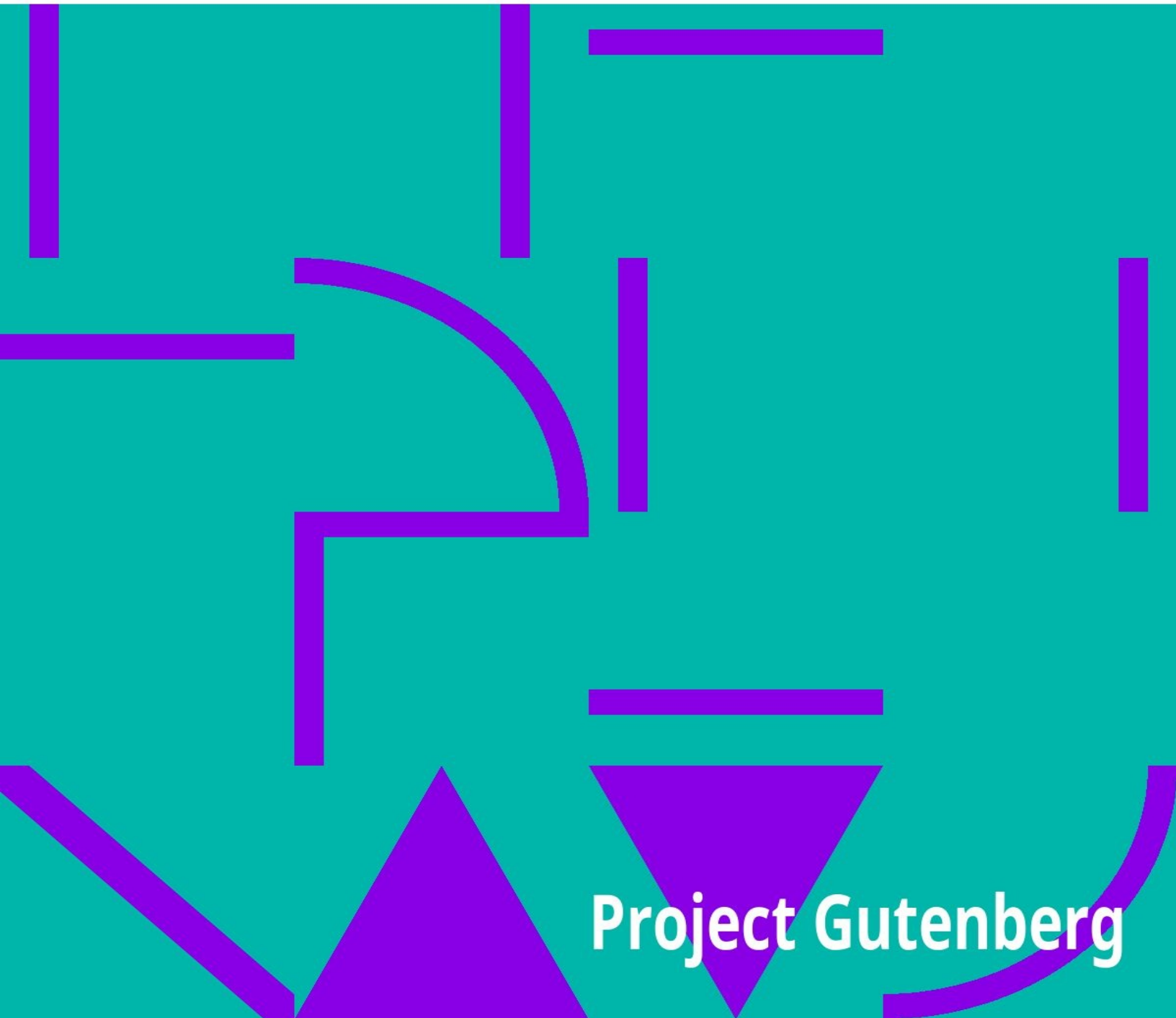
The City of Masks

George Barr McCutcheon



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The Head and Shoulders of a Man Rose Quickly Above the Ledge (Page 265)

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THE CITY OF MASKS

CHAPTER I

LADY JANE THORNE COMES TO DINNER

THE Marchioness carefully draped the dust-cloth over the head of an andiron and, before putting the question to the parlour-maid, consulted, with the intensity of a near-sighted person, the ornate French clock in the centre of the mantelpiece. Then she brushed her fingers on the voluminous apron that almost completely enveloped her slight person.

"Well, who is it, Julia?"

"It's Lord Temple, ma'am, and he wants to know if you're too busy to come to the 'phone. If you are, I'm to ask you something."

The Marchioness hesitated. "How do you know it is Lord Eric? Did he mention his name?"

"He did, ma'am. He said 'this is Tom Trotter speaking, Julia, and is your mistress disengaged?' And so I knew it couldn't be any one else but his Lordship."

"And what are you to ask me?"

"He wants to know if he may bring a friend around tonight, ma'am. A gentleman from Constantinople, ma'am."

"A Turk? He knows I do not like Turks," said the Marchioness, more to herself than to Julia.

"He didn't say, ma'am. Just Constantinople."

The Marchioness removed her apron and handed it to Julia. You would have thought she expected to confront Lord Temple in person, or at least that she would be fully visible to him despite the distance and the intervening buildings that lay between. Tucking a few stray locks of her snow-white hair into place, she approached the telephone in the hall. She had never quite gotten over the

impression that one could be seen through as well as heard over the telephone. She always smiled or frowned or gesticulated, as occasion demanded; she was never languid, never bored, never listless. A chat was a chat, at long range or short; it didn't matter.

"Are you there? Good evening, Mr. Trotter. So charmed to hear your voice." She had seated herself at the little old Italian table.

Mr. Trotter devoted a full two minutes to explanations.

"Do bring him with you," cried she. "Your word is sufficient. He *must* be delightful. Of course, I shuddered a little when you mentioned Constantinople. I always do. One can't help thinking of the Armenians. Eh? Oh, yes,—and the harems."

Mr. Trotter: "By the way, are you expecting Lady Jane tonight?"

The Marchioness: "She rarely fails us, Mr. Trotter."

Mr. Trotter: "Right-o! Well, good-bye,—and thank you. I'm sure you will like the baron. He is a trifle seedy, as I said before,—sailing vessel, you know, and all that sort of thing. By way of Cape Town,—pretty well up against it for the past year or two besides,—but a regular fellow, as they say over here."

The Marchioness: "Where did you say he is stopping?"

Mr. Trotter: "Can't for the life of me remember whether it's the 'Sailors' Loft' or the 'Sailors' Bunk.' He told me too. On the water-front somewhere. I knew him in Hong Kong. He says he has cut it all out, however."

The Marchioness: "Cut it all out, Mr. Trotter?"

Mr. Trotter, laughing: "Drink, and all that sort of thing, you know. Jolly good thing too. I give you my personal guarantee that he—"

The Marchioness: "Say no more about it, Mr. Trotter. I am sure we shall all be happy to receive any friend of yours. By the way, where are you now—where are you telephoning from?"

Mr. Trotter: "Drug store just around the corner."

The Marchioness: "A booth, I suppose?"

Mr. Trotter: "Oh, yes. Tight as a sardine box."

The Marchioness: "Good-bye."

Mr. Trotter: "Oh—hello? I beg your pardon—are you there? Ah, I—er—neglected to mention that the baron may not appear at his best tonight. You see, the poor chap is a shade large for my clothes. Naturally, being a sailor-man, he hasn't—er—a very extensive wardrobe. I am fixing him out in a—er—rather abandoned evening suit of my own. That is to say, I abandoned it a couple of seasons ago. Rather nobby thing for a waiter, but not—er—what you might call —"

The Marchioness, chuckling: "Quite good enough for a sailor, eh? Please assure him that no matter what he wears, or how he looks, he will not be conspicuous."

After this somewhat ambiguous remark, the Marchioness hung up the receiver and returned to the drawing-room; a prolonged search revealing the dust-cloth on the "nub" of the andiron, just where she had left it, she fell to work once more on the velvety surface of a rare old Spanish cabinet that stood in the corner of the room.

"Don't you want your apron, ma'am?" inquired Julia, sitting back on her heels and surveying with considerable pride the leg of an enormous throne seat she had been rubbing with all the strength of her stout arms.

Her mistress ignored the question. She dabbed into a tiny recess and wriggled her finger vigorously.

"I can't imagine where all the dust comes from, Julia," she said.

"Some of it comes from Italy, and some of it from Spain, and some from France," said Julia promptly. "You could rub for a hundred years, ma'am, and there'd still be dust that you couldn't find, not to save your soul. And why not? I'd bet my last penny there's dust on that cabinet this very minute that settled before Napoleon was born, whenever that was."

"I daresay," said the Marchioness absently.

More often than otherwise she failed to hear all that Julia said to her, or in her presence rather, for Julia, wise in association, had come to consider these lapses of inattention as openings for prolonged and rarely coherent soliloquies on topics of the moment. Julia, by virtue of long service and a most satisfying avoidance of matrimony, was a privileged servant between the hours of eight in the morning and eight in the evening. After eight, or more strictly speaking, the moment dinner was announced, Julia became a perfect servant. She would no more have thought of addressing the Marchioness as "ma'am" than she would have called the King of England "mister." She had crossed the Atlantic with her mistress eighteen years before; in mid-ocean she celebrated her thirty-fifth birthday, and, as she had been in the family for ten years prior to that event, even a child may solve the problem that here presents a momentary and totally unnecessary break in the continuity of this narrative. Julia was English. She spoke no other language. Beginning with the soup, or the *hors d'œuvres* on occasion, French was spoken in the house of the Marchioness. Physically unable to speak French and psychologically unwilling to betray her ignorance, Julia became a model servant. She lapsed into perfect silence.

The Marchioness seldom if ever dined alone. She always dined in state. Her guests,—English, Italian, Russian, Belgian, French, Spanish, Hungarian, Austrian, German,—conversed solely in French. It was a very agreeable way of symphonizing Babel.

The room in which she and the temporarily imperfect though treasured servant were employed in the dusk of this stormy day in March was at the top of an old-fashioned building in the busiest section of the city, a building that had, so far, escaped the fate of its immediate neighbours and remained, a squat and insignificant pygmy, elbowing with some arrogance the lofty structures that had shot up on either side of it with incredible swiftness.

It was a large room, at least thirty by fifty feet in dimensions, with a vaulted ceiling that encroached upon the space ordinarily devoted to what architects, builders and the Board of Health describe as an air chamber, next below the roof. There was no elevator in the building. One had to climb four flights of stairs to reach the apartment.

From its long, heavily curtained windows one looked down upon a crowded cross-town thoroughfare, or up to the summit of a stupendous hotel on the opposite side of the street. There was a small foyer at the rear of this lofty room,

with an entrance from the narrow hall outside. Suspended in the wide doorway between the two rooms was a pair of blue velvet Italian portières of great antiquity and, to a connoisseur, unrivaled quality. Beyond the foyer and extending to the area wall was the rather commodious dining-room, with its long oaken English table, its high-back chairs, its massive sideboard and the chandelier that is said to have hung in the Doges' Palace when the Bridge of Sighs was a new and thriving avenue of communication.

At least, so stated the dealer's tag tucked carelessly among the crystal prisms, supplying the observer with the information that, in case one was in need of a chandelier, its price was five hundred guineas. The same curious-minded observer would have discovered, if he were not above getting down on his hands and knees and peering under the table, a price tag; and by exerting the strength necessary to pull the sideboard away from the wall, a similar object would have been exposed.

In other words, if one really wanted to purchase any article of furniture or decoration in the singularly impressive apartment of the Marchioness, all one had to do was to signify the desire, produce a check or its equivalent, and give an address to the competent-looking young woman who would put in an appearance with singular promptness in response to a couple of punches at an electric button just outside the door, any time between nine and five o'clock, Sundays included.

The drawing-room contained many priceless articles of furniture, wholly antique—(and so guaranteed), besides rugs, draperies, tapestries and stuffs of the rarest quality. Bronzes, porcelains, pottery, things of jade and alabaster, sconces, candlesticks and censers, with here and there on the walls lovely little "primitives" of untold value. The most exotic taste had ordered the distribution and arrangement of all these objects. There was no suggestion of crowding, nothing haphazard or bizarre in the exposition of treasure, nothing to indicate that a cheap intelligence revelled in rich possessions.

You would have sat down upon the first chair that offered repose and you would have said you had wandered inadvertently into a palace. Then, emboldened by an interest that scorned politeness, you would have got up to inspect the riches at close range,—and you would have found price-marks everywhere to overcome the impression that Aladdin had been rubbing his lamp all the way up the dingy, tortuous stairs.

You are not, however, in the shop of a dealer in antiques, price-marks to the contrary. You are in the home of a Marchioness, and she is not a dealer in old furniture, you may be quite sure of that. She does not owe a penny on a single article in the apartment nor does she, on the other hand, own a penny's worth of anything that meets the eye,—unless, of course, one excepts the dust-cloth and the can of polish that follows Julia about the room. Nor is it a loan exhibit, nor the setting for a bazaar.

The apartment being on the top floor of a five-story building, it is necessary to account for the remaining four. In the rear of the fourth floor there was a small kitchen and pantry from which a dumb-waiter ascended and descended with vehement enthusiasm. The remainder of the floor was divided into four rather small chambers, each opening into the outer hall, with two bath-rooms inserted. Each of these rooms contained a series of lockers, not unlike those in a club-house. Otherwise they were unfurnished except for a few commonplace cane bottom chairs in various stages of decrepitude.

The third floor represented a complete apartment of five rooms, daintily furnished. This was where the Marchioness really lived.

Commerce, after a fashion, occupied the two lower floors. It stopped short at the bottom of the second flight of stairs where it encountered an obstacle in the shape of a grill-work gate that bore the laconic word "Private," and while commerce may have peeped inquisitively through and beyond the barrier it was never permitted to trespass farther than an occasional sly, surreptitious and unavailing twist of the knob.

The entire second floor was devoted to work-rooms in which many sewing machines buzzed during the day and went to rest at six in the evening. Tables, chairs, manikins, wall-hooks and hangers thrust forward a bewildering assortment of fabrics in all stages of development, from an original uncut piece to a practically completed garment. In other words, here was the work-shop of the most exclusive, most expensive *modiste* in all the great city.

The ground floor, or rather the floor above the English basement, contained the *salon* and fitting rooms of an establishment known to every woman in the city as

DEBORAH'S.

To return to the Marchioness and Julia.

"Not that a little dust or even a great deal of dirt will make any different to the Princess," the former was saying, "but, just the same, I feel better, if I *know* we've done our best."

"Thank the Lord, she don't come very often," was Julia's frank remark. "It's the stairs, I fancy."

"And the car-fare," added her mistress. "Is it six o'clock, Julia?"

"Yes, ma'am, it is."

The Marchioness groaned a little as she straightened up and tossed the dust-cloth on the table. "It catches me right across here," she remarked, putting her hand to the small of her back and wrinkling her eyes.

"You shouldn't be doing my work," scolded Julia. "It's not for the likes of you to be—"

"I shall lie down for half an hour," said the Marchioness calmly. "Come at half-past six, Julia."

"Just Lady Jane, ma'am? No one else?"

"No one else," said the other, and preceded Julia down the two flights of stairs to the charming little apartment on the third floor. "She is a dear girl, and I enjoy having her all to myself once in a while."

"She is so, ma'am," agreed Julia, and added. "The oftener the better."

At half-past seven Julia ran down the stairs to open the gate at the bottom. She admitted a slender young woman, who said, "Thank you," and "Good evening, Julia," in the softest, loveliest voice imaginable, and hurried up, past the apartment of the Marchioness, to the fourth floor. Julia, in cap and apron, wore a pleased smile as she went in to put the finishing touches on the coiffure of her mistress.

"Pity there isn't more like her," she said, at the end of five minutes' reflection. Patting the silvery crown of the Marchioness, she observed in a less detached

manner: "As I always says, the wonderful part is that it's all your own, ma'am."

"I am beginning to dread the stairs as much as any one," said the Marchioness, as she passed out into the hall and looked up the dimly lighted steps. "That is a bad sign, Julia."

A mass of coals crackled in the big fireplace on the top floor, and a tall man in the resplendent livery of a footman was engaged in poking them up when the Marchioness entered.

"Bitterly cold, isn't it, Moody?" inquired she, approaching with stately tread, her lorgnon lifted.

"It is, my lady,—extremely nawsty," replied Moody. "The trams are a bit off, or I should 'ave 'ad the coals going 'alf an hour sooner than—Ahem! They call it a blizzard, my lady."

"I know, thank you, Moody."

"Thank you, my lady," and he moved stiffly off in the direction of the foyer.

The Marchioness languidly selected a magazine from the litter of periodicals on the table. It was *La Figaro*, and of recent date. There were magazines from every capital in Europe on that long and time-worn table.

A warm, soft light filled the room, shed by antique lanthorns and wall-lamps that gave forth no cruel glare. Standing beside the table, the Marchioness was a remarkable picture. The slight, drooping figure of the woman with the dust-cloth and creaking knees had been transformed, like Cinderella, into a fairly regal creature attired in one of the most fetching costumes ever turned out by the rapacious Deborah, of the first floor front!

The foyer curtains parted, revealing the plump, venerable figure of a butler who would have done credit to the lordliest house in all England.

"Lady Jane Thorne," he announced, and a slim, radiant young person entered the room, and swiftly approached the smiling Marchioness.

CHAPTER II

OUT OF THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH

"AM I late?" she inquired, a trace of anxiety in her smiling blue eyes. She was clasping the hand of the taut little Marchioness, who looked up into the lovely face with the frankest admiration.

"I have only this instant finished dressing," said her hostess. "Moody informs me we're in for a blizzard. Is it so bad as all that?"

"What a perfectly heavenly frock!" cried Lady Jane Thorne, standing off to take in the effect. "Turn around, do. Exquisite! Dear me, I wish I could—but there! Wishing is a form of envy. We shouldn't wish for anything, Marchioness. If we didn't, don't you see how perfectly delighted we should be with what we have? Oh, yes,—it is a horrid night. The trolley-cars are blocked, the omnibuses are stalled, and walking is almost impossible. How good the fire looks!"

"Cheerful, isn't it? Now you must let me have my turn at wishing, my dear. If I could have my wish, you would be disporting yourself in the best that Deborah can turn out, and you would be worth millions to her as an advertisement. You've got style, figure, class, verve—everything. You carry your clothes as if you were made for them and not the other way round."

"This gown is so old I sometimes think I *was* made for it," said the girl gaily. "I can't remember when it was made for *me*."

Moody had drawn two chairs up to the fire.

"Rubbish!" said the Marchioness, sitting down. "Toast your toes, my dear."

Lady Jane's gown was far from modish. In these days of swift-changing fashions for women, it had become passé long before its usefulness or its beauty had passed. Any woman would have told you that it was a "season before last model," which would be so distantly removed from the present that its owner may be forgiven the justifiable invention concerning her memory.

But Lady Jane's figure was not old, nor passé, nor even a thing to be forgotten easily. She was straight, and slim, and sound of body and limb. That is to say, she stood well on her feet and suggested strength rather than fragility. Her neck and shoulders were smooth and white and firm; her arms shapely and capable, her hands long and slender and aristocratic. Her dark brown hair was abundant and wavy;—it had never experienced the baleful caress of a curling-iron. Her firm, red lips were of the smiling kind,—and she must have known that her teeth were white and strong and beautiful, for she smiled more often than not with parted lips. There was character, intelligence and breeding in her face.

She wore a simple black velvet gown, close-fitting,—please remember that it was of an antiquity not even surpassed, as things go, by the oldest rug in the apartment,—with a short train. She was fully a head taller than the Marchioness, which isn't saying much when you are informed that the latter was at least half-a-head shorter than a woman of medium height.

On the little finger of her right hand she wore a heavy seal ring of gold. If you had known her well enough to hold her hand—to the light, I mean,—you would have been able to decipher the markings of a crest, notwithstanding the fact that age had all but obliterated the lines.

Dinner was formal only in the manner in which it was served. Behind the chair of the Marchioness, Moody posed loftily when not otherwise employed. A critical observer would have taken note of the threadbare condition of his coat, especially at the elbows, and the somewhat snug way in which it adhered to him, fore and aft. Indeed, there was an ever-present peril in its snugness. He was painfully deliberate and detached.

From time to time, a second footman, addressed as McFaddan, paused back of Lady Jane. His chin was not quite so high in the air as Moody's; the higher he raised it the less it looked like a chin. McFaddan, you would remark, carried a great deal of weight above the hips. The ancient butler, Cricklewick, decanted the wine, lifted his right eyebrow for the benefit of Moody, the left in directing McFaddan, and cringed slightly with each trip upward of the dumb-waiter.

The Marchioness and Lady Jane were in a gay mood despite the studied solemnity of the three servants. As dinner has no connection with this narrative except to introduce an effect of opulence, we will hurry through with it and allow Moody and McFaddan to draw back the chairs on a signal transmitted by

Cricklewick, and return to the drawing-room with the two ladies.

"A quarter of nine," said the Marchioness, peering at the French clock through her lorgnon. "I am quite sure the Princess will not venture out on such a night as this."

"She's really quite an awful pill," said Lady Jane calmly. "I for one sha'n't be broken-hearted if she doesn't venture."

"For heaven's sake, don't let Cricklewick hear you say such a thing," said the Marchioness in a furtive undertone.

"I've heard Cricklewick say even worse," retorted the girl. She lowered her voice to a confidential whisper. "No longer ago than yesterday he told me that she made him tired, or something of the sort."

"Poor Cricklewick! I fear he is losing ambition," mused the Marchioness. "An ideal butler but a most dreary creature the instant he attempts to be a human being. It isn't possible. McFaddan is quite human. That's why he is so fat. I am not sure that I ever told you, but he was quite a slim, puny lad when Cricklewick took him out of the stables and made a very decent footman out of him. That was a great many years ago, of course. Camelford left him a thousand pounds in his will. I have always believed it was hush money. McFaddan was a very wide-awake chap in those days." The Marchioness lowered one eye-lid slowly.

"And, by all reports, the Marquis of Camelford was very well worth watching," said Lady Jane.

"Hear the wind!" cried the Marchioness, with a little shiver. "How it shrieks!"

"We were speaking of the Marquis," said Lady Jane.

"But one may always fall back on the weather," said the Marchioness drily. "Even at its worst it is a pleasanter thing to discuss than Camelford. You can't get anything out of me, my dear. I was his next door neighbour for twenty years, and I don't believe in talking about one's neighbour."

Lady Jane stared for a moment. "But—how quaint you are!—you were married to him almost as long as that, were you not?"

"My clearest,—I may even say my dearest,—recollection of him is as a neighbour, Lady Jane. He was most agreeable next door."

Cricklewick appeared in the door.

"Count Antonio Fogazario," he announced.

A small, wizened man in black satin knee-breeches entered the room and approached the Marchioness. With courtly grace he lifted her fingers to his lips and, in a voice that quavered slightly, declared in French that his joy on seeing her again was only surpassed by the hideous gloom he had experienced during the week that had elapsed since their last meeting.

"But now the gloom is dispelled and I am basking in sunshine so rare and soft and—"

"My dear Count," broke in the Marchioness, "you forget that we are enjoying the worst blizzard of the year."

"Enjoying,—vastly enjoying it!" he cried. "It is the most enchanting blizzard I have ever known. Ah, my dear Lady Jane! This *is* delightful!"

His sharp little face beamed with pleasure. The vast pleated shirt front extended itself to amazing proportions, as if blown up by an invisible though prodigious bellows, and his elbow described an angle of considerable elevation as he clasped the slim hand of the tall young woman. The crown of his sleek black toupee was on a line with her shoulder.

"God bless me," he added, in a somewhat astonished manner, "this is most gratifying. I could not have lifted it half that high yesterday without experiencing the most excruciating agony." He worked his arm up and down experimentally. "Quite all right, quite all right. I feared I was in for another siege. I cannot tell you how delighted I am. Ahem! Where was I? Oh, yes—This is a pleasure, Lady Jane, a positive delight. How charming you are look—"

"Save your compliments, Count, for the Princess," interrupted the girl, smiling. "She is coming, you know."

"I doubt it," he said, fumbling for his snuff-box. "I saw her this afternoon. Chilblains. Weather like this, you see. Quite a distance from her place to the

street-cars. Frightful going. I doubt it very much. Now, what was it she said to me this afternoon? Something very important, I remember distinctly,—but it seems to have slipped my mind completely. I am fearfully annoyed with myself. I remember with great distinctness that it was something I was determined to remember, and here I am forgetting—Ah, let me see! It comes to me like a flash. I have it! She said she felt as though she had a cold coming on or something like that. Yes, I am sure that was it. I remember she blew her nose frequently, and she always makes a dreadful noise when she blows her nose. A really unforgettable noise, you know. Now, when I blow my nose, I don't behave like an elephant. I —"

"You blow it like a gentleman," interrupted the Marchioness, as he paused in some confusion.

"Indeed I do," he said gratefully. "In the most polished manner possible, my dear lady."

Lady Jane put her handkerchief to her lips. There was a period of silence. The Count appeared to be thinking with great intensity. He had a harassed expression about the corners of his nose. It was he who broke the silence. He broke it with a most tremendous sneeze.

"The beastly snuff," he said in apology.

Cricklewick's voice seemed to act as an echo to the remark.

"The Right-Honourable Mrs. Priestly-Duff," he announced, and an angular, middle-aged lady in a rose-coloured gown entered the room. She had a very long nose and prominent teeth; her neck was of amazing length and appeared to be attached to her shoulders by means of vertical, skin-covered ropes, running from torso to points just behind her ears, where they were lost in a matting of faded, straw-coloured hair. On second thought, it may be simpler to remark that her neck was amazingly scrawny. It will save confusion. Her voice was a trifle strident and her French execrable.

"Isn't it awful?" she said as she joined the trio at the fireplace. "I thought I'd never get here. Two hours coming, my dear, and I must be starting home at once if I want to get there before midnight."

"The Princess will be here," said the Marchioness.

"I'll wait fifteen minutes," said the new-comer crisply, pulling up her gloves. "I've had a trying day, Marchioness. Everything has gone wrong,—even the drains. They're frozen as tight as a drum and heaven knows when they'll get them thawed out! Who ever heard of such weather in March?"

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Priestly-Duff, you should not forget the beautiful sunshine we had yesterday," said the Count cheerily.

"Precious little good it does today," she retorted, looking down upon him from a lofty height, and as if she had not noticed his presence before. "When did you come in, Count?"

"It is quite likely the Princess will not venture out in such weather," interposed the Marchioness, sensing squalls.

"Well, I'll stop a bit anyway and get my feet warm. I hope she doesn't come. She is a good deal of a wet blanket, you must admit."

"Wet blankets," began the Count argumentatively, and then, catching a glance from the Marchioness, cleared his throat, blew his nose, and mumbled something about poor people who had no blankets at all, God help them on such a night as this.

Lady Jane had turned away from the group and was idly turning the leaves of the *Illustrated London News*. The smallest intelligence would have grasped the fact that Mrs. Priestly-Duff was not a genial soul.

"Who else is coming?" she demanded, fixing the little hostess with the stare that had just been removed from the back of Lady Jane's head.

Cricklewick answered from the doorway.

"Lord Temple. Baron—ahem!—Whiskers—eh? Baron Wissmer. Prince Waldemar de Bosky. Count Wilhelm Frederick Von Blitzen."

Four young men advanced upon the Marchioness, Lord Temple in the van. He was a tall, good-looking chap, with light brown hair that curled slightly above the ears, and eyes that danced.

"This, my dear Marchioness, is my friend, Baron Wissmer," he said, after

bending low over her hand.

The Baron, whose broad hands were encased in immaculate white gloves that failed by a wide margin to button across his powerful wrists, smiled sheepishly as he enveloped her fingers in his huge palm.

"It is good of you to let me come, Marchioness," he said awkwardly, a deep flush spreading over his sea-tanned face. "If I manage to deport myself like the bull in the china shop, pray lay it to clumsiness and not to ignorance. It has been a very long time since I touched the hand of a Marchioness."

"Small people, like myself, may well afford to be kind and forgiving to giants," said she, smiling. "Dear me, how huge you are."

"I was once in the Emperor's Guard," said he, straightening his figure to its full six feet and a half. "The Blue Hussars. I may add with pride that I was not so horribly clumsy in regimentals. After all, it is the clothes that makes the man." He smiled as he looked himself over. "I shall not be at all offended or even embarrassed if you say 'goodness, how you have grown!'"

"The best tailor in London made that suit of clothes," said Lord Temple, surveying his friend with an appraising eye. Out of the corner of the same eye he explored the region beyond the group that now clustered about the hostess. Evidently he discovered what he was looking for. Leaving the Baron high and dry, he skirted the edge of the group and, with beaming face, came to Lady Jane.

"My family is of Vienna," the Baron was saying to the Marchioness, "but of late years I have called Constantinople my home."

"I understand," said she gently. She asked no other question, but, favouring him with a kindly smile, turned her attention to the men who lurked insignificantly in the shadow of his vast bulk.

The Prince was a pale, dreamy young man with flowing black hair that must have been a constant menace to his vision, judging by the frequent and graceful sweep of his long, slender hand in brushing the encroaching forelock from his eyes, over which it spread briefly in the nature of a veil. He had the fingers of a musician, the bearing of a violinist. His head drooped slightly toward his left shoulder, which was always raised a trifle above the level of the right. And there was in his soft brown eyes the faraway look of the detached. The insignia of his

house hung suspended by a red ribbon in the centre of his white shirt front, while on the lapel of his coat reposed the emblem of the Order of the Golden Star. He was a Pole.

Count Von Blitzen, a fair-haired, pink-skinned German, urged himself forward with typical, not-to-be-denied arrogance, and crushed the fingers of the Marchioness in his fat hand. His broad face beamed with an all-enveloping smile.

"Only patriots and lovers venture forth on such nights as this," he said, in a guttural voice that rendered his French almost laughable.

"With an occasional thief or varlet," supplemented the Marchioness.

"Ach, Dieu," murmured the Count.

Fresh arrivals were announced by Cricklewick. For the next ten or fifteen minutes they came thick and fast, men and women of all ages, nationality and condition, and not one of them without a high-sounding title. They disposed themselves about the vast room, and a subdued vocal hubbub ensued. If here and there elderly guests, with gnarled and painfully scrubbed hands, preferred isolation and the pictorial contents of a magazine from the land of their nativity, it was not with snobbish intentions. They were absorbing the news from "home," in the regular weekly doses.

The regal, resplendent Countess du Bara, of the Opera, held court in one corner of the room. Another was glorified by a petite baroness from the Artists' Colony far down-town, while a rather dowdy lady with a coronet monopolized the attention of a small group in the centre of the room.

Lady Jane Thorne and Lord Temple sat together in a dim recess beyond the great chair of state, and conversed in low and far from impersonal tones.

Cricklewick appeared in the doorway and in his most impressive manner announced Her Royal Highness, the Princess Mariana Theresa Sebastano Michelini Celestine di Pavesi.

And with the entrance of royalty, kind reader, you may consider yourself introduced, after a fashion, to the real aristocracy of the City of New York, United States of America,—the titled riff-raff of the world's cosmopolis.

CHAPTER III

THE CITY OF MASKS

NEW YORK is not merely a melting pot for the poor and the humble of the lands of the earth. In its capacious depths, unknown and unsuspected, float atoms of an entirely different sort: human beings with the blood of the high-born and lofty in their veins, derelicts swept up by the varying winds of adversity, adventure, injustice, lawlessness, fear and independence.

Lords and ladies, dukes and duchesses, counts and countesses, swarm to the Metropolis in the course of the speeding year, heralded by every newspaper in the land, fêted and feasted and glorified by a capricious and easily impressed public; they pass with pomp and panoply and we let them go with reluctance and a vociferous invitation to come again. They come and they go, and we are informed each morning and evening of every move they have made during the day and night. We are told what they eat for breakfast, luncheon and dinner; what they wear and what they do not wear; where they are entertained and by whom; who they are and why; what they think of New York and—but why go on? We deny them privacy, and they think we are a wonderful, considerate and hospitable people. They go back to their homes in far-off lands,—and that is the end of them so far as we are concerned.

They merely pause on the lip of the melting pot, briefly peer into its simmering depths, and then,—pass on.

It is not with such as they that this narrative has to deal. It is not of the heralded, the glorified and the toasted that we tell, but of those who slip into the pot with the coarser ingredients, and who never, by any chance, become actually absorbed by the processes of integration but remain for ever as they were in the beginning: distinct foreign substances.

From all quarters of the globe the drift comes to our shores. New York swallows the good with the bad, and thrives, like the cannibal, on the man-food it gulps down with ravenous disregard for consequences or effect. It rarely disgorges.

It eats all flesh, foul or fair, and it drinks good red blood out of the same cup that offers a black and nauseous bile. It conceals its inward revulsion behind a bland, disdainful smile, and holds out its hands for more of the meat and poison that comes up from the sea in ships.

It is the City of Masks.

Its men and women hide behind a million masks; no man looks beneath the mask his neighbour wears, for he is interested only in that which he sees with the least possible effort: the surface. He sees his neighbour but he knows him not. He keeps his own mask in place and wanders among the millions, secure in the thought that all other men are as casual as he,—and as charitable.

From time to time the newspapers come forward with stories that amaze and interest those of us who remain, and always will remain, romantic and impressionable. They tell of the royal princess living in squalor on the lower east side; of the heir to a baronetcy dying in poverty in a hospital somewhere up-town; of the countess who defies the wolf by dancing in the roof-gardens; of the lost arch-duke who has been recognized in a gang of stevedores; of the earl who lands in jail as an ordinary hobo; of the baroness who supports a shiftless husband and their offspring by giving music-lessons; of the retiring scholar who scorns a life of idleness and a coronet besides; of shifty ne'er-do-wells with titles at homes and aliases elsewhere; of fugitive lords and forgotten ladies; of thieves and bauds and wastrels who stand revealed in their extremity as the sons and daughters of noble houses.

In this City of Masks there are hundreds of men and women in whose veins the blood of a sound aristocracy flows. By choice or necessity they have donned the mask of obscurity. They tread the paths of oblivion. They toil, beg or steal to keep pace with circumstance. But the blood will not be denied. In the breast of each of these drifters throbs the pride of birth, in the soul of each flickers the unquenchable flame of caste. The mask is for the man outside, not for the man inside.

Recently there died in one of the municipal hospitals an old flower-woman, familiar for three decades to the thousands who thread their way through the maze of streets in the lower end of Manhattan. To them she was known as Old Peg. To herself she was the Princess Feododric, born to the purple, daughter of one of the greatest families in Russia. She was never anything but the Princess to

herself, despite the squalor in which she lived. Her epitaph was written in the bold, black head-lines of the newspapers; but her history was laid away with her mask in a graveyard far from palaces—and flower-stands. Her headstone revealed the uncompromising pride that survived her after death. By her direction it bore the name of Feododric, eldest daughter of His Highness, Prince Michael Androvodski; born in St. Petersburgh, September 12, 1841; died Jan. 7, 1912; wife of James Lumley, of County Cork, Ireland.

It is of the high-born who dwell in low places that this tale is told. It is of an aristocracy that serves and smiles and rarely sneers behind its mask.

When Cricklewick announced the Princess Mariana Theresa the hush of deference fell upon the assembled company. In the presence of royalty no one remained seated.

She advanced slowly, ponderously into the room, bowing right and left as she crossed to the great chair at the upper end. One by one the others presented themselves and kissed the coarse, unlovely hand she held out to them. It was not "make-believe." It was her due. The blood of a king and a queen coursed through her veins; she had been born a Princess Royal.

She was sixty, but her hair was as black as the coat of the raven. Time, tribulation, and a harsh destiny had put each its own stamp upon her dark, almost sinister, face. The black eyes were sharp and calculating, and they did not smile with her thin lips. She wore a great amount of jewellery and a gown of blue velvet, lavishly bespangled and generously embellished with laces of many periods, values and, you could say, nativity.

The Honourable Mrs. Priestly-Duff having been a militant suffragette before a sudden and enforced departure from England, was the only person there with the hardihood to proclaim, not altogether *sotto voce*, that the "get-up" was a fright.

Restraint vanished the instant the last kiss of tribute fell upon her knuckles. The Princess put her hand to her side, caught her breath sharply, and remarked to the Marchioness, who stood near by, that it was dreadful the way she was putting on weight. She was afraid of splitting something if she took a long, natural breath.

"I haven't weighed myself lately," she said, "but the last time I had this dress

on it felt like a kimono. Look at it now! You could not stuff a piece of tissue paper between it and me to save your soul. I shall have to let it out a couple of—What were you about to say, Count Fogazario?"

The little Count, at the Marchioness's elbow, repeated something he had already said, and added:

"And if it continues there will not be a trolley-car running by midnight."

The Princess eyed him coldly. "That is just like a man," she said. "Not the faintest idea of what we were talking about, Marchioness."

The Count bowed. "You were speaking of tissue paper, Princess," said he, stiffly. "I understood perfectly."

Once a week the Marchioness held her amazing salon. Strictly speaking, it was a co-operative affair. The so-called guests were in reality contributors to and supporters of an enterprise that had been going on for the matter of five years in the heart of unsuspecting New York. According to his or her means, each of these exiles paid the tithe or tax necessary, and became in fact a member of the inner circle.

From nearly every walk in life they came to this common, converging point, and sat them down with their equals, for the moment laying aside the mask to take up a long-discarded and perhaps despised reality. They became lords and ladies all over again, and not for a single instant was there the slightest deviation from dignity or form.

Moral integrity was the only requirement, and that, for obvious reasons, was sometimes overlooked,—as for example in the case of the Countess who eloped with the young artist and lived in complacent shame and happiness with him in a three-room flat in East Nineteenth street. The artist himself was barred from the salon, not because of his ignoble action, but for the sufficient reason that he was of ignoble birth. Outside the charmed conclave he was looked upon as a most engaging chap. And there was also the case of the appallingly amiable baron who had fired four shots at a Russian Grand-Duke and got away with his life in spite of the vaunted secret service. It was of no moment whatsoever that one of his bullets accidentally put an end to the life of a guardsman. That was merely proof of his earnestness and in no way reflected on his standing as a nobleman. Nor was it adequate cause for rejection that certain of these men and women

were being sought by Imperial Governments because they were political fugitives, with prices on their heads.

The Marchioness, more prosperous than any of her associates, assumed the greater part of the burden attending this singular reversion to form. It was she who held the lease on the building, from cellar to roof, and it was she who paid that important item of expense: the rent. The Marchioness was no other than the celebrated Deborah, whose gowns issuing from the lower floors at prodigious prices, gave her a standing in New York that not even the plutocrats and parvenus could dispute. In private life she may have been a Marchioness, but to all New York she was known as the queen of dressmakers.

If you desired to consult Deborah in person you inquired for Mrs. Sparflight, or if you happened to be a new customer and ignorant, you were set straight by an attendant (with a slight uplifting of the eyebrows) when you asked for Madame "Deborah."

The ownership of the rare pieces of antique furniture, rugs, tapestries and paintings was vested in two members of the circle, one occupying a position in the centre of the ring, the other on the outer rim: Count Antonio Fogazario and Moody, the footman. For be it known that while Moody reverted once a week to a remote order of existence he was for the balance of the time an exceedingly prosperous, astute and highly respected dealer in antiques, with a shop in Madison Avenue and a clientele that considered it the grossest impertinence to dispute the prices he demanded. He always looked forward to these "drawing-rooms," so to speak. It was rather a joy to disregard the aspirates. He dropped enough hs on a single evening to make up for a whole week of deliberate speech.

As for Count Antonio, he was the purveyor of Italian antiques and primitive paintings, "authenticity guaranteed," doing business under the name of "Juneo & Co., Ltd. London, Paris, Rome, New York." He was known in the trade and at his bank as Mr. Juneo.

Occasionally the exigencies of commerce necessitated the substitution of an article from stock for one temporarily loaned to the fifth-floor drawing-room.

During the seven days in the week, Mr. Moody and Mr. Juneo observed a strained but common equality. Mr. Moody contemptuously referred to Mr. Juneo as a second-hand dealer, while Mr. Juneo, with commercial bitterness, informed his patrons that Pickett, Inc., needed a lot of watching. But on these Wednesday

nights a vast abyss stretched between them. They were no longer rivals in business. Mr. Juneo, without the slightest sign of arrogance, put Mr. Moody in his place, and Mr. Moody, with perfect equanimity, quite properly stayed there.

"A chair over here, Moody," the Count would say (to Pickett, Inc.,) and Moody, with all the top-lofty obsequiousness of the perfect footman, would place a chair in the designated spot, and say:

"H'anythink else, my lord? Thank you, sir."

On this particular Wednesday night two topics of paramount interest engaged the attention of the company. The newspapers of that day had printed the story of the apprehension and seizure of one Peter Jolinski, wanted in Warsaw on the charge of assassination.

As Count Andreas Verdray he was known to this exclusive circle of Europeans, and to them he was a persecuted, unjustly accused fugitive from the land of his nativity. Russian secret service men had run him to earth after five years of relentless pursuit. As a respectable, industrious window-washer he had managed for years to evade arrest for a crime he had not committed, and now he was in jail awaiting extradition and almost certain death at the hands of his intriguing enemies. A cultured scholar, a true gentleman, he was, despite his vocation, one of the most distinguished units in this little world of theirs. The authorities in Warsaw charged him with instigating the plot to assassinate a powerful and autocratic officer of the Crown. In more or less hushed voices, the assemblage discussed the unhappy event.

The other topic was the need of immediate relief for the family of the Baroness de Flamme, who was on her death-bed in Harlem and whose three small children, deprived of the support of a hard-working music-teacher and deserted by an unconscionably plebeian father, were in a pitiable state of destitution. Acting on the suggestion of Lord Temple, who as Thomas Trotter earned a weekly stipend of thirty dollars as chauffeur for a prominent Park Avenue gentleman, a collection was taken, each person giving according to his means. The largest contribution was from Count Fogazario, who headed the list with twenty-five dollars. The Marchioness was down for twenty. The smallest donation was from Prince Waldemar. Producing a solitary coin, he made change, and after saving out ten cents for carfare, donated forty cents.

Cricklewick, Moody and McFaddan were not invited to contribute. No one

would have dreamed of asking them to join in such a movement. And yet, of all those present, the three men-servants were in a better position than any one else to give handsomely. They were, in fact, the richest men there. The next morning, however, would certainly bring checks from their offices to the custodian of the fund, the Hon. Mrs. Priestly-Duff. They knew their places on Wednesday night, however.

The Countess du Bara, from the Opera, sang later on in the evening; Prince Waldemar got out his violin and played; the gay young baroness from the Artists' Colony played accompaniments very badly on the baby grand piano; Cricklewick and the footmen served coffee and sandwiches, and every one smoked in the dining-room.

At eleven o'clock the Princess departed. She complained a good deal of her feet.

"It's the weather," she explained to the Marchioness, wincing a little as she made her way to the door.

"Too bad," said the Marchioness. "Are we to be honoured on next Wednesday night, your highness? You do not often grace our gatherings, you know. I—"

"It will depend entirely on circumstances," said the Princess, graciously.

Circumstances, it may be mentioned,—though they never were mentioned on Wednesday nights,—had a great deal to do with the Princess's actions. She conducted a pawn-shop in Baxter street. As the widow and sole legatee of Moses Jacobs, she was quite a figure in the street. Customers came from all corners of the town, and without previous appointment. Report had it that Mrs. Jacobs was rolling in money. People slunk in and out of the front door of her place of business, penniless on entering, affluent on leaving,—if you would call the possession of a dollar or two affluence,—and always with the resolve in their souls to some day get even with the leech who stood behind the counter and doled out nickels where dollars were expected.

It was an open secret that more than one of those who kissed the Princess's hand in the Marchioness's drawing-room carried pawnchecks issued by Mrs. Jacobs. Business was business. Sentiment entered the soul of the Princess only on such nights as she found it convenient and expedient to present herself at the Salon. It vanished the instant she put on her street clothes on the floor below and

passed out into the night. Avarice stepped in as sentiment stepped out, and one should not expect too much of avarice.

For one, the dreamy, half-starved Prince Waldemar was rarely without pawnchecks from her delectable establishment. Indeed it had been impossible for him to entertain the company on this stormy evening except for her grudging consent to substitute his overcoat for the Stradivarius he had been obliged to leave the day before.

Without going too deeply into her history, it is only necessary to say that she was one of those wayward, wilful princesses royal who occasionally violate all tradition and marry good-looking young Americans or Englishmen, and disappear promptly and automatically from court circles.

She ran away when she was nineteen with a young attaché in the British legation. It was the worst thing that could have happened to the poor chap. For years they drifted through many lands, finally ending in New York, where, their resources having been exhausted, she was forced to pawn her jewellery. The pawn-broker was one Abraham Jacobs, of Baxter street.

The young English husband, disheartened and thoroughly disillusioned, shot himself one fine day. By a single coincidence, a few weeks afterward, old Abraham went to his fathers in the most agreeable fashion known to nature, leaving his business, including the princess's jewels, to his son Moses.

With rare foresight and acumen, Mrs. Brinsley (the Princess, in other words), after several months of contemplative mourning, redeemed her treasure by marrying Moses. And when Moses, after begetting Solomon, David and Hannah, passed on at the age of twoscore years and ten, she continued the business with even greater success than he. She did not alter the name that flourished in large gold letters on the two show windows and above the hospitable doorway. For twenty years it had read: The Royal Exchange: M. Jacobs, Proprietor. And now you know all that is necessary to know about Mariana, to this day a true princess of the blood.

Inasmuch as a large share of her business came through customers who preferred to visit her after the fall of night, there is no further need to explain her reply to the Marchioness.

When midnight came the Marchioness was alone in the deserted drawing-

room. The company had dispersed to the four corners of the storm-swept city, going by devious means and routes.

They fared forth into the night *sans* ceremony, *sans* regalia. In the locker-rooms on the floor below each of these noble wights divested himself and herself of the raiment donned for the occasion. With the turning of a key in the locker door, barons became ordinary men, countesses became mere women, and all of them stole regretfully out of the passage at the foot of the first flight of stairs and shivered in the wind that blew through the City of Masks.

"I've got more money than I know what to do with, Miss Emsdale," said Tom Trotter, as they went together out into the bitter wind. "I'll blow you off to a taxi."

"I couldn't think of it," said the erstwhile Lady Jane, drawing her small stole close about her neck.

"But it's on my way home," said he. "I'll drop you at your front door. Please do."

"If I may stand half," she said resolutely.

"We'll see," said he. "Wait here in the doorway till I fetch a taxi from the hotel over there. Oh, I say, Herman, would you mind asking one of those drivers over there to pick us up here?"

"Sure," said Herman, one time Count Wilhelm Frederick Von Blitzen, who had followed them to the side-walk. "Fierce night, ain'd it? Py chiminy, ain'd it?"

"Where is your friend, Mr. Trotter," inquired Miss Emsdale, as the stalwart figure of one of the most noted head-waiters in New York struggled off against the wind.

"He beat it quite a while ago," said he, with an enlightening grin.

"Oh?" said she, and met his glance in the darkness. A sudden warmth swept over her.

CHAPTER IV

THE SCION OF A NEW YORK HOUSE

AS Miss Emsdale and Thomas Trotter got down from the taxi, into a huge unbroken snowdrift in front of a house in one of the cross-town streets just off upper Fifth Avenue, a second taxi drew up behind them and barked a raucous command to pull up out of the way. But the first taxi was unable to do anything of the sort, being temporarily though explosively stalled in the drift along the curb. Whereupon the fare in the second taxi threw open the door and, with an audible imprecation, plunged into the drift, just in time to witness the interesting spectacle of a lady being borne across the snow-piled sidewalk in the arms of a stalwart man; and, as he gazed in amazement, the man and his burden ascended the half-dozen steps leading to the storm-vestibule of the very house to which he himself was bound.

