed, and lost the thread of this thought. "I'm going to buy her a horse," he went on. "I'm very fond of riding."

He said, however, that it was going to be very hard for him to quarrel with her the evening before the finals.

"I'm too much in love," he confessed. "Besides, outside of golf we agree on everything—politics, religion, bridge; everything."

It was then that Tish made one of her deeply understanding comments.

"Married life is going to be very dull for you both," she said.

It was arranged that in spite of the quarrel he should volunteer to caddie for the champion the day of the strike, and to take a portion of Aggie's responsibility as to changing the lie of the ball, and so forth. He was not hopeful, however.

"She won't want me any more than the measles," he said.

"She can't very well refuse, before the crowd," Tish replied.

I pass with brief comment over the early days of the women's tournament. Mrs. Ostermaier was eliminated the first day with a score of 208, and slapped her caddie on the seventeenth green. Tish turned in only a fair score, and was rather depressed; so much so that she walked in her sleep and wakened Aggie by trying to tee a ball on the end of her—Aggie's—nose. But the next day she was calm enough, and kept her nerves steady by the simple device of knitting

as she followed the ball. The result was what she had expected, and the day of the finals saw only Nettie Lynn and our dear Tish remaining.

All worked out as had been expected. The caddies went on a strike that day, and before the field Nettie was obliged to accept Bobby's offer to carry her clubs. But he was very gloomy and he brought his troubles to me.

"Well, I've done it," he said. "And I'm ruined for life. She never wants to see me again. It's my belief," he added gloomily, "that she could have bit the head off an iron club last night and never have known she had done it."

He groaned and mopped his face with his handkerchief.

"I'm not sure it's the right thing after all," he said. "The madder she is the better she'll play. All she's got to do is to imagine I'm the ball, and she'll knock it a thousand yards."

There was some truth in this probably, for she certainly overshot the first hole, and the way she said "Mashie!" to Bobby Anderson really sounded like an expletive. Tish won that hole, they halved the second, and owing to Aggie sneezing without apparent cause during Tish's drive on the third, Nettie took it. On the fourth, however, Tish was fortunate and drove directly into the cup.

We now entered the undulating portion of the course, and I understand that Bobby and Aggie both took advantage of this fact to place Nettie Lynn's ball in occasional sand traps, and once to lose it altogether. Also that the device of sneezing during a putt was highly effective, so that at the ninth hole dear Tish was three up.

Considering the obloquy which has fallen to me for my own failure to coöperate, I can only state as follows: I engaged Mr. McNab steadily in conversation, and when he moved to a different position I faithfully followed him; but I was quite helpless when he suddenly departed, taking an oblique course across the field, nor could I approach Tish to warn her.

And on the surface all continued to go well. It was now evident to all that the champion was defeated, and that the champion knew it herself. In fact the situation was hopeless, and no one, I think, was

greatly surprised when after driving for the fourteenth hole she suddenly threw down her club, got out her handkerchief and left the course, followed by Bobby.

Our misfortune was that Aggie was ahead in the hollow and did not see what had happened. Her own statement is that she saw the ball come and fall into a dirt road, and that all she did was to follow it and step on it, thus burying it out of sight; but also that no sooner had she done this than Mr. McNab came charging out of the woods like a mad bull and rushed at her, catching her by the arm.

It was at that moment that our valiant Tish, flushed with victory, came down the slope.

Mr. McNab was dancing about and talking in broad Scotch, but Tish finally caught the drift of what he was saying—that he had suspected us all day, that we would go before the club board, and that Tish would get no cup.

"You've played your last gowf on these links, Miss Carberry, and it's a crying shame the bad name you've gien us," was the way he finished, all the time holding to Aggie's arm. It was thus I found them.

"Very well," Tish said in her coldest tone. "I shall be very glad to state before the board my reasons, which are excellent. Also to register a protest against using the lake front before my cottage for the cooling of beer, et cetera. I dare say I may go home first?"

"I'll be going with you, then."

"Very well," Tish replied. "And be good enough to release Miss Pilkington. She was merely obeying my instructions." Thus our lion-hearted Tish, always ready to assume responsibility, never weakening, always herself.

I come now to a painful portion of this narrative, and the reason for Nettie Lynn cutting us dead on the street. For things moved rapidly within the next few moments. Mr. McNab settled himself like a watchdog on our cottage steps, and there Tish herself carried him some blackberry cordial and a slice of coconut cake. There, too, in her impressive manner she told him the story of the plot.

"Think of it, Mr. McNab," she said. "Two young and loving hearts yearning for each other, and separated only by the failure of one of them to learn the game of golf!"

Mr. McNab was profoundly moved.

"He wouldna keep his eye on the ball," he said huskily. "I like the lad fine, but he would aye lift his heid."

"If this brings them together you would not part them, would you?"

"He wouldna fallow through, Miss Carberry. He juist hit the ball an' quit."

"If they were married, and he could give his mind to the game he'd learn it, Mr. McNab."

The professional brightened. "Maybe. Maybe," he said. "He has the body of the gowfer. If he does that, we'll say na mair, Miss Carberry."

And, do what we would, Mr. McNab stood firm on that point. The thought of his failure with Bobby Anderson had rankled, and now he made it a condition of his silence on the day's events that he have a free hand with him that summer.

"Gie him to me for a month," he said, "and he'll be a gowfer, and na care whether he's married or no."

We ate our dinner that night in a depressed silence, although Tish's silver cup graced the center of the table. Before we had finished, Bobby Anderson came bolting in and kissed us each solemnly.

"It's all fixed," he said. "She has solemnly sworn never to play golf again, and I've brought her clubs down to follow mine into the lake."

"You'd better keep them," Tish said. "You're going to need them."

She then broke the news to him, and considering the months she had spent to help him he was very ungrateful, I must say. Indeed, his language was shocking.

"Me learn golf?" he shouted. "You tell McNab to go to perdition and take his cursed golf links with him. I won't do it! This whole scheme was to eliminate golf from my life. It has pursued me for

three years. I have nightmares about it. I refuse. Tell McNab I've broken my leg. Wait a minute and I'll go out and break it."

But he could not refuse, and he knew it.

So far as we know, Nettie Lynn has never played golf since. She impresses me as a person of her word. But why she should be so bitter toward us we cannot understand. As dear Tish frequently remarks, who could have foreseen that Mr. McNab would actually make a golfer out of Bobby? Or that he would become so infatuated with the game as to abandon practically everything else?

They are married now, and Hannah knows their cook. She says it is sometimes nine o'clock at night in the summer before he gets in to dinner.

THE BABY BLIMP

I

Ever since last spring I have felt that a certain explanation is due to the public regarding Tish's great picture, The Sky Pirate, especially as to the alteration at the end of that now celebrated picture. I have also felt that a full explanation of what happened to us on that final tragic night is due to our dear Tish herself. She has never yet made a statement of any case of hers, believing that her deeds must speak for her.

But perhaps, more than anything, I am influenced by the desire to present the facts to Charlie Sands, Tish's nephew, for, owing to his attitude the day he met us at the train, Tish has never deigned to make a full explanation.

We were on the platform, and I was taking a cinder out of Aggie's eye, when we perceived him, standing close by and surveying us gloomily.

"My life," he said, "has resolved itself into meeting you three when you have come back from doing something you shouldn't." He then picked up a bag or two and observed: "Even the chap in the Bible only had one prodigal."

He said nothing more until we were waiting for a taxi, when he observed that his nerves were not what they had been, and who was to secure bail for us when he was gone? We could only meet this with silence, but the fact is that he has never yet lost his money in that way, and never will.

"Some day," he said, "I shall drop over of heart failure on receiving one of your wires, and then where will you be?"

"The circumstances were unusual," Tish said with dignity.

"I'll tell the world they were!" he said. "Unusual as h—l."

He then lapsed into silence, and so remained until we were in the taxicab, on our way to Tish's apartment. Then he leaned forward and stared fixedly at his Aunt Letitia.

"Now!" he said. "We're going to have the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. What about that elephant?"

Tish raised her eyebrows.

"Elephant?" she said.

"'Elephant' is the word I used. Look me square in the eye, last surviving female relative of mine, and deny you had anything to do with it! The moment the Associated Press wires began to come in, I knew."

"Very well," Tish said acidly. "If you know, there is no need to explain."

And from that moment to this, she never has.

In order to bring the elephant incident in its proper sequence it is necessary to return to the autumn of last year, and to tell of the various incidents which led up to that awful night, and the roof of the First National Bank of Los Angeles.

During all of last winter Tish had been making a survey of what she called the art, the educational value and the business of moving pictures. She was, in a word, studying them. And she came to certain conclusions. Thus, she believed that the public had wearied of sentiment and was ready for adventure without sex. Also, that the overemphasis on love in the pictures was weakening the moral fiber of the nations.

"It was when sex replaced war," she observed to Aggie and myself, "that Rome fell and Babylon crumbled to the dust."

I agreed with her, but Aggie had certain reservations. When, as frequently happened, Tish left the theater just before the final embrace, thus registering her disapproval, Aggie sometimes loitered, to put on her overshoes or to find her glasses. Indeed, once trying to take her departure while looking back over her shoulder, she had a really bad fall in the theater aisle.

But our dear Tish showed Aggie considerable indulgence, as Aggie's life had at one time held a romance of its own, she having been engaged to a Mr. Wiggins, who had not survived the engagement.

I have mentioned Mr. Wiggins because, although it is thirty years since he passed over, it was Aggie's getting into touch with him in the spirit world which brought Mr. Stein into our lives. And it was Stein who brought about all our troubles. We were both very happy to find our dear Tish occupied with a new interest, as since the war, when she had captured the town of X—— single handed—for Aggie was at the time on the church steeple and I had gone back for reënforcements—she had become rather listless.

"I find it difficult," she had once acknowledged, "to substitute the daily dozen for my activities in France, and the sight of four women quarreling madly over a bridge table for a back scratcher with a pink bow on it simply makes me homesick for the war."

Judge of our disappointment, therefore, when with the first of March, Tish's interest in the pictures apparently lagged. From spending night after night watching them, she suddenly became invisible to us for long periods, and Hannah reported that at these times she would lock herself in her room, burning innumerable papers at the end of the period of seclusion. Also that, listening at

the door, she could hear our dear Tish walking up and down the floor muttering to herself; and she reported that these active periods were followed by quiescent ones, when she could hear the rapid scratching of a pen.

Our first anxiety was that Tish had got herself into some sort of difficulty with her affairs, and this was not lessened by Hannah's bringing to us one evening a scrap of charred paper on which were the words: "I will kill myself first."

Had Charlie Sands not been out of town we would have gone to him, but he was in Europe, and did not return until four months later, when we were able to call on him for bail, as I have said. We had, therefore, no inkling of what was happening when, finding Tish in an approachable mood one evening, Aggie suggested that she try automatic writing.

Aggie had at last got into touch with Mr. Wiggins through a medium, and learned that he was very happy. But, although I have seen her sit for hours with a pencil poised over a sheet of paper, she had secured no written message from him. She therefore suggested that Tish try it.

"I've always felt that you are psychic, Tish," she said. "Every now and then when I touch you I get a spark, like electricity. And I have frequently heard knocks on the furniture when you are in a dark room."

"I've got bruises to show for them too," Tish said grimly.

Well, though Tish at first demurred, she finally agreed, and after Aggie had placed a red petticoat over the lamp to secure what she called the psychic light, Tish made the attempt.

"I have no faith in it," she said, "but I shall entirely retire my personality, and if there is a current from beyond, it shall flow through me unimpeded."

Very soon we heard the pencil moving, and on turning on the light later we were electrified to see the rough outline of an animal, which Aggie has since contended might have been intended for Katie, the elephant, but which closely resembled those attempts frequently made to draw a pig with the eyes closed. Underneath was the word "stein."

In view of later developments we know now that the word "stein" was not from Mr. Wiggins—although Aggie remembered that he had once or twice referred, when thirsty, to a stein of something or other—but that it was a proper name.

That at least a part of the message had a meaning for our dear Tish is shown by a cryptic remark she made to the room.

"Thanks," she said, to whatever spirit hovered about us. "I'll do it. It was what I intended, anyhow."

II

Just a month later Tish telephoned one morning for Aggie and myself to go there that afternoon. There was a touch of sharpness in her manner, which with Tish usually means nervous tension.

"And put on something decent, for once," she said. "There's no need to look as though you were taking your old clothes for an airing, to keep out the moths."

Tish was alone when we arrived. I could smell sponge cakes baking, and Tish had put on her mother's onyx set and was sitting with her back to the light. She looked slightly feverish, and I commented on it, but she only said that she had been near the stove.

When she was called out, however, Aggie leaned over to me.

"Stove, nothing!" she said. "She's painted her face! And she's got a new transformation!"

Had Charlie Sands himself appeared wearing a toupee we could not have been more astounded. And our amazement continued when Hannah brought in a tea tray with the Carberry silver on it, silver which had been in a safe-deposit vault for twenty years.

"Hannah," I demanded, "what is the matter?"

"She's going to be married! That's what," said Hannah, putting down the tray with a slam. "No fool like an old fool!" Then she burst into tears. "She spent the whole morning in a beauty parlor," she wailed. "Look at her finger nails! And callin' me in to draw up her corset on her!"

Neither Aggie nor I could speak for a moment. As I have said, our dear Tish had never shown any interest in the other sex. Indeed, I think I may say that Tish's virginity of outlook regarding herself is her strongest characteristic. It is her proud boast that no man has ever offered her the most chaste of salutes, and her simple statement as to what would happen if one did has always been a model of firmness.

I have heard her remark that when the late Henry Clay observed "Give me liberty or give me death," he was referring to marriage.

But Aggie had been correct. There was a bloom on dear Tish's face never placed there by the benign hand of Nature. Had I seen Mr. Ostermaier, our minister, preaching a sermon in a silk hat I should not have felt more horrified. And our anxiety was not lessened by Tish's first remark when she returned.

"I shall want you two as witnesses," she said. "And I shall make just one remark now. I know your attitude on certain subjects, so I ask you simply to remember this: I believe we owe a duty to the nation, especially with regard to children."

"Good heavens, Tish!" Aggie said, and turned a sort of greenish white. "A woman of your age——"

"What's my age got to do with it?" Tish snapped. "I simply say ——"

But just then the doorbell rang, and Hannah announced a gentleman.

It was a Mr. Stein.

Aggie has told me since that the thought of Tish marrying was as nothing to her then, compared with the belief that she was marrying out of the Presbyterian Church. And she knew the moment she saw him that Mr. Stein was not a Presbyterian. But as it developed and as all the world knows now, it was not a matter of marriage at all.

Mr. Stein was the well-known moving-picture producer.

While Aggie and I were endeavoring to readjust our ideas he sat down, and looked at Tish while rubbing his hands together.

"Well, Miss Carberry," he said, "I've brought the contracts."

"And the advance?" Tish inquired calmly.

"And the advance. Certified check, as you requested."

"You approve of my idea?"

"Well," he said, "you're right in one way. Sex has been overdone in pictures. The censors have killed it. When you're limited to a five-foot kiss—well, you know. You can't get it over, that's all. We've had to fall back on adventure. Not even crime, at that. Would you believe it, we've had to change a murder scene just lately to the corpse taking an overdose of sleeping medicine by mistake. And we can't have a woman show her figure on a chaise longue in a tea gown, while the bathing-suit people get by without any trouble. It's criminal, that's all. Criminal!"

"You have missed my idea," Tish said coldly. "I wrote that picture to prove that a love interest, any love interest, is not essential to a picture."

He agreed with what we now realize was suspicious alacrity.

"Certainly," he said. "Certainly! After all, who pays the profits on pictures? The women, Miss Carberry. The women! Do up the dishes in a hurry—get me?—and beat it for the theater. Like to sit there and imagine themselves the heroine. And up to now we've never given them a heroine over seventeen years of age!"

He reflected on this, almost tearfully.

"Well," he said, "that's over now. There are twenty-nine million women over forty in America to-day, and every one will see this picture. That is, if we do it."

"If you do it?" Tish inquired, gazing at him through her spectacles.

"When I told the casting director to find me a woman for the part he went out and got drunk. He's hardly been sober since."

"You haven't found anyone?"

"Not yet."

Tish had picked up her knitting, and Mr. Stein sat back and surveyed her for a few moments in silence. Then he leaned forward.

"Excuse me for asking, Miss Carberry," he said, "but have you ever driven a car?"

"I drove an ambulance in France."

"Really?" He seemed interested and slightly excited. "Then the sound of a gun wouldn't scare you, I dare say?"

"I would hardly say that. I shoot very well. I'm considered rather good with a machine gun, I believe."

He sat forward on the edge of his chair, and stared at her.

"Ever ride a horse?" he inquired. "Not hard, you know, with a Western saddle. You just sit in it and the horse does the rest."

Tish looked at him through her spectacles.

"There is no argument for the Western saddle as against the English," she said firmly. "I have used them both, Mr. Stein. One rides properly by balance, not adherence."

Mr. Stein suddenly got out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

"Would you believe it!" he muttered. "And me just happening to be in town on a little matter of alimony! Does everything! By heaven, I believe she could fill a tooth!"

He then stared again at Tish and said, "You're not by any chance related to the Miss Carberry who captured the town of X—— from the Germans, I suppose?"

"My friends here, and I, did that; yes."

He stared at us all without saying anything for a moment. Then he moistened his lips.

"Well, well!" he said. "Well, well! Why, we ran a shot of you, Miss Carberry, in our news feature, when you were decorated and kissed by that French general, What's-His-Name."

"I prefer not to recall that."

"Surely, surely," he agreed. He then got up and bowed to Tish. "Miss Carberry," he said, "I apologize, and I salute you. I came here to offer you a fixed price for your story. A moment ago I decided to offer you the part of the woman of—er—maturity in your picture, with two hundred dollars a week and a double for the stunts. I now remove the double, and offered you a thousand a week for your first picture. If that goes, we'll talk business."

If Tish reads this I will ask her at this moment to pause and think. Did I or did I not enter a protest? Did Aggie warn her or did she not? And was it not Tish herself who silenced us with a gesture, and completed her arrangements while Aggie softly wept?

She cannot deny it.

One final word of Tish's I must record, in fairness to her.

"If I do this, Mr. Stein," she said, "there must be a clear understanding. This is purely a picture of adventure and is to teach a real moral lesson."

"Absolutely," Mr. Stein said heartily. "Virtue is always triumphant on the screen. It is our greatest commercial asset. Without it, ladies, we would be nowhere."

"And there must be no love element introduced."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Stein. "Certainly not!"

Those were almost his final words. We then had tea, and Tish gave him some of our homemade blackberry cordial. He seemed very pleased with it, and on departing remarked, "My admiration for you grows steadily, Miss Carberry. I did not fully estimate your powers when I said you could fill a tooth. You could, with that cordial, make a ouija board hiccup."

III

Things were quiet for a month or two after that, and we understood that the production was being got ready. But Tish was very busy, having thrown herself into her preparations with her usual thoroughness.

She had found a teacher who taught how to register with the face the various emotions on the screen, and twice a week Aggie or myself held her book, illustrated with cuts, while Tish registered in alphabetical order: Amusement, anxiety, boredom, curiosity, devotion, envy, fatigue, generosity, hate, interest, jealousy, keenness, laughter, love, merriment, nobility, objection, pity, quarrelsomeness, ridicule, satisfaction, terror, uneasiness, vanity, wrath, and so on.

I must confess that the subtle changes of expression were often lost on me, and that I suffered extremely at those times, when discarding the book, she asked us to name her emotion from her expression. She would stand before her mirror and arrange her features carefully, and then quickly turn. But I am no physiognomist.

Her physical preparations, however, she made alone. That she was practicing again with her revolver Hannah felt sure, but we had no idea where and how. As has been previously recorded, the janitor of her apartment had refused to allow her to shoot in the basement after a bullet had embedded itself in the dining table of A flat while the family was at luncheon. We surmised that she was doing it somewhere outside of town.

Later on we had proof of this. Aggie and I were taking a constitutional one day in the country beyond the car line when, greatly to our surprise, we heard two shots beyond a hedge, followed by a man's angry shouts, and on looking over the hedge, who should we behold but our splendid Tish, revolver in hand, and confronted by an angry farm laborer.

"Right through my hat!" he was bellowing. "If a man can't do an honest day's work without being fired at——"

"Work?" Tish said coldly. "You were so still I took you for a scarecrow."

"Scarecrow yourself! When I yelled, you shot again!" he howled. "Deliberate attempt at murder. That's what it was."

"It went off by itself the second time," Tish explained. "I'm rehearsing a certain scene, and——"

"Rehearsing?" said the man. "What for?"

"For the moving pictures."

He looked at her, and then he bowed very politely.

"Well, well!" he said. "I didn't recognize you at first, Miss Pickford. And how's Doug?"

We did not tell Tish that we had witnessed this encounter. She might have been sensitive about mistaking a farmer for a scarecrow.

It was a day or so after, in our presence, that Tish informed Hannah she would take her along as her maid. And Hannah, who in twenty odd years had never been known to show enthusiasm, was plainly delighted with the prospect.

"D'you mean I can see them acting?" she inquired.

"I imagine so," Tish said with a tolerant smile.

"Love scenes too?" Hannah asked, with an indelicacy that startled us.

"There will be no love scenes in this picture, Hannah," Tish reproved her. "I am surprised at you. And even in the ones you see every evening, when you ought to be doing something better, it is as well to remember that the persons are not really lovers. Indeed, that often they are barely friends."

She then told Hannah to go downtown and buy a book on moving-picture make-up and the various articles required, as, since she was to be a personal maid, she must know about such things.

I confess that Aggie and I were in a state of extreme depression when we left Tish that day. The thought of our dear friend altering the face her Creator gave her was a painful one, and both of us, I think, feared it as an index of a possible general demoralization, as too often happens in the movies. Aggie particularly feared the contacts with men, as mentioned by Hannah, in spite of Tish's firm attitude. The well-known temptations of Hollywood were in both our minds.

"They aren't paying her a thousand dollars a week just to ride, and so on," Aggie said bitterly. "Did you ever see a picture without a love story? It isn't only her neck she's risking, Lizzie."

I must confess to the same uneasiness.

We went to bed early that night, sorely troubled, and I had fallen asleep and was dreaming that Tish was trying to leap from an automobile to a moving train, and that everytime she did it the train jumped to another track, when the telephone bell rang, and it was Hannah. She said that Tish wanted me, and to go over right away, but not to waken Aggie.

I went at once and found all the lights going, and Tish in her bed, bolt upright, with both eyes closed.

"Tish!" I cried. "Your eyes! Can't you see?"

"Not through my eyelids," she said witheringly. "Don't be a fool, Lizzie. Look at this stuff and then tell me what will take it off."

I then saw that the rims of her eyelids were smeared with a black paste which had hardened like enamel, and that they had become glued together, leaving her, temporarily at least, sightless and helpless. My poor Tish!

"What will take it off?" she demanded. "That idiot Hannah offered to melt it with a burning match."

"I don't think anything but a hammer will do any good, Tish."

I discovered then that Hannah had bought the make-up book, and that it laid particular emphasis on beading the eyelashes. With her impatient temperament Tish, although the shops were shut by that time, decided to make the experiment, and had concocted a paste of glue and India ink. She had experimented first on her eyebrows, she had thought successfully, although when I saw her they looked like two jet crescents fastened to her forehead; but inadvertently closing her eyes after beading her lashes, she had been unable to open them again.

She and Hannah had tried various expedients, among them lard, the yolk of an egg, cold cream and ammonia, but without result. I was obliged to tell her that it was set like a cement pavement.

In the end I was able, amid exclamations of pain and annoyance from Tish, to cut off her lashes, and later to shave her eyebrows with an old razor which Hannah had for some unknown purpose, and although much of the glue remained Tish was able to see once more. When I left her she was contemplating her image in her mirror, and a little of her fine frenzy of early enthusiasm seemed to have departed.

It is characteristic of Tish that, once embarked on an enterprise, she devotes her entire attention to it and becomes in a way isolated from her kind. Her mental attitude during these periods of what may be termed mind gestation is absent and solitary. Thus I am able to tell little of what preparations she made during the following weeks. I do know that she went to church on her last Sunday with her bonnet wrong side before, and that during the sermon she was

unconsciously assuming the various facial expressions, one after the other, to the astonishment and confusion of Mr. Ostermaier in the pulpit.

But we also learned that she had again taken up her riding. The papers one evening were full of an incident connected with the local hunt, where an unknown woman rider had followed the hounds in to the death and had then driven them all off and let the fox go free.

My suspicions were at once aroused, and I carried the paper to Tish that night. I found her on her sofa, with the air redolent of arnica and witch hazel, and gave her the paper. She read the article calmly enough.

"I belong to the Humane Society, Lizzie," she said. "Those dogs would have killed it."

"But what made you join the hunt?"

"I didn't join the hunt," she said wearily. "How did I know that beast was an old hunter? I was riding along quietly when a horn blew somewhere, and the creature just went over the fence and started." Tish closed her eyes. "We jumped eleven fences and four ditches," she said in a tired voice, "and I bit my tongue halfway through. I think we went through some hotbeds, too, but I hadn't time to look."

"Tish," I said firmly, "I want you to think, long and hard. Is it worth it? What are they going to pay you a thousand dollars a week to risk? Your beauty, your virtue or your neck? I leave it to you to guess."

"It's my neck," said Tish coldly.

"Well, you've lost the head that belongs on it," I retorted. And I went home.

We were to leave on a Monday, and the Saturday before Tish called me by telephone.

"I've been thinking, Lizzie," she said. "A portion of my picture is laid in the desert. We'd better take some antisnake-bite serum."

"Where do you get it?"

"For heaven's sake, don't bother me with detail," she snapped. "Try the snake house at the Zoo."

I did so, and I must say the man acted strangely about it.

"For snake bite?" he inquired. "Who's been bitten?"

"Nobody's been bitten," I said with dignity. "I just want a little to have on hand in case of trouble."

He looked around and lowered his voice. "I get you," he said. "Well, I haven't any now, but I will have next week. Eight dollars a quart. Prewar stuff."

When I told him I couldn't wait he stared at me strangely, and when I turned at the door he had called another man, and they were both looking after me and shaking their heads.

IV

It had been the desire of Tish's life to fly in an aëroplane, and we knew by this time that much of her story was laid in the air. But during the trip west I believe she lost some of her fine enthusiasm. This was due, I imagine, to the repeated stories of crashes with which the newspapers were filled, and also to the fact that we passed one airship abandoned in a field, and showing signs of having fallen from a considerable height.

This theory was borne out, I admit, by Tish's reception of Mr. Stein at the station in Los Angeles.

"We've got a small dirigible for the bootleggers, Miss Carberry," he said cheerfully, "and a fast pursuit plane for you, machine gun and all. Got the plane cheap, after a crash. A dollar saved is a dollar earned, you know!"

Tish, I thought, went a trifle pale.

"You won't need them, Mr. Stein. I'm going to take the story out of the air."

"Great Scott! What for?" he exclaimed.

"It is too improbable."

"Improbable! Of course it is. That's the point." Then he leaned forward and patted her reassuringly. "Now, see here, Miss Carberry," he said, "don't you worry! We've got a good pilot for you, and everything. You're as safe there as you are in this car."

Unfortunately the car at that moment failed to make a sharp turn, left the road, leaped a ditch, and brought up in a plowed field. It seemed a bad omen to begin with, and Tish, I think, so considered it.

"My nephew developed jaundice after an air ride, Mr. Stein," she said as the driver backed the car onto the road, and we pulled Aggie from beneath the three of us. "An attack of jaundice on my part would hold up the picture indefinitely."

But Mr. Stein was ready for that, as we later found him ready for every emergency.

