THE REST HOLLOW MYSTERY

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Title: The Rest Hollow Mystery

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Release Date: August 5, 2012 [EBook #40416]

Language: English

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NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1922

Printed in U. S. A.

TO MY BROTHER
WILLIAM STRATTON PORTER

That ideal reader of mystery stories—with
the ardor to pursue, the faith to believe
and the magnanimity to guess wrong

THE REST HOLLOW MYSTERY

CHAPTER I

Kenwick himself had no recollection of the accident. But he knew that there must have been one, for when he recovered consciousness, his clothes were full of burrs, his hat was badly crushed, and there was a violent throbbing in one of his legs.

With both hands gripping the aching thigh in a futile effort to soothe its pain, he dragged himself into the clearing and looked about. It was one of those narrow, wooded mountain ravines that in the West are classed as cañons. Back of him rose a succession of sage-covered slopes, bleak, wintry, hostile. In front was a precipitous cliff studded with dwarf madrone trees and the twisted manzanita. Overhead the bare distorted sycamore boughs lashed themselves together and moaned a dreary monotone to the accompaniment of a keen November wind. No sign of autumn lingered on the landscape, and the shed leaves formed a moldy carpet underfoot. The cañon was redolent with the odor of damp timber and decaying vegetation.

Kenwick buttoned his heavy overcoat about him and limped painfully toward the cliff, keeping as nearly as possible a straight line from his starting-point. Although his surroundings were totally unfamiliar his mind was clear. But he had that curious sensation of a man who has slept all night in a strange bed, and in the first moment of wakening is unable to adjust himself to his environment. While he groped his way through the tangled underbrush his memory struggled to clear a passage back to the present.

At the foot of the cliff he stopped short, staring in horror at a spot a few paces ahead of him. A scrub madrone had been torn from the side of the ravine and had fallen to the bottom of the cañon, its mutilated roots stretching skyward like the grotesque claws of some prehistoric animal. The force which had torn it from its moorings had scarred the slope with other evidences of disaster; a limb lopped off here, a mass of brush ripped away there. A glistening object caught his eye. He stooped laboriously and picked it up, then dropped it, shuddering. It was a triangle of broken glass spattered with blood.

For half an hour he poked around in the brush searching for, yet dreading to find, a more gruesome object. Perhaps the driver had not been killed after all, he

reassured himself. As he dimly remembered him, he was a friendly sort of fellow whom he had engaged to drive him out to the Raeburn place. As he climbed the steep hill now Kenwick tried to remember what they had been talking about just before this thing happened, but the effort made his head ache and landed him nowhere. A more vital conjecture was concerned with how long he had been lying at the foot of the ravine and why no one had come to his rescue.

When he gained the road there was nobody in sight. It was a splendidly paved bit of country boulevard curving out of sight into what Kenwick told himself must be the land of dreams and romance. He turned to the left and started to walk, aimlessly, hopping part of the time to save his aching leg. Surely some one would overtake him in a car soon and offer assistance. He had dragged himself over half a mile, stimulated by this hope, when he sighted a house set far back from the highway behind a vista of date-palms. He struggled up to the entrance and gazed through the bars of a tall iron gate. It was locked. And, as an extra precaution against intrusion, a heavy iron chain was swung across the outside. Through the trees the house was plainly visible, a colossal concrete structure with stone trimmings flanked on one side by a sturdy combination tank-house and garage. About the whole place there was an aristocratic, exclusive dignity that reminded Kenwick of one of the great English estates that he had once visited during a convalescent furlough spent near London. It was more like a castle than a private residence, with its high stone wall covered by dank clinging vines. The very trees that bordered the driveway had an air of aloofness as though they had severed all relationship with the rest of nature's family. It was inconceivable, Kenwick told himself, that guests had ever been entertained, unbidden, in that mansion. And yet it was here that he must apply for help.

Strength had deserted him. Courage had deserted him. Even self-respect was fast slipping away. Desperation alone remained; desperation lashed almost to fury by the agony in his throbbing leg. He or his companion must have been drunk, hideously drunk, to have met with such a mischance. And yet where could they have purchased a drink? He himself hated liquor, and he had no recollection of having been persuaded into illicit conviviality. As he searched for an opening in the stone wall, he took hasty stock of himself. The fur-collared overcoat would give him a certain social status in the eyes of this householder. His hat, though bearing the mark of riotous adventure, was obviously the hat of a gentleman. His shoes subscribed liberally to this classification and his dark broadcloth suit was conclusive. He felt in his pocket. There was neither watch nor money. But he could mention Raeburn's name. The wealthy New Yorker who was to have been

his host undoubtedly stood high in this community.