His first shock of apprehension was dissipated almost instantly. The man's burden giggled quite audibly as he set her down inside the storm doors. That giggle was proof positive that she was neither dead nor injured. She was very much alive, there could be no doubt about it. But who was she?

The newcomer swore softly as he fumbled in his trousers' pocket for a coin for the driver who had run him up from the club. After an exasperating but seemingly necessary delay he hurried up the steps. He met the stalwart burden-bearer coming down. A servant had opened the door and the late burden was passing into the hall.

He peered sharply into the face of the man who was leaving, and recognized him.

"Hello," he said. "Some one ill, Trotter?"

"No, Mr. Smith-Parvis," replied Trotter in some confusion. "Disagreeable night, isn't it?"

"In some respects," said young Mr. Smith-Parvis, and dashed into the vestibule before the footman could close the door.

Miss Emsdale turned at the foot of the broad stairway as she heard the servant greet the young master. A swift flush mounted to her cheeks. Her heart beat a little faster, notwithstanding the fact that it had been beating with unusual rapidity ever since Thomas Trotter disregarded her protests and picked her up in his strong arms.

"Hello," he said, lowering his voice.

There was a light in the library beyond. His father was there, taking advantage, no doubt, of the midnight lull to read the evening newspapers. The social activities of the Smith-Parvises gave him but little opportunity to read the evening papers prior to the appearance of the morning papers.

"What is the bally rush?" went on the young man, slipping out of his fur-lined overcoat and leaving it pendant in the hands of the footman. Miss Emsdale, after responding to his hushed "hello" in an equally subdued tone, had started up the stairs.

"It is very late, Mr. Smith-Parvis. Good night."

"Never too late to mend," he said, and was supremely well-satisfied with what a superior intelligence might have recorded as a cryptic remark but what, to him, was an awfully clever "come-back." He had spent three years at Oxford. No beastly American college for him, by Jove!

Overcoming a cultivated antipathy to haste,—which he considered the lowest form of ignorance,—he bounded up the steps, three at a time, and overtook her midway to the top.

"I say, Miss Emsdale, I saw you come in, don't you know. I couldn't believe my eyes. What the deuce were you doing out with that common—er—chauffeur? D'you mean to say that you are running about with a chap of that sort, and letting him—"

"If you *please*, Mr. Smith-Parvis!" interrupted Miss Emsdale coldly. "Good night!"

"I don't mean to say you haven't the *right* to go about with any one you please," he persisted, planting himself in front of her at the top of the steps. "But a common chauffeur—Well, now, 'pon my word, Miss Emsdale, really you

might just as well be seen with Peasley down there."

"Peasley is out of the question," said she, affecting a wry little smile, as of self-pity. "He is tooken, as you say in America. He walks out with Bessie, the parlour-maid."

"Walks out? Good Lord, you don't mean to say you'd—but, of course, you're spoofing me. One never knows how to take you English, no matter how long one may have lived in England. But I am serious. You cannot afford to be seen running around nights with fellows of that stripe. Rotten bounders, that's what I call 'em. Ever been out with him before?"

"Often, Mr. Smith-Parvis," she replied calmly. "I am sure you would like him if you knew him better. He is really a very—"

"Nonsense! He is a good chauffeur, I've no doubt,—Lawrie Carpenter says he's a treasure, but I've no desire to know him any better. And I don't like to think of you knowing him quite as well as you do, Miss Emsdale. See what I mean?"

"Perfectly. You mean that you will go to your mother with the report that I am not a fit person to be with the children. Isn't that what you mean?"

"Not at all. I'm not thinking of the kids. I'm thinking of myself. I'm pretty keen about you, and—"

"Aren't you forgetting yourself, Mr. Smith-Parvis?" she demanded curtly.

"Oh, I know there'd be a devil of a row if the mater ever dreamed that I—Oh, I say! Don't rush off in a huff. Wait a—"

But she had brushed past him and was swiftly ascending the second flight of stairs.

He stared after her in astonishment. He couldn't understand such stupidity, not even in a governess. There wasn't another girl in New York City, so far as he knew, who wouldn't have been pleased out of her boots to receive the significant mark of interest he was bestowing upon this lowly governess,—and here was she turning her back upon,—Why, what was the matter with her? He passed his hand over his brow and blinked a couple of times. And she only a paid governess! It

was incredible.

He went slowly downstairs and, still in a sort of daze, found himself a few minutes later pouring out a large drink of whiskey in the dining-room. It was his habit to take a bottle of soda with his whiskey, but on this occasion he overcame it and gulped the liquor "neat." It appeared to be rather uplifting, so he had another. Then he went up to his own room and sulked for an hour before even preparing for bed. The more he thought of it, the graver her unseemly affront became.

"And to have her insult *me* like that," he said to himself over and over again, "when not three minutes before she had let that bally bounder carry her up—By gad, I'll give her something to think about in the morning. She sha'n't do that sort of thing to me. She'll find herself out of a job and with a damned poor reference in her pocket if she gets gay with me. She'll come down from her high horse, all right, all right. Positions like this one don't grow in the park. She's got to understand that. She can't go running around with chauffeurs and all—My God, to think that he had her in his arms! The one girl in all the world who has ever really made me sit up and take notice! Gad, I—I can't stand it—I can't bear to think of her cuddling up to that—The damned bounder!"

He sprang to his feet and bolted out into the hall. He was a spoiled young man with an aversion: an aversion to being denied anything that he wanted.

In the brief history of the Smith-Parvis family he occupied many full and far from prosaic pages. Smith-Parvis, Senior, was not a prodigal sort of person, and yet he had squandered a great many thousands of dollars in his time on Smith-Parvis, Junior. It costs money to bring up young men like Smith-Parvis, Junior; and by the same token it costs money to hold them down. The family history, if truthfully written, would contain passages in which the unbridled ambitions of Smith-Parvis, Junior, overwhelmed everything else. There would be the chapters excoriating the two chorus-girls who, in not widely separated instances, consented to release the young man from matrimonial pledges in return for so much cash; and there would be numerous paragraphs pertaining to auction-bridge, and others devoted entirely to tailors; to say nothing of uncompromising café and restaurant keepers who preferred the Smith-Parvis money to the Smith-Parvis trade.

The young man, having come to the conclusion that he wanted Miss

Emsdale, ruthlessly decided to settle the matter at once. He would not wait till morning. He would go up to her room and tell her that if she knew what was good for her she'd listen to what he had to say. She was too nice a girl to throw herself away on a rotter like Trotter.

Then, as he came to the foot of the steps, he remembered the expression in her eyes as she swept past him an hour earlier. It suddenly occurred to him to pause and reflect. The look she gave him, now that he thought of it, was not that of a timid, frightened menial. Far from it! There was something imperious about it; he recalled the subtle, fleeting and hitherto unfamiliar chill it gave him.

Somewhat to his own amazement, he returned to his room and closed the door with surprising care. He usually slammed it.

"Dammit all," he said, half aloud, scowling at his reflection in the mirror across the room, "I—I wonder if she thinks she can put on airs with me." Later on he regained his self-assurance sufficiently to utter an ultimatum to the invisible offender: "You'll be eating out of my hand before you're two days older, my fine lady, or I'll know the reason why."

Smith-Parvis, Junior, wore the mask of a gentleman. As a matter-of-fact, the entire Smith-Parvis family went about masked by a similar air of gentility.

The hyphen had a good deal to do with it.

The head of the family, up to the time he came of age, was William Philander Smith, commonly called Bill by the young fellows in Yonkers. A maternal uncle, name of Parvis, being without wife or child at the age of seventy-eight, indicated a desire to perpetuate his name by hitching it to the sturdiest patronymic in the English language, and forthwith made a will, leaving all that he possessed to his only nephew, on condition that the said nephew and all his descendants should bear, henceforth and for ever, the name of Smith-Parvis.

That is how it all came about. William Philander, shortly after the fusion of names, fell heir to a great deal of money and in due time forsook Yonkers for Manhattan, where he took unto himself a wife in the person of Miss Angela Potts, only child of the late Simeon Potts, Esq., and Mrs. Potts, neither of whom, it would seem, had the slightest desire to perpetuate the family name. Indeed, as Angela was getting along pretty well toward thirty, they rather made a point of abolishing it before it was too late.

The first-born of William Philander and Angela was christened Stuyvesant Van Sturdevant Smith-Parvis, after one of the Pottses who came over at a time when the very best families in Holland, according to the infant's grandparents, were engaged in establishing an aristocracy at the foot of Manhattan Island.

After Stuyvesant,—ten years after, in fact,—came Regina Angela, who languished a while in the laps of the Pottses and the Smith-Parvis nurses, and died expectedly. When Stuyvie was fourteen the twins, Lucille and Eudora, came, and at that the Smith-Parvises packed up and went to England to live. Stuyvie managed in some way to make his way through Eton and part of the way through Oxford. He was sent down in his third year. It wasn't so easy to have his own way there. Moreover, he did not like Oxford because the rest of the boys persisted in calling him an American. He didn't mind being called a New Yorker, but they were rather obstinate about it.

Miss Emsdale was the new governess. The redoubtable Mrs. Sparflight had recommended her to Mrs. Smith-Parvis. Since her advent into the home in Fifth Avenue, some three or four months prior to the opening of this narrative, a marked change had come over Stuyvesant Van Sturdevant. It was principally noticeable in a recently formed habit of getting down to breakfast early. The twins and the governess had breakfast at half-past eight. Up to this time he had detested the twins. Of late, however, he appeared to have discovered that they were his sisters and rather interesting little beggars at that.

They were very much surprised by his altered behaviour. To the new governess they confided the somewhat startling suspicion that Stuyvie must be having softening of the brain, just as "grandpa" had when "papa" discovered that he was giving diamond rings to the servants and smiling at strangers in the street. It must be that, said they, for never before had Stuyvie kissed them or brought them expensive candies or smiled at them as he was doing in these wonderful days.

Stranger still, he never had been polite or agreeable to governesses—before. He always had called them frumps, or cats, or freaks, or something like that. Surely something must be the matter with him, or he wouldn't be so nice to Miss Emsdale. Up to now he positively had refused to look at her predecessors, much less to sit at the same table with them. He said they took away his appetite.

The twins adored Miss Emsdale.

"We love you because you are so awfuly good," they were wont to say. "And so beautiful," they invariably added, as if it were not quite the proper thing to say.

It was obvious to Miss Emsdale that Stuyvesant endorsed the supplemental tribute of the twins. He made it very plain to the new governess that he thought more of her beauty than he did of her goodness. He ogled her in a manner which, for want of a better expression, may be described as possessive. Instead of being complimented by his surreptitious admiration, she was distinctly annoyed. She disliked him intensely.

He was twenty-five. There were bags under his eyes. More than this need not be said in describing him, unless one is interested in the tiny black moustache that looked as though it might have been pasted, with great precision, in the centre of his long upper lip,—directly beneath the spreading nostrils of a broad and far from aristocratic nose. His lips were thick and coarse, his chin a trifle undershot. Physically, he was a well set-up fellow, tall and powerful.

For reasons best known to himself, and approved by his parents, he affected a distinctly English manner of speech. In that particular, he frequently out-Englished the English themselves.

As for Miss Emsdale, she was a long time going to sleep. The encounter with the scion of the house had left her in a disturbed frame of mind. She laid awake for hours wondering what the morrow would produce for her. Dismissal, no doubt, and with it a stinging rebuke for what Mrs. Smith-Parvis would consider herself justified in characterizing as unpardonable misconduct in one employed to teach innocent and impressionable young girls. Mingled with these dire thoughts were occasional thrills of delight. They were, however, of short duration and had to do with a pair of strong arms and a gentle, laughing voice.

In addition to these shifting fears and thrills, there were even more disquieting sensations growing out of the unwelcome attentions of Smith-Parvis, Junior. They were, so to speak, getting on her nerves. And now he had not only expressed himself in words, but had actually threatened her. There could be no mistake about that.

Her heart was heavy. She did not want to lose her position. The monthly checks she received from Mrs. Smith-Parvis meant a great deal to her. At least half of her pay went to England, and sometimes more than half. A friendly

solicitor in London obtained the money on these drafts and forwarded it, without fee, to the sick young brother who would never walk again, the adored young brother who had fallen prey to the most cruel of all enemies: infantile paralysis.

Jane Thorne was the only daughter of the Earl of Wexham, who shot himself in London when the girl was but twelve years old. He left a penniless widow and two children. Wexham Manor, with all its fields and forests, had been sacrificed beforehand by the reckless, ill-advised nobleman. The police found a half-crown in his pocket when they took charge of the body. It was the last of a once imposing fortune. The widow and children subsisted on the charity of a niggardly relative. With the death of the former, after ten unhappy years as a dependent, Jane resolutely refused to accept help from the obnoxious relative. She set out to earn a living for herself and the crippled boy. We find her, after two years of struggle and privation, installed as Miss Emsdale in the Smith-Parvis mansion, earning one hundred dollars a month.

It is safe to say that if the Smith-Parvises had known that she was the daughter of an Earl, and that her brother was an Earl, there would have been great rejoicing among them; for it isn't everybody who can boast an Earl's daughter as governess.

One night in each week she was free to do as she pleased. It was, in plain words, her night out. She invariably spent it with the Marchioness and the coterie of unmasked spirits from lands across the seas.

What was she to say to Mrs. Smith-Parvis if called upon to account for her unconventional return of the night before? How could she explain? Her lips were closed by the seal of honour so far as the meetings above "Deborah's" were concerned. A law unwritten but steadfastly observed by every member of that remarkable, heterogeneous court, made it impossible for her to divulge her whereabouts or actions on this and other agreeable "nights out." No man or woman in that company would have violated, even under the gravest pressure, the compact under which so many well-preserved secrets were rendered secure from exposure.

Stuyvesant, in his rancour, would draw an ugly picture of her midnight adventure. He would, no doubt, feel inspired to add a few conclusions of his own. Her word, opposed to his, would have no effect on the verdict of the indulgent mother. She would stand accused and convicted of conduct

unbecoming a governess! For, after all, Thomas Trotter was a chauffeur, and she couldn't make anything nobler out of him without saying that he wasn't Thomas Trotter at all.

She arose the next morning with a splitting headache, and the fear of Stuyvesant in her soul.

He was waiting for her in the hall below. The twins were accorded an unusually affectionate greeting by their big brother. He went so far as to implant a random kiss on the features of each of the "brats," as he called them in secret. Then he roughly shoved them ahead into the breakfast-room.

Fastening his gaze upon the pale, unsmiling face of Miss Emsdale, he whispered:

"Don't worry, my dear. Mum's the word."

He winked significantly. Revolted, she drew herself up and hurried after the children, unpleasantly conscious of the leer of admiration that rested upon her from behind.

He was very gay at breakfast.

"Mum's the word," he repeated in an undertone, as he drew back her chair at the conclusion of the meal. His lips were close to her ear, his hot breath on her cheek, as he bent forward to utter this reassuring remark.

CHAPTER V

MR. THOMAS TROTTER HEARS SOMETHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE

TWO days later Thomas Trotter turned up at the old book shop of J. Bramble, in Lexington Avenue.

"Well," he said, as he took his pipe out of his pocket and began to stuff tobacco into it, "I've got the sack."

"Got the sack?" exclaimed Mr. Bramble, blinking through his horn-rimmed spectacles. "You can't be serious."

"It's the gospel truth," affirmed Mr. Trotter, depositing his long, graceful body in a rocking chair facing the sheet-iron stove at the back of the shop. "Got my walking papers last night, Bramby."

"What's wrong? I thought you were a fixture on the job. What have you been up to?"

"I'm blessed if I know," said the young man, shaking his head slowly. "Kicked out without notice, that's all I know about it. Two weeks' pay handed me; and a simple statement that he was putting some one on in my place today."

"Not even a reference?"

"He offered me a good one," said Trotter ironically. "Said he would give me the best send-off a chauffeur ever had. I told him I couldn't accept a reference and a discharge from the same employer."

"Rather foolish, don't you think?"

"That's just what he said. I said I'd rather have an explanation than a reference, under the circumstances."

"Um! What did he say to that?"

"Said I'd better take what he was willing to give."

Mr. Bramble drew up a chair and sat down. He was a small, sharp-featured man of sixty, bookish from head to foot.

"Well, well," he mused sympathetically. "Too bad, too bad, my boy. Still, you ought to thank goodness it comes at a time when the streets are in the shape they're in now. Almost impossible to get about with an automobile in all this snow, isn't it? Rather a good time to be discharged, I should say."

"Oh, I say, that *is* optimism. 'Pon my soul, I believe you'd find something cheerful about going to hell," broke in Trotter, grinning.

"Best way I know of to escape blizzards and snow-drifts," said Mr. Bramble, brightly.

The front door opened. A cold wind blew the length of the book-littered room.

"This Bramble's?" piped a thin voice.

"Yes. Come in and shut the door."

An even smaller and older man than himself obeyed the command. He wore the cap of a district messenger boy.

"Mr. J. Bramble here?" he quaked, advancing.

"Yes. What is it? A telegram?" demanded the owner of the shop, in some excitement.

"I should say not. Wires down everywheres. Gee, that fire looks good. I gotta letter for you, Mr. Bramble." He drew off his red mittens and produced from the pocket of his thin overcoat, an envelope and receipt book. "Sign here," he said, pointing.

Mr. Bramble signed and then studied the handwriting on the envelope, his lips pursed, one eye speculatively cocked.

"I've never seen the writing before. Must be a new one," he reflected aloud, and sighed. "Poor things!"

"That establishes the writer as a woman," said Trotter, removing his pipe. "Otherwise you would have said 'poor devils.' Now what do you mean by trifling with the women, you old rogue?" The loss of his position did not appear to have affected the nonchalant disposition of the good-looking Mr. Trotter.

"God bless my soul," said Mr. Bramble, staring hard at the envelope, "I don't believe it is from one of them, after all. By 'one of them,' my lad, I mean the poor gentlewomen who find themselves obliged to sell their books in order to obtain food and clothing. They always write before they call, you see. Saves 'em not only trouble but humiliation. The other kind simply burst in with a parcel of rubbish and ask how much I'll give for the lot. But this,—Well, well, I wonder who it can be from? Doesn't seem like the sort of writing—"

"Why don't you open it and see?" suggested his visitor.

"A good idea," said Mr. Bramble; "a very clever thought. There *is* a way to find out, isn't there?" His gaze fell upon the aged messenger, who warmed his bony hands at the stove. He paused, the tip of his forefinger inserted under the flap. "Sit down and warm yourself, my friend," he said. "Get your long legs out of the way, Tom, and make room for him. That's right! Must be pretty rough going outside for an old codger like you."

The messenger "boy" sat down. "Yes, sir, it sure is. Takes 'em forever in this 'ere town to clean the snow off'n the streets. 'Twasn't that way in my day."

"What do you mean by your 'day'?"

"Haven't you ever heard about me?" demanded the old man, eyeing Mr. Bramble with interest.

"Can't say that I have."

"Well, can you beat that? There's a big, long street named after me way down town. My name is Canal, Jotham W. Canal." He winked and showed his toothless gums in an amiable grin. "I used to be purty close to old Boss Tweed; kind of a lieutenant, you might say. Things were so hot in the old town in those days that we used to charge a nickel apiece for snowballs. Five cents apiece, right off the griddle. That's how hot it was in my day."

"My word!" exclaimed Mr. Bramble.

"He's spoofing you," said young Mr. Trotter.

"My God," groaned the messenger, "if I'd only knowed you was English I'd have saved my breath. Well, I guess I'll be on my way. Is there an answer, Mr. Bramble?"

"Um—aw—I quite forgot the—" He tore open the envelope and held the missive to the light. "'Pon my soul!" he cried, after reading the first few lines and then jumping ahead to the signature. "This is most extraordinary." He was plainly agitated as he felt in his pocket for a coin. "No answer,—that is to say,—none at present. Ahem! That's all, boy. Goodbye."

Mr. Canal shuffled out of the shop,—and out of this narrative as well.

"This will interest you," said Mr. Bramble, lowering his voice as he edged his chair closer to the young man. "It is from Lady Jane Thorne—I should say, Miss Emsdale. Bless my soul!"

Mr. Trotter's British complacency was disturbed. He abandoned his careless sprawl in the chair and sat up very abruptly.

"What's that? From Lady Jane? Don't tell me it's anything serious. One would think she was on her deathbed, judging by the face you're—"

"Read it for yourself," said the other, thrusting the letter into Trotter's hand. "It explains everything,—the whole blooming business. Read it aloud. Don't be uneasy," he added, noting the young man's glance toward the door. "No customers on a day like this. Some one may drop in to get warm, but—aha, I see you are interested."

An angry flush darkened Trotter's face as his eyes ran down the page.

> "'Dear Mr. Bramble: (she wrote) I am sending this to you by special messenger, hoping it may reach you before Mr. Trotter drops in. He has told me that he spends a good deal of his spare time in your dear old shop, browsing among the books. In the light of what may already have happened, I am quite sure you will see him today. I feel that I may write freely to you, for you are his friend and mine, and you will understand. I am greatly distressed. Yesterday I was informed that he is to be summarily dismissed by Mr. Carpenter. I prefer not to reveal the source of information.

All I may say is that I am, in a way, responsible for his misfortune. If the blow has fallen, he is doubtless perplexed and puzzled, and, I fear, very unhappy. Influence has been brought to bear upon Mr. Carpenter, who, you may not be by way of knowing, is a close personal friend of the people in whose home I am employed. Indeed, notwithstanding the difference in their ages, I may say that he is especially the friend of young Mr. S-P. Mr. Trotter probably knows something about the nature of this friendship, having been kept out till all hours of the morning in his capacity as chauffeur. My object in writing to you is two-fold: first, to ask you to prevail upon him to act with discretion for the present, at least, as I have reason to believe that there may be an attempt to carry out a threat to "run him out of town"; secondly, to advise him that I shall stop at your place at five o'clock this afternoon in quest of a little book that now is out of print. Please explain to him also that my uncertainty as to where a letter would reach him under these new conditions accounts for this message to you. Sincerely your friend,

"JANE EMSDALE.'"

"Read it again, slowly," said Mr. Bramble, blinking harder than ever.

"What time is it now?" demanded Trotter, thrusting the letter into his own pocket. A quick glance at the watch on his wrist brought a groan of dismay from his lips. "Good Lord! A few minutes past ten. Seven hours! Hold on! I can almost see the words on your lips. I'll be discreet, so don't begin prevailing, there's a good chap. There's nothing to be said or done till I see her. But,—seven hours!"

"Stop here and have a bite of lunch with me," said Mr. Bramble, soothingly.

"Nothing could be more discreet than that," said Trotter, getting up to pace the floor. He was frowning.

"It's quite cosy in our little dining-room upstairs. If you prefer, I'll ask Mirabeau to clear out and let us have the place to ourselves while—"

"Not at all. I'll stop with you, but I will not have poor old Mirabeau evicted. We will show the letter to him. He is a Frenchman and he can read between the lines far better than either of us."

At twelve-thirty, Mr. Bramble stuck a long-used card in the front door and

locked it from the inside. The world was informed, in bold type, that he had gone to lunch and would not return until one-thirty.

In the rear of the floor above the book-shop were the meagrely furnished bedrooms and kitchen shared by J. Bramble and Pierre Mirabeau, clock-maker and repairer. The kitchen was more than a kitchen. It was also a dining-room, a sitting-room and a scullery, and it was as clean and as neat as the proverbial pin. At the front was the work-shop of M. Mirabeau, filled with clocks of all sizes, shapes and ages. Back of this, as a sort of buffer between the quiet bedrooms and the busy resting-place of a hundred sleepless chimes, was located the combination store-room, utilized by both merchants: a musty, dingy place crowded with intellectual rubbish and a lapse of Time.

Mirabeau, in response to a shout from the fat Irishwoman who came in by the day to cook, wash and clean up for the tenants, strode briskly into the kitchen, drying his hands on a towel. He was a tall, spare old man with uncommonly bright eyes and a long grey beard.

His joy on beholding the young guest at their board was surpassed only by the dejection communicated to his sensitive understanding by the dismal expression on the faces of J. Bramble and Thomas Trotter.

He broke off in the middle of a sentence, and, still grasping the hand of the guest, allowed his gaze to dart from one to the other.

"Mon dieu!" he exclaimed, swiftly altering his tone to one of the deepest concern. "What has happened? Has some one died? Don't tell me it is your grandfather, my boy. Don't tell me that the old villain has died at last and you will have to go back and step into his misguided boots. Nothing else can—"

"Worse than that," interrupted Trotter, smiling. "I've lost my situation."

M. Mirabeau heaved a sigh of relief. "Ah! My heart beats again. Still," with a vastly different sigh, "he cannot go on living for ever. The time is bound to come when you—"

An admonitory cough from Mr. Bramble, and a significant jerk of the head in the direction of the kitchen-range, which was almost completely obscured by the person of Mrs. O'Leary, caused M. Mirabeau to bring his remarks to an abrupt close.

When he was twenty-five years younger, Monsieur Mirabeau, known to every one of consequence in Paris by his true and lawful name, Count André Drouillard, as handsome and as high-bred a gentleman as there was in all France, shot and killed, with all the necessary ceremony, a prominent though bourgeoise general in the French Army, satisfactorily ending a liaison in which the Countess and the aforesaid general were the principal characters. Notwithstanding the fact that the duel had been fought in the most approved French fashion, which almost invariably (except, in case of accident) provides for a few well-scattered shots and subsequent embraces on the part of the uninjured adversaries, the general fell with a bullet through his heart.

So great was the consternation of the Republic, and so unpardonable the accuracy of the Count, that the authorities deemed it advisable to make an example of the unfortunate nobleman. He was court-martialled by the army and sentenced to be shot. On the eve of the execution he escaped and, with the aid of friends, made his way into Switzerland, where he found refuge in the home of a sequestered citizen who made antique clocks for a living. A price was put upon his head, and so relentless were the efforts to apprehend him that for months he did not dare show it outside the house of his protector.

He repaid the clockmaker with honest toil. In course of time he became an expert repairer. With the confiscation of his estates in France, he resigned himself to the inevitable. He became a man without a country. One morning the newspapers in Paris announced the death, by suicide, of the long-sought pariah. A few days later he was on his way to the United States. His widow promptly re-married and, sad to relate, from all reports lived happily ever afterwards.

The bourgeoise general, in his tomb in France, was not more completely dead to the world than Count André Drouillard; on the other hand, no livelier, sprightlier person ever lived than Pierre Mirabeau, repairer of clocks in Lexington Avenue.

And so if you will look at it in quite the proper spirit, there is but one really morbid note in the story of M. Mirabeau: the melancholy snuffing-out of the poor general,—and even that was brightened to some extent by the most sumptuous military funeral in years.

"What do you make of it?" demanded Mr. Trotter, half-an-hour later in the crowded work-shop of the clockmaker.

M. Mirabeau held Miss Emsdale's letter off at arm's length, and squinted at it with great intensity, as if actually trying to read between the lines.

"I have an opinion," said M. Mirabeau, frowning. Whereupon he rendered his deductions into words, and of his two listeners Thomas Trotter was the most dumbfounded.

"But I don't know the blooming bounder," he exclaimed,—"except by sight and reputation. And I have reason to know that Lady Jane loathes and detests him."

"Aha! There we have it! Why does she loathe and detest him?" cried M. Mirabeau. "Because, my stupid friend, he has been annoying her with his attentions. It is not an uncommon thing for rich young men to lose their heads over pretty young maids and nurses, and even governesses."

"'Gad, if I thought he was annoying her I'd—I'd—"

"There you go!" cried Mr. Bramble, nervously. "Just as she feared. She knew what she was about when she asked me to see that you did not do anything—"

"Hang it all, Bramble, I'm not *doing* anything, am I? I'm only *saying* things. Wait till I begin to do things before you preach."

"That's just it!" cried Mr. Bramble. "You invariably do things when you get that look in your eyes. I knew you long before you knew yourself. You looked like that when you were five years old and wanted to thump Bobby Morgan, who was thirteen. You—"

M. Mirabeau interrupted. He had not been following the discussion. Leaning forward, he eyed the young man keenly, even disconcertingly.

"What is back of all this? Admitting that young Mr. S.-P. is enamoured of our lovely friend, what cause have you given him for jealousy? Have you—"

"Great Scot!" exclaimed Trotter, fairly bouncing off the work-bench on which he sat with his long legs dangling. "Why,—why, if *that's* the way he feels toward her he must have had a horrible jolt the other night. Good Lord!" A low whistle followed the exclamation.

"Aha! Now we are getting at the cause. We already have the effect. Out with it," cried M. Mirabeau, eager as a boy. His fine eyes danced with excitement.

"Now that I think of it, he saw me carry her up the steps the other night after we'd all been to the Marchioness's. The night of the blizzard, you know. Oh, I say! It's worse than I thought." He looked blankly from one to the other of the two old men.

"Carried her up the steps, eh? In your good strong arms, eh? And you say '*now* that I think of it.' Bless your heart, you scalawag, you've been thinking of nothing else since it happened. Ah!" sighed M. Mirabeau, "how wonderful it must have been! The feel of her in your arms, and the breath of her on your cheek, and—Ah! It is a sad thing not to grow old. I am not growing old despite my seventy years. If I could but grow old, and deaf, and feeble, perhaps I should then be able to command the blood that thrills now with the thought of—But, alas! I shall never be so old as that! You say he witnessed this remarkable—ah—exhibition of strength on your part?" He spoke briskly again.

"The snow was a couple of feet deep, you see," explained Trotter, who had turned a bright crimson. "Dreadful night, wasn't it, Bramble?"

"I know what kind of a night it was," said the old Frenchman, delightedly. "My warmest congratulations, my friend. She is the loveliest, the noblest, the truest—"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Trotter, stiffly. "It hasn't gone as far as all that."

"It has gone farther than you think," said M. Mirabeau shrewdly. "And that is why you were discharged without—"

"By gad! The worst of it all is, she will probably get her walking papers too,—if she hasn't already got them," groaned the young man. "Don't you see what has happened? The rotter has kicked up a rumpus about that innocent,—and if I do say it,—gallant act of mine the other night. They've had her on the carpet to explain. It looks bad for her. They're the sort of people you can't explain things to. What rotten luck! She needs the money and—"

"Nothing of the kind has happened," said M. Mirabeau with conviction. "It isn't in young Mr. S.-P.'s plans to have her dismissed. That would be—ah, what

is it you say?—spilling the beans, eh? The instant she relinquishes her place in that household all hope is lost, so far as he is concerned. He is shrewd enough to realize that, my friend. You are the fly in his ointment. It is necessary to the success of his enterprise to be well rid of you. He doesn't want to lose sight of her, however. He—"

"Run me out of town, eh?" grated Trotter, his thoughts leaping back to the passage in Lady Jane's letter. "Easier said than done, he'll find."

Mr. Bramble coughed. "Are we not going it rather blindly? All this is pure speculation. The young man may not have a hand in the business at all."

"He'll discover he's put his foot in it if he tries any game on me," said Mr. Trotter.

M. Mirabeau beamed. "There is always a way to checkmate the villain in the story. You see it exemplified in every melodrama on the stage and in every shilling shocker. The hero,—and you are our hero,—puts him to rout by marrying the heroine and living happily to a hale old age. What could be more beautiful than the marriage of Lady Jane Thorne and Lord Eric Carruthers Ethelbert Temple? Mon dieu! It is—"

"Rubbish!" exclaimed Mr. Trotter, suddenly looking down at his foot, which was employed in the laudable but unnecessary act of removing a tiny shaving from a crack in the floor. "Besides," he went on an instant later, acknowledging an interval of mental consideration, "she wouldn't have me."

"It is my time to say 'rubbish,'" said the old Frenchman. "Why wouldn't she have you?"

"Because she doesn't care for me in that way, if you must know," blurted out the young man.

"Has she said so?"

"Of course not. She wouldn't be likely to volunteer the information, would she?" with fine irony.

"Then how do you know she doesn't care for you in that way?"

"Well, I—I just simply know it, that's all."

"I see. You are the smartest man of all time if you know a woman's heart without probing into it, or her mind without tricking it. She permitted you to carry her up the steps, didn't she?"

"She had to," said Trotter forcibly. "That doesn't prove anything. And what's more, she objected to being carried."

"Um! What did she say?"

"Said she didn't in the least mind getting her feet wet. She'd have her boots off as soon as she got into the house."

"Is that all?"

"She said she was awfully heavy, and—Oh, there is no use talking to me. I know how to take a hint. She just didn't want me to—er—carry her, that's the long and the short of it."

"Did she struggle violently?"

"What?"

"You heard me. Did she?"

"Certainly not. She gave in when I insisted. What else could she do?" He whirled suddenly upon Mr. Bramble. "What are you grinning about, Bramby?"

"Who's grinning?" demanded Mr. Bramble indignantly, after the lapse of thirty or forty seconds.

"You *were*, confound you. I don't see anything to laugh at in—"

"My advice to you," broke in M. Mirabeau, still detached, "is to ask her."

"Ask her? Ask her what?"

"To marry you. As I was saying—"

"My God!" gasped Trotter.

"That is my advice also," put in Mr. Bramble, fumbling with his glasses and trying to suppress a smile,—for fear it would be misinterpreted. "I can't think of anything more admirable than the union of the Temple and Wexham families in —"

"But, good Lord," cried Trotter, "even if she'd have me, how on earth could I take care of her on a chauffeur's pay? And I'm not getting that now. I wish to call your attention to the fact that your little hero has less than fifty pounds,—a good deal less than fifty,—laid by for a rainy day."

"I've known a great many people who were married on rainy days," said M. Mirabeau brightly, "and nothing unlucky came of it."

"Moreover, when your grandfather passes away," urged Mr. Bramble, "you will be a very rich man,—provided, of course, he doesn't remain obstinate and leave his money to some one else. In any event, you would come in for sufficient to—"

"You forget," began Trotter, gravely and with a dignity that chilled the eager old man, "that I will not go back to England, nor will I claim anything that is *in* England, until a certain injustice is rectified and I am set straight in the eyes of the unbelievers."

Mr. Bramble cleared his throat. "Time will clear up everything, my lad. God knows you never did the—"

"God knows it all right enough, but God isn't a member of the Brunswick Club, and His voice is never heard there in counsel. He may lend a helping hand to those who are trying to clear my name, because they believe in me, but the whole business is beginning to look pretty dark to me."

"Ahem! What does Miss—ah, Lady Jane think about the—ah, unfortunate affair?" stammered Mr. Bramble.

"She doesn't believe a damn' word of it," exploded Trotter, his face lighting up.

"Good!" cried M. Mirabeau. "Proof that she pities you, and what more could you ask for a beginning? She believes you were unjustly accused of cheating at cards, that there was a plot to ruin you and to drive you out of the Army, and that

your grandfather ought to be hung to a lamp post for believing what she doesn't believe. Good! Now we are on solid, substantial ground. What time is it, Bramble?"

Mr. Bramble looked at a half-dozen clocks in succession.

"I'm blessed if I know," he said. "They range from ten o'clock to half-past six."

"Just three hours and twenty-two minutes to wait," said Thomas Trotter.

CHAPTER VI

THE UNFAILING MEMORY

PRINCE WALDEMAR DE BOSKY, confronted by the prospect of continued cold weather, decided to make an appeal to Mrs. Moses Jacobs, sometime Princess Mariana di Pavesi. She had his overcoat, the precious one with the fur collar and the leather lining,—the one, indeed, that the friendly safe-blower who lodged across the hall from him had left behind at the outset of a journey up-state.

"More than likely," said the safe-blower, who was not only surprised but gratified when the "little dago" came to visit him in the Tombs, "more than likely I sha'n't be needin' an overcoat for the next twelve or fourteen year, kid, so you ain't robbin' me,—no, sir, not a bit of it. I make you a present of it, with my compliments. Winter is comin' on an' I can't seem to think of anybody it would fit better'n it does you. You don't need to mention as havin' received it from me. The feller who owned it before I did might accidentally hear of it and—but I guess it ain't likely, come to think of it. To the best of my recollection, he lives 'way out West somewhere,—Toledo, I think, or maybe Omaha,—and he's probably got a new one by this time. Much obliged fer droppin' in here to see me, kid. So long,—and cut it out. Don't try to come any of that thanks guff on me. You might as well be usin' that coat as the moths. Besides, I owe you something for storage, don't forget that. I was in such a hurry the last time I left town I didn't have a chance to explain. You didn't know it then,—and I guess if you had knowed it you wouldn't have been so nice about lookin' out for my coat durin' the summer,—but I was makin' a mighty quick getaway. Thanks fer stoppin' in to remind me I left the coat in your room that night. I clean forgot it, I was in such a hurry. But lemme tell you one thing, kid, I'll never ferget the way you c'n make that fiddle talk. I don't know as you'd 'a' played fer me as you used to once in awhile if you'd knowed I was what I am, but it makes no difference now. I just loved hearin' you play. I used to have a hard time holdin' in the tears. And say, kid, keep straight. Keep on fiddlin'! So long! I may see you along about 1926 or 8. And say, you needn't be ashamed to wear that coat. I didn't steal it. It was a clean case of mistaken identity, if there ever was one. It happened in a restaurant." He winked.

And that is how the little violinist came to be the possessor of an overcoat with a sable collar and a soft leather lining.

He needed it now, not only when he ventured upon the chilly streets but when he remained indoors. In truth, he found it much warmer walking the streets than sitting in his fireless room, or even in going to bed.

It was a far cry from the dapper, dreamy-eyed courtier who kissed the chapped knuckles of the Princess Mariana on Wednesday night to the shrinking, pinched individual who threaded his way on Friday through the cramped lanes that led to the rear of the pawn-shop presided over by Mrs. Jacobs.

And an incredibly vast gulf lay between the Princess Mariana and the female Shylock who peered at him over a glass show-case filled with material pledges in the shape of watches, chains, rings, bracelets, and other gaudy tributes left by a shifting constituency.

"Well?" she demanded, fixing him with a cold, offensive stare. "What do you want?"

He turned down the collar of his thin coat, and straightened his slight figure in response to this unfriendly greeting.

"I came to see if you would allow me to take my overcoat for a few days,—until this cold spell is over,—with the understanding—"

"Nothing doing," said she curtly. "Six dollars due on it."

"But I have not the six dollars, madam. Surely you may trust me."

"Why didn't you bring your fiddle along? You could leave it in place of the coat. Go and get it and I'll see what I can do."

"I am to play tonight at the house of a Mr. Carpenter. He has heard of me through our friend Mr. Trotter, his chauffeur. You know Mr. Trotter, of course."

"Sure I know him, and I don't like him. He insulted me once."

"Ah, but you do not understand him, madam. He is an Englishman and he may have tried to be facetious or even pleasant in the way the English—"

"Say, don't you suppose I know when I'm insulted? When a cheap guy like that comes in here with a customer of mine and tells me I'm so damned mean they won't even let me into hell when I die,—well, if you don't call that an insult, I'd like to know what it is. Don't talk to me about that bum!"

"Is *that* all he said?" involuntarily fell from the lips of the violinist, as if, to his way of thinking, Mr. Trotter's remark was an out-and-out compliment. "Surely you have no desire to go to hell when you die."

"No, I haven't, but I don't want anybody coming in here telling me to my face that there'd be a revolution down there if I *tried* to get in. I've got as much right there as anybody, I'd have him know. Cough up six or get out. That's all I've got to say to you, my little man."

"It is freezing cold in my room. I—"

"Don't blame me for that. I don't make the weather. And say, I'm busy. Cough up or—clear out."

"You will not let me have it for a few days if I—"

"Say, do you think I'm in business for my health? I haven't that much use—" she snapped her fingers—"for a fiddler anyhow. It's not a man's job. That's what I think of long-haired guys like—Beat it! I'm busy."

With head erect the little violinist turned away. He was half way to the door when she called out to him.

"Hey! Come back here! Now, see here, you little squirt, you needn't go turning up your nose at me and acting like that. I've got the goods on you and a lot more of those rummies up there. I looked 'em over the other night and I said to myself, says I: 'Gee whiz, couldn't I start something if I let out what I know about this gang!' Talk about earthquakes! They'd—Here! What are you doing? Get out from behind this counter! I'll call a cop if you—"

The pallid, impassioned face of Prince Waldemar de Bosky was close to hers; his dark eyes were blazing not a foot from her nose.

"If I thought you were that kind of a snake I'd kill you," he said quietly, levelly.

"Are—are you threatening me?" sputtered Mrs. Jacobs, trying in vain to look away from those compelling eyes. She could not believe her senses.

"No. I am merely telling you what I would do if you were that kind of a snake."

"See here, don't you get gay! Don't you forget who you are addressing, young man. I am—"

"I am addressing a second-hand junk dealer, madam. You are at home now, not sitting in the big chair up at—at—you know where. Please bear that in mind."

"I'll call some one from out front and have you chucked into—"

"Do you even *think* of violating the confidence we repose in you?" he demanded. "The thought must have been in your mind or you would not have uttered that remark a moment ago. You are one of us, and we've treated you as a —a queen. I want to know just where you stand, Mrs. Jacobs."

"You can't come in here and bawl me out like this, you little shrimp! I'll—"

"Keep still! Now, listen to me. If I should go to our friends and repeat what you have just said, you would never see the inside of that room again. You would never have the opportunity to exchange a word with a single person you have met there. You would be stripped of the last vestige of glory that clings to you. Oh, you may sneer! But down in your heart you love that bit of glory,—and you would curse yourself if you lost it."

"It's—it's all poppy-cock, the whole silly business," she blurted out. But it was not anger that caused her voice to tremble.

"You know better than that," said he, coldly.

"I don't care a rap about all that foolishness up there. It makes me sick," she muttered.

"You may lie to me but you cannot lie to yourself, madam. Under that filthy, greasy skin of yours runs the blood that will not be denied. Pawn-broker, miser, —whatever you may be to the world, to yourself you are a princess royal. God

knows we all despise you. You have not a friend among us. But we can no more overlook the fact that you are a princess of the blood than we can ignore the light of day. The blood that is in you demands its tribute. You have no control over the mysterious spark that fires your blood. It burns in spite of all you may do to quench it. It is there to stay. We despise you, even as you would despise us. Am I to carry your words to those who exalt you despite your calling, despite your meanness, despite all that is base and sordid in this rotten business of yours? Am I to let them know that you are the only—the only—what is the name of the animal I've heard Trotter mention?—ah, I have it,—the only skunk in our precious little circle? Tell me, madam, are you a skunk?"

Her face was brick red; she was having difficulty with her breathing. The pale, white face of the little musician dazzled her in a most inexplicable way. Never before had she felt just like this.

"Am I a—what?" she gasped, her eyes popping.

"It is an animal that has an odour which—"

"Good God, you don't have to tell me what it is," she cried, but in suppressed tones. Her gaze swept the rear part of the shop. "It's a good thing for you, young fellow, that nobody heard you call me that name. Thank the good Lord, it isn't a busy day here. If anybody *had* heard you, I'd have you skinned alive."

"A profitless undertaking," he said, smiling without mirth, "but quite in your line, if reports are true. You are an expert at skinning people, alive or dead. But we are digressing. Are you going to turn against us?"

"I haven't said I was going to, have I?"

"Not in so many words."

"Well, then, what's all the fuss about? You come in here and shoot off your mouth as if—And say, who are you, anyhow? Tell me that! No, wait a minute. Don't tell me. I'll tell myself. When a man is kicked out of his own family because he'd sooner play a fiddle than carry a sword, I don't think he's got any right to come blatting to me about—"

"The cruelest monster the world has ever known, madam," he interrupted, stiffening, "fiddled while Rome was burning. Fiddlers are not always gentle. You

may not have heard of one very small and unimportant incident in my own life. It was I who fiddled,—badly, I must confess,—while the Opera House in Poltna was burning. A panic was averted. Not a life was lost. And when it was all over some one remembered the fiddler who remained upon the stage and finished the aria he was playing when the cry of fire went up from the audience. Brave men,—far braver men than he,—rushed back through the smoke and found him lying at the footlights, unconscious. But why waste words? Good morning, madam. I shall not trouble you again about the overcoat. Be good enough to remember that I have kissed your hand only because you are a princess and not because you have lent me five dollars on the wretched thing."

The angry light in his brown eyes gave way to the dreamy look once more. He bowed stiffly and edged his way out from behind the counter into the clogged area that lay between him and the distant doorway. Towering above him on all sides were heaps of nondescript objects, classified under the generic name of furniture. The proprietress of this sordid, ill-smelling crib stared after him as he strode away, and into her eyes there stole a look of apprehension.

She followed him to the front door, overtaking him as his hand was on the latch.

"Hold on," she said, nervously glancing at the shifty-eyed, cringing assistant who toiled not in vain,—no one ever toiled in vain in the establishment of M. Jacobs, Inc.,—behind a clump of chairs;—"hold on a second. I don't want you to say a word to—to them about—about all this. You are right, de Bosky. I—I have not lost all that once was mine. You understand, don't you?"

He smiled. "Perfectly. You can never lose it, no matter how low you may sink."

"Well," she went on, hesitatingly, "suppose we forget it."

He eyed her for a moment in silence, shaking his head reflectively. "It is most astonishing," he said at last.

"What's astonishing?" she demanded sharply.

"I was merely thinking of your perfect, your exquisite French, madam!"

"French? Are you nutty? I've been talkin' to you in English all the time."

He nodded his head slowly. "Perhaps that is why your French is so astonishing," he said, and let it go at that.

"Look at me," she exclaimed, suddenly breaking into French as she spread out her thick arms and surveyed with disgust as much of her ample person as came within range of an obstructed vision, "just look at me. No one on earth would take *me* for a princess, would he? And yet that is just what I am. I *think* of myself as a princess, and always will, de Bosky. I think of myself,—of my most unlovely, unregal self,—as the superior of every other woman who treads the streets of New York, all of these base born women. I cannot help it. I cannot think of them as equals, not even the richest and the most arrogant of them. You say it is the blood, but you are wrong. Some of these women have a strain of royal blood in them—a far-off, remote strain, of course,—but they do not *know* it. That's the point, my friend. It is the *knowing* that makes us what we are. It isn't the blood itself. If we were deprived of the power to *think*, we could have the blood of every royal family in Europe in our veins, and that is all the good it would do us. We *think* we are nobler, better than all the rest of creation, and we would keep on thinking it if we slept in the gutter and begged for a crust of bread. And the proof of all this is to be found in the fact that the rest of creation will not allow us to forget. They think as we do, in spite of themselves, and there you have the secret of the supremacy we feel, in spite of everything."

Her brilliant, black eyes were flashing with something more than excitement. The joy, the realization of power glowed in their depths, welling up from fires that would never die. Waldemar de Bosky nodded his head in the most matter-of-fact way. He was not enthralled. All this was very simple and quite undebatable to him.

"I take it, therefore, that you retract all that you said about its being poppycock," he said, turning up his coat collar and fastening it close to his throat with a long and formidable looking safety pin.

"It may be poppycock," she said, "but we can't help liking it—not to save our lives."

"And I shall not have to kill you as if you were a snake, eh?"

"Not on your life," said Mrs. Moses Jacobs in English, opening the door for him.

He passed out into the cold and windy street and she went back to her dingy nook at the end of the store, pausing on the way to inform an assistant that she was not to be disturbed, no matter who came in to see her.

While she sat behind her glittering show-case and gazed pensively at the ceiling of her ugly storehouse, Waldemar de Bosky went shivering through the streets to his cold little backroom many blocks away. While she was for the moment living in the dim but unforgotten past, a kindly memory leading her out of the maze of other people's poverty and her own avarice into broad marble halls and vaulted rooms, he was thinking only of the bitter present with its foodless noon and of pockets that were empty. While maudlin tears ran down her oily cheeks and spilled aimlessly upon a greasy sweater with the spur of memory behind them, tears wrought by the sharp winds of the street glistened in his squinting eyes.