"We've a doctor on the lot, Miss Carberry," he said. "Specializes in jaundice. Don't you worry at all."

Looking back, both Aggie and I realize the significance of the remark he made on leaving us after having settled us at the hotel.

"We've made one or two changes in the story, Miss Carberry," he said. "Nothing you will object to." He smiled genially. "Have to give the scenario department something to do to earn their salaries!"

Had Tish not been preoccupied this would not have gone unchallenged. But she was staring up just then at the blue California sky, where an aviator was looping the loop, and so forth, and she made no comment.

When we recall our California experience, Aggie and I date our first disappointment from the following day, Tish's first at the studio.

Though Tish cannot be termed a handsome woman, she has a certain majesty of mien, which has its own charm. Her new transformation, too, had softened certain of her facial angles, and we had felt that she would have real distinction on the screen. But it was to be otherwise, alas!

Aggie and I had been put out, and sat on the dressing-room steps, perspiring freely, while numerous people came and went from Tish's room. We had heard of the great change effected by the make-up, and our hopes were high. We had not expected her to compete with the various beauties of the silver sheet, but we had expected to find her natural charms emphasized.

But when, some time later, the door opened and Tish appeared, what shall I say? It was Tish, of course, but Tish in an old skirt and a blouse, with no transformation, and her own hair slicked into a hard knot on top of her head.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and she can never be utterly plain to us. But I must say she was not ornamental.

She did not speak, nor did we. She simply passed us, stalking across the lot to a large glassed-in building, and I went in to comfort Hannah.

V

The picture, The Sky Pirate, having made a great success, I need only briefly outline Tish's story. As an elderly clerk in the secret service, she is appalled by the amount of rum smuggling going on, especially by dirigible from Mexico. She volunteers to stop it, and is refused permission. She then steals an airship from the Army, funds from the Treasury in Washington, an air pilot from the Marines, and starts West, unheralded and unsung, in pursuit of her laudable purpose.

The various incidents, as the great American public will recall, include her fastening a Mexican governor in a cave by exploding dynamite in the hillside above him; dropping from a bridge to a moving train below to search the express car for liquor; trapping the chief smuggler on top of the structural-iron framework of a building, and so on. In the end, by holding up the smugglers' dirigible with her own aëroplane and a machine gun, Tish forces them to hand over the valise containing their ill-gotten gains, and with it descends by a parachute to the ground and safety. Later on, as you will recall, she finds the smugglers at an orgy, and with two revolvers arrests them all.

This simple outline only barely reveals the plan of the story. It says nothing of the pursuits on horseback, the shipwreck, the fire, and so on. But it shows clearly that the original story contained no love interest.

I lay stress on this at this point in the narration, because it was very early in the picture that we began to notice Mr. Macmanus.

Mr. Macmanus was a tall gentleman with a gray mustache, and with a vague resemblance to Mr. Ostermaier, but lacking the latter's saintliness of expression. We paid little attention to him at first, but he was always around when Tish was being photographed—or shot, as the technical term is—and in his make-up.

Aggie rather admired him, and spoke to him one day while he was feeding peanuts to Katie, the tame studio elephant—of whom more anon.

"Are you being shot to-day?" she inquired.

"No madam. Not to-day, nor even at sunrise!" he replied in a bitter tone. "From what I can discover, I am being paid my salary to prevent my appearance on any screen."

He then gloomily fed the empty bag to Katie, and went away.

We had no solution for the mystery of Mr. Macmanus at that period, and indeed temporarily forgot him. For the time had come for Tish to take the air, and both Aggie and I were very nervous.

Even Tish herself toyed with her breakfast the morning of that day, and spoke touchingly of Charlie Sands, observing that she was his only surviving relative, and that perhaps it was wrong and selfish of her to take certain risks. To add to our anxiety, the morning paper chronicled the story of a fatal crash the day before, and she went, I think, a trifle pale. Later on, however, she rallied superbly.

"After all," she said, "the percentage of accident is only one in five hundred. I am sorry for the poor wretch, but it saves the lives of four hundred and ninety-nine others. Figures do not lie."

From that time on she was quite buoyant, and ate a lamb chop with appetite.

During the flight Aggie, Hannah and I remained in the open, looking up, and I must admit that it was a nervous time for us, seeing our dear Tish head down above the earth, and engaged in other life-imperiling exploits. But she came down smiling and, when the aëroplane stopped, spoke cheerfully.

"A marvelous experience," she observed. "One feels akin to the birds. One soars, and loses memory of earth."

She was then helped out, but owing to the recent altitude her knees refused to support her, and she sank to the ground.

VI

There were, of course, occasional misadventures. There was that terrible day, for instance, when Tish hung from a bridge by her hands, ready to drop to a train beneath, when through some mistake the train was switched to another track and our dear Letitia was left hanging, like Mohammed's coffin, between heaven and earth. And that other day, of wretched memory, when on exploding the hillside to imprison the governor, a large stone flew up and struck Aggie violently in the mouth, dislodging her upper plate and almost strangling her.

There was, again, the time when the smugglers set fire to the building Tish was in, and the fire department did not receive its signal and failed to arrive until almost too late.

But in the main, things went very well. There were peaceful days when Aggie and I fed peanuts to the little studio elephant, Katie, and indeed became quite friendly with Katie, who dragged certain heavy articles about the lot and often roamed at will, her harness chains dangling. And there were hot days when we sought the shelter of the cool hangar which housed the smugglers' dirigible, or baby blimp as it was called, and where we had concealed several bottles of blackberry cordial against emergency.

At such times we frequently discussed what Aggie now termed the Macmanus mystery. For such it had become.

"He's not hanging around for any good purpose, Lizzie," Aggie frequently observed. "He's in Tish's picture somehow, and—I think he is a lover!"

We had not mentioned him to Tish, but on the next day after she took her parachute leap we learned that she had her own suspicions about him.

I may say here, before continuing with my narrative, that Tish's parachute experience was without accident, although not without incident. She was to leap with the bag of stage money she had captured in the air from the smugglers, and this she did. But a gust of wind caught her, and it was our painful experience to see her lifted on the gale and blown out of sight toward the mountains.

Several automobiles and the dirigible immediately started after her, but dusk fell and she had not returned to us. Even now I cannot picture those waiting hours without emotion. At one moment we visualized her sitting on some lonely mountain crag, and at another still floating on, perhaps indefinitely, a lonely bit of flotsam at the mercy of the elements.

At nine o'clock that night, however, she returned, slightly irritable but unhurt.

"For heaven's sake, Aggie," she said briskly, "stop sneezing and crying, and order me some supper. I've been sitting in a ranch house, with a nervous woman pointing a gun at me, for three hours."

It developed that she had landed in the country, and had untied the parachute and started with her valise full of stage money back toward the studio, but that she had stopped to ask for supper at a ranch, and the woman there had looked in the bag while Tish was washing, and had taken her for a bank robber.

"If she had ever looked away," Tish said, "I could have grabbed the gun. But she was cross-eyed, and I don't know yet which eye she watched with."

As I have said, it was the next day that we learned that Tish herself had grown suspicious about Mr. Macmanus.

She sent for us to come to her dressing room, and when we appeared she said, "I want you both here for a few minutes. Light a cigarette, Hannah. Mr. Stein's coming."

To our horror Hannah produced a box of cigarettes and lighted one by holding it in the flame of a match. But we were relieved to find that Tish did not intend to smoke it. Hannah placed it in an ash tray on the table and left it there.

"Local color," Tish said laconically. "They think a woman's queer here if she doesn't smoke. Come in, Mr. Stein."

When Mr. Stein entered he was uneasy, we thought, but he wore his usual smile.

"Going like a breeze, Miss Carberry," he said.

"Yes," said Tish grimly. "And so am I!"

"What do you mean, going?" said Mr. Stein, slightly changing color. "You can't quit on us, Miss Carberry. We've spent a quarter of a million dollars already."

"And I've risked a million-dollar life."

"We've been carrying insurance on you."

"Oh, you have!" said Tish, and eyed him coldly. "I hope you've got Mr. Macmanus insured too."

"Just why Mr. Macmanus, Miss Carberry?"

"Because," Tish said with her usual candor, "I propose physical assault, and possibly murder, if he's brought on the set with me."

"Now see here," he said soothingly, "you're just tired, Miss Carberry. Ladies, how about a glass of that homemade TNT for Miss Tish? And a little all round?"

But when none of us moved he was forced to state his case, as he called it.

"You see, Miss Carberry," he said, "we've made the old girl pretty hardboiled, so far. Now the public's going to want to see her softer side."

"As, for instance?"

"Well, something like this: The rancher who's been the secret head of the smugglers, he's a decent fellow at heart, see? Only got into it to pay the mortgage on the old home. Well, now, why not a bit of sentiment between you and him at the end? Nothing splashy, just a nice refined church and a kiss." When he saw Tish's face he went on, speaking very fast. "Not more than a four-foot kiss, if that. We've got to do it, Miss Carberry. I've been wiring our houses all over the country, and they're unanimous."

At Tish's firm refusal he grew almost tearful, saying he dared not fly in the face of tradition, and that he couldn't even book the picture if he did. But Tish merely rose majestically and opened the door.

"I warned you, Mr. Stein, I would have no sex stuff in this picture."

"Sex stuff!" he cried. "Good Lord, you don't call that sex stuff, do you?"

"I dare say you call it platonic friendship here," Tish said in her coldest tone. "But my agreement stands. Good afternoon."

He went out, muttering.

VII

Just what happened within a day or two to determine Tish's later course, I cannot say. We know that she had a long talk with Mr. Macmanus himself, and that he maintained that his intentions were of the most honorable—namely, to earn a small salary—and that his idea was that the final embrace could be limited to his kissing her hand.

"I have ventured so to suggest, madam," Hannah reported him as saying, "but they care nothing for art here. Nothing. They reduce everything to its physical plane, absolutely."

That our dear Tish was in a trap evidently became increasingly clear to her as the next few days passed. Nothing else would have forced her to the immediate course she pursued, and which resulted in such ignominious failure.

It was, I believe, a week after the interview with Mr. Stein, and with the picture drawing rapidly to a close, that Tish retired early one night and was inaccessible to us.

We were entirely unsuspicious, as the day had been a hard one, Tish having been washed from her horse while crossing a stream and having sunk twice before they stopped shooting the picture to rescue her.

Aggie, I remember, was remarking that after all Macmanus was a handsome man, and that some people wouldn't object to being embraced by him at a thousand dollars a week, when Hannah came bolting in.

"She's gone!" she cried.

"Gone? Who's gone?"

"Miss Tish. Her room's empty and I can't find her valise."

Only partially attired we rushed along the corridor. Hannah had been only too right. Our dear Tish had flown.

I did not then, nor do I now, admit that this flight, and the other which followed it, indicate any weakness in Letitia Carberry. The strongest characters must now and then face situations too strong for them and depart, as the poet says, "to fight another day."

I do, however, question the wisdom of her course, for it put her enemies on guard and involved us finally in most unhappy circumstances.

Be that as it may, we had closed Tish's door on its emptiness and were about to depart, when on turning she herself stood before us!

She said nothing. She simply passed on and into the room, traveling bag in hand, and closed and locked the door between us.

We believe now that her flight was not unexpected, and that her door and windows had been under surveillance. Certainly she was met at the station by Mr. Stein and his attorney and was forced to turn back, under threat of such legal penalties as we know not of. Certainly, too, she had closed that avenue of escape to further attempts, and knew it.

But from Tish herself we have until now had no confidences.

Some slight revenge she had, we know, the following day. As this portion of the picture has received very good notices, it may interest the reader to know under what circumstances it was taken.

I have mentioned the scene in the studio where the smugglers were banqueting, and Tish, followed by revenue officers, was to appear and, after a shot or two, force them to subjection. Aggie and I had been permitted to watch this, the crowning scene of the picture, and stood behind the camera. The musicians were playing For He's a Jolly Good Fellow, and the rum runners were drinking cold tea in champagne glasses and getting very drunk over it, when Tish entered.

Aggie took one look at her and clutched my arm.

"I don't like her expression, Lizzie," she whispered. "She——"

At that moment Tish fired, and the bandit who'd been standing gave a loud bellow. She had shot his wine glass out of his hand.

"Stop the camera!" the chief smuggler called in a loud voice. "She's crazy! She's got that gun loaded!"

The director, however, seemed delighted, and called to the camera men to keep on grinding.

"Great stuff, Miss Carberry!" he yelled. "I didn't think anybody could put life in these wooden soldiers, but you have. Keep it up, only don't kill anyone. Hold it, everybody! Camera! Camera! Now shoot out the lights, Miss Carberry, and I'll think up something to follow while you're doing it."

I believe now that he referred to the candles on the table, but Tish either did not or would not understand. A second later there were two crashes of broken glass, and wild howls from the men with the arc lamps above, which lighted the scene. The stage was in semidarkness, and pieces of glass and metal and the most frightful language continued to drop from above. In the confusion all I could hear was the director muttering something about five hundred dollars gone to perdition, and the rush of the entire company from the stage.

It has been no surprise to me that this scene has made the great hit of the picture, the critics describing it as a classical study in fear. It was, indeed.

This small explosion of indignation had one good effect, however. Tish was almost her own self that night, recalling with a certain humor that a piece of one arc lamp had fallen down and had hit Mr. Macmanus on the head.

VIII

Tish is the most open and candid of women, and nothing so rouses her indignation as trickery. Had Mr. Stein not resorted to stratagem to compel her consent to the final scenes, I believe a compromise might have been effected.

It was his deliberate attempt to imprison Tish on the lot the night before those final shots which brought about the catastrophe. To pretend, as he does now, that he thought we had left at midnight does not absolve him.

The fact remains that after the final night shots, when Tish had her make-up off and we started to leave, we found that the gates were locked and the gatekeeper gone. What is more, there was a

man across the street behind a tree box, watching the exit.

Tish called to him in an angry voice, but he pretended not to be there, and we finally turned away.

From the beginning Tish had recognized it as a trick, and she lost but little time in organizing herself for escape. A trial of the high fence which surrounded the lot, with Aggie on Tish's shoulders while Tish stood on a box, revealed three strands of heavy barbed wire. But, more than that, Aggie declared that there were guards here and there all around.

On receiving this information Tish stood for a moment in deep thought. She then instructed Aggie to go on to the balloon hangar and open the doors, while she and I gathered up her personal possessions and followed.

It is not our method to question Tish at such times; ours not to reason why, ours but to do and die. But I confess to a certain uneasiness. If she proposed to escape by means of the baby blimp, well and good. At the same time, it required a dozen men to haul the balloon out of its shed, and we were but three weak women. I believed that she had overlooked this, but, as usual, I underestimated her.

On reaching the hangar I found the door open, and I could see in the darkness the large balloon, with what appeared to be a smaller one beside it, a matter of surprise to me, as I knew of no other. But I could not see Aggie.

I entered as quietly as possible and advanced into the hangar.

"Aggie!" I called in a low tone. "Aggie! Where are you?"

There was a silence, then from somewhere above came a sneeze, followed by Aggie's voice, broken and trembling.

"On—on a r-r-rafter, Lizzie," she said.

I could not believe my ears and advanced towards the sound. Suddenly Aggie yelled, and at the same moment the smaller balloon lurched and came toward me.

"Run!" Aggie yelled. "Run. She's after you!"

Unfortunately, the warning came too late. Something reached out from the running balloon and caught me around the body, and the next moment, to my horror, I was lifted off the ground and thrust up

into the timbers which supported the roof of the building. I am a heavy woman, and only by a desperate effort did I catch a rafter as the thing let go of me, and drew myself to safety. Aggie was somewhere close at hand, sobbing in the darkness.

It was a moment before I could speak. Then I managed to ask what had happened to me.

"It's Katie, Lizzie," Aggie said between sobs. "I think she must have found the blackberry cordial we left here, and it's gone to her head!"

Our position was very unfortunate, especially as time was important. Katie was merely playful, but on any attempt to move on our part she would trumpet loudly and reach up for us. Most annoying of all, she had taken a fancy to one of my shoes and kept reaching up and pulling at it.

"Let her have it, if it keeps her quiet," Aggie said tartly when I told her. "Give her anything she wants. Give her your bonnet. I never liked it, anyhow."

It was then after midnight, but fortunately it was very soon after that that we saw an electric flash and heard our dear Tish's voice.

"Aggie! Lizzie!" she called. And then she saw the elephant and advanced toward her.

"Katie!" she said. "What are you doing here? I've been looking for you all over the lot!" She then turned the flash on Katie and beheld her swaying. "Shame on you," she said. "I believe you've been drinking."

"Don't reprove her; kill her"; Aggie said suddenly from overhead, and Tish looked up.

"I thought so," she said rather sharply. "I cannot count on the faintest coöperation. I need two courageous hearts, and I find you roosting like frightened chickens on a beam. That elephant's harmless. She's only playing."

"I don't like the way she plays, then," I protested angrily. "If you do, play with her yourself."

But Tish had no time for irony. She simply picked up a piece of wood from the ground and hit Katie on the trunk with it.

"Now!" she said. "Bring them down, you shame to your sex. And be gentle. Remember you are not quite yourself."

Thanks to Tish's dominance over all types of inferior minds, Katie at once obeyed, and brought us down without difficulty.

Then she ambled unsteadily to a corner, and proceeded to empty another bottle of cordial we had concealed there.

I have always considered, in spite of its dénouement, that Tish's idea of using Katie to drag the blimp out of the shed was a brilliant one. Katie herself made no demur. She stood swaying gently while we harnessed her to the balloon and at the word she bent to her work. Tish was in the car, examining the controls at the time, and turning up what I believe are called the flippers, which direct its course away from Mother Earth.

But I have blamed her for her impatience in starting the engine before we had unfastened Katie's harness. Tish has a tendency now and then toward hasty action, which she always regrets later. There is this excuse for her, however: She had apparently no idea that the balloon would rise the moment the propeller reached a certain number of revolutions. But it did.

It seemed only a moment after we heard the engine start that I felt the car lifting from the earth, and in desperation flung myself into it, as Aggie did the same thing from the other side.

The next instant we were well above the ground, and from below there was coming a terrible trumpeting and squealing. We all looked over the side, and there beneath us was Katie, fastened to us by her harness and rising with us!

I shall never forget that moment. One and all, we are members of the Humane Society. And if Katie's ropes and straps gave way, she would certainly fall to a terrible death. Even Tish lost her sang-froid and, frantically starting the engine, endeavored to maneuver the thing to earth again. But anybody who has traveled in a blimp knows that it cannot be brought to earth again without outside aid.

Moreover, we were already outside the studio grounds, and traveling over roofs which Katie barely escaped. Indeed, from certain sounds, we had reason to believe that she was striking

numerous chimneys, and I think now that this may account for the stories of a mysterious electric storm that night, which destroyed a half dozen chimneys in one block.

It was a fortunate thing that Tish remembered in time to elevate the flippers still further, thus giving us a certain amount of leeway. But a strong breeze from the sea had sprung up and was carrying us toward the city, and it became increasingly evident that, even if we cleared the highest buildings, Katie would not.

It was a tragic moment. Aggie proposed lightening the craft by throwing out the bottles of liquor, which had been a part of the smugglers' cargo in the picture, but Tish restrained her.

"Better to kill an elephant," she said, "than to brain some harmless wretch below."

Katie meanwhile had lapsed into the silence of despair, or possibly had fainted. I do not know, nor is it now pertinent, for in a few moments the situation solved itself. We had barely missed the roof of the First National Bank Building when the blimp gave a terrific jar, and momentarily stopped.

On looking over the side the cause of this was explained. Katie had landed squarely on the flat roof of the building, and had immediately thrown her trunk around a chimney and braced herself. Even as we looked, her harness parted and left her free of us.

Katie was saved.

Glancing again over the side as we quickly rose, we could see her in the moonlight still hugging her chimney and gazing after us. What thoughts were hers we cannot know.

I am glad to solve in this manner a problem which caused much perplexity throughout the country—namely, how an elephant could have reached the roof of the First National Bank Building, to which the only possible entrance was through a trapdoor two feet six inches each way. As will be seen, the explanation, like that of many mysteries, is entirely simple.

It is necessary to touch but lightly on the unfortunate incident which concluded our escape. That the apparently friendly villagers who, the next morning, ran out from their peaceful businesses to haul on our ropes and bring us to a landing, should so change in attitude in a few moments has ever since been a warning to us of the innate suspicion of human nature.

How could they look at Tish's firm and noble face, and so misread it? Why did they not at once open the smugglers' rum cargo which had remained in the car, and discover that the liquid in the bottles was only cold tea?

Can it be possible that Charlie Sands' explanation is correct, and that the fact that many of them purchased the stuff from the sheriff and later threatened to lynch him, can account for his peculiar malignity to us?

One thing is certain—they held us in the local jail for days, until Charlie Sands was able to rescue us.

We never saw Mr. Stein again. Nor, frankly, did we ever expect to see Tish's picture, since she had not finished it. But, as all the world now knows, it opened in June of this current year, and made a great success.

But our surprise at this was as nothing compared with the fact that Tish's name did not appear in connection with it, and that the announcements read: "Featuring Miss Betty Carlisle."

There had been no Miss Carlisle in Tish's cast.

On the opening night we went to see it, accompanied by Charlie Sands. He said very little while watching Tish perform her various exploits, but when, after the shooting scene, Tish prepared to depart he protested.

"I've stood it up to this point," he said grimly. "I propose to see it through."

"There will be no more, Charles," Tish explained in an indulgent manner. "I quit at the end of this scene. Be glad of one picture which does not end with an embrace."

But she had spoken too soon!

Judge of our amazement when we saw our Tish, on the screen, disappear through a doorway, and return a moment later, a young and beautiful girl, who was at once clasped in Mr. Macmanus' arms.

The title was: Her Elderly Disguise at Last Removed!

HIJACK AND THE GAME

I

It was last May that Tish's cousin, Annabelle Carter, wrote to her and asked her to take Lily May for the summer.

"I need a rest, Tish," she wrote. "I need a rest from her. I want to go off where I can eat a cup custard without her looking at my waistline, and can smoke an occasional cigarette without having to steal one of hers when she is out. I may even bob my hair."

"She'll smoke no cigarettes here," Tish interjected. "And Annabelle Carter's a fool. Always was and always will be. Bob her hair indeed!"

She read on: "I want you to take her, Tish, and show her that high principles still exist in the older generation. They seem to think we are all hypocrites and whited sepulchers. But most of all, I want to get her away from Billy Field. He is an enchanting person, but he couldn't buy gas for her car. Jim says if he can earn a thousand dollars this summer he'll think about it. But outside of bootlegging, how can he? And he has promised not to do that."

Tish had read us the letter, but she had already made up her mind.

"It is a duty," she said, "and I have never shirked a duty. Annabelle Carter has no more right to have a daughter than I have; I've seen her playing bridge and poker before that child. And she serves liquor in her house, although it is against the law of the nation."

And later on: "What the girl needs," she said, "is to be taken away from the artificial life she is living, and to meet with Nature. Nature," she said, "is always natural. A mountain is always a

mountain; the sea is the sea. Sufficient of either should make her forget that boy."

"Too much of either might, Tish," I said, rather tartly. "You can drown her or throw her over a precipice, of course. But if you think she'll trade him for a view or a sailboat, you'd better think again."

But Tish was not listening.

"An island," she said, "would be ideal. Just the four of us, and Hannah. Simple living and high thinking. That's what the young girls of to-day require."

"I often wonder," Aggie said sadly, "what Mr. Wiggins would have thought of them! I remember how shocked he was when his Cousin Harriet used ice on her face before a party, to make her cheeks pink."

So the matter was determined, and Tish appealed to Charlie Sands, her nephew, to find her an island. I shall never forget his face when she told him why.

"A flapper!" he said. "Well, your work's cut out for you all right."

"Nonsense!" Tish said sharply. "I have been a girl myself. I understand girls."

"Have you made any preparations for her?"

"I've bought a set of Louisa M. Alcott. And I can hire a piano if she wants to keep in practice."

"Oh, she'll keep in practice all right," he said, "but I wouldn't bother with a piano." He did not explain this, but went away soon after. "I'll do my best to find you an island," he said cryptically, as he departed, "but the chances are she can swim."

That last sentence of his made Tish thoughtful, and she determined that, if our summer was to be spent on the sea, we should all learn to swim. I cannot say that the result was successful. Indeed, our very first lesson almost ended in a tragedy, for it was Tish's theory that one must start in deep water.

"The natural buoyancy of the water is greater there," she said. "One goes in and then simply strikes out."

She did this, therefore, standing on the diving board in the correct position—the instructor was not yet ready—and made a very nice dive. But she did not come up again, although the water was very agitated, and after a time Aggie became alarmed and called the instructor. He found her at last, but she was so filled with water that we abandoned the lesson for the day.

As the instructor said to her, "All you need is a few goldfish, lady, and you'd be a first-class aquarium."

And then, with all our ideas of setting Lily May an example of dignity and decorum, along about the middle of June Hannah, going out on a Thursday, came creeping in about nine o'clock at night and brought in the tray with cake and blackberry cordial, with her hat on.

"What do you mean," Tish demanded, fixing her with a stony glare, "by coming in here like that?"

Hannah set the tray down and looked rather pale.

"It's my hat, Miss Tish," she said; "and it's my head."

"Take it off," said Tish. "Your hat, not your head. Not that you'd miss one more than the other."

So Hannah took her hat off, and she had had her hair shingle-bobbed! I never saw anything more dreadful, unless it was our dear Tish's face. She looked at her for some moments in silence.

"Have you seen yourself?" she demanded.

"Yes."

"Then I shall add no further punishment," said Tish grimly. "But as I do not propose to look at you in this condition, you will continue to wear a hat until it grows out again."

"I'm to wear a hat over the stove?"

"You're to wear a hat over yourself, Hannah," Tish corrected her, and Hannah went out in tears.

It was very strange, after that, to see Hannah serving the table with a hat on, but our dear Tish is firmness itself when it comes to a matter of principle, and even the discovery of an artificial rosebud in

the stewed lamb one day did not cause her to weaken. I shall, however, never forget Lily May's expression when Hannah served luncheon the day she arrived.

She came in, followed by a taxi man and the janitor of Tish's apartment building, who were loaded down with bags and hat boxes, and having kissed Tish without any particular warmth, turned to the janitor.

"Go easy with that bag, Charles," she said. His name is not Charles, but this seemed not to worry her. "If you break the contents Miss Carberry will be out her summer liquor."

As Tish has been for many years a member of the W.C.T.U., she protested at once, but the taxi man seemed to think it funny until Tish turned on him.

"It is you," she said, "and your kind who make it impossible to enforce the best law our nation has ever passed. If there is liquor in that bag," she said to Lily May, "it will not remain in this apartment one instant. Lizzie, open the bag, and pour the wretched stuff into the kitchen sink."

I was about to open the bag, when the taxi man said that, while he was not a drinking man, plenty of hospitals need stimulants.

"You pour it down the sink," he said, "and where is it? Nowhere, lady. But if I take it to the Samaritan, and they use it—why, it's a Christian action, as I see it."

I will say for Lily May that she offered no objection. She stood by, looking at each of us in turn and seeming rather puzzled. She only spoke once.

"Look here, Aunt Tish," she began, "I was only——"

"I shall discuss this with you later and in private," Tish cut in sternly, and motioned me to open the bag.

I did so, but it contained no alcoholic stimulant whatever; only a number of bottles and jars for the toilet. Tish eyed them, and then turned to Lily May.

"Have I your word of honor," she said, "that these are what they purport to be?"

"Probably not," said Lily May coolly. "Nothing is these days. But there's nothing there for Volstead to beat his breast about. I tried to tell you."