His search along the wall brought him at last to a broken ledge of rock which might serve as a stepping-stone. He drew in his breath sharply, dreading the pain of the stupendous effort that he was about to make. Then he placed his sound foot on the ledge and dragged himself over the enclosure.

If the place had looked inhospitable from the outside it was even more formidable viewed from within. Only that portion of the acreage which immediately surrounded the house was under cultivation. On either side of this a wide expanse of eucalyptus forest sloped away from the road. They were half-grown saplings and the blue-gray of their foliage blended with subtle harmony into the somber winter landscape.

"Lord! What a lonely spot!" Kenwick muttered as he followed the driveway around to the side of the house. "Good God! Anything could happen in a place like this!"

The shallow stone steps echoed beneath his feet, and the door-bell, tinkling in some remote region, gave back a ghostly, deserted sound. Two more trials with the electric button convinced Kenwick that the place was untenanted. He made a shade of his two hands and peered into the plate-glass window that gave on the front porch.

What he saw was an elegantly appointed dining-room furnished in old mahogany and dull blue hangings. There were carved candlesticks on the sideboard, and in the center of the bare dining-table a cut-glass bowl full of English walnuts. The somber high-backed chairs ranged along the wall seemed to the man outside to be guarding the room like a body of solemn gendarmes. Slowly he turned, descended the shallow steps, and started around to the rear of the house. There must be some servant, he reasoned, some caretaker or gardener who could administer temporary relief and direct him to his destination. The ache in his leg was becoming unbearable. It was impossible for him to go on unaided. However reluctant this exclusive home might be to admit a stranger within its gates, it must conform to the laws of decency and bind up his wounds.

On the side path, bordered with monster oleanders and dusty miller, he stopped. The door of the garage was open. It seemed safe to assume that the chauffeur or caretaker lived in the commodious quarters overhead. Hope glimmered at last through the night of black despair. Almost blind with pain now Kenwick staggered toward that open door. In the dim light of late afternoon he made out a

small room filled with garden tools. Beyond, through an inside window, was revealed a handsome black limousine standing motionless in the gathering darkness.

But the building was deserted. It was when he realized this that the dusk suddenly enveloped the man peering desperately in at the threshold. Through a bleak mist he saw the lawn-mower, garden hose, and beetle-black car dance together in hideous nightmare. And then the room full of garden tools rushed toward him. He felt the wheels of that sinister black car grinding into his neck, and he knew no more.

CHAPTER II

When Kenwick came to himself he was lying on a cavernous divan with a gorgeous Indian blanket over him and a tabouret drawn close to his side. In a far corner of the room a rose-shaded lamp was burning. It gave to the handsome drawing-room a rosy glow that seemed to envelop its every object in subtle mystery. For long minutes the sick man stared about the apartment without trying to move. Slowly the events of the last few hours came back to him. Very cautiously, like a man who has just recovered his sight after prolonged blindness, he felt his way back along the path that he had just traveled. It brought him at last to the door of the garage and the beetle-black limousine grinding over his neck.

He reached out and touched the spindle-legged table at his side. On it were his collar, tie, and a long-stemmed glass partly full of whisky. Very slowly he drained the remaining contents. Then he sat upright and gently touched his injured leg. It felt hard and tight. Whoever had done the bandaging had made up in force what he had lacked in skill, but the numbness of a too tight wrapping was an intense relief after his hour of agony. He limped across the long room to the entrance-hall and stood at length in the doorway of the mahogany-furnished dining-room guarded by the row of gendarme chairs.

This last evidence was conclusive. In some way he had gained admittance to the house with the barred gate. Evidently there had been some one close at hand when he fainted; some one who had authority to carry him through those impregnable doors. The thought gave him an uncanny feeling. But where was this gum-shod combination of mystery and mercy? In the curious way that the senses convey such intelligence he felt that the house was empty.

"Well, if I've got to stay here alone all night," he said to himself, "I'm going to see what this place looks like."