Memory carried him back no farther than the week before and he was distressed only by its exceeding frailty. He could not, for the life of him, remember the address of J. Bramble, bookseller,—a most exasperating lapse in view of the fact that J. Bramble himself had urged him to come up some evening soon and have dinner with him, and to bring his Stradivarius along if he didn't mind. Mind? Why, he would have played his heart out for a good square meal. The more he tried to remember J. Bramble's address, the less he thought of the overcoat with the fur collar and the soft leather lining. He couldn't eat that, you know.

In his bleak little room in the hall of the whistling winds, he took from its case with cold-benumbed fingers the cherished violin. Presently, as he played, the shivering flesh of him grew warm with the heat of an inward fire; the stiff, red fingers became limp and pliable; the misty eyes grew bright and feverish. Fire,—the fires of love and genius and hope combined,—burnt away the chill of despair; he was as warm as toast!

And hours after the foodless noon had passed, he put the treasure back into its case and wiped the sweat from his marble brow. Something flashed across his mind. He shouted aloud as he caught at what the flash of memory revealed.

"Lexington Avenue! Three hundred and something, Lexington Avenue! J. Bramble, bookseller! Ha! Come! Come! Let us be off!"

He spoke to the violin as if it were a living companion. Grabbing up his hat

and mittens, he dashed out of the room and went clattering down the hall with the black leather case clasped tightly under his arm.

It was a long, long walk to three hundred and something Lexington Avenue, but in due time he arrived there and read the sign above the door. Ah, what a great thing it is to have a good, unfailing memory!

And so it came to pass that Prince Waldemar de Bosky and Lady Jane Thorne met at the door of J. Bramble, bookseller, at five of the clock, and entered the shop together.

CHAPTER VII

THE FOUNDATION OF THE PLOT

MR. BRAMBLE had never been quite able to resign himself to a definitely impersonal attitude toward Lord Eric Temple. He seemed to cling, despite himself, to a privilege long since outlawed by time and circumstance and the inevitable outgrowing of knickerbockers by the aforesaid Lord Eric. Back in the good old days it had been his pleasant,—and sometimes unpleasant,—duty to direct a very small Eric in matters not merely educational but of deportment as well. In short, Eric, at the age of five, fell into the capable, kindly and more or less resolute hands of a well-recommended tutor, and that tutor was no other than J. Bramble.

At the age of twelve, the boy went off to school in a little high hat and an Eton suit, and J. Bramble was at once, you might say, out of the frying pan into the fire. In other words, he was promoted by his lordship, the boy's grandfather, to the honourable though somewhat onerous positions of secretary, librarian and cataloguer, all in one. He had been able to teach Eric a great many things he didn't know, but there was nothing he could impart to his lordship.

That irascible old gentleman knew everything. After thrice informing his lordship that Sir Walter Scott was the author of *Guy Mannering*, and being thrice informed that he was nothing of the sort, the desolate Mr. Bramble realized that he was no longer a tutor,—and that he ought to be rather thankful for it. It exasperated him considerably, however, to have the authorship of *Guy Mannering* arbitrarily ascribed to three different writers, on three separate occasions, when any schoolboy could have told the old gentleman that Fielding and Sterne and Addison had no more to do with the book than William Shakespeare himself. His lordship maintained that no one could tell *him* anything about Scott; he had him on his shelves and he had read him from A to Izzard. And he was rather severe with Mr. Bramble for accepting a position as librarian when he didn't know any more than that about books.

And from this you may be able to derive some sort of an opinion concerning the cantankerous, bull-headed old party (Bramble's appellation behind the hand)

who ruled Fenlew Hall, the place where Tom Trotter was reared and afterwards disowned.

Also you may be able to account in a measure for Mr. J. Bramble's attitude toward the tall young man, an attitude brought on no doubt by the revival, or more properly speaking the survival, of an authority exercised with rare futility but great satisfaction at a time when Eric was being trained in the way he should go. If at times Mr. Bramble appears to be mildly dictatorial, or gently critical, or sadly reproachful, you will understand that it is habit with him, and not the captiousness of old age. It was his custom to shake his head reprovingly, or to frown in a pained sort of way, or to purse his lips, or even to verbally take Mr. Trotter to task when that young man deviated,—not always accidentally,—from certain rules of deportment laid down for him to follow in his earliest efforts to be a "little gentleman."

For example, when the two of them, after a rather impatient half-hour, observed Miss Emsdale step down from the trolley car at the corner above and head for the doorway through which they were peering, Mr. Bramble peremptorily said to Mr. Trotter:

"Go and brush your hair. You will find a brush at the back of the shop. Look sharp, now. She will be here in a jiffy."

And you will perhaps understand why Mr. Trotter paid absolutely no attention to him.

Miss Emsdale and the little violinist came in together. The latter's teeth were chattering, his cheeks were blue with the cold.

"God bless my soul!" said Mr. Bramble, blinking at de Bosky. Here was an unforeseen complication.

Miss Emsdale was resourceful. "I stopped in to inquire, Mr. Bramble,—this is Mr. Bramble, isn't it?—if you have a copy of—"

"Please close the door, Trotter, there's a good fellow," interrupted Mr. Bramble, frowning significantly at the young man.

"It is closed," said Mr. Trotter, tactlessly. He was looking intently, inquiringly into the blue eyes of Miss Emsdale.

"I closed it as I came in," chattered de Bosky.

"Oh, did you?" said Mr. Bramble. "People always leave it open. I am so in the habit of having people leave the door open that I never notice when they close it. I—ahem! Step right this way, please, Miss Ems—ahem! I think we have just the book you want."

"I am not in any haste, Mr. Bramble," said she, regarding de Bosky with pitying eyes. "Let us all go back to the stove and—and—" She hesitated, biting her lip. The poor chap undoubtedly was sensitive. They always are.

"Good!" said Mr. Bramble eagerly. "And we'll have some tea. Bless my soul, how fortunate! I always have it at five o'clock. Trotter and I were just on the point of—so glad you happened in just at the right moment, Miss Emsdale. Ahem! And you too, de Bosky. Most extraordinary. You may leave your pipe on that shelf, Trotter. It smells dreadfully. No, no,—I wouldn't even put it in my pocket if I were you. Er—ahem! You have met Mr. Trotter, haven't you, Miss Emsdale?"

"You poor old boob," said Trotter, laying his arm over Bramble's shoulder in the most affectionate way. "Isn't he a boob, Miss Emsdale?"

"Not at all," said she severely. "He is a dear."

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Bramble, doing as well as could be expected. He blessed it again before he could catch himself up.

"Sit here by the stove, Mr. de Bosky," said Miss Emsdale, a moment later. "Just as close as you can get to it."

"I have but a moment to stay," said de Bosky, a wistful look in his dark eyes.

"You'll have tea, de Bosky," said Mr. Bramble firmly. "Is the water boiling, Trotter?"

A few minutes later, warmed by the cup of tea and a second slice of toast, de Bosky turned to Trotter.

"Thanks again, my dear fellow, for speaking to your employer about my playing. This little affair tonight may be the beginning of an era of good fortune

for me. I shall never forget your interest—"

"Oh, that's off," said Trotter carelessly.

"Off? You mean?" cried de Bosky.

"I'm fired, and he has gone to Atlantic City for the week-end."

"He—he isn't going to have his party in the private dining-room at,—you said it was to be a private dining-room, didn't you, with a few choice spirits—"

"He has gone to Atlantic City with a few choice spirits," said Trotter, and then stared hard at the musician's face. "Oh, by Jove! I'm sorry," he cried, struck by the look of dismay, almost of desperation, in de Bosky's eyes. "I didn't realize it meant so much to—"

"It is really of no consequence," said de Bosky, lifting his chin once more and straightening his back. The tea-cup rattled ominously in the saucer he was clutching with tense fingers.

"Never mind," said Mr. Bramble, anticipating a crash and inspired by the kindliest of motives; "between us we've smashed half a dozen of them, so don't feel the least bit uncomfortable if you *do* drop—"

"What are you talking about, Bramby?" demanded Trotter, scowling at the unfortunate bookseller. "Have some more tea, de Bosky. Hand up your cup. Little hot water, eh?"

Mr. Bramble was perspiring. Any one with half an eye could see that it *was* of consequence to de Bosky. The old bookseller's heart was very tender.

"Don't drink too much of it," he warned, his face suddenly beaming. "You'll spoil your appetite for dinner." To the others: "Mr. de Bosky honours my humble board with his presence this evening. The finest porterhouse steak in New York —Eh, what?"

"It is I," came a crisp voice from the bottom of the narrow stairway that led up to the living-quarters above. Monsieur Mirabeau, his whiskers neatly brushed and twisted to a point, his velvet lounging jacket adorned with a smart little boutonnière, his shoes polished till they glistened, approached the circle and,

bending his gaunt frame with gallant disdain for the crick in his back, kissed the hand of the young lady. "I observed your approach, my dear Miss Emsdale. We have been expecting you for ages. Indeed, it has been the longest afternoon that any of us has ever experienced."

Mr. Bramble frowned. "Ahem!" he coughed.

"I am sorry if I have intruded," began de Bosky, starting to arise.

"Sit still," said Thomas Trotter. He glanced at Miss Emsdale. "You're not in the way, old chap."

"You mentioned a book, Miss Emsdale," murmured Mr. Bramble. "When you came in, you'll remember."

She looked searchingly into Trotter's eyes, and finding her answer there, remarked:

"Ample time for that, Mr. Bramble. Mr. de Bosky is my good friend. And as for dear M. Mirabeau,—ah, what shall I say of him?" She smiled divinely upon the grey old Frenchman.

"I commend your modesty," said M. Mirabeau. "It prevents your saying what every one knows,—that I am your adorer!"

Tom Trotter was pacing the floor. He stopped in front of her, a scowl on his handsome face.

"Now, tell us just what the infernal dog said to you," he said.

She started. "You—you have already heard something?" she cried, wonderingly.

"Ah, what did I tell you?" cried M. Mirabeau triumphantly, glancing first at Trotter and then at Bramble. "He *is* in love with her, and this is what comes of it. He resorts to—"

"Is this magic?" she exclaimed.

"Not a bit of it," said Trotter. "We've been putting two and two together, the three of us. Begin at the beginning," he went on, encouragingly. "Don't hold back

a syllable of it."

"You must promise to be governed by my advice," she warned him. "You must be careful,—oh, so very careful."

"He will be good at any rate," said Mr. Bramble, fixing the young man with a look. Trotter's face went crimson.

"Ahem!" came guardedly from M. Mirabeau. "Proceed, my dear. We are most impatient."

The old Frenchman's deductions were not far from right. Young Mr. Smith-Parvis, unaccustomed to opposition and believing himself to be entitled to everything he set his heart on having, being by nature predatory, sustained an incredible shock when the pretty and desirable governess failed utterly to come up to expectations. Not only did she fail to come up to expectations but she took the wind completely out of his sails, leaving him adrift in a void so strange and unusual that it was hours before he got his bearings again. Some of the things she said to him got under a skin so thick and unsensitive that nothing had ever been sharp enough to penetrate it before.

The smartting of the pain from these surprising jabs at his egotism put him into a state of fury that knew no bounds. He went so far as to accuse her of deliberately trying to be a lady,—a most ridiculous assumption that didn't fool him for an instant. She couldn't come that sort of thing with him! The sooner she got off her high-horse the better off she'd be. It had never entered the head of Smith-Parvis Jr. that a wage-earning woman could be a lady, any more than a wage-earning man could be a gentleman.

The spirited encounter took place on the afternoon following her midnight adventure with Thomas Trotter. Stuyvesant lay in wait for her when she went out at five o'clock for her daily walk in the Park. Overtaking her in one of the narrow, remote little paths, he suggested that they cross over to Bustanoby's and have tea and a bite of something sweet. He was quite out of breath. She had given him a long chase, this long-limbed girl with her free English stride.

"It's a nice quiet place," he said, "and we won't see a soul we know."

Primed by assurance, he had the hardihood to grasp her arm with a sort of possessive familiarity. Whereupon, according to the narrator, he sustained his

first disheartening shock. She jerked her arm away and faced him with blazing eyes.

"Don't do that!" she said. "What do you mean by following me like this?"

"Oh, come now," he exclaimed blankly; "don't be so damned uppish. I didn't sleep a wink last night, thinking about you. You—"

"Nor did I sleep a wink, Mr. Smith-Parvis, thinking about you," she retorted, looking straight into his eyes. "I am afraid you don't know me as well as you think you do. Will you be good enough to permit me to continue my walk unmolested?"

He laughed in her face. "Out here to meet the pretty chauffeur, are you? I thought so. Well, I'll stick around and make the crowd. Is he likely to pop up out of the bushes and try to bite me, my dear? Better give him the signal to lay low, unless you want to see him nicely booted."

("My God!" fell from Thomas Trotter's compressed lips.)

"Then I made a grievous mistake," she explained to the quartette. "It is all my fault, Mr. Trotter. I brought disaster upon you when I only intended to sound your praises. I told him that nothing could suit me better than to have you pop up out of the bushes, just for the pleasure it would give me to see him run for home as fast as he could go. It made him furious."

Smith-Parvis Jr. proceeded to give her "what for," to use his own words. In sheer amazement, she listened to his vile insinuations. She was speechless.

"And here am I," he had said, toward the end of the indictment, "a gentleman, born and bred, offering you what this scurvy bounder cannot possibly give you, and you pretend to turn up your nose at me. I am gentleman enough to overlook all that has transpired between you and that loafer, and I am gentleman enough to keep my mouth shut at home, where a word from me would pack you off in two seconds. And I'd like to see you get another fat job in New York after that. You ought to be jolly grateful to me."

"If I am the sort of person you say I am," she had replied, trembling with fury, "how can you justify your conscience in letting me remain for a second longer in charge of your little sisters?"

"What the devil do I care about them? I'm only thinking of you. I'm mad about you, can't you understand? And I'd like to know what conscience has to do with *that*."

Then he had coolly, deliberately, announced his plan of action to her.

"You are to stay on at the house as long as you like, getting your nice little pay check every month, and something from me besides. Ah, I'm no piker! Leave it all to me. As for this friend of yours, he has to go. He'll be out of a job tomorrow. I know Carpenter. He will do anything I ask. He'll have to, confound him. I've got him where he can't even squeak. And what's more, if this Trotter is not out of New York inside of three days, I'll land him in jail. Oh, don't think I can't do it, my dear. There's a way to get these renegade foreigners,—every one of 'em,—so you'd better keep clear of him if you don't want to be mixed up in the business. I am doing all this for your own good. Some day you'll thank me. You are the first girl I've ever really loved, and—I—I just can't stand by and let you go to the devil with my eyes shut. I am going to save you, whether you like it or not. I am going to do the right thing by you, and you will never regret chucking this rotter for me. We will have to be a little careful at home, that's all. It would never do to let the old folks see that I am more than ordinarily interested in you, or you in me. Once, when I was a good deal younger and didn't have much sense, I spoiled a—but you wouldn't care to hear about it."

She declared to them that she would never forget the significant grin he permitted himself in addition to the wink.

"The dog!" grated Thomas Trotter, his knuckles white.

M. Mirabeau straightened himself to his full height,—and a fine figure of a man was he!

"Mr. Trotter," he said, with grave dignity, "it will afford me the greatest pleasure and honour to represent you in this crisis. Pray command me. No doubt the scoundrel will refuse to meet you, but at any rate a challenge may be—"

Miss Emsdale broke in quickly. "Don't,—for heaven's sake, dear M. Mirabeau,—don't put such notions into his head! It is bad enough as it is. I beg of you—"

"Besides," said Mr. Bramble, "one doesn't fight duels in this country, any

more than one does in England. It's quite against the law."

"I sha'n't need any one to represent me when it comes to punching his head," said Mr. Trotter.

"It's against the law, strictly speaking, to punch a person's head," began Mr. Bramble nervously.

"But it's not against the law, confound you, Bramby, to provide a legal excuse for going to jail, is it? He says he's going to put me there. Well, I intend to make it legal and—"

"Oh, goodness!" cried Miss Emsdale, in dismay.

"—And I'm not going to jail for nothing, you can stake your life on that."

"Do you think, Mr. Trotter, that it will add to my happiness if you are lodged in jail on my account?" said she. "Haven't I done you sufficient injury—"

"Now, you are not to talk like that," he interrupted, reddening.

"But I *shall* talk like that," she said firmly. "I have not come here to ask you to take up my battles for me but to warn you of danger. Please do not interrupt me. I know you would enjoy it, and all that sort of thing, but it isn't to be considered. Hear me out."

She went on with her story. Young Mr. Smith-Parvis, still contending that he was a gentleman and a friend as well as an abject adorer, made it very plain to her that he would stand no foolishness. He told her precisely what he would do unless she eased up a bit and acted like a good, sensible girl. He would have her dismissed without character and he would see to it that no respectable house would be open to her after she left the service of the Smith-Parvises.

"But couldn't you put the true situation before his parents and tell 'em what sort of a rotten bounder he is?" demanded Trotter.

"You do not know them, Mr. Trotter," she said forlornly.

"And they'd kick you out without giving you a chance to prove to them that he is a filthy liar and—"

"Just as Mr. Carpenter kicked you out," she said.

"By gad, I—I wouldn't stay in their house another day if I were you," he exclaimed wrathfully. "I'd quit so quickly they wouldn't have time to—"

"And then what?" she asked bitterly. "Am I so rich and independent as all that? You forget that I must have a 'character,' Mr. Trotter. That, you see, would be denied me. I could not obtain employment. Even Mrs. Sparflight would be powerless to help me after the character they would give me."

"But, good Lord, you—you're not going to stay on in the house with that da — that nasty brute, are you?" he cried, aghast.

"I must have time to think, Mr. Trotter," she said quietly. "Now, don't say anything more,—please! I shall take good care of myself, never fear. My woes are small compared to yours, I am afraid. The next morning after our little scene in the park, he came down to breakfast, smiling and triumphant. He said he had news for me. Mr. Carpenter was to dismiss you that morning, but had agreed not to prefer charges against you,—at least, not for the present." She paused to moisten her lips. There was a harassed look in her eyes.

"Charges?" said Trotter, after a moment. The other men leaned forward, fresh interest in their faces.

"Did you say charges, Miss Emsdale?" asked Mr. Bramble, putting his hand to his ear.

"He told me that Mr. Carpenter was at first determined to turn you over to the police, but that he had begged him to give you a chance. He—he says that Mr. Carpenter has had a private detective watching you for a fortnight, and—and—oh, I cannot say it!"

"Go on," said Trotter harshly; "say it!"

"Well, of course, I know and you understand it is simply part of his outrageous plan, but he says your late employer has positive proof that you took —that you took some marked bank notes out of his overcoat pocket a few days ago. He had been missing money and had provided himself with marked—"

Trotter leaped to his feet with a cry of rage.

"Sit down!" commanded Mr. Bramble. "Sit down! Where are you going?"

"Great God! Do you suppose I can sit still and let him get away with anything like that?" roared Trotter. "I'm going to jam those words down Carpenter's craven throat. I'm—"

"You forget he is in Atlantic City," said de Bosky, as if suddenly coming out of a dream.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Trotter, very white in the face.

There were tears in Miss Emsdale's eyes. "They—he means to drive you out of town," she murmured brokenly.

"Fine chance of that!" cried Trotter violently.

"Let us be calm," said M. Mirabeau, gently taking the young man's arm and leading him back to the box on which he had been sitting. "You must not play into their hands, and that is what you would be doing if you went to him in a rage. As long as you remain passive, nothing will come of all this. If you show your teeth, they will stop at nothing. Take my word for it, Trotter, before many hours have passed you will be interviewed by a detective,—a genuine detective, by the way, for some of them can be hired to do anything, my boy,—and you will be given your choice of going to prison or to some far distant city. You—"

"But how in thunder is he going to prove that I took any marked bills from him? You've got to prove those things, you know. The courts would not—"

"Just a moment! Did he pay you by check or with bank notes this morning?"

"He gave me a check for thirty dollars, and three ten-dollar bills and a five." ·

"Have you them on your person at present?"

"Not all of them. I have—wait a second! We'll see." He fumbled in his pocket for the bill-folder.

"What did you do with the rest?"

"Paid my landlady for—good Lord! I see what you mean! He paid me with marked bills! The—the damned scoundrel!"

"He not only did that, my boy, but he put a man on your trail to recover them as fast as you disposed of them," said M. Mirabeau calmly.

CHAPTER VIII

LADY JANE GOES ABOUT IT PROMPTLY

A FEW minutes before six o'clock that same afternoon, Mr. James Cricklewick, senior member of the firm of Cricklewick, Stackable & Co., linen merchants, got up from his desk in the crowded little compartment labelled "Private," and peered out of the second-floor window into the busy street below. Thousands of people were scurrying along the pavements in the direction of the brilliantly lighted Fifth Avenue, a few rods away; vague, dusky, unrecognizable forms in the darkness that comes so early and so abruptly to the cross-town streets at the end of a young March day. The middle of the street presented a serried line of snow heaps, piled up by the shovellers the day before,—symmetrical little mountains that formed an impassable range over which no chauffeur had the temerity to bolt in his senseless ambition to pass the car ahead.

Mr. James Cricklewick sighed. He knew from past experience that the Rock of Ages was but little more enduring than the snow-capped range in front of him. Time and a persistent sun inevitably would do the work of man, but in the meantime Mr. Cricklewick's wagons and trucks were a day and a half behind with deliveries, and that was worth sighing about. As he stood looking down the street, he sighed again. For more than forty years Mr. Cricklewick had made constant use of the phrase: "It's always something." If there was no one to say it to, he satisfied himself by condensing the lament into a strictly personal sigh.

He first resorted to the remark far back in the days when he was in the service of the Marquis of Camelford. If it wasn't one thing that was going wrong it was another; in any event it was "always something."

Prosperity and environment had not succeeded in bringing him to the point where he could snap his fingers and lightly say in the face of annoyances: "It's really nothing."

The fact that he was, after twenty-five years of ceaseless climbing, at the head of the well-known and thoroughly responsible house of Cricklewick, Stackable & Co., Linen Merchants and Drapers,—(he insisted on attaching the

London word, not through sentiment, but for the sake of isolation),—operated not at all in bringing about a becalmed state of mind. Habitually he was disturbed by little things, which should not be in the least surprising when one stops to think of the multitudinous annoyances he must have experienced while managing the staff of under-servants in the extensive establishment of the late Marquis of Camelford.

He had never quite outgrown the temperament which makes for a good and dependable butler,—and that, in a way, accounts for the contention that "it is always something," and also for the excellent credit of the house he headed. Mr. Cricklewick made no effort to deceive himself. He occasionally deceived his wife in a mild and innocuous fashion by secretly reverting to form, but not for an instant did he deceive himself. He was a butler and he always would be a butler, despite the fact that the business and a certain section of the social world looked upon him as a very fine type of English gentleman, with a crest in his shop window and a popularly accepted record of having enjoyed a speaking acquaintance with Edward, the late King of England. Indeed, the late king appears to have enjoyed the same privilege claimed and exercised by the clerks, stenographers and floorwalkers in his employ, although His Majesty had a slight advantage over them in being free to call him "Cricky" to his face instead of behind his back.

Mr. Cricklewick, falling into a snug fortune when he was forty-five and at a time when the Marquis felt it to be necessary to curtail expenses by not only reducing his staff of servants but also the salaries of those who remained, married very nicely into a draper's family, and soon afterward voyaged to America to open and operate a branch of the concern in New York City. His fortune, including the savings of twenty years, amounted to something like thirty thousand pounds, most of which had been accumulated by a sheep-raising brother who had gone to and died in Australia. He put quite a bit of this into the business and became a partner, making himself doubly welcome to a family that had suffered considerably through competition in business and a complete lack of it in respect to the matrimonial possibilities of five fully matured daughters.

Mr. Cricklewick had the further good sense to marry the youngest, prettiest and most ambitious of the quintette, and thereby paved the way for satisfactory though wholly unexpected social achievements in the City of Now York. His wife, with the customary British scorn for Americans, developed snobbish tendencies that rather alarmed Mr. Cricklewick at the outset of his business

career in New York, but which ultimately produced the most remarkable results.

Almost before he was safely out of the habit of saying "thank you" when it wasn't at all necessary to say it, his wife had him down at Hot Springs, Virginia, for a month in the fall season, where, because of his exceptionally mellifluous English accent and a stateliness he had never been able to overcome, he was looked upon by certain Anglo-maniacs as a real and unmistakable "toff."

Cricklewick had been brought up in, or on, the very best of society. From his earliest days as third groom in the Camelford ménage to the end of his reign as major-domo, he had been in a position to observe and assimilate the manners of the elect. No one knew better than he how to go about being a gentleman. He had had his lessons, not to say examples, from the first gentlemen of England. Having been brought up on dukes and earls,—and all that sort of thing,—to say nothing of quite a majority in the House of Lords, he was in a fair way of knowing "what's what," to use his own far from original expression.

You couldn't fool Cricklewick to save your life. The instant he looked upon you he could put you where you belonged, and, so far as he was concerned, that was where you would have to stay.

It is doubtful if there was ever a more discerning, more discriminating butler in all England. It was his rather astonishing contention that one could be quite at one's ease with dukes and duchesses and absolutely ill-at-ease with ordinary people. That was his way of making the distinction. It wasn't possible to be on terms of intimacy with the people who didn't belong. They never seemed to know their place.

The next thing he knew, after the Hot Springs visit, his name began to appear in the newspapers in columns next to advertising matter instead of the other way round. Up to this time it had been a struggle to get it in next to reading matter on account of the exorbitant rates demanded by the newspapers.

He protested to his wife. "Oh, I say, my dear, this is cutting it a bit thick, you know. You can't really be in earnest about it. I shouldn't know how to act sitting down at a dinner table like that, you know. I am informed that these people are regarded as real swells over 'ere,—here, I should say. You must sit down and drop 'em a line saying we can't come. Say we've suddenly been called out of town, or had bad news from home, or—"

"Rubbish! It will do them no end of good to see how you act at table. Haven't you had the very best of training? All you have to do—"

"But I had it standing, my dear."

"Just the same, I shall accept the invitation. They are very excellent people, and I see no reason why we shouldn't know the best while we're about it."

"But they've got millions," he expostulated.

"Well," said she, "you musn't believe everything you hear about people with millions. I must say that I've not seen anything especially vulgar about them. So don't let that stand in your way, old dear." It was unconscious irony.

"It hasn't been a great while since I was a butler, my love; don't forget that. A matter of a little over seven years."

"Pray do not forget," said she coldly, "that it hasn't been so very long since all these people over here were Indians."

Mr. Cricklewick, being more or less hazy concerning overseas history, took heart. They went to the dinner and he, remembering just how certain noblemen of his acquaintance deported themselves, got on famously. And although his wife never had seen a duchess eat, except by proxy in the theatre, she left nothing to be desired,—except, perhaps, in the way of food, of which she was so fond that it was rather a bore to nibble as duchesses do.

Being a sensible and far-seeing woman, she did not resent it when he mildly protested that Lady So-and-So wouldn't have done this, and the Duchess of You-Know wouldn't have done that. She looked upon him as a master in the School of Manners. It was not long before she was able not only to hold her own with the élite, but also to hold her lorgnette with them. If she did not care to see you in a crowd she could overlook you in the very smartest way.

And so, after twenty or twenty-five years, we find the Cricklewicks,—mother, father and daughter,—substantially settled in the City of Masks, occupying an enviable position in society, and seldom, if ever,—even in the bosom of the family,—referring to the days of long ago,—a precaution no doubt inspired by the fear that they might be overheard and misunderstood by their own well-trained and admirable butler, whose respect they could not afford to

lose.

Once a week, on Wednesday nights, Mr. Cricklewick took off his mask. It was, in a sense, his way of going to confession. He told his wife, however, that he was going to the club.

He sighed a little more briskly as he turned away from the window and crossed over to the closet in which his fur-lined coat and silk hat were hanging. It had taken time and a great deal of persuasion on the part of his wife to prove to him that it wasn't quite the thing to wear a silk hat with a sack coat in New York; he had grudgingly compromised with the barbaric demands of fashion by dispensing with the sack coat in favour of a cutaway. The silk hat was a fixture.

"A lady asking to see you, sir," said his office-boy, after knocking on the door marked "Private."

"Hold my coat for me, Thomas," said Mr. Cricklewick.

"Yes, sir," said Thomas. "But she says you will see her, sir, just as soon as you gets a look at her."

"Obviously," said Mr. Cricklewick, shaking himself down into the great coat. "Don't rub it the wrong way, you simpleton. You should always brush a silk hat with the nap and not—"

"May I have a few words with you, Mr. Cricklewick?" inquired a sweet, clear voice from the doorway.

The head of the house opened his lips to say something sharp to the office-boy, but the words died as he obeyed a magnetic influence and hazarded a glance at the intruder's face.

"Bless my soul!" said he, staring. An instant later he had recovered himself. "Take my coat, Thomas. Come in, Lady—er—Miss Emsdale. Thank you. Run along, Thomas. This is—ah—a most unexpected pleasure." The door closed behind Thomas. "Pray have a chair, Miss Emsdale. Still quite cold, isn't it?"

"I sha'n't detain you for more than five or ten minutes," said Miss Emsdale, sinking into a chair.

"At your service,—quite at your service," said Mr. Cricklewick, dissolving in the presence of nobility. He could not have helped himself to save his life.

Miss Emsdale came to the point at once. To save *her* life she could not think of Cricklewick as anything but an upper servant.

"Please see if we are quite alone, Mr. Cricklewick," she said, laying aside her little fur neck-piece.

Mr. Cricklewick started. Like a flash there shot into his brain the voiceless groan: "It's always something." However, he made haste to assure her that they would not be disturbed. "It is closing time, you see," he concluded, not without hope.

"I could not get here any earlier," she explained. "I stopped in to ask a little favour of you, Mr. Cricklewick."

"You have only to mention it," said he, and then abruptly looked at his watch. The thought struck him that perhaps he did not have enough in his bill-folder; if not, it would be necessary to catch the cashier before the safe was closed for the day.

"Lord Temple is in trouble, Mr. Cricklewick," she said, a queer little catch in her voice.

"I—I am sorry to hear that," said he.

"And I do not know of any one who is in a better position to help him than you," she went on coolly.

"I shall be happy to be of service to Lord Temple," said Mr. Cricklewick, but not very heartily. Observation had taught him that young noblemen seldom if ever get into trouble half way; they make a practice of going in clean over their heads.

"Owing to an unpleasant misunderstanding with Mr. Stuyvesant Smith-Parvis, he has lost his situation as chauffeur for Mr. Carpenter," said she.

"I hope he has not—ahem!—thumped him," said Mr. Cricklewick, in such dismay that he allowed the extremely undignified word to slip out.

She smiled faintly. "I said unpleasant, Mr. Cricklewick,—not pleasant."

"Bless my soul," said Mr. Cricklewick, blinking.

"Mr. Smith-Parvis has prevailed upon Mr. Carpenter to dismiss him, and I fear, between them, they are planning to drive him out of the city in disgrace."

"Bless me! This is too bad."

Without divulging the cause of Smith-Parvis's animosity, she went briefly into the result thereof.

"It is really infamous," she concluded, her eyes flashing. "Don't you agree with me?"

Having it put to him so abruptly as that, Mr. Cricklewick agreed with her.

"Well, then, we must put our heads together, Mr. Cricklewick," she said, with decision.

"Quite so," said he, a little vaguely.

"He is not to be driven out of the city," said she. "Nor is he to be unjustly accused of—of wrongdoing. We must see to that."

Mr. Cricklewick cleared his throat. "He can avoid all that sort of thing, Lady —er—Miss Emsdale, by simply announcing that he is Lord Temple, heir to one of the—"

"Oh, he wouldn't think of doing such a thing," said she quickly.

"People would fall over themselves trying to put laurels on his head," he urged. "And, unless I am greatly mistaken, the first to rush up would be the—er —the Smith-Parvises, headed by Stuyvesant."

"No one knows the Smith-Parvises better than you, Mr. Cricklewick," she said, and for some reason he turned quite pink.

"Mrs. Cricklewick and I have seen a great deal of them in the past few years," he said, almost apologetically.

"And that encourages me to repeat that no one knows them better than you," she said coolly.

"We are to dine with Mr. and Mrs. Smith-Parvis tonight," said Mr. Cricklewick.

"Splendid!" she cried, eagerly. "That works in very nicely with the plan I have in mind. You must manage in some way to remark—quite casually, of course,—that you are very much interested in the affairs of a young fellow-countryman,—omitting the name, if you please,—who has been dismissed from service as a chauffeur, and who has been threatened—"

"But my dear Miss Emsdale, I—"

"—threatened with all sorts of things by his late employer. You may also add that you have communicated with our Ambassador at Washington, and that it is your intention to see your fellow-countryman through if it takes a—may I say leg, Mr. Cricklewick? Young Mr. Smith-Parvis will be there to hear you, so you may bluster as much as you please about Great Britain protecting her subjects to the very last shot. The entire machinery of the Foreign Office may be called into action, if necessary, to—but I leave all that to you. You might mention, modestly, that it's pretty ticklish business trying to twist the British lion's tail. Do you see what I mean?"

Mr. Cricklewick may have had an inward conviction that this was hardly what you would call asking a favour of a person, but if he had he kept it pretty well to himself. It did not occur to him that his present position in the world, as opposed to hers, justified a rather stiff reluctance on his part to take orders, or even suggestions, from this penniless young person,—especially in his own sacred lair. On the contrary, he was possessed by the instant and enduring realization that it was the last thing he could bring himself to the point of doing. His father, a butler before him, had gone to considerable pains to convince him, at the outset of his career, that insolence is by far the greatest of vices.

Still, in this emergency, he felt constrained to argue,—another vice sometimes modified by circumstances and the forbearance of one's betters.

"But I haven't communicated with our Ambassador at Washington," he said. "And as for the Foreign Office taking the matter up—"

"But, don't you see, *they* couldn't possibly know that, Mr. Cricklewick," she interrupted, frowning slightly.

"Quite true,—but I should be telling a falsehood if I said anything of the sort."

"Knowing you to be an absolutely truthful and reliable man, Mr. Cricklewick," she said mendaciously, "they would not even dream of questioning your veracity. They do not believe you capable of telling a falsehood. Can't you see how splendidly it would all work out?"

Mr. Cricklewick couldn't see, and said so.

"Besides," he went on, "suppose that it should get to the ears of the Ambassador."

"In that event, you could run over to Washington and tell him in private just who Thomas Trotter is, and then everything would be quite all right. You see," she went on earnestly, "all you have to do is to drop a few words for the benefit of young Mr. Smith-Parvis. He looks upon you as one of the most powerful and influential men in the city, and he wouldn't have you discover that he is in anyway connected with such a vile, underhanded—"

"How am I to lead up to the subject of chauffeurs?" broke in Mr. Cricklewick weakly. "I can hardly begin talking about chauffeurs—er—out of a clear sky, you might say."

"Don't begin by talking about chauffeurs," she counselled. "Lead up to the issue by speaking of the friendly relations that exist between England and America, and proceed with the hope that nothing may ever transpire to sever the bond of blood—and so on. You know what I mean. It is quite simple. And then look a little serious and distressed,—that ought to be easy, Mr. Cricklewick. You must see how naturally it all leads up to the unfortunate affair of your young countryman, whom you are bound to defend,—and *we* are bound to defend,—no matter what the consequences may be."

Two minutes later she arose triumphant, and put on her stole. Her eyes were sparkling.

"I knew you couldn't stand by and see this outrageous thing done to Eric

Temple. Thank you. I—goodness gracious, I quite forgot a most important thing. In the event that our little scheme does not have the desired result, and they persist in persecuting him, we must have something to fall back upon. I know McFaddan very slightly. (She did not speak of the ex-footman as Mr. McFaddan, nor did Cricklewick take account of the omission). He is, I am informed, one of the most influential men in New York,—one of the political bosses, Mr. Smith-Parvis says. He says he is a most unprincipled person. Well, don't you see, he is just the sort of person to fall back upon if all honest measures fail?"

Mr. Cricklewick rather blankly murmured something about "honest measures," and then mopped his brow. Miss Emsdale's enthusiasm, while acutely ingenuous, had him "sweating blood," as he afterwards put it during a calm and lucid period of retrospection.

"I—I assure you I have no influence with McFaddan," he began, looking at his handkerchief,—and being relieved, no doubt, to find no crimson stains,—applied it to his neck with some confidence and vigour. "In fact, we differ vastly in—"

"McFaddan, being in a position to dictate to the police and, if it should come to the worst, to the magistrates, is a most valuable man to have on our side, Mr. Cricklewick. If you could see him tomorrow morning,—I suppose it is too late to see him this evening,—and tell him just what you want him to do, I'm sure—"

"But, Miss Emsdale, you must allow me to say that McFaddan will absolutely refuse to take orders from me. He is no longer what you might say—er—in a position to be—er—you see what I mean, I hope."

"Nonsense!" she said, dismissing his objection with a word. "McFaddan is an Irishman and therefore eternally committed to the under dog, right or wrong. When you explain the circumstances to him, he will come to our assistance like a flash. And don't, overlook the fact, Mr. Cricklewick, that McFaddan will never see the day when he can ignore a—a request from you." She had almost said command, but caught the word in time. "By the way, poor Trotter is out of a situation, and I may as well confess to you that he can ill afford to be without one. It has just occurred to me that you may know of some one among your wealthy friends, Mr. Cricklewick, who is in need of a good man. Please rack your brain. Some one to whom you can recommend him as a safe, skilful and competent chauffeur."

"I am glad you mention it," said he, brightening perceptibly in the light of something tangible. "This afternoon I was called up on the telephone by a party —by some one, I mean to say,—asking for information concerning Klausen, the man who used to drive for me. I was obliged to say that his habits were bad, and that I could not recommend him. It was Mrs. Ellicott Millidew who inquired."

"The young one or the old one?" inquired Miss Emsdale quickly.

"The elder Mrs. Millidew," said Mr. Cricklewick, in a tone that implied deference to a lady who was entitled to it, even when she was not within earshot. "Not the pretty young widow," he added, risking a smile.

"That's all right, then," said Miss Emsdale briskly. "I am sure it would be a most satisfactory place for him."

"But she is a very exacting old lady," said he, "and will require references."

"I am sure you can give him the very best of references," said she. "She couldn't ask for anything better than your word that he is a splendid man in every particular. Thank you so much, Mr. Cricklewick. And Lord Temple will be ever so grateful to you too, I'm sure. Oh, you cannot possibly imagine how relieved I am—about everything. We are very great friends, Lord Temple and I."

He watched the faint hint of the rose steal into her cheeks and a velvety softness come into her eyes.

"Nothing could be more perfect," he said, irrelevantly, but with real feeling, and the glow of the rose deepened.

"Thank you again,—and good-bye," she said, turning toward the door.

It was then that the punctilious Cricklewick forgot himself, and in his desire to be courteous, committed a most unpardonable offence.

"My motor is waiting, Lady Jane," he said, the words falling out unwittingly. "May I not drop you at Mr. Smith-Parvis's door?"

"No, thank you," she said graciously. "You are very good, but the stages go directly past the door."

As the door closed behind her, Mr. Cricklewick sat down rather suddenly, overcome by his presumption. Think of it! He had had the brass to invite Lady Jane Thorne to accept a ride in his automobile! He might just as well have had the effrontery to ask her to dine at his house!

CHAPTER IX

MR. TROTTER FALLS INTO A NEW POSITION

THE sagacity of M. Mirabeau went far toward nullifying the hastily laid plans of Stuyvesant Smith-Parvis. It was he who suggested a prompt effort to recover the two marked bills that Trotter had handed to his landlady earlier in the day.

Prince Waldemar de Bosky, with a brand new twenty-dollar bill in his possession,—(supplied by the excited Frenchman)—boarded a Lexington Avenue car and in due time mounted the steps leading to the front door of the lodging house kept by Mrs. Dulaney. Ostensibly he was in search of a room for a gentleman of refinement and culture; Mrs. Dulaney's house had been recommended to him as first class in every particular. The landlady herself showed him a room, fourth-floor front, just vacated (she said) by a most refined gentleman engaged in the phonograph business. It was her rule to demand references from prospective lodgers, but as she had been in the business a great many years it was now possible for her to distinguish a gentleman the instant she laid eyes on him, so it would only be necessary for the present applicant to pay the first week's rent in advance. He could then move in at once.

With considerable mortification, she declared that she wouldn't insist on the "advance,"—knowing gentlemen as perfectly as she did,—were it not for the fact that her rent was due and she was short exactly that amount,—having recently sent more than she could spare to a sick sister in Bridgeport.

De Bosky was very amiable about it,—and very courteous. He said that, so far as he knew, all gentlemen were prepared to pay five dollars in advance when they engaged lodgings by the week, and would she be so good as to take it out of the twenty-dollar bill?

Mrs. Dulaney was slightly chagrined. The sight of a twenty-dollar bill caused her to regret not having asked for two weeks down instead of one.

"If it does not inconvenience you, madam," said de Bosky, "I should like the

change in new bills. You have no idea how it offends my artistic sense to—" He shuddered a little. "I make a point of never having filthy, germ-disseminating bank notes on my person."

"And you are quite right," said she feelingly. "I wish to God I could afford to be as particular. If there's anything I hate it's a dirty old bill. Any one could tell that you are a real gentleman, Mr.—Mr.—I didn't get the name, did I?"

"Drexel," he said.

"Excuse me," she said, and moved over a couple of paces in order to place the parlour table between herself and the prospective lodger. Using it as a screen, she fished a thin flat purse from her stocking, and opened it. "I wouldn't do this in the presence of any one but a gentleman," she explained, without embarrassment. As she was twice the size of Prince Waldemar and of a ruggedness that challenged offence, one might have been justified in crediting her with egotism instead of modesty.

Selecting the brightest and crispest from the layer of bank notes, she laid them on the table. De Bosky's eyes glistened.

"The city has recently been flooded with counterfeit fives and tens, madam," he said politely. This afforded an excuse for holding the bills to the light for examination.

"Now, don't tell me they're phoney," said Mrs. Dulaney, bristling. "I got 'em this morning from the squarest chap I've ever had in my—"

"I have every reason to believe they are genuine," said he, concealing his exultation behind a patronizing smile. He had discovered the tell-tale marks on both bills. Carefully folding them, he stuck them into his waistcoat pocket. "You may expect me tomorrow, madam,—unless, of course, destiny should shape another end for me in the meantime. One never can tell, you know. I may be dead, or your comfortable house may be burned to the ground. It is—"

"For the Lord's sake, don't make a crack like that," she cried vehemently. "It's bad luck to talk about fire."

"In any event," said he jauntily, "you have my five dollars. Au revoir, madam. Auf wiedersehn!" He buttoned Mr. Bramble's ulster close about his throat and

gravely bowed himself out into the falling night.

In the meantime, Mr. Bramble had substituted two unmarked bills for those remaining in the possession of Thomas Trotter, and, with the return of Prince Waldemar, triumphant, M. Mirabeau arbitrarily confiscated the entire thirty dollars.

"These bills must be concealed at once," he explained. "Temporarily they are out of circulation. Do not give them another thought, my dear Trotter. And now, Monsieur Bookseller, we are in a proper frame of mind to discuss the beefsteak you have neglected to order."

"God bless my soul," cried Mr. Bramble in great dismay. His unceremonious departure an instant later was due to panic. Mrs. O'Leary had to be stopped before the tripe and tunny fish had gone too far. Moreover, he had forgotten to tell her that there would be two extra for dinner,—besides the extra sirloin.

On the following Monday, Thomas Trotter entered the service of Mrs. Millidew, and on the same day Stuyvesant Smith-Parvis returned to New York after a hasty and more or less unpremeditated visit to Atlantic City, where he experienced a trying half hour with the unreasonable Mr. Carpenter, who spoke feelingly of a personal loss and most unfeelingly of the British Foreign Office. Every nation in the world, he raged, has a foreign office; foreign offices are as plentiful as birds'-nests. But Tom Trotters were as scarce as hen's-teeth. He would never find another like him.

"And what's more," he interrupted himself to say, glowering at the shocked young man, "he's a gentleman, and that's something you ain't,—not in a million years."

"Ass!" said Mr. Smith-Parvis, under his breath.

"What's that?" roared the aggrieved one.

"Don't shout like that! People are beginning to stare at—"

"Thank the Lord I had sense enough to engage a private detective and not to call in the police, as you suggested. That would have been the limit. I've a notion to hunt that boy up and tell him the whole rotten story."

"Go ahead and do it," invited Stuyvie, his eyes narrowing, "and I will do a little telling myself. There is one thing in particular your wife would give her ears to hear about you. It will simplify matters tremendously. Go ahead and tell him."

Mr. Carpenter appeared to be reflecting. His inflamed sullen eyes assumed a misty, faraway expression.

"For two cents I'd tell you to go to hell," he said, after a long silence.

"Boy!" called Mr. Smith-Parvis loftily, signalling a passing bell-hop. "Go and get me some small change for this nickel."

Mr. Carpenter's face relaxed into a sickly grin. "Can't you take a joke?" he inquired peevishly.

"Never mind," said Stuyvie to the bell-boy. "I sha'n't need it after all."

"What I'd like to know," mused Mr. Carpenter, later on, "is how in thunder the New York police department got wind of all this."

Mr. Smith-Parvis, Junior, wiped a fine moisture from his brow, and said: "I forgot to mention that I had to give that plain-clothes man fifty dollars to keep him from going to old man Cricklewick with the whole blooming story. It seems that he got it from your bally private detective."

"Good!" said the other brightly. "You got off cheap," he added quickly, catching the look in Stuyvie's eye.

"I did it to spare Cricklewick a whole lot of embarrassment," said the younger man stiffly.

"I don't get you."

"He never could look me in the face again if he found out I was the man he was panning so unmercifully the other night at our own dinner table." He wiped his brow again. "'Gad, he'd never forgive himself."

Which goes to prove that Stuyvie was more considerate of the feelings of others than one might have credited him with being.

Mrs. Millidew was very particular about chauffeurs,—an idiosyncrasy, it may be said, that brought her into contact with a great many of them in the course of a twelvemonth. The last one to leave her without giving the customary week's notice had remained in her employ longer than any of his predecessors. A most astonishing discrepancy appeared in their statements as to the exact length of time he was in her service. Mrs. Millidew maintained that he was with her for exactly three weeks; the chauffeur swore to high heaven that it was three centuries.

She had Thomas Trotter up before her.

"You have been recommended to me by Mr. Cricklewick," she said, regarding him with a critical eye. "No other reference is necessary, so don't go fumbling in your pockets for a pack of filthy envelopes. What is your name?"

She was a fat little old woman with yellow hair and exceedingly black and carefully placed eyebrows.

"Thomas Trotter, madam."

"How tall are you?"

"Six feet."

"I am afraid you will not do," she said, taking another look at him.

Trotter stared. "I am sorry, madam."

"You are much too tall. Nothing will fit you."

"Are you speaking of livery, madam?"

"I'm speaking of a uniform," she said. "I can't be buying new uniforms every two weeks. I don't mind a cap once in awhile, but uniforms cost money. Mr. Cricklewick didn't tell me you were so tall. As a matter of fact, I think I neglected to say to him that you would have to be under five feet nine and fairly thin. You couldn't possibly squeeze into the uniform, my man. I am sorry. I have tried everything but an English chauffeur, and—you *are* English, aren't you?"

"Yes, madam. Permit me to solve the problem for you. I never, under any circumstances, wear livery,—I beg your pardon, I should say a uniform."

"You never what?" demanded Mrs. Millidew, blinking.

"Wear livery," said he, succinctly.

"That settles it," said she. "You'd have to if you worked for me. Now, see here, my man, it's possible you'll change your mind after you've seen the uniform I put on my chauffeurs. It's a sort of maroon—"

"I beg your pardon, madam," he interrupted politely, favouring her with his never-failing smile. Her gaze rested for a moment on his white, even teeth, and then went up to meet his deep grey eyes. "A cap is as far as I go. A sort of blue fatigue cap, you know."