While she was in her room taking off her things, Tish expressed herself with her usual clearness on the situation in which she found herself.

"Already," she said, "the girl has shown two of the most undesirable modern qualities—flippancy and a disregard for the law of the nation. I am convinced that I saw a box of rouge in that bag, Lizzie."

But when, later on, she accused Lily May of making up her face, Lily May only smiled sweetly and said she was obliged to do so.

"Obliged!" Tish sniffed. "Don't talk nonsense."

"Not nonsense at all," said Lily May. "All the——" She seemed to hesitate. "It's like this," she said. "Make-up is respectable. The other thing isn't. When you see a woman these days with a dead-white face, watch her. That's all."

Poor Aggie cast an agonized glance at herself in the mirror, but Tish stared hard at Lily May.

"There are certain subjects on which I do not wish to be informed," she said coldly.

"Oh, very well," said Lily May. "If you like to think that the Easter bunny lays hardboiled eggs——"

I must say things looked very uncomfortable from the start. Nobody could accuse Lily May of being any trouble, or even of being unpleasant; she had a very sweet smile, and she did everything she was told. But she seemed to regard the three of us as mere children, and this was particularly galling to Tish.

"Why shouldn't we see that picture?" Tish demanded one night, when she steered us away from a movie we had been waiting three weeks to see.

"It's not a nice movie," said Lily May gently, and took us to see The Ten Commandments, which we had already seen three times.

It was a difficult situation, for of course Tish could not insist on going, after that. And Aggie suffered also, for on the hay-fever season coming on she brought out her medicinal cigarettes, and Lily

May walked right out and bought her a vaporizing lamp instead, which smelled simply horrible when lighted.

But it was over Hannah that Tish suffered the most, for of course Lily May had had her hair bobbed, and Hannah rebelled the first minute she saw it.

"Either she wears a hat or I don't, Miss Tish," she said. "And you'd better put a hat on her. The way that janitor is hanging around this place is simply sinful."

It ended by Hannah abandoning her hat, copying Lily May's method of fixing her hair; only where Lily May's hair hung straight and dark, Hannah was obliged to use soap to gain the same effect.

As Tish observed to her scathingly, "It will break off some night in your sleep. And then where will you be?"

It became evident before long that the city simply would not do for Lily May. The grocer's boy took to forgetting things so he could make a second trip, and in the market one day Mr. Jurgens, Tish's butcher, handed Lily May a bunch of pansies.

"Pansies are for thoughts, Miss Lily May," he said.

And Tish said he looked so like a sick calf that she absently ordered veal for dinner, although she had meant to have lamb chops.

Other things, too, began to worry us. One was that although Lily May had, according to orders, received no letters from the Field youth, Hannah's mail had suddenly increased. For years she had received scarcely anything but the catalogue of a mail-order house, and now there was seldom a mail went by without her getting something.

Another was Tish's discovery that Lily May wore hardly any clothes. I shall never forget the day Tish discovered how little she actually wore. It was wash day, and Tish had engaged Mrs. Schwartz for an extra day.

"There will be extra petticoats and—er—undergarments, Mrs. Schwartz," she explained. "I well remember in my young days that my dear mother always alluded to the expense of my frillies."

It has been Tish's theory for years that no decent woman ever appears without a flannel petticoat under her muslin one, and I shall never forget the severe lecture she read Aggie when, one warm summer day, she laid hers aside. It was therefore a serious shock to her to come home the next day and find Mrs. Schwartz scrubbing the kitchen floor, while Hannah was drinking a cup of tea and gossiping with her.

"The young lady's clothes!" said Mrs. Schwartz. "Why, bless your heart, I pressed them off in fifteen minutes."

It turned out that Lily May wore only a single garment beneath her frock. I cannot express in words Tish's shock at this discovery, or her complete discouragement when, having brought out her best white flannel petticoat and a muslin one with blind embroidery, of which she is very fond, Lily May flatly refused to put them on.

"Why?" she said. "I'm not going to pretend I haven't got legs. My feet have to be fastened to something."

It was in this emergency that Tish sent for Charlie Sands, but I regret to say that he was of very little assistance to us. Lily May was demure and quiet at first, and sat playing with something in her hand. Finally she dropped it, and it was a small white cube with spots on each side. Charlie Sands picked it up and looked at Lily May.

"Got the other?" he asked.

Well, she had, and it seems one plays a sort of game with them, for in a very short time they were both sitting on the floor, and she won, I think, a dollar and thirty cents.

I cannot recall this situation without a pang, for our dear Tish never gambles, and is averse to all games of chance. Indeed, she went so pale that Aggie hastily brought her a glass of blackberry cordial, and even this was unfortunate, for Lily May looked up and said, "If you want mother's recipe for homemade gin I think I can remember it."

Tish was utterly disheartened when Charlie Sands went away, but he seemed to think everything would be all right.

"She's a nice child," he said. "She's only living up to a type. And there isn't an ounce of hypocrisy in her. I can see through her, all right."

"I dare say," Tish retorted grimly. "So can anyone else, when the sun is shining."

But the climax really came when old Mr. Barnes, on the floor above Tish's apartment, sent her a note. It seems that he had asthma and sat at the window just above Lily May's, and the note he sent was to ask Tish not to smoke cigarettes out her window. I really thought Tish would have a stroke on the head of it, and if Annabelle Carter hadn't been in Europe I am quite sure she would have sent Lily May back home.

But there we were, with Lily May on our hands for three months, and Hannah already rolling her stockings below her knees and with one eyebrow almost gone, where she had tried to shave it to a line with a razor. And then one day Aggie began to talk about long hair being a worry, and that it would be easier to put on her tonic if it was short; and with that Tish took the island Charlie Sands had found, and we started.

II

I shall never forget Lily May's expression when she saw Tish trying on the knickerbockers which are her usual wear when in the open.

"Oh, I wouldn't!" she said in a sort of wail.

"Why not?" Tish demanded tartly. "At least they cover me, which is more than I can say of some of your clothes."

"But they're not—not feminine," said Lily May, and Tish stared at her.

"Feminine!" she said. "The outdoors is not a matter of sex. Thank God, the sea is sexless; so are the rocks and trees."

"But the people——"

"There will be no people," said Tish with an air of finality.

The next few days were busy ones. Tish had immediately, on learning that the New England coast has several varieties of fish, decided that we could combine change and isolation with fishing for

the market.

"Save for the cost of the bait," she said, "which should be immaterial, there is no expense involved. The sea is still free, although the bootleggers seem to think they own it. But I do not intend to profit by this freedom. The money thus earned will go to foreign missions."

She bought a book on New England fish, and spent a long time studying it. Then she went to our local fish market and secured a list of prices.

"With any luck," she said, "we should catch a hundred pounds or so a day. At sixty cents a pound, that's sixty dollars, or we'll say thirty-six hundred dollars for the summer. There may be a bad day now and then."

Mr. Ostermaier, our clergyman, was greatly impressed, and felt that the money should perhaps go toward a new organ. Tish, however, held out for missions, and in the end they compromised on a kitchen for the parish house.

Toward the end, Lily May began to take more interest in our preparations. At first she had been almost indifferent, observing that any old place would do, and the sooner the better.

"It will give you something to do," Tish told her severely.

"So would a case of hives," she replied, and lapsed again into the lethargy which Tish found so trying.

But, as I have said, she cheered up greatly before our departure, and we all felt much encouraged. She never spoke to us of Billy Field, but she had made Hannah a confidante, and Hannah told Aggie that it was apparently off.

"It's this way, Miss Aggie," she said. "He's got to earn a thousand dollars this summer, one way or another, and I guess he's about as likely to do it as you are to catch a whale."

Perhaps it was significant, although I did not think of it at the time, that Aggie did catch a whale later on; and that indeed our troubles began with that unlucky incident.

But Lily May became really quite cheery as the time for departure approached, and we began to grow very much attached to her, although she inadvertently got us into a certain amount of trouble

on the train going up.

She had brought along a pack of cards, and taught us a game called cold hands, a curious name, but a most interesting idea. One is dealt five cards, and puts a match in the center of the table. Then one holds up various combinations, such as pairs, three of a kind, and so on, and draws again. Whoever has the best hand at the end takes all the matches.

Tish, I remember, had all the matches in front of her, and rang for the porter to bring a fresh box. But when he came back the conductor came along and said gambling was not allowed.

"Gambling!" Tish said. "Gambling! Do you suppose I would gamble on this miserable railroad of yours, when at any moment I may have to meet my Creator?"

"If it isn't gambling, what is it?"

And then Lily May looked up at him sweetly and said, "Now run away and don't tease, or mamma spank."

That is exactly what she said. And instead of reproving her that wretched conductor only grinned at her and went away. What, as Tish says, can one do with a generation which threatens an older and wiser one with corporal punishment?

We had telegraphed ahead for a motor boat to meet us and take us over to Paris Island, and we found it waiting; quite a handsome boat named the Swallow, a name which Tish later observed evidently did not refer to the bird of that sort, but to other qualities it possessed.

"Swallow!" she snorted. "It's well named. The thing tried to swallow the whole Atlantic Ocean."

It was in charge of a young fisherman named Christopher Columbus Jefferson Spudd.

"It sounds rather like a coal bucket falling down the cellar stairs," said Lily May, giving him a cold glance.

And indeed he looked very queer. He had a nice face and a good figure, but his clothes were simply horrible. He wore a checked suit with a short coat, very tight at the waist, and pockets with buttons on everywhere. And he had a baby-blue necktie and a straw hat with a fancy ribbon on it, and too small for his head.

Lily May put her hand up as if he dazzled her, and said, “What do we call you if we want you? If we ever do,” she added unpleasantly.

“Just call me anything you like, miss,” he said with a long look at her, “and I’ll come running. I kind of like Christopher myself.”

“You would!” said Lily May, and turned her back on him.

But, as Tish said that night, we might as well employ him as anyone else.

“Do what we will,” she said, “we might as well recognize the fact that the presence of Lily May is to the other sex what catnip is to a cat. It simply sets them rolling. And,” she added, “if it must be somebody, better Christopher, who is young and presumably unattached, than an older man with a wife and children. Besides, his boat is a fast one, and we shall lose no time getting to and from the fishing grounds.”

We therefore decided to retain Christopher and the Swallow, although the price, two hundred and fifty dollars a month, seemed rather high.

“We do not need Christopher,” she said, “but if we must take him with the boat we must. He can chop wood and so on.”

We spent the next day getting settled. The island was a small one, with only a few fishermen’s houses on it, and Tish drew a sigh of relief.

“No man except Christopher,” she said to me. “And she detests him. And who can be small in the presence of the Atlantic Ocean? She will go back a different girl, Lizzie. Already she is less selfish. I heard her tell Hannah to-night, referring to Christopher, to ‘feed the brute well.’ There was true thoughtfulness behind that.”

Christopher, of course, ate in the kitchen.

It was the next morning that Tish called him in from the woodpile and asked him about the size of codfish.

“Codfish?” he said. “Well, now, I reckon they’d run a pound or so.”

“A pound or so?” Tish demanded indignantly. “There is one in the natural history museum at home that must weigh sixty pounds.”

"Oh, well," he said, "if you're talking about museum pieces, there are whales around here that weigh pretty considerable. But you take the run of cod, the oil variety, and you get 'em all sizes. Depends on their age," he added.

Tish says that she knew then that he was no fisherman, but it was not for several days that he told her his story.

"I am not exactly a fisherman," he said. "I can run a boat all right, so you needn't worry, but in the winter I clerk in a shoe store in Bangor, Maine. But there is no career in the shoe business, especially on a commission basis. In New England the real money goes to the half-sole-and-heel people."

"I suppose that's so," said Tish. "I never thought of it."

"Then," he went on, "you take automobiles. Did you ever think how they've hurt the sale of shoes? Nobody walks. Folks that used to buy a pair of shoes every year have dropped clean off my list. The tailors are getting my business."

"Tailors?" Tish asked.

"Putting new seats in trousers," he said gloomily, and stalked away.

The boat, he told us later, belonged to his uncle, who was a tailor. But he was not tailoring at present. As a matter of fact, he was at the moment in the state penitentiary, and that was how Christopher had the Swallow.

"He took to bootlegging on the side," he explained.

"It was a sort of natural evolution, as you may say. He noticed the wear and tear on hip pockets from carrying flasks, and it seized on his imagination." He mopped discouragedly at the boat, in which we were about to go on our first fishing trip, and sighed. "Many a case of good hard liquor has run the revenue blockade in this," he said.

"Well, there will be no liquor run in it while I'm renting it," said Tish firmly.

III

I cannot say that the fishing was what we had expected. There was plenty of fish, and Tish grew quite expert at opening clams and putting them on her hook. But as Aggie could never bear the smell of clams at any time, and as the rocking of the boat seriously disturbed her, we had rather a troublesome time with her. Once she even begged to be thrown overboard.

"Nonsense!" Tish said. "You can't swim and you know it."

"I don't want to swim, Tish," she said pitifully "I just want to die, and the quicker the better."

On rough days, too, when an occasional wave dashed over us, and Tish would shake herself and speak of the bracing effect of salt water, our poor Aggie would fall into violent sneezing, and more than once lost a fish by so doing. And I shall never forget the day when she drew up a squid, and the wretched thing squirted its ink all over her. There was a certain dignity in the way she turned her blackened face to Tish.

"I have stood for clams, Tish," she said, "and I have stood for the rocking of this d-damned boat. But when the very creatures of the deep insult me I'm through!"

As, however, a wave came overboard just then and removed practically all the ink, as well as the squid itself, she was fortunately unable to express herself further. It speaks well for our dear Tish's self-control that she allowed Aggie's speech to pass without reproof, and even offered her a small glass of blackberry cordial from the bottle we always carried with us.

But it was in the matter of payment for the fish that our plans suffered a serious reverse. We had on our first day out taken what we imagined was a hundred pounds of various sorts, many unknown to us, and on the way to the fish wharf, while Aggie and I neatly arranged them as to sizes, Tish figured out the probable value.

"About forty dollars," she said. "And if they take that thing with whiskers under its chin, even more. Gasoline, one dollar. Christopher's wages and boat hire per day, eight dollars. Clams, a

dollar and a quarter. Leaving a net profit of twenty-nine dollars and seventy-five cents, or clear every month eight hundred and seventy dollars and fifty cents."

She closed her notebook and we drew in under the fish wharf, where a man who was chewing tobacco came to the edge and looked down at us.

"We are selling these fish," Tish said with her usual dignity. "They are quite fresh, and ought to bring the best market rates."

The man spit into the water and then glanced at our boxes.

"Jerry!" he called. "Want any more fish?"

"What kind of fish?" a voice replied from back in the shed.

The man squinted again at our catch.

"Looks like succotash to me," he called.

Jerry came out and stared down at us, and then slowly descended the ladder to the boat. He had a mean face, Tish says, and he made us about as welcome as the bubonic plague. He said nothing, but picked out six haddock and handed them up to the man above.

"Thirty cents," he said.

"I'm paying sixty in the market," Tish protested.

"Thirty-five," he repeated, and started up the ladder.

"Forty," said Tish firmly.

"Look here," he said with bitterness, "all you've had to do is to catch those fish. That's easy; the sea's full of 'em. What have I got to do? I've got to clean 'em and pack 'em and ice 'em and ship 'em. I'm overpaying you; that's what I'm doing."

"What am I going to do with the others?" Tish demanded angrily. "Seventy pounds of good fish, and half the nation needing food."

"You might send it to Congress," he suggested. "They say it's good for the brain—phosphorus."

"You must eat a great deal of fish!" said Tish witheringly.

"Or," he said, brightening, "take it home to the cat. There's nothing a cat will get real worked up about like a nice mess of fish."

He then went up the ladder, leaving us in speechless fury. But Tish recovered quickly and began figuring again. "Six haddock at seven pounds each," she said. "Forty-two pounds at thirty-five cents

per pound, or about fourteen dollars. At least we've made our expenses. And of course we can eat some."

Aggie, who had felt the motion severely coming in, raised herself from the bottom of the boat at this, and asked for another sip of cordial.

"They smell," she wailed, and fell back again.

"All perfectly healthy fish smell," said Tish.

"So does a healthy skunk," said Aggie, holding her handkerchief to her nose, "but I don't pretend to like it."

And then Jerry came down the ladder and handed Tish a quarter and a five-cent piece!

"There you are," he said cheerfully. "One of them's a bit wormy, but we say here that a wormy fish is a healthy fish."

I draw a veil over the painful scene that followed. That fish house paid two-thirds of a cent a pound for fish, no more and no less, and the more Tish raged the higher Jerry retreated up the ladder until he was on the wharf again. From there he looked down at us before he disappeared.

"You might get more out in the desert, lady," he said as a parting shot. "But then, you'd get a pretty good price for a plate of ice cream in hell too."

And with that he disappeared, and left us to face our situation.

Our deficit on the day, according to Tish, was ten dollars. In three months it would amount to nine hundred dollars. She closed her notebook with a snap.

"Unless we count intangible assets," she said, "we shall certainly be bankrupt. Of course there is the gain in health; the salt air——"

"Health!" said Aggie feebly. "A little more of this, Tish Carberry, and Jerry will be cleaning and packing and icing and shipping something that isn't fish."

"Then again," said Tish, ignoring this outburst, "we may find something unusual. There are whales about here, according to Christopher. And the oil of the whale is still used, I believe."

But after learning from Christopher that whales ranged in size from fifty to one hundred feet, and were not caught on a line, however heavy, but with a knife thrown into some vital part, she was compelled to abandon this idea. Indeed, I do not know how we should have filled up our summer had it not been that on that very evening we received a visit from a Mr. MacDonald, who turned out to be the deputy sheriff on the island.

Aggie was still far from well that night. She said the floor kept rising and falling, and at dinner several times she had clutched at her plate to keep it from sliding off the table. So she had been about to pour herself a glass of blackberry cordial, when Lily May saw Mr. MacDonald coming, and hastily took the bottle and hid it under a table.

Christopher brought him in, and he sat down and began to sniff almost immediately. But he said that he had called to secure our assistance; it wasn't often he needed help, but he needed it now.

"It's these here rum runners, ladies," he said. "You take a place like this, all islands and about a million of them. We've got as much coast line as the state of California."

"Indeed?" said Tish politely.

"And they know every inch of it. And every trick," he added. "'Tain't more than a week now since the government inspector found a case of Black and White tied under the surface to one of the channel buoys. And who's to know whether the fellows hauling up lobster pots aren't hauling up something else too?"

"Very probably they are," said Tish dryly—"from the price of lobsters."

"There's liquor all around these waters. Last big storm we had, a lot of it must have got smashed up, and there was a porpoise reeling around the town wharf for two or three hours. Finally it brought up against one of the poles of the fish pier and went asleep there. It was a disgraceful exhibition."

"Tish," Aggie said suddenly, "if this floor doesn't keep still that bottle will upset."

Mr. MacDonald stared at her and then cleared his throat.

"Of course I'm taking for granted," he said, "that you ladies believe in upholding the law."

"We are members of the W.C.T.U.," Tish explained. "We stand ready to assist our nation in every possible way. We do not even believe in beer and light wines."

He seemed reassured at that, and explained what he wanted. The Government had a number of patrol boats outside, and they were doing their best, but in spite of them liquor was coming in and was being shipped hither and yon.

"The worst of it is," he said, "we don't know who we can trust. Only last week I paid a fellow fifteen dollars good money to take me out and locate a rum runner, and he got lost in the fog and had to come back. Yesterday I learned he got forty dollars from the other side for getting lost."

His idea was that under pretense of fishing we could assist him by watching for the criminals, and reporting anything we saw that was suspicious. As Tish said afterward, there was no profit for the church in the arrangement, but there was a spiritual gain to all of us.

"There are things one cannot measure in dollars and cents," she said.

We all agreed, and rose to see Mr. MacDonald to the door. But I think he left in a divided state of mind, for Christopher, standing near the table, upset the bottle of blackberry cordial, and Aggie, who had been watching it, gave a wail and started for it. But the floor was still going up and down to her, and her progress across the room was most unsteady.

It is to this unfortunate combination undoubtedly that we owe our later ill luck. For Mr. MacDonald caught her as she was about to bump the mantel, and still holding her, turned to Tish.

"That fellow that double-crossed me," he said with meaning, "he got thirty days."

"When we agree to do a thing we do it," Tish said stiffly.

"So did he," said Mr. MacDonald, and went away, taking a final sniff at the door.

Tish made her usual preparations for our new rôle. She at once sent to Bar Harbor for a pair of field glasses, and oiled and loaded her revolver.

"Not that I mean to shoot them," she said, "but a well-placed shot or two can wreck their engine. In that case all we shall have to do is to tow them in."

She procured also a good towing rope for this purpose, and spent her odd time the next day or two shooting at a floating target in the water. Unfortunately, the fact that a bullet will travel over the water like a skipping stone escaped her, and our next-door neighbor, who was just hauling in the largest halibut of the season, had the misfortune to have his line cut in half and of seeing the halibut escape.

On the other hand, her resolution was strengthened by a letter from Charlie Sands, her nephew, which showed the moral deterioration being fostered by these wretched liquor smugglers.

"Dear Aunt Tish," he wrote. "It has just occurred to me that you are near the Canadian border. Scotch ought to be good and also cheap there. Why not fill a hot-water bag or two for me? Even a bottle or two would not come amiss, and if you are nervous on the train I suggest the space outside your ventilator in the drawing-room."

Tish's indignation was intense. She wrote him a very sharp letter, informing him that she was now in the government service. "If the worst comes," she said, "I shall not hesitate to arrest my own family. No Carberry has been jailed yet for breaking the nation's laws, but it is not too late to begin."

It may have been pure coincidence, but Lily May ordered a hot-water bag from the mainland soon after that. She said her feet got cold at night.

I must confess Lily May puzzled us at that time. She would not go fishing, but stayed at home and insulted poor Christopher. She claimed that he spent most of his time at the woodpile smoking cigarettes, and so she would go out and watch him. Hannah said that her manner to him was really overbearing, and that she believed she said quite insulting things to him under her breath.

She counted the wood he cut too. Once Hannah heard her say, "Twice two fifty is five hundred. You've still five hundred to go."

And he groaned and said, "It's the h—— of a long way yet."

She was very odd about the revenue matter, also, and said very little when Tish got her badge.

"Well," she said, "it may stop a bullet. But that's all it will stop."

As Tish said, such cynicism in the young was really bewildering.

IV

It was the middle of July when Tish finally started on her dangerous duty. Aggie had begged to be left at home, but Tish had arranged a duty for each of us.

"I shall steer the boat," she said. "Aggie is to lower and lift up the anchor, and you, Lizzie, are to take charge of the fishing tackle and the bait."

We were, as I have said, to pretend to be fishing, and thus avert the suspicion of the bootleggers.

Lily May and Christopher saw us off, and Lily May's farewell was characteristic of her.

"Pick out a good-looking rum runner for me," Lily May called. "I know father would love to have one in the family."

We had gone about three miles, I think, when I heard a peculiar noise, like the rumbling of steam, but no one else noticed it. A little later, however, Aggie called out that there was a fountain playing not far ahead. Tish at once announced that it was a whale spouting, and changed our course so as to avoid it.

We saw no more of it, and Aggie was beginning to look white about the ears and the tip of the nose as usual, when Tish decided to drop our anchor and there take up our position. She therefore stopped the engine and Aggie heaved the anchor overboard. But we did not stop.

"There's certainly a very fast tide," Tish said, looking over the side. "We are going as fast as before."

"Then the bottom's moving too," Aggie said sharply. "The anchor's caught, all right."

We looked about. Either we were moving out to sea or Smith's Island was going toward the mainland and would soon collide with it. And at that moment the front end of the boat dipped down, shipping an enormous amount of sea, and throwing us all forward, and then the entire boat shot ahead as if it had been fired out of a gun.

"It's an earthquake, Tish," Aggie groaned, lying prone in the water.

Tish pulled herself to her knees and stared about her.

"It may be a tidal wave," she said. "But they go in, not out." She then stared again, forward, and finally rose to her feet. I followed her, and she lifted a shaking finger and pointed ahead. Only a hundred feet or so from us, and heading for Europe, was an enormous whale. One point of our anchor had caught in his blowhole, and we were traveling at what I imagine was sixty miles an hour or more.

"Really, Aggie," Tish said, "this is a little too much! I gave you the lightest duty on the boat—simply to anchor this boat to the bottom. Instead——"

"What did you want me to do?" Aggie demanded. "Go down with it, and hook it to a rock?"

"When I want a whale I'll ask for a whale," said Tish with dignity. But with her usual alertness she was already making a plan. She at once started the engine and put it in reverse. "After all," she said, "we have the thing, and we may as well try to take it in."

But there was no perceptible effect, and after a moment or so the engine choked, and would not start again. Tish's second thought, therefore, of running at the whale and stunning it until we could free ourselves, was not practical. And the creature itself began to show signs of extreme nervous irritation; it struck the water really terrific blows with its enormous broad flat tail, and Aggie remembered a moving picture she had seen, where a whale had turned in anger on a boat and had crushed it like a peanut shell.

And to add to our difficulties there was a fishing fleet ahead of us, and the creature was heading directly for it. We went through that fleet without touching a boat!

One fisherman yelled to us. “Better let go!” he called. “If you do get him what’ll you do with him?”

“If I ever get him,” Tish said grimly, “I’ll know what to do with him.”

But of course the man was a mile behind us by that time.

We had left the islands far behind us, and the last bit of land was out of sight. With her usual forethought Tish ordered us to put on our life preservers, and after that we set to work to endeavor to loosen the anchor rope from the ring to which it was fastened.

But the tension was too great, and careful search revealed no hatchet with which to cut ourselves free. Our knife had gone overboard with the first jerk. In this emergency my admiration for Tish was never greater.

“One of two things will happen,” she said. “Either he will go down to the sea bottom, taking the boat with him, or he will strike for his native haunts, which to the north whale is probably the arctic region around Greenland. In the first event, we have our life preservers; in the second case, our sweaters. And as there is nothing more to do, we may as well have our luncheon.”

Her courage was contagious, and while Aggie spread the cloth on our folding table, I brought out the sandwiches and coffee. I daresay the schooner had been in sight for some time, just ahead of us, before we noticed it, and Tish thinks that the whale was too excited to see it at all. Anyhow, we were within half a mile of it and heading directly at it when we first saw it.

Aggie was the first to see what was happening, and she ran forward and yelled to the other boat to head him off. But there was no one in sight on it, and the whale kept straight on. Within a hundred feet or so, however, he suddenly dived; the Swallow went on, however, striking the other boat in the center, and the jar must have loosened the anchor, for we remained on the surface.

It was then that a man carefully peered over the edge of the revenue boat and looked down at us.

“My land!” he said. “I was just waiting for you to explode!”

He then said that he had thought they had been struck by a torpedo, and on Tish explaining, he looked rather odd and brought two other men to look at us. In the end, however, we convinced them, and they invited us on board while they bailed our boat and fixed our engine.

The first man was the captain, and while Aggie made us some fresh tea in the galley Tish confided to him our real purpose, and showed him her badge.

He seemed greatly impressed, and said, “If more people would see their duty and do it, we would get rid of the rum evil.”

He then said that they were also a part of the revenue fleet, or had been. He didn’t know how long they could stick it out.

“I’m all right,” he said. “But now you take Joe and Bill, there. They’re not normal any more; it’s the loneliness gets them. Nothing to do but wait, you see.”

“You might try cross-word puzzles,” Tish suggested.

“We had a book of them,” he said dejectedly. “But Bill got mad one day trying to think of a South American river, in five letters, and flung it overboard.”

Over our tea Tish discoursed of the reasons which had turned us from our original idea to the revenue service, and the captain nodded his head.