And so, using two light willow chairs as crutches, he started upon a slow tour of exploration. Through the swinging doors he passed into a butler's pantry and then into the kitchen. It was a large cheerful room with laundry in the rear. But although there were no soiled dishes about, it had an undefinable air of untidiness and neglect. A crumpled dish-towel was under the table. The sink was

grimy and the stove spotted with grease. Even to Kenwick's inexpert eyes the room appeared somehow dirty and repellant.

He set the wine-glass that he had brought from the front room on the table and tried the back door. It was locked on the outside. Every door and window that he had tested so far was similarly barred. With a vague feeling of misgiving he returned to the drawing-room. It was very late. The alabaster clock on the mantel was ticking its way toward midnight. He felt ravenously hungry but shrank from touching any of the food upon the pantry shelves. He decided that until his host arrived he would sit in the den, a companionable little room, whose deep leather chairs invited him. The porte-cochère was on this side of the house and the home-comers, whoever they were, would doubtless enter there. No fire burned on the hearth but the house was comfortably and evenly warm. It was apparent that the caretaker was an expert furnace-man.

Kenwick was about to sink into one of the big chairs opposite the huge antlers of a deer when suddenly an object caught his eye. He struggled over to the telephone and took down the receiver. For five minutes he stood there holding it to his ear listening for the familiar hum that assures telephonic health. But the thing was dead. As he hung it up, it struck Kenwick all at once that it might be disconnected. The idea brought him a sense of unaccountable resentment. "My Lord!" he muttered. "I might as well be in a jail!"

He sank into one of the Morris-chairs and gazed out into the blackness of night. He could, he reflected, smash a window and make his escape that way. But why escape from comfort into bleakness? Jail or no jail he was lucky to have found such a haven. By morning somebody would have arrived and he could be taken to old man Raeburn's. He was probably worrying about him at this very moment. "I didn't break into this place though," Kenwick reassured himself. "Somebody in authority brought me in, so there's nothing criminal about staying on. And since there had to be an invader, better myself than some unscrupulous beggar who might make off with the family plate."

The reading-lamp upon the table was equipped with a dimmer. He drew the chain half its length, pulled the Indian blanket over him, and, in spite of the dull ache in his leg, was soon wrapped in the dreamless slumber of utter exhaustion.

When he awoke it was broad daylight and the dimly burning bulb of the reading-lamp shone with a futile bleary light. He extinguished it and drew up the window-shades. Sleep had refreshed him and he felt healthily hungry. The pain

in his leg returned with almost overwhelming force when he attempted to walk, but a sharp-edged appetite impelled him to seek the pantry. He found the dining-room wrapped in the same somber stillness that it had worn the night before, the bowl of walnuts showing dully in the center of the table. From the kitchen table where he had set it the night before the empty wine-glass stared back at him. But there was something reassuring in its presence. It seemed to give mute evidence of the reality of this adventure.

From the butler's pantry Kenwick brought a can of coffee and half a loaf of bread. "Whatever my bill in this caravansary amounts to," he told himself as he measured out the coffee, "it's going to include breakfast. I've decided to sign up on the American plan."

On his trip back to the pantry he discovered upon the ledge inside the window half a dozen fresh eggs. They gave him a little shock of surprise. For he was certain that they had not been there before. The window was small and narrow, much too tiny to admit a human body. But whoever was detailed to take care of this place was apparently on the job. Kenwick resolved to be on the alert for the egg-hunter. In twenty minutes he had cooked himself an ample breakfast and carried it into the dining-room on an impressive silver tray. Memories of long-ago camping trips with his elder brother in the Adirondacks recurred to him as he ate. Everett was a master camper but had always hated to cook. In order to even things he had been willing to do much more than his share of the rougher work. Now as Kenwick drank his coffee and ate the perfectly browned toast and fluffy eggs, he blessed those camping trips and the education which they had given him.