"I like your face," said she regretfully. "You are quite a good-looking fellow. The last man I had looked like a street cleaner, even in his maroon coat and white pants. I—Don't you think you could be persuaded to put it on if I,—well, if I added five dollars a week to your wages? I like your looks. You look as if you might have been a soldier."

Trotter swallowed hard. "I shouldn't in the least object to wearing the uniform of a soldier, Mrs. Millidew. That's quite different, you see."

"Suppose I take you on trial for a couple of weeks," she ventured, surrendering to his smile and the light in his unservile eyes. Considering the matter settled, she went on brusquely: "How old are you, Trotter?"

"Thirty."

"Are you married? I never employ married men. Their wives are always having babies or operations or something disagreeable and unnecessary."

"I am not married, Mrs. Millidew."

"Who was your last employer in England?"

"His Majesty King George the Fifth," said Trotter calmly.

Her eyes bulged. "What?" she cried. Then her eyes narrowed. "And do you

mean to tell me you didn't wear a uniform when you worked for him?"

"I wore a uniform, madam."

"Umph! America has spoiled you, I see. That's always the way. Independence is a curse. Have you ever been arrested? Wait! Don't answer. I withdraw the question. You would only lie, and that is a bad way to begin."

"I lie only when it is absolutely necessary, Mrs. Millidew. In police courts, for example."

"Good! Now, you are young, good looking and likely to be spoiled. It must be understood in the beginning, Trotter, that there is to be no foolishness with women." She regarded him severely.

"No foolishness whatsoever," said he humbly, raising his eyes to heaven.

"How long were you employed in your last job—ah, situation?"

"Not quite a twelve-month, madam."

"And now," she said, with a graciousness that surprised her, "perhaps you would like to put a few questions to me. The cooks always do."

He smiled more engagingly than ever. "As they say in the advertisements of lost jewellery, madam,—'no questions asked,'" he said.

"Eh? Oh, I see. Rather good. I hope you know your place, though," she added, narrowly. "I don't approve of freshness."

"No more do I," said he, agreeably.

"I suppose you are accustomed to driving in—er—in good society, Trotter. You know what I mean."

"Perfectly. I have driven in the very best, madam, if I do say it as shouldn't. Beg pardon, I daresay you mean smart society?" He appeared to be very much concerned, even going so far as to send an appraising eye around the room,—doubtless for the purpose of satisfying himself that *she* was quite up to the standard.

"Of course," she said hastily. Something told her that if she didn't nab him on the spot he would get away from her. "Can you start in at once, Trotter?"

"We have not agreed upon the wages, madam."

"I have never paid less than forty a week," she said stiffly. "Even for bad ones," she added.

He smiled, but said nothing, apparently waiting for her to proceed.

"Would fifty a week suit you?" she asked, after a long pause. She was a little helpless.

"Quite," said he.

"It's a lot of money," she murmured. "But I like the way you speak English. By the way, let me hear you say: 'It is half after four, madam. Are you going on to Mrs. Brown's.'"

Trotter laid himself out. He said "hawf-paast," and "fou-ah," and "Meddem," and "gehing," in a way that delighted her.

"I shall be going out at three o'clock, Trotter. Be on time. I insist on punctuality."

"Very good, madam," he said, and retreated in good order. She halted him at the door.

"Above all things you mustn't let any of these silly women make a fool of you, Trotter," she said, a troubled gleam in her eyes.

"I will do my best, madam," he assured her.

And that very afternoon she appeared in triumph at the home of her daughter-in-law (the *young* Mrs. Millidew) and invited that widowed siren to go out for a spin with her "behind the stunningest creature you ever laid your eyes on."

"Where did you get him?" inquired the beautiful daughter-in-law, later on, in a voice perfectly audible to the man at the wheel. "He's the best looking thing in town. Don't be surprised if I steal him inside of a week." She might as well have been at the zoo, discussing impervious captives.

"Now, don't try anything like that," cried Mrs. Millidew the elder, glaring fiercely.

"I like the way his hair kinks in the back,—and just above his ears," said the other. "And his skin is as smooth and as clear—"

"Is there any drive in particular you would like to take, madam?" broke in Trotter, turning in the seat.

"Up—up and down Fifth Avenue," said Mrs. Millidew promptly.

"Did you ever see such teeth?" cried Mrs. Millidew, the younger, delightedly.

Trotter's ears were noticeable on account of their colour.

CHAPTER X

PUTTING THEIR HEADS—AND HEARTS—TOGETHER

"FOR every caress," philosophized the Marchioness, "there is a pinch. Somehow they manage to keep on pretty even terms. One receives the caresses fairly early in life, the pinches later on. You shouldn't be complaining at your time of life, my friend."

She was speaking to Lord Temple, who had presented himself a full thirty minutes ahead of other expected guests at the Wednesday evening salon. He explained that he came early because he had to leave early. Mrs. Millidew was at the theatre. She was giving a box party. He had been directed to return to the theatre before the end of the second act. Mrs. Millidew, it appears, was in the habit of "walking out" on every play she attended, sometimes at the end of an act but more frequently in the middle of it, greatly to the relief of actors and audience.

("Tell me something good to read," said one of her guests, in the middle of the first act, addressing no one in particular, the audience being a very large one. "Is there anything new that's worth while?"

"*The Three Musketeers* is a corker," said the man next her. "Awfully exciting."

"Write it down for me, dear boy. I will order it sent up tomorrow. One has so little time to read, you know. Anything else?"

"You *must* read *Trilby*," cried one of the other women, frowning slightly in the direction of the stage, where an actor was doing his best to break into the general conversation. "It's perfectly ripping, I hear. And there is another book called *Three Men in a Yacht,* or something like that. Have you had it?"

"No. Good Lord, what a noisy person he is! One can't hear oneself think, the way he's roaring. *Three Men in a Yacht.* Put that down, too, Bertie. Dear me, how do you find the time to keep up with your reading, my dear? It's absolutely impossible for me. I'm always six months or a year behind—"

"Have you read *Brewster's Millions*, Mrs. Corkwright?" timidly inquired a rather up-to-date gentleman.

"That isn't a book. It's a play," said Mrs. Millidew. "I saw it ten years ago. There is a ship in it.")

"I'm not complaining," remarked Lord Temple, smiling down upon the Marchioness, who was seated in front of the fireplace. "I merely announced that the world is getting to be a dreary old place,—and that's all."

"Ah, but you made the announcement after a silence of five minutes following my remark that Lady Jane Thorne finds it impossible to be with us tonight."

He blushed. "Did it seem as long as that?" he said, penitently. "I'm sorry."

"How do you like your new situation?" she inquired, changing the subject abruptly.

He gave a slight start. It was an unwritten law that one's daily occupation should not be discussed at the weekly drawing-rooms. For example, it is easy to conceive that one could not be forgiven for asking the Count Pietro Poloni how many nickels he had taken in during the day as Humpy the Organ-grinder.

Lord Temple also stared. Was it possible that she was forgetting that Thomas Trotter, the chauffeur, was hanging over the back of a chair in the locker room down-stairs,—where he had been left by a hurried and somewhat untidy Lord Temple?

"As well as could be expected," he replied, after a moment.

"Mrs. Millidew came in to see me today. She informed me that she had put in her thumb and pulled out a plum. Meaning you, of course."

"How utterly English you are, my dear Marchioness. She mentioned a fruit of some kind, and you missed the point altogether. 'Peach' is the word she's been using for the past two days, just plain, ordinary 'peach.' A dozen times a day she sticks a finger almost up against my manly back, and says proudly: 'See my new chauffeur. Isn't he a peach?' I can't see how you make plum out of it."

The Marchioness laughed. "It doesn't matter. She dragged me to the window this afternoon and pointed down at you sitting alone in all your splendour. I am afraid I gasped. I couldn't believe my eyes. You won't last long, dear boy. She's a dreadful woman."

"I'm not worrying. I shouldn't be out of a situation long. Do you happen to know her daughter-in-law?"

"I do," said the Marchioness, frowning.

"She told me this morning that the instant I felt I couldn't stand the old lady any longer, she'd give me a job on the spot. As a matter-of-fact, she went so far as to say she'd be willing to pay me more money if I felt the slightest inclination to leave my present position at once."

The Marchioness smiled faintly. "No other recommendation necessary, eh?"

"Beg pardon?"

"In other words, she is willing to accept you at your face value."

"I daresay I have a competent face," he acknowledged, his smile broadening into a grin.

"Designed especially for women," said she.

He coloured. "Oh, I say, that's a bit rough."

"And thoroughly approved by men," she added.

"That's better," he said. "I'm not a ladies' man, you know,—thank God." His face clouded. "Is Lady Jane ill?"

"Apparently not. She merely telephoned to say it would be impossible to come." She eyed him shrewdly. "Do you know anything about it, young man?"

"Have you seen her,—lately?" he parried.

"Yesterday afternoon," she answered, keeping her eyes upon his half-averted face. "See here, Eric Temple," she broke out suddenly, "she is unhappy—most unhappy. I am not sure that I ought to tell you—and yet, you are in love with her, so you should know. Now, don't say you are not in love with her! Save your breath. The trouble is, you are not the only man who is in that peculiar fix."

"I know," he said, frowning darkly. "She's being annoyed by that infernal blighter."

"Oho, so you *do* know, then?" she cried. "She was very careful to leave you out of the story altogether. Well, I'm glad you know. What are you going to do about it?"

"I? Why,—why, what *can* I do?"

"There is a great deal you can do."

"But she has laid down the law, hard and fast. She won't let me," he groaned.

The Marchioness blinked rapidly. "Well, of all the stupid,—Say that again, please."

"She won't let me. I would in a second, you know,—no matter if it did land me in jail for—"

"What are you talking about?" she gasped.

"Punching his bally head till he wouldn't know it himself in the mirror," he grated, looking at his fist almost tearfully.

The Marchioness opened her lips to say something, thought better of it, and turned her head to smile.

"Moreover," he went on, "she's right. Might get her into no end of a mess with those people, you see. It breaks my heart to think of her—"

"He wants her to run away with him and be married," she broke in.

"What!" he almost shouted, glaring at her as if she were the real offender. "You—did she tell you that?"

"Yes. He rather favours San Francisco. He wants her to go out there with him and be married by a chap to whom he promised the distinction while they were still in their teens."

"The cur! That's his game, is it? Why, that's the foulest trick known to—"

"But she isn't going, my friend,—so possess yourself in peace. That's why he is turning off so nasty. He is making things most unpleasant for her."

He wondered how far Jane had gone in her confidences. Had she told the Marchioness everything?

"Why doesn't she leave the place?" he demanded, as a feeler.

Lady Jane had told the Marchioness everything, and a great deal more besides, including, it may be said, something touching upon her own feelings toward Lord Temple. But the Marchioness was under imperative orders. Not for the world, was Thomas Trotter to know that Miss Emsdale, among others, was a perfect fool about him.

"She must have her bread and butter, you know," said she severely.

"But she can get that elsewhere, can't she?"

"Certainly. She can get it by marrying some decent, respectable fellow and all that sort of thing, but she can't get another place in New York as governess if the Smith-Parvis establishment turns her out with a bad name."

He swallowed hard, and went a little pale. "Of course, she isn't thinking of—of getting married."

"Yes, she is," said the Marchioness flatly.

"Has—has she told you that in so many words, Marchioness?" he asked, his heart going to his boots.

"Is it fair to ask that question, Lord Temple?"

"No. It isn't fair. I have no right to pry into her affairs. I'm—I'm desperately concerned, that's all. It's my only excuse."

"It isn't strange that she should be in love, is it?"

"But I—I don't see who the deuce she can have found over here to—to fall in love with," he floundered.

"There are millions of good, fine Americans, my friend. Young Smith-Parvis is one of the exceptions."

"He isn't an American," said Lord Temple, savagely. "Don't insult America by mentioning his name in—"

"Please, please! Be careful not to knock over the lamp, dear boy. It's Florentine, and Count Antonio says it came from some dreadful sixteenth-century woman's bedroom, price two hundred guineas net. She's afraid she's being watched."

"She? Oh, you mean Lady Jane?"

"Certainly. The other woman has been dead for centuries. Jane thinks it isn't safe for her to come here for a little while. There's no telling what the wretch may stoop to, you see."

Lord Temple squared his shoulders. "I don't see how you can be so cheerful about it," he said icily. "I fear it isn't worth while to ask the favour I came to—er—to ask of you tonight."

"Don't be silly. Tell me what I can do for you."

"It isn't for me. It's for her. I came early tonight so that we could talk it all over before any one else arrived. I've slept precious little the last few nights, Marchioness." His brow was furrowed as with pain. "In the first place, you will agree that she cannot remain in that house up there. That's settled." As she did not offer any audible support, he demanded, after a pause: "Isn't it?"

"I daresay she will have something to say about that," she said, temporizing.

"She is her own mistress, you know."

"But the poor girl doesn't know where to turn," he protested. "She'd chuck it in a second if something else turned up."

"I spoke of marriage, you will remember," she remarked, drily.

"I—I know," he gulped. "But we've just got to tide her over the rough going until she's—until she's ready, you see." He could not force the miserable word out of his mouth. "Now, I have a plan. Are you prepared to back me up in it?"

"How can I answer that question?"

"Well, I'll explain," he went on rapidly, eagerly. "We've got to make a new position for her. I can't do it without your help, of course, so we'll have to combine forces. Now, here's the scheme I've worked out. You are to give her a place here,—not downstairs in the shop, mind you,—but upstairs in your own, private apartment. You—"

"Good heavens, man! What are you saying? Would you have Lady Jane Thorne go into service? Do you dare suggest that she should put on a cap and apron and—"

"Not at all," he interrupted. "I want you to engage her as your private secretary, at a salary of one hundred dollars a month. She's receiving that amount from the Smith-Parvises. I don't see how she can get along on less, so—"

"My dear man!" cried the Marchioness, in amazement. "What *are* you talking about? In the first place, I haven't the slightest use for a private secretary. In the second place, I can't afford to pay one hundred—"

"You haven't heard all I have to say—"

"And in the third place, Lady Jane wouldn't consider it in the first place. Bless my soul, you *do* need sleep. You are losing your—"

"She sends nearly all of her salary over to the boy at home," he went on earnestly. "It will have to be one hundred dollars, at the very lowest. Now, here's my proposition. I am getting two hundred a month. It's just twice as much as I'm worth,—or any other chauffeur, for that matter. Well, now what's the matter with

me taking just what I'm worth and giving her the other half? See what I mean?"

He was standing before her, his eyes glowing, his voice full of boyish eagerness. As she looked up into his shining eyes, a tender smile came and played about her lips.

"I see," she said softly.

"Well?" he demanded anxiously, after a moment.

"Do sit down," she said. "You appear to have grown prodigiously tall in the last few minutes. I shall have a dreadful crick in my neck, I'm afraid."

He pulled up a chair and sat down.

"I can get along like a breeze on a hundred dollars a month," he pursued. "I've worked it all out,—just how much I can save by moving into cheaper lodgings, and cutting out expensive cigarettes, and going on the water-wagon entirely,—although I rarely take a drink as it is,—and getting my clothes at a department store instead of having them sent out from London,—I'd be easy to fit, you see, even with hand-me-downs,—and in a lot of other ways. Besides, it would be a splendid idea for me to practise economy. I've never—"

"You dear old goose," broke in the Marchioness, delightedly; "do you think for an instant that I will allow you to pay the salary of my private secretary,—if I should conclude to employ one?"

"But you say you can't afford to employ one," he protested. "Besides, I shouldn't want her to be a real secretary. The work would be too hard and too confining. Old Bramble was my grandfather's secretary. He worked sixteen hours a day and never had a holiday. She must have plenty of fresh air and outdoor exercise and—and time to read and do all sorts of agreeable things. I couldn't think of allowing her to learn how to use a typing machine, or to write shorthand, or to get pains in her back bending over a desk for hours at a time. That isn't my scheme, at all. She mustn't do any of those stupid things. Naturally, if you were to pay her out of your own pocket, you'd be justified in demanding a lot of hard, exacting work—"

"Just a moment, please. Let's be serious," said the Marchioness, pursing her lips.

"Suffering—" he began, staring at her in astonishment.

"I mean, let's seriously consider your scheme," she hastened to amend. "You are assuming, of course, that she will accept a position such as you suggest. Suppose she says no,—what then?"

"I leave that entirely to you," said he, composedly. "You can persuade her, I'm sure."

"She is no fool. She is perfectly well aware that I don't require the services of a secretary, that I am quite able to manage my private affairs myself. She would see through me in a second. She is as proud as Lucifer. I don't like to think of what she would say to me. And if I were to offer to pay her one hundred dollars a month, she would—well, she would think I was losing my mind. She knows I —"

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, slapping his knee, his face beaming. "That's the ticket! That simplifies everything. Let her think you *are* losing your mind. From worry and overwork—and all that sort of thing. It's the very thing, Marchioness. She would drop everything to help you in a case like that."

"Well, of all the—" began the Marchioness, aghast.

"You can put it up to her something like this," he went on, enthusiastically. "Tell her you are on the point of having a nervous breakdown,—a sort of collapse, you know. You know how to put it, better than I do. You—"

"I certainly do *not* know how to put it better than you do," she cried, sitting up very straight.

"Tell her you are dreadfully worried over not being able to remember things, —mental strain, and all that sort of thing. May have to give up business altogether unless you can—Is it a laughing matter, Marchioness?" he broke off, reddening to the roots of his hair.

"You are delicious!" she cried, dabbing her eyes with a bit of a lace handkerchief. "I haven't laughed so heartily in months. Bless my soul, you'll have me telling her there is insanity in my family before you're through with it."

"Not at all," he said severely. "People *never* admit that sort of thing, you

know. But certainly it isn't asking too much of you to act tired and listless, and a *little* distracted, is it? She'll ask what's the matter, and you simply say you're afraid you're going to have a nervous breakdown or—or—"

"Or paresis," she supplied.

"Whatever you like," he said promptly. "Now you *will* do this for me, won't you? You don't know what it will mean to me to feel that she is safe here with you."

"I will do my best," she said, for she loved him dearly—and the girl that he loved dearly too.

"Hurray!" he shouted,—and kissed her!

"Don't be foolish," she cried out. "You've tumbled my hair, and Julia had a terrible time with it tonight."

"When will you tackle—see her, I mean?" he asked, sitting down abruptly and drawing his chair a little closer.

"The first time she comes in to see me," she replied firmly, "and not before. You must not demand too much of a sick, collapsible old lady, you know. Give me time,—and a chance to get my bearings."

He drew a long breath. "I seem to be getting my own for the first time in days."

She hesitated. "Of course, it is all very quixotic,—and most unselfish of you, Lord Temple. Not every man would do as much for a girl who—well, I'll not say a girl who is going to be married before long, because I'd only be speculating,—but for a girl, at any rate, who can never be expected to repay. I take it, of course, that Lady Jane is never, under any circumstances to know that you are the real paymaster."

"She must never know," he gasped, turning a shade paler. "She would hate me, and—well, I couldn't stand that, you know."

"And you will not repent when the time comes for her to marry?"

"I'll—I'll be miserably unhappy, but—but, you will not hear a whimper out of me," he said, his face very long.

"Spoken like a hero," she said, and again she laughed, apparently without reason. "Some one is coming. Will you stay?"

"No; I'll be off, Marchioness. You don't know how relieved I am. I'll drop in tomorrow some time to see what she says,—and to arrange with you about the money. Good night!" He kissed her hand, and turned to McFaddan, who had entered the room. "Call a taxi for me, McFaddan."

"Very good, sir."

"Wait! Never mind. I'll walk or take a street car." To the Marchioness: "I'm beginning right now," he said, with his gayest smile.

In the foyer he encountered Cricklewick.

"Pleasant evening, Cricklewick," he said.

"It is, your lordship. Most agreeable change, sir."

"A bit soft under foot."

"Slushy, sir," said Cricklewick, obsequiously.

CHAPTER XI

WINNING BY A NOSE

MRS. SMITH-PARVIS, having received the annual spring announcement from Juneo & Co., repaired, on an empty Thursday, to the show-rooms and galleries of the little Italian dealer in antiques.

Twice a year she disdainfully,—and somewhat hastily,—went through his stock, always proclaiming at the outset that she was merely "looking around"; she'd come in later if she saw anything really worth having. It was her habit to demand the services of Mr. Juneo himself on these profitless visits to his establishment. She looked holes through the presumptuous underlings who politely adventured to inquire if she was looking for anything in particular. It would seem that the only thing in particular that she was looking for was the head of the house, and if he happened to be out she made it very plain that she didn't see how he ever did any business if he wasn't there to look after it.

And if little Mr. Juneo was in, she swiftly conducted him through the various departments of his own shop, questioning the genuineness of everything, denouncing his prices, and departing at last with the announcement that she could always find what she wanted at Pickett's.

At Pickett's she invariably encountered coldly punctilious gentlemen in "frockaway" coats, who were never quite sure, without inquiring, whether Mr. Moody was at liberty. Would she kindly take a seat and wait, or would she prefer to have a look about the galleries while some one went off to see if he could see her at once or a little later on? She liked all this. And she would wander about the luxurious rooms of the establishment of Pickett, Inc., content to stare languidly at other and less influential patrons who had to be satisfied with the smug attentions of ordinary salesmen.

And Moody, being acutely English, laid it on very thick when it came to dealing with persons of the type of Mrs. Smith-Parvis. Somehow he had learned that in dealing with snobs one must transcend even in snobbishness. The only way to command the respect of a snob is to go him a little better,—indeed,

according to Moody, it isn't altogether out of place to go him a great deal better. The loftier the snob, the higher you must shoot to get over his head (to quote Moody, whose training as a footman in one of the oldest houses in England had prepared him against almost any emergency). He assumed on occasion a polite, bored indifference that seldom failed to have the desired effect. In fact, he frequently went so far as to pretend to stifle a yawn while face to face with the most exalted of patrons,—a revelation of courage which, being carefully timed, usually put the patron in a corner from which she could escape only by paying a heavy ransom.

He sometimes had a way of implying,—by his manner, of course,—that he would rather not sell the treasure at all than to have it go into *your* mansion, where it would be manifestly alone in its splendour, notwithstanding the priceless articles you had picked up elsewhere in previous efforts to inhabit the place with glory. On the other hand, if you happened to be nobody at all and therefore likely to resent being squelched, he could sell you a ten-dollar candlestick quite as amiably as the humblest clerk in the place. Indeed, he was quite capable of giving it to you for nine dollars if he found he had not quite correctly sized you up in the beginning.

As he never erred in sizing up people of the Smith-Parvis ilk, however, his profits were sublime. Accident, and nothing less, brought him into contact with the common people looking for bargains: such as the faulty adjustment of his monocle, or a similarity in backs, or the perverseness of the telephone, or a sudden shower. Sudden showers always remind pedestrians without umbrellas that they've been meaning for a long time to stop in and price things, and they clutter up the place so.

Mrs. Smith-Parvis was bent on discovering something cheap and unusual for the twins, whose joint birthday anniversary was but two days off. It occurred to her that it would be wise to give them another heirloom apiece. Something English, of course, in view of the fact that her husband's forebears had come over from England with the twenty or thirty thousand voyagers who stuffed the *Mayflower* from stem to stern on her historic maiden trip across the Atlantic.

Secretly, she had never got over being annoyed with the twins for having come regardless, so to speak. She had prayed for another boy like Stuyvesant, and along came the twins—no doubt as a sort of sop in the form of good measure. If there had to be twins, why under heaven couldn't she have been

blessed with them on Stuyvesant's natal day? She couldn't have had too many Stuyvesants.

Still, she considered it her duty to be as nice as possible to the twins, now that she had them; and besides, they were growing up to be surprisingly pretty girls, with a pleasantly increasing resemblance to Stuyvesant.

Always, a day or two prior to the anniversary, she went surreptitiously into the antique shops and picked out for each of them a piece of jewellery, or a bit of china, or a strip of lace, or anything else that bore evidence of having once been in a very nice sort of family. On the glad morning she delivered her gifts, with sweet impressiveness, into the keeping of these remote little descendants of her beloved ancestors! Invariably something English, heirlooms that she had kept under lock and key since the day they came to Mr. Smith-Parvis under the terms of his great-grandmother's will. Up to the time Stuyvesant was sixteen he had been getting heirlooms from a long-departed great-grandfather, but on reaching that vital age, he declared that he preferred cash.

The twins had a rare assortment of family heirlooms in the little glass cabinets upstairs.

"You must cherish them for ever," said their mother, without compunction. "They represent a great deal more than mere money, my dears. They are the intrinsic bonds that connect you with a glorious past."

When they were ten she gave them a pair of beautiful miniatures,—a most alluring and imperial looking young lady with powdered hair, and a gallant young gentleman with orders pinned all over his bright red coat. It appears that the lady of the miniature was a great personage at court a great many years before the misguided Colonists revolted against King George the Third, and they —her darling twins—were directly descended from her. The gentleman was her husband.

"He was awfully handsome," one of the twins had said, being romantic. "Are we descended from him too, mamma?" she inquired innocently.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis severely.

A predecessor of Miss Emsdale's got her walking papers for putting nonsense (as well as the truth) into the heads of the children. At least, she told them

something that paved the way for a most embarrassing disclosure by one of the twins when a visitor was complimenting them on being such nice, lovely little ladies.

"We ought to be," said Eudora proudly. "We are descended from Madam du Barry. We've got her picture upstairs."

Mrs. Smith-Parvis took Miss Emsdale with her on this particular Thursday afternoon. This was at the suggestion of Stuyvesant, who held forth that an English governess was in every way qualified to pass upon English wares, new or old, and there wasn't any sense in getting "stung" when there was a way to protect oneself, and all that sort of thing.

Stuyvesant also joined the hunt.

"Rather a lark, eh, what?" he whispered in Miss Emsdale's ear as they followed his stately mother into the shop of Juneo & Co. She jerked her arm away.

The proprietor was haled forth. Courteous, suave and polished though he was, Signor Juneo had the misfortune to be a trifle shabby, and sartorially remiss. Mrs. Smith-Parvis eyed him from a peak,—a very lofty peak.

Ten minutes sufficed to convince her that he had nothing in his place that she could think of buying.

"My dear sir," she said haughtily, "I know just what I want, so don't try to palm off any of this jewellery on me. Miss Emsdale knows the Queen Anne period quite as well as I do, I've no doubt. Queen Anne never laid eyes on that wristlet, Mr. Juneo."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Smith-Parvis, I fear you misunderstood me," said the little dealer politely. "I think I said that it was of Queen Anne's period—"

"What time is it, Stuyvesant?" broke in the lady, turning her back on the merchant. "We must be getting on to Pickett's. It is really a waste of time, coming to places like this. One should go to Pickett's in the first—"

"There are a lot of ripping things here, mater," said Stuyvesant, his eyes resting on a comfortable couch in a somewhat secluded corner of the shop. "Take

a look around. Miss Emsdale and I will take a back seat, so that you may go about it with an open mind. I daresay we confuse you frightfully, tagging at your heels all the time, what? Come along, Miss Emsdale. You look fagged and—"

"Thank you, I am quite all right," said Miss Emsdale, the red spots in her cheeks darkening.

"Oh, be a sport," he urged, under his voice. "I've just got to have a few words with you. It's been days since we've had a good talk. Looks as though you were deliberately avoiding me."

"I am," said she succinctly.

Mrs. Smith-Parvis had gone on ahead with Signor Juneo, and was loudly criticizing a beautiful old Venetian mirror which he had the temerity to point out to her.

"Well, I don't like it," Stuyvesant said roughly. "That sort of thing doesn't go with me, Miss Emsdale. And, hang it all, why haven't you had the decency to answer the two notes I stuck under your door last night and the night before?"

"I did not read the second one," she said, flushing painfully. "You have no right to assume that I will meet you—oh, *can't* you be a gentleman?"

He gasped. "My God! Can you beat *that*!"

"It is becoming unbearable, Mr. Smith-Parvis," said she, looking him straight in the eye. "If you persist, I shall be compelled to speak to your mother."

"Go ahead," he said sarcastically. "I'm ready for exposure if you are."

"And I am now prepared to give up my position," she added, white and calm.

"Good!" he exclaimed promptly. "I'll see that you never regret it," he went on eagerly, his enormous vanity reaching out for but one conclusion.

"You beast!" she hissed, and walked away.

He looked bewildered. "I'm blowed if I understand what's got into women lately," he muttered, and passed his fingers over his brow.

On the way to Pickett's, Mrs. Smith-Parvis dilated upon the unspeakable Mr. Juneo.

"You will be struck at once, Miss Emsdale, by the contrast. The instant you come in contact with Mr. Moody, at Pickett's—he is really the head of the firm,—you will experience the delightful,—and unique, I may say,—sensation of being in the presence of a cultured, high-bred gentleman. They are most uncommon among shop-keepers in these days. This little Juneo is as common as dirt. He hasn't a shred of good-breeding. Utterly low-class Neapolitan person, I should say at a venture,—although I have never been by way of knowing any of the lower class Italians. They must be quite dreadful in their native gutters. Now, Mr. Moody,—but you shall see. Really, he is so splendid that one can almost imagine him in the House of Lords, or being privileged to sit down in the presence of the king, or— My word, Stuyvesant, what are you scowling at?"

"I'm not scowling," growled Stuyvesant, from the little side seat in front of them.

"He actually makes me feel sometimes as though I were dirt under his feet," went on Mrs. Smith-Parvis.

"Oh, come now, mother, you know I never make you feel anything of the—"

"I was referring to Mr. Moody, dear."

"Oh,—well," said he, slightly crestfallen.

Miss Emsdale suppressed a desire to giggle. Moody, a footman without the normal supply of aitches; Juneo, a nobleman with countless generations of nobility behind him!

The car drew up to the curb on the side street paralleling Pickett's. Another limousine had the place of vantage ahead of them.

"Blow your horn, Galpin," ordered Mrs. Smith-Parvis. "They have no right to stand there, blocking the way."

"It's Mrs. Millidew's car, madam," said the footman up beside Galpin.

"Never mind, Galpin," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis hastily. "We will get out here.

It's only a step."

Miss Emsdale started. A warm red suffused her cheeks. She had not seen Trotter since that day in Bramble's book-shop. Her heart began to beat rapidly.

Trotter was standing on the curb, carrying on a conversation with some one inside the car. He too started perceptibly when his gaze fell upon the third person to emerge from the Smith-Parvis automobile. Almost instantly his face darkened and his tall frame stiffened. He had taken a second look at the first person to emerge. The reply he was in process of making to the occupant of his own car suffered a collapse. It became disjointed, incoherent and finally came to a halt. He was afforded a slight thrill of relief when Miss Emsdale deliberately ignored the hand that was extended to assist her in alighting.

Mrs. Millidew, the younger, turned her head to glance at the passing trio. Her face lighted with a slight smile of recognition. The two Smith-Parvises bowed and smiled in return.

"Isn't she beautiful?" said Mrs. Smith-Parvis to her son, without waiting to get out of earshot.

"Oh, rather," said he, quite as distinctly.

"Who is that extremely pretty girl?" inquired Mrs. Millidew, the younger, also quite loudly, addressing no one in particular.

Trotter cleared his throat.

"Oh, you wouldn't know, of course," she observed. "Go on, Trotter. You were telling me about your family in—was it Chester? Your dear old mother and the little sisters. I am very much interested."

Trotter looked around cautiously, and again cleared his throat.

"It is awfully good of you to be interested in my people," he said, an uneasy note in his voice. For his life, he could not remember just what he had been telling her in response to her inquiries. The whole thing had been knocked out of his head by the sudden appearance of one who knew that he had no dear old mother in Chester, nor little sisters anywhere who depended largely on him for support! "Chester," he said, rather vaguely. "Yes, to be sure,—Chester. Not far

from Liverpool, you know,—it's where the cathedral is."

"Tell me all about them," she persisted, leaning a little closer to the window, an encouraging smile on her carmine lips.

In due time the impassive Mr. Moody issued forth from his private office and bore down upon the two matrons, who, having no especial love for each other, were striving their utmost to be cordial without compromising themselves by being agreeable.

Mrs. Millidew the elder, arrayed in many colours, was telling Mrs. Smith-Parvis about a new masseuse she had discovered, and Mrs. Smith-Parvis was talking freely at the same time about a person named Juneo.

Miss Emsdale had drifted over toward the broad show window looking out upon the cross-town street, where Thomas Trotter was visible,—out of the corner of her eye. Also the younger Mrs. Millidew.

Stuyvesant, sullenly smoking a cigarette, lolled against a show-case across the room, dropping ashes every minute or two into the mouth of a fragile and, for the time being, priceless vase that happened to be conveniently located near his elbow.

Mr. Moody adjusted his monocle and eyed his matronly visitors in a most unfeeling way.

"Ah,—good awfternoon, Mrs. Millidew. Good awfternoon, Mrs. Smith-Parvis," he said, and then catching sight of an apparently neglected customer in the offing, beckoned to a smart looking salesman, and said, quite loudly:

"See what that young man wants, Proctor."

The young man, who happened to be young Mr. Smith-Parvis, started violently,—and glared.

"Stupid blight-ah!" he said, also quite loudly, and disgustedly chucked his cigarette into the vase, whereupon the salesman, in some horror, grabbed it up and dumped the contents upon the floor.

"You shouldn't do that, you know," he said, in a moment of righteous

forgetfulness. "That's a peach-blow—"

"Oh, is it?" snapped Stuyvesant, and walked away.

"That is my son, Mr. Moody," explained Mrs. Smith-Parvis quickly. "Poor dear, he hates so to shop with me."

"Ah,—ah, I see," drawled Mr. Moody. "Your son? Yes, yes." And then, as an afterthought, with a slight elevation of one eyebrow, "Bless my soul, Mrs. Smith-Parvis, you amaze me. It's incredible. You cawn't convince me that you have a son as old as— Well, now, really it's a bit thick."

"I—I'm not spoofing you, Mr. Moody," cried Mrs. Smith-Parvis delightedly.

His face relaxed slightly. One might have detected the faint, suppressed gleam of a smile in his eyes,—but it was so brief, so evanescent that it would be folly to put it down as such.

The ensuing five minutes were devoted entirely to manœuvres on the part of all three. Mrs. Smith-Parvis was trying to shunt Mrs. Millidew on to an ordinary salesman, and Mrs. Millidew was standing her ground, resolute in the same direction. The former couldn't possibly inspect heirlooms under the eye of that old busy-body, nor could the latter resort to cajolery in the effort to obtain a certain needle-point chair at bankrupt figures. As for Mr. Moody, he was splendid. The lordliest duke in all of Britain could not have presented a truer exemplification of lordliness than he. He quite outdid himself. The eighth letter in the alphabet behaved in a most gratifying manner; indeed, he even took chances with it, just to see how it would act if he were not watching it,—and not once did it fail him.

"But, of course, one never can find anything one wants unless one goes to the really exclusive places, you know," Mrs. Smith-Parvis was saying. "It is a waste of time, don't you think?"

"Quate—oh, yes, quate," drawled Mr. Moody, in a roving sort of way. That is to say, his interest seemed to be utterly detached, as if nothing that Mrs. Smith-Parvis said really mattered.

"Naturally we try to find things in the cheaper places before we come here," went on the lady boldly.

"More int'resting," said Mr. Moody, indulgently eyeing a great brass lanthorn that hung suspended over Mrs. Millidew's bonnet,—but safely to the left of it, he decided.

"I've been looking for something odd and quaint and—and—you know,—of the Queen Anne period,—trinkets, you might say, Mr. Moody. What have you in that—"

"Queen Anne? Oh, ah, yes, to be sure,—Queen Anne. Yes, yes. I see. 'Pon my soul, Mrs. Smith-Parvis, I fear we haven't anything at all. Most uncommon dearth of Queen Anne material nowadays. We cawn't get a thing. Snapped up in England, of course. I know of some extremely rare pieces to be had in New York, however, and, while I cannot procure them for you myself, I should be charmed to give you a letter to the dealer who has them."

"Oh, how kind of you. That is really most gracious of you."

"Mr. Juneo, of Juneo & Co., has quite a stock," interrupted Mr. Moody tolerantly,—"quite a remarkable collection, I may say. Indeed, nothing finer has been brought to New York in—in—in—"

Mr. Moody faltered. His whole manner underwent a swift and peculiar change. His eyes were riveted upon the approaching figure of a young lady. Casually, from time to time, his roving, detached gaze had rested upon her back as she stood near the window. As a back, it did not mean anything to him.

But now she was approaching,—and a queer, cold little something ran swiftly down his spine. It was Lady Jane Thorne!

Smash went his house of cards into a jumbled heap. It collapsed from a lofty height. Lady Jane Thorne!

No use trying to lord it over her! She was the real thing! Couldn't put on "lugs" with her,—not a bit of it! She knew!

His monocle dropped. He tried to catch it. Missed!

"My word!" he mumbled, as he stooped over to retrieve it from the rug at his feet. The exertion sent a ruddy glow to his neck and ears and brow.

"Did you break it?" cried Mrs. Millidew.

He stuck it in his waist-coat pocket without examination.

"This is Miss Emsdale, our governess," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis. "She's an English girl, Mr. Moody."

"Glad to meet you," stammered Mr. Moody, desperately.

"How do you do, Mr. Moody," said Jane, in the most matter-of-fact way.

Mr. Moody knew that she was a paid governess. He had known it for many months. But that didn't alter the case. She was the "real thing." He couldn't put on any "side" with her. He couldn't bring himself to it, not if his life depended on it. Not even if she had been a scullery-maid and appeared before him in greasy ginghams. All very well to "stick it on" with these fashionable New Yorkers, but when it came to the daughter of the Earl of Wexham,—well, it didn't matter *what* she was as long as he knew *who* she was.

His mask was off.

The change in his manner was so abrupt, so complete, that his august customers could not fail to notice it. Something was wrong with the poor man! Certainly he was not himself. He looked ill,—at any rate, he did not look as well as usual. Heart, that's what it was, flashed through Mrs. Millidew's brain. Mrs. Smith-Parvis took it to be vertigo. Sometimes her husband looked like that when —

"Will you please excuse me, ladies,—just for a moment or two?" he mumbled, in a most extraordinary voice. "I will go at once and write a note to Mr. Juneo. Make yourselves at 'ome. And—and—" He shot an appealing glance at Miss Emsdale,—"and you too, Miss."

In a very few minutes a stenographer came out of the office into which Mr. Moody had disappeared, with a typewritten letter to Mr. Juneo, and the word that Mr. Moody had been taken suddenly ill and begged to be excused. He hoped that they would be so gracious as to allow Mr. Paddock to show them everything they had in stock,—and so on.

"It was so sudden," said Mrs. Millidew. "I never saw such a change in a man

in all my life. Heart, of course. High living, you may be sure. It gets them every time."

"I shall run in tomorrow and tell him about Dr. Brodax," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis firmly. "He ought to see the best man in the city, of course, and no one—"

"For the Lord's sake, don't let him get into the clutches of that man Brodax," interrupted Mrs. Millidew. "He is—"

"No, thank you, Mr. Paddock,—I sha'n't wait. Another day will do just as well. Come, Miss Emsdale. Good-bye, my dear. Come and see me."

"Dr. Brown stands at the very top of the profession as a heart specialist. He —"

"I've never heard of him," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis icily, and led the way to the sidewalk, her head very high. You could say almost anything you pleased to Mrs. Smith-Parvis about her husband, or her family, or her religion, or even her figure, but you couldn't belittle her doctor. That was lese-majesty. She wouldn't have it.

A more or less peaceful expedition came to grief within sixty seconds after its members reached the sidewalk,—and in a most astonishing manner.

Stuyvesant was in a nasty humour. He had not noticed Thomas Trotter before. Coming upon the tall young man suddenly, after turning the corner of the building, he was startled into an expression of disgust. Trotter was holding open the limousine door for Mrs. Millidew, the elder.

Young Mr. Smith-Parvis stopped short and stared in a most offensive manner at Mrs. Millidew's chauffeur.

"By gad, you weren't long in getting a job after Carpenter fired you, were you? Fish!"

Now, there is no way in the world to recall the word "fish" after it has been uttered in the tone employed by Stuyvesant. Ordinarily it is a most inoffensive word, and signifies something delectable. In French it is *poisson*, and we who know how to pronounce it say it with pleasure and gusto, quite as we say *pomme de terre* when we mean potato. If Stuyvesant had said *poisson*, the chances are

that nothing would have happened. But he didn't. He said fish.

No doubt Thomas Trotter was in a bad humour also. He was a very sensible young man, and there was no reason why he should be jealous of Stuyvesant Smith-Parvis. He had it from Miss Emsdale herself that she loathed and despised the fellow. And yet he saw red when she passed him a quarter of an hour before with Stuyvesant at her side. For some time he had been harassed by the thought that if she had not caught sight of him as she left the car, the young man's offer of assistance might not have been spurned. In any event, there certainly was something queer afoot. Why was she driving about with Mrs. Smith-Parvis, —*and* Stuyvesant,—as if she were one of the family and not a paid employé?

In the twinkling of an eye, Thomas Trotter forgot that he was a chauffeur. He remembered only that he was Lord Eric Carruthers Ethelbert Temple, the grandson of a soldier, the great-grandson of a soldier, and the great-great grandson of a soldier whose father and grandfather had been soldiers before him.

Thomas Trotter would have said,—and quite properly, too, considering his position:—"Quite so, sir."

Lord Temple merely put his face a little closer to Stuyvesant's and said, very audibly, very distinctly: "You go to hell!"

Stuyvesant fell back a step. He could not believe his ears. The fellow couldn't have said—and yet, there was no possible way of making anything else out of it. He *had* said "You go to hell."

Fortunately he had said it in the presence of ladies. Made bold by the continued presence of at least three ladies, Stuyvesant, assuming that a chauffeur would not dare go so far as a physical retort, snapped his fingers under Trotter's nose and said:

"For two cents I'd kick you all over town for that."

Miss Emsdale erred slightly in her agitation. She grasped Stuyvesant's arm. Trotter also erred. He thought she was trying to keep Smith-Parvis from carrying out the threat.

Mrs. Millidew, the elder, cried out sharply: "What's all this? Trotter, get up on the seat at once. I—"

Mrs. Millidew, the younger, leaned from the window and patted Trotter on the shoulder. Her eyes were sparkling.

"Give it to him, Trotter. Don't mind me!" she cried.

Stuyvesant turned to Miss Emsdale. "Don't be alarmed, my dear. I sha'n't do it, you know. Pray compose yourself. I—"

At that juncture Lord Eric Temple reached out and, with remarkable precision, grasped Stuyvesant's nose between his thumb and forefinger. One sharp twist brought a surprised grunt from the owner of the nose, a second elicited a pained squeak, and the third,—pressed upward as well as both to the right and left,—resulted in a sharp howl of anguish.

The release of his nose was attended by a sudden push that sent Stuyvesant backward two or three steps.

"Oh, my God!" he gasped, and felt for his nose. There were tears in his eyes. There would have been tears in anybody's eyes after those merciless tweaks.

Finding his nose still attached, he struck out wildly with both fists, a blind fury possessing him. Even a coward will strike if you pull his nose severely enough. As Trotter remained motionless after the distressing act of Lord Temple, Stuyvesant missed him by a good yard and a half, but managed to connect solidly with the corner of the limousine, barking his knuckles, a circumstance which subsequently provided him with something to substantiate his claim to having planted a "good one" on the blighter's jaw.

His hat fell off and rolled still farther away from the redoubtable Trotter, luckily in the direction of the Smith-Parvis car. By the time Stuyvesant retrieved it, after making several clutches in his haste, he was, singularly enough, beyond the petrified figure of his mother.

"Call the police! Call the police!" Mrs. Smith-Parvis was whimpering. "Where are the police?"

Mrs. Millidew, the elder, cried out sharply: "Hush up! Don't be idiotic! Do you want to attract the police and a crowd and—What do you mean, Trotter, by attacking Mr. Smith-Par—"

"Get out of the way, mother," roared Stuyvesant. "Let me at him! Don't hold me! I'll break his infernal neck—Shut up!" His voice sank to a hoarse whisper. "We don't want the police. Shut up, I say! My God, don't make a scene!"

"Splendid!" cried Mrs. Millidew, the younger, enthusiastically, addressing herself to Trotter. "Perfectly splendid!"

Trotter, himself once more, calmly stepped to the back of the car to see what, if any, damage Stuyvesant had done to the polished surface!

Mrs. Smith-Parvis advanced. Her eyes were blazing.

"You filthy brute!" she exclaimed.

Up to this instant, Miss Emsdale had not moved. She was very white and breathless. Now her eyes flashed ominously.

"Don't you dare call him a brute," she cried out.

Mrs. Smith-Parvis gasped, but was speechless in the face of this amazing defection. Stuyvesant opened his lips to speak, but observing that the traffic policeman at the Fifth Avenue corner was looking with some intensity at the little group, changed his mind and got into the automobile.

"Come on!" he called out. "Get in here, both of you. I'll attend to this fellow later on. Come on, I say!"

"How dare you speak to me in that manner?" flared Mrs. Smith-Parvis, turning from Trotter to the girl. "What do you mean, Miss Emsdale? Are you defending this—"

"Yes, I am defending him," cried Jane, passionately. "He—he didn't do half enough to him."

"Good girl!" murmured Trotter, radiant.

"That will do!" said Mrs. Smith-Parvis imperiously. "I shall not require your services after today, Miss Emsdale."

"Oh, good Lord, mother,—don't be a fool," cried Stuyvesant. "Let me straighten this thing out. I—"

"As you please, madam," said Jane, drawing herself up to her full height.

"Drive to Dr. Brodax's, Galpin, as quickly as possible," directed Stuyvesant's mother, and entered the car beside her son.

The footman closed the door and hopped up beside the chauffeur. He was very pink with excitement.

"Oh, for heaven's sake—" began her son furiously, but the closing of the door smothered the rest of the complaint.

"You may also take your notice, Trotter," said Mrs. Millidew the elder. "I can't put up with such behaviour as this."

"Very good, madam. I'm sorry. I—"

Miss Emsdale was walking away. He did not finish the sentence. His eyes were following her and they were full of concern.

"You may come to me tomorrow, Trotter," said Mrs. Millidew, the younger. "Now, don't glare at me, mother-in-law," she added peevishly. "You've dismissed him, so don't, for heaven's sake, croak about me stealing him away from you."

Trotter's employer closed her jaws with a snap, then opened them instantly to exclaim:

"No, you don't, my dear. I withdraw the notice, Trotter. You stay on with me. Drop Mrs. Millidew at her place first, and then drive me home. That's all right, Dolly. I don't care if it is out of our way. I wouldn't leave you alone with him for anything in the world."

Trotter sighed. Miss Emsdale had turned the corner.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE FOG

MISS EMSDALE did not ask Mrs. Smith-Parvis for a "reference." She dreaded the interview that was set for seven o'clock that evening. The butler had informed her on her return to the house shortly after five that Mrs. Smith-Parvis would see her at seven in the library, after all, instead of in her boudoir, and she was to look sharp about being prompt.

The young lady smiled. "It's all one to me, Rogers,—the library or the boudoir."

"First it was the boudoir, Miss, and then it was the library, and then the boudoir again,—and now the library. It seems to be quite settled, however. It's been nearly 'arf an hour since the last change was made. Shouldn't surprise me if it sticks."

"It gives me an hour and a half to get my things together," said she, much more brightly than he thought possible in one about to be "sacked." "Will you be good enough to order a taxi for me at half-past seven, Rogers?"

Rogers stiffened. This was not the tone or the manner of a governess. He had a feeling that he ought to resent it, and yet he suddenly found himself powerless to do so. No one had spoken to him in just that way in fifteen years.

"Very good, Miss Emsdale. Seven-thirty." He went away strangely puzzled, and not a little disgusted with himself.

She expected to find that Stuyvesant had carried out his threat to vilify her, and was prepared for a bitter ten minutes with the outraged mistress of the house, who would hardly let her escape without a severe lacing. She would be dismissed without a "character."