“I know Jerry,” he said. “Now you take us. Wouldn’t you think we could fish out here, and fill in our spare time? Not a bit of it. It’s my belief Jerry’s running liquor, and he won’t let a revenue boat near the wharf.”

But he had, he said, discovered a way to circumvent Jerry. He and Bill and Joe fished, all right, only they dried the fish and packed them in boxes.

“Some day,” he said, “we’ll land those fish, and old Jerry will find the market glutted. That’s all; glutted.” He had, he said, a hundred boxes in the hold already. “Only trouble is,” he went on, “we’re getting overloaded. If a big sea comes along, and one’s due most any time, they may shift, and then where are we?”

It was just before we left, I remember, that he asked us if we wouldn't carry in a few boxes for him and land them at a cove on our island, where a friend of the captain's was living alone. And Tish agreed at once.

I have no wish to reflect on Tish; her motive, then as later, was of the highest, and for Charlie Sands to say what he does is most ungenerous. At the same time, her reckless kindness led us into serious trouble later on, and I hope will be a lesson to her.

We not only took the boxes of fish to Al Smith, at the cove, that day, but we made repeated excursions to the revenue boat from that time on, carrying back a dozen boxes or so at a time, and taking out an occasional batch of Aggie's doughnuts, a parcheesi game, and once a bottle of blackberry cordial.

"For *mal de mer*," Tish said kindly as she presented it, and it created a profound impression. Bill and Joe seemed quite overcome, and the captain was so moved that he had to walk away and wipe his eyes.

"It's not the gift," he said later. "It's the thought."

We had naturally not told Lily May. But one day when Mr. Smith, the captain's friend, was unpacking the boxes of fish at the cove, who should wander into sight but the child herself.

She came right up and looked at the boxes, and said, "What's that anyhow?"

"It's dried fish," said Tish. "And I'll thank you to say nothing about it."

I must say she gave Tish a very strange look.

"Well," she said, "I only hope you're getting something out of it."

"I am getting the pleasure of assisting people who need assistance."

"I'll tell the world you are!" said Lily May. And after giving Mr. Smith a most unpleasant look she went away again.

But the very next day, rounding the corner, who should we see but Lily May at Smith's wharf, sitting on the edge of the boat and smiling, and Mr. Smith talking in a very loud and angry voice. Once he even seemed to shake his fist at her, but she kept right on smiling.

She was certainly a queer child.

Then, one night early in August, we had another visit from Mr. MacDonald. He said that liquor was coming in from somewhere in quantities, and that trucks on the mainland were distributing it all over the country. I happened to have my eye on Lily May, and she turned pale. I said nothing to Tish, but from that time on Aggie and I kept a watch on her, and I really shudder to recall what we discovered. Night after night our boat was going out; sometimes with Christopher alone in it, and sometimes with Lily May also. And on one such night we quietly searched her room.

We knew she had practically no money, for her mother had been afraid she would run away, back to the Field boy. But under her mattress we found three hundred and twenty dollars, mostly in small bills!

I simply cannot record how we felt about it. Especially as in other ways the child was really quite lovable. She and Aggie had become great friends, and she would listen for hours while Aggie told her of Mr. Wiggins. But on Aggie's endeavoring to discuss bootlegging with her she would shut up like a clam. Aggie tried to draw her out.

"Of course," she said one day, "if we knew some of the reasons behind bootlegging, we might be more lenient."

But there was no use trying to gain her confidence. She only gave Aggie another of her strange looks, and got up and went away.

Tish knew nothing of our worry, and day after day we went out in the boat, watching for rum runners. On Tuesdays and Fridays we made our trips to the revenue boat, but on other days Aggie and I fished, while Tish stood erect with her glasses, sweeping the surface of the sea. She was particularly severe with the lobster men, and after showing her badge would search their boats carefully. On one such occasion a lobster fastened itself to her and remained unnoticed until Aggie gave a terrible scream. She had sat down on the thing.

But mostly life in the Swallow moved quietly enough. Aggie worked at a bag she was making out of steel beads, with a fishing line looped around her arm; a habit she was obliged to alter, after a

very large fish one day unexpectedly took her hook and but for Tish's presence of mind in grasping her feet would have taken her overboard. And I did most of my Christmas fancy-work.

And thus things were up to the twenty-ninth of August, a day, or rather a night, which none of us will ever forget. At two o'clock that afternoon three of us started out; at four in the morning I returned home alone, in such agony of spirit as can only be imagined when the facts are known.

V

It was our day to go out to the revenue boat, and there were indications of a fog. Poor Aggie did not want to go. It was as though she had a premonition of trouble, but Tish insisted, and even took along some seasick remedy. Aggie, who has been somewhat bitter since, should remember that, and the real kindness which lay behind it.

We made jelly in the morning, so it was late when we started, and the fog was fairly thick already. But Tish took along a compass, and we started at two p.m. For once Lily May insisted on going along, although the sea was very rough, and she flirted quite dreadfully with the captain of the revenue boat while Joe and Bill were loading.

But she was seasick on the way back, and so was Aggie. I took the lookout, therefore, and it must have been four or five miles from land that I saw something straight ahead in the fog, and Tish turned out just in time to avoid a bell buoy. It was not ringing!

Tish at once stopped and examined it. It consisted of a small platform above which rose a superstructure with a bell at the top, and clappers which struck the bell as the sea moved it this way and that. But the bell had fallen down and now lay on the platform.

"This is a very serious matter," Tish said. "This buoy is here to save our shipping. Undoubtedly it marks a reef. And now when it is most needed its warning voice is stilled."

"I wish you'd still your own voice, Tish," Aggie groaned. "Or else get out on it and yell ding-dong."

It was an unfortunate suggestion. Aggie was taking a dose of her remedy for sea-sickness at the moment, and she did not see Tish's eyes as they traveled from her to me, but I did.

"You couldn't do it, Lizzie," she said. "You're too stout. But Aggie could."

"Could what?" said Aggie, giving her a cold glance.

"Your duty," said Tish gravely. "That bell must ring, Aggie. The fog is intense, and all about are—or may be—men who depend on its warning signal for their lives. Can we fail them?"

"I can," said Aggie shortly.

Lily May said it was all nonsense, but "Give me a hammer and I'll do it," she said. "I suppose I can stick it out for an hour or so, and after that I dare say I'll not care."

But Tish said the child was in her care, and she was to stay just where she was. And in the end Aggie crawled onto the bell buoy, and we placed one of the boxes on the platform as a seat for her.

"It will take only a short time," were Tish's final words, "to get to the coast-guard station. We shall return at once."

But it was a painful sight, as we moved away, to see our poor Aggie thus marooned, watching us into the fog with wistful eyes and ever and anon striking the bell with the hammer as she sat on the box.

I did not see her again until three o'clock the next morning!

It was when we had gone about six miles by Tish's watch, while I watched the compass, that Tish suddenly announced something was wrong.

"Either we've missed the land altogether, Lizzie," she said, "or we've passed right over the Baptist church and are now at Graham's grocery store."

I handed the compass to her, but the moment she took it the needle turned about and continued pointing toward me. It was very unusual, and Tish stared at me with a justifiable irritation.

"Don't stand there pretending you're the magnetic pole," she snapped. "Move around, and see what the dratted thing will do."

Well, wherever I went that needle pointed at me. As events proved, for Tish to blame it on my gold tooth was quite unjustified, but it was not until in a burst of irritation she had flung it overboard that we discovered the true cause.

Aggie's workbag, containing a magnet for picking up steel beads, was on my arm.

All the time the fog was growing thicker, so that we could not see ten feet in any direction. And although we kept moving we never seemed to arrive anywhere. Once, indeed, I thought I heard faintly the sound of Aggie's hammer striking the bell, but it was very feeble and soon died away.

At seven o'clock it was already dark, and we had just two gallons of gasoline left. Tish shut off the engine and we considered our position.

"If we use all our gasoline the tide will carry us straight out to sea, and we may never get back," she said.

"And Aggie!" I said. "Our poor Aggie!"

"Aggie is all right," she said impatiently. "At least she doesn't have to get anywhere. We do."

We decided at last until the fog lifted to save our gasoline, in case we had to get out of the way of some vessel; and Tish—who can knit quite well in the dark—got out her work. But Lily May seemed to have recovered, and was acting very strangely.

For instance, she roused once from deep thought to suggest that we throw the boxes of fish overboard, and she seemed quite worried when Tish refused.

"Why should I?" Tish said. "They represent money and effort. They have a certain value."

Lily May muttered something about a thousand dollars and ten years, which I did not catch, and then became silent once more. But when, about seven o'clock, we all heard the engine of a boat not far off and Tish was for hailing it at once, she sharply said we'd better not.

"Nonsense!" said Tish, and had started to call when Lily May put a hand over her mouth.

"Haven't you any sense?" she demanded. "It may be a revenue boat."

"And what if it is?" said Tish.

Lily May sat down on the edge of a thwart and stared at us.

"Look here," she said, "is the little old bean gone, or has that shot of blackberry cordial gone to my head? What about this stuff you're loaded with?"

"If there is any fine connected with running fish," Tish said shortly, "I have yet to hear of it."

"Fish!" said Lily May in a disgusted tone. "I could do better than that myself. Why not canned corn? Or artificial legs? Or bunion plasters?"

"Fish," Tish repeated. "Dried fish. And if you dare to intimate——"

"Oh, don't be so silly!" said Lily May, and yawned. "Now see here, you may be older than I am in years, but I was old when I was born. And I can't remember the time when I didn't know whiskey from fish."

"Whiskey!" said Tish in a terrible voice.

"Booze," said Lily May. "You're loaded to the gunwales with booze. You've landed, so far, about a hundred cases of first-grade Canadian Club, and if you haven't made more than I have out of it you've been stung. That's all."

Tish got up at that and gave her a really terrible look.

"You have made money out of this iniquitous traffic?" she demanded.

"Oh, a bagatelle," Lily May replied languidly. "I had to protect you, you see. If you will run liquor——"

"Silence!" Tish thundered. "What have you made?"

"I got three hundred for keeping Christopher busy while you unloaded," she said a trifle sulkily.

"Christopher?" Tish said in a dazed manner.

"He's in the revenue service," said Lily May. "So am I, for that matter. There's been hardly a day since we came when I couldn't have arrested you all. But it would have upset mother a lot. If you don't believe me——"

She turned up her skirt, and I shall never forget Tish's eyes when she saw what I saw. That chit had her revenue badge pinned to the top of her stocking!

It was after that that our dear Tish was taken with a sudden shuddering spell and we had to give her quite a heavy dose of blackberry cordial. It is possible that in the darkness we gave her more than we intended, on an empty stomach, and there is undoubtedly a small percentage of alcohol in it to preserve it. When, later on, she insisted on opening one of the boxes and on tasting its contents before she would be entirely convinced, the combination was unfortunate.

She lapsed into silence soon after that, rousing once to shed a few tears, a most unusual proceeding for her, and with her voice slightly thickened she said, "We have been ushed by those sons of Belial, Lizzie. I musht think of a way to shettle with them."

She dozed a little then, but shortly thereafter she wakened and said a sea serpent had just stuck its head up beside her, and what if it should find Aggie? I was greatly alarmed, but Lily May was quite calm.

"She's only slightly binged," she said, "but she will sleep it off. Do her good probably; like having a good cry."

I pass over the next few hours. Tish slept, and we drifted about at the mercy of wind and tide. About midnight a gale came up and gave us considerable trouble, as the boxes kept shifting. Lily May once more suggested flinging them overboard, but I dared not do this without Tish's consent, and when I roused her and asked her she gave me no satisfaction.

"Shertainly not," she said. "It's evidench. Never destroy evidench, Lizzie."

"She'll snap out of it after a while," Lily May comforted me. "But she's sure gifted. I'll bet a brandied peach would give her the D.T.'s."

I was about to reprove her when I suddenly perceived that the wind had lifted the fog, and there was even a pale moonlight. And at that, Lily May clutched my arm and pointed ahead.

We had indeed been drifting with the tide, and the schooner was just ahead, within a hundred yards or so. We were moving slowly toward it.

I wakened Tish, and this time she responded. I can still see her, majestic and calm, clutching the rail and staring ahead. I can still hear the ringing tone of her voice when she said, "The hour of vengeance is at hand, Lizzie."

"I'll tell the world it is, if you go up there," said Lily May.

But she brushed the child aside, and immediately Bill yelled from the schooner, "Stand by, there! What do you want?"

"We're looking for trouble, Bill," said Lily May. "If you have any around——"

But Bill recognized her voice, and he smiled down at us.

"Trouble's my middle name, ladies," he said. "Come up and make yourselves at home. Hi, cap!" he shouted. "Here's company."

I had not an idea of what was in the wind until I saw Tish pick up her knitting bag. Her revolver was in it.

How can I relate what followed? Tish went up first, Lily May was on the ladder, and I was in the very act of tying up, our rope in my hands, when I heard Tish say, "Hands up! You are under arrest."

Immediately on that, a most terrible uproar broke out above, and a shot rang out. Just after that my poor Tish's revolver fell into the boat with a terrible thud, and so startled me that I let go of the rope. There was a frightful noise going on overhead, and as I drifted away I heard another shot or two, and then the captain's voice.

"I've got her, the h—— cat!" he called. "Start the engine, Bill. We'd better get out of here."

And the next minute the engine of the schooner was starting and they were getting the anchor up. The schooner was moving away.

I cannot write my sensations without pain. The schooner starting off; my dear Tish a prisoner on that accursed boat, helpless, possibly injured; and Lily May, who had been placed in our care, on that accursed vessel.

I stood up and called.

"Tish!" I said in agony. "Tish, where are you?"

"I am here, Lizzie," I heard the dear familiar tones. And that was all.

In a few moments I was alone on the bosom of the raging deep, and Tish and Lily May were on their way probably to the Canadian border.

I have no very clear idea of what happened next. As I had no knowledge of a motor I could but experiment, and finally about two a.m. I did start the engine. I managed the steering fairly well after a time, and started back. The fog was quite gone by that time, and it was clear moonlight. I seemed to be going very fast, but I did not know how to stop the thing and could but keep on. I have one very clear and tragic impression, however. In the moonlight I passed the bell buoy where we had left Aggie—and Aggie was not there!

After that I remember little, except seeing our beach in front of me with a group of people on it, and steering at it. They have told me since that I came in on the top of a high roller, and that the Swallow simply crossed the beach and went up onto the lawn, where it stopped finally in the pansy bed, but I did not.

And then Christopher was lifting my head from a bottle of Canadian Club whiskey as I lay on the ground, and saying in a shaken voice, "Where is she?"

"Gone," I said sadly. "They are all gone, Christopher. Tish and Aggie and Lily May. Gone."

"My God!" he said. "Lily May!"

"Canada," I said. "Or maybe England; or Spain. I don't know. But Aggie——"

"What do you mean?" yelled Christopher. "Canada or England?"

"They've been stolen. Abducted. By rum runners, Christopher," I said. "But my dear Aggie——"

And at that minute I heard a sneeze from the house.

"Aggie!" I cried. "Aggie!"

Then Hannah and Mr. MacDonald came up. Mr. MacDonald picked up a bottle and said, "You wouldn't believe me before. Is this eau de cologne or is it liquor?"

"Oh, get the h—— out of here," said Christopher.

They took me into the house, and there was Aggie sitting before the fire, still shivering, and with a very bad cold. She had her feet in a mustard foot bath with a blanket over it, for Mr. MacDonald would not allow her to go upstairs, and she burst into tears the minute she saw me.

"I'b udder arrest, Lizzie," she wailed. "I've beed soaked through, ad bit at by sharks, ad fired od, ad lost by teeth. Ad dow I'b arrested. It's just too buch."

She had lost her teeth, poor soul. She had taken them out because they were chattering so, and they had slipped out of her hand. She might have recovered them, but just as she was about to do so a huge fish had snapped at them and got them.

It had indeed been a day of misfortunes, and Aggie's were not the least. For Mr. MacDonald and Christopher had heard her sneezing on the bell buoy, and had fired at her before they knew her.

Then, when they did find her, she was sitting on a case of liquor, and nothing she could say did any good.

"I told theb it was dried fish," she said, "but the darded fools wouldd't believe be, ad whed they looked, it wasd't."

VI

As soon as possible Christopher and Mr. MacDonald had aroused the island, and every possible boat had started out. I telegraphed to Charlie Sands also, and he was on his way by the first train.

But all the next day went by, and no sign of the schooner or of Tish and Lily May. And as Aggie said, sitting up in bed with a bowl of junket—she could only eat soft food, poor thing—"We bay dever see theb agaid, Lizzie. They bay have to walk the plak or sobethig."

I spent all my time on the beach, awaiting news, and at evening Charlie Sands arrived from the mainland. He came over to me as I sat disconsolately on a rock, cutting up fish and feeding the sea gulls as our poor Tish had always done, and listened to my story.

"Now," he said when I had finished, "how many men were on that boat?"

"Three."

"Three," he repeated thoughtfully. "And my dear Aunt Letitia and Lily May. Is that correct?"

"And boxes and boxes of-f—of liquor, Charlie."

"I wouldn't worry about the liquor," he said. "I imagine by this time——" He hesitated and sighed. "It seems rather a pity, in a way. Still——"

"A pity!" I said angrily. "Your Aunt Letitia and Lily May Carter abducted, and you say it is a pity!"

"I'm sorry," he apologized. "Just for the moment my mind had wandered. Now let's see. They've had eighteen hours, and the percentage was favorable. I rather think—of course, I'm not sure—but I rather think it's about time something happened."

He then rose to his feet and looked out over the water, and said, "What kind of a boat was it anyhow?"

"It was a schooner."

"Of course," he said. "It would be a schooner, naturally. And while I am not a betting man, I'll wager ten dollars against a bottle of blackberry cordial that this is it now."

I leaped to my feet, and there, coming around the point of our cove, was the revenue boat! I could only stand and stare. Our beloved Tish was at the helm, and as we gazed she shouted to Lily May, who at once shoved the anchor overboard. As all the sails were still up, the boat listed heavily to one side, but it stopped.

There was no one else in sight, and this seemed to make Charlie Sands somewhat uneasy.

"By the gods," he said, "she's done away with them!"

But this proved to be erroneous. Our dear Tish, having brought the vessel to a halt, straightened her bonnet, and then drawing the small boat which trailed behind to the foot of the rope ladder, she and Lily May got into it and Tish rowed it to the shore.

Her first words were typical.

"I want a policeman, Lizzie," she said briefly, "and a room in the jail, and a bath."

"I doubt if the jails are arranged that way," said Charlie Sands, coming forward. "Still, we can inquire."

She had not noticed him before, and his presence startled her. I have never seen our Tish flinch, but she very nearly did so then. And she gave Lily May a curious look.

"I have taken three prisoners," she said with dignity. "They are locked in, down below in that ship. And here's the key, for Mr. MacDonald."

She then felt in her workbag, handed a key to Charlie Sands, and started with dignity to the house. Charlie Sands looked at the key and then called after her.

"Is that all you've got?" he said.

She stiffened and glared at him.

"If you mean the curse of this nation, rum," she said coldly, "I have thrown it overboard."

"Not every bottle?" he said in a pleading voice.

"Every bottle," she said, and walked firmly into the house.

Lily May did not follow her. She stood eying Charlie Sands through her long lashes.

"Well?" she said. "Doesn't papa still love mamma?"

"I'll tell you that," he said sternly, "when you tell me something else." He then stooped and picked up a one-hundred-dollar bill which was lying on the grass. "Where did this come from?"

"Well, well?" said Lily May. "You are lucky, aren't you?"

"Don't look at me like that," said Charlie Sands. "Where did this come from?"

"They grow around here," said Lily May cheerfully. "Not everywhere, but here and there, you know. Like four-leaf clovers."

"It didn't by any chance drop from my Aunt Tish's workbag?"

"Well, you might call up and inquire," she suggested, and sauntered off to the house.

She spent an hour and a quarter getting dressed that evening, and when the Swallow and Christopher came back, Christopher almost crazy, she was sitting on the veranda doing her finger nails.

Hannah was laying the table inside, and she says she greeted him with "Hello, old egg! And how are things?"

And that fool of a boy just got down on his knees and put his head in her lap and his arms around her; and when he looked up he said, "You little devil! I've a good notion to turn you over my knee and spank you."

As Aggie says, it was queer love-making, and there is no use trying to understand the younger generation.

"Under no circumstances," she says, "would Mr. Wiggins have threatened me with that. But then," she adds, "Mr. Wiggins would never have put on those dreadful clothes and pretended to be something he wasn't either. Times have changed, Lizzie."

For it turned out, that very night, that Christopher was Billy Field.

Never, so long as I live, shall I forget that evening around Aggie's bed, when Tish told her story. The bootleggers had tied her up at once, and even Lily May also. But Lily May was so quiet and chastened that they had weakened, after a while, and had let her loose.

"And then what did you do?" asked Charlie Sands.

"I amused them," she said, not looking at Tish.

"I think," Tish said in a terrible voice, "the less said of that the better."

But it appears—for one must be frank—that Lily May saw that Tish was working with her ropes, and so she began to tell them stories. They must have been very queer ones, for Tish has never reverted to the subject.

"I told them the flapper story," she said to Charlie Sands, "and that new Ford one, and the April-fool joke."

Charlie Sands seemed to understand, for he nodded.

"Pretty fair," he said.

But it seems they relaxed after that, and then she got them started on mixing different kinds of drinks. She would say, Did you ever try this and that, with a drop of something else floated on the top? And she would taste the things they brought, and they would take the rest.

"It was Bill who went under first. He went asleep standing up," she said. And the captain next. But by that time Tish had freed herself, and she knocked Joe out with a piece of chain that was handy. And then their troubles were over, for they only had to drag them down below and lock them up. But they had been banging at the door all day, and Tish had had to make them keep quiet. She had the captain's revolver by that time, and now and again she fired a bullet into the door frame, and they would hush up for an hour or so. Then they would start again.

Our dear Tish finished her narrative and then rose.

"And now," she said brightly, "it is time for bed. I have done my duty, and shall sleep with a clear conscience."

"Are you so sure of that?" said Charlie Sands, and fixed her with a cold eye.

"Why not?" Tish asked tartly.

"One reason might be—piracy on the high seas."

"Piracy!" said Tish furiously. "I capture three rum runners, and you call it piracy?"

"Then there's no matter of money to be discussed."

"Certainly not," said Tish.

"Of seventeen hundred and forty-one dollars," he insisted. "At the present moment concealed in your bedroom."

"That money belongs to the church."

"I see. But the amount interests me. I can understand the seventeen hundred, and even the forty. But why the one?"

"Two months at eight hundred and seventy dollars and fifty cents per month," Tish said, staring at him defiantly. "Even an idiot could figure that."

"And you took it from those bootleggers?"

"I'd earned it for them."

"By force and duress?"

"Nothing of the sort. The man was asleep."

"Hijacking," he said softly. "Ye gods and little fishes! Hijacking for the church!"

He seemed a trifle dazed, although Tish carefully explained her position to him.

"I see it all," he said. "It sounds all right, but there must be a catch in it somewhere. I don't quite grasp it, that's all."

After a time, however, he got up and went to the door, still thinking, and called Christopher.

"Come in, you young imposter," he said, "and tell us how much you've had out of the summer."

"I couldn't quite make it," said Christopher sadly. "Five hundred for the boat and two hundred revenue salary. That's all."

"Certainly it's not all, Billy Field!" said Lily May. "I have three hundred from Smith, haven't I? That makes the thousand."

But Charlie Sands was holding his head.

"It sounds all right," he said. "The parish house gets a kitchen, and Field gets Lily May. Personally I think my Aunt Tish ought to get thirty years, but still——" He groaned. "Rum running, assault and battery, piracy, straight larceny and hijacking!" he said. "And everybody's happy! There's a profound immorality somewhere," he added, looking around at us. "But where?"

He got up feebly. "I'm getting too old for much of this," he said. "Get me a stiff dose of blackberry cordial, somebody. And, Field, slip around to old MacDonald's and get a bit of something to float on the top."

THE TREASURE HUNT

I

Had we not been so anxious about our dear Tish last summer, I dare say it would never have happened. But even Charlie Sands noticed when he came to our cottage at Lake Penzance for the week-end that she was distinctly not her old self.

"I don't like it," he said. "She's lost her pep, or something. I've been here two days and she hasn't even had a row with Hannah, and I must say that fuss with old Carpenter yesterday really wasn't up to her standard at all."

Old Carpenter is a fisherman, and Tish having discovered that our motor boat went better in reverse than forward, he had miscalculated our direction and we had upset him.

As it happened, that very evening Tish herself confirmed Charlie's fears by asking about Aggie's Cousin Sarah Brown's Chelsea teapot.

"I think," she said, "that a woman of my age should have a hobby; one that will arouse interest at the minimum of physical exertion. And the collection of old china——"

"Oh, Tish!" Aggie wailed, and burst into tears.

"I mean it," said Tish, "I have reached that period of my life which comes to every woman, when adventure no longer lurks around the next corner. By this I do not refer necessarily to amorous affairs, but to dramatic incidents. I think more than I did of what I eat. I take a nap every day. I am getting old."

"Never!" said Aggie valiantly.

"No? When I need my glasses nowadays to see the telephone directory!"

"But they're printing the names smaller, Tish."

"Yes, and I dare say my arm is getting shorter also," she returned with a sad smile. She pursued the subject no further, however, but went on knitting the bedroom slippers which are her yearly contribution to the Old Ladies' Home, leaving Charlie Sands to gaze at her thoughtfully as he sipped his blackberry cordial.

But the fact is that Tish had outgrown the cottage life at Penzance, and we all knew it. Save for an occasional golf ball from the links breaking a window now and then, and the golfers themselves who brought extra shoes done up in paper for us to keep for them, paying Hannah something to put them on the ice, there was nothing to rouse or interest her.

Her mind was as active as ever; it was her suggestion that a clothespin on Aggie's nose might relieve the paroxysms of her hay fever, and she was still filled with sentiment. It was her own idea on the anniversary of Mr. Wiggins' demise to paint the cottage roof a fresh and verdant green as a memorial to him, since he had been a master roofer by profession.

But these had been the small and simple annals of her days. To all outward seeming, until the night of the treasure hunt, our Tish was no longer the Tish who with our feeble assistance had captured the enemy town of X—— during the war, or held up the band of cutthroats on Thundercloud, or led us through the wilderness of the Far West. An aëroplane in the sky or the sound of the Smith boys racing along in their stripped flivver may have reminded her of brighter days, but she said nothing.

Once, indeed, she had hired a horse from the local livery stable and taken a brief ride, but while making a short cut across the Cummings estate the animal overturned a beehive. Although Tish, with her customary presence of mind, at once headed the terrified creature for the swimming pool, where a number of persons were bathing and sunning themselves in scanty apparel about the edge, the insects forsook the beast the moment horse and rider plunged beneath the surface and a great many people were severely stung. Indeed, the consequences threatened to be serious, for Tish was unable to get the horse out again and it was later necessary to bring a derrick from Penzance to rescue him. But her protests over the enormous bills rendered by the livery man were feeble, indeed, compared to the old days.

"Twenty dollars!" she said. "Are you claiming that that animal, which should have been able to jump over a beehive without upsetting it, was out ten hours?"

"That's my charge," he said. "Walk, trot and canter is regular rates, but swimming is double, and cheap at that. The next time you want to go out riding, go to the fish pier and I reckon they'll oblige you. You don't need a horse, lady. What you want is a blooming porpoise."

Which, of course, is preposterous. There are no porpoises in Lake Penzance.

She even made the blackberry cordial that year, a domestic task usually left to Aggie and myself, but I will say with excellent results. For just as it was ready for that slight fermentation which gives it its medicinal quality, a very pleasant young man came to see us, having for sale a fluid to be added to homemade cordials and so on, which greatly increased their bulk without weakening them.