And then his memory wandered from the wholesome sanity of those days to the first dreadful months of the war. From the chaos of that era, one night leaped out at him. It was the night that he had parted with Everett at the old Kenwick house, the house that had been the Kenwicks' for sixty years. Perhaps the stark simplicity of that scene, shorn of objective emotion by the presence of Everett's wife, was the very thing that enabled him now to extricate it from the tangle of days that preceded and followed it. Everett had laid his hand for just an instant upon the shoulder of the new uniform. "I'm all you've got to see you off, boy," he had said. "But if mother and dad could see you now they'd be proud and happy." And then had followed a sentence or two of promise, of affection, of admonition, murmured in a hasty undertone intended to escape the ears of the statuesque creature who was his brother's wife. Kenwick had wondered afterward whether they had escaped her, whether, anything vital ever escaped Isabel Kenwick. And

yet his farewell to her had been a flawless scene. She was always the central figure in some flawless scene. His brother's whole life seemed to him to be enacted upon a perfectly appointed stage. There had been just the proper proportion of regret and pride in Isabel's voice as she bade him good-by; just the right waving to him from the steps and calling after him that whenever he returned his old room would be waiting with everything just as he left it.

And then he had come back and not found his room the same at all. Everything about the house seemed changed. His room was a guestroom now, and he had been relegated to a place on the third floor with dormer-windows. He hated dormer-windows. When his mother had been head of the home the third floor had been used only for the servants, but under Isabel's régime it had been converted into extra guestrooms, and there seemed to be a never-ending succession of guests.

So it had been no hardship to acquiesce in Everett's suggestion that he come out to California and recuperate from the war strain in Old Man Raeburn's hospitable Mont-Mer home. It was a splendid idea for Everett well knew that the West was more like home to him now than New York. Mont-Mer itself was unfamiliar, but only a few hours up coast there was San Francisco. And in San Francisco was ——He felt in his pocket. But the slender flat object around which his fingers had closed during moments of desolation and peril in the trenches was not there. The realization that it had been pitched into the underbrush along with his money and watch stabbed him with a new pain. Her picture out there in that cañon where any casual explorer might chance upon it! Why, it was desecration!

He pushed aside the tray and went over to the long mirror in the door of the hall closet. In all his twenty-five years he had never given his physical appearance such intensive consideration. Vanity had never been one of his failings. And his fastidious taste in dress was more instinctive than consciously cultivated. Now the keen dark eyes traveled slowly from the brown hair brushed back from his forehead to the thin lips and firm square chin. His eyes were the wide-apart eyes of the student but it was the nose that gave his face distinction. Thin, sensitive, perfectly molded, it betrayed an eager, intense nature never quite at peace with itself. The hands with which he tried now to comb his disordered hair into decorum were the long-fingered, hollow-palmed hands of those who are blessed and cursed with the creative, introspective temperament. They were hands impatient of detail, eager to grasp at the garment of great achievement, resentful of the slower process of accomplishment. He had drawn himself to his full six feet. Army training had given him an extra inch, and of this one physical asset he

was proud.

"Decent appearing," he mused, checking off the credit side of his ledger in businesslike tones. "Fairly prosperous, sane, and law-abiding. I wonder if I'll be able to convince my host of any of those things."

He decided suddenly to explore the upper part of the house. It would cost terrific physical effort, but a fury of restlessness possessed him. On the broad landing the stairway divided and took opposite ways. He turned to the left and a few minutes later found himself standing in the open doorway of what appeared to be an upstairs sitting-room. It was obviously a man's apartment. The smell of stale cigar smoke was in the air and on the table a pipe and ash-tray. It was the sight of the latter that brought Kenwick's fine eyes together in a deep-furrowed frown. From the cold ashes he drew out a half-smoked cigar. For a long moment he stood turning it in his hand. It couldn't have been in that tray for more than a few hours.

In the room beyond, separated from the sitting-room by portières, was a massive walnut bed, chiffonier, and shaving-stand. A blue-tiled bathroom completed the suite. The windows of all three were closed and locked. He went back to the hall, past another bedroom with door ajar, and descended the stairs to the landing. Here he paused to rest, gazing speculatively at the closed portals in the opposite wing.

"The modern American home," he decided. "He has one part of the house and she has the other."

His face twitched with the pain of his pilgrimage. It was going to be a crucial experience getting downstairs. While he stood there almost despairing of the feat of covering the distance back to the den, there came to his ears a sound that turned him cold. He forgot his pain and clung to the supporting post motionless as a statue.

The sound came again. He knew this time that it was not the hallucination of overstrung nerves. Dragging himself up by the banister, he knocked on the first door of the right wing. There was no response. He knocked again, then boldly turned the knob. The door was locked. But through the deathly stillness there came, after a moment's pause, the sound that he had heard before. It was the sound of a woman's stifled sobbing.