She packed her boxes and the two or three hand-bags that had come over from London with her. A heightened colour was in her cheeks, and there was a repelling gleam in her blue eyes. She was wondering whether she could keep

herself in hand during the tirade. Her temper was a hot one.

A not distant Irish ancestor occasionally got loose in her blood and played havoc with the strain inherited from a whole regiment of English forebears. On such occasions, she flared up in a fine Celtic rage, and then for days afterwards was in a penitential mood that shamed the poor old Irish ghost into complete and grovelling subjection.

What she saw in the mirror over her dressing-table warned her that if she did not keep a pretty firm grip tonight on the throat of that wild Irishman who had got into the family-tree ages before the twig represented by herself appeared, Mrs. Smith-Parvis was reasonably certain to hear from him. A less captious observer, leaning over her shoulder, would have taken an entirely different view of the reflection. He (obviously he) would have pronounced it ravishing.

Promptly at seven she entered the library. To her dismay, Mrs. Smith-Parvis was not alone. Her husband was there, and also Stuyvesant. If her life had depended on it, she could not have conquered the impulse to favour the latter's nose with a rather penetrating stare. A slight thrill of satisfaction shot through her. It *did* seem to be a trifle red and enlarged.

Mr. Smith-Parvis, senior, was nervous. Otherwise he would not have risen from his comfortable chair.

"Good evening, Miss Emsdale," he said, in a palliative tone. "Have this chair. Ahem!" Catching a look from his wife, he sat down again, and laughed quite loudly and mirthlessly, no doubt actuated by a desire to put the governess at her ease,—an effort that left him rather flat and wholly non-essential, it may be said.

His wife lifted her lorgnon. She seemed a bit surprised and nonplussed on beholding Miss Emsdale.

"Oh, I remember. It is you, of course."

Miss Emsdale had the effrontery to smile. "Yes, Mrs. Smith-Parvis."

Stuyvesant felt of his nose. He did it without thinking, and instantly muttered something under his breath.

"We owe you, according to my calculations, fifty-five dollars and eighty-two

cents," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis, abruptly consulting a tablet. "Seventeen days in this month. Will you be good enough to go over it for yourself? I do not wish to take advantage of you."

"I sha'n't be exacting," said Miss Emsdale, a wave of red rushing to her brow. "I am content to accept your—"

"Be good enough to figure it up, Miss Emsdale," insisted the other coldly. "We must have no future recriminations. Thirty-one days in this month. Thirty-one into one hundred goes how many times?"

"I beg pardon," said the girl, puzzled. "Thirty-one into one hundred?"

"Can't you do sums? It's perfectly simple. Any school child could do it in a—in a jiffy."

"Quite simple," murmured her husband. "I worked it out for Mrs. Smith-Parvis in no time at all. Three dollars and twenty-two and a half cents a day. Perfectly easy, if you—"

"I am sure it is quite satisfactory," said Miss Emsdale coldly.

"Very well. Here is a check for the amount," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis, laying the slip of paper on the end of the library table. "And now, Miss Emsdale, I feel constrained to tell you how gravely disappointed I am in you. For half-a-year I have laboured under the delusion that you were a lady, and qualified to have charge of two young and innocent—"

"Oh, Lord," groaned Stuyvesant, fidgeting in his chair.

"—young and innocent girls. I find, however, that you haven't the first instincts of a lady. I daresay it is too much to expect." She sighed profoundly. "I know something about the lower classes in London, having been at one time interested in settlement work there in connection with Lady Bannistell's committee, and I am aware that too much should not be expected of them. That is to say, too much in the way of—er—delicacy. Still, I thought you might prove to be an exception. I have learned my lesson. I shall in the future engage only German governesses. From time to time I have observed little things in you that disquieted me, but I overlooked them because you appeared to be earnestly striving to overcome the handicap placed upon you at birth. For example, I have

found cigarette stubs in your room when I—"

"Oh, I say, mother," broke in Stuyvesant; "cut it out."

"My dear!"

"You'd smoke 'em yourself if father didn't put up such a roar about it. Lot of guff about your grandmothers turning over in their graves. I don't see anything wrong in a woman smoking cigarettes. Besides, you may be accusing Miss Emsdale unjustly. What proof have you that the stubs were hers?"

"I distinctly said that I found them in her room," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis icily. "I don't know how they got there."

"Circumstantial evidence," retorted Stuyvie, an evil twist at one corner of his mouth. "Doesn't prove that she smoked 'em, does it?" He met Miss Emsdale's burning gaze for an instant, and then looked away. "Might have been the housekeeper. She smokes."

"It was not the housekeeper," said Jane quietly. "I smoke."

"We are digressing," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis sternly. "There are other instances of your lack of refinement, Miss Emsdale, but I shall not recite them. Suffice to say, I deeply deplore the fact that my children have been subject to contamination for so long. I am afraid they have acquired—"

Jane had drawn herself up haughtily. She interrupted her employer.

"Be good enough, Mrs. Smith-Parvis, to come to the point," she said. "Have you nothing more serious to charge me with than smoking? Out with it! Let's have the worst."

"How dare you speak to me in that—My goodness!" She half started up from her chair. "What *have* you been up to? Drinking? Or some low affair with the butler? Good heavens, have I been harbouring a—"

"Don't get so excited, momsey," broke in Stuyvesant, trying to transmit a message of encouragement to Miss Emsdale by means of sundry winks and frowns and cautious head-shakings. "Keep your hair on."

"My—my hair?" gasped his mother.

Mr. Smith-Parvis got up. "Stuyvesant, you'd better retire," he said, noisily. "Remember, sir, that you are speaking to your mother. It came out at the time of her illness,—when we were so near to losing her,—and you—"

"Keep still, Philander," snapped Mrs. Smith-Parvis, very red in the face. "It came in again, thicker than before," she could not help explaining. "And don't be absurd, Stuyvesant. This is my affair. Please do not interfere again. I—What was I saying?"

"Something about drinking and the butler, Mrs. Smith-Parvis," said Jane, drily. It was evident that Stuyvesant had not carried tales to his mother. She would not have to defend herself against a threatened charge. Her sense of humour was at once restored.

"Naturally I cannot descend to the discussion of anything so perfectly vile. Your conduct this afternoon is sufficient—ah,—sufficient unto the day. I am forced to dismiss you without a reference. Furthermore, I consider it my duty to protect other women as unsuspecting as I have been. You are in no way qualified to have charge of young and well-bred girls. No apology is desired," she hastily declared, observing symptoms of protest in the face of the delinquent; "so please restrain yourself. I do not care to hear a single word of apology, or any appeal to be retained. You may go now, my girl. Spare us the tears. I am not turning you out into the streets tonight. You may remain until tomorrow morning."

"I am going tonight," said Jane, quite white,—with suppressed anger.

"It isn't necessary," said the other, loftily.

"Where are you going?" inquired Mr. Smith-Parvis, senior, fumbling with his nose-glasses. "Have you any friends in the city?"

Miss Emsdale ignored the question. She picked up the check and folded it carefully.

"I should like to say good-bye to the—to Eudora and Lucille," she said, with an effort.

"That is out of the question," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis.

Jane deliberately turned her back upon Mrs. Smith-Parvis and moved toward the door. It was an eloquent back. Mrs. Smith-Parvis considered it positively insulting.

"Stop!" she cried out. "Is that the way to leave a room, Miss Emsdale? Please remember who and what you are. I can not permit a servant to be insolent to me."

"Oh, come now, Angela, dear," began Mr. Smith-Parvis, uncomfortably. "Seems to me she walks properly enough. What's the matter with her—There, she's gone! I can't see what—"

"You would think the hussy imagines herself to be the Queen of England," sputtered Mrs. Smith-Parvis angrily. "I've never seen such airs."

The object of her derision mounted the stairs and entered her bed-chamber on the fourth floor. Her steamer-trunk and her bags were nowhere in sight. A wry little smile trembled on her lips.

"Must you be going?" she said to herself, whimsically, as she adjusted her hat in front of the mirror.

There was no one to say good-bye to her, except Peasley, the footman. He opened the big front door for her, and she passed out into the foggy March night. A fine mist blew upon her hot face.

"Good-bye, Miss," said Peasley, following her to the top of the steps.

"Good-bye, Peasley. Thank you for taking down my things."

"You'll find 'em in the taxi," said he. He peered hard ahead and sniffed. "A bit thick, ain't it? Reminds one of London, Miss." He referred to the fog.

At the bottom of the steps she encountered the irrepressible and somewhat jubilant scion of the house. His soft hat was pulled well down over his eyes, and the collar of his overcoat was turned up about his ears. He promptly accosted her, his voice lowered to an eager, confident undertone.

"Don't cry, little girl," he said. "It isn't going to be bad at all. I—Oh, I say, now, listen to me!"

She tried to pass, but he placed himself directly in her path. The taxi-cab loomed up vaguely through the screen of fog. At the corner below an electric street lamp produced the effect of a huge, circular vignette in the white mist. The raucous barking of automobile horns, and the whir of engines came out of the street, and shadowy will-o'-the-wisp lights scuttled through the yielding, opaque wall.

"Be good enough to let me pass," she cried, suddenly possessed of a strange fear.

"Everything is all right," he said. "I'm not going to see you turned out like this without a place to go—"

"Will you compel me to call for help?" she said, backing away from him.

"Help? Why, hang it all, can't you see that I'm trying to help you? It was a rotten thing for mother to do. Poor little girl, you sha'n't go wandering around the streets looking for—Why, I'd never forgive myself if I didn't do something to offset the cruel thing she's done to you tonight. Haven't I told you all along you could depend on me? Trust me, little girl. I'll—"

Suddenly she blazed out at him.

"I see it all! That is *your* taxi, not mine! So that is your game, is it? You beast!"

"Don't be a damn' fool," he grated. "I ought to be sore as a crab at you, but I'm not. You need me now, and I'm going to stand by you. I'll forgive all that happened today, but you've got to—"

She struck his hand from her arm, and dashed out to the curb.

"Driver!" she cried out. "If you are a man you will protect me from this—"

"Hop in, Miss," interrupted the driver from his seat. "I've got all your bags and things up but,—What's that you're saying?"

"I shall not enter this cab," she said resolutely. "If you are in the pay of this man—"

"I was sent here in answer to a telephone call half an hour ago. That's all I know about it. What's the row?"

"There is no row," said Stuyvesant, coming up. "Get in, Miss Emsdale. I'm through. I've done my best to help you."

But she was now thoroughly alarmed. She sensed abduction.

"No! Stay on your box, my man! Don't get down. I shall walk to my—"

"Go ahead, driver. Take those things to the address I just gave you," said Stuyvesant. "We'll be along later."

"I knew! I knew!" she cried out. In a flash she was running down the sidewalk toward the corner.

He followed her a few paces and then stopped, cursing softly.

"Hey!" called out the driver, springing to the sidewalk. "What's all this? Getting me in wrong, huh? That's what the little roll of bills was for, eh? Well, guess again! Get out of the way, you, or I'll bat you one over the bean."

In less time than it takes to tell it, he had whisked the trunk from the platform of the taxi and the three bags from the interior.

"I ought to beat you up anyhow," he grunted. "The Parkingham Hotel, eh? Fine little place, that! How much did you say was in this roll?"

"Never mind. Give it back to me at once or I'll—I'll call the police."

"Go ahead! Call your head off. Good *night*!"

Ten seconds later, Stuyvesant alone stood guard over the scattered effects on

the curb. A tail-light winked blearily at him for an additional second or two, the taxi chortled disdainfully, and seemed to grind its teeth as it joined the down-town ghosts.

"Blighter!" shouted Stuyvesant, and urged by a sudden sense of alarm, strode rapidly away,—not in the wake of Miss Emsdale nor toward the house from which she had been banished, but diagonally across the street. A glance in the direction she had taken revealed no sign of her, but the sound of excited voices reached his ear. On the opposite sidewalk he slowed down to a walk, and peering intently into the fog, listened with all his ears for the return of the incomprehensible governess, accompanied by a patrolman!

A most amazing thing had happened to Lady Jane. At the corner below she bumped squarely into a pedestrian hurrying northward.

"I'm sorry," exclaimed the pedestrian. He did not say "excuse me" or "I beg pardon."

Jane gasped. "Tom—Mr. Trotter!"

"Jane!" cried the man in surprise. "I say, what's up? 'Gad, you're trembling like a leaf."

She tried to tell him.

"Take a long breath," he suggested gently, as the words came swiftly and disjointedly from her lips.

She did so, and started all over again. This time he was able to understand her.

"Wait! Tell me the rest later on," he interrupted. "Come along! This looks pretty ugly to me. By gad, I—I believe he was planning to abduct you or something as—"

"I must have a policeman," she protested, holding back. "I was looking for one when you came up."

"Nonsense! We don't need a bobby. I can take care of—"

"But that man will make off with my bags."

"We'll see," he cried, and she was swept along up the street, running to keep pace with his prodigious strides. He had linked his arm through hers.

They found her effects scattered along the edge of the sidewalk. Trotter laughed, but it was not a good-humoured laugh.

"Skipped!" he grated. "I might have known it. Now, let me think. What is the next, the best thing to do? Go up there and ring that doorbell and—"

"No! You are not to do that. Sit down here beside me. My—my knees are frightfully shaky. So silly of them. But I—I—really it was quite a shock I had, Mr. Trotter."

"Better call me Tom,—for the present at least," he suggested, sitting down beside her on the trunk.

"What a strange coincidence," she murmured. There was not much room on the trunk for two. He sat quite on one end of it.

"You mean,—sitting there?" he inquired, blankly.

"No. Your turning up as you did,—out of a clear sky."

"I shouldn't call it clear," said he, suddenly diffident. "Thick as a blanket."

"It was queer, though, wasn't it?"

"Not a bit. I've been walking up and down past this house for twenty minutes at least. We were bound to meet. Sit still. I'll keep an eye out for an empty taxi. The first thing to do is to see that you get safely down to Mrs. Sparflight's."

"How did you know I was to go there?" she demanded.

"She told me," said he bluntly.

"She wasn't to tell any one—at present." She peered closely,—at the side of his face.

He abruptly changed the subject. "And then I'll come back here and wait till

he ventures out. I'm off till nine o'clock. I sha'n't pull his nose this time."

"Please explain," she insisted, clutching at his arm as he started to arise. "Did she send you up here, Mr. Trotter?"

"No, she didn't," said he, almost gruffly, and stood up to hail an approaching automobile. "Can't see a thing," he went on. "We'll just have to stop 'em till we catch one that isn't engaged. Taxi?" he shouted.

"No!" roared a voice from the shroud of mist.

"The butler telephoned for one, I am sure," said she. "He must have been sent away before I came downstairs."

"Don't think about it. You'll get yourself all wrought up and—and—Everything's all right, now, Lady Jane,—I should say Miss—"

"Call me Jane," said she softly.

"You—you don't mind?" he cried, and sat down beside her again. The trunk seemed to have increased in size. At any rate there was room to spare at the end.

"Not—not in the least," she murmured.

He was silent for a long time. "Would you mind calling me Eric,—just once?" he said at last, wistfully. His voice was very low. "I—I'm rather homesick for the sound of my own name, uttered by one of my own people."

"Oh, you poor dear boy!"

"Say 'Eric,'" he pleaded.

"Eric," she half-whispered, suddenly shy.

He drew a long, deep breath, and again was silent for a long time. Both of them appeared to have completely forgotten her plight.

"We're both a long, long way from home, Jane," he said.

"Yes, Eric."

"Odd that we should be sitting here like this, on a trunk, on the sidewalk,—in a fog."

"The 'two orphans,'" she said, with feeble attempt at sprightliness.

"People passing by within a few yards of us and yet we—we're quite invisible." There was a thrill in his voice.

"Almost as if we were in London, Eric,—lovely black old London."

Footsteps went by in the fog in front of them, automobiles slid by behind them, tooting their unheard horns.

"Oh, Jane, I—I can't help it," he whispered in her ear, and his arm went round her shoulders. "I—I love you so."

She put her hand up to his cheek and held it there.

"I—I know it, Eric," she said, ever so softly.

It may have been five minutes, or ten minutes—even so long as half an hour. There is no way to determine the actual lapse of time, or consciousness, that followed her declaration. The patrolman who came up and stopped in front of them, peering hard at the dense, immobile mass that had attracted his attention for the simple reason that it wasn't there when he passed on his uptown round, couldn't have thrown any light on the question. He had no means of knowing just when it began.

"Well, what's all this?" he demanded suspiciously.

Jane sighed, and disengaged herself. Trotter stood up, confronting the questioner.

"We're waiting for a taxi," he said.

"What's this? A trunk?" inquired the officer, tapping the object with his night-stick.

"It is," said Trotter.

"Out of one of these houses along here?" He described a half-circle with his

night-stick.

"Right in front of you."

"That's the Smith-Parvis house. They've got a couple of cars, my bucko. What you givin' me? Whadda you mean taxi?"

"She happens not to be one of the family. The courtesy of the port is not extended to her, you see."

"Hired girl?"

"In a way. I say, officer, be a good fellow. Keep your eye peeled for a taxi as you go along and send it up for us. She had one ordered, but—well, you can see for yourself. It isn't here."

"That's as plain as the nose on your face. I guess I'll just step up to the door and see if it's all right. Stay where you are. Looks queer to me."

"Oh, it isn't necessary to inquire, officer," broke in Jane nervously. "You have my word for it that it's all right."

"Oh, I have, have I? Fine! And what if them bags and things is filled with silver and God knows what? You don't—"

"Go ahead and inquire," said Trotter, pressing her arm encouragingly. "Ask the butler if he didn't call a cab for Miss Emsdale,—and also ask him why in thunder it isn't here."

The patrolman hesitated. "Who are you," he asked, stepping a little closer to Trotter.

"I am this young lady's fiancé," said Trotter, with dignity.

"Her what?"

"Her steady," said Trotter.

The policeman laughed,—good-naturedly, to their relief.

"Oh, well, *that* being the case," said he, and started away. "Excuse me for

buttin' in."

"Sure," said Trotter amiably. "If you see a taxi, old man."

"Leave it to me," came back from the fog.

Jane nestled close to her tall young man. His arm was about her.

"Wasn't he perfectly lovely?" she murmured.

"Everything is perfectly lovely," said he, vastly reassured. He had taken considerable risk with the word "fiancé."

CHAPTER XIII

NOT CLOUDS ALONE HAVE LININGS

THE weather turned off warm. The rise in the temperature may have been responsible for the melting of Princess Mariana Theresa Sebastano Michelini Celestine di Pavesi's heart, or it may have sharply revealed to her calculating mind the prospect of a long and profitless season in cold storage for Prince de Bosky's fur-lined coat. In any event, she notified him by post to call for his coat and take it away with him.

The same post brought a letter from the Countess du Bara advising him that her brother-in-law, who conducted an all-night café just off Broadway in the very heart of the thriftless district, had been compelled to dismiss the leader of his far-famed Czech orchestra, and that she had recommended him for the vacancy. He would have to hurry, however.

In a postscript, she hoped he wouldn't mind wearing a red coat.

The Countess du Bara was of the Opera, where she was known as Mademoiselle Belfort and occupied a fairly prominent position in the front row of chorus sopranos. Some day she was to make her début as a principal. The Director of the Opera had promised her that, and while she regarded his promise as being as good as gold, it was, unfortunately, far more elastic, as may be gathered from the fact that it already had stretched over three full seasons and looked capable of still further extension without being broken.

But that is neither here nor there. It is only necessary to state that the Countess, being young and vigorous and satisfactorily endowed with good looks, was not without faith in the promises of man. In return for the Director's faith in her, she was one day going to make him famous as the discoverer of Corinne Belfort. For the moment, her importance, so far as this narrative is concerned, rests on the fact that her brother-in-law conducts a café and had named his youngest daughter Corinne, a doubtful compliment in view of his profane preference for John or even George. He was an American and had five daughters.

De Bosky was ecstatic. Luck had turned. He was confident, even before he ventured to peer out of his single little window, that the sun was shining brightly and that birds were singing somewhere, if not in the heart of the congested East Side. And sure enough the sun was shining, and hurdy-gurdies were substituting for bobolinks, and the air was reeking of spring. A little wistfully he regretted that the change had not come when he needed the overcoat to shield his shivering body, and when the "opportunity" would have insured an abundance of meat and drink, to say nothing of a couple of extra blankets,—but why lament?

There was a sprightliness in his gait, a gleam in his eyes, and a cheery word on his lips as he forged his way through the suddenly alive streets, and made his way to the Subway station. This morning he would not walk. There was something left of the four dollars he had earned the week before shovelling snow into the city's wagons. True, his hands were stiff and blistered, but all that would respond to the oil of affluence. There was no time to lose. She had said in the postscript that he would have to hurry.

Two hours later he burst excitedly into the bookshop of J. Bramble and exclaimed:

"And now, my dear, good friend, I shall soon be able to return to you the various amounts you have advanced me from time to time, out of the goodness of your heart, and I shall—what do I say?—blow you off to a banquet that even now, in contemplation, makes my own mouth water,—and I shall—"

"Bless my soul," gasped Mr. Bramble. "Would you mind saying *all* of it in English? What is the excitement? Just a moment, please." The latter to a mild-looking gentleman who was poising a book in one hand and inquiring the price with the uplifting of his eyebrows.

De Bosky rapped three or four times on the violin case tucked under his arm.

"After all the years and all the money I spent in mastering this—But, you are busy, my good friend. Pray forgive the interruption—"

"What has happened?" demanded Mr. Bramble, uneasily.

"I have fallen into a fortune. Twenty-five dollars a week,—so!" he said whimsically. "Also I shall restore the five dollars that Trotter forced me to take, —and the odd amounts M. Mirabeau has—Yes, yes, my friend, I am radiant. I

am to lead the new orchestra at Spangler's café. I have concluded negotiations with—ah, how quickly it was done! And I approached him with fear and trembling. I would have played for him, so that he might judge,—but no! He said 'No, no!' It was not necessary. Corinne's word was enough for him. You do not know Corinne. She is beautiful. She is an artiste! One day she will be on the lips of every one. Go! Be quick! The gentleman is departing. You will have lost a—a sale, and all through the fault of me. I beseech you,—catch him quick. Do not permit me to bring you bad luck. Au revoir! I go at once to acquaint M. Mirabeau with—au revoir!"

He dashed up the back stairway, leaving Mr. Bramble agape.

"It was only a ten-cent book," he muttered to the back of the departing customer. "And, besides, you do not belong to the union," he shouted loudly, addressing himself to de Bosky, who stopped short on the stairs.

"The union?"

"The union will not permit you to play," said the bookseller, mounting the steps. "It will permit you to starve but not to play."

"But the man—the man he said it was because I do not belong to the union that he engages me. He says the union holds him, up, what? So! He discharge the union—all of them. We form a new orchestra. Then we don't give a damn, he say. Not a tinkle damn! And Corinne say also not a tinkle damn! And I say not a tinkle damn! *Voila!*"

"God bless my soul," said Mr. Bramble, shaking his head.

M. Mirabeau rejoiced. He embraced the little musician, he pooh-hooed Mr. Bramble's calamitous regard for the union, and he wound up by inviting de Bosky to stop for lunch with him.

"No, no,—impossible," exclaimed de Bosky, feeling in his waistcoat pocket absent-mindedly, and then glancing at a number of M. Mirabeau's clocks in rotation; "no, I have not the time. Your admirable clocks urge me to be off. See! I am to recover the overcoat of my excellent friend, the safe-blower. This letter,—see! Mrs. Moses Jacobs. She tells me to come and take it away with me. Am I not the lucky dog,—no, no! I mean am I not the lucky star? I must be off. She may change her mind. She—"

"Mon dieu! I'd let her change it if I were you," cried M. Mirabeau. "I call it the height of misfortune to possess a fur coat on a day like this. One might as well rejoice over a linen coat in mid-winter. You are excited! Calm yourself. A bit of cold tongue, and a salad, and—"

"Au revoir!" sang out de Bosky from the top of the steps. "And remember! I shall repay you within the fortnight, monsieur. I promise! Ah, it is a beautiful, a glorious day!"

The old Frenchman dashed to the landing and called down after his speeding guest:

"Fetch the coat with you to luncheon. I shall order some moth-balls, and after we've stuffed it full of them, we'll put the poor thing away for a long, long siesta. It shall be like the anaconda. I have a fine cedar chest—"

But Mr. Bramble was speaking from the bottom of the steps.

"And the unfeeling brutes may resort to violence. They often do. They have been known to inflict serious injury upon—"

"Tonight I shall play at Spangler's," cried de Bosky, slapping his chest. "In a red coat,—and I shall not speak the English language. I am the recent importation from Budapesth. So! I am come especially to direct the orchestra—at great expense! In big letters on the menu card it shall be printed that I am late of the Royal Hungarian Orchestra, and at the greatest expense have I been secured. The newspapers shall say that I came across the ocean in a special steamer, all at Monsieur Spangler's expense. I and my red coat! So! Come tonight, my friend. Come and hear the great de Bosky in his little red coat,—and —"

"Do not forget that you are to return for luncheon," sang out M. Mirabeau from the top of the stairs.

There were tears in de Bosky's eyes. "God bless you both," he cried. "But for you I should have starved to death,—as long ago as last week. God bless you!"

His frail body swayed a little as he made his way down the length of the shop. Commanding all his strength of will, he squared his shoulders and stiffened his trembling knees, but not soon enough to delude the observing Mr.

Bramble, who hurried after him, peering anxiously through his horn-rimmed spectacles.

"It is just like you foreigners," he said, overtaking the violinist near the door, and speaking with some energy. "Just like you, I say, to forget to eat breakfast when you are excited. You did not have a bite of breakfast, now did you? Up and out, all excited and eager, forgetting everything but—I say, Mirabeau, lend a hand! He is ready to drop. God bless my soul! Brace up, your highness,—I should say old chap—brace up! Damme, sir, what possessed you to refuse our invitation to dine with us last night? And it was the third time within the week. Answer me that, sir!"

De Bosky sat weakly, limply, pathetically, before the two old men. They had led him to a chair at the back of the shop. Both were regarding him with justifiable severity. He smiled wanly as he passed his hand over his moist, pallid brow.

"You are poor men. Why,—why should I become a charge upon you?"

"Mon dieu!" sputtered M. Mirabeau, lifting his arms on high and shaking his head in absolute despair,—despair, you may be sure, over a most unaccountable and never-to-be-forgotten moment in which he found himself utterly and hopelessly without words.

Mr. Bramble suddenly rammed a hand down into the pocket of his ancient smoking-coat, and fished out a huge, red, glistening apple.

"Here! Eat this!"

De Bosky shook his head. His smile broadened.

"No, thank you. I—I do not like apples."

The bookseller was aghast. Moreover, pity and alarm rendered him singularly inept in the choice of a reply to this definite statement.

"Take it home to the children," he pleaded, with the best intention in the world.

By this time, M. Mirabeau had found his tongue. He took the situation in

hand. With tact and an infinite understanding, he astonished the matter-of-fact Mr. Bramble by appearing to find something amusing in the plight of their friend. He made light of the whole affair. Mr. Bramble, who could see no farther than the fact that the poor fellow was starving, was shocked. It certainly wasn't a thing one should treat as a joke,—and here was the old simpleton chuckling and grinning like a lunatic when he should be—

Lunatic! Mr. Bramble suddenly went cold to the soles of his feet. A horrified look came into his eyes. Could it be possible that something had snapped in the old Frenchman's—but M. Mirabeau was now addressing him instead of the smiling de Bosky.

"Come, come!" he was shouting merrily. "We're not following de Bosky to the grave. He is not even having a funeral. Cheer up! Mon dieu, such a face!"

Mr. Bramble grew rosy. "Blooming rubbish," he snorted, still a trifle apprehensive.

The clock-maker turned again to de Bosky. "Come upstairs at once. I shall myself fry eggs for you, and bacon,—nice and crisp,—and my coffee is not the worst in the world, my friend. *His* is abominable. And toast, hot and buttery,—ah, I am not surprised that your mouth waters!"

"It isn't my mouth that is watering," said de Bosky, wiping his eyes.

"Any fool could see that," said Mr. Bramble, scowling at the maladroit Mirabeau.

It was two o'clock when Prince Waldemar de Bosky took his departure from the hospitable home of the two old men, and, well-fortified in body as well as in spirit, moved upon the stronghold of Mrs. Moses Jacobs.

The chatelaine of "The Royal Exchange. M. Jacobs, Proprietor," received him with surprising cordiality.

"Well, well!" she called out cheerily as he approached the "desk." "I thought you'd never get here. I been waitin' since nine o'clock."

Her dark, heavy face bore signs of a struggle to overcome the set, implacable expression that avarice and suspicion had stamped upon it in the course of a long

and resolute abstinence from what we are prone to call the milk of human kindness. She was actually trying to beam as she leaned across the gem-laden showcase and extended her coarse, unlovely hand to the visitor.

"I am sorry," said he, shaking hands with her. "I have been extremely busy. Besides, on a hot day like this, I could get along very nicely without a fur coat, Mrs. Jacobs."

"Sure!" said she. "It sure is hot today. You ought to thank God you ain't as fat as I am. It's awful on fat people. Well, wasn't you surprised?"

"It was most gracious of you, Mrs. Jacobs," he said with dignity. "I should have come in at once to express my appreciation of your—"

"Oh, that's all right. Don't mention it. You're a decent little feller, de Bosky, and I've got a heart,—although most of these mutts around here don't think so. Yes, sir, I meant it when I said you could tear up the pawn ticket and take the coat—with the best wishes of yours truly."

"Spoken like a lady," said he promptly. He was fanning himself with his hat.

"Mind you, I don't ask you for a penny. The slate is clean. There's the coat, layin' over there on that counter. Take it along. No one can ever say that I'd let a fellow-creature freeze to death for the sake of a five-dollar bill. No, sir! With the compliments of 'The Royal Exchange,'—if you care to put it that way."

"But I cannot permit you to cancel my obligation, Mrs. Jacobs. I shall hand you the money inside of a fortnight. I thank you, however, for the generous impulse—"

"Cut it out," she interrupted genially. "Nix on the sentiment stuff. I'm in a good humour. Don't spoil it by tryin' to be polite. And don't talk about handin' me anything. I won't take it."

"In that case, Mrs. Jacobs, I shall be obliged to leave the coat with you," he said stiffly.

She stared. "You mean,—you won't accept it from me?"

"I borrowed money on it. I can say no more, madam."

"Well, I'll be—" She extended her hand again, a look of genuine pleasure in her black eyes. "Shake hands again, Prince de Bosky. I—I understand."

"And I—I think I understand, Princess," said he, grasping the woman's hand.

"I hope you do," said she huskily. "I—I just didn't know how to go about it, that's all. Ever since that day you were in here to see me,—that bitterly cold day,—I've been trying to think of a way to—And so I waited till it turned so hot that you'd know I wasn't trying to do it out of charity—You *do* understand, don't you, Prince?"

"Perfectly," said he, very soberly.

"I feel better than I've felt in a good long time," she said, drawing a long breath.

"That's the way we all feel sometimes," said he, smiling. "No doubt it's the sun," he added. "We haven't seen much of it lately."

"Quit your kiddin'," she cried, donning her mask again and relapsing into the vernacular of the district.

He bore the coat in triumph to the work-shop of M. Mirabeau, and loudly called for moth-balls as he mounted the steps.

"I jest, good friend," he explained, as the old Frenchman laid aside his tools and started for the shelves containing a vast assortment of boxes and packages. "Time enough for all that. At four o'clock I am due at Spangler's for a rehearsal of the celebrated Royal Hungarian Orchestra, imported at great expense from Budapesth. I leave the treasure in your custody. Au revoir!" He had thrown the coat on the end of the work bench.

"You will return for dinner," was M. Mirabeau's stern reminder. "A pot roast tonight, Bramble has announced. We will dine at six, since you must report at seven."

"In my little red coat," sang out de Bosky blithely.

"Mon dieu!" exclaimed the Frenchman, in dismay, running his fingers over the lining of the coat. "They are already at work. The moths! See! Ah, *le diable!*

They have devoured—"

"What!" cried de Bosky, snatching up the coat.

"The arm pits and—ah, the seams fall apart! One could thrust his hand into the hole they have made. Too late!" he groaned. "They have ruined it, my friend."

De Bosky leaned against the bench, the picture of distress. "What will my friend, the safe-blower, say to this? What will he think of me for—"

"Now we know how the estimable Mrs. Jacobs came to have softening of the heart," exploded M. Mirabeau, pulling at his long whiskers.

Mr. Bramble, abandoning the shop downstairs, shuffled into the room.

"Did I hear you say 'moths'?" he demanded, consternation written all over his face. "For God's sake, don't turn them loose in the house. They'll be into everything—"

"What is this?" cried de Bosky, peering intently between the crumbling edges of the rent, which widened hopelessly as he picked at it with nervous fingers.

Stitched securely inside the fur at the point of the shoulder was a thin packet made of what at one time must have been part of a rubber rain-coat. The three men stared at it with interest.

"Padding," said Mr. Bramble.

"Rubbish," said M. Mirabeau, referring to Mr. Bramble's declaration. He was becoming excited. Thrusting a keen-edged knife into de Bosky's hand, he said: "Remove it—but with care, with care!"

A moment later de Bosky held the odd little packet in his hand.

"Cut the threads," said Mr. Bramble, readjusting his big spectacles. "It is sewed at the ends."

The old bookseller was the first of the stupefied men to speak after the contents of the rubber bag were revealed to view.

"God bless my soul!" he gasped.

Bank notes,—many of them,—lay in de Bosky's palm.

Almost mechanically he began to count them. They were of various denominations, none smaller than twenty dollars. The eyes of the men popped as he ran off in succession two five-hundred-dollar bills.

Downstairs in the shop of J. Bramble, some one was pounding violently on a counter, but without results. He could produce no one to wait on him. He might as well have tried to rouse the dead.

"Clever rascal," said M. Mirabeau at last. "The last place in the world one would think of looking for plunder."

"What do you mean?" asked de Bosky, still dazed.

"It is quite simple," said the Frenchman. "Who but your enterprising friend, the cracksman, could have thought of anything so original as hiding money in the lining of a fur overcoat? He leaves the coat in your custody, knowing you to be an honest man. At the expiration of his term, he will reclaim—"

"Ah, but he has still a matter of ten or eleven years to serve," agreed de Bosky. "A great deal could happen in ten or eleven years. He would not have taken so great a risk. He—"

"Um!" mused M. Mirabeau, frowning. "That is so."

"What am I to do with it?" cried de Bosky. "Nearly three thousand dollars! Am I awake, Mr. Bramble?"

"We can't all be dreaming the same thing," said the bookseller, his fascinated gaze fixed on the bank notes.

"Ah-h!" exclaimed M. Mirabeau suddenly. "Try the other shoulder! There will be more. He would not have been so clumsy as to put it all on one side. He would have padded both shoulders alike."

And to the increased amazement of all of them, a similar packet was found in the left shoulder of the coat.

"What did I tell you!" cried the old Frenchman, triumphantly.

Included among the contents of the second bag, was a neatly folded sheet of writing-paper. De Bosky, with trembling fingers, spread it out, and holding it to the light, read in a low, halting manner:

"'Finder is keeper. This coat dont belong to me, and the money neither. It is nobodies buisness who they belonged to before. I put the money inside here becaus it is a place no one would ever look and I am taken a gamblers chanse on geting it back some day. Stranger things have happened. Something tells me that they are going to get me soon, and I dont want them to cop this stuff. It was hard earned. Mighty hard. I am hereby trusting to luck. I leave this coat with my neighbor, Mr. Debosky, so in case they get me, they wont get it when they search my room. My neighber is an honest man. He dont know what I am and he dont know about this money. If anybody has to find it I hope it will be him. Maybe they wont get me after all so all this writing is in vain. But Im taken no chance on that, and Im willing to take a chance on this stuff getting back to me somehow. I will say this before closing. The money belonged to people in various parts of the country and they could all afford to lose it, espeshilly the doctor. He is a bigger robber than I am, only he lets people see him get away with it. If this should fall into the hands of the police I want them to believe me when I say my neighber, a little forreigner who plays the violin till it brings tears to my eyes, has no hand in this business. I am simply asking him to take care of my coat and wear it till I call for it, whenever that may be. And the following remarks is for him. If he finds this dough, he can keep it and use as much of it as he sees fit. I would sooner he had it than anybody, because he is poorer than anybody. And what he dont know wont hurt him. I mean what he dont know about who the stuff belonged to in the beginning. Being of sound mind and so fourth I hereby subscribe myself, in the year of our lord, September 26, 1912.

"HENRY LOVELESS."

"How very extraordinary," said Mr. Bramble after a long silence.

"Nearly five thousand dollars," said M. Mirabeau. "What will you do with it, de Bosky?"

The little violinist passed his hand over his brow, as if to clear away the last vestige of perplexity.

"There is but one thing to do, my friends," he said slowly, straightening up and facing them. "You will understand, of course, that I cannot under any circumstances possess myself of this stolen property."

Another silence ensued.

"Certainly not," said Mr. Bramble at last.

"It would be impossible," said M. Mirabeau, sighing.

"I shall, therefore, address a letter to my friend, acquainting him with the mishap to his coat. I shall inform him that the insects have destroyed the fur in the shoulders, laying bare the padding, and that while I have been negligent in my care of his property up to this time, I shall not be so in the future. Without betraying the secret, I shall in some way let him know that the money is safe and that he may expect to regain all of it when he—when he comes out."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Bramble warmly.

M. Mirabeau suddenly broke into uproarious laughter.

"Mon dieu!" he gasped, when he could catch his breath. The others were staring at him in alarm. "It is rare! It is exquisite! The refinement of justice! That *this* should have happened to the blood-sucking Mrs. Jacobs! Oho—ho—ho!"

CHAPTER XIV

DIPLOMACY

MR. SMITH-PARVIS, Senior, entertained one old-fashioned, back-number idea,—relict of a throttled past; it was a pestiferous idea that always kept bobbing up in an insistent, aggravating way the instant he realized that he had a few minutes to himself.

Psychologists might go so far as to claim that he had been born with it; that it was, after a fashion, hereditary. He had come of honest, hard-working Smiths; the men and women before him had cultivated the idea with such unwavering assiduity that, despite all that had conspired to stifle it, the thing still clung to him and would not be shaken off.

In short, Mr. Smith-Parvis had an idea that a man should work. Especially a young man.

In secret he squirmed over the fact that his son Stuyvesant had never been known to do a day's work in his life. Not that it was actually necessary for the young man to descend to anything so common and inelegant as earning his daily bread, or that there was even a remote prospect of the wolf sniffing around a future doorway. Not at all. He knew that Stuyvie didn't have to work. Still, it grieved him to see so much youthful energy going to waste. He had never quite gotten over the feeling that a man could make something besides a mere gentleman of himself, and do it without seriously impairing the family honour.

He had once suggested to his wife that Stuyvesant ought to go to work. He didn't care what he took up, just so he took up something. Mrs. Smith-Parvis was horrified. She would not listen to his reiterations that he didn't mean clerking in a drygoods shop, or collecting fares on a street car, or repairing electric doorbells, or anything of the kind, and she wouldn't allow him to say just what sort of work he did mean. The subject was not mentioned again for years. Stuyvesant was allowed to go on being a gentleman in his own sweet way.

One day Mrs. Smith-Parvis, to his surprise and joy, announced that she

thought Stuyvesant ought to have a real chance to make something of himself,—a vocation or an avocation, she wasn't sure which,—and she couldn't see why the father of such a bright, capable boy had been so blind to the possibilities that lay before him. She actually blamed him for holding the young man back.

"I suggested some time ago, my dear," he began, in self-defence, "that the boy ought to get a job and settle down to—"

"Job? How I loathe that word. It is almost as bad as situation."

"Well, then, position," he amended. "You wouldn't hear to it."

"I have no recollection of any such conversation," said she firmly. "I have been giving the subject a great deal of thought lately. The dear boy is entitled to his opportunity. He must make a name for himself. I have decided, Philander, that he ought to go into the diplomatic service."

"Oh, Lord!"

"I don't blame you for saying 'Oh, Lord,' if you think I mean the American diplomatic service," she said, smiling. "That, of course, is not even to be considered. He must aim higher than that. I know it is a vulgar expression, but there is no class to the American embassies abroad. Compare our embassies with any of the other—"

"But, my dear, you forget that—"

"They are made up largely of men who have sprung from the most ordinary walks in life,—men totally unfitted for the social position that— Please do not argue, Philander. You know perfectly well that what I say is true. I shouldn't think of letting Stuyvesant enter the American diplomatic service. Do you remember that dreadful person who came to see us in Berlin,—about the trunks we sent up from Paris by *grande vitesse*? Well, just think of Stuyvesant—"

"He was a clerk from the U. S. Consul's office," he interrupted doggedly. "Nothing whatever to do with the embassy. Besides, we can't—"

"It doesn't matter. I have been giving it a great deal of thought lately, trying to decide which is the best service for Stuyvesant to enter. The English diplomatic corps in this country is perfectly stunning, and so is the French,—and the

Russian, for that matter. He doesn't speak the Russian language, however, so I suppose we will have to—"

"See here, my dear,—listen to me," he broke in resolutely. "Stuyvesant can't get into the service of any of these countries. He—"

"I'd like to know why not!" she cried sharply. "He is a gentleman, he has manner, he is— Well, isn't he as good as any of the young men one sees at the English or the French Legations in Washington?"

"I grant you all that, but he is an American just the same. He can't be born all over again, you know, with a new pair of parents. He's got to be in the American diplomatic corps, or in no corps at all. Now, get that through your head, my dear."

She finally got it through her head, and resigned herself to the American service, deciding that the Court of St. James offered the most desirable prospects in view of its close proximity to the other great capitals of Europe.

"Stuyvesant likes London next to Paris, and he could cross over to France whenever he felt the need of change."

Mr. Smith-Parvis looked harassed.

"Easier said than done," he ventured. "These chaps in the legations have to stick pretty close to their posts. He can't be running about, all over the place, you know. It isn't expected. You might as well understand in the beginning that he'll have to work like a nailer for a good many years before he gets anywhere in the diplomatic service."

"Nonsense. Doesn't the President appoint men to act as Ambassadors who never had an hour's experience in diplomacy? It's all a matter of politics. I'm sorry to say, Philander, the right men are never appointed. It seems to be the practice in this country to appoint men who, so far as I know, have absolutely no social standing. Mr. Choate was an exception, of course. I am sure that Stuyvesant will go to the top rapidly if he is given a chance. Now, how shall we go about it, Philander?" She considered the matter settled. Her husband shook his head.

"Have you spoken to Stuyvie about it?" he inquired.

"Oh, dear me, no. I want to surprise him."

"I see," said he, rather grimly for him. "I see. We simply say: 'Here is a nice soft berth in the diplomatic corps, Stuyvie. You may sail tomorrow if you like.'"

"Don't be silly. And please do not call him Stuyvie. I've spoken to you about that a thousand times, Philander. Now, don't you think you ought to run down to Washington and see the President? It may—"

"No, I don't," said he flatly. "I'm not a dee fool."

"Don't—don't you care to see your son make something of himself?" she cried in dismay.

"Certainly. I'd like nothing better than—"

"Then, try to take a little interest in him," she said coldly.

"In the first place," said he resignedly, "what are his politics?"

"The same as yours. He is a Republican. All the people we know are Republicans. The Democrats are too common for words."

"Well, his first attempt at diplomacy will be to change his politics," he said, waxing a little sarcastic as he gained courage. "And I'd advise you not to say nasty things about the Democrats. They are in the saddle now, you know. I suppose you've heard that the President is a Democrat?"

"I can't help that," she replied stubbornly.

"And he appoints nothing but Democrats."

"Is there likely to be a Republican president soon?" she inquired, knitting her brows.

"That's difficult to say."

"I suppose Stuyvesant could, in a diplomatic sort of way, pretend to be a Democrat, couldn't he, dear?"

"He lost nearly ten thousand dollars at the last election betting on what he

said was a sure thing," said he, compressing his lips.

"The poor dear!"

"I can't see very much in this diplomatic game, anyhow," said Mr. Smith-Parvis determinedly.

"I asked you a direct question, Philander," she said stiffly.

"I—I seem to have forgotten just what—"

"I asked you how we are to go about securing an appointment for him."

"Oh," said he, wilting a little. "So you did. Well,—um—aw—let me think. There's only one way. He's got to have a pull. Does he know any one high up in the Democratic ranks? Any one who possesses great influence?" There was a twinkle in his eye.

"I—I don't know," she replied, helplessly. "He is quite young, Philander. He can't be expected to know everybody. But you! Now that I think of it, you must know any number of influential Democrats. There must be some one to whom you could go. You would simply say to him that Stuyvesant agrees to enter the service, and that he will do everything in his power to raise it to the social standard—"

"The man would die laughing," said he unfeelingly. "I was just thinking. Suppose I were to go to the only influential Democratic politician I know,—Cornelius McFaddan,—and tell him that Stuyvesant advocates the reconstruction of our diplomatic service along English lines, he would undoubtedly say things to me that I could neither forget nor forgive. I can almost hear him now."

"You refuse to make any effort at all, then?"

"Not at all," he broke in quickly. "I will see him. As a matter of fact, McFaddan is a very decent sort of chap, and he is keen to join the Oxford Country Club. He knows I am on the Board of Governors. In fact, he asked me not long ago what golf club I'd advise him to join. He thinks he's getting too fat. Wants to take up golf."

"But you *couldn't* propose him for membership in the Oxford, Philander," she

said flatly. "Only the smartest people in town—"

"Leave it to me," he interrupted, a flash of enthusiasm in his eyes. "By gad, I shouldn't be surprised if I could do something through him. He carries a good deal of weight."

"Would it be wise to let him reduce it by playing golf?" she inquired doubtfully.

He stared. "I mean politically. Figure of speech, my dear."

"Oh, I see."

"A little coddling on my part, and that sort of thing. They all want to break into society,—every last one of them. You never can tell. A little soft soap goes a long way sometimes. I could ask him to have luncheon with me at Bombay House. Um-m-m!" He fell into a reflective mood.

Mrs. Smith-Parvis also was thoughtful. An amazing idea had sprouted in her head.

"Has he a wife?" she inquired, after many minutes.

"They always have, those chaps," said he. "And a lot of children."

"I was just wondering if it wouldn't be good policy to have them to dinner some night, Philander," she said.

"Oh, my God!" he exclaimed, sitting up suddenly and staring at her in astonishment.

"Every little helps," she said argumentatively. "It would be like opening the seventh heaven to her if I were to invite her here to dine. Just think what it would mean to her. She would meet—"

"They probably eat with their knives and tuck their napkins under their chins."

"I am sure that would be amusing," said she, eagerly. "It is so difficult nowadays to provide amusement for one's guests. Really, my dear, I think it is quite an idea. We could explain beforehand to the people we'll have in to meet

them,—explain everything, you know. The plan for Stuyvesant, and everything."

He was still staring. "Well, who would you suggest having in with Mr. and Mrs. Con McFaddan?"

"Oh, the Cricklewicks, and the Blodgetts,—and old Mrs. Millidew,—I've been intending to have her anyway,—and perhaps the Van Ostrons and Cicely Braithmere, and I am sure we could get dear old Percy Tromboy. He would be frightfully amused by the McFinnegans, and—"

"McFaddan," he edged in.

"—and he could get a world of material for those screaming Irish imitations he loves to give. Now, when will you see Mr. McFaddan?"

"You'd have to call on his wife, wouldn't you, before asking her to dinner?"

"She probably never has heard of the custom," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis composedly.

The next day, Mr. Smith-Parvis strolled into the offices of Mr. Cornelius McFaddan, Contractor, and casually remarked what a wonderful view of the Bay he had from his windows.

"I dropped in, Mr. McFaddan," he explained, "to see if you were really in earnest about wanting to join the Oxford Country Club." He had decided that it was best to go straight to the point.