"But how can one dilute without weakening?" Tish demanded suspiciously.

"I would not call it dilution, madam. It is really expansion."

It was a clear colorless liquid with a faintly aromatic odor, which he said was due to juniper in it, and he left us a small bottle for experimental purposes.

With her customary caution, our dear Tish would not allow us to try it until it had been proved, and some days later Hannah reporting a tramp at the back door, she diluted—or rather expanded—a half glass of cordial, gave him some cookies with it, and we all waited breathlessly.

It had no ill effect, however. The last we saw of the person he was quite cheery; and, indeed, we heard later that he went into Penzance, and getting one of the town policemen into an alley, forced him to change trousers with him. As a matter of record, whether it was Tish's efforts with the cordial itself, or the addition of the expansion matter which we later purchased in bulk and added, I cannot say. But I do know that on one occasion, having run out of gasoline, we poured a bottle of our blackberry cordial into the tank of the motor boat and got home very nicely indeed. I believe that this use of fruit juices has not heretofore been generally known.

Tish, I know, told it to Mr. Stubbs, the farmer who brought us our poultry, advising him to try cider in his car instead of feeding his apples to his hogs. But he only stared at her.

"Feed apples to hogs these days!" he said. "Why, lady, my hogs ain't seen an apple for four years! They don't know there is such a thing."

Occupied with these small and homely duties then, we went on along the even tenor of our way through July and August, and even into September. In August, Charlie Sands sent us a radio, and thereafter it was our custom at 7:20 A.M. to carry our comforters into Tish's bedroom and do divers exercises in loose undergarments.

It is to this training that I lay Tish's ability to go through the terrible evening which followed with nothing more serious than a crack in a floating rib.

And in September Charlie Sands himself week-ended with us, as I have said; with the result of a definite break in our monotony and a revival of Tish's interest in life which has not yet begun to fade.

Yet his visit itself was uneventful enough. It was not until Mrs. Ostermaier's call on Saturday evening that anything began to develop. I remember the evening most distinctly. Our dear Tish was still in her dressing gown, after a very unpleasant incident of the morning, when she had inflated a pair of water wings and gone swimming. Unluckily, when some distance out she had endeavored to fasten the water wings with a safety pin to her bathing garments and the air at once began to escape. When Charlie Sands reached the spot only a few bubbles showed where our unfortunate Tish had been engulfed. She had swallowed a great deal of water, and he at once suggested bailing her out.

"By and large," he said, "I've been bailing you out for the last ten years. Why not now?"

But she made no response save to say that she had swallowed a fish. "Get me a doctor," she said thickly. "I can feel the thing wriggling."

"Doctor nothing!" he told her. "What you need is a fisherman, if that's the case."

But she refused to listen to him, saying that if she was meant to be an aquarium she would be one; and seeing she was firm, he agreed.

"Very well," he said cheerfully. "But why not do the thing right while you're about it? How about some pebbles and a tadpole or two?"

The result of all this was that Tish, although later convinced there was no fish, was in an uncertain mood that evening as we sat about the radio. She had, I remember, got Chicago, where a lady at some hotel was singing By the Waters of Minnetonka. Turning away from Chicago, she then got Detroit, Michigan, and a woman there was singing the same thing.

Somewhat impatiently, she next picked up Atlanta, Georgia, where a soprano was also singing it, and the same thing happened with Montreal, Canada. With a strained look, our dear Tish then

turned to the national capital, and I shall never forget her expression when once more the strains of Minnetonka rang out on the evening air.

With an impatient gesture, she shoved the box away from her, and the various batteries and so on fell to the floor. And at that moment Mrs. Ostermaier came in breathless, and said that she and Mr. Ostermaier had just got Denver, and heard it quite distinctly.

"A woman was singing," she said. "Really, Miss Carberry, we could hear every word. She was singing——"

"The Waters of Minnetonka?" asked Tish.

"Why, however did you guess it?"

It was probably an accident, but as Tish got up suddenly, her elbow struck the box itself, and the box fell with a horrible crash. Tish never even looked at it, but picked up her knitting and fell to work on a bedroom slipper, leaving Mrs. Ostermaier free to broach her plan.

For, as it turned out, she had come on an errand. She and Mr. Ostermaier wished to know if we could think of any way to raise money and put a radio in the state penitentiary, which was some miles away along the lake front.

"Think," she said, "of the terrible monotony of their lives there! Think of the effect of the sweetness disseminated by Silver Threads Among the Gold or By the Waters of——"

"Mr. Wiggins always said that music had power to soothe the savage breast," Aggie put in hastily. "Have you thought of any plan?"

"Mr. Ostermaier suggested that Miss Tish might think of something. She is so fertile."

But Tish's reaction at first was unfavorable.

"Why?" she said. "We've made our jails so pleasant now that there's a crime wave so people can get into them." But she added, "I'm in favor of putting one in every prison if they'd hire a woman to sing The Waters of Minnetonka all day and all night. If that wouldn't stop this rush to the penitentiaries, nothing will."

On the other hand, Charlie Sands regarded the idea favorably. He sat sipping a glass of cordial and thinking, and at last said:

"Why not? Think of an entire penitentiary doing the morning daily dozen! Or laying out bridge hands, according to radio instructions! Broaden 'em. Make 'em better citizens. Send 'em out fit to meet the world again. Darned good idea—Silver Threads Among the Gold for the burglars and Little Brown Jug for the bootleggers. Think of Still as the Night for the moonshiners, too, and the bedtime stories for the cradle snatchers. Why, it's got all sorts of possibilities!"

He then said to leave it to him and he would think up something; and falling to work on the radio, soon had it in operation again. His speech had evidently had a quieting effect on Tish, and when the beautiful strains of The Waters of Minnetonka rang out once more she merely placed her hands over her ears and said nothing.

It was after his departure on Monday that he wrote us the following note, and succeeded in rousing our dear Tish:

> "*Beloved Maiden Ladies*: I have been considering the problem of the radio for our unfortunate convicts. How about a treasure hunt—à la Prince of Wales—to raise the necessary lucre? I'll write the clews and bury a bag of pennies—each entrant to pay five dollars, and the profits to go to the cause.
>
> "Oil up the old car and get out the knickerbockers, for it's going to be a tough job. And don't forget, I'm betting on you. Read the Murders in the Rue Morgue for clews and deductive reasoning. And pass me the word when you're ready.
>
> Devotedly, C.S."
>
> "P.S. My usual terms are 20 per cent, but will take two bottles of cordial instead. Please mark 'Preserves' on box.
>
> C."

II

We saw an immediate change in Tish from that moment. The very next morning we put on our bathing suits and, armed with soap and sponges, drove the car into the lake for a washing. Unluckily a wasp stung Tish on the bare knee as we advanced and she stepped on the

gas with great violence, sending us out a considerable distance, and, indeed, rendering it necessary to crawl out and hold to the top to avoid drowning.

Here we were marooned for some time, until Hannah spied us and rowed out to us. It was finally necessary to secure three horses and a long rope to retrieve the car, and it was some days in drying out.

But aside from these minor matters, things went very well. Mr. Ostermaier, who was not to search, took charge of the hunt from our end and reported numerous entrants from among the summer colony, and to each entrant the following was issued:

1. The cars of the treasure hunters will meet at the Rectory on Saturday evening at eight o'clock.

2. Each hunter will receive a password or sentence, and a sealed envelope containing the first clew.

3. This clew found, another password and fresh sealed envelope will be discovered. And so on.

4. There are six clews.

5. Participants are requested to use care in driving about the country, as the local police force has given notice that it will be stationed at various points to prevent reckless driving.

6. After the treasure is discovered, the hunt will please meet at the Rectory, where light refreshments will be served. It is requested that if possible the search be over before midnight in order not to infringe on the Sabbath day.

In view of the fact that certain persons, especially Mrs. Cummings—who should be the last to complain—have accused Tish of certain unethical acts during that terrible night, I wish to call attention to certain facts:

(a) We obeyed the above rules to the letter, save possibly Number Five.

(b) There was no actual identification of the scissors.

(c) If there was a box of carpet tacks in our car, neither Aggie nor I saw them.

(d) The fish pier had been notoriously rotten for years.

(e) We have paid for the repairs to the motorcycle, and so on.

(f) Doctor Parkinson is not permanently lamed, and we have replaced his lamps.

(g) Personally, knowing Tish's detestation of cross-word puzzles, I believe the false clews were a joke on the part of others concerned.

(h) We did that night what the local police and the sheriff from Edgewater had entirely failed to do, and risked our lives in so doing. Most of the attack is purely jealousy of Letitia Carberry's astute brain and dauntless physical courage.

I need say no more. As Tish observed to Charlie Sands the next day, when he came to see her, lifting herself painfully in her bed:

"I take no credit for following the clews; they were simplicity itself. And I shall pay all damages incurred. But who is to pay for this cracked rib and divers minor injuries, or replace poor Aggie's teeth? Tell me that, and then get out and let me sleep. I'm an old woman."

"Old!" said Charlie Sands. "Old! If you want to see an aged and a broken man, look at me! I shall have to put on a false mustache to get out of town."

But to return to the treasure hunt.

On the eventful day we worked hard. By arrangement with Mr. Stubbs, our poultry man, he exchanged the license plates from his truck for ours in the morning, and these we put on, it being Tish's idea that in case our number was taken by the local motor policeman, Mr. Stubbs could prove that he was in bed and asleep at the time. We also took out our tail light, as Tish said that very probably the people who could not unravel their clews would follow us if possible, and late in the afternoon, our arrangements being completed, Tish herself retired to her chamber with a number of envelopes in her hand.

Lest it be construed that she then arranged the cross-word puzzles which were later substituted for the real clews, I hasten to add that I believe, if I do not actually know, that she wrote letters

concerning the missionary society at that time. She is an active member.

At 5:30 we had an early supper and one glass of cordial each.

"I think better on an empty stomach," Tish said. "And I shall need my brains to-night."

"If that's what you think of Aggie and myself, we'd better stay at home," I said sharply.

"I have not stated what I think of your brain, Lizzie, nor of Aggie's either. Until I do, you have no reason for resentment."

Peace thus restored, we ate lightly of tea, toast and lettuce sandwiches; and having donned our knickerbockers and soft hats, were ready for the fray. Aggie carrying a small flask of cordial for emergencies and I a flashlight and an angel-food cake to be left at the Rectory, we started out on what was to prove one of the most eventful evenings in our experience.

Tish was thoughtful on the way over, speaking occasionally of Poe and his system of deductive reasoning in solving clews, and also of Conan Doyle, but mostly remaining silent.

Aggie, however, was sneezing badly, due to the dust, and this annoying Tish, she stopped where some washing was hanging out and sent her in for a clothespin. She procured the pin, but was discovered and chased, and undoubtedly this is what led later to the story that the bandits—of whom more later—had, before proceeding to the real business of the night, attempted to steal the Whitings' washing.

But the incident had made Aggie very nervous and she took a second small dose of the cordial. Of this also more later on.

There was a large group of cars in front of the Rectory. The Smith boys had brought their flivver, stripped of everything but the engine and one seat for lightness, and the Cummingses, who are very wealthy, had brought their racer. Tish eyed them both with a certain grimness.

"Not speed, but brains will count, Lizzie," she said to me. "What does it matter how fast they can go if they don't know where they're going?"

After some thought, however, she took off the engine hood and the spare tire and laid them aside, and stood gazing at Aggie, now fast asleep in the rear seat.

"I could leave her too," she said. "She will be of no help whatever. But on the other hand, she helps to hold the rear springs down when passing over bumps."

Mrs. Ostermaier then passed around glasses of lemonade, saying that every hunt drank a stirrup cup before it started, and Mr. Ostermaier gave us our envelopes and the first password, which was "Ichthyosaurus."

It was some time before everyone had memorized it, and Tish utilized the moments to open her envelope and study the clew. The password, as she said, was easy; merely a prehistoric animal. The clew was longer:

"*Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink.*
Two twos are four, though some say more, and i-n-k spells ink."

"Water?" I said. "That must be somewhere by the lake, Tish."

"Nonsense! What's to prevent your drinking the lake dry if you want to? I-n-k! It may be the stationer's shop; but if it ever saw water, I don't believe it. 'Two twos are four, though some say more!' Well, if they do, they're fools, and so is Charlie Sands for writing such gibberish."

What made matters worse was that the Smith boys were already starting off laughing, and two or three other people were getting ready to move. Suddenly Tish set her mouth and got into the car, and it was as much as I could do to crawl in before she had cut straight through the canna bed and out onto the road.

The Smith boys were well ahead, but we could still see their tail light, and we turned after them. Tish held the wheel tightly, and as we flew along she repeated the clew, which with her wonderful memory she had already learned by heart. But no light came to either of us, and at the crossroads we lost the Smith boys and were

obliged to come to a stop. This we did rather suddenly, and Mr. Gilbert, who is a vestryman in our church, bumped into us and swore in a most unbefitting manner.

"Where the hell is your tail light?" he called furiously.

"You ought to know," said Tish calmly. "Somewhere in your engine, I imagine."

Well, it seemed that everyone had been following us, and no one except the Smith boys apparently knew where to go from there. And just then a policeman came out of the bushes and asked what the trouble was.

"Ichthyosaurus," said Tish absently. "'Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink. Two twos are four, though some say more, and——'"

"Don't try to be funny with me," he said. "For a cent I'd take the whole lot of you into town for obstructing traffic. You've been drinking, that's what!"

And just then Aggie sat up in the back seat and said, "Drinking yourshelf! Go on, Tish, and run over him. He'sh a nuishance."

Well, I will say her voice was somewhat thick, and the constable got on the running board and struck a match. But Tish was in her seat by that time, and she started the car so suddenly that he fell off into the road. As the other cars had to drive around him, this gave us a certain advantage; and we had soon left them behind us, but we still had no idea where to go. Matters were complicated also by the fact that Tish had now extinguished our headlights for fear of again being molested, and we were as often off the road as on it.

Indeed, once we brought up inside a barn, and were only saved from going entirely through it by our dear Tish's quick work with the brakes; and we then had the agony of hearing the other cars pass by on the main road while we were backing away from the ruins of a feed cutter we had smashed.

We had also aroused a number of chickens, and as we could hear the farmer running out and yelling, there was nothing to do but to back out again. Just as we reached the highroad a load of buckshot tore through the top of the car, but injured nobody.

"Luckily he was shooting high," said Tish as we drove on. "Lower, and he might have cut our tires."

"Luckily!" said Aggie, from the rear seat. "He'sh taken the crown out of my hat, Tish Carberry! It was nish hat too. I loved my little hat. I——"

"Oh, keep still and go to sleep again," said Tish. "'Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink. Two twos are four, though some say more, and i-n-k spells ink.'"

"So it did when I went to school," said Aggie, still drowsily. "I-n-k, ink; p-i-n-k, pink; s——"

Suddenly Tish put her foot on the gas and we shot ahead once more.

"Schoolhouse of course," she said. "The schoolhouse by the water tower. I knew my subconscious mind would work it out eventually."

III

Unfortunately, we were the last to get to the schoolhouse, and we had to witness the other cars streaming triumphantly down the road as we went up, shouting and blowing their horns. All but the Simmonses' sedan, which had turned over in a ditch and which we passed hastily, having no time to render assistance.

Miss Watkins, the school-teacher, was on the porch, and as we drew up Tish leaped out.

"Pterodactyl!" she said.

"Warm, but not hot," said Miss Watkins.

"Plesiosaurus!"

"The end's all right."

"Ichthyosaurus!" said Tish triumphantly, and received the envelope. Aggie, however, who had not heard the password given at the Ostermaiers', had listened to this strange conversation dazedly and now burst into tears.

"There'sh something wrong with me, Lizzie!" she wailed. "I've felt queer ever since we started, and now they are talking and it doesn't sound like sensh to me."

It was some time before I was able to quiet her, but Tish had already received the second password, or sentence, which was "Prevention is better than cure, ting-a-ling," and was poring over the next clew.

"*Always first in danger, always last to go,*
Look inside the fire box and then you'll know."

I still think that had she taken sufficient time she could have located this second clew easily and without the trouble that ensued. But finding herself last when she is so generally first had irritated her, and she was also annoyed at Miss Watkins, it having been arranged that the last car was to take her back into town.

"Mr. Ostermaier said the clew's in town anyhow. And he didn't think the last car would have much chance, either," she said.

"Who laughs last laughs best," said Tish grimly, and started off at a frightful speed. Miss Watkins lost her hat within the first mile or two, but we could not pause, as a motorcycle policeman was now following close behind us. Owing to Tish's strategy, however, for when he attempted to come up on the right of us she swerved in that direction and vice versa, we finally escaped him, an unusually sharp swerve of hers having caught him off guard, so to speak, and upset him.

Just when or where we lost Miss Watkins herself I have no idea. Aggie had again dozed off, and when we reached the town and slowed up, Miss Watkins was gone. She herself does not know, as she seems to have wandered for some time in a dazed condition before reaching home.

But to the hunt.

I still think our mistake was a natural one. One would think that the pass sentence, "Prevention is better than cure, ting-a-ling," certainly indicated either a pharmacy or a medical man and a doorbell, and as Tish said, a fire box was most likely a wood box. There being only two doctors in the town, we went first to Doctor Burt's, but he had already retired and spoke to us from an upper window.

"We want to examine your wood box," Tish called.

"Wood box?" he said, in a stupefied voice. "What do you want wood for? A splint?"

"We're hunting treasure," said Tish sharply. "'Prevention is better than cure, ting-a-ling.'"

The doctor closed the window violently; and although we rang for some time, he did not appear again.

At Doctor Parkinson's, however, we had better luck, discovering the side entrance to the house open and finding our way inside with the aid of the flashlight. There was only one wood box on the lower floor, and this we proceeded to search, laying the wood out carefully onto a newspaper. But we found no envelopes, and in the midst of our discouragement came a really dreadful episode.

Doctor Parkinson himself appeared at the door in his night clothes, and not recognizing us because of our attire and goggles, pointed a revolver at us.

"Hands up!" he cried in a furious tone. "Hands up, you dirty devils! And be quick about it!"

"'Prevention is better than cure, ting-a-ling,'" said Tish.

"Ting-a-ling your own self! Of all the shameless proceedings I've ever——"

"Shame on you!" Tish reproved him. "If ting-a-ling means nothing to you, we will leave you."

"Oh, no, you don't!" he said, most unpleasantly. "Put up your hands as I tell you or——"

I do not now and I never did believe the story he has since told over the town—that Tish threw the fire log she was holding at his legs. I prefer to credit her own version—that as she was trying to raise her hands the wood fell, with most unfortunate results. As a matter of fact, the real risk was run by myself, for when on the impact he dropped the revolver, it exploded and took off the heel of my right shoe.

Nor is it true, as he claims, that having been forced out of his house, we attempted to get back in and attack him again. This error is due to the fact that, once outside, Tish remembered the revolver

on the floor, and thinking it might be useful later, went back to get it. But the door was locked.

However, all is well that ends well. We had but driven a block or two when we perceived a number of the cars down the street at the engine house, and proceeded to find our next clew in the box of the local fire engine.

The password this time was "Prohibition," and the clew ran:

"*Just two blocks from paradise and only one from hell,*
Stranger things than truth are found in the bottom of a well."

The Smith boys had already gone on, but we were now at last on equal terms with the others, and as the sleep and the cold night air had by now fully restored Aggie, Tish called a consultation.

"So far," she said, "the Smiths have had the advantage of superior speed. But it is my opinion that this advantage is an unfair one, and that I have a right to nullify it if opportunity arises."

"We'll have to catch them first," I observed.

"We shall catch them," she said firmly, and once more studied the clew.

"Paradise," she said, "should be the Eden Inn. To save time we will circumnavigate it at a distance of two blocks."

This we did, learning later that Hell's Kitchen was the name locally given to the negro quarter, and once more Tish's masterly deciphering of the clew served us well. Before the other cars had much more than started, we espied the Smiths' stripped flivver outside the Gilbert place, and to lose no time drove through the hedge and onto the lawn. Here, as is well known, the Gilberts have an old well, long disused, or so supposed. And here we found the Gilberts' gardener standing and the Smith boys drawing up the well bucket.

"Give the word and get the envelope," Tish whispered to me, and disappeared into the darkness.

I admit this. I admit, too, that, as I have said before, I know nothing of her actions for the next few moments. Personally, I believe that she went to the house, as she has stated, to get the Gilbert cook's recipe for jelly roll; and as anyone knows, considerable damage may be done to an uncovered engine by flying stones. To say that she cut certain wires while absent is to make a claim not borne out by the evidence.

But I will also say that the Smith boys up to that moment had had an unfair advantage, and that the inducing of a brief delay on their part was not forbidden by the rules, which are on my desk as I write. However——

As Mr. Gilbert is not only prominent in the church but is also the local prohibition officer, judge of our surprise when, on the well bucket emerging, we found in it not only the clews but some bottles of beer which had apparently been put there to cool. And Mr. Gilbert, on arriving with the others, seemed greatly upset.

"Hawkins," he said to the gardener, "what do you mean by hiding six bottles of beer in my well?"

"Me?" said Hawkins angrily. "If I had six bottles of beer, they'd be in no well! And there aren't six; there's only four."

"Four!" said Mr. Gilbert in a furious voice. "Four! Then who the dev——" Here, however, he checked himself; and as Tish had now returned, we took our clews and departed. Hawkins had given us the next password, which was "Good evening, dearie," and the clew, which read:

> "*Down along the lake front, in a pleasant place,*
> *Is a splendid building, full of air and space.*
> *Glance within a closet, where, neatly looped and tagged,*
> *Are the sturdy symbols of the game they've bagged.*"

Everybody seemed to think it meant the Duck Club, and in a few moments we were all off once more except the Smith boys, who were talking loudly and examining their engine. But Tish was not quite certain.

"These clews are tricky," she said. "They are not obvious, but subtle. It sounds too much like the Duck Club to be the Duck Club. Besides, what symbols of dead ducks would they keep? I've never seen anything left over but the bones."

"The feathers?" Aggie suggested.

"They wouldn't keep feathers in a closet. And besides, there's nothing sturdy about a feather. What other large building is on the lake front?"

"The fish cannery," I said.

"True. And they might keep boards in a closet with the outlines of very large fish on them. But the less said about the air there the better. However, we might try it."

Having made this decision, as soon as we were outside of Penzance we began once more to travel with extreme rapidity, retracing for some distance the road we had come in on, and thus it happened that we again saw the motorcycle policeman with his side car. He was repairing something and shouted angrily at us as we passed, but we did not even hesitate, and soon we arrived at the fish cannery.

None of the others had apparently thought of this possibility, and when we reached it there was no one in sight but a bearded watchman with a lantern, sitting on a barrel outside. Tish hopefully leaped from the car and gave him the password at once.

"'Good evening, dearie.'"

But the wretch only took his pipe out of his mouth and, after expectorating into the lake, replied:

"Hello, sweetheart. And what can I do for you?"

"Don't be impertinent," said Tish tartly. "I said 'good evening, dearie', as a signal."

"And a darned fine signal I call it," he said, rising. "Let's have a look at you before the old lady comes along with my supper."

"I have given you the signal. If you haven't anything for me, say so."

"Well, what is it you want?" he inquired, grinning at us in a horrible manner. "A kiss?"

As he immediately began to advance toward Tish, to this action on his part may be laid the misfortune which almost at once beset us. For there is no question that had it not discomposed her she would never have attempted to turn by backing onto the fish pier, which has been rotten for years. But in her indignation she did so, and to our horror we felt the thing giving way beneath us. There was one loud sharp crack followed by the slow splintering of wood, and the next moment we were resting gently on some piles above the water, with the shattered framework of the pier overhead and the watchman yelling that the company would sue us for damages.

"Damages!" said Tish, still holding to the steering wheel, while Aggie wailed in the rear. "You talk of damages to me! I'll put you and your company in the penitentiary if I have to——"

Here she suddenly checked herself and turned to me.

"The penitentiary, of course!" she said. "How stupid of us! And I dare say they keep the ropes they hang people with in a closet. They have to keep them somewhere. Speaking of ropes," she went on, raising her voice, "if that old fool up there will get a rope, I dare say we can scramble out."

"Old fool yourself!" cried the watchman, dancing about. "Coming here and making love to me, and then destroying my pier! You can sit there till those piles rot, far's I'm concerned. There's something queer about this business anyhow; how do I know you ain't escaped from the pen?"

"My dear man," said Tish quietly, "the one thing we want is to get to the penitentiary, and that as soon as possible."

"Well, you won't have any trouble getting there," he retorted. "I'll see to that. Far's you're concerned, you're on your way."

He then disappeared, and one of the piles yielding somewhat, the car fell a foot or two more, while Aggie wailed and sneezed alternately. But Tish remained composed. She struck a match, and leaning over the side inspected the water and so on below us.

"There's a boat down there, Lizzie," she said. "Get the towrope from under Aggie and fasten it to something. If we can get down, we'll be all right. The penitentiary isn't more than a half mile from here."

"I slide down no rope into no boat, Tish Carberry," I said firmly.

But at that moment we heard the engine of a motorcycle coming along the road and realized that our enemy the policeman had followed us. And as at that same instant the car again slipped with a sickening jar, we were compelled to this heroic attempt after all.

However, it was managed without untoward incident, Aggie even salvaging the flask of blackberry cordial. But the boat was almost filled with water, and thus required frantic bailing with our hats, a matter only just accomplished when the motorcycle policeman came running onto the pier.

Whether the watchman had failed to tell him of the break or not, I cannot say, but we were no more than under way when we heard a splash followed by strangled oaths, and realized that for a time at least we were safe from pursuit.

Wet as we now were, we each took a small dose of the cordial and then fell to rowing. Tish's watch showed only ten o'clock, and we felt greatly cheered and heartened. Also, as Tish said by way of comforting Aggie, the license plates on the car belonging to Mr. Stubbs, it was unlikely that we would be further involved for the present at least.

IV

Owing to the fact that the cars still in the hunt had all gone to the Duck Club, the brief delay had not lost us our lead, and we proceeded at once, after landing near the penitentiary, to the gate. Our halt there was brief. Tish merely said to the sentry at the entrance, "'Good evening, dearie.'"

"The same to you and many of them," he replied cheerfully, and unlocked the gate. We then found ourselves in a large courtyard, with the looming walls of the building before us, and on ringing the bell and repeating the phrase were at once admitted.

There were a number of men in uniform, who locked the grating behind us and showed us into an office where a young man was sitting at a desk.

I had an uneasy feeling the moment I saw him, and Aggie has since acknowledged the same thing. Instead of smiling as had the others, he simply pushed a large book toward us and asked us to sign our names.

"Register here, please," was what he said.

"Register?" said Tish. "What for?"

"Like to have our guests' names," he said solemnly. "You'll find your cells all ready for you. Very nice ones—view of the lake and everything. Front, show these ladies to their cells."

Aggie gave a low moan, but Tish motioned her to be silent.

"Am I to understand you are holding us here?"

"That's what we're here for. We specialize in holding, if you know what I mean."

"If it's that fish pier——"

"Is it the fish pier?" the young man asked of two or three men around, but nobody seemed to know.

Tish cast a desperate glance about her.

"I may have made a mistake," she said, "but would it mean anything to you if I said 'Good evening, dearie'?"

"Why, it would mean a lot," he said politely. "Any term of—er—affection, you know. I'm a soft-hearted man in spite of my business."

But Tish was eying him, and now she leaned over the desk and asked very clearly:

> "*Have you got a closet where, neatly looped and tagged,*
> *You keep the sturdy symbols of the game you've bagged?*"

Suddenly all the guards laughed, and so did the young man.