CHAPTER III

Kenwick stood outside the closed door, a curious numbness stealing over him. Was it possible, he asked himself, that there had been some one in this house during the last twelve hours? Was it possible that this person was a woman? A solitary woman? It was unmistakably a woman's voice, and there was no sound of comforting or upbraiding or other evidence of companionship. As he knocked again at the door he wondered which one of them was the more startled by the presence of the other.

The sobbing had abruptly ceased. There was dead silence. Had he been of a superstitious temperament he might have suspected that his knock had somehow released from bondage an unhappy ghost who, wailing over a dead tragedy, had vanished leaving this spectral house as desolate as he had found it.

But Kenwick had no patience whatever with the occult. For him life was too all-absorbing and vivid an enterprise to tolerate the pastel existence of ghosts. Through the stillness his voice cut its way like a torchlight cleaving a path through a blind alley.

"What's the matter?"

As he hurled this question through the panel, he reflected that, being a woman, she would probably reply, "Nothing." But there was no response. Kenwick persisted. "Can I do anything for you?" And then a voice that was little more than a whisper came to him.

"Who are you?"

Conscious that the name would mean nothing to her, he gave it with a touch of irritation. She must know that he couldn't explain his invasion of her house through that inscrutably closed door. He had never thought of the place as belonging to a woman. Nothing that he had seen in it so far bespoke a woman's presence. The embarrassment that he had felt during the first hours of his imprisonment ebbed back and for the moment robbed him of further speech.

"Please go away." The voice from the other side of the door was entreating. It was a cultured, beautifully modulated voice struggling against heavy odds for

composure. Kenwick had the feeling that it was a voice that lent itself easily to disguise.

"I can't go away until I have told you about myself," he said firmly. "I must tell you how I happen to be here, an uninvited guest in your house." He gave her the story briefly and was horribly conscious that it lacked conviction. In his own ears it sounded like the still-born narrative of a debauchee. Having stumbled to the end he waited for her comment. It came after a long pause.

"I'm sorry you're hurt. I hope you'll feel better to-morrow." To-morrow! Did she expect him to prolong his visit indefinitely? The casual courtesy of her tone was more disconcerting than indignation or resentment or any other form of reply could have been. But he resolved savagely not to leave that door until he had obtained some sort of information.

"When I met with the accident I was driving out to the Raeburn house; Charles Raeburn. Do you know where he lives?"

"No."

"Well, tell me about this place, then, please. Whose is it?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know? And yet you live here?" Kenwick felt as though his brain were turning over in his head.

"If you call this living." He wouldn't have caught this reply at all if his ear hadn't been pressed close against the panel.

"Are you all alone here?"

There was no reply.

"Is any one with you?"

"Oh, please go away. Do have pity on me and go away."

She was alone, Kenwick decided, and was afraid to tell him so. The realization brought a wave of hot color to his face. He dragged himself painfully back to the landing. And from that distance he sent his voice up to her, freighted with reassurance.

"Don't be frightened. I'm pretty badly bunged up just now, but I found a revolver

over in the other wing, and if anybody comes prowling about—well, I'm not a bad shot." Suddenly a new thought occurred to him. "Have you had anything to eat this morning? Are you hungry?"

"I think—I am starving."

It was like a spray of ice-water in his face. He stood for a moment considering, "I'll get you something," he promised. "If you don't want to come out I'll fix it and bring it up on a tray."

"There would be no use."

"Why not?"

"Because I can't open the door."

"Are you in bed?" His voice had sharpened.

Silence again, from which he concluded that she was. He stood there staring at the heavy mahogany door as though by the mere intensity of his gaze he could dissolve it. For a long moment he was lost in thought, but he was not trying now to solve the riddle of the woman on the other side of the barrier. The needs of the immediate present were all that concerned him. Finally he spoke again.

"Is your bed anywhere near a window?"

"Yes."

"Is the window open?"

"Yes."

"Then listen. I'll go downstairs and get something for you to eat. I'll put it into a bucket, attach some kind of rope with a weighted end to it, and throw the end in at your window. I can't get outside so I'll have to do it from the pantry window and it may take some time, but I'll keep at it. When the end comes in, pull up the bucket. Do you see?"