McFaddan regarded him narrowly. "Did I ever say I wanted to join the Oxford Country Club?" he demanded.

"Didn't you?" asked his visitor, slightly disturbed by this ungracious response.

"I did not," said Mr. McFaddan promptly.

"Dear me, I—I was under the impression—Ahem! I am sure you spoke of wanting to join a golf club."

"That must have been some time ago. I've joined one," said the other, a little more agreeably.

Mr. Smith-Parvis punched nervously with his cane at one of his pearl grey spats. The contractor allowed his gaze to shift. He didn't wear "spats" himself.

"I am sorry. I daresay I could have rushed you through in the Oxford. They are mighty rigid and exclusive up there, but—well, you would have gone in with a rush. Men like you are always shoved through ahead of others. It isn't quite—ah—regular, you know, but it's done when a candidate of special prominence comes up. Of course, I need not explain that it's—ah—quite sub rosa?"

"Sure," said Mr. McFaddan promptly; "I know. We do it at the Jolly Dog Club." He was again eyeing his visitor narrowly, speculatively. "It's mighty good of you, Mr. Smith-Parvis. Have a cigar?"

"No, thank you. I seldom— On second thoughts, I will take one." It occurred to him that it was the diplomatic thing to do, no matter what kind of a cigar it was. Besides, he wouldn't feel called upon to terminate his visit at once if he lighted the man's cigar. He could at least smoke an inch or even an inch and a half of it before announcing that he would have to be going. And a great deal can happen during the consumption of an inch or so of tobacco.

"That's a good cigar," he commented, after a couple of puffs. He took it from his lips and inspected it critically.

Mr. McFaddan was pleased. "It ought to be," he said. "Fifty cents straight."

The visitor looked at it with sudden respect. "A little better than I'm in the habit of smoking," he said ingratiatingly.

"What does it cost to join the Oxford Club?" inquired the contractor.

"Twelve hundred dollars admission, and two hundred a year dues," said Mr. Smith-Parvis, pricking up his ears. "Really quite reasonable."

"My wife don't like the golf club I belong to," said the other, squinting at his own cigar. "Rough-neck crowd, she says."

Mr. Smith-Parvis looked politely concerned.

"That's too bad," he said.

The contractor appeared to be weighing something in his mind.

"How long does it take to get into your club?" he asked.

"Usually about five years," said Mr. Smith-Parvis, blandly. "Long waiting list, you know. Some of the best people in the city are on it, by the way. I daresay it wouldn't be more than two or three months in your case, however," he concluded.

"I'll speak to the wife about it," said Mr. McFaddan. "She may put her foot down hard. Too swell for us, maybe. We're plain people."

"Not a bit of it," said Mr. Smith-Parvis readily. "Extremely democratic club, my dear McFaddan. Exclusive and all that, but quite—ah—unconventional. Ha-ha!"

Finding himself on the high-road to success, he adventured a little farther. Glancing up at the clock on the wall, he got to his feet with an exclamation of well-feigned dismay.

"My dear fellow, I had no idea it was so near the luncheon hour. Stupid of me. Why didn't you kick me out? Ha-ha! Let me know what you decide to do, and I will be delighted to— But better still, can't you have lunch with me? I could tell you something about the club and— What do you say to going around to Bombay House with me?"

"I'd like nothing better," said the thoroughly perplexed politician. "Excuse me while I wash me hands."

And peering earnestly into the mirror above the washstand in the corner of the office, Mr. McFaddan said to himself:

"I must look easier to him than I do to meself. If I'm any kind of a guesser at all he's after one of two things. He either wants his tax assessment rejuced or wants to run for mayor of the city. The poor boob!"

That evening Mr. Smith-Parvis announced, in a bland and casual manner, that things were shaping themselves beautifully.

"I had McFaddan to lunch with me," he explained. "He was tremendously

impressed."

His wife was slightly perturbed. "And I suppose you were so stupid as to introduce him to a lot of men in the club who—"

"I didn't have to," interrupted Mr. Smith-Parvis, a trifle crossly. "It was amazing how many of the members knew him. I daresay four out of every five men in the club shook hands with him and called him Mr. McFaddan. Two bank presidents called him Con, and, by gad, Angela, he actually introduced me to several really big bugs I've been wanting to meet for ten years or more. Most extraordinary, 'pon my word."

"Did you—did you put out any feelers?"

"About Stuyvie—sant? Certainly not. That would have been fatal. I did advance a few tactful and pertinent criticisms of our present diplomatic service, however. I was relieved to discover that he thinks it can be improved. He agreed with me when I advanced the opinion that we, as sovereign citizens of this great Republic, ought to see to it that a better, a higher class of men represent us abroad. He said,—in his rough, slangy way: 'You're dead right. What good are them authors and poets we're sendin' over there now? What we need is good, live hustlers,—men with ginger instead of ink in their veins.' I remember the words perfectly. 'Ginger instead of ink!' Ha-ha,—rather good, eh?"

"You must dress at once, Philander," said his wife. "We are dining with the Hatchers."

"That reminds me," he said, wrinkling his brow. "I dropped in to see Cricklewick on the way up. He didn't appear to be very enthusiastic about dining here with the McFaddans."

"For heaven's sake, you don't mean to say you've already asked the man to dine with us!" cried his wife.

"Not in so many words," he made haste to explain. "He spoke several times about his wife. Seemed to want me to know that she was a snappy old girl,—his words, not mine. The salt of the earth, and so on. Of course, I had to say something agreeable. So I said I'd like very much to have the pleasure of meeting her."

"Oh, you did, did you?" witheringly.

"He seemed really quite affected, my dear. It was several minutes before he could find the words to reply. Got very red in the face and managed to say finally that it was very kind of me. I think it rather made a hit with him. I merely mentioned the possibility of dining together some time,—*en famille*,—and that I'd like him to meet you. Nothing more,—not a thing more than that!" he cried, quailing a little under his wife's eye.

"And what did he say to that?" she inquired. The rising inflection was ominous.

"He was polite enough to say he'd be pleased to meet you," said he, with justifiable exasperation.

CHAPTER XV

ONE NIGHT AT SPANGLER'S

A FEW mornings after de Bosky's *premier* as director of the Royal Hungarian Orchestra, Mrs. Sparflight called Jane Emsdale's attention to a news "story" in the *Times*. The headline was as follows:

A ROYAL VIOLINIST

Prince de Bosky Leads the Orchestra
at Spangler's

Three-quarters of a column were devoted to the first appearance in America of the royal musician; his remarkable talent; his glorious ancestry; his singular independence; and (through an interpreter) his impressions of New York.

"Oh, I am so glad," cried Jane, after she had read the story. "The poor fellow was so dreadfully up against it."

"We must go and hear him soon," said the other.

They were at the breakfast-table. Jane had been with the elder woman for nearly a week. She was happy, radiant, contented. Not so much as an inkling of the truth arose to disturb her serenity. She believed herself to be actually in the pay of "Deborah." From morning till night she went cheerfully about the tasks set for her by her sorely tried employer, who, as time went on, found herself hard put to invent duties for a conscientious private secretary. Jane was much too active, much too eager; such indefatigable energy harassed rather than comforted her employer. And, not for the world, would the latter have called upon her to take over any of the work downstairs. The poor lady lay awake nights trying to think of something that she could set the girl to doing in the morning!

A curt, pointed epistle had come to Mrs. Sparflight from Mrs. Smith-Parvis. That lady announced briefly that she had been obliged to discharge Miss Emsdale, and that she considered it her duty to warn Mrs. Sparflight against recommending her late governess to any one else.

"You may answer the note, my dear," the Marchioness had said, her eyes twinkling as she watched Jane's face. "Thank her for the warning and say that I regret having sent Miss Emsdale to her. Say that I shall be exceedingly careful in the future. Sign it, and append your initials. It isn't a bad idea to let her know that I do not regard her communication as strictly confidential,—between friends, you might say. And now you must get out for a long walk today. A strong, healthy English girl like you shouldn't go without stretching her legs. You'll be losing the bloom in your cheek if you stay indoors as you've been doing the past week."

Jane's dread of meeting her tormentor had kept her close to the apartment since the night of her rather unconventional arrival. Twice the eager Trotter, thrilled and exalted by his new-found happiness, had dashed in to see her, but only for a few minutes' stay on each occasion.

"How do you like your new position?" he had asked in the dimness at the head of the stairway. She could not see his face, but it was because he kept her head rather closely pressed into the hollow of his shoulder. Otherwise she might have detected the guilty flicker in his eyes.

"I love it. She is such a dear. But, really, Eric, I don't think I'm worth half what she pays me."

He chuckled softly. "Oh, yes, you are. You are certainly worth half what my boss pays me."

"But I do not earn it," she insisted.

"Neither do I," said he.

To return to the Marchioness and the newspaper:

"We will go off on a little spree before long, my dear. A good dinner at Spangler's, a little music, and a chat with the sensation of the hour. Get Mrs. Hendricks on the telephone, please. I will ask her to join us there some night soon with her husband. He is the man who wrote that delightful novel with the name I never can remember. You will like him, I know. He is so dreadfully deaf that all one has to do to include him in the conversation is to return his smiles occasionally."

And so, on a certain night in mid-April, it came to pass that Spangler's Café, gay and full of the din that sustains the *genus* New Yorker in his contention that there is no other place in the world fit to live in, had among its patrons a number of the persons connected with this story of the City of Masks.

First of all, there was the new leader of the orchestra, a dapper, romantic-looking young man in a flaming red coat. Ah, but you should have seen him! The admirable Mirabeau, true Frenchman that he was, had performed wonders with pomades and oils and the glossy brilliantine. The sleek black hair of the little Prince shone like the raven's wing; his dark, gipsy eyes, rendered more vivid by the skilful application of "lampblack," gleamed with an ardent excitement; there was colour in his cheeks, and a smile on his lips.

At a table near the platform on which the orchestra was stationed, sat the Honourable Cornelius McFaddan, his wife, and a congenial party of friends. In a far-off corner, remote from the music, you would have discovered the Marchioness and her companions; the bland, perpetually smiling Mr. Hendricks who wrote the book, his wife, and the lovely, blue-eyed Jane.

By a strange order of coincidence, young Mr. Stuyvesant Smith-Parvis, quite mellow and bereft of the power to focus steadily with eye or intellect, occupied a seat,—and frequently a seat and a half,—at a table made up of shrill-voiced young women and bald-headed gentlemen of uncertain age who had a whispering acquaintance with the head waiter and his assistants.

The Countess du Bara, otherwise Corinne, entertained a few of the lesser lights of the Opera and two lean, hungry-looking critics she was cultivating against an hour of need.

At a small, mean table alongside the swinging door through which a procession of waiters constantly streamed on their way from the kitchen, balancing trays at hazardous heights, sat two men who up to this moment have not been mentioned in these revelations. Very ordinary looking persons they were, in business clothes.

One of them, a sallow, liverish individual, divided his interest between two widely separated tables. His companion was interested in nothing except his food, which being wholly unsatisfactory to him, relieved him of the necessity of talking about anything else. He spoke of it from time to time, however, usually to the waiter, who could only say that he was sorry. This man was a red-faced,

sharp-nosed person with an unmistakable Cockney accent. He seemed to find a great deal of comfort in verbally longing for the day when he could get back to Simpson's in the Strand for a bit of "roast that is a roast."

The crowd began to thin out shortly after the time set for the lifting of curtains in all of the theatres. It was then that the sallow-faced man arose from his seat and, after asking his companion to excuse him for a minute, approached Stuyvesant Smith-Parvis. That gentleman had been dizzily ogling a dashing, spirited young woman at the table presided over by Mr. McFaddan, a circumstance which not only annoyed the lady but also one closer at hand. The latter was wanting to know, in some heat, what he took her for. If he thought she'd stand for anything like that, he had another guess coming.

"May I have a word with you?" asked the sallow man, inserting his head between Stuyvesant and the protesting young woman.

"The bouncer," cried the young woman, looking up. "Good work. That's what you get for making eyes at strange—"

"Shut up," said Stuyvie, who had, after a moment's concentration, recognized the man. "What do you want?"

"A word in private," said the other.

Stuyvesant got up and followed him to a vacant table in the rear.

"She is here," said the stranger. "Here in this restaurant. Not more than fifty feet from where we're sitting."

The listener blinked. His brain was foggy.

"What's that?" he mumbled, thickly.

"The girl you're lookin' for," said the man.

Stuyvesant sat up abruptly. His brain seemed to clear.

"You mean—Miss Emsdale?" he demanded, rather distinctly.

The little man in the red coat, sitting just above them on the edge of the platform, where he was resting after a particularly long and arduous number,

pricked up his ears. He, too, had seen the radiant, friendly face of the English girl at the far end of the room, and had favoured her with more than one smile of appreciation.

"Yes. Stand up and take a look. Keep back of this palm, so's she won't lamp you. 'Way over there with the white-haired old lady. Am I right? She's the one, ain't she?"

Smith-Parvis became visibly excited. "Yes,—there's not the slightest doubt. How—how long has she been here? Why the devil didn't you tell me sooner?"

"Don't get excited. Better not let her see you in this condition. She looks like a nice, refined girl. She—"

"What do you mean 'condition'? I'm all right," retorted the young man, bellicose at once.

"I know you are," said the other soothingly.

"Darn the luck," growled Stuyvie, following a heroic effort to restore his physical equilibrium. "I wouldn't have had her see me here with this crowd for half the money in New York. She'll get a bad impression of me. Look at 'em! My Lord, they're all stewed. I say, you go over and tell that man with the big nose at the head of my table that I've been suddenly called away, and—"

"Take my advice, and sit tight."

Stuyvie's mind wandered. "Say, do you know who that rippin' creature is over there with the fat Irishman? She's a dream."

The sallow man did not deign to look. He bent a little closer to Mr. Smith-Parvis.

"Now, what is the next move, Mr. Smith-Parvis? I've located her right enough. Is this the end of the trail?"

"Sh!" cautioned Stuyvie, loudly. Then even more loudly: "Don't you know any better than to roar like that? There's a man sitting up there—"

"He can't understand a word of English. Wop. Just landed. That's the guy the

papers have been—"

"I am not in the least interested in your conversation," said Stuyvie haughtily. "What were you saying?"

"Am I through? That's what I want to know."

"You have found out where she's stopping?"

"Yep. Stayin' with the white-haired old lady. Dressmaking establishment. The office will make a full report to you tomorrow."

"Wait a minute. Let me think."

The sallow man waited for some time. Then he said: "Excuse me, Mr. Smith-Parvis, but I've got a friend over here. Stranger in New York. I'm detailed to entertain him."

"You've got to shake him," said Stuyvie, arrogantly. "I want you to follow her home, and I'm going with you. As soon as I know positively where she lives, I'll decide on the next step we're to take. We'll have to work out some plan to get her away from that dressmakin' 'stablishment."

The other gave him a hard look. "Don't count our people in on any rough stuff," he said levelly. "We don't go in for that sort of thing."

Stuyvie winked. "We'll talk about that when the time comes."

"Well, what I said goes. We're the oldest and most reliable agency in—"

"I know all that," said Stuyvie, peevishly. "It is immaterial to me whether your agency or some other one does the job. Remember that, will you? I want that girl, and I don't give a—"

"Good night, Mr. Smith-Parvis."

"Wait a minute,—*wait* a minute. Now, listen. When you see her getting ready to leave this place, rush out and get a taxi. I'll join you outside, and we'll—"

"Very well. That's part of my job, I suppose. I will have to explain to my friend. He will understand." He lowered his voice to almost a whisper. "He's in

the same business. Special from Scotland Yard. My God, what bulldogs these Britishers are. He's been clear around the world, lookin' for a young English swell who lit out a couple of years ago. We've been taken in on the case,—and I'm on the job with him from now—"

"And say," broke in Stuyvie, irrelevantly, "before you leave find out who that girl is over there with the fat Irishman. Understand?"

Prince Waldemar de Bosky's thoughts and reflections, up to the beginning of this duologue, were of the rosiest and most cheerful nature. He was not proud to be playing the violin in Spangler's, but he was human. He was not above being gratified by the applause and enthusiasm of the people who came to see if not to hear a prince of the blood perform.

His friends were out there in front, and it was to them that he played. He was very happy. And the five thousand dollars in the old steel safe at the shop of Mirabeau the clockmaker! He had been thinking of them and of the letter he had posted to the man "up the river,"—and of the interest he would take in the reply when it came. Abruptly, in the midst of these agreeable thoughts, came the unlovely interruption.

At first he was bewildered, uncertain as to the course he should pursue. He never had seen young Smith-Parvis before, but he had no difficulty in identifying him as the disturber of Trotter's peace of mind. That there was something dark and sinister behind the plans and motives of the young man and his spy was not a matter for doubt. How was he to warn Lady Jane? He was in a fearful state of perturbation as he stepped to the front of the platform for the next number on the program.

As he played, he saw Smith-Parvis rejoin his party. He watched the sallow man weave his way among the diners to his own table. His anxious gaze sought out the Marchioness and Jane, and he was relieved to find that they were not preparing to depart. Also, he looked again at McFaddan and the dashing young woman at the foot of his table. He had recognized the man who once a week came under his critical observation as a proper footman. As a matter of fact, he had been a trifle flabbergasted by the intense stare with which McFaddan favoured him. Up to this hour he had not associated McFaddan with opulence or a tailor-made dress suit.

After the encore, he descended from the platform and made his way, bowing

right and left to the friendly throng, until he brought up at the Marchioness's table. There he paused and executed a profound bow.

The Marchioness proffered her hand, which he was careful not to see, and said something to him in English. He shook his head, expressive of despair, and replied in the Hungarian tongue.

"He does not understand English," said Jane, her eyes sparkling. Then she complimented him in French.

De Bosky affected a faint expression of hope. He managed a few halting words in French. Jane was delighted. This was rare good fun. The musician turned to the others at the table and gave utterance to the customary "Parle vouz Francais, madame—m'sieu?"

"Not a word," said Mrs. Hendricks. "*He* understands it but he can't hear it," she went on, and suddenly turned a fiery red. "How silly of me," she said to the Marchioness, giggling hysterically.

De Bosky's face cleared. He addressed himself to Jane; it was quite safe to speak to her in French. He forgot himself in his eagerness, however, and spoke with amazing fluency for one who but a moment before had been so at a loss. In a few quick, concise sentences he told her of Stuyvesant's presence, his condition and his immediate designs.

Both Jane and the Marchioness were equal to the occasion. Although filled with consternation, they succeeded admirably in concealing their dismay behind a mask of smiles and a gay sort of chatter. De Bosky beamed and smirked and gesticulated. One would have thought he was regaling them with an amusing story.

"He is capable of making a horrid scene," lamented Jane, through smiling lips. "He may come over to this table and—"

"Compose yourself," broke in de Bosky, a smile on his lips but not in his eyes. "If he should attempt to annoy you here, I—I myself will take him in hand. Have no fear. You may depend on me."

He was interrupted at this juncture by a brass-buttoned page who passed the table, murmuring the name of Mrs. Sparflight.

Spangler's is an exceptional place. Pages do not bawl out one's name as if calling an "extra." On the contrary, in quiet, repressed tones they politely inquire at each table for the person wanted. Mr. Spangler was very particular about this. He came near to losing his license years before simply because a page had meandered through the restaurant bellowing the name of a gentleman whose influence was greater at City Hall than it was at his own fireside,—from which, by the way, he appears to have strayed on the night in question.

"Dear me," cried the Marchioness, her agitation increasing. "No one knows I am here. How on earth—Here, boy!"

A note was delivered to her. It was from Thomas Trotter. Her face brightened as she glanced swiftly through the scrawl.

"Splendid!" she exclaimed. "It is from Mr. Trotter. He is waiting outside with his automobile."

She passed the note to Jane, whose colour deepened. De Bosky drew a deep breath of relief, and, cheered beyond measure by her reassuring words, strode off, his head erect, his white teeth showing in a broad smile.

Trotter wrote: "It is raining cats and dogs. I have the car outside. The family is at the theatre. Don't hurry. I can wait until 10:15. If you are not ready to come away by that time, you will find my friend Joe Glimm hanging about in front of the café,—drenched to the skin, I'll wager. You will recall him as the huge person I introduced to you recently as from Constantinople. Just put yourselves under his wing if anything happens. He is jolly well able to protect you. I know who's in there, but don't be uneasy. He will not dare molest you."

"Shall I keep it for you?" asked Jane, her eyes shining.

"I fancy it was intended for you, my dear," said the other drily.

"How very interesting," observed Mr. Hendricks, who occasionally offered some such remark as his contribution to the gaiety of the evening. He had found it to be a perfectly safe shot, even when fired at random.

In the meantime, Mr. McFaddan had come to the conclusion that the young man at the next table but one was obnoxious. It isn't exactly the way Mr. McFaddan would have put it, but as he would have put it less elegantly, it is

better to supply him with a word out of stock.

The dashing young woman upon whom Stuyvesant lavished his bold and significant glances happened to be Mrs. McFaddan, whose scant twelve months as a wife gave her certain privileges and a distinction that properly would have been denied her hearth-loving predecessor who came over from Ireland to marry Con McFaddan when he was promoted to the position of foreman in the works, —and who, true to her estate of muliebrity, produced four of the most exemplary step-children that any second wife could have discovered if she had gone storking over the entire city.

Cornelius had married his stenographer. It was not his fault that she happened to be a very pretty young woman, nor could he be held responsible for the fact that he was approximately thirty years of age on the day she was born. Any way you look at it, she was his wife and dependent on him for some measure of protection.

And Mr. McFaddan, being an influence, sent for the proprietor of the café himself, and whispered to him. Whereupon, Mr. Spangler, considering the side on which his bread was buttered, whispered back that it should be attended to at once.

"And," pursued Mr. McFaddan, purple with suppressed rage, "if you don't, I will."

A minute or two later, one of the waiters approached young Mr. Smith-Parvis and informed him that he was wanted outside at once.

Stuyvesant's heart leaped. He at once surmised that Miss Emsdale, repentant and envious, had come off her high horse and was eager to get away from the dull, prosaic and stupidly respectable old "parties" over in the corner. Conceivably she had taken a little more champagne than was good for her. He got up immediately, and without so much as a word of apology to his host, made his way eagerly, though unsteadily, to the entrance-hall.

He expected Miss Emsdale to follow; he was already framing in his beaddled brain the jolly little lecture he would give her when—

A red-faced person jostled him in a most annoying manner.

"Look sharp there," said Stuyvie thickly. "Watch where you're going."

"Steady, sir,—steady!" came in a hushed, agitated voice from Mr. Spangler, who appeared to be addressing himself exclusively to the red-faced person. "Let me manage it,—please."

"Who the devil is this bally old blighter?" demanded Stuyvie loudly.

"Leave him to me, Spangler," said the red-faced man. "I have a few choice words I—"

"Here! Confound you! Keep off of my toes, you fool! I say, Spangler, what's the matter with you? Throw him out! He's—"

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!"

"I ought to knock your block off," said Mr. McFaddan, without raising his voice. As his face was within six inches of Stuyvesant's nose, the young man had no difficulty whatever in hearing what he said, and yet it should not be considered strange that he failed to understand. In all fairness, it must be said that he was bewildered. Under the circumstances any one would have been bewildered. Being spoken to in that fashion by a man you've never seen before in your life is, to say the least, surprising. "I'll give you ten seconds to apologize."

"Ap—apologize? Confound you, what do you mean? You're drunk."

"I said ten seconds," growled Cornelius.

"And then what?" gulped Stuyvie.

"A swat on the nose," said Mr. McFaddan.

At no point in the course of this narrative has there been either proof or assertion that Smith-Parvis, Junior, possessed the back-bone of a caterpillar. It has been stated, however, that he was a young man of considerable bulk. We have assumed, correctly, that this rather impressive physique masked a craven spirit. As a matter of fact, he was such a prodigious coward that he practised all manner of "exercises" in order to develop something to inspire in his fellow-men the belief that he would be a pretty tough customer to tackle.

Something is to be said for his method. It has been successfully practised by man ever since the day that Solomon, in all his glory, arrayed himself so sumptuously that the whole world hailed him as the wisest man extant.

Stuyvie took great pride in revealing his well-developed arms; it was not an uncommon thing for him to ask you to feel his biceps, or his back muscles, or the cords in his thigh; he did a great deal of strutting in his bathing suit at such places as Atlantic City, Southampton and Newport. In a way, it paid to advertise.

Now when Mr. McFaddan, a formidable-looking person, made that emphatic remark, Stuyvesant realized that there was no escape. He was trapped. Panic seized him. In sheer terror he struck blindly at the awful, reddish thing that filled his vision.

He talked a good deal about it afterwards, explaining in a casual sort of way just how he had measured the distance and had picked out the point of the fat man's jaw. He even went so far as to say that he felt sorry for the poor devil even before he delivered the blow.

The fact of the matter is, Stuyvie's wild, terrified swing,—delivered with the eyes not only closed but covered by the left arm,—landed squarely on Mr. McFaddan's jaw. And when the aggressor, after a moment or two of suspense, opened his eyes and lowered his arm, expecting to find his adversary's fist on its irresistible approach toward his nose, there was no Mr. McFaddan in sight;—at least, he was not where he had been the moment before.

Mr. McFaddan lay in a crumpled heap against a chair, ten feet away.

Stuyvie was suddenly aware that some one was assisting him into his coat, and that several men were hustling him toward the door.

"Get out,—quick!" said one, who turned out to be the agitated Mr. Spangler. "Before he gets up. He is a terrible man."

By this time they were in the vestibule.

"I will not tell him who you are," Mr. Spangler was saying. "I will give you another name,—Jones or anything. He must never know who you are."

"What's the difference?" chattered Stuyvie. "He's—he's dead, isn't he?"

CHAPTER XVI

SCOTLAND YARD TAKES A HAND

IT was raining hard. Stuyvesant, thoroughly alarmed and not at all elated by his astonishing conquest, halted in dismay. The pelting torrent swept up against the side of the canvas awning that extended to the street; the thick matting on the sidewalk was almost afloat. Headlights of automobiles drawn up to the curb blazed dimly through the screen of water. He peered out beyond the narrow opening left for pedestrians and groaned.

"Taxi!" he frantically shouted to the doorman. Some one tapped him on the shoulder. He started as if a gun had gone off at his back. It was all up! For once the police were on the spot when—A voice was shouting:

"By thunder, I didn't think it was in you!"

He whirled to face, not the expected bluecoat, but the sallow detective.

"My God, how you startled me!"

"I'd have bet my last dollar you hadn't the nerve to—ahem! I—I—Say, take a tip from me. Beat it! Don't hang around here waitin' for that girl. That guy in there is beginning to see straight again, and if he was to bust out here and find you—Well, it would be something awful!"

"Get me a taxi, you infernal idiot!" roared the conqueror in flight, addressing the starter.

"Have one here in five minutes, sir," began the taxi starter, grabbing up the telephone.

"Five minutes?" gasped Stuyvie, with a quick glance over his shoulder. "Oh, Lord! Tell one of those chauffeurs out there I'll give him ten dollars to run me to the Grand Central Station. Hurry up!"

"The Grand Central?" exclaimed the detective. "Great Scott, man, you don't

have to beat it clear out of town, you know. What are you going to the Station for?"

"For a taxi, you damn' fool," shouted Stuyvie. "Say, who was that man in there?"

"Didn't you know him?"

"Never saw him in my life before,—the blighter. Who is he?"

The detective stared. He opened his mouth to reply, and as suddenly closed it. He, too, knew on which side his bread was precariously buttered.

"I don't know," he said.

"Well, the papers will give his name in the morning,—and mine, too, curse them," chattered Stuyvie.

"Don't you think it," said the other promptly. "There won't be a word about it, take it from me. That guy,—whoever he is,—ain't going to have the newspapers say he was knocked down by a pinhead like you."

The insult passed unnoticed. Stuyvie was gazing, pop-eyed, at a man who suddenly appeared at the mouth of the canopy, a tall fellow in a dripping raincoat.

The newcomer's eyes were upon him. They were steady, unfriendly eyes. He advanced slowly.

"I sha'n't wait," said Stuyvie, and swiftly passed out into the deluge. No other course was open to him. There was trouble ahead and trouble behind.

Thomas Trotter laughed. The sallow-faced man made a trumpet of his hands and shouted after the departing one:

"Beat it! He's coming!"

The retreating footsteps quickened into a lively clatter. Trotter distinctly heard the sallow-faced man chuckle.

The Marchioness and Jane went home in the big Millidew limousine instead

of in a taxi. They left the restaurant soon after the departure of Stuyvesant Smith-Parvis. The pensive-looking stranger from Scotland Yard came out close upon their heels. He was looking for his American guide.

Trotter brought his car up to the awning and grinned broadly as he leaned forward for "orders."

"Home, James," said Lady Jane, loftily.

"Very good, my lady," said Trotter.

The man from Scotland Yard squinted narrowly at the chauffeur's face. He moved a few paces nearer and stared harder. For a long time after the car had rolled away, he stood in the middle of the sidewalk, frowning perplexedly. Then he shook his head and apparently gave it up. He went inside to look for his friend.

The next day, the sallow-faced detective received instructions over the telephone from one who refused to give his name to the operator. He was commanded to keep close watch on the movements of a certain party, and to await further orders.

"I shall be out of town for a week or ten days," explained young Mr. Smith-Parvis.

"I see," said the sallow-faced man. "Good idea. That guy—" But the receiver at the other end clicked rudely and without ceremony.

Stuyvesant took an afternoon train for Virginia Hot Springs. At the Pennsylvania Station he bought all of the newspapers,—morning, noon and night. There wasn't a line in any one of them about the fracas. He was rather hurt about it. He was beginning to feel proud of his achievement. By the time the train reached Philadelphia he had worked himself into quite a fury over the way the New York papers suppress things that really ought to be printed. Subsidized, that's what they were. Jolly well bribed. He had given the fellow,—whoever he was,—a well-deserved drubbing, and the world would never hear of it! Miss Emsdale would not hear of it. He very much wished her to hear of it, too. The farther away he got from New York the more active became the conviction that he owed it to himself to go back there and thrash the fellow all over again, as publicly as possible,—in front of the Public Library at four o'clock in the

afternoon, while he was about it.

He had been at Hot Springs no longer than forty-eight hours when a long letter came from his mother. She urged him to return to New York as soon as possible. It was imperative that he should be present at a very important dinner she was giving on Friday night. One of the most influential politicians in New York was to be there,—a man whose name was a household word,—and she was sure something splendid would come of it.

"You must not fail me, dear boy," she wrote. "I would not have him miss seeing you for anything in the world. Don't ask me any questions. I can't tell you anything now, but I will say that a great surprise is in store for my darling boy."

Meanwhile the nosy individual from Scotland Yard had not been idle. The fleeting, all too brief glimpse he had had of the good-looking chauffeur in front of Spangler's spurred him to sudden energy in pursuit of what had long since shaped itself as a rather forlorn hope. He got out the photograph of the youngster in the smart uniform of the Guard, and studied it with renewed intensity. Mentally he removed the cocky little moustache so prevalent in the Army, and with equal arrogance tried to put one on the smooth-faced chauffeur. He allowed for elapsed time, and the wear and tear of three years knocking about the world, and altered circumstances, and still the resemblance persisted.

For a matter of ten months he had been seeking the young gentleman who bore such a startling resemblance to the smiling chauffeur. He had traced him to Turkey, into Egypt, down the East Coast of Africa, over to Australia, up to Siam and China and Japan, across the Pacific to British Columbia, thence to the United States, where the trail was completely lost. His quarry had a good year and a half to two years the start of him.

Still, a chap he knew quite well in the Yard, after chasing a man twice around the world, had nabbed him at the end of six years. So much for British perseverance.

Inquiry had failed to produce the slightest enlightenment from the doorman or the starter at Spangler's. He always remembered them as the stupidest asses he had ever encountered. They didn't recognize the chauffeur, nor the car, nor the ladies; not only were they unable to tell him the number of the car, but they couldn't, for the life of them, approximate the number of ladies. All they seemed to know was that some one had been knocked down by a "swell" who was "hot-

footing it" up the street.

His sallow-faced friend, however, had provided him with an encouraging lead. That worthy knew the ladies, but somewhat peevishly explained that it was hardly to be expected that he should know all of the taxi-cab drivers in New York,—and as he had seen them arrive in a taxi-cab it was reasonable to assume that they had departed in one.

"But it wasn't a taxi-cab," the Scotland Yard man protested. "It was a blinking limousine."

"Then, all I got to say is that they're not the women I mean. If I'd been out here when they left I probably could have put you wise. But I was in there listenin' to what Con McFaddan was sayin' to poor old Spangler. The woman I mean is a dressmaker. She ain't got any more of a limo than I have. Did you notice what they looked like?"

The Scotland Yard man, staring gloomily up the rain-swept street, confessed that he hadn't noticed anything but the chauffeur's face.

"Well, there you are," remarked the sallow-faced man, shrugging his shoulders in a patronizing, almost pitying way.

The Londoner winced.

"I distinctly heard the chauffeur say 'Very good, my lady,'" he said, after a moment. "That was a bit odd, wasn't it, now? You don't have any such things as titles over 'ere, do you?"

"Sure. Every steamer brings one or two of 'em to our little city."

The Englishman scratched his head. Suddenly his face brightened.

"I remember, after all,—in a vague sort of way, don't you know,—that one of the ladies had white hair. I recall an instant's speculation on my part. I remember looking twice to be sure that it was hair and not a bit of lace thrown—"

"That's the party," exclaimed the sallow-faced man. "Now we're getting somewhere."

The next afternoon, the man from Scotland Yard paid a visit to Deborah's. Not at all abashed at finding himself in a place where all save angels fear to tread, he calmly asked to be conducted into the presence of Mrs. Sparflight. He tactfully refrained from adding "alias Deborah, Limited. London, Paris and New York." He declined to state his business.

"Madam," said he, coming straight to the point the instant he was ushered into the presence of the white-haired proprietress, "I sha'n't waste your time,—and mine, I may add,—by beating about the bush, as you Americans would say. I represent—"

"If you are an insurance agent or a book agent, you need not waste any time at all," began Mrs. Sparflight. He held up his hand deprecatingly.

"—Scotland Yard," he concluded, fixing his eyes upon her. The start she gave was helpful. He went on briskly. "Last night you were at a certain restaurant. You departed during the thunder-storm in a limousine driven by a young man whose face is familiar to me. In short, I am looking for a man who bears a most startling resemblance to him. May I prevail upon you to volunteer a bit of information?"

Mrs. Sparflight betrayed agitation. A hunted, troubled look came into her eyes.

"I—I don't quite understand," she stammered. "Who—who did you say you were?"

"My name is Chambers, Alfred Chambers, Scotland Yard. In the event that you are ignorant of the character of the place called Scotland Yard, I may explain that—"

"I know what it is," she interrupted hastily. "What is it that you want of me, Mr. Chambers?" She was rapidly gaining control of her wits.

"Very little, madam. I should very much like to know whose car took you away from Sprinkler's last night."

She looked him straight in the eye. "I haven't the remotest idea," she said.

He nodded his head gently. "Would you, on the other hand, object to telling

me how long James has been driving for her ladyship?"

This was a facer. Mrs. Sparflight's gaze wavered.

"Her ladyship?" she murmured weakly.

"Yes, madam,—unless my hearing was temporarily defective," he said.

"I don't know what you mean."

"Your companion was a young lady of—"

"My good man," interrupted the lady sharply, "my companion last night was my own private secretary."

"A Miss Emsdale, I believe," said he.

She gulped. "Precisely."

"Um!" he mused. "And you do not know whose car you went off in,—is that right?"

"I have no hesitancy in stating, Mr. Chambers, that the car does not belong to me or to my secretary," she said, smiling.

"I trust you will pardon a seemingly rude question, Mrs. Sparflight. Is it the custom in New York for people to take possession of private automobiles—"

"It is the custom for New York chauffeurs to pick up an extra dollar or two when their employers are not looking," she interrupted, with a shrug of her shoulders. She was instantly ashamed of her mendacity. She looked over her shoulder to see if Mr. Thomas Trotter's sweetheart was anywhere within hearing, and was relieved to find that she was not. "And now, sir, if it is a fair question, may I inquire just what this chauffeur's double has been doing that Scotland Yard should be seeking him so assiduously?"

"He has been giving us a deuce of a chase, madam," said Mr. Chambers, as if that were the gravest crime a British subject could possibly commit. "By the way, did you by any chance obtain a fair look at the man who drove you home last night?"

"Yes. He seemed quite a good-looking fellow."

"Will you glance at this photograph, Mrs. Sparflight, and tell me whether you detect a resemblance?" He took a small picture from his coat pocket and held it out to her.

She looked at it closely, holding it at various angles and distances, and nodded her head in doubtful acquiescence.

"I think I do, Mr. Chambers. I am not surprised that you should have been struck by the resemblance. This man was a soldier, I perceive."

Mr. Chambers restored the photograph to his pocket.

"The King's Own," he replied succinctly. "Perhaps your secretary may be able to throw a little more light on the matter, madam. May I have the privilege of interrogating her?"

"Not today," said Mrs. Sparflight, who had anticipated the request. "She is very busy."

"Of course I am in no position to insist," said he pleasantly. "I trust you will forgive my intrusion, madam. I am here only in the interests of justice, and I have no desire to cause you the slightest annoyance. Permit me to bid you good day, Mrs. Sparflight. Thank you for your kindness in receiving me. Tomorrow, if it is quite agreeable to you, I shall call to see Miss Emsdale."

At that moment, the door opened and Miss Emsdale came into the little office.

"You rang for me, Mrs. Sparflight?" she inquired, with a quick glance at the stranger.

Mrs. Sparflight blinked rapidly. "Not at all,—not at all. I did not ring."

Miss Emsdale looked puzzled. "I am sure the buzzer—"

"Pardon me," said Mr. Chambers, easily. "I fancy I can solve the mystery. Accidentally,—quite accidentally, I assure you,—I put my hand on the button on your desk, Mrs. Sparflight,—while you were glancing at the photograph. Like

this,—do you see?" He put his hand on the top of the desk and leaned forward, just as he had done when he joined her in studying the picture a few moments before.

A hot flush mounted to Mrs. Sparflight's face, and her eyes flashed. The next instant she smiled.

"You are most resourceful, Mr. Chambers," she said. "It happens, however, that your cleverness gains you nothing. This young lady is one of our stenographers. I think I said that Miss Emsdale is my private secretary. She has no connection whatever with the business office. The button you inadvertently pressed simply disturbed one of the girls in the next room. You may return to your work, Miss Henry."

She carried it off very well. Jane, sensing danger, was on the point of retiring, —somewhat hurriedly, it must be confessed,—when Mr. Chambers, in his most apologetic manner, remarked:

"May I have a word with you, your ladyship?"

It was a bold guess, encouraged by his discovery that the young lady was not only English but of a class distinctly remote from shops and stenography.

Under the circumstances, Jane may be forgiven for dissembling, even at the cost of her employer's honour. She stopped short, whirled, and confronted the stranger with a look in her eyes that convicted her immediately. Her hand flew to her heart, and a little gasp broke from her parted lips.

Mr. Chambers was smiling blandly. She looked from him to Mrs. Sparflight, utter bewilderment in her eyes.

"Oh, Lord!" muttered that lady in great dismay.

The man from Scotland Yard hazarded another and even more potential stroke while the iron was hot.

"I am from Scotland Yard," he said. "We make some mistakes there, I admit, but not many." He proceeded to lie boldly. "I know who you are, my lady, and— But it is not necessary to go into that at present. Do not be alarmed. You have nothing to fear from me,—or from Scotland Yard. I—"

"Well, I should hope *not*!" burst out Mrs. Sparflight indignantly.

"What does he want?" cried Jane, in trepidation. She addressed her friend, but it was Mr. Chambers who answered.

"I want you to supply me with a little information concerning Lord Eric Temple,—whom you addressed last evening as James."

Jane began to tremble. Scotland Yard!

"The man is crazy," said Mrs. Sparflight, leaping into the breach. "By what right, sir, do you come here to impose your—"

"No offence is intended, ma'am," broke in Mr. Chambers. "Absolutely no offence. It is merely in the line of duty that I come. In plain words, I have been instructed to apprehend Lord Eric Temple and fetch him to London. You see, I am quite frank about it. You can aid me by being as frank in return, ladies."

By this time Jane had regained command of herself. Drawing herself up, she faced the detective, and, casting discretion to the winds, took a most positive and determined stand.

"I must decline,—no matter what the cost may be to myself,—to give you the slightest assistance concerning Lord Temple."

To their infinite amazement, the man bowed very courteously and said:

"I shall not insist. Pardon my methods and my intrusion. I shall trouble you no further. Good day, madam. Good day, your ladyship."

He took his leave at once, leaving them staring blankly at the closed door. He was satisfied. He had found out just what he wanted to know, and he was naturally in some haste to get out before they began putting embarrassing questions to him.

"Oh, dear," murmured Jane, distractedly. "What *are* we to do? Scotland Yard! That can mean but one thing. His enemies at home have brought some vile, horrible charge against—"

"We must warn him at once, Jane. There is no time to be lost. Telephone to

the garage where Mrs. Millidew—"

"But the man doesn't know that Eric is driving for Mrs. Millidew," broke in Jane, hopefully.

"He *will* know, and in very short order," said the other, sententiously. "Those fellows are positively uncanny. Go at once and telephone." She hesitated a moment, looking a little confused and guilty. "Lay aside your work, dear, for the time being. There is nothing very urgent about it, you know."

In sheer desperation she had that very morning set her restless charge to work copying names out of the *Social Register*,—names she had checked off at random between the hours of ten and two the previous night.

Jane's distress increased to a state bordering on anguish.

"Oh, dear! He—he is out of town for two or three days."

"Out of town?"

"He told me last night he was to be off early this morning for Mrs. Millidew's country place somewhere on Long Island. Mrs. Millidew had to go down to see about improvements or repairs or something before the house is opened for the season."

"Mrs. Millidew was in the shop this morning for a 'try-on,'" said the other. "She has changed her plans, no doubt."

Jane's honest blue eyes wavered slightly as she met her friend's questioning gaze.

"I think he said that young Mrs. Millidew was going down to look after the work for her mother-in-law."

CHAPTER XVII

FRIDAY FOR LUCK

THE "drawing-room" that evening lacked not only distinction but animation as well. To begin with, the attendance was small. The Marchioness, after the usual collaboration with Julia in advance of the gathering, received a paltry half-dozen during the course of the evening. The Princess was there, and Count Antonio,—(he rarely missed coming), and the Hon. Mrs. Priestley-Duff. Lord Eric Temple and Lady Jane Thorne were missing, as were Prince Waldemar de Bosky, Count Wilhelm von Blitzen and the Countess du Bara. Extreme dulness prevailed. The Princess fell asleep, and, on being roused at a seasonable hour, declared that her eyes had been troubling her of late, so she kept them closed as much as possible on account of the lights.

Mrs. Priestley-Duff, being greatly out-of-sorts, caustically remarked that the proper way to treat bothersome eyes is to put them to bed in a sound-proof room.

Cricklewick yawned in the foyer, Moody yawned in the outer hall, and McFaddan in the pantry. The latter did not yawn luxuriously. There was something half-way about it.

"Why don't you 'ave it out?" inquired Moody, sympathetically, after solicitous inquiry. "They say the bloomin' things are the cause of all the rheumatism we're 'aving nowadays. Is it a wisdom tooth?"

"No," said McFaddan, with a suddenness that startled Moody; "it ain't. It's a whole jaw. It's a dam' fool jaw at that."

"Now that I look at you closer," said Moody critically, "it seems to be a bit discoloured. Looks as though mortification had set in."

"Ye never said a truer thing," said McFaddan. "It set in last night."

The man from Scotland Yard waited across the street until he saw the lights in the windows of the third, fourth and fifth floors go out, and then strolled patiently away. Queer looking men and women came under his observation

during the long and lonely vigil, entering and emerging from the darkened doorway across the street, but none of them, by any chance, bore the slightest resemblance to the elusive Lord Temple, or "her ladyship," the secretary. He made the quite natural error of putting the queer looking folk down as tailors and seamstresses who worked far into the night for the prosperous Deborah.

Two days went by. He sat at a window in the hotel opposite and waited for the young lady to appear. On three separate occasions he followed her to Central Park and back. She was a brisk walker. She had the free stride of the healthy English girl. He experienced some difficulty in keeping her in sight, but even as he puffed laboriously behind, he was conscious of a sort of elation. It was good to see some one who walked as if she were in Hyde Park.

For obvious reasons, his trailing was in vain. Jane did not meet Lord Temple for the excellent reason that Thomas Trotter was down on Long Island with the beautiful Mrs. Millidew. And while both Jane and Mrs. Sparflight kept a sharp lookout for Mr. Chambers, they failed to discover any sign of him. He seemed to have abandoned the quest. They were not lured into security, however. He would bob up, like Jack-in-the-box, when least expected.

If they could only get word to Trotter! If they could only warn him of the peril that stalked him!

Jane was in the depths. She had tumbled swiftly from the great height to which joy had wafted her; her hopes and dreams, and the castles they had built so deftly, shrunk up and vanished in the cloud that hung like a pall about her. Her faith in the man she loved was stronger than ever; nothing could shatter that. No matter what Scotland Yard might say or do, actuated by enemy injustice, she would never believe evil of him. And she would not give him up!

"Marchioness," she said at the close of the second day, her blue eyes clouded with the agony of suspense, "is there not some way to resist extradition? Can't we fight it? Surely it isn't possible to take an innocent man out of this great, generous country—"

"My dear child," said the Marchioness, putting down her coffee cup with so little precision that it clattered in the saucer, "there isn't *anything* that Scotland Yard cannot do." She spoke with an air of finality.

"I have been thinking," began Jane, haltingly. She paused for a moment. An

appealing, wistful note was in her voice when she resumed, and her eyes were tenderly resolute. "He hasn't very much money, you know, poor boy. I have been thinking,—oh, I've been thinking of so many things," she broke off confusedly.

"Well, what have you been thinking?" inquired the other, helpfully.

"It has occurred to me that I can get along very nicely on half of what you are paying me,—or even less. If it were not for the fact that my poor brother depends solely upon me for support, I could spare practically all of my salary to —for—"

"Go on," said the Marchioness gently.

"In any case, I can give Eric half of my salary if it will be of any assistance to him,—yes, a little more than half," said Jane, a warm, lovely flush in her cheeks.

The Marchioness hastily pressed the serviette to her lips. She seemed to be choking. It was some time before she could trust herself to say:

"Bless your heart, my dear, he wouldn't take it. Of course," she went on, after a moment, "it would please him beyond words if you were to suggest it to him."

"I shall do more," said Jane, resolutely. "I shall insist."

"It will tickle him almost to death," said the Marchioness, again raising the napkin to her lips.

At twelve o'clock the next day, Trotter's voice came blithely over the telephone.

"Are you there, darling? Lord, it seems like a century since I—"

"Listen, Eric," she broke in. "I have something very important to tell you. Now, *do* listen—are you there?"

"Right-o! Whisper it, dear. The telephone has a million ears. I want to hear you say it,—oh, I've been wanting—"

"It isn't that," she said. "You know I do, Eric. But this is something perfectly terrible."

"Oh, I say, Jane, you haven't changed your mind about—about—"

"As if I *could*," she cried. "I love you more than ever, Eric. Oh, what a silly thing to say over the telephone. I am blushing,—I hope no one heard—"

"Listen!" said he promptly, music in his voice. "I'm just in from the country. I'll be down to see you about five this afternoon. Tell you all about the trip. Lived like a lord,—homelike sort of feeling, eh?—and—"

"I don't care to hear about it," said Jane stiffly. "Besides, you must not come here today, Eric. It is the very worst thing you could do. He would be sure to see you."

"He? What he?" he demanded quickly.

"I can't explain. Listen, dear. Mrs. Sparflight and I have talked it all over and we've decided on the best thing to do."