"Well, well!" he said. "So that's what brought you here, Miss Carberry? And all of us hoping you'd come for a nice little stay! Jim, take the ladies to the closet."

Well, what with the accident and the hard rowing, as well as this recent fright, neither Aggie nor I was able to accompany Tish. I cannot therefore speak with authority; but knowing Tish as I do, I do not believe that Mrs. Cummings' accusation as to what happened at this closet is based at all on facts.

Briefly, Mrs. Cummings insists that having taken out her own clew, Tish then placed on top of the others a number of similar envelopes containing cross-word puzzles, which caused a considerable delay, especially over the Arabic name for whirling dervishes. This not, indeed, being solved at all, somebody finally telephoned to Mr. Ostermaier to look it up in the encyclopedia, and he then stated that no cross-word puzzles had been included among the clews. Whereupon the mistake was rectified and the hunt proceeded.

As I say, we did not go with Tish to the closet and so cannot be certain, but I do know that the clew she brought us was perfectly correct, as follows:

Password: "All is discovered."

"*Where are you going, my pretty maid?"*
"'Most anywhere else," said she.
"Behind the grille is a sweet young man,
And he'll give my clew to me."

We had no more than read it when we heard a great honking of horns outside, and those who had survived trooped in. But alas, what a pitiful remnant was left! Only ten cars now remained out of twenty. The Smith boys had not been heard from, and the Phillipses had been arrested for speeding. Also Mr. Gilbert had gone into a ditch and was having a cut on his chin sewed up, the Jenningses' car had had a flat tire and was somewhere behind in the road, and the Johnstons were in Backwater Creek, waiting for a boat to come to their rescue.

And we had only just listened to this tale of woe when Mrs. Cummings sailed up to Tish with an unpleasant smile and something in her hand.

"Your scissors, I believe, dear Miss Carberry," she said. But Tish only eyed them stonily.

"Why should you think they are my scissors?" she inquired coldly.

"The eldest Smith boy told me to return them to you, with his compliments. He found them in the engine of his car."

"In his car? What were they doing there?"

"That's what I asked him. He said that you would know."

"Two pairs of scissors are as alike as two pairs of pants," Tish said calmly, and prepared to depart.

But our poor Aggie now stepped up and examined the things and began to sneeze with excitement.

"Why, Tish Carberry!" she exclaimed. "They are your scissors. There's the broken point and everything. Well, if that isn't the strangest thing!"

"Extraordinary," said Mrs. Cummings. "Personally, I think it a matter for investigation."

She then swept on, and we left the penitentiary. But once outside, the extreme discomfort of our situation soon became apparent. Not only were we wet through, so that Aggie's sneezing was no longer alleviated by the clothespin, but Tish's voice had become hardly more than a hoarse croaking. Also, we had no car in which to proceed. Indeed, apparently the treasure hunt was over so far as we were concerned. But once again I had not counted on Tish's resourcefulness. We had no sooner emerged than she stopped in the darkness and held up her hand.

"Listen!" she said.

The motorcycle was approaching along the lake road, with that peculiar explosive sound so reminiscent of the machine gun Tish had used in the capture of X—— during the war.

It was clear that we had but two courses of action—one to return to the penitentiary and seek sanctuary, the other to remain outside. And Tish, thinking rapidly, chose the second. She drew us into an embrasure of the great wall and warned us to be silent, especially Aggie.

"One sneeze," she said, "and that wretch will have us. You'll spend the night in jail."

"I'd rather be there thad here any day," said Aggie, shivering. However, she tried the clothespin once more, and for a wonder it worked.

"He'll hear by teeth chatterig, I'b certaid," she whispered.

"Take them out," Tish ordered her, and she did so.

How strange, looking back, to think of the effect which that one small act was to have on the later events of the evening! How true it is that life is but a series of small deeds and great results! We turn to the left instead of the right and collide with a motorbus, or trip over the tail of an insignificant tea gown, like my Cousin Sarah Pennell, and fall downstairs and break a priceless bottle of medicinal brandy.

So Aggie took out her teeth and placed them in her ulster pocket, and tied her scarf over her mouth to prevent taking cold without them, and later on——

However, at the moment we were concentrated on the policeman. First he discovered and apparently examined the boat on the shore, and then, pushing and grunting, shoved his machine past us and up to the road. There he left it, the engine still going, and went toward the penitentiary, whistling softly and plainly outlined against the lights of the cars outside. A moment later Tish had led us to the motorcycle and was examining the mechanism by the aid of the flashlight.

"It looks easy enough," she said in her usual composed manner. "Lizzie, get into the side car and take Aggie on your lap—and hold on to her. I wish no repetition of the Miss Watkins incident."

We watched for a short time, hoping the policeman would go inside, but he was talking to the Cummingses' chauffeur, who seemed to be pointing in our direction. Seeing then that no time was to be lost, Tish hastily adjusted her goggles and pulled down her hat, and being already in knickerbockers, got quickly into the saddle. With the first explosion of the engine the motorcycle officer looked up, and an instant later began to run in our direction.

But I saw no more. Tish started the machine at full speed, and to a loud cry from Aggie we were off with a terrific jerk.

"By deck's broked!" she cried. "Stop her! By deck's broked!"

Her neck was not broken, however, I am happy to say, and the osteopath who is attending her, promises that she will soon be able to turn her head.

How shall I describe the next brief interval of time? To those who have ridden in such fashion, no description is necessary; and to those who have not, words are inadequate. And, in addition, while it was speedily apparent that we were leaving our pursuers behind—for the Cummingses' car followed us for some distance, with the policeman on the running board—it was also soon apparent that our dear Tish had entirely lost control of the machine.

Unable to turn her eyes from the road to examine the various controls, an occasional flash of lightning from an approaching storm showed her fumbling blindly with the mechanism. Farmhouses loomed up and were gone in an instant; on several curves the side car was high in the air, and more than once our poor Aggie almost left us entirely. As the lightning became more frequent we could see frightened animals running across the fields; and finally, by an unfortunate swerve, we struck and went entirely through some unseen obstacle, which later proved to be a fence.

However, what might have been a tragedy worked out to the best possible advantage, for another flash revealing a large haystack near by, Tish turned the machine toward it with her usual farsightedness and we struck it fairly in the center. So great was our impact, indeed, that we penetrated it to a considerable distance and were almost buried, but we got out without difficulty and also extricated the machine. Save for Aggie's neck, we were unhurt; and the rain coming up just then, we retired once more into the stack and with the aid of the flash again read over the clew:

"*Where are you going, my pretty maid?"*
"'Most anywhere else," said she.
"Behind the grille is a nice young man.
And he'll give my clew to me."

"Going?" said Tish thoughtfully. "'Most anywhere else'? There's no sense to that." The hay, however, had brought back Aggie's hay fever, and as sneezing hurt her neck, she was utterly wretched.

"There's a heap of sedse," she said in a petulant voice. "Bost adywhere else would suit be all right. Ad if you're goig to try that dabbed bachide agaid, Tish Carberry, I ab dot."

"If you must swear, Aggie," Tish reproved her, "go outside, and do not pollute the clean and wholesome fragrance of this hay."

"I'd have said worse if I knew adythig worse," said Aggie. "And bebbe this hay is wholesobe, but if you had by dose you wouldn't thig so."

"Grille?" said Tish. "A nice young man behind a grille? Is there a grillroom at the Eden Inn?"

But we could not remember any, and we finally hit on the all-night restaurant in town, which had.

"'Most anywhere else' must refer to that," Tish said. "The food is probably extremely poor. And while there we can get a sandwich or so and eat it on the way. I confess to a feeling of weakness."

"Weakness!" said Aggie bitterly. "Thed I dod't ever wadt to see you goig strog, Tish Carberry!"

It was owing to Aggie's insistence that Tish test out the mechanism of the motorcycle before any of us mounted again that our next misfortune occurred. So far, when one thing failed us, at least we had been lucky enough to find a substitute at hand, but in this instance we were for a time at a loss.

It happened as follows: As soon as the rain ceased, Tish, flashlight in hand, went to the machine and made a few experiments with it. At first all went well, but suddenly something happened, I know not what, and in a second the motorcycle had darted out of our sight and soon after out of hearing, leaving our dear Tish still with a hand out and me holding a flashlight on the empty air. Pursuit was useless, and, after a few moments, inadvisable, for as it reached the highroad it apparently struck something with extreme violence.

"If that's a house it's docked it dowd," Aggie wailed.

But as we were to learn later, it had not struck a house, but something far more significant. Of that also more later on.

Our situation now was extremely unpleasant. Although the storm was over, it was almost eleven o'clock, and at any time we expected to see the other cars dashing past toward victory. To walk back to town was out of the question in the condition of Aggie's neck. Yet what else could we do? However, Tish had not exhausted all her resources.

"We are undoubtedly on a farm," she said. "Where there's a farm there's a horse, and where there's a horse there is a wagon. I am not through yet."

And so, indeed, it turned out to be. We had no particular mischance in the barn, where we found both a horse and a wagon, only finding it necessary to connect the two.

This we accomplished in what I fear was but an eccentric manner, and soon we were on our way once more, Aggie lying flat in the wagon bed because of her neck. How easy to pen this line, yet to what unforeseen consequences it was to lead!

As we wished to avoid the spot where the motorcycle had struck something, we took back lanes by choice, and after traveling some three miles or so had the extraordinary experience of happening on the motorcycle itself once more, comfortably settled in a small estuary of the lake and with several water fowl already roosting upon it.

But we reached the town safely, and leaving Aggie, now fast asleep, in the rear of the wagon, entered the all-night restaurant.

V

There was no actual grille to be seen in this place, but a stout individual in a dirty white apron was frying sausages on a stove at the back end and a thin young man at a table was waiting to eat them.

Tish lost no time, but hurried back, and this haste of hers, added to the dirt and so on with which she was covered and the huskiness of her voice, undoubtedly precipitated the climax which immediately followed. Breathless as she was, she leaned to him and said:

"All is discovered."

"The hell you say!" said the man, dropping the fork.

"I've told you," she repeated. "All is discovered. And now no funny business. Give me what you've got; I'm in a hurry."

"Give you what I've got?" he repeated. "You know damn well I haven't got anything, and what I'm going to get is twenty years! Where are the others?"

Well, Tish had looked rather blank at first, but at that she brightened up.

"In the penitentiary," she said. "At least——"

"In the pen!" yelped the man. "Here, Joe!" he called to the person at the table. "It's all up! Quick's the word!"

"Not at all," said Tish. "I was to say 'All is discovered,' and——"

But he only groaned, and throwing off his apron and grabbing a hat, the next moment he had turned out the lights and the two of them ran out the front door. Tish and I remained in the darkness, too astonished to speak, until a sound outside brought us to our senses.

"Good heavens, Lizzie," she cried. "They have taken the wagon—and Aggie's in it!"

We ran outside, but it was too late to do anything. The horse was galloping wildly up the street, and after following it a block or two, we were obliged to desist. I leaned against a lamp-post and burst into tears, but Tish was made of stronger fiber. While others mourn, Tish acts, and in this case she acted at once.

As it happened, we were once more at Doctor Parkinson's, and even as we stood there the doctor himself brought his car out of the garage, and leaving it at the curb, limped into his house for something he had forgotten. He was wearing a pair of loose bedroom slippers, and did not see us at first, but when he did he stopped.

"Still at large, are you?" he said in an unpleasant tone.

"Not through any fault of yours," said Tish, glaring at him. "After your dastardly attack on us——"

"Attack!" he shouted. "Who's limping, you or me? I'm going to lose two toenails, and possibly more. I warn you, whoever you are, I've told the police and they are on your track."

"Then they are certainly traveling some," said Tish coldly.

He then limped into the house, and Tish caught me by the arm.

"Into the car!" she whispered. "He deserves no consideration whatever, and our first duty is to Aggie."

Before I could protest, I was in the car and Tish was starting the engine; but precious time had been lost, and although we searched madly, there was no trace of the wagon.

When at last in despair we drove up to the local police station it was as a last resort. But like everything else that night, it too failed us. The squad room was empty, and someone was telephoning from the inner room to Edgewater, the next town.

"Say," he was saying, "has the sheriff and his crowd started yet?... Have, eh? Well, we need 'em. All the boys are out, but they haven't got 'em yet, so far's I know.... Yes, they've done plenty. Attacked Doctor Parkinson first. Then busted down the pier at the fish house and stole a boat there, and just as Murphy corraled them near the pen, they grabbed his motorcycle and escaped. They hit a car with it and about killed a man, and a few minutes ago old Jenkins, out the Pike, telephoned they'd lifted a horse and wagon and beat it. And now they've looted the Cummings house and stolen Parkinson's car for a get-away.... Crazy? Sure they're crazy! Called the old boy at the fish cannery dearie! Can you beat it?"

We had just time to withdraw to the street before he came through the doorway, and getting into the car we drove rapidly away. Never have I seen Tish more irritated; the unfairness of the statements galled her, and still more her inability to refute them. She said but little, merely hoping that whoever had robbed the Cummings house had made a complete job of it, and that we would go next to the railway station.

"It is possible," she said, "that the men in that restaurant are implicated in this burglary, and certainly their actions indicate flight. In that case the wagon—and Aggie—may be at the depot."

This thought cheered us both. But alas, the waiting room was empty and no wagon stood near the tracks. Only young George Welliver was behind the ticket window, and to him Tish related a portion of the situation.

"Not only is Miss Pilkington in the wagon," she said, "but these men are probably concerned in the Cummings robbery. I merely said to them 'All is discovered,' when they rushed out of the place."

Suddenly George Welliver threw back his head and laughed.

"Well!" he said. "And me believing you all the time! So you're one of that bunch, are you? All that rigmarole kind of mixed me up. Here's your little clew, and you're the first to get one."

He then passed out an envelope, and Tish, looking bewildered, took it and opened it. It was the next clew, right enough. The password was "Three-toed South American sloth," and the clew as follows:

"*Wives of great men all remind us,*
We can make our wives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time."

"That ought not to be difficult," said Tish. "If only Aggie hadn't acted like a fool——"

"It's the cemetery," I said, "and I go to no cemetery to-night, Tish Carberry."

"Nonsense!" said Tish briskly. "Time certainly means a clock. I'm just getting the hang of this thing, Lizzie."

"'Hang' may be right before we're through. And when I think of poor Aggie——"

"Still," she went on, "sands might be an hourglass. Sands of time, you know."

"And if somebody broke it by stepping on it, it would be footprints in the sands of time!" I retorted. "Go on! All we have to do is to find an hourglass and step on it. And in the meantime Aggie——"

However, at that instant a train drew in and a posse from Edgewater, heavily armed, got out of it and made for a line of waiting motor hacks. Never have I seen a more ruthless-looking lot of men, and Tish felt as I did, for as they streamed into the waiting room she pushed me into a telephone booth and herself took another.

And with her usual competency she took advantage of the fact to telephone Hannah to see if Aggie had returned home, but she had not.

As soon as the posse had passed through we made our escape by the other door and were able to reach the doctor's car unseen, and still free to pursue our search. But I insist that I saw Tish scatter no tacks along the street as we left the depot. If she did, then I must also insist that she had full reason; it was done to prevent an unjustified pursuit by a body of armed men, and not to delay the other treasure hunters.

Was it her fault that the other treasure seekers reached the station at that time? No, and again no. Indeed, when the first explosive noises came as the cars drew up she fully believed that the sheriff was firing on us, and it was in turning a corner at that time that she broke the fire plug.

Certainly to assess her damages for flooded cellars is, under these circumstances, a real injustice.

But to return to the narrative: Quite rightly, once beyond pursuit, Tish headed for the Cummings property, as it was possible that there we could pick up some clew to Aggie, as well as establish our own innocence. But never shall I forget our reception at that once friendly spot.

As the circumstances were peculiar, Tish decided to reconnoiter first, and entered the property through a hedge with the intention of working past the sundial and so toward the house. But hardly had she emerged into the glow from the windows when a shot was fired at her and she was compelled to retire. As it happened, she took the shortest cut to where she had left me, which was down the drive, and I found myself exposed to a fusillade of bullets, which compelled me to seek cover on the floor of the car. Two of the car

windows were broken at once and Letitia Carberry herself escaped by a miracle, as a bullet went entirely through the envelope she held in her hand.

Yes, with her customary astuteness she had located the fresh clew. The Ostermaier boy had had them by the sundial, and had gone asleep there. She fell over him in the darkness, as a matter of fact, and it was his yell which had aroused the house afresh.

There was clearly nothing to do but to escape at once, as men were running down the drive and firing as they ran. And as it seemed to make no difference in which direction we went, we drove more or less at random while I examined the new clew. On account of the bullet holes, it was hard to decipher, but it read much as follows:

The password was "Keep your head down, —— boy," and the clew was as follows:

"*Search where affection ceases,*
By soft and —— sands.
The digit it increases,
On its head it stands."

"After all," Tish said, "we have tried to help Aggie and failed. If that thing made sense I would go on and locate the treasure. But it doesn't. A digit is a finger, and how can it stand on its head?"

"A digit is a number too."

"So I was about to observe," said Tish. "If you wouldn't always break in on my train of thought, I'd get somewhere. And six upside down is nine, so it's six we're after. Six what? Six is half a dozen. Half a dozen eggs; half a dozen rolls; half a dozen children. Who has half a dozen children? That's it, probably. I'm sure affection would cease with six children."

"Somebody along the water front. It says: 'By soft and something-or-other sands.'"

We pondered the matter for some time in a narrow lane near the country club, but without result; and might have been there yet had not the sudden passing of a car which sounded like the Smith boys'

flivver toward the country club gate stimulated Tish's imagination.

"I knew it would come!" she said triumphantly. "The sixth tee, of course, and the sand box! And those dratted boys are ahead of us!"

Anyone but Tish, I am convinced, would have abandoned hope at that moment. But with her, emergencies are to be met and conquered, and so now. With a "Hold tight, Lizzie!" she swung the car about, and before I knew what was on the tapis she had let in the clutch and we were shooting off the road and across a ditch.

VI

So great was our momentum that we fairly leaped the depression, and the next moment were breaking our way through a small woods, which is close to the fourteenth hole of the golf links, and had struck across the course at that point. Owing to the recent rain, the ground was soft, and at one time we were fairly brought to bay—on, I think, the fairway to the eleventh hole, sinking very deep. But we kept on the more rapidly, as we could now see the lights of the stripped flivver winding along the bridle path which intersects the links.

I must say that the way the greens committee has acted in this matter has been a surprise to us. The wagon did a part of the damage, and also the course is not ruined. A few days' work with a wheelbarrow and spade will repair all damage; and as to the missing cup at the eighth hole, did we put the horse's foot in it?

Tish's eyes were on the lights of the flivver, now winding its way along the road through the course, and it is to that that I lay our next and almost fatal mishap. For near the tenth hole she did not notice a sand pit just ahead, and a moment later we had leaped the bunker at the top and shot down into it.

So abrupt was the descent that the lamps—and, indeed, the entire fore part of the doctor's car—were buried in the sand, and both of us were thrown entirely out. It was at this time that Tish injured one of her floating ribs, as before mentioned, and sustained the various injuries which laid her up for some time afterward, but at the moment she said nothing at all. Leaping to her feet, she climbed out of the pit and disappeared into the night, leaving me in complete

darkness to examine myself for fractures and to sustain the greatest fright of my life. For as I sat up I realized that I had fallen across something, and that the something was a human being. Never shall I forget the sensations of that moment, nor the smothered voice beneath me, which said:

"Kill be at odce ad be dode with it," and then sneezed violently.

"Aggie!" I shrieked.

She seemed greatly relieved at my voice, and requested me to move so she could get her head out of the sand. "Ad dod't screab agaid," she said pettishly. "They'll cobe back ad fidish us all if you do."

Well, it appeared that the two men had driven straight to the golf links with the wagon, and had turned in much as we had done. They had not known that Aggie was in the rear, and at first she had not been worried, thinking that Tish and I were in the seat. But finally she had learned her mistake, and that they were talking about loot from some place or other, and she was greatly alarmed. They were going too fast for her to escape, although once or twice they had struck bunkers which nearly threw her out.

But at last they got into the sand pit, and as the horse climbed up the steep ascent our poor Aggie had heard her teeth drop out of her pocket and had made a frantic clutch at them. The next moment she had alighted on her head in the sand pit and the wagon had gone on.

She was greatly shaken by her experience and had taken a heavy cold; but although we felt about for the blackberry cordial, we could not find it, and could only believe it had miraculously remained in the wagon.

As she finished her narrative our dear Tish slipped quietly over the edge of the pit and sat down, panting, in the sand. The storm being definitely over and a faint moon now showing, we perceived that she carried in her hand a canvas sack tied with a strong cord, and from its weight as she dropped it we knew that at last we had the treasure.

It was a great moment, and both Aggie and I then set about searching for the missing teeth. But as Tish learned of Aggie's experience she grew thoughtful.

"Undoubtedly," she said, "those two men are somehow concerned in this robbery to-night, and very probably the rendezvous of the gang is somewhere hereabouts. In which direction did they go, Aggie?"

"They've parked the wagod over id those woods."

"Then," said Tish, "it is our clear duty——"

"——to go hobe," said Aggie sharply.

"Home nothing!" said Tish. "Jail is where we go unless we get them. There are fifteen policemen and a sheriff coming for us at this minute, and——" But here she stopped and listened intently. "It is too late," she said, with the first discouragement she had shown all evening. "Too late, my friends. The police are coming now."

Aggie wailed dismally, but Tish hushed her and we set ourselves to listen. Certainly there were men approaching, and talking in cautious tones. There was a moment when I thought our dear Tish was conquered at last, but only a moment. Then she roused to incisive speech and quick action.

"I do not propose to be dug out of here like a golf ball," she stated. "I am entitled to defend myself and I shall do so. Lizzie, see if there are any tools in the car there, and get a wrench." She then took a firm hold of the treasure bag and swung it in her hand. "I am armed," she said quietly, "and prepared for what may come. Aggie, get the clothespin, and when I give the word point it like a pistol."

"Ab I to say 'bag'?"

But before Tish could reply, the men were fairly on us. We had but time to get behind the car when we could hear their voices. And suddenly Aggie whispered, "It's theb! It's the baddits! Ad they've beed at the cordial!"

And Aggie was right; they had, indeed, as we could tell by their voices.

"It wash Bill, all righ'," said one man. "I shaw the litsh of hish car."

"Well, wheresh he gone to? No car here, no anything. Black ash hell."

One of them then began to sing a song, in which he requested a bartender to give him a drink, but was quickly hushed by the others, for there were now three of them. Whether it was this one or not I do not know, but at that instant one of them fell over the bunker at the top of the pit and came rolling down at our feet, and Tish, with her customary readiness, at once struck him on the head with the bag of pennies. He was evidently stunned, for he lay perfectly still, and the men above seemed puzzled.

"Hey, Joe!" they called. "Where are you?"

On receiving no reply, one of them lighted a match, and Tish had only time to retire behind the car before it flared up.

"Well, can you beat that? He'sh broken hish neck!"

But the man with the match was sober, and he saw the car and stared at it.

"If that's Bill's car," he said, as the match went out, "we're up against it. Only—where the devil's Bill?"

"He'sh dead too, mosht likely," said the other. "Everybody'sh dead. S'terrible night. Car'sh dead, too; buried in a shea of shand. Shinking rapidly. Poor ole car! Women and children first!"

He then burst into tears and sat down apparently, for the other man kicked him and told him to get up; and then came sliding into the pit and bent over Joe, striking another match as he did so. Hardly had he done so when Tish's weapon again descended with full force, and he fell beside his unconscious partner in crime.

We had now only the drunken man to deal with; and as Tish wished no more bloodshed, she managed him in a different manner.

In a word, she secured the towrope from the rear seat of the doctor's car and, leaving Aggie and myself to watch the others, climbed out and approached him from the rear. It was only the work of a moment to pinion his arms to his sides, and as Aggie immediately pointed her impromptu weapon and cried "Hads up!" he surrendered without a struggle. Having securely roped him, we then rolled him into the sand pit with the others, who showed no signs of coming to.

Fatigued as we were by that time, and no further danger threatening for the moment, we rested for a brief time on the ground and ate a few macaroons which I had carried in a pocket against such an emergency. But by "we" I mean only Tish and myself, as poor Aggie was unable to do so—and, indeed, has been living on soft food ever since. Then retrieving the sack containing the Cummings jewels and silver which the burglars had been carrying, we prepared to carry our double treasure back to the town.

Here, however, I feel that our dear Tish made a tactical error, for after we had found the horse and wagon—in the undergrowth just beyond the seventh hole—instead of heading at once for the police station she insisted on going first to the Ostermaier's.

"It is," she said, examining her watch by the aid of the flashlight, "now only half past eleven, and we shall not be late if we hurry. After that I shall report to the police."

"And what is to prevent those wretches from coming to and escaping in the interval?" I asked dryly.

"True," Tish agreed. "Perhaps I would better go back and hit them again. But that would take time also."

In the end we compromised on Tish's original plan and set out once more. The trip back across the links was uneventful, save that on the eighth green the horse got a foot into the hole and was only extricated with the cup still clinging to his foot.

We had no can opener along, and it is quite possible that the ring of the tin later on on the macadam road led to our undoing. For we had no sooner turned away from the town toward the Ostermaier's cottage on the beach than a policeman leaped out of the bushes and, catching the animal by the bridle, turned a lantern on us.

"Hey, Murphy!" he called. "Here they are! I've got 'em! Hands up, there!"

"Stand back!" said Tish in a peremptory voice. "We are late enough already."

"Late!" said the policeman, pointing a revolver at us. "Well, time won't make much difference to you from now on—not where you're going. You won't ever need to hurry again."

"But I must deliver this treasure. After that I'll explain everything."

"You bet you'll deliver it, and right here and now. And your weapons too."

"Aggie, give up your clothespin," said Tish in a resigned voice. "These yokels apparently think us guilty of something or other, but my conscience is clear. If you want the really guilty parties," she told the policeman, "go back to the sand pit by the tenth hole and you will find them."

"April fool your own self," said the one called Murphy. "I've been following you for two hours and I don't trust you. You're too resourceful. Is the stuff there?" he asked the first man, who had been searching in the wagon.

"All here."

"Then we'll be moving along," he said; and in this fashion did we reach the town once more, and the station house.

Never shall I forget that moment. Each of us handcuffed and hustled along by the officers, we were shoved into the station house in a most undignified manner, to confront the sheriff and a great crowd of people. Nor shall I ever forget the sheriff's face when he shouted in an angry voice:

"Women, by heck! When a woman goes wrong she sure goes!"

The place seemed to be crowded with people. The fish-pier man was there, and a farmer who said we had smashed his feed cutter. And Doctor Parkinson, limping about in his bedroom slippers and demanding to know where we had left his car, and another individual who claimed it was his horse we had taken, and that we'd put a tin can on his off forefoot and ought to be sued for cruelty to animals. And even Mr. Stubbs, because his license plates were on our car—and of course the old fool had told all about it—and the Cummings butler, who pointed at Tish and said that after the alarm was raised she had tried to get back into the house again, which was, of course, ridiculous.

I must say it looked bad for us, especially when the crowd moved and we saw a man lying in a corner with an overcoat under his head and his eyes shut. Tish, who had not lost an ounce of dignity, gazed

at him without expression.

"I dare say," she said, "that you claim that that is our work also."

"Just about killed him, you have," said the sheriff. "Went right through him with that motorcycle you stole. Murder—that's what it's likely to be—murder. D'you get his name, doctor?"

"Only roused enough to say it was Bill," said Doctor Parkinson. "I wish myself to lodge a complaint for assault and battery against these women. I am per——"

But Tish interrupted him.