"I'll try to."

He turned away and began the long trip down to the kitchen. Now that he was animated by a desire to help somebody else, the depression which had enveloped him was momentarily dissipated. In spite of the ever-present pain he felt almost elated when at last he arrived again in the kitchen.

Half an hour later the "rope," manufactured from several towels tied together, with a potato-masher on the end, flew in at the window just above the pantry and the carefully covered bucket disappeared from sight. "Pretty neat," Kenwick remarked to himself. "I had no idea that I could do it when I told her I would."

But the strain had been too great. He was suddenly aware that every nerve in his body was aching. Back in the den he sank down on the couch where he had spent the night. Conjecture about the woman upstairs was submerged now beneath his own physical misery. The shelves in the library were empty. There was nothing to read save a paper-backed copy of one of Dumas's earlier novels, which he discovered in a corner. He took it up and tried to lose himself in the story, but it couldn't hold him. He found himself wondering resentfully why old man Raeburn hadn't shown more interest in his non-appearance. He was furiously impatient and utterly helpless. And he told himself that these two cannot live long together without wrecking the reason. Never before in his life had he been in a position where he couldn't do something to alter obdurate circumstance. To do anything would be better than to do nothing. The thought came to him all at once that this was what women, overwhelming numbers of women, must have endured during the terrible years of the war just past. There must have been whole armies of them, furiously eager to shoulder guns and march away to the trenches with the men they loved. And instead they had to submit to being caged up in houses and, blindfolded to all vision of the outer world, perform day after day the dreary treadmill duties of routine existence. For the first time he found himself wondering why more of them hadn't gone insane under the pressure. He was certain that he himself would lose his mental balance if the blindfold wasn't soon removed from his mental vision.

Suddenly he sat up and tossed aside his book. There was the sound of a footstep on the gravel walk at the other side of the house. Pushing a chair before him he followed the sound out to the dining-room. Through the window he saw a tall, ungainly looking boy walking toward the tank-house garage. He was carrying a long pole and a pair of pruning shears. So this was the accursed gardener, the mysterious gatherer of eggs, who, having brought him into the house, was content to let him die there or make off with the family plate.

"Here, you!" Kenwick knocked on the window-pane. It was a loud resounding knock, but the boy walked on unheeding, carefully examining one end of his pole.

Kenwick tried the lock. He had noticed in a previous investigation that all the windows on the lower floor had double locks. Undoing them on the inside was futile until a spring released them on the outside. And Kenwick was in no mood for making mechanical experiments. For an instant he stood there, like some caged animal, staring after the gawky figure of the boy as though he were the embodiment of hope fading away in the distance. And then a blind fury seized him. Possessed only of the overpowering desire to gain the attention of the outside world, he suddenly doubled his fist and sent it crashing through the heavy plate-glass pane. It shattered into a hundred pieces and cut a deep gash in his wrist.

When he had bound this up in a handkerchief with deft first-aid skill, he leaned out through the ragged aperture that had been the window. The boy had vanished as completely as though he were a wraith. Kenwick, controlling his dismay with a stupendous effort, told himself that he had only gone to put away his tools and would soon come running back to investigate the damage. He stood there waiting, exulting in his revolt. In spite of the lacerated wrist this violent assertion of his rights brought an immense relief. Why, a person might be murdered in this place and it would be days before anybody would know a thing about it.

The boy did not return, and Kenwick made his way back to the den. It was mid-afternoon now and a heavy rain had begun to fall. He made no further attempt to read, but lay on the upholstered window-seat trying to find some position that would be bearable. He cursed himself for having used the leg so much. Had he remained quiet all day he might by now have been able to get away from this uncanny place. But the woman upstairs! He couldn't throw off an absurd sense of responsibility concerning her. From all that he could gather she was as helpless a puppet in the hands of fate as he. But of course she might have been lying to him. As he lay there on his back gazing out at the needles of rain driven aslant into the dank ground, he felt distrustful of the whole universe. Could there be any way, he wondered, of getting a message out of this house? There must be a rural delivery, and if so, at the gate would be a letterbox. But that gate——It seemed tortuous miles away.