And she poured into the puzzled young man's ear the result of prolonged deliberations. He was to go to Bramble's Bookshop at half-past four, and proceed at once to the workshop of M. Mirabeau upstairs. She had explained the situation to Mr. Bramble in a letter. At five o'clock she would join him there. In the meantime, he was to keep off of the downtown streets as much as possible.

"In the name of heaven, what's up?" he cried for the third time,—with variations.

"A—a detective from Scotland Yard," she replied in a voice so low and cautious that he barely caught the words. "I—I can't say anything more now," she went on rapidly. "Something tells me he is just outside the door, listening to every word I utter."

"Wait!" he ordered. "A detective? Has that beastly Smith-Parvis crowd dared to insinuate that you—that you—Oh, Lord, I can't even say it!"

"I said 'Scotland Yard,' Eric," she said. "Don't you understand?"

"No, I'm hanged if I do. But don't worry, dear. I'll be at Bramble's and, by the lord Harry, if they're trying to put up any sort of a—Hello! Are you there?"

There was no answer.

Needless to say, he was at Bramble's Bookshop on the minute, vastly perturbed and eager for enlightenment.

"Don't stop down here an instant," commanded Mr. Bramble, glancing warily at the front door. "Do as I tell you. Don't ask questions. Go upstairs and wait,—and don't show yourself under any circumstance. Did you happen to catch a glimpse of him anywhere outside?"

"The street is full of 'hims,'" retorted Mr. Trotter in exasperation. "What the devil is all this about, Bramby?"

"She will be here at five. There's nothing suspicious in her coming in to buy a book. It's all been thought out. Most natural thing in the world that she should buy a book, don't you see? Only you must not be buying one at the same time. Now, run along,—lively. Prince de Bosky is with Mirabeau. And don't come down till I give you the word."

"See here, Bramble, if you let anything happen to her I'll—" Mr. Bramble relentlessly urged him up the steps.

Long before Jane arrived, Trotter was in possession of the details. He was vastly perplexed.

"I daresay one of those beastly cousins of mine has trumped up some charge that he figures will put me out of the running for ever," he said gloomily. He sat, slack and dejected, in a corner of the shop farthest removed from the windows. "I shouldn't mind so much if it weren't for Lady Jane. She—you see, M'sieur, she has promised to be my wife. This will hurt her terribly. The beastly curs!"

"Sit down!" commanded M. Mirabeau. "You must not go raging up and down past those windows."

"Confound you, Mirabeau, he doesn't know this place exists. He never will know unless he follows Lady Jane. I'll do as I jolly well please."

De Bosky, inspired, produced a letter he had just received from his friend, the cracksman. He had read it to the bookseller and clockmaker, and now re-read it, with soulful fervour, for the benefit of the new arrival. He interrupted himself to

beg M. Mirabeau to unlock the safe and bring forth the treasure.

"You see what he says?" cried he, shaking the letter in front of Trotter's eyes. "And here is the money! See! Touch it, my friend. It is real. I thought I was also dreaming. Count them. Begin with this one. Now,—one hundred, two hundred —"

"I haven't the remotest idea what you're talking about," said Trotter, staring blankly at the money.

"What a fool I am!" cried de Bosky. "I begin at the back-end of the story. How could you know? Have you ever known such a fool as I, Mirabeau?"

"Never," said M. Mirabeau, who had his ear cocked for sounds on the stairway.

"And so," said the Prince, at the end of the hastily told story of the banknotes and the man up the river, "you see how it is. He replies to my carefully worded letter. Shall I read it again? No? But, I ask you, my dear Trotter, how am I to carry out his instructions? Naturally he is vague. All letters are read at the prison, I am informed. He says: 'And anything you may have come acrosst among my effects is so piffling that I hereby instructs you to burn it up, sos I won't have to be bothered with it when I come out, which ain't fer some time yet, and when I do get out I certainly am not coming to New York, anyhow. I am going west and start all over again. A feller has got a better chance out there.' That is all he has to say about this money, Trotter. I cannot burn it. What am I to do?"

Trotter had an inspiration.

"Put it into American Tobacco," he said.

De Bosky stared. "Tobacco?"

"Simplest way in the world to obey instructions. The easiest way to burn money is to convert it into tobacco. Slip down to Wall Street tomorrow and invest every cent of this money in American Tobacco, register the stock in the name of Henry Loveless and put it away for him. Save out enough for a round-trip ticket to Sing Sing, and run up there some day and tell him what you've done."

"By Jove!" exclaimed de Bosky, his eyes dancing. "But," he added, doubtfully, "what am I to do if he doesn't approve?"

"Tell him put it in his pipe and smoke it," said the resourceful Mr. Trotter.

"You know," said the other admiringly, "I have never been one of those misguided persons who claim that the English have no sense of humour. I—"

"Sh!" warned M. Mirabeau from the top of the steps. And then, like a true Frenchman, he bustled de Bosky out of the shop ahead of him and closed the door, leaving Trotter alone among the ticking clocks.

Jane came swiftly up the steps, hurrying as if pursued. Mr. Bramble was pledging something, in a squeaky undertone, from the store below.

"He may not have followed me," Jane called back in guarded tones, "but if he has, Mr. Bramble, you must be sure to throw him off the trail."

"Trust me,—trust me implicitly," came in a strangled sort of voice from the faithful ex-tutor.

"Oh,—Eric, dearest! How you startled me!" cried Lady Jane a moment later. She gasped the words, for she was almost smothered in the arms of her lover.

"Forgive me," he murmured, without releasing her,—an oversight which she apparently had no immediate intention of resenting.

A little later on, she suddenly drew away from him, with a quick, embarrassed glance around the noisy little shop. He laughed.

"We are quite alone, Jane dear,—unless you count the clocks. They're all looking at us, but they never tell anything more than the time of day. And now, dear, what is this beastly business?"

She closed the door to the stairway, very cautiously, and then came back to him. The frown deepened in his eyes as he listened to the story she told.

"But why should I go into hiding?" he exclaimed, as she stopped to get her breath. "I haven't done anything wrong. What if they have trumped up some rotten charge against me? All the more reason why I should stand out and defend

—"

"But, dear, Scotland Yard is such a dreadful place," she cried, blanching. "They—"

"Rubbish! I'm not afraid of Scotland Yard."

"You—you're not?" she gasped, blankly. "But, Eric dear, you *must* be afraid of Scotland Yard. You don't know what you are saying."

"Oh, yes, I do. And as for this chap they've sent after me,—where is he? In two seconds I can tell him what's what. He'll go humping back to London—"

"I knew you would say something like that," she declared, greatly perturbed. "But I sha'n't let you. Do you hear, Eric? I sha'n't let you. You *must* hide. You must go away from New York,—tonight."

"And leave you?" he scoffed. "What can you be thinking of, darling? Am I—Sit down, dear,—here beside me. You are frightened. That infernal brute has scared you almost out of—"

"I *am* frightened,—terribly frightened. So is the Marchioness,—and Mr. Bramble." She sat beside him on the bench. He took her cold hands in his own and pressed them gently, encouragingly. His eyes were very soft and tender.

"Poor little girl!" For a long time he sat there looking at her white, averted face. A slow smile slowly struggled to the corners of his mouth. "I can't afford to run away," he said at last. "I've just got to stick by my job. It means a lot to me now, Jane dear."

She looked up quickly, her face clearing.

"I love you, Eric. I know you are innocent of anything they may charge you with. I *know* it. And I would give all I have in the world to help you in your hour of trouble. Listen, dear. I want you to accept this in the right spirit. Don't let pride stand in the way. It is really something I want to do,—something that will make me—oh, so happy, if you will just let me do it. I am earning five guineas a week. It is more than I need. Now, dear, just for a little while,—until you have found another place in some city far away from New York,—you must let me share my—What is there to laugh at, Eric?" she cried in a hurt voice.

He grew sober at once.

"I'm—I'm sorry," he said. "Thank you,—and God bless you, Jane. It's fine. You're a brick. But,—but I can't accept it. Please don't say anything more about it, dear. I just *can't*,—that's all."

"Oh, dear," she sighed. "And—and you refuse to go away? You will not escape while there is yet—"

"See here, dear," he began, his jaw setting, "I am not underrating the seriousness of this affair. They may have put up a beast of a job on me. They fixed it so that I hadn't a chance three years ago. Perhaps they've decided to finish the job and have done with me for ever. I don't put it above them, curse them. Here's the story in a nutshell. I have two cousins in the Army, sons of my mother's sisters. They're a pair of rotters. It was they who hatched up the scheme to disgrace me in the service,—and, by gad, they did it to the queen's taste. I had to get out. There wasn't a chance for me to square myself. I—I sha'n't go into that, dear. You'll understand why. It—it hurts. Cheating at cards. That's enough, isn't it? Well, they got me. My grandfather and I—he is theirs as well as mine,—we never hit it off very well at best. My mother married Lord Temple. Grandfather was opposed to the match. Her sisters did everything in their power to widen the breach that followed the marriage. It may make it easier for you to understand when I remind you that my grandfather is one of the wealthiest peers in England.

"Odd things happen in life. When my father died, I went to Fenlew Hall with my mother to live. Grandfather's heart had softened a little, you see. I was Lord Eric Temple before I was six years old. My mother died when I was ten. For fifteen years I lived on with Lord Fenlew, and, while we rowed a good deal,—he is a crotchety old tyrant, bless him!—he undoubtedly preferred me to either of my cousins. God bless him for that! He showed his good sense, if I do say it who shouldn't.

"So they set to work. That's why I am here,—without going into details. That's why I am out of the Army. And I loved the Army, Jane,—God bless it! I used to pray for another war, horrible as it may sound, so that I could go out and fight for England as those lads did who went down to the bottom of Africa. I would cry myself to sleep because I was so young then, and so useless. I am not ashamed of the tears you see in my eyes now. You can't understand what it means to me, Jane."

He drew a deep breath, cleared his throat, and then went on.

"Lord Fenlew turned me out,—disowned me. Don't blame the old boy. They made out a good enough case against me. I was given the choice of resigning

from the regiment or—well, the other thing. My father was practically penniless when he died. I had nothing of my own. It was up to me to earn an honest living,—or go to the devil. I thought I'd try out the former first. One can always go to the devil, you know. So off into the far places of the earth I wandered,—and I've steered pretty clear of the devil up to date.

"It's easy to earn a living, dear, if you just half try.

"And now for this new complication. For the three years that I have been away from England, not a single word have I sent home. I daresay they know that I am alive, and that I'll turn up some day like the bad penny. I was named in my grandfather's will. He once told me he intended to leave the bulk of the unentailed property to me,—not because he loved me well but because he loved my two cousins not at all. For all I know, he may never have altered his will. In that case, I still remain the chief legatee and a source of tremendous uneasiness to my precious aunts and their blackguard sons. It is possible, even probable, that they have decided the safest place to have me is behind the bars,—at least until Lord Fenlew has changed his will for the last time and lies securely in the family vault. I can think of no other explanation for the action of Scotland Yard. But, don't worry, dear. I haven't done anything wrong, and they can't stow me away in—"

"The beasts!" cried Jane, furiously.

He stroked her clenched fingers.

"I wouldn't call 'em names, dear," he protested. "They're honest fellows, and simply doing—"

"They are the most despicable wretches on earth."

"You must be referring to my cousins. I thought—"

"Now, Eric," she broke in firmly, "I sha'n't let you give yourself up. You owe something to me. I love you with all my soul. If they were to take you back to London and—and put you in prison,—I'd—I'd die. I could not endure—" She suddenly broke down and, burying her face on his shoulder, sobbed chokingly.

He was deeply distressed.

"Oh, I say, dearest, don't—don't go under like this. I—I can't stand it. Don't cry, darling. It breaks my heart to see you—"

"I—I can't help it," she sobbed. "Give—give me a little—time. I'll be all right in a—minute."

He whispered consolingly: "That's right. Take your time, dear. I never dreamed you cared so much."

She looked up quickly, her eyes flashing through the tears.

"And do you care less for me, now that you see what a weak, silly—"

"Good Lord, no! I adore you more than ever. I— Who's there?"

M. Mirabeau, coughing considerately, was rattling the latch of the door that separated the shop from the store-room beyond. A moment later he opened the door slowly and stuck his head through the aperture. Then, satisfied that his warning cough had been properly received, he entered the shop. The lovers were sitting bolt upright and some distance apart. Lady Jane was arranging a hat that had been somehow forgotten up to that instant.

"A thousand pardons," said the old Frenchman, his voice lowered. "We must act at once. Follow me,—quickly, but as quietly as possible. He is downstairs. I have listened from the top of the steps. Poor old Bramble is doing his best to divert him. I have just this instant heard the villain announce that his watch needs looking into, and from that I draw a conclusion. He will come to my shop in spite of all that Bramble can do. Come! I know the way to safety."

"But I'm not going to hide," began Trotter.

Jane seized his arm and dragged him toward the door.

"Yes, you are," she whispered fiercely. "You belong to me, Eric Temple. I shall do what I like with you. Don't be mulish, dear. I sha'n't leave you,—not for anything in the world."

"Bravo!" whispered M. Mirabeau.

Swiftly they stole through the door and past the landing. Scraps of

conversation from below reached their ears. Jane's clutch tightened on her lover's arm. She recognized the voice of Mr. Alfred Chambers.

"De Bosky will do the rest," whispered the clockmaker, as they were joined by the musician at the far end of the stock-room. "I must return to the shop. He will suspect at once if I am not at work when he appears,—for appear he will, you may be sure."

He was gone in a second. De Bosky led them into the adjoining room and pointed to a tall step-ladder over in the corner. A trap-door in the ceiling was open, and blackness loomed beyond.

"Go up!" commanded the agitated musician, addressing Trotter. "It is an air-chamber. Don't break your head on the rafters. Follow close behind, Lady Jane. I will hold the ladder. Close the trap after you,—and do not make a sound after you are once up there. This is the jolliest moment of my life! I was never so thrilled. It is beautiful! It is ravishing! Sh! Don't utter a word, I command you! We will foil him,—we will foil old Scotland Yard. Be quick! Splendid! You are wonderful, Mademoiselle. Such courage,—such grace,—such— Sh! I take the ladder away! Ha, he will never suspect. He—"

"But how the deuce are we to get down from here?" groaned Trotter in a penetrating whisper from aloft.

"You can't get down,—but as he can't get up, why bother your head about that? Close the trap!"

"Oh-h!" shuddered Jane, in an ecstasy of excitement. She was kneeling behind her companion, peering down through the square little opening into which he had drawn her a moment before.

Trotter cautiously lowered the trap-door,—and they were in Stygian darkness. She repeated the exclamation, but this time it was a sharp, quick gasp of dismay.

For a long time they were silent, listening for sounds from below. At last he arose to his feet. His head came in contact with something solid. A smothered groan escaped his lips.

"Good Lord!— Be careful, dear! There's not more than four feet head-room. Sit still till I find a match."

"Are you hurt? What a dreadful bump it was. I wonder if he could have heard?"

"They heard it in heaven," he replied, feeling his head.

"How dark it is," she shuddered. "Don't you dare move an inch from my side, Eric. I'll scream."

He laughed softly. "By Jove, it's rather a jolly lark, after all. A wonderful place this is for sweethearts." He dropped down beside her.

After a time, she whispered: "You mentioned a match, Eric."

"So I did," said he, and proceeded to go through the pocket in which he was accustomed to carry matches. "Thunderation! The box is empty."

She was silent for a moment. "I really don't mind, dear."

"I remember saying this morning that I never have any luck on Friday," said he resignedly. "But," he added, a happy note in his voice, "I never dreamed there was such luck as this in store for me."

CHAPTER XVIII

FRIDAY FOR BAD LUCK

SPEAKING of Friday and the mystery of luck. Luck is supposed to shift in one direction or another on the sixth day of every week in the year. It is supposed to shift for everybody. A great many people are either too ignorant or too supercilious to acknowledge this vast and oppressive truth, however. They regard Friday as a plain, ordinary day, and go on being fatuously optimistic.

On the other hand, when it comes Friday, the capable and the far-seeing are prone to accept it as it was intended by the Creator, who, from confidential reports, paused on the sixth day (as we reckon it) of his labours and looked back on what already had been accomplished. He was dissatisfied. He set to work again. Right then and there Friday became an unlucky day, according to a great many philosophers. If the Creator had stopped then and let well-enough alone, there wouldn't have been any cause for complaint. He would have failed to create Adam (an afterthought), and the human race, lacking existence, would not have been compelled to put up with life,—which is a mess, after all.

If more people would pause to consider the futility of living between Thursday and Saturday, a great deal of woe and misfortune might be avoided.

For example, when Mrs. Smith-Parvis called on Mrs. McFaddan on the Monday of the week that is now making history through these pages, she completely overlooked the fact that there was a Friday still to be reckoned with.

True, she had in mind a day somewhat more remote when, after coming face to face with the blooming Mrs. MCFaddan who happened to open her own front door,—it being Maggie's day out,—she had been compelled to substitute herself in person for the cards she meant to leave. Mrs. McFaddan had cordially sung out to her from the front stoop, over the head of the shocked footman, that she was at home and would Mrs. Smith-Parvis please step in.

Thursday, two weeks hence, was the day Mrs. Smith-Parvis had in mind. She had not been in the McFaddan parlour longer than a minute and a half before she

realized that an invitation by word of mouth would do quite as well as an expensively engraved card by post. There was nothing formal about Mrs. McFaddan. She was sorry that Con wasn't home; he would hate like poison to have missed seeing Mrs. Smith-Parvis when she did them the honour to call. But Con was not likely to be in before seven,—he was that busy, poor man,—and it would be asking too much of Mrs. Smith-Parvis to wait till then.

So, the lady from the upper East Side had no hesitancy in asking the lady from the lower West Side to dine with her on Thursday the nineteenth.

"I am giving a series of informal dinners, Mrs. McFad-*dan*," she explained graciously.

"They're the nicest kind," returned Mrs. McFaddan, somewhat startled by the pronunciation of her husband's good old Irish name. She knew little or nothing of French, but somehow she rather liked the emphasis, crisply nasal, her visitor put upon the final syllable. Before the visit came to an end, she was mentally repeating her own name after Mrs. Smith-Parvis, and wondering whether Con would stand for it.

"What date did you say?" she inquired, abruptly breaking in on a further explanation. The reply brought a look of disappointment to her face. "We can't come," she said flatly. "We're leaving on Saturday this week for Washington to be gone till the thirtieth. Important business, Con says."

Mrs. Smith-Parvis thought quickly. Washington, eh?

"Could you come on Friday night of this week, Mrs. McFad-*dan*?"

"We could," said the other. "Don't you worry about Con cooking up an excuse for not coming, either. He does just about what I tell him."

"Splendid!" said Mrs. Smith-Parvis, arising. "Friday at 8:30."

"Have plenty of fish," said Mrs. McFaddan gaily.

"Fish?" faltered the visitor.

"It's Friday, you know."

Greatly to Mrs. Smith-Parvis's surprise,—and in two or three cases, irritation,—every one she asked to meet the McFaddans on Friday accepted with alacrity. She asked the Dodges, feeling confident that they couldn't possibly be had on such short notice,—and the same with the Bittinger-Stuarts. They *did* have previous engagements, but they promptly cancelled them. It struck her as odd,—and later on significant,—that, without exception, every woman she asked said she was just dying for a chance to have a little private "talk" with the notorious Mr. McFaddan.

People who had never arrived at a dinner-party on time in their lives, appeared on Friday at the Smith-Parvis home all the way from five to fifteen minutes early.

The Cricklewicks were not asked. Mr. Smith-Parvis remembered in time that the Irish hate the English, and it wouldn't do at all.

Mr. McFaddan and his wife were the last to arrive. They were so late that not only the hostess but most of her guests experienced a sharp fear that they wouldn't turn up at all. There were side glances at the clock on the mantel, surreptitious squints at wrist-watches, and a queer, unnatural silence while the big clock in the upper hall chimed a quarter to nine.

"Really, my dear," said Mrs. Dodge, who had the New York record for tardiness,—an hour and three-quarters, she claimed,—"I can't understand people being late for a dinner,—unless, of course, they mean to be intentionally rude."

"I can't imagine what can have happened to them," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis nervously.

"Accident on the Subway, no doubt," drawled Mr. Bittinger-Stuart, and instantly looked around in a startled sort of way to see if there was any cause for repenting the sarcasm.

"Where is Stuyvesant?" inquired Mrs. Millidew the elder, who had arrived a little late. She had been obliged to call a taxi-cab at the last moment on account of the singular defection of her new chauffeur,—who, she proclaimed on entering, was to have his walking papers in the morning. Especially as it was raining pitchforks.

"He is dressing, my dear," explained Stuyvesant's mother, with a maternal

smile of apology.

"I should have known better," pursued Mrs. Millidew, still chafing, "than to let him go gallivanting off to Long Island with Dolly."

"I said he was dressing, Mrs. Millidew," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis stiffly.

"If I could have five minutes alone with Mr. McFaddan," one of the ladies was saying to the host, "I know I could interest him in our plan to make Van Cortlandt Park the most attractive and the most exclusive country club in—"

"My dear," interrupted another of her sex, "if you get him off in a corner and talk to him all evening about that ridiculous scheme of yours, I'll murder you. You know how long Jim has been working to get his brother appointed judge in the United States District Court,—his brother Charlie, you know,—the one who doesn't amount to much,—and I'll bet my last penny I can fix it if—"

"It's an infernal outrage," boomed Mr. Dodge, addressing no one in particular. "Yes, sir, a pernicious outrage."

"As I said before, the more you do for them the worse they treat you in return," agreed Mrs. Millidew. "It doesn't pay. Treat them like dogs and they'll be decent. If you try to be kind and—"

Mr. Dodge expanded.

"You see, it will cut straight through the centre of the most valuable piece of unimproved property in New York City. It isn't because I happen to be the owner of that property that I'm complaining. It's the high-handed way—Now, look! This is the Grand Concourse, and here is Bunker Avenue." He produced an invisible diagram with his foot, jostling Mr. Smith-Parvis off of the rug in order to extend the line beyond the intersection to a point where the proposed street was to be opened. "Right smack through this section of—"

At that instant Mr. and Mrs. McFaddan were announced.

"Where the deuce is Stuyvie?" Mr. Smith-Parvis whispered nervously into the ear of his wife as the new arrivals approached.

"Diplomacy," whispered she succinctly. "All for effect. Last but not least. He

—Good evening, dear Mrs. McFad-dán!"

In the main hall, a moment before, Mr. McFaddan had whispered in *his* wife's ear. He transmitted an opinion of Peasley the footman.

"He's a mutt." He had surveyed Peasley with a discriminating and intensely critical eye, taking him in from head to foot. "Under-gardener or vicar's man-of-all-work. Trained in a Sixth Avenue intelligence office. Never saw livery till he —"

"Hush, Con! The man will hear you."

"And if he should, he can't accuse me of betrayin' a secret."

To digress for a moment, it is pertinent to refer to the strange cloud of preoccupation that descended upon Mr. McFaddan during the ride uptown,—not in the Subway, but in his own Packard limousine. Something back in his mind kept nagging at him,—something elusive yet strangely fresh, something that had to do with recent events. He could not rid himself of the impression that the Smith-Parvises were in some way involved.

Suddenly, as they neared their destination, the fog lifted and his mind was as clear as day. His wife's unctuous reflections were shattered by the force of the explosion that burst from his lips. He remembered everything. This was the house in which Lady Jane Thorne was employed, and it was the scion thereof who had put up the job on young Trotter. Old Cricklewick had come to see him about it and had told him a story that made his blood boil. It was all painfully clear to him now.

Their delay in arriving was due to the protracted argument that took place within a stone's throw of the Smith-Parvis home. Mr. McFaddan stopped the car and flatly refused to go an inch farther. He would be hanged if he'd have anything to do with a gang like that! His wife began by calling him a goose. Later on she called him a mule, and still later, in sheer exasperation, a beast. He capitulated. He was still mumbling incoherently as they mounted the steps and were admitted by the deficient Peasley.

"What shall I say to the dirty spalpeen if he tries to shake hands with me?" Mr. McFaddan growled, three steps from the top.

"Say anything you like," said she, "but, for God's sake, say it under your breath."

However: the party was now complete with one notable exception. Stuyvie was sound asleep in his room. He had reached home late that afternoon and was in an irascible frame of mind. He didn't know the McFad-dáns, and he didn't care to know them. Dragging him home from Hot Springs to meet a cheap bounder,—what the deuce did she mean anyhow, entertaining that sort of people? And so on and so forth until his mother lost her temper and took it out on the maid who was dressing her hair.

Peasley was sent upstairs to inform Mr. Stuyvesant that they were waiting for him.

Mrs. Smith-Parvis met her son at the foot of the stairs when he came lounging down. He was yawning and making futile efforts to smooth out the wrinkles in his coat, having reposed soundly in it for the better part of an hour.

"You must be nice to Mr. McFad-dán," said she anxiously. "He has a great deal of influence with the powers that be."

He stopped short, instantly alert.

"Has a—a warrant been issued?" he demanded, leaping to a very natural and sickening conclusion as to the identity of the "powers."

"Not yet, of course," she said, benignly. "It is a little too soon for that. But it will come, dear boy, if we can get Mr. McFad-dán on our side. That is to be the lovely surprise I spoke about in my—"

"You—you call *that* lovely?" he snapped.

"If everything goes well, you will soon be at the Court of St. James. Wouldn't you call that lovely?"

He was perspiring freely. "My God, that's just the thing I'm trying to avoid. If they get me into court, they'll—"

"You do not understand. The diplomatic court,—corps, I mean. You are to go to London,—into the legation. The rarest opportunity—"

"Oh, Lord!" gasped Stuyvesant, passing his hand over his wet brow. A wave of relief surged over him. He leaned against the banister, weakly. "Why didn't you say that in the first place?"

"You must be very nice to Mr. McFad-dán," she said, taking his arm. "And to Mrs. McFad-dán also. She is rather stunning—and quite young."

"That's nice," said Stuyvie, regaining a measure of his tolerant, blasé air.

Now, while the intelligence of the reader has long since grasped the fact that the expected is about to happen, it is only fair to state that the swiftly moving events of the next few minutes were totally unexpected by any one of the persons congregated in Mrs. Smith-Parvis's drawing-room.

Stuyvesant entered the room, a forced, unamiable smile on his lips. He nodded in the most casual, indifferent manner to those nearest the door. It was going to be a dull, deadly evening. The worst lot of he-fossils and scrawny-necked—

"For the love o' Mike!"

Up to that instant, one could have dropped a ten-pound weight on the floor without attracting the slightest attention. For a second or two following the shrill ejaculation, the crash of the axiomatic pin could have been heard from one end of the room to the other.

Every eye, including Stuyvie's, was fixed upon the shocked, surprised face of the lady who uttered the involuntary exclamation.

Mrs. McFaddan was staring wildly at the newcomer. Stuyvesant recognized her at once. The dashing, vivid face was only too familiar. In a flash the whole appalling truth was revealed to him. An involuntary "Oh, Lord!" oozed from his lips.

Cornelius McFaddan suddenly clapped his hand to his mouth, smothering the words that surged up from the depths of his injured soul. He became quite purple in the face.

"This is my son Stuyvesant, Mr. McFaddan," said Mrs. Smith-Parvis, in a voice strangely faint and faltering. And then, sensing catastrophe, she went on

hurriedly: "Shall we go in to dinner? Has it been announced, Rogers?"

Mr. McFaddan removed his hand.

The hopes and ambitions, the desires and schemes of every one present went hurtling away on the hurricane of wrath that was liberated by that unfortunate action of Cornelius McFaddan. An unprejudiced observer would have explained, in justice to poor Cornelius, that the force of the storm blew his hand away, willy-nilly, despite his heroic efforts to check the resistless torrent.

I may be forgiven for a confessed inadequacy to cope with a really great situation. My scope of delivery is limited. In a sense, however, short-comings of this nature are not infrequently blessings. It would be a pity for me or any other upstart to spoil, through sheer feebleness of expression, a situation demanding the incomparable virility of a Cornelius McFaddan.

Suffice to say, Mr. McFaddan left nothing to the imagination. He had the stage to himself, and he stood squarely in the centre of it for what seemed like an age to the petrified audience. As a matter of fact, it was all over in three minutes. He was not profane. At no time did he forget there were ladies present. But from the things he said, no one doubted, then or afterwards, that the presence of ladies was the only thing that stood between Stuyvesant Smith-Parvis and an unhallowed grave.

It may be enlightening to repeat his concluding remark to Stuyvie.

"And if I thought ye'd even dream of settin' foot outside this house I'd gladly stand on the sidewalk in the rain, without food or drink, for forty-eight hours, waitin' for ye."

And as that was the mildest thing he said to Stuyvie, it is only fair to state that Peasley, who was listening in the hall, hastily opened the front door and looked up and down the street for a policeman. With commendable foresight, he left it ajar and retired to the foot of the stairs, hoping, perhaps, that Stuyvesant might undertake to throw the obnoxious guest into the street,—in which case it would be possible for him to witness the whirlwind without being in the path of it.

To Smith-Parvis, Senior, the eloquent McFaddan addressed these parting words:

"I don't know what you had in mind when you invited me here, Mr. Smith-Parvis, but whatever it was you needn't worry about it,—not for a minute. Put it out of your mind altogether, my good man. And if I've told you anything at all about this pie-faced son of yours that ye didn't already know or suspect, you're welcome to the information. He's a bad egg,—and if ye don't believe me, ask Lady Jane Thorne,—if she happens to be about."

He spoke without thinking, but he did no harm. No one there had the remotest idea who he meant when he referred to Lady Jane Thorne.

"Come, Peggy, we'd better be going," he said to his wife. "If we want a bite o' dinner, I guess we'll have to go over to Healy's and get it."

Far in the night, Mrs. Smith-Parvis groaned. Her husband, who sat beside her bed and held her hand with somnolent devotion, roused himself and inquired if the pain was just as bad as ever.

She groaned again.

He patted her hand soothingly. "There, there, now,—go to sleep again. You'll be all right—"

"Again?" she cried plaintively. "How can you say such a thing? I haven't closed my eyes."

"Oh, my dear," he expostulated. "You've been sound asleep for—"

"I have not!" she exclaimed. "My poor head is splitting. You know I haven't been asleep, so why will you persist in saying that I have?"

"At any rate," said he, taking up a train of thought that had become somewhat confused and unstable by passing through so many cat-naps, "we ought to be thankful it isn't worse. The dear boy might have gone to the electric chair if we had permitted him to follow the scoundrel to the sidewalk."

Mrs. Smith-Parvis turned her face toward him. A spark of enthusiasm flashed for an instant in her tired eyes.

"How many times did he knock him down at Spangler's?" she inquired.

"Four," said Mr. Smith-Parvis, proudly.

"And that dreadful woman was the cause of it all, writing notes to Stuyvesant and asking him to meet her—What was it Stuyvesant called them?"

"Crush-notes, Angie. Now, try to go to sleep, dearie."

CHAPTER XIX

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

"GOODNESS! What's that?" whispered Lady Jane, starting violently.

For what seemed to them many hours, she and Thomas Trotter had sat, quite snugly comfortable, in the dark air-chamber. Comfortable, I say, but I fear that the bewildering joy of having her in his arms rendered him impervious to what under other conditions would most certainly have been a severe strain upon his physical endurance. In other words, she rested very comfortably and cosily in the crook of his arm, her head against his shoulder, while he, sitting bolt upright with no support whatsoever—But why try to provide him with cause for complaint when he was so obviously contented?

Her suppressed exclamation followed close upon the roar and crash of an ear-splitting explosion. The reverberation rolled and rumbled and dwindled away into the queerest silence. Almost immediately the clatter of falling debris assailed their ears. She straightened up and clutched his arm convulsively.

"Rain," he said, with a short laugh. For an instant his heart had stood still. So appalling was the crash that he involuntarily raised an arm to shield his beloved companion from the shattered walls that were so soon to tumble about their ears. "Beating on the tin roof," he went on, jerkily.

"Oh,—wasn't it awful?" she gasped, in smothered tones. "Are you sure?"

"I am now," he replied, "but, by Jove, I wasn't a second or two ago. Lord, I thought it was all over."

"If we could only see!" she cried nervously.

"Any how," he said, with a reassuring chuckle, "we sha'n't get wet."

By this time the roar of rain on the roof so close to their heads was deafening.

"Goodness, Eric,—it's—it's leaking here," she cried out suddenly, after a long

silence.

"That's the trouble with these ramshackle old—Oh, I say, Jane, your frock! It will be ruined. My word! The confounded roof's like a sieve."

He set out,—on all fours,—cautiously to explore.

"I—I am frightfully afraid of thunder," she cried out after him, a quaver in her voice. "And, Eric, wouldn't it be dreadful if the building were to be struck by lightning and we should be found up here in this—this unexplainable loft? What *could* we say?"

"Nothing, dearest," he replied, consolingly. "That is, provided the lightning did its work properly. Ouch! It's all right! Don't bother, dear. Nothing but a wall. Seems dry over here. Don't move. I'll come back for you."

"It's—it's rather jolly, isn't it?" she cried nervously as his hand touched her shoulder. She grasped it eagerly. "Much jollier than if we could see." A few moments later: "Isn't it nice and dry over here. How clever of you, Eric, to find it in the dark."

On their hands and knees they had crept to the place of shelter, and were seated on a broad, substantial beam with their backs against a thin, hollow-sounding partition. The journey was not without incident. As they felt their way over the loose and sometimes widely separated boards laid down to protect the laths and plaster of the ceiling below, his knee slipped off and before he could prevent it, his foot struck the lathing with considerable force.

"Clumsy ass!" he muttered.

After a long time, she said to him,—a little pathetically:

"I hope M. Mirabeau doesn't forget we are up here."

"I should hope not," he said fervently. "Mrs. Millidew is going out to dinner this evening. I'd—"

"Oh-h!" she whispered tensely. "Look!"

A thin streak of light appeared in front of them. Fascinated, they watched it

widen, slowly,—relentlessly.

The trap-door was being raised from below. A hand and arm came into view, —the propelling power.

"Is that you, de Bosky?" called out Trotter, in a penetrating whisper.

Abruptly the trap flew wide open and dropped back on the scantlings with a bang.

The head and shoulders of a man,—a bald-headed man, at that,—rose quickly above the ledge, and an instant later a lighted lantern followed.

"Oh, dear!" murmured Lady Jane, aghast. "It—it isn't Mr. de Bosky, Eric. It's that man."

"I beg your pardon, Lord Temple," said Mr. Alfred Chambers, setting the lantern down in order to brush the dust off of his hands. "Are you there?"

"What is the meaning of this, sir?" demanded the young man on the beam, blinking rapidly in the unaccustomed glare.

Mr. Chambers rested his elbows on the ledge. The light of the lantern shone full on his face, revealing the slow but sure growth of a joyous grin.

"Permit me to introduce myself, your lordship. Mr. Alfred Chambers, of—"

"I know,—I know!" broke in the other impatiently. "What the devil do you want?"

"Good evening, Miss Emsdale," said Mr. Chambers, remembering his manners. "That is to say,—your ladyship. 'Pon my word, you can't possibly be more surprised than I am,—either of you. I shouldn't have dreamed of looking in this—this stuffy hole for—for anything except bats." He chortled.

"I can't understand why some one below there doesn't knock that ladder from under you," said Mr. Trotter rudely.

"I was on the point of giving up in despair," went on Mr. Chambers, unoffended. "You know, I shouldn't have thought of looking up here for you."

His quarry bethought himself of the loyal, conspiring friends below.

"See here, Mr. Chambers," he began earnestly, "I want you to understand that those gentlemen downstairs are absolutely innocent of any criminal complicity in—"

"I understand perfectly," interrupted the man from Scotland Yard. "Perfectly. And the same applies to her ladyship. Everything's as right as rain, your lordship. Will you be so good, sir, as to come down at once?"

"Certainly," cried the other. "With the greatest pleasure. Come, Jane,—"

"Wait!" protested Jane. "I sha'n't move an inch until he promises to—to listen to reason. In the first place, this gentleman is a Mr. Trotter," she went on rapidly, addressing the head and shoulders behind the lantern. "You will get yourself into a jolly lot of trouble if you—"

"Thanks, Jane dear," interrupted her lover gently. "It's no use. He knows I am Eric Temple,—so we'll just have to make the best of it."

"He doesn't know anything of the kind," said she. "He noticed a resemblance, that's all."

Mr. Chambers beamed.

"Quite so, your ladyship. I noticed it at once. If I do say it myself, there isn't a man in the department who has anything on me when it comes to that sort of thing. The inspector has frequently mentioned—"

"By the way, Mr. Snooper, will you be kind enough to—"

"Chambers, your lordship," interrupted the detective.

"Kind enough to explain how you discovered that we were up here?"

"Well, you see we were having our coffee,—after a most excellent dinner, your lordship, prepared, I am bound to say, for your discussion by the estimable Mr. Bramble,—"

"Dinner? By George, you remind me that I am ravenously hungry. It must be quite late."

"Half-past eight, sir,—approximately. As I was saying, we were enjoying our coffee,—the three of us only,—"

Trotter made a wry face. "In that case, Mrs. Millidew will sack me in the morning, Jane. I had orders for eight sharp."

"It really shouldn't matter, your lordship," said Mr. Chambers cheerfully. "Not in the least, if I may be so bold as to say so. However, to continue, sir. Or rather, to go back a little if I may. You see, I was rather certain you were hiding somewhere about the place. At least, I was certain her ladyship was. She came in and she didn't go out, if you see what I mean. I insisted on my right to search the premises. Do you follow me, sir?"

"Reluctantly."

"In due time, I came to the little dining-room, where I discovered the cook preparing dinner. You were not in evidence, your ladyship. I do not mind in the least confessing that I was ordered out by the cook. I retired to the clock-shop of M. Mirabeau and sat down to wait. The Polish young gentleman was there. As time went on, Mr. Bramble joined us. They were extremely ill-at-ease, your lordship, although they tried very hard to appear amused and unconcerned. The slightest noise caused them to fidget. Once, to test them, I stealthily dropped my pocket knife on the floor. Now, you would say, wouldn't you, that so small an object as a pen-knife—but that's neither here nor there. They jumped,—every blessed one of them. Presently the young Polish gentleman, whose face is strangely familiar to me,—I must have seen him in London,—announced that he was obliged to depart. A little later on,—you see, it was quite dark by this time, —the clockmaker prepared to close up for the night. Mr. Bramble looked at his watch two or three times in rapid succession, notwithstanding the fact that he was literally surrounded by clocks. He said he feared he would have to go and see about the dinner,—and would I kindly get out. I—"

"They should have called in the police," interrupted his male listener indignantly. "That's what I should have done, confound your impudence."

"Ah, now *there* is a point I should have touched upon before," explained Mr. Chambers, casting an uneasy glance down into the room below. "I may as well confess to you,—quite privately and confidentially, of course, your lordship,—that I—er—rather deceived the old gentlemen. Do not be alarmed. I am quite sure they can't hear what I am saying. You see. I told them in the beginning that I

had surrounded the place with policemen and plain-clothes men. They—"

"And hadn't you?" demanded Mr. Trotter quickly, a reckless light appearing in his eyes.

"Not at all, sir,—not at all. Why should I? I am quite capable of handling the case single-handed. The less the police had to do with it the better for all parties concerned. Still, it was necessary to frighten them a little. Otherwise, they *might* have ejected me—er—bodily, if you know what I mean. Or, for that matter, they might have called in the police, as you suggest. So I kept them from doing either by giving them to understand that if there was to be any calling of the police it would be I who would do it with my little whistle."

He paused to chuckle.

"You are making a long story of it," growled Mr. Trotter.

"I beg your pardon, sir. The interruptions, you see,—ahem! I followed Mr. Bramble to the dining-room. He was very nervous. He coughed a great deal, and very loudly. I was quite convinced that you were secreted somewhere about the place, but, for the life of me, I couldn't imagine where."

"I suppose it hadn't occurred to you that we might have gone down the back stairway and escaped into the side-street," said Mr. Trotter sarcastically.

Mr. Chambers cleared his throat and seemed curiously embarrassed.

"Perhaps I should have stated before that a—er—a chap from a local agency was posted at the bottom of the kitchen stairway,—as a favour to me, so to speak. A chap who had been detailed to assist me,—But I shall explain all that in my report. So, you see, you couldn't have gone out that way without—Yes, yes, —as I was saying, I accompanied Mr. Bramble to the dining-room. The cook was in a very bad temper. The dinner was getting cold. I observed that three places had been laid. Fixing my eye upon Mr. Bramble I inquired who the third place was for. I shall never forget his expression, nor the admirable way in which he recovered himself. He was quite wonderful. He said it was for *me*. Rather neat of him, wasn't it?"

"You don't mean to say you had the brass to—Well, 'pon my soul, Chambers, that *was* going it a bit strong."

"Under the circumstances, your lordship, I couldn't very well decline," said Mr. Chambers apologetically. "He is such a decent, loyal old chap, sir, that it would have been cruel to let him see that I knew he was lying."

"But, confound you, that was *my* dinner," exclaimed Trotter wrathfully.

"So I suspected, your lordship. I knew it *couldn't* be her ladyship's. Well, we had got on to the coffee, and I was just on the point of asking Mr. Bramble for the loan of an umbrella, when there was a loud thump on the ceiling overhead. An instant later a large piece of plaster fell to the floor, not three feet behind my chair. I—"

"By Jove! What a pity it didn't fall three feet nearer," exclaimed Trotter, a note of regret in his voice.

Mr. Chambers generously overlooked the remark.

"After that it was plain sailing," said he, quite pleasantly. "Now you know how I came to discover you, and how I happen to be here."

"And those poor old dears," cried Lady Jane in distress; "where are they? What have you done to them?"

"They are—" he looked downward again before answering—"yes, they are holding the ladder for me. Coming, gentlemen!" he called out. "We'll all be down in a jiffy."

"Before we go any farther," said Trotter seriously, "I should like to know just what the charge is against me."

"Beg pardon?"

"The charge. What are you going to chuck me into prison for?"

"Prison? My God, sir! Who said anything about prison?" gasped Mr. Chambers, staring wide-eyed at the young man.

Trotter leaned forward, his face a study in emotions. Lady Jane uttered a soft little cry.

"Then,—then they haven't trumped up some rotten charge against me?"

"They? Charge? I say!" He bellowed the last to the supporters below. "Hold this bally thing steady, will you? Do you want me to break my neck?"

"Well, don't jiggle it like that," came the voice of Mr. Bramble from below. "We can't hold it steady if you're going to *dance* on it."

Mr. Chambers once more directed his remarks to Mr. Trotter.

"So far as I am aware, Lord Temple, there is no—er—charge against you. The only complaint I know of is that you haven't kept your grandfather informed as to your whereabouts. Naturally he is a bit annoyed about it. You see, if you had dropped him a line occasionally—"

"Get on, man,—get on," urged Trotter excitedly.

"He wouldn't have been put to the expense of having a man detached from Scotland Yard to look the world over for you. Personal influence did it, of course. He went direct to the chief and asked for the best man in the service. I happened to be on another case at the time," explained Mr. Chambers modestly, "but they took me off at once and started me out. I—"

"In a nutshell, you represent my grandfather and not the King of England," interrupted Trotter.

"On detached duty," said Mr. Chambers.

"And you do not intend to arrest him?" cried Lady Jane.

"Bless me, no!" exclaimed Mr. Chambers.

"Then, what the deuce do you mean by frightening Miss Emsdale and my friends downstairs?" demanded Lord Fenlew's grandson. "Couldn't you have said in the beginning that there was no criminal charge against me?"

"I hadn't the remotest idea, your lordship, that any one suspected you of crime," said Mr. Chambers, with dignity.

"But, confound you, why didn't you explain the situation to Bramble? That was the sensible,—yes, the intelligent thing to do, Mr. Chambers."

"That is precisely what I did, your lordship, while we were at dinner,—we

had a bottle of the wine Mr. Bramble says you are especially partial to,—but it wasn't until your heel came through the ceiling that they believed *anything* at all. Subsequently I discovered that her ladyship had prepared them for all sorts of trickery on my part. She had made them promise to die rather than give you up. Now that I see things as they are in a clear light, it occurs to me that your ladyship must have pretty thoroughly convinced the old gentlemen that Lord Temple is a fit subject for the gallows,—or at the very least, Newgate Prison. I fancy—"

Lady Jane laughed aloud, gaily, unrestrainedly.

"Oh, dear! What a mess I've made of things!" she cried. "Can you ever forgive me, Eric?"

"Never!" he cried, and Mr. Chambers took that very instant to stoop over for a word with the men at the foot of the ladder. He went farther and had several words with them. Indeed, it is not unlikely that he, in his eagerness to please, would have stretched it into a real chat if the object of his consideration had not cried out:

"And now let us get down from this stuffy place, Eric. I am sure there must be rats and all sorts of things up here. And it was such a jolly place before the lantern came."

"Can you manage it, sir?" inquired Mr. Chambers anxiously, as Eric prepared to lower her through the trap-door.

"Perfectly, thank you," said the young man. "If you will be good enough to stand aside and make room at the top of the ladder," he added, with a grin.

Mr. Chambers also grinned. "There's a difference between walking on air and standing on it," said he, and hurriedly went down the steps.

Presently they were all grouped at the foot of the ladder. Mr. Bramble was busily engaged in brushing the dust and cobwebs from the excited young lady's gown.

M. Mirabeau rattled on at a prodigious rate. He clapped Trotter on the back at least half-a-dozen times, and, forgetting most of his excellent English, waxed eloquent over the amazing turn of affairs. The literal, matter-of-fact Mr. Bramble

after a time succeeded in stemming the flow of exuberance.

"If you don't mind, Mirabeau, I have a word I'd like to get in edgewise," he put in loudly, seizing an opportunity when the old Frenchman was momentarily out of breath.

M. Mirabeau threw up his hands.

"At a time like this?" he gasped incredulously.

"And why not?" said Mr. Bramble stoutly. "It's time we opened that last bottle of Chianti and drank to the health of Lord Eric Temple,—and the beautiful Lady Jane."

"The most sensible thing that has been uttered this evening," cried M. Mirabeau, with enthusiasm.

Lord Temple took this occasion to remind them,—and himself as well,—that he was still Thomas Trotter and that the deuce would be to pay with Mrs. Millidew.

"By George, she'll skin me alive if I've been the cause of her missing a good dinner," he said ruefully.

"That reminds me,—" began Mr. Bramble, M. Mirabeau and Mr. Chambers in unison. Then they all laughed uproariously and trooped into the dining-room, where the visible signs of destruction were not confined to the floor three feet back of the chair lately occupied by the man from Scotland Yard. A very good dinner had been completely wrecked.

Mrs. O'Leary, most competent of cooks, was already busily engaged in preparing another!

"Now, Mr. Chambers," cried Jane, as she set her wine glass down on the table and touched her handkerchief to her lips, "tell us everything, you dear good man."

Mr. Chambers, finding himself suddenly out of employment and with an unlimited amount of spare time on his hands, spent the better part of the first care-free hour he had known in months in the telling of his story.

In a ruthlessly condensed and deleted form it was as follows: Lord Fenlew, quietly, almost surreptitiously, had set about to ascertain just how much of truth and how much of fiction there was in the unpublished charges that had caused his favourite grandson to abandon the Army and to seek obscurity that inevitably follows real or implied disgrace for one too proud to fight. His efforts were rewarded in a most distressing yet most satisfactory manner. One frightened and half-decent member of the little clique responsible for the ugly stories, confessed that the "whole bally business" was a put-up job.