"Bill?" she said. "Bill?"

Without a word she pushed the crowd aside, and bending over Bill, with her poor manacled hands she examined him as best she could. Then she straightened herself and addressed the crowd with composure.

"Under this man's shirt," she said, "you will find what I imagine to be a full set of burglar's tools. If your hands are not paralyzed like your brains, examine him and see."

And they found them! The picture of that moment is indelibly impressed on my mind—the sheriff holding up the tools and Tish addressing the mob with majesty and the indignation of outraged womanhood.

"Gentlemen, this is one of the gang which robbed the Cummings house to-night. Through all this eventful evening, during which I regret to say some of you have suffered, my friends and I have been on their track. Had the motorcycle not wrecked that ruffian's car, they would now have safely escaped. As it is, when we were so unjustly arrested I had but just recovered the Cummings silver and jewels, and alone and unaided had overcome the remainder of the gang. I am exhausted and weary; I have suffered physical injury and mental humiliation; but I am not too weak or too weary to go now to the sand pit at the tenth hole on the golf links and complete my evening's work by handing over to the police the three other villains I have captured."

"Three cheers for the old girl!" somebody called in the crowd. "I'm for her! Let's go!"

And this, I think, concludes the narrative of that evening's events. It was almost midnight when, our prisoners safely jailed, we arrived at the Ostermaiers' to find all the treasure hunters except the Cummingses there and eating supper, and our angel-food cake gracing the center of the table. Our dear Tish walked in and laid the sack of pennies on the table.

"Here is the treasure," she announced. "It has been an interesting evening, and I hope we shall soon do it again."

Mr. Ostermaier took up the bag and examined it.

"I have the honor of stating," he said, "that this, as Miss Carberry claims, is the treasure, and that Miss Carberry wins the hand-painted candlestick which is the prize for the event." He then examined the bag more carefully, and added:

"But this sack seems to be stained. Perhaps our good sister will explain what the stains are."

Tish eyed the bag with an expressionless face.

"Stains?" she said. "Oh, yes, of course. I remember now. They are blood."

Then, leaving them staring and speechless with astonishment, she led the way out of the house, and home.

THE GRAY GOOSE

In order to understand the case of Emmie Hartford and the rather drastic method by which our splendid Tish endeavored to effect a cure, it is necessary to go back a few months to that strange but brief period during which Letitia Carberry developed psychic power.

Not, indeed, that she used her power in the case referred to; on the contrary, rather. But the influence of her earlier experiences is plainly to be discovered by the careful reader, and since she has been severely criticized for her attitude to Emmie, as well as for the methods she pursued, it is only fair to her to revert briefly to the incidents which preceded the Hartford affair.

It is, I admit, a long step from a book on palmistry to that frightful evening when Aggie and I were compelled to sit under the eyes of a policeman and listen to a number of men digging

frantically in the cellar of the Hartford house just beneath the room in which we waited. But that is the way it began.

It was last Christmas that Charlie Sands, Tish's nephew, sent her a book on palmistry. Tish studied it carefully, and for some time Aggie and I, and even Hannah, her maid, were obliged to make impressions of our hands on a sheet of smoked paper while Tish studied the results. Aggie, I recall, had a line down near her wrist which worried Tish greatly, revealing as it did an unbridled and passionate nature, although Aggie was certain that it was where she had been cut while paring quinces some years ago. And Hannah certainly had the circle which indicated death by drowning. But what is important to this narrative is that our dear Tish discovered that she herself had the psychic cross on both hands.

She at once undertook a study of such matters, although at first her attitude was largely one of academic interest, she having always stoutly maintained that under no circumstances, once having passed over, would she care to be brought back and forced to inhabit even temporarily the body of a medium she might not care for or might indeed positively dislike.

And, I may say, her interest was largely impersonal until well on into the spring. Then one night she had a most curious experience, and there began that earnest investigation which was to lead us into such strange paths, and was later, indeed, to see us driven from the Hartford home under conditions so unpleasant that only a sense of fairness to Tish compels me to record them.

Briefly, then, Tish was reading one evening in the living room of her apartment, while Hannah in the kitchen was cutting out a nightgown from a paper pattern. There was only the light from the reading lamp, an auspicious fact, since we have since learned how fatal is light to these delicate phenomena, and it so happened that there was on the table beside her a vase of flowers and also a pitcher of drinking water. Since both water and flowers greatly assist in psychic manifestations, it will be readily seen that, without Tish knowing it, the stage was already set for the drama which ensued.

Suddenly she heard a faint rustling, and on glancing up there was the sleeve pattern of Hannah's nightgown moving across the doorsill and into the room!

It is unfortunate that, in her surprise, she dropped her book and thus broke the ectoplasmic force, or whatever it may be called. The paper instantly ceased to move. But her interest was naturally aroused, and with her usual promptness she at once inaugurated a series of sittings, consisting of the three of us—Aggie, Tish and myself. Later on, for one experiment, we persuaded Hannah to join us, with results so startling that neither she nor Aggie sat again. But even these early sittings brought surprising results. I quote a few extracts from Tish's record, made each evening after the event, and thus as correct as possible:

> At one A.M. last night we secured heavy raps on the wall next to the Ingersoll apartment, distinctly audible over the sound of the phonograph.
>
> By an unmistakable affirmative in the usual code of raps for yes and no, Mr. Wiggins tonight told Aggie he had desired her to have his cameo scarf pin, and not his sister, who has it.
>
> C. S.—Charlie Sands—sat with us tonight. Vase of flowers and bowl of water on floor. He requested that the spirits place something in the bowl of water, and since it was Friday, suggested fish. In thirty seconds we heard a loud plop, and found on turning on the light that a goldfish was swimming in the bowl.

Brief as they are, these few extracts prove conclusively that we were securing results. Already, a purely amateur circle as we were, we had succeeded in securing a materialized form. More than that, the fish remained some days, in every way acting like a real fish, even eating the food we placed in the bowl. Indeed, it was only to leave us later on under circumstances as amazing as those of its arrival.

It will be seen, then, that we were slowly but definitely progressing, although small setbacks and annoyances came our way also. Hannah, for instance, became so nervous that she constantly threatened to leave, and on a storm coming up one night and Tish going into her room in her nightdress to see if the window was closed, was only in time to catch her before she leaped out of the window!

But in the main we were satisfied. True, our one attempt to utilize a trumpet medium, strongly recommended by Mrs. Ostermaier as having predicted Willie's measles, was most unfortunate. We had invited Charlie Sands to sit with us, and the early performance was most surprising. Mr. Abraham, the medium, went into a deep trance and the trumpet which had been placed on the floor moved about and touched us all. Not only that, but it hovered in the air in front of Charlie Sands, and after a number of kissing sounds, a young woman who said her name was Katie and that she used to know him, asked him to go to a private sitting at Mr. Abraham's, because she didn't want to make any trouble for him by talking there.

"That's right, Katie," he said. "I don't seem to remember you, but be discreet anyhow. And you might pass that word along over there, because a lot of folks could come back and make trouble here if they wanted to."

Well, she agreed to that and was just sending another kiss to him through the trumpet, when she sneezed twice. Tish thought it was Aggie, but it was not. And while this was being argued the medium in his chair suddenly gave a terrific yelp.

"I've been injured!" he shouted. "Somebody's played a trick on me! I'm damaged! I'm hurt!"

Well, Aggie turned on the lamp, and Mr. Abraham was on his feet, making dreadful faces and pulling at the seat of his trousers. Somebody had put a tack with the point upright on his chair, and he must have been standing up, for he had sat down on it. He was very much upset, and left without waiting to collect his fee at all.

It turned out that Charlie Sands had suspected him right along, and had blown some snuff into the trumpet when he was talking to Katie. It was he, also, who had placed the tack on the chair.

A weaker spirit than Letitia Carberry might have been discouraged, but Tish was not daunted; and, although our next sitting was the last we held, since neither Aggie nor Hannah would so much as venture into a dark room after it, it was so conclusive that it left no room for doubt.

To be brief, Tish had always felt that in materializing a goldfish we had done well, but not sufficiently well.

"A fish," she said, "is a lower earth form. It is soulless and purely material, for there is no record of water in the higher planes of existence, since in the spirit we neither thirst nor bathe. We must do better than that."

As a result of this resolution we were, as I have said, compelled to give up our sittings entirely; but not before we had had a success beyond our wildest hopes.

On the night in question, then, we had coaxed Hannah to sit once more, and in a very few minutes we heard undeniable sounds from the neighborhood of the open window. As it was entirely dark we could see nothing, but after a short time Hannah yelled in a terrified voice that something was rubbing against her.

"Hush!" said Tish quietly. "If it is a spirit form it is welcome. Welcome, friend."

"It's scratching my leg!" said Hannah in a dreadful tone.

She then let out a bloodcurdling yell and the next instant the spirit form had leaped to Aggie's shoulder, and she fell from her chair in a dead faint. We were obliged to turn on the light, but it was a long time before she could do more than moan. Naturally the force was entirely dissipated by that time; but Hannah was able to show two long scratches on her leg as evidence, and Aggie's shoulder revealed three or four minute punctures entirely through the skin.

A careful examination of the room also revealed a startling fact. The goldfish had disappeared from its bowl!

It was, indeed, a remarkable achievement, marking as it did our advance from the piscatorial to the animal plane, and indicating that we might even hope before long for the materialized human body. But, alas for Tish's hopes, neither Aggie nor Hannah would sit again. So undermined, indeed, was Hannah's morale by the incident that she gave us a considerable fright only a few days later.

Tish was experimenting with automatic writing at the time, and had already secured a curious result. Her hand had drawn first a series of straight horizontal lines and then crossed them with a similar number of vertical ones, resulting in numerous small

squares. Then, moving on inexorably, it had just written beneath: "Number one horizontal," when we heard a terrific shriek from Hannah's room, followed by another and another.

The power, of course, was broken, and, on rushing to Hannah's assistance, we found that she had heard strange movements and sounds from her closet and was convinced that there was a spirit there. It turned out, however, to be only the Ingersolls' cat; a troublesome animal which had crawled in over the fire escape and was playing with a mouse it had captured.

But this practically ended our experiments in that direction. As Tish so justly observed, the craven heart has no place in the spirit world. I have related it, however, because indirectly but surely it had its influence in the Hartford matter.

It was just after all this that Aggie's cousin Will Hartford came to see her and to ask her to indorse a note for five hundred dollars. We were all struck by the change in him; he used to be a nice-looking man, rather fastidious about his clothes, but he looked thin and had a bad color that day, and as shabby as a person could be and go about.

Aggie was so sorry for him that she would have done what he asked, but Tish at once advised against it.

"Lending money to relatives is like lending seed to a canary bird," she said. "You get paid only in song, and some of them can't sing. What's the matter, anyhow, Will?" she demanded, gazing at him with her usual searching glance. "You earn a good salary. You oughtn't to be borrowing seed—I mean money."

"Well," he said, "Emmie's kind of frail. She has been most ever since I married her. It's mostly a matter of doctors and nurses."

"Frail, how?" said Tish sharply. "Morally or physically? She used to be all right. I can remember when she ate three eggs for breakfast and was out in the pantry at eleven o'clock for a glass of milk."

He looked pained.

"She doesn't eat now at all, Letitia," he said sadly. "She feeds most everything that goes up on her tray to the dog. I don't know how she lives on what she eats."

Well, poor Will's story was certainly a sad one. About ten years ago Emmie had been taken sick. Fainted. And from that time on she'd just been up and down. Once they had thought it was a dropped stomach, and about the time she was all strapped up for that along came a new doctor and located something in her gall bladder. Her kidneys were wrong, too, and they'd got a new specialist lately who was laying the trouble to the thyroid gland.

"She's had so many hypodermics that her poor skin is full of holes," he told us. "I guess they've used about a hundred needles on her."

"It's a pity somebody wouldn't use a needle on you," said Tish sharply, looking at a hole in his sock.

But he only put his foot under his chair and went on about his troubles.

"I don't like asking for help," he said, "but every time I get a little money it goes to doctors and nurses. I've paid a nurse forty dollars a week for seven years and I've been needing a new suit for the last six of them. And we can't keep help. There's nobody there now but the nurse. Seems as though the feebler Emmie gets the worse they treat her."

Well, he looked so forlorn that Tish sent Aggie out for some blackberry cordial.

"Is she in bed all the time?" she asked.

"She's up and down. I carry her down to the living room once in a while, but I can't do it often. I'm not so strong as I used to be."

"Still, as thin as she must be——"

"Well, she isn't exactly thin," he said in an embarrassed manner. "It's a funny thing, but she's put on weight. Of course, weight itself may be a disease. I guess it is with her, anyhow."

Tish glanced at him, but he was drinking his blackberry cordial and didn't notice it. He was certainly shabby, and his face had sort of fallen in.

"What's the matter with your teeth?" Tish said suddenly.

"I've lost one or two of them," he admitted. "I haven't liked to take the time away from her to get them looked at. You see"—he looked away from us, out of the window—"you see, I may not have her long. I don't want ever to feel that I—that I failed her in any way."

"It's a pity it isn't Emmie who's lost her teeth, and not you," said Tish. "Since she doesn't need them and you do."

But he looked pained at that; so she told him she would think things over and let him know what Aggie would do, and he went away. On his way out Tish asked him suddenly what sort of a dog they had, and he seemed surprised.

"It's a Pekingese," he said, and went out with his shoulders bent, like an old man.

After he had gone Aggie told us more about Emmie. She said it was a great pity about her, not forty yet and on her deathbed, but that that sort of weakness ran in the family.

"Her mother was delicate, too," she said. "For twenty-five years she never came downstairs. Her mother carried up every bite of food she ate."

"What happened to her then?" Tish put in, rousing herself. "Did she die?"

"No, but her mother did," Aggie said.

"And then who carried the tray?"

"Well, she began to get better about that time, and she lived to be eighty. She would be living now, poor soul, but she got on a chair one night to reach a piece of pie that somebody had hidden in the pantry, and she fell off and broke her neck."

Tish seemed very thoughtful as she went back to her apartment. She told Aggie not to do anything about the note for a time; that she would go and think over the situation. It was that night that she called me up and asked me how large a Pekingese dog was, and I told her the one her niece, Lily May Carter, had, weighed about seven pounds.

"You're sure of that, are you?" she inquired. "It's not the size of a police dog or a mastiff?"

"Not unless it's grown considerably since I saw it," I assured her.

"Then," she said, "I fancy things at Will Hartford's are in a very bad way. We'd better go there, Lizzie."

"Do you think that Emmie's going to die, Tish?"

"I do, indeed," said Tish dryly. "At eighty or ninety, if I can restrain myself so long, she will pass on. But Will Hartford is in a bad way. And so, I should judge," she added cryptically, "is the Pekingese dog."

We left two days later to see Emmie. It suited none of us to go. It was almost time for the annual meeting at the church, where we invariably serve the supper. Also Aggie was having an early attack of hay fever, which the dust of the motor trip did nothing to allay. All in all, only a strong sense of duty took us, a genuine spirit of self-sacrifice; and when I think of that last evening there, with the house full of doctors and policemen, I cannot restrain a certain sense of bitterness.

We acted entirely for the best. If the results were not what we anticipated, surely the fault is not ours. And how true, indeed, are these lines, secured only the other day by Tish through the medium of automatic writing:

There swims no goose so gray but soon or late
She finds some honest gander for her mate.

It was the night before our departure that Tish and I sat together for advice on the situation, Aggie definitely refusing to join us.

We got rather feeble results, as the power was evidently low; but on her asking if we should go to the Hartfords', the table very clearly rapped "Yes." Whether, after I had gone, Tish received further instructions or not I do not know, but I am inclined to think she did. For one reason, I doubt if the idea of breaking a spring in her car and thus prolonging our stay there originated with her. She is very fond of her car.

On the other hand, the suggestion that I take along my small bathroom scale was clearly her own. Also, I imagine, the ipecac and the raw beef. Though of an idealistic type, the practical side of her nature is also extremely well developed.

But that she succeeded in breaking not one spring, but an entire set of them, was a proof undoubtedly that she was being carefully guided. I still think, and Aggie agrees with me, that she could have done so without us in the car, and thus have saved Aggie much physical discomfort—at the third ditch her poor head went entirely through the top.

But at least she achieved her purpose, and we limped into the untidy drive in front of the Hartford house in a considerably demoralized condition. The house was as run down as the property, and what with it being a mile beyond the village and isolated, and having a cemetery just across the road, it was as gloomy a place as ever I have laid eyes on. The front porch had not been swept for months, and the doorbell was disconnected, so we had to hammer for admission.

We learned later that the sound of the bell annoyed Emmie.

Will Hartford himself opened the door and I cannot say that he burst into shouts of joy when he saw us. He had heard us drive up, and he came out onto the front porch with his finger to his lips and a worried look on his face.

"Sh!" he said. "She's had a bad day, and she's resting now. Most folks leave their cars out in the road so as not to disturb her."

"We had to drive in," said Tish, "because of our luggage, Will."

Well, he looked at the car then, and when he saw the bags in it he went quite pale.

"Oh!" he said. "So you're staying over-night, are you? Well, I guess you'd better come in, but don't make any noise. The nurse dropped the thermometer a few minutes ago, and Emmie hasn't yet recovered from the shock."

We tiptoed inside, and he went out and carried in our bags and the bathroom scale. But he had not been quite prepared for the weight of the scale, and just inside the door it slipped and fell with a terrible crash on the floor. It caught his foot, too, and there was nothing subdued either about the racket or the way he swore.

Tish said she took heart from that minute. It showed that he was not entirely crushed. But there was a yelp from upstairs, and the next minute a nurse in uniform dashed down the stairs.

"You've got the aromatic ammonia in your pocket," she said to him. "She's fainted again."

Well, he let go of his foot and gave her the bottle, and Tish watched her rush up the stairs with a queer look on her face.

"Do you mean to say that that noise made Emmie faint?" she inquired.

"Her nerves are about gone," he whispered, all subdued again. "Any unexpected sound almost kills her. I've had to put a piece of felt on the back porch, so the milkman can put down his bottles quietly."

He limped into the living room and while Tish took the car to the garage in the village we followed him. Just one look around was enough for me, and the dust started Aggie to sneezing again at once. He closed the door with a pained expression and said he was glad to see us once more, and asked Aggie if she still made cream puffs with whipped-cream filling. Then he groaned, and said that he was a criminal to be thinking of the flesh when Emmie, as like as not, was near the end of the road.

And at that moment the dog scratched at the door and he let it in. It was a tiny thing and as thin as a rail, and when Tish came back from leaving her car at the garage she took one look at it and said:

"Why don't you feed that poor little beast?"

"Feed it!" he said. "It has worms, or something. It eats enough for two men. Last night it ate Emmie's sweetbread entire, and then came down and tried to take my pork chop from me."

He sighed and then limped to the door again.

"I'll have some beds made up for you," he said. "I guess we can manage for one night."

"It may be more than one night," said Tish, looking him straight in the eye. "They have to send away for those springs, Will."

"Well, two nights then," he said, and went out of the room, closing the door softly behind him.

It did not require any keen intelligence to show us that we were not welcome, and I said so to Tish.

"Personally," I observed, "I imagine he would rather have the whooping cough!"

"Not the whooping cough," said Tish. "That's noisy, Lizzie." She then walked to the door, opened it and slammed it hard. "There's no death here yet," she said, "although there may be, if I don't hold myself in. Where's that dog?"

Well, the poor little thing had crept under a sofa, and was almost too feeble to crawl out.

"Eats her food, does he?" said Tish. "So nobody feeds him downstairs, and he's starving to death. Here," she said, "try this, old boy."

To our surprise she drew a package of raw chopped beef out of her pocket, and the way that creature bolted it was a revelation. Tish watched him carefully but said nothing, and before Will came back she had burned the paper in the fireplace.

Well, we didn't see Emmie before dinner. Will said somebody or other had slammed a door and she had gone into a collapse. He'd sent for the doctor again. As there was no servant, we pitched in and cooked what was in the house, which wasn't much, except for the broiled squab, baked potato, two rolls, some green peas and a saucer of ice cream which the nurse took up to Emmie.

"If she would only eat!" Will said. "And build up her strength. But she just groans and turns her face away."

It turned out that the nurse ate while Emmie was merely toying with her tray upstairs and feeding Teddy from it. But that night Teddy did not go upstairs. He had been fed and was asleep under the table. And it wasn't more than five minutes after the nurse and the rest of us had sat down to our frugal repast when we heard Emmie feebly calling for him.

"You see?" Will said, hopelessly. "She won't touch it, and she's calling Teddy."

"And Teddy isn't going!" said Tish. "He's under the table at my feet."

Well, all through the meal we could hear Emmie weakly calling the dog, and Will and the nurse kept running up to see if she was all right. Once Will came down and tried to carry the dog up, but he ran

out into the kitchen and into the yard, and he couldn't catch him.

"Emmie's frightfully upset," he said in a worried way. "She has fancies like this, and I don't like to cross her. But that dog has crawled under the porch and I don't know what to do."

Tish said nothing. Later on the tray came down untouched, and Will said Emmie was in a very bad way. She would not speak to him, and just lay there staring at the ceiling.

"She looks as though she is staring into eternity," he said. "To think of me sitting here eating like an animal, and my poor wife——"

He was so overcome he had to leave the room, and Aggie got out her handkerchief.

"I'm afraid it's the end, Tish," she whimpered.

"It is the end," Tish said shortly, "or it will be unless somebody holds me."

It was that evening that Will took Tish to a window and pointed out the lot he had selected in the cemetery across the road.

"It has a good view, you see, Letitia," he told her. "And her sainted mother lies there too. There is room for me beside her also. I shan't outlive her very long."

"No," Tish said dryly, "I imagine you'll not outlive Emmie, Will; not to amount to anything anyhow."

We had a long talk with Will that night. We had dusted the living room and started a fire there, and he seemed to relax. He even lighted a cigarette, after Tish had told him that if he sat near the fire the smoke would go up the chimney.

Emmie, it seemed, didn't like tobacco smoke.

"It affects her heart," he said. "I smoke outside, and then come in and change my coat. The faintest odor sickens her."

The trouble, he said, had been coming on for some years.

"We'd been talking about getting a car," he said, "and I didn't feel able to. I remember she had just said she wasn't as well as she might be, and that she needed a car for fresh air; and when I said that I couldn't afford it she fell over just like that." He snapped his fingers. "In a heap. That was the beginning."

"And it's gone on ever since?"

"Yes. She just wouldn't take care of herself. And I didn't understand. I used to ask her to do things. The second attack came when I asked her to wash out a pair of golf hose for me. The laundress always shrunk them, and I thought—well, she took cold, and it settled on her lungs. Every now and then she has a hemorrhage."

"A large one?" Tish asked.

"I've never been around when she's had one, but they weaken her terribly," he said. "The worst thing about it all is I'm responsible. I never did realize just how delicate she was until it was too late."

We sat there for a while, and he seemed glad to talk and be warm at the same time. But after a while the nurse tiptoed in and whispered that Emmie wanted him, and he slipped out and creaked up the stairs.

"I always read to her in the evenings," he explained as he left. "It's the least I can do, and it's all she has."

Tish was very thoughtful that evening, and after Will had read to Emmie until she was sleepy, and tucked her up and fixed her window and taken her ice water and moved her bell closer to her and given her an eggnog, which was all, he said, she could keep down, he locked up the house and we went to bed.

"Don't worry if you hear me moving about in the night," he said. "The nurse has to sleep sometime."

"And when do you sleep?" Tish inquired.

"Oh, I get a nap now and then, and then I sleep in the train going up to business in the morning and coming back in the evening."

The last thing I heard that night was Emmie's bell ringing hard. I heard Will get up and go into her room, and when I dropped off he was still there, soothing her about something.

I had been asleep for perhaps three hours when I was wakened by a terrific crash from somewhere below, and I leaped out of bed. Across the hall I heard Will moving, and the next moment he ran down the staircase. Tish was not in her room, and, convinced that something dreadful had occurred, I hurried down in my nightdress.

I could hear Tish's voice in the pantry, and Will moaning and saying Emmie was dead, and when I opened the pantry door I thought at first that she was.

She was lying on the floor in a dead faint, with a slice of bread and butter in her hand, and Tish was standing over her keeping Will off.

"She's all right," she said. "Let her alone. She'll come round all right."

"But she's fainted," Will yelled. "Get Miss Smith. Ring up the doctor. Pour some water over her."

Tish did this last. She turned on the cold-water tap, filled a dipper, and flung its contents hard in Emmie's face. And if ever I've seen a fainting woman look furious Emmie did. But she only opened her eyes and said weakly:

"Where am I?"

"You're here, darling," said Will, trembling all over. "You'll be all right now."

"How did I get here?" she whimpered.

"You walked here," Tish said dryly. "You didn't fly, you know, Emmie."

Well, she couldn't have flown anywhere. She was as fat as butter, and as healthy-looking a woman as ever I've seen. Will had run to telephone for the doctor, and Emmie seemed to realize the bread and butter, for she held up the hand that had it and said feebly:

"What's this?"

"Just what it looks like, Emmie," said Tish.

"Strange!" she whispered. "I don't remember anything. Who found me here, and when?"

"I did," Tish said coldly. "You had just spread on the butter and were reaching for the jam when I came in."

She gave Tish a look of absolute hatred, and then the nurse ran in and drove us out. Later on we heard poor Will carrying her up the staircase, and when he bumped against the rail with her she yelped. He twisted his back doing it, but when the doctor came he said it had been a curious case of somnambulism.

"In her state of weakness," he said, "it's impossible to believe that she walked down those stairs, Miss Carberry. She must have slid down."

"She walked down. I was behind her."

"Why on earth didn't you stop her?"

"I had an idea that maybe she was hungry," Tish said quietly.

We did not feed Teddy the next morning, but we weighed him when he followed the breakfast tray to Emmie's room. And when he came down, having supposedly eaten all of Emmie's breakfast, he had lost two ounces!

Tish gazed at the scales angrily.

"As I thought!" she observed. "And that poor devil of a husband hasn't probably been out of this house at night for five years, or had a sock darned in ten! If he had any sense he'd take up with another woman."

"Why, Tish!" said Aggie, aghast.

"If there's anything more immoral than that woman lying up there in bed and taking everything Will gives her and giving nothing back, I haven't heard of it."

"She's his wife."

"She's not his wife," said Tish. "She's a cancer, that's what she is. Cancers thrive, but the people who have 'em die. And he's got her."

It was that morning that Emmie decided to make the best of a bad job and see us, and all the time the nurse was fixing her up for the doctor's visit she told us her symptoms. For a dying woman she certainly was particular about her appearance, for she was dressed up to beat anything in a silk nightgown, and with her hair crimped. Just before the nurse went out she sprayed her with violet water,

and Emmie stopped whining about serums and blood pressure long enough to say that she had to use perfume because the smell of cooking in the house upset her poor weak stomach.

"And Will is so thoughtless," she said. "Would you believe that he brought home spareribs and sauerkraut the other night? And it isn't more than ten days since he fried some onions for his supper! But I suppose men are all alike."

"No, Emmie," Tish told her gently. "No, they are not. There are some men who would as soon commit murder as not. But your Will isn't that sort. Anybody can see that."

Well, Emmie eyed her suspiciously, but Tish went on asking her if all the arrangements for the funeral were made, and if she would like us to stay on until everything was over.

"We could put the house in order, and so on," she said. "I dare say Will will marry again, because the lonelier they are, the sooner they do it; but we could leave things tidy. And he would have to wait a year anyhow."

"I should think he would," said Emmie coldly. "And if you think I intend to have this house put in order for Will's second wife you can think again. Anyhow, Will Hartford has never looked at another woman and never will."