A search through the empty drawers of the desk revealed several loose sheets of tablet-paper and the stub of a pencil. With this equipment he wrote out a telegram to Everett. The mere wording of it seemed to reinstate him somehow in the world of affairs. The problem of getting it into the office could be solved later.

At six o'clock he forced himself to go out to the kitchen again and prepare supper. The thought of eating revolted him, but the woman upstairs, liar, decoy, or invalid, must be fed. Dangling close to the pantry window was the white-knotted towel rope with the bucket on the end. He put into it the last of the loaf of bread and some boiled eggs. Then he called to her to pull it up. When the bucket had begun its erratic climb, he leaned out of the narrow opening and spoke with defiant triumph. "Did you hear me smash that window this afternoon? I was trying to get the attention of the gardener. And I'm going to get it too if I have to smash up everything on this place."

If she made any reply he did not catch it. The rain was falling fast now and there was the growling sound of approaching thunder. Back in the den again he turned on the reading-light, more for companionship than illumination. Could it be possible that he would have to spend another night in this ghostly house? The idea was intolerable, and yet there was no relief in sight.

Another hour passed, and darkness enveloped the world in a shroud-like mantle. The bandage with which Kenwick's leg was wrapped was a torture now. He unwound it and began to massage the badly swollen limb using the long firm strokes that he had learned from the athletic trainer during his university days. They seemed to ease the pain somewhat and he continued to rub until his arms ached with the effort.

Then all at once there came to his ears a sound that made him halt, every muscle tense with listening. It was a sharp incisive knocking and it seemed to come from the dining-room. He sat motionless, afraid to move lest it should stop. But it came again, a clear unmistakable knocking that had the dull resonance of metal clashing against metal. To Kenwick it was perfectly obvious now that someone was trying to gain entrance at that broken dining-room window. He tested his unbandaged foot upon the floor and drew himself stealthily to a standing position. And then he turned himself slowly in the direction of the darkened dining-room.

CHAPTER IV

The Morgan home on Pine Street was a rambling old house; the only shingle structure in a block of modern concrete apartments. To the elder Morgans it had been the fulfilment of a dream; a home of their own in San Francisco. Clinton Morgan had lived only a year after its completion, and his widow, in spite of the pressure of hard times and the inadequacy of the income which he left, had resisted all tempting offers to sell the old place and had brought up her son and daughter with a reverence for family tradition as incongruous to their environment and generation as was the old shingle house among its businesslike neighbors.

And then, eight years after Clinton Morgan's death, oil had been discovered in his holdings over at Coalinga, and the last year of Sarah Morgan's life had been spent in affluence. But she had never parted with the old home. At the end of that year she had called Clinton, Jr., then a young instructor in chemistry at the university, to her bedside and laid a last charge upon him.

"Clint,"—Her voice held that note of unconscious tyranny that approaching death gives to last utterances. For in the moment of dissolution there is not one among us but is granted the crown and scepter of autocracy. "Clint, don't let the old place go. Fix it over any way you and Marcreta like, but keep it in the family as long as you live."

"Yes, Mother."

"And Clint, there is something else."

"I know, Mother. It's Marcreta. But you needn't worry about her."

"I don't believe in death-bed promises. It's not right to try to tie up anybody's future. But——You see, if she were strong and well, I wouldn't be anxious; I wouldn't say anything but——"

"You don't need to say anything, Mother. I'll always look out for her."

A white, blue-veined hand stretched across the counterpane groping for his. A moment later Marcreta was holding the other and brother and sister faced each other alone.

It was about a year after this that Clinton Morgan brought home with him to dinner one night a young college fellow, just on the eve of graduating from the University of California. The friendship between the instructor and this undergraduate, five years his junior, had begun in the fraternity-house where Clinton dined occasionally as one of the "old men." And temperamental congeniality and diversity of interests had done the rest.

"He's slated to be one of those writer freaks." Thus he introduced the guest to his sister. "But he's harmless at present and he's far from home, so I brought him along."

Roger Kenwick looked into Miss Morgan's grave blue eyes and became suddenly a man. His host, surveying him genially from across the meat-platter, found himself entertaining a stranger. The gay persiflage which he had known over at "the house" was completely submerged under a maturity which he had suspected only as potential. In vain he tried that form of social surgery known to hosts and hostesses as "drawing him out." He mentioned a clever poem in the college magazine of which Kenwick was editor. He began a discussion of the approaching track-meet in which Kenwick was to support his championship for the hundred-yard dash. He tried university politics in which his guest was a conspicuous figure. To all these leads his fraternity brother made brief, almost impatient response. And Clinton Morgan was resentfully bewildered. He experienced that cheated feeling known to any one who has brought home exultantly a clever friend, and then failed in the effort to make him show off.