Lord Fenlew lost no time in putting his grandsons on the grill. He grilled them properly; when they left his presence they were scorched to a crisp, unsavoury mess. Indeed, his lordship went so far as to complain of the stench, and had the windows of Fenlew Hall opened to give the place a thorough airing after they had gone forth forevermore. With characteristic energy and promptness, he went to the head of the War Office, and laid bare the situation. With equal forethought and acumen he objected to the slightest publicity being given the vindication of Eric Temple. He insisted that nothing be said about the matter until the maligned officer returned to England and to the corps from which he had resigned. He refused to have his grandson's innocence publicly advertised! That, he maintained, would be to start more tongues to wagging, and unless the young man himself were on the ground to make the wagging useless, speculation would have a chance to thrive on winks and head-shakings, and the "bally business" would be in a worse shape than before. Moreover, he argued, it wasn't Eric's place to humiliate himself by *admitting* his innocence. He wouldn't have that at all.

Instead of beginning his search for the young man through the "lost," "wanted" or "personal" columns of an international press, he went to Scotland Yard. He abhorred the idea of such printed insults as these: "If Lord Eric Temple will communicate with his grandfather he will learn something to his advantage" or "Will the young English nobleman who left London under a cloud in 1911 please address So-and-So"; or "Eric: All is well. Return at once and be forgiving"; or "£5,000 reward will be paid for information concerning the present whereabouts of one Eric Temple, grandson of Lord Fenlew, of Fenlew Hall"; etc., etc.

"And now, Lord Temple," said Mr. Alfred Chambers, after a minute and unsparing account of his own travels and adventures, "your grandfather is a very old man. I trust that you can start for England at once. I am authorized to draw

upon him for all the money necessary to—"

Lord Temple held up his hand. His eyes were glistening, his breast was heaving mightily, and his voice shook with suppressed emotion as he said, scarcely above a whisper:

"First of all, I shall cable him tonight. He'd like that, you know. Better than anything."

"A word direct from you, dear," said Jane softly, happily. "It will mean more to him than anything else in the world."

"As you please, sir," said Mr. Chambers. "The matter is now entirely in your hands. I am, you understand, under orders not to return to England without you, —but, I leave everything to you, sir. I was only hoping that it would be possible for me to get back to my wife and babies before,—er,—well, I was about to say before they forget what I look like, but that would have been a stupid thing to say. They're not likely to forget a mug like mine."

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Chambers, that you and I will have to be content to leave the matter of our departure entirely to the discretion of a third party," said Eric, and blushed. A shy, diffident smile played about his lips as he turned his wistful eyes upon Lady Jane Thorne.

"Leave that to me, sir," said the man from Scotland Yard promptly and with decision, but with absolutely no understanding. "I shall be happy to attend to any little—Ow! Eh, what?"

M. Mirabeau's boot had come violently in contact with his ankle. By a singular coincidence, Mr. Bramble, at precisely the same instant, effected a sly but emphatic prod in the ribs.

"Ignoramus!" whispered the latter fiercely.

"Imbecile!" hissed the former, and then, noting the bewildered look in the eyes of Mr. Chambers, went on to say in his most suave manner: "Can't you see that you are standing in the presence of the Third Party?"

"Any fool could see that," said Mr. Chambers promptly, and bowed to Lady Jane. Later on he wanted to know what the deuce M. Mirabeau meant by kicking

him on the shin.

"How soon can *you* be ready to start home, dear?" inquired Eric, ignoring the witnesses.

Jane's cheeks were rosy. Her blue eyes danced.

"It depends entirely on Mrs. Sparflight," said she.

"What has Mrs. Sparflight to do with it?"

"You dear silly, I can't go to Fenlew Hall with absolutely nothing to wear, can I?"

CHAPTER XX

AN EXCHANGE OF COURTESIES

LATER in the evening, Mr. Thomas Trotter—(so far as he knew he was still in the service of Mrs. Millidew, operating under chauffeur's license No. So-and-So, Thomas Trotter, alien)—strode briskly into a Western Union office and sent off the following cablegram, directed to Lord Fenlew, Fenlew Hall, Old-marsh, Blightwind Banks, Surrey:

"God bless you. Returning earliest possible date. Will wire soon as wedding day is set. Eric."

It was a plain, matter-of-fact Britannical way of covering the situation. He felt there was nothing more that could be said at the moment, and his interest being centred upon two absorbing subjects he touched firmly upon both of them and let it go at that.

Quite as direct and characteristic was the reply that came early the next day.

"Do nothing rash. Who and what is she? Fenlew."

This was the beginning of a sharp, incisive conversation between two English noblemen separated by three thousand miles of water.

"Loveliest girl in the world. You will be daffy over her. Take my word for it. Eric."

(While we are about it, it is just as well to set forth the brisk dialogue now and get over with it. Something like forty-eight hours actually were required to complete the transoceanic conversation. We save time and avoid confusion, to say nothing of interrupted activities, by telling it all in a breath, so to speak, disregarding everything except sequence.)

Lord Fenlew to Lord Temple: "I repeat, who and what is she?"

Lord Temple to Lord Fenlew: "Forgive oversight. She is daughter of late Earl

of Wexham. I told you what she is."

Lord Fenlew to Lord Temple: "What is date of wedding? Must know at once."

Lord Temple to Lord Fenlew: "I will ask her and let you know."

Lord Temple to Lord Fenlew—(the next day): "Still undecided. Something to do with gowns."

Lord Fenlew to Lord Temple: "Nonsense. I cannot wait."

Lord Temple to Lord Fenlew: "Gave her your message. She says you'll have to."

Lord Fenlew to Lord Temple: "Tell her I can't. I am a very old man."

Lord Temple to Lord Fenlew: "Thanks. That brought her round. May fifteenth in this city."

Lord Fenlew to Lord Temple: "My blessings. Draw on me for any amount up to ten thousand pounds. Wedding present on the way."

Lord Temple to Lord Fenlew: "Happiness complete."

An ordinary telegram signed "Eric Temple" was delivered on board one of the huge American cruisers at Hampton Roads during this exchange of cablegrams. It was directed to Lieut. Samuel Pickering Aylesworth, who promptly replied: "Heartiest congratulations. Count on me for anything. Nothing could give me greater happiness than to stand up with you on the momentous occasion. It is great to know that you are not only still in the land of the living but that you are living in the land that I love best. My warmest felicitations to the future Lady Temple."

Now, to go back to the morning on which the first cablegram was received from Lord Fenlew. At precisely ten minutes past nine o'clock we take up the thread of this narrative once more and find Thomas Trotter standing in the lower hall of Mrs. Millidew's home, awaiting the return of a parlour-maid who had gone to inform her mistress that the chauffeur was downstairs and wanted to see her when it was convenient. The chauffeur did not fail to observe the anxious,

concerned look in the maid's eyes, nor the glance of sympathy she sent over her shoulder as she made the turn at the top of the stairs.

Presently she came back. She looked positively distressed.

"My goodness, Tommie," she said, "I'd hate to be you."

He smiled, quite composedly. "Think I'd better beat it?" he inquired.

"She's in an awful state," said the parlour-maid, twisting the hem of her apron.

"I don't blame her," said Trotter coolly.

"What was you up to?" asked she, with some severity.

He thought for a second or two and then puzzled her vastly by replying:

"Up to my ears."

"Pickled?"

"Permanently intoxicated," he assured her.

"Well, all I got to say is you'll be sober when she gets through with you. I've been up against it myself, and I *know*. I've been on the point of quittin' half a dozen times."

"A very sensible idea, Katie," said he, solemnly.

She stiffened. "I guess you don't get me. I mean quittin' my job, Mr. Fresh."

"I daresay I'll be quitting mine," said he and smiled so engagingly that Katie's rancour gave way at once to sympathy.

"You poor kid! But listen. I'll give you a tip. You needn't be out of a job ten minutes. Young Mrs. Millidew is up there with the old girl now. They've been havin' it hot and heavy for fifteen minutes. The old one called the young one up on the 'phone at seven o'clock this morning and gave her the swellest tongue-lashin' you ever heard. Said she'd been stealin' her chauffeur, and—a lot of other things I'm ashamed to tell you. Over comes the young one, hotter'n fire, and

they're havin' it out upstairs. I happened to be passin' the door a little while ago and I heard young Mrs. Millidew tell the Missus that if she fired you she'd take you on in two seconds. So, if you—"

"Thanks, Katie," interrupted Trotter. "Did Mrs. Millidew say when she would see me?"

"Soon as she gets something on," said Katie.

At that moment, a door slammed violently on the floor above. There was a swift swish of skirts, and then the vivid, angry face of Mrs. Millidew, the younger, came suddenly into view. She leaned far out over the banister rail and searched the hallway below with quick, roving eyes.

"Are you there, Trotter?" she called out in a voice that trembled perceptibly.

He advanced a few paces, stopping beside the newel post. He looked straight up into her eyes.

"Yes, Mrs. Millidew."

"You begin driving for me today," she said hurriedly. "Do you understand?"

"But, madam, I am not open to—"

"Yes, you are," she interrupted. "You don't know it, but you are out of a job, Trotter."

"I am not surprised," he said.

"I don't care what you were doing last night,—that is your affair, not mine. You come to me at once at the same wages—"

"I beg your pardon," he broke in. "I mean to say I am not seeking another situation."

"If it is a question of pay, I will give you ten dollars a week more than you were receiving here. Now, don't haggle. That is sixty dollars a week. Hurry up! Decide! She will be out here in a minute. Oh, thunder!"

The same door banged open and the voice of Mrs. Millidew, the elder,

preceded its owner by some seconds in the race to the front.

"You are not fired, Trotter," she squealed. Her head, considerably dishevelled, appeared alongside the gay spring bonnet that bedecked her daughter-in-law. "You ought to be fired for what you did last night, but you are not. Do you understand? Now, shut up, Dolly! It doesn't matter if I *did* say I was going to fire him. I've changed my mind."

"You are too late," said the younger Mrs. Millidew coolly. "I've just engaged him. He comes to me at—"

"You little snake!"

"Ladies, I beg of you—"

"The next time I let him go gallivanting off with you for a couple of days—and *nights*,—you'll know it," cried the elder Mrs. Millidew, furiously. "I can see what you've been up to. You've been doing everything in your power to get him away from me—"

"Just what do you mean to insinuate, Mother Millidew?" demanded the other, her voice rising.

"My God!" cried Trotter's employer, straightening her figure and facing the other. Something like horror sounded in her cracked old voice. "Could—my God!—could it be possible?"

"Speak plainly! What do you mean?"

Mrs. Millidew, the elder, advanced her mottled face until it was but a few inches from that of her daughter-in-law.

"Where were *you* last night?" she demanded harshly.

There was a moment of utter silence. Trotter, down below, caught his breath.

Then, to his amazement, Mrs. Millidew the younger, instead of flying into a rage, laughed softly, musically.

"Oh, you are too rich for words," she gurgled. "I wish,—heavens, how I wish you could see what a fool you look. Go back, quick, and look in the mirror before it wears off. You'll have the heartiest laugh you've had in years."

She leaned against the railing and continued to laugh. Not a sound from Mrs. Millidew, the elder.

"Do come up a few steps, Trotter," went on the younger gaily,—"and have a peep. You will—"

The other found her voice. There was now an agitated note, as of alarm, in it.

"Don't you dare come up those steps, Trotter;—I forbid you, do you hear!"

Trotter replied with considerable dignity. He had been shocked by the scene.

"I have no intention of moving in any direction except toward the front door," he said.

"Don't go away," called out his employer. "You are not dismissed."

"I came to explain my unavoidable absence last—"

"Some other time,—some other time. I want the car at half-past ten."

Young Mrs. Millidew was descending the stairs. Her smiling eyes were upon the distressed young man at the bottom. There was no response in his.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Millidew," he said, raising his voice slightly. "I came not only to explain, but to notify you that I am giving up my place almost immediately."

"What!" squeaked the old lady, coming to the top of the steps.

"It is imperative. I shall, of course, stay on for a day or two while you are finding—"

"Do you mean to say you are quitting of your own accord?" she gasped.

"Yes, madam."

"Don't call me 'madam'! I've told you that before. So—so, you are going to work for her in spite of me, are you? It's all been arranged, has it? You two have —"

"He is coming to me today," said young Mrs. Millidew sweetly. "Aren't you, Trotter?"

"No, I am not!" he exploded.

She stopped short on the stairs, and gave him a startled, incredulous look. Any one else but Trotter would have been struck by her loveliness.

"You're not?" cried Mrs. Millidew from the top step. It was almost a cry of relief. "Do you mean that?"

"Absolutely."

His employer fumbled for a pocket lost among the folds of her dressing-gown.

"Well, you can't resign, my man. Don't think for a minute you can resign," she cried out shrilly.

He thought she was looking for a handkerchief.

"But I insist, Mrs. Millidew, that I—"

"You can't resign for the simple reason that you're already fired," she sputtered. "I never allow any one to give *me* notice, young man. No one ever left me without being discharged, let me tell you that. Where the dev—Oh, here it is!" She not only had found the pocket but the crisp slip of paper that it contained. "Here is a check for your week's wages. It isn't up till next Monday, but take it and get out. I never want to see your ugly face again."

She crumpled the bit of paper in her hand and threw the ball in his direction. Its flight ended half-way down the steps.

"Come and get it, if you want it," she said.

"Good day, madam," he said crisply, and turned on his heel.

"How many times must I tell you not to call me—Come back here, Dolly! I want to see you."

But her tall, perplexed daughter-in-law passed out through the door, followed by the erect and lordly Mr. Trotter.

"Good-bye, Tommie," whispered Katie, as he donned his grey fedora.

"Good-bye, Katie," he said, smiling, and held out his hand to her. "You heard what she said. If you should ever think of resigning, I'd suggest you do it in writing and from a long way off." He looked behind the vestibule door and recovered a smart little walking-stick. "Something to lean upon in my misfortune," he explained to Katie.

Young Mrs. Millidew was standing at the top of the steps, evidently waiting for him. Her brow wrinkled as she took him in from head to foot. He was wearing spats. His two-button serge coat looked as though it had been made for him,—and his correctly pressed trousers as well. He stood for a moment, his head erect, his heels a little apart, his stick under his arm, while he drew on,—with no inconsiderable effect—a pair of light tan gloves. And the smile with which he favoured her was certainly not that of a punctilious menial. On the contrary, it was the rather bland, casual smile of one who is very well satisfied with his position.

In a cheery, off-hand manner he inquired if she was by any chance going in his direction.

The metamorphosis was complete. The instant he stepped outside of Mrs. Millidew's door, the mask was cast aside. He stood now before the world,—and before the puzzled young widow in particular,—as a thoroughbred, cocksure English gentleman. In a moment his whole being seemed to have undergone a change. He carried himself differently; his voice and the manner in which he used it struck her at once as remarkably altered; more than anything else, was she impressed by the calm assurance of his inquiry.

She was nonplussed. For a moment she hesitated between resentment and the swift-growing conviction that he was an equal.

For the first time within the range of her memory, she felt herself completely rattled and uncertain of herself. She blushed like a fool,—as she afterwards

confessed,—and stammered confusedly:

"I—yes—that is, I am going home."

"Come along, then," he said coolly, and she actually gasped.

To her own amazement, she took her place beside him and descended the steps, her cheeks crimson. At the bottom, she cast a wild, anxious look up and down the street, and then over her shoulder at the second-story windows of the house they had just left.

Queer little shivers were running all over her. She couldn't account for them,—any more than she could account for the astonishing performance to which she was now committed: that of walking jauntily through a fashionable cross-town street in the friendliest, most intimate manner with her mother-in-law's discharged chauffeur! Fifth Avenue but a few steps away, with all its mid-morning activities to be encountered! What on earth possessed her! "Come along, then," he had said with all the calmness of an old and privileged acquaintance! And obediently she had "come along"!

His chin was up, his eyes were sparkling; his body was bent forward slightly at the waist to co-ordinate with the somewhat pronounced action of his legs; his hat was slightly tilted and placed well back on his head; his gay little walking-stick described graceful revolutions.

She was suddenly aware of a new thrill—one of satisfaction. As she looked at him out of the corner of her eye, her face cleared. Instinctively she grasped the truth. Whatever he may have been yesterday, he was quite another person today,—and it was a pleasure to be seen with him!

She lengthened her stride, and held up her head. Her red lips parted in a dazzling smile.

"I suppose it is useless to ask you to change your mind,—Trotter," she said, purposely hesitating over the name.

"Quite," said he, smiling into her eyes.

She was momentarily disconcerted. She found it more difficult than she had thought to look into his eyes.

"Why do you call yourself Trotter?" she asked, after a moment.

"I haven't the remotest idea," he said. "It came to me quite unexpectedly."

"It isn't a pretty name," she observed. "Couldn't you have done better?"

"I daresay I might have called myself Marjoribanks with perfect propriety," said he. "Or Plantagenet, or Cholmondeley. But it would have been quite a waste of time, don't you think?"

"Would you mind telling me who you really are?"

"You wouldn't believe me."

"Oh, yes, I would. I could believe anything of you."

"Well, I am the Prince of Wales."

She flushed. "I believe you," she said. "Forgive my impertinence, Prince."

"Forgive mine, Mrs. Millidew," he said soberly. "My name is Temple, Eric Temple. That does not convey anything to you, of course."

"It conveys something vastly more interesting than Trotter,—Thomas Trotter."

"And yet I am morally certain that Trotter had a great deal more to him than Eric Temple ever had," said he. "Trotter was a rather good sort, if I do say it myself. He was a hard-working, honest, intelligent fellow who found the world a very jolly old thing. I shall miss Trotter terribly, Mrs. Millidew. He used to read me to sleep nearly every night, and if I got a headache or a pain anywhere he did my complaining for me. He was with me night and day for three years and more, and that, let me tell you, is the severest test. I've known him to curse me roundly, to call me nearly everything under the sun,—and yet I let him go on doing it without a word in self-defence. Once he saved my life in an Indian jungle,—he was a remarkably good shot, you see. And again he pulled me through a pretty stiff illness in Tokio. I don't know how I should have got on without Trotter."

"You are really quite delicious, Mr. Eric Temple. By the way, did you allow the admirable Trotter to direct your affairs of the heart?"

"I did," said he promptly.

"That is rather disappointing," said she, shaking her head. "Trotter may not have played the game fairly, you know. With all the best intentions in the world, he may have taken advantage of your—shall I say indifference?"

"You may take my word for it, Mrs. Millidew, good old Trotter went to a great deal of pains to arrange a very suitable match for me," said he airily. "He was a most discriminating chap."

"How interesting," said she, stiffening slightly. "Am I permitted to inquire just what opportunities Thomas Trotter has had to select a suitable companion for the rather exotic Mr. Temple?"

"Fortunately," said he, "the rather exotic Mr. Temple approves entirely of the choice made by Thomas Trotter."

"I wouldn't trust a chauffeur too far, if I were you," said she, a little maliciously.

"Just how far *would* you trust one?" he inquired, lifting his eyebrows.

She smiled. "Well,—the length of Long Island," she said, with the utmost composure.

"Mr. Trotter's late employer would not, it appears, share your faith in the rascal," said he.

"She is a rather evil-minded old party," said Mrs. Millidew, the younger, bowing to the occupants of an automobile which was moving slowly in the same direction down the Avenue.

A lady in the rear seat of the limousine leaned forward to peer at the widow's companion, who raised his hat,—but not in greeting. The man who slumped down in the seat beside her, barely lifted his hat. A second later he sat up somewhat hastily and stared.

The occupants of the car were Mrs. Smith-Parvis,—a trifle haggard about the eyes,—and her son Stuyvesant.

Young Mrs. Millidew laughed. "Evidently they recognize you, Mr. Temple, in spite of your spats and stick."

"I thought I was completely disguised," said he, twirling his stick.

"Good-bye," said she, at the corner. She held out her hand. "It is very nice to have known you, Mr. Eric Temple. Our mutual acquaintance, the impeccable Trotter, has my address if you should care to avail yourself of it. After the end of June, I shall be on Long Island."

"It is very good of you, Mrs. Millidew," he said, clasping her hand. His hat was off. The warm spring sun gleamed in his curly brown hair. "I hope to be in England before the end of June." He hesitated a moment, and then said: "Lady Temple and I will be happy to welcome you at Fenlew Hall when you next visit England. Good-bye."

She watched him stride off down the Avenue. She was still looking after him with slightly disturbed eyes when the butler opened the door.

"Any fool should have known," she said, to herself and not to the servant. A queer little light danced in her eyes. "As a matter of fact, I suppose I did know without realizing it. Is Mrs. Hemleigh at home, Brooks?"

"She is expecting you, Mrs. Millidew."

"By the way, Brooks, do you happen to know anything about Fenlew Hall?"

Brooks was as good a liar as any one. He had come, highly recommended, from a Fifth Avenue intelligence office. He did not hesitate an instant.

"The Duke of Aberdeen's county seat, ma'am? I know it quite well. I cawn't tell you 'ow many times I've been in the plice, ma'am, while I was valeting his Grice, the Duke of Manchester."

CHAPTER XXI

THE BRIDE-ELECT

FOUR persons, a woman and three men, assembled in the insignificant hallway at the top of the steps reaching to the fifth floor of the building occupied by Deborah, Limited. To be precise, they were the butler, the parlour-maid and two austere footmen. Cricklewick was speaking.

"Marriage is a most venturesome undertaking, my dear." He addressed himself to Julia, the parlour-maid. "So don't go saying it isn't."

"I didn't say it wasn't," said Julia stoutly. "What I said was, if ever any two people were made for each other it's him and her."

"In my time," said Cricklewick, "I've seen what looked to be the most excellent matches turn out to be nothing but fizzles."

"Well, this one won't," said she.

"As I was saying to McFaddan in the back 'all a minute ago, Mr. Cricklewick, the larst weddin' of any consequence I can remember hattending was when Lady Jane's mother was married to the Earl of Wexham. I sat on the box with old 'Oppins and we ran hover a dog drivin' away from St. George's in 'Anover Square." It was Moody who spoke. He seemed to relish the memory. "It was such a pretty little dog, too. I shall never forget it." He winked at Julia.

"You needn't wink at me, Moody," said Julia. "I didn't like the little beast any more than you did."

"Wot I've always wanted to know is how the blinkin' dog got loose in the street that day," mused McFaddan. "He was the most obstinate dog I ever saw. It was absolutely impossible to coax 'im into the stable-yard when Higgins's bull terrier was avisitin' us, and you couldn't get him into the stall with Dandy Boy,—not to save your life. He seemed to know that hoss would kick his bloomin' gizzard out. I used to throw little hunks of meat into the stall for him, too,—nice little morsels that any other dog in the world would have been proud to risk

anything for. But him? Not a bit of it. He was the most disappointin', bull-headed animal I ever saw. I've always meant to ask how did it happen, Julia?"

"I had him out for his stroll," said Julia, with a faraway, pleased expression in her eyes. "I thought as how he might be interested in seeing the bride and groom, and all that, when they came out of the church, so I took him around past Claridge's, and would you believe it he got away from me right in the thick of the carriages. He was that kind of a dog. He would always have his own way. I was terribly upset, McFaddan. You must remember how I carried on, crying and moaning and all that till her ladyship had to send for the doctor. It seemed to sort of get her mind off her bereavement, my hysterics did."

"You made a puffeck nuisance of yourself," said Cricklewick.

"I took notice, however, Mr. Cricklewick, that *you* didn't shed any tears," said she coldly.

"Certainly not," said the butler. "I admit I should have cried as much as anybody. You've no idea how fond the little darling was of me. There was hardly a day he didn't take a bite out of me, he liked me so much. He used to go without his regular meals, he had such a preference for my calves. I've got marks on me to this day."

"And just to think, it was twenty-six years ago," sighed Moody. "'Ow times 'ave changed."

"Not as much as you'd think," said Julia, a worried look in her eyes. "My mistress is talking of getting another dog,—after all these years. She swore she'd never have another one to take 'is place."

"Thank 'eavings," said Moody devoutly, "I am in another situation." He winked and chuckled loudly.

"As 'andsome a pair as you'll see in a twelve-month," said McFaddan. "He is a—"

"Ahem!" coughed the butler. "There is some one on the stairs, Julia."

Silently, swiftly, the group dissolved. Cricklewick took his place in the foyer, Julia clattered down the stairs to the barred gate, Moody went into the big

drawing-room where sat the Marchioness, resplendent,—the Marchioness, who, twenty-six years before, had owned a pet that came to a sad and inglorious end on a happy wedding-day, and she alone of a large and imposing household had been the solitary mourner. She was the Marchioness of Camelford in those days.

The nobility of New York,—or such of it as existed for the purpose of dignifying the salon,—was congregating on the eve of the marriage of Lady Jane Thorne and Lord Temple. Three o'clock the next afternoon was the hour set for the wedding, the place a modest little church, somewhat despised by its lordlier companions because it happened to be off in a somewhat obscure cross-town street and encouraged the unconventional.

The bride-elect was not so proud or so self-absorbed that she could desert the Marchioness in the preparation of what promised to be the largest, the sprightliest and the most imposing salon of the year. She had put on an old gingham gown, had rolled up the sleeves, and had lent a hand with a will and an energy that distressed, yet pleased the older woman. She dusted and polished and scrubbed, and she laughed joyously and sang little snatches of song as she toiled. And then, when the work was done, she sat down to her last dinner with the delighted Marchioness and said she envied all the charwomen in the world if they felt as she did after an honest day's toil.

"I daresay I ought to pay you a bit extra for the work you've done today," the Marchioness had said, a sly glint in her eyes. "Would a shilling be satisfactory, my good girl?"

"Quite, ma'am," said Jane, radiant. "I've always wanted a lucky shillin', ma'am. I haven't one to me name."

"You'll be having sovereigns after tomorrow, God bless you," said the other, a little catch in her voice,—and Jane got up from the table instantly and kissed her.

"I am ashamed of myself for having taken so much from you, dear, and given so little in return," she said. "I haven't earned a tenth of what you've paid me."

The Marchioness looked up and smiled,—and said nothing.

"Isn't Lieutenant Aylesworth perfectly stunning?" Lady Jane inquired, long afterwards, as she obediently turned this way and that while the critical Deborah studied the effect of her latest creation in gowns.

"Raise your arm, my dear,—so! I believe it is a trifle tight—What were you saying?"

"Lieutenant Aylesworth,—isn't he adorable?"

"My dear," said the Marchioness, "it hasn't been your good fortune to come in contact with many of the *real* American men. You have seen the imitations. Therefore you are tremendously impressed with the real article when it is set before you. Aylesworth is a splendid fellow. He is big and clean and gentle. There isn't a rotten spot in him. But you must not think of him as an exception. There are a million men like him in this wonderful country,—ay, more than a million, my dear. Give me an American every time. If I couldn't get along with him and be happy to the end of my days with him, it would be my fault and not his. They know how to treat a woman, and that is more than you can say for our own countrymen as a class. All that a woman has to do to make an American husband happy is to let him think that he isn't doing quite enough for her. If I were twenty-five years younger than I am, I would get me an American husband and keep him on the jump from morning till night doing everything in his power to make himself perfectly happy over me. This Lieutenant Aylesworth is a fair example of what they turn out over here, my dear Jane. You will find his counterpart everywhere, and not always in the uniform of the U. S. Navy. They are a new breed of men, and they are full of the joy of living. They represent the revivified strength of a dozen run-down nations, our own Empire among them."

"He may be all you claim for him," said Jane, "but give me an English gentleman every time."

"That is because you happen to be very much in love with one, my dear,—and a rare one into the bargain. Eric Temple has lost nothing by being away from England for the past three years. He is as arrogant and as cocksure of himself as any other Englishmen, but he has picked up virtues that most of his countrymen disdain. Never fear, my dear,—he will be a good husband to you. But he will not eat out of your hand as these jolly Americans do. And when he is sixty he will be running true to form. He will be a lordly old dear and you will have to listen to his criticism of the government, and the navy and the army and all the rest of creation from morning till night and you will have to agree with him or he won't understand what the devil has got into you. But, as that is precisely what all English wives love better than anything else in the world, you will be happy."

"I don't believe Eric will ever become crotchety or overbearing," said Jane stubbornly.

"That would be a pity, dear," said the Marchioness, rising; "for of such is the kingdom of Britain."

Shortly after eleven o'clock, Julia came hurrying upstairs in great agitation. She tried vainly for awhile to attract the attention of the pompous Cricklewick by a series of sibilant whispers directed from behind the curtains in the foyer.

The huge room was crowded. Everybody was there, including Count Andrew Drouillard, who rarely attended the functions; the Princess Mariana di Pavesi, young Baron Osterholz (who had but recently returned to New York after a tour of the West as a chorus-man in "The Merry Widow"); and Prince Waldemar de Bosky, excused for the night from Spangler's on account of a severe attack of ptomaine poisoning.

"What do you want?" whispered Cricklewick, angrily, passing close to the curtains and cocking his ear without appearing to do so.

"Come out here," whispered Julia.

"Don't hiss like that! I can't come."

"You must. It's something dreadful."

"Is it McFaddan's wife?" whispered Cricklewick, in sudden dismay.

"Worse than that. The police."

"My Gawd!"

The butler looked wildly about. He caught McFaddan's eye, and signalled him to come at once. If it was the police, McFaddan was the man to handle them. All the princes and lords and counts in New York combined were not worth McFaddan's little finger in an emergency like this.

At the top of the steps Julia explained to the perspiring Cricklewick and the incredulous McFaddan.

"They're at the gate down there, two of 'em in full uniform,—awful looking things,—and a man in a silk hat and evening dress. He says if we don't let him up he'll have the joint pulled."

"We'll see about *that*," said McFaddan gruffly and not at all in the voice or manner of a well-trained footman. He led the way down the steps, followed by Cricklewick and the trembling Julia. At the last landing but one, he halted, and in a superlatively respectful whisper restored Cricklewick to his natural position as a superior.

"You go ahead and see what they want," he said.

"What's wrong with your going first?" demanded Cricklewick, holding back.

"I suddenly remembered that the cops wouldn't know what to think if they saw me in this rig," confessed McFaddan, ingratiatingly. "They might drop dead, you know."

"You can explain that you're attending a fancy dress party," said Cricklewick earnestly. "I am a respectable, dignified merchant and I—"

"Go on, man! If you need me I'll be waitin' at the top of the steps. They don't know you from Adam, so what's there to be afraid of?"

Fortified by McFaddan's promise, Cricklewick descended to the barred and locked grating.

"What's goin' on here?" demanded the burliest policeman he had ever seen. The second bluecoat shook the gate till it rattled on its hinges.

Mr. Cricklewick was staring, open-mouthed but speechless, at the figure behind the policemen.

"Open up," commanded the second officer. "Get a move on."

"We got to see what kind of a joint this is, uncle. This gentleman says something's been goin' on here for the past month to his certain knowledge,—"

"Just a moment," broke in Cricklewick, hastily covering the lower part of his face with his hand,—that being the nearest he could come, under the circumstances, to emulating the maladroit ostrich. "I will call Mr.—"

"You'll open the gate right now, me man, or we'll bust it in and jug the whole gang of ye," observed the burlier one, scowling.

"Go ahead and bust," said Cricklewick, surprising himself quite as much as the officers. "Hey, Mack!" he called out. "Come down at once! Now, you'll see!" he rasped, turning to the policemen again. The light of victory was in his eye.

"What's that!" roared the cop.

"Break it down," ordered the young man in the rear. "I tell you there's a card game or—even worse—going on upstairs. I've had the place watched. All kinds of hoboes pass in and out of here on regular nights every week,—the rottenest lot of men and women I've—"

"Hurry up, Mack!" shouted Mr. Cricklewick. He was alone. Julia had fled to the top landing.

"Coming," boomed a voice from above. A gorgeous figure in full livery filled the vision of two policemen.

"For the love o' Mike," gasped the burly one, and burst into a roar of laughter. "What is it?"

"Well, of all the—" began the other.

McFaddan interrupted him just in time to avoid additional ignominy.

"What the hell do you guys mean by buttin' in here?" he roared, his face brick-red with anger.

"Cut that out," snarled the burly one. "You'll mighty soon see what we mean by—"

"Beat it. Clear out!" shouted McFaddan.

"Smash the door down," shouted the young man in full evening dress.

"Oh, my God!" gasped McFaddan, his eyes almost popping from his head. He had recognized the speaker.

By singular coincidence all three of the men outside the gate recognized Mr. Cornelius McFaddan at the same time.

"Holy mackerel!" gasped the burly one, grabbing for his cap. "It's—it's Mr. McFaddan or I'm a goat."

"You're a goat all right," declared McFaddan in a voice that shook all the confidence out of both policemen and caused Mr. Stuyvesant Smith-Parvis to back sharply toward the steps leading to the street. "Where's Julia?" roared the district boss, glaring balefully at Stuyvie. "Get the key, Cricklewick,—quick. Let me out of here. I'll never have another chance like this. The dirty—"

"Calm yourself, McFaddan," pleaded Cricklewick. "Remember where you are—and who is upstairs. We can't have a row, you know. It—"

"What's the game, Mr. McFaddan?" inquired one of the policemen, very politely. "I hope we haven't disturbed a party or anything like that. We were sent over here by the sergeant on the complaint of this gentleman, who says—"

"They've got a young girl up there," broke in Stuyvesant. "She's been decoyed into a den of crooks and white-slavers headed by the woman who runs the shop downstairs. I've had her watched. I—"

"O'Flaherty," cried McFaddan, in a pleading voice, "will ye do me the favour of breaking this damned door down? I'll forgive ye for everything—yes, bedad, I'll get ye a promotion if ye'll only rip this accursed thing off its hinges."

"Ain't this guy straight?" demanded O'Flaherty, turning upon Stuyvesant. "If he's been double-crossing us—"

"I shall report you to the Commissioner of Police," cried Stuyvesant, retreating a step or two as the gate gave signs of yielding. "He is a friend of mine."

"He is a friend of Mr. McFaddan's also," said O'Flaherty, scratching his head dubiously. "I guess you'll have to explain, young feller."

"Ask him to explain," insisted Stuyvie.

"Permit me," interposed Cricklewick, in an agitated voice. "This is a private little fancy dress party. We—"

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" exclaimed Stuyvesant, coming closer to a real American being than he had ever been before in all his life. "It's old Cricklewick! Why, you old roué!"

"I—I—let me help you, McFaddan," cried Cricklewick suddenly. "If we all put our strength to the bally thing, it may give way. Now! All together!"

Julia came scuttling down the steps.

"Be quiet!" she cried, tensely. "Whatever are we to do? She's coming down—they're both coming down. They are going over to the Ritz for supper. The best man is giving a party. Oh, my soul! Can't you do anything, McFaddan?"

"Not until you unlock the gate," groaned McFaddan, perspiring freely.

"There she is!" cried Stuyvesant, pointing up the stairs. "Now, will you believe me?"

"Get out of sight, you!" whispered McFaddan violently, addressing the bewildered policemen. "Get back in the hall and don't breathe,—do you hear me? As for *you*—" Cricklewick's spasmodic grip on his arm checked the torrent.

Lady Jane was standing at the top of the steps, peering intently downward.

"What is it, Cricklewick?" she called out.

"Nothing, my lady,—nothing at all," the butler managed to say with perfect composure. "Merely a couple of newspaper reporters asking for—ahem—an interview. Stupid blighters! I—I sent them away in jolly quick order."

"Isn't that one of them still standing at the top of the steps?" inquired she.

"It's—it's only the night-watchman," said McFaddan.

"Oh, I see. Send him off, please. Lord Temple and I are leaving at once, Cricklewick. Julia, will you help me with my wraps?"

She disappeared from view. Julia ran swiftly up the steps.

Stuyvesant, apparently alone in the hall outside, put his hand to his head.

"Did—did she say Lord Temple?"

"Beat it!" said McFaddan.

"The chap the papers have been—What the devil has she to do with Lord Temple?"

"I forgot to get the key from Julia, damn it!" muttered McFaddan, suddenly trying the gate again.

"I say, Jane!" called out a strong, masculine voice from regions above. "Are you nearly ready?"

Rapid footsteps came down the unseen stairway, and a moment later the erstwhile Thomas Trotter, as fine a figure in evening dress as you'd see in a month of Sundays, stopped on the landing.

"Will you see if there's a taxi waiting, Cricklewick?" he said. "Moody telephoned for one a few minutes ago. I'll be down in a second, Jane dear."

He dashed back up the stairs.

"Officer O'Flaherty!" called out Mr. McFaddan, in a cautious undertone, "will you be good enough to step downstairs and see if Lord Temple's taxi's outside?"

"What'll we do with this gazabo, Mr. McFaddan?"

"Was—is *that* man—that chauffeur—was that Lord Temple?" sputtered Stuyvesant.

"Yes, it was," snapped McFaddan. "And ye'd better be careful how ye speak of your betters. Now, clear out. I wouldn't have Lady Jane Thorne know I lied to her for anything in the world."

"Lied? Lied about what?"

"When I said ye were a decent night-watchman," said McFaddan.

Stuyvesant went down the steps and into the street, puzzled and sick at heart.

He paused irresolutely just outside the entrance. If they were really the Lord Temple and the Lady Jane Thorne whose appearance in the marriage license bureau at City Hall had provided a small sensation for the morning newspapers, it wouldn't be a bad idea to let them see that he was ready and willing to forget and forgive—

"Move on, now! Get a move, you!" ordered O'Flaherty, giving him a shove.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BEGINNING

THE brisk, businesslike little clergyman was sorely disappointed. He had looked forward to a rather smart affair, so to speak, on the afternoon of the fifteenth. Indeed, he had gone to some pains to prepare himself for an event far out of the ordinary. It isn't every day that one has the opportunity to perform a ceremony wherein a real Lord and Lady plight the troth; it isn't every parson who can say he has officiated for nobility. Such an event certainly calls for a little more than the customary preparations. He got out his newest vestments and did not neglect to brush his hair. His shoes were highly polished for the occasion and his nails shone with a brightness that fascinated him. Moreover, he had tuned up his voice; it had gone stale with the monotony of countless marriages in which he rarely took the trouble to notice whether the responses were properly made. By dint of a little extra exertion in the rectory he had brought it to a fine state of unctuous mellowness.

Moreover, he had given some thought to the prayer. It wasn't going to be a perfunctory, listless thing, this prayer for Lord and Lady Temple. It was to be a profound utterance. The glib, everyday prayer wouldn't do at all on an occasion like this. The church would be filled with the best people in New York. Something fine and resonant and perhaps a little personal,—something to do with God, of course, but, in the main, worth listening to. In fact, something from the diaphragm, sonorous.

For a little while he would take off the well-worn mask of humility and bask in the fulgent rays of his own light.

But, to repeat, he was sorely disappointed. Instead of beaming upon an assemblage of the elect, he found himself confronted by a company that caused him to question his own good taste in shaving especially for the occasion and in wearing gold-rimmed nose-glasses instead of the "over the ears" he usually wore when in haste.

He saw, with shocked and incredulous eyes, sparsely planted about the dim

church as if separated by the order of one who realized that closer contact would result in something worse than passive antagonism, a strange and motley company.

For a moment he trembled. Had he, by some horrible mischance, set two weddings for the same hour? He cudgelled his brain as he peeped through the vestry door. A sickening blank! He could recall no other ceremony for that particular hour,—and yet as he struggled for a solution the conviction became stronger that he had committed a most egregious error. Then and there, in a perspiring panic, he solemnly resolved to give these weddings a little more thought. He had been getting a bit slack,—really quite haphazard in checking off the daily grist.

What was he to do when the noble English pair and their friends put in an appearance? Despite the fact that the young American sailor-chap who came to see him about the service had casually remarked that it was to be a most informal affair,—with "no trimmings" or something like that,—he knew that so far as these people were concerned, simplicity was merely comparative. Doubtless, the young couple, affecting simplicity, would appear without coronets; the guests probably would saunter in and, in a rather dégagé fashion, find seats for themselves without deigning to notice the obsequious verger in attendance. And here was the church partially filled,—certainly the best seats were taken,—by a most unseemly lot of people! What was to be done about it? He looked anxiously about for the sexton. Then he glanced at his watch. Ten minutes to spare.

Some one tapped him on the shoulder. He turned to face the stalwart young naval officer. A tall young man was standing at some distance behind the officer, clumsily drawing on a pair of pearl grey gloves. He wore a monocle. The good pastor's look of distress deepened.

"Good afternoon," said the smiling lieutenant. "You see I got him here on time, sir."

"Yes, yes," murmured the pastor. "Ha-ha! Ha-ha!" He laughed in his customary way. Not one but a thousand "best men" had spoken those very words to him before. The remark called for a laugh. It had become a habit.

"Is everybody here?" inquired Aylesworth, peeping over his shoulder through the crack in the door. The pastor bethought himself and gently closed the door,

whereupon the best man promptly opened it again and resumed his stealthy scrutiny of the dim edifice.

"I can't fasten this beastly thing, Aylesworth," said the tall young man in the background. "Would you mind seeing what you can do with the bally thing?"

"I see the Countess there," said Aylesworth, still gazing. "And the Marchioness, and—"

"The Marchioness?" murmured the pastor, in fresh dismay.

"I guess they're all here," went on the best man, turning away from the door and joining his nervous companion.

"I'd sooner face a regiment of cavalry than—" began Eric Temple.

"May I have the pleasure and the honour of greeting Lord Temple?" said the little minister, approaching with outstretched hand. "A—er—a very happy occasion, your lordship. Perhaps I would better explain the presence in the church of a—er—rather unusual crowd of—er—shall we say curiosity-seekers? You see, this is an open church. The doors are always open to the public. Very queer people sometimes get in, despite the watchfulness of the attendant, usually, I may say, when a wedding of such prominence—ahem!—er—"

"I don't in the least mind," said Lord Temple good-humouredly. "If it's any treat to them, let them stay. Sure you've got the ring, Aylesworth? I say, I'm sorry now we didn't have a rehearsal. It isn't at all simple. You said it would be, confound you. You—"

"All you have to do, old chap, is to give your arm to Lady Jane and follow the Baroness and me to the chancel. Say 'I do' and 'I will' to everything, and before you know it you'll come to and find yourself still breathing and walking on air. Isn't that so, Doctor?"

"Quite,—quite so, I am sure."

"Let me take a peep out there, Aylesworth. I'd like to get my bearings."

"Pray do not be dismayed by the—" began the minister.

"Hullo! There's Bramby sitting in the front seat,—my word, I've never known him to look so seraphic. Old Fogazario, and de Bosky, and—yes, there's Mirabeau, and the amiable Mrs. Moses Jacobs. 'Gad, she's resplendent! Du Bara and Herman and—By Jove, they're all here, every one of them. I say, Aylesworth, what time is it? I wonder if anything can have happened to Jane? Run out to the sidewalk, old chap, and have a look, will you? I—"

"Are all bridegrooms like this?" inquired Aylesworth drily, addressing the bewildered minister.

"Here she is!" sang out the bridegroom, leaping toward the little vestibule. "Thank heaven, Jane! I thought you'd met with an accident or—My God! How lovely you are, darling! Isn't she, Aylesworth?"

"Permit me to present you, Doctor, to Lady Jane Thorne," interposed Aylesworth. "And to the Baroness Brangwyng."

From that moment on, the little divine was in a daze. He didn't know what to make of anything. Everything was wrong and yet everything was right! How could it be?

How was he to know that his quaint, unpretentious little church was half-full of masked men and women? How was he to know that these queer-looking people out there were counts and countesses, barons and baronesses, princes and princesses? Swarthy Italians, sallow-faced Frenchmen, dark Hungarians, bearded Russians and pompous Teutons! How was he to know that once upon a time all of these had gone without masks in the streets and courts of far-off lands and had worn "purple and fine linen"? And those plainly, poorly dressed women? Where, —oh where, were the smart New Yorkers for whom he had furbished himself up so neatly?

What manner of companions had this lovely bride,—ah, but *she* had the real atmosphere!—What sort of people had she been thrown with during her stay in the City of New York? She who might have known the best, the most exclusive, —"bless me, what a pity!"

Here and there in the motley throng, he espied a figure that suggested upper Fifth Avenue. The little lady with the snow-white hair; the tall brunette with the rather stunning hat; the austere gentleman far in the rear, the ruddy faced old man behind him, and the aggressive-looking individual with the green necktie,—Yes, any one of them might have come from uptown and ought to feel somewhat out of place in this singular gathering. The three gentlemen especially. He sized them up as financiers, as plutocrats. And yet they were back where the family servants usually sat.

He got through with the service,—indulgently, it is to be feared, after all.

He would say, on the whole, that he had never seen a handsomer couple than Lord and Lady Temple. There was compensation in that. Any one with half an eye could see that they came of the very best stock. And the little Baroness,—he had never seen a baroness before,—was somebody, too. She possessed manner, —that indefinable thing they called manner,—there was no mistake about it. He had no means of knowing, of course, that she was struggling hard to make a living in the "artist colony" down town.

Well, well, it is a strange world, after all. You never can tell, mused the little pastor as he stood in the entrance of his church with half-a-dozen reporters and watched the strange company disperse,—some in motors, some in hansoms, and others on the soles of their feet. A large lady in many colours ran for a south-bound street car. He wondered who she could be. The cook, perhaps.

Lieutenant Aylesworth was saying good-bye to the bride and groom at the Grand Central Station. The train for Montreal was leaving shortly before ten o'clock.

The wedding journey was to carry them through Canada to the Pacific and back to New York, leisurely, by way of the Panama Canal. Lord Fenlew had not been niggardly. All he demanded of his grandson in return was that they should come to Fenlew Hall before the first of August.

"Look us up the instant you set foot in England, Sammy," said Eric, gripping his friend's hand. "Watch the newspapers. You'll see when our ship comes home,

and after that you'll find us holding out our arms to you."

"When my ship *leaves* home," said the American, "I hope she'll steer for an English port. Good-bye, Lady Temple. Please live to be a hundred, that's all I ask of you."

"Good-bye, Sam," she said, blushing as she uttered the name he had urged her to use.

"You won't mind letting the children call me Uncle Sam, will you?" he said, a droll twist to his lips.

"How quaint!" she murmured.

"By Jove, Sammy," cried Eric warmly, "you've no idea how much better you look in Uncle Sam's uniform than you did in that stuffy frock coat this afternoon. Thank God, I can get into a uniform myself before long. You wouldn't understand, old chap, how good it feels to be in a British uniform."

"I'm afraid we've outgrown the British uniform," said the other drily. "It used to be rather common over here, you know."

"You don't know what all this means to me," said Temple seriously, his hand still clasping the American's. "I can hold up my head once more. I can fight for England. If she needs me, I can fight and die for her."

"You're a queer lot, you Britishers," drawled the American. "You want to fight and die for Old England. I have a singularly contrary ambition. I want to *live* and *fight* for America."

On the twenty-fourth of July, 1914, Lord Eric Temple and his bride came home to England.

THE END

Transcriber Notes:

Throughout the dialogues, there were words used to mimic accents of the speakers. Those words were retained as-is.

The illustrations have been moved so that they do not break up paragraphs and so that they are next to the text they illustrate. Thus the page number of the illustration might not match the page number in the List of Illustrations, and the order of illustrations may not be the same in the List of Illustrations and in the book.

Errors in punctuations and inconsistent hyphenation were not corrected unless otherwise noted.

On page 9, "Marchiness" was replaced with "Marchioness".

On page 18, "unforgetable" was replaced with "unforgettable".

On page 22, "respendent" was replaced with "resplendent".

On page 26, "idlness" was replaced with "idleness".

On page 47, "sacrified" was replaced with "sacrificed".

On page 53, "spooffing" was replaced with "spoofing".

On page 67, "shan't" was replaced with "sha'n't".

On page 69, "constitutency" was replaced with "constituency".

On page 78, "assed" was replaced with "passed".

On page 80, "acccepting" was replaced with "accepting".

On page 81, "lookingly" was replaced with "looking".

On page 103, "acccused" was replaced with "accused".

On page 107, "afternooon" was replaced with "afternoon".

On page 224, "limmo" was replaced with "limo".

On page 230, "pressent" was replaced with "present".

On page 233, "EOR" was replaced with "FOR".

On page 235, a period was placed after "in the depths".

On page 240, "tobaccco" was replaced with "tobacco".

On page 244, "crochetty" was replaced with "crotchety".

On page 247, "properely" was replaced with "properly".

On page 259, "expained" was replaced with "explained".

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