"Not even at that nurse of yours?" Tish inquired. "I was just thinking last night that I didn't consider it exactly wise to leave these two together as much as you do. She's a right nice-looking girl."

"I can't say I admire your taste!" she said. But when the nurse came back she gave her a long, hard look and then said she would take a rest so as to be ready for the doctor's visit.

"I don't know if Will has told you," she remarked, "but I'm not supposed to have company. Excitement is my worst enemy."

"Well, we're not company, Emmie," Tish told her. "You just go on and be as sick as you like. And don't worry about us. Nobody with a heart would leave Will to go through the funeral by himself. And you might tell us where your grave clothes are while you're still able to speak."

"They're in the lower bureau drawer," she said in a hard voice. And we went out.

When the doctor came that day Tish waylaid him in the lower hall. And he said Emmie Hartford could get out of bed and do a day's washing any minute she had a mind to. But he said also that if he told her so she would only shop around for another doctor, who would tell her she had something seriously wrong with her. He had not been paid for a long time, but he did not mind that as much as the way she made him lose his sleep.

"My wife says," he stated, "that she seems to know the minute I've taken my trousers off. I don't know when I've slept a night through. Why, if you'll believe me, the alarm clock in the kitchen went off at two o'clock the other morning and I got up in my sleep and was out to the cemetery here before I wakened."

Well, after he had gone we sent Emmie a nice lunch, and soon after, she began to call the dog. But Tish had fed him and shut him in a closet and once more she had to send her tray down untouched. She was in a villainous temper by that time and the nurse came down about four P.M. and said there was something queer about her. She just lay in bed and stared hard at her. And when she had told her she was going to put on a fresh uniform before Will got home, Emmie had called her something that sounded like a hussy.

But if Emmie's condition was worse, Will's was distinctly better. He ate a real meal that evening, and, instead of hurrying up to her afterward, he sat for a little while in the sitting room. We had brought along some blackberry cordial, and he sipped it with appreciation.

"I was making some right good moonshine myself a while back," he said. "I bought a still, you know, and I gave the doctor some one night. He turned his car over on his way back into town and broke his arm. But the smell annoyed Emmie, so I had to give it up."

Well, Miss Smith came in for a few minutes, too; she seemed glad to relax for once. But pretty soon Emmie's bell began to ring and she had to go up. It was no time at all before she came running down the stairs with a thermometer in her hand and a scared look on her face.

"You'd better come up at once, Mr. Hartford," she said. "She's got a terrible fever."

"How high is it?" asked Will, beginning to tremble.

"About as high as it can be," said Miss Smith, looking worried. "I've telephoned to the doctor, and he says to use a cold pack. But she won't have it."

But as usual, our dear Tish rose to the emergency at once.

"Certainly she will have it," she said. "You crack the ice, Will, and you might mix some salt with it while you're at it. There's no use doing it unless we do it right. A high fever is not to be fooled with."

Well, I don't know when I remember such a fuss as Emmie made over that cold pack. She was strong, too, and it was all we could do to put her between sheets wrung out of ice water and then pour the ice and salt over her. She howled and screamed, but Tish worked calmly.

"You're killing me!" she would yell. "I'm dying!"

"You will die if you don't keep quiet," Tish would say.

"But I'll take cold; I'll take pneumonia."

"Not with a temperature like that," Tish would assure her, and pour on more ice and salt.

They did not stop until her temperature was down to ninety-five. She would not speak to any of us by that time, but when it was all over, Tish came over to the room Aggie and I occupied together and closed the door.

"I fancy," she said grimly, "that it will be some time before she holds the thermometer against her hot-water bottle again."

As Tish says, the Emmies of this world never fool the women, although they always fool the men. But Emmie knew well enough that she had not fooled us for a minute. And the way she hated us after the affair of the cold pack was simply wicked. She would lie in bed and loathe the very ground we walked on, and when she found it would take at least a week to repair the car she had a convulsion

and frothed at the mouth. Tish was quite certain the froth was merely lather from a cake of soap, but Will was almost out of his mind.

The strangest thing, however, was the way she had turned against Miss Smith. Possibly the fact that Tish found a picture of her in Will's coat one day while she was repairing it in Emmie's room had something to do with it. But both Will and Miss Smith were as puzzled as could be about it, and Miss Smith said it had been on her bureau when she went out.

Will went right down on his knees beside Emmie's bed and swore he had always been true to her.

"There has never been any other woman in my life, Emmie," he told her. "I've never had any time for that sort of thing, and you know it. Surely you can trust me!"

"I trust nobody," said Emmie grimly. "If you haven't the decency to wait until I am gone, which at the best is a matter of weeks, I can but lie here and await the end."

But she couldn't very well send the nurse away, for in ten years she had had most of the nurses thereabouts, and none of them would come back, and she knew it. She was very suspicious after that, however, and the very next day, Aggie happening to dust baking soda instead of powdered sugar over her cup custard—yes, she was eating a little by that time; she had to, or starve—she accused Miss Smith of trying to poison her.

Naturally, things were considerably strained from then on, although both Will and the dog were showing marked improvement. Will would come home to a clean house and a good dinner and smoke a couple of cigarettes up the chimney afterward. Then he would get up heavily and draw a long breath and say:

"Well, I suppose I'd better be getting on the job again," and go slowly up the stairs.

But long after he should have been in his bed, getting the rest he needed, we could hear him reading aloud, on and on, until Emmie went to sleep.

How long this might have continued I cannot say. But one morning we missed the half of a coconut cake from the kitchen cupboard, and Tish promptly went to Will about it.

"None are so blind as those who will not see," she said to him. "But if you think, Will Hartford, that a mouse ate that cake and then put the pan in the garbage can, I don't."

"But I don't think anything of the kind, Letitia," he protested, looking distressed. "Every now and then a tramp breaks into a house out here and eats what he can find."

Tish gave him a terrible stare, and then she used an expression I had never before heard from her lips. "Some people are idiots," she said, "and some are just plain fools," and with that she stalked out of the room.

She called us together for a council of war, as she termed it, after he had gone to the train.

"Two courses are open before us," she said. "We can leave the poor deluded imbecile to his fate, or we can take matters into our own hands. If the former, we must go; if the latter, that nurse must get out. I cannot be hampered."

Well, after some argument we agreed to do whatever Tish suggested, although Aggie stipulated that Emmie, being her cousin by marriage, was to suffer no physical harm. Tish, on the other hand, demanded absolute freedom and no criticism. And this being satisfactorily arranged it remained only to get rid of Miss Smith.

As it happened, fate played into our hands that very morning.

The coconut cake had upset Emmie's stomach, and the doctor sent some medicine for her. But Tish met the boy at the door, and, having instructed us to have the kettle boiling, was able to steam off the label and place it on the bottle of ipecac swiftly and neatly. Miss Smith gave her two doses before it began to act, but when it did it was thorough.

Well, Emmie was about as sick as any human could be and live for the next six hours. I suppose it was the first real sickness she had felt in ten years, and the fuss she made was dreadful. There was no

use blaming a tramp for the coconut cake after it either. But what really matters is that she made them bring Will out from town. And between paroxysms she told him Miss Smith had poisoned her.

Miss Smith left that afternoon, but before she did she told Will that Emmie was as well as he was, or even better, and that the doctor knew it too. But if anyone thinks that Will believed her he does not know Will Hartford. All he did was to dismiss the doctor, too, and then come back to the kitchen and moan about the way people treated Emmie.

"Even that doctor never understood her," he said despondently. "And I must owe him two hundred dollars or so this minute! Sometimes, Letitia, I think there is no compassion left in the world. Even the neighbors neglect her nowadays; I don't believe there has been a bowl of calf's-foot jelly sent to her in months."

"Really?" said Tish. "It is surprising, when you think of the things folks might send her and don't. Every now and then you read of somebody getting a bomb, or poisoned candy."

He looked at her, but she went on fixing Emmie's tray in her usual composed manner.

We had a day or two of peace after that. Tish brought Doctor Snodgrass, her own physician, out from town. And after a short talk with her, he put Emmie on a very light diet and went away again. As Tish had put a padlock on the kitchen cupboard the light diet was all Emmie got, too. She had a bowl of junket for breakfast, beef tea for lunch and in the evening she had some milk toast, and if ever I've seen a woman suffer she did. We did not run every time she rang her bell, either. She would jingle it for half a dozen times, and for a feeble woman the way she could fling it when nobody came was a marvel.

But, looking back, I can see that we underestimated her intelligence. She had a good bit of time, by and large, to think things out, and she was no fool, whatever else she might be. And I imagine it galled her, too, to see Will filling out and looking more cheerful every day. He was spending more time than ever downstairs and, instead of tiptoeing into the room when he came home at night, he would walk in briskly and say: "Well, how's the old girl to-night?"

He still wandered across to the cemetery now and then, but we fancied there was more of speculation than of grief in his face when he picked the daisies off his lot. And one night, I remember, he came back and said it was a curious thing that Emmie's mother had lived to be eighty, as frail as she had been, and that Emmie was like her in a lot of ways.

Tish eyed him.

"She certainly is," she said. "I thought of that the night I found her in the pantry."

And then one night there was a yell and a crash upstairs, and when we all ran up, with Will in the lead, we found Emmie stretched out on the floor, and she said she was paralyzed from the waist down!

It took the four of us to get her back into bed. She gave Tish a glance of triumph when she was finally installed and then grabbed Will's hand and began to groan.

"It's the last straw," she moaned. "Until now I have not been entirely helpless, but this is too much. I am near the end, William."

"My poor Emmie!" he wailed. "My poor afflicted girl!"

Things were not only no better, for all that we had done, but worse.

Well, Will carried on like a madman, of course. There were specialists from town and a woman to massage her legs, but not a muscle would she move. Except once, when Tish jabbed a pin into her and she jerked and yelled like a lunatic. But she had us beaten, of course, for she had worked it all out in her mind. If she had paralysis she didn't have to have anything else, and the very first thing she asked for was a broiled beefsteak. After that she ate everything; she ate like a day laborer.

Tish tried skimping on her tray, but if she got one egg instead of two in the morning poor Will would come down looking troubled.

"We must build her up," he would say. "She needs all the strength we can give her, Letitia."

And that was the situation when our poor Tish finally took matters into her own hands, with results for which she has been so cruelly blamed.

I have now come to that series of mysterious events which led, with tragic inevitability, to the crisis on the night of our departure. And it may be well here to revert to the subject of spiritualism.

What with one thing and another Tish had apparently lost interest in it, hers being a mind which concentrates on one idea at a time, and having occupied itself almost entirely with Emmie since our arrival.

True, such reading aloud as she had been forced to do for Emmie while Will had laryngitis had been on such subjects, dealing largely with specters and apparitions. And both Aggie and I recalled later that she had told Emmie that the nearness of the graveyard would make such materialization comparatively simple.

But Emmie had shown more terror than interest in the subject, and finally Will had insisted that Tish abandon it for lighter and more cheerful material.

It had been seed sown in fruitful ground, however, as shall presently appear.

To go back then: Will came home very dejected one night and said he would have to go away for a business trip. Emmie was most disagreeable about it.

“And what about me?” she demanded. “Are you going to leave me here alone?”

“It’s the first time I’ve left you for five years, Emmie,” he told her. “I’ll just have to go. And as for being alone, haven’t you got Letitia here? And Lizzie and Aggie?”

Well, I must admit that that did not seem to cheer her any, and the look she gave us was most unpleasant. But she had to let him go, although her last words were not calculated to send him away happy.

“If anything happens to me while you are gone, Will,” she said, “you know how I want things done. And my black silk dress is in the lower bureau drawer.”

“I can get back in six hours if I’m needed, Emmie,” he said brokenly. “A telegram or——”

"When I go I shall be snuffed out like a candle," she told him in a cold voice. And with that he went away, looking as though he was on his way to the electric chair.

I met Tish on the stairs after she had seen him off. There was a strange look on her face, I remembered later; but after she had settled Emmie for the night she took up her knitting quietly enough. She always contributes a number of knitted pairs of bedroom slippers to the Old Ladies' Home at Christmas.

Aggie and I retired early, taking Emmie's bell with us at Tish's orders, so she could not disturb us during the night, and were soon fast asleep.

But judge of our horror when, at two o'clock or thereabouts, we heard a dreadful shriek from Emmie's room, followed by a strange, rushing sound. As soon as I could move I got out of bed and turned on the lights; Aggie was reaching for her teeth, with her eyes fixed on the door.

"I left that door open, Lizzie," she said in an agonized whisper. "Somebody's closed it."

Well, it certainly was closed, and when I tried it, it was locked and the key was on the outside! And, to add to the dreadfulness of our position, there was no further sound whatever; no whimpering from Emmie's room; no sound of Tish in short and sharp remonstrance. No anything.

Never have we passed through such a half hour as followed. That both our wonderful Tish and Emmie had fallen to the knife or other method of some deadly assassin we never doubted. And when at the end of that time we heard halting but inevitable footsteps slowly climbing the staircase, both of us were certain that our hour had come. When they stopped outside the door and an unseen hand fumbled with the key, Aggie gave a low moan and made for the window, but she was stopped before it was too late by the entrance into the room of Tish herself!

She was a curious dead-white color, and she came in limping and closed the door.

"I'd like to borrow your tweezers, Lizzie," she said, in a toneless sort of voice. "I ran out when I heard Emmie scream, and I've got something in my foot."

"But Emmie!" we inquired in unison. "What has happened to her?"

It was a moment before she replied. Both Aggie and I remembered that hesitation later and that there was a hard and determined look on her face. But when she did reply, it was reassuring.

"She's all right," she said.

"But she screamed, Tish! She screamed horribly."

"You've heard her scream before this," she said coldly. "She says she saw a ghost. That's all."

She went out again, and to her own room. She was very lame, we noticed, but calm. Some time later she called to Aggie to bring her the arnica, and Aggie did so. She reported that Tish had lost the strange pallor, but that she had got a number of thorns in her feet and was removing them.

"She's very quiet, Lizzie," Aggie said. "And I think she's sprained her ankle. You would think she had seen the ghost, to look at her, and not Emmie."

Well, I felt uneasy myself, especially as something had certainly locked us in, and after a while I went across to Emmie's room and tapped lightly at the door. It was Tish herself who answered from the other side.

"Get away from there, Lizzie," she said sharply. "We are all right. I shall stay with Emmie until she is calmer."

The rest of the night was quiet enough. It was not until the next day that certain things began to make us uneasy.

One of these was Emmie herself. However lightly Tish might treat the matter, refusing to call a doctor and so on, it was evident that Emmie had passed through a terrible experience.

She would not see anyone, even Aggie or myself, and she insisted on keeping her door closed and locked. Once in a while we could hear Tish reading to her, apparently to calm her. And she ate a little from the trays Tish carried up. But never once did she raise her

voice; ordinarily when she wanted anything and no one answered her bell one could hear her shouting, from the main road. But she was apparently chastened beyond belief.

Our real anxiety, however, was Tish herself. She was in a curious nervous state; a thing most unusual in her. She ate nothing at all. And if a door slammed she would jump violently and turn quite pale.

Knowing her as we did, we could only believe that she, as well as Emmie, had seen the apparition, and had possibly received a message of some personal import. It was in a spirit of helpfulness, therefore, and not of curiosity, that we decided to remain awake that night to give her moral support if she required it.

And that very night we saw it ourselves.

Aggie was suffering from a bad attack of hay fever and had gone to the window for air. Suddenly I heard her whisper, "Lizzie; cobe here! It's outside, od the walk!"

I ran to the window. And there below us, just leaving the kitchen porch, was the apparition itself! It was a tall, thin, gray figure. And as we watched, it moved along through the back garden and then, on Aggie sneezing violently, apparently dissolved.

Although we waited for some time, it did not materialize again.

In view of Tish's curious nervous condition, we did not mention it to her. But we saw it for three nights in succession.

I must admit that it made us both very uneasy, especially in view of Emmie's continued strange state. If Tish had been her usual buoyant self we would have gone to her, but she was oddly restless and uneasy, and once or twice we even found her dozing in her chair —a thing unprecedented with her.

But I kept a careful record of the appearance, and I quote from it here:

> Monday. 12 midnight. Materialized human figure. Gray in color, thin in outline. Ectoplasmic blanket around shoulders.
>
> Tuesday. 1 A.M. Same figure, but with long rodlike structure—See Crawford—across both shoulders. Figure bent, as though carrying weight.

Wednesday. 12:30 A.M. Same figure, with misty projection around one arm, simulating basket or pail.

This ends the record, for on Thursday Will Hartford unexpectedly came home and a situation developed which I cannot yet recall without anger and dismay.

We had not expected him for some time, but he let himself in with his latchkey and came back to the kitchen where Aggie and I were fixing Emmie's tray. He looked thin and worn.

"How is she?" he asked, almost in a whisper. "Still——"

"She's still alive, if that's what you mean," I said tartly. "Look at this tray and judge for yourself."

He was so relieved that he had to sit down and wipe his face, which was covered with a clammy sweat.

"I just had to come back," he said. "I didn't even finish the business. What do money and success matter if I haven't her with me to share in them?"

He got up, however, and picked up a large package he had brought in.

"I brought her some flowers," he said. "I got to thinking while I was away. Maybe I could have done a lot of things to make her happy, but I've been too selfish to think of them. Well——"

Aggie watched him go out. She still had her hay fever, and standing at the window for three nights had not improved it.

"What I dod't udderstad, Lizzie," she said, "is why there are so bady healthy wobed in the world. The bed seeb to like theb feeble."

And just then Tish, on her way downstairs for the tray, met Will face to face. She never even spoke to him. She gave him one awful look, and then, just as she was, she went out of the house. She did not come back for the most terrible five hours of my life.

Now and then, in a nightmare, I hear Will carrying that box of flowers up the stairs and opening the door which Tish had forgotten to lock. And then I hear him give a groan and drop the box, and then

come staggering down again like a madman, shaking both his fists at us and shouting at the top of his lungs.

"She's gone!" he yelled. "You've lied to me! She's dead! Oh, my poor Emmie, and I left you to die alone!"

"Nonsense!" I shouted back at him. "Your poor Emmie's all right. She's been eating enough for ten people right along!"

He stopped wailing and looked at me.

"Then where is she?" he demanded.

"She's right up in her room in bed. You don't see her frying herself over this cookstove, do you?" He caught me by the shoulder. "Have you moved her?" he shouted. "Have you taken my precious girl out of the room where she has lain helpless so long, and put her somewhere else? Have you dared——"

"Oh, take your hands off me," I said. "She's up there all right. Maybe she's hiding behind the door to surprise you!"

Well, he ran up again, and we followed him. But he was right. Emmie's room was empty; her bed was neatly made up, and all the bottles on the table beside it had been cleared away. We could only stand and stare, while Will Hartford ran like a lunatic from room to room, peering into the closets and behind the doors, and moaning all the time.

"Emmie," he called over and over. "Emmie! It's Will! It's Will, darling!"

I tried to calm him and tell him she was not hanging up in a cupboard like an old coat, but he only turned on me savagely.

"Where's that woman?" he cried. "Where's Letitia Carberry? I didn't trust her from the start, and Emmie didn't either. She has murdered my poor girl. Murdered her and done away with her!"

What could we say, or do? We had to stand by and see him run down the stairs; to hear him call the local police and accuse our poor Tish of a heinous crime, and later on to remain helpless while the officers searched the house and the cellar, and even dropped a searchlight down into the well. And still no Tish. They would not even let us leave the house to search for her, although I did manage to get Charlie Sands on the telephone before they stopped me.

"Come at once," I said. "We are in terrible trouble."

"Naturally," he said, without excitement. "Shall I bring bail money or a doctor?"

But I could hear him whistle softly when I told him that Tish was accused of a murder.

It was seven o'clock by that time and growing dark. Waiting by a window, we watched for our poor Tish, but time went on and she did not come. Eight o'clock. Nine. Ten. Never once did our loyalty waver, but, on the other hand, what about the past four days? What about that locked door into Emmie's room and the trays that went up, while Tish ate nothing at the table? What about that horrible scream and Tish's strange pallor afterward?

"Baybe Tish gave ger the wrog bedicide," Aggie whispered to me, "ad she died because of it, so Tish had to——"

But the policeman was watching us, and I motioned her to be silent.

The house was full of people by that time. Two or three doctors were working with Will upstairs. And some neighbors had come in and were digging a hole in the cellar. All they found was the still Will had buried there, but the horrible sound of their spades about drove me crazy. And still Tish did not come.

Charlie Sands arrived at eleven o'clock. They were bringing the still up the cellar stairs just as he got there. And he seemed quite calm and not at all worried.

"For some reason that reminds me," he said, "that a little blackberry cordial would not go amiss. I've had a long trip."

And not until he had had a generous dose of this tonic did he make a statement which set the whole house in a turmoil.

"By the way," he said, "if you want Miss Carberry, she will be here in a few moments. She would have arrived sooner, but one of the garage men had taken her car out for a joy ride and she is waiting, to use her own words, to give him a piece of her mind."

Never shall I forget the scene when Tish arrived, and, walking quietly into the hall, asked for a cup of tea, as she had had no supper. Will, supported by two of the doctors, was waiting on the stairs, and he tried to throw himself at her.

"Supper!" he screeched. "You—you murderess! What have you done with her? Let me loose! I want to kill her," he shouted.

But Tish paid no attention to him whatever. So far as she was concerned he might not have been there.

"With a little cinnamon toast, too, Aggie," she said. "I'm about famished."

"She's brazen!" cried Will. "She's insane! Where is Emmie, Tish Carberry?"

She looked at him as if she saw him for the first time.

"Oh, Emmie!" she said. "Well, that's a long story. Now, Aggie, do I get tea, or do I not?"

Well, they were obliged to wait, for it was clear she would tell them nothing until she was ready. They had to lock Will in a room until she had had it, however, and, although the men who had been digging in the cellar had stopped work, they still held onto their spades. They were certain they would have to dig somewhere.

But at last she had finished, and they brought Will down again and confronted her with him again. She gave him a long, hard look, and then she smiled.

"You're a fool, Will Hartford," she said calmly, "and your poor helpless Emmie knows it. That's why she's helpless."

"I know a murderess when I see one," said Will.

"As to her being helpless," Tish went on inexorably, "let me tell you that, in spite of her total paralysis, she placed herself where you will find her, and has since remained there of her own free will."

"That's a lie at the start," said Will. "She can't walk a step, and you know it. Officers, if that woman gets out of this house she will attempt to escape. It's a ruse on her part. She's got a car at the door."

Tish sighed.

"Well, I've done my best for you, Will," she told him. "Personally, I don't care whether Emmie is found or not. If I have a preference, it is for the latter. But I'll take you to her and the rest is up to you."

I don't believe any of them believed her. Will Hartford, indeed, demanded handcuffs for her, but she only sat down quietly and refused to stir if they used them. And when someone said she ought to be in jail on general principles, she merely replied placidly that jails were no novelty to her.

In the end they agreed to let her go free, and she rose briskly and started out the kitchen door. It was a strange procession, indeed, and a silent one, for that had been Tish's condition.

"One unnecessary sound," she said, "and I stop. Later on I shall place you all at a point of observation, and I shall ask for silence."

In the hall she had picked up a parcel she had brought in with her, and she took it with her. The police were suspicious of it, but on their threatening to open it she at once turned back, and they were compelled to let it alone.

As I look back I can still see that strange group—Will broken and supported by a doctor on each side, three policemen, six neighbors, mostly armed with spades, and ourselves. And in the lead our dear Tish, with no evidence of guilt about her, but rather as one who has done a good and worthy deed. She moved swiftly, as though she knew the way well, up through the pasture behind the house and through a grove of trees, until at the other side we could dimly discern a small cabin, and a light shining through the window.

Here Tish stopped and addressed us.

"We have come a half mile," she said. "Mrs. Hartford may tell you that she was brought here while unconscious, but she came here on two perfectly healthy legs. I know, because I followed her. And she came rapidly," she added, with what I felt was a certain significance. "Now I have one request to make. You will stay here until I have reached the cabin; then you will come to the window as silently as possible."

They let her go, and we did as she had requested. But never, so long as I live, shall I forget the sight that greeted us as we stared through that window.

The cabin was bare, save for a folding cot bed, a candle on a shelf, a box for a chair and an old cooking stove with some utensils on it. And lying on the cot, in a dressing gown over her nightdress, was Will's Emmie. She was scowling frightfully, and when Tish opened the door she nearly jumped down her throat.

"Do you know what time it is?" she demanded furiously. "And that I've had nothing to eat since breakfast?"

"I left you plenty for all day," Tish told her. "And you know you can get plenty more if you decide to come home."

"I'm not walking back, if that's what you mean," Emmie snapped.

"Very well, but you are walking to this cookstove if you want any supper," Tish said, and sat down on the box. "If you could run a half mile you can walk ten feet."

I think Will would have broken away then and there, but Charlie Sands took hold of him. And the next minute Emmie got off that cot and walked across the room. She was in a frightful humor, for she slapped a frying pan onto the stove, opened the package, and said: "Bacon again! I hope I never see another pig!" and began to cook a meal for herself in a most able-bodied but infuriated manner.

And she ate bread and butter over the stove while the meat was frying!

Tish only spoke once while this was going on.

"It's a pity poor Will can't see you now," she said.

"If he was here I wouldn't be having to do this," she snapped.

"No," said Tish. "The poor fool must like to be deceived. It's my experience that the weaker a man is the more he likes to have something helpless around him. It makes him feel strong and protective."

Well, Will made a noise at that, and Emmie suddenly threw up her head and listened.

"Who's out there?" she said in a dreadful voice.

"Only Will and two or three policemen and a few neighbors," Tish told her calmly. "They're all glad you are well again, and can take your place in the——"

But at that Emmie simply leaped at her, and the next moment Will Hartford was inside, pulling her off our poor Tish and holding her so her blows would do no damage. And then he put his arms around her and glared at Tish as if she had been the one to blame.

"Leave!" he said. "Begone! To what brutality you have submitted my poor wife I have yet to learn. But the law is not through. Not yet. Nor am I."

But Tish only stared at him with a faint and sardonic smile.

"Oh, yes, you are," she told him. "You're through. You're as through as you can be. I tried to save you, but you wouldn't be saved."

And with that didn't Emmie suddenly cry out, "Oh, my poor legs! There's no feeling in them! It's come again."

And she sagged in his arms, just exactly as paralyzed as ever.

No, as Tish has often said, there is no moral to this tale. Emmie is still paralyzed, but people get what they want in this world, and if they want a helpless woman she's about the easiest thing there is to obtain.

But it has been necessary to relate it as accurately as possible, because of the stories that have been going round.

Tish certainly never dreamed that Emmie would leave the house. All she meant to do by playing ghost was to prove that she was not paralyzed at all, but had two perfectly good legs.

But Emmie's legs were even better than Tish had expected. She says, and I have never known her to exaggerate, that Emmie never went down the stairs at all, but leaped over the stair rail. And when Tish tried to catch her, because she was in her nightgown and the night was cool, the silly fool simply kept on running.

It was daylight the next morning when Tish finally located her in the cabin. But the chances are that Emmie saw her coming, for when Tish went in she was lying on the floor with her eyes closed, and she only opened them when Tish shook her.

Then she stared around feebly and said, “Where am I? And how did I get here?”

She would not walk back, and Tish knew it was hopeless from that minute.

As I have said, there is no moral whatever to this story. The nearest I can come to it is that couplet Tish secured by automatic writing the other day:

> “*There swims no goose so gray but soon or late*
> *She finds some honest gander for her mate.*”

And even there, as dear Tish so aptly remarks, there is a question. For how honest is a man who wants those about him to be weak so he can feel strong?

THE END

Colophon

Tish Plays the Game
Mary Roberts Rinehart

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