But he couldn't complain that Kenwick was tongue-tied. He was talking earnestly, but it was about future, not past achievement. Inspired by Marcreta's sympathetic interest, he unfolded plans of accomplishment of which until that moment he himself had been in densest ignorance. Clinton had seen other men change, chameleon-like, in the presence of his sister, and he found himself wondering now as he watched Kenwick take his headlong leap into the future, whether it was Marcreta's regal beauty which inspired their admiration or her physical disability which appealed to their chivalry.

Kenwick himself was scarcely conscious of the disability. He was only vaguely aware that there were cushions at Miss Morgan's back and that on the way in from the living-room she had leaned slightly upon her brother's arm. When the evening was over he left the Morgan home enveloped in a white fury.

"I've been a fool!" he told himself violently. "I've been frittering away my whole life. This college stuff is kids' play. If I wasn't just two months from the end I'd ditch it and break into the man's game of finding a place in the world."

"Great chap, Kenwick," Clinton was telling his sister. "But he wasn't quite himself to-night. I think he has some family troubles that worry him. Doesn't get on very well with his sister-in-law back East, I believe. That's why he came out here to college."

Marcreta made a random reply. She was wondering what kind of person Roger Kenwick's real self was. And she was soon to discover. For that evening marked the beginning of a new era for them both. Scarcely a week passed that he did not spend Saturday and Sunday evenings at the house on Pine Street. Sometimes he read aloud to her "stuff" that he had written for the local newspapers. Sometimes she read to him from her favorite books. Once she helped him plan the plot of an absorbing serial story. But often they didn't read anything at all; just sat in front of the open fire and talked.

In May Kenwick was graduated from the university, but was still living at the fraternity-house in Berkeley when there came a sudden summons from New York. He ought to come, Isabel informed him, for his brother was seriously ill. On the night before he left he made a longer call than usual at the Morgan home.

"Everett's the finest chap in the world," he told Marcreta. "He's been like a father to me. But——Lord! How I hate to tear myself away from here! And the worst of it is, I don't know how long I may have to stay. You won't forget me if it's a long time?"

And then all at once they were not talking about his trip any more, nor of Everett. "If you could only give me some hope to go on," Kenwick was saying. "Something to live on while I'm away."

But to this entreaty Marcreta was almost coldly unresponsive. She tried evasions first; asked solicitous questions concerning his plans; showed a heart-warming interest in his anxiety concerning his brother. But, forced at length to answer his persistent question, she said simply: "No. I don't care for you—in that way. Let's not talk any more about it. Let's not spoil our last evening together."

It brought him to his feet white and shaken. "Spoil my last evening with you!" he cried. "Spoil my whole life! That's what it will do if I can't have you in it." His fingers sought an inside pocket of his coat. "I've got your picture," he told her

fiercely. "I got it down at Stafford's studio the other day. And I'm going to carry it with me always—until you give me something better."

A month after his arrival in New York he wrote her that his brother had recovered and that he would soon be coming back to find a position in a newspaper office in San Francisco. But he didn't come back. For it was just at this time that men began to hear strange new voices calling to them from out of the world-chaos. Day by day they grew in volume and in authority luring youth out of the isolation of personal ambition into the din and horrible carnage of war. Just before he left for a Southern training-camp Kenwick wrote her a long letter. In it there was neither past nor future tense. It concerned itself solely, almost stubbornly, with the present.

On the evening that she received it Marcreta held conference with her brother in the dignified old drawing-room. "Clinton, I want to make the old house take a part in the war. I've been talking it over with Dr. Reynolds. He says it would make an ideal sanitarium. I want to use it for the families of enlisted men; the women and children, you know, who are too proud for charity and who, for just a nominal sum, could come here and get the best treatment. If you were at the front, wouldn't it relieve your mind to know that somebody you loved, I for instance, was getting the proper care when I was ill, even though you couldn't provide it for me? I'll do all this out of my own money, of course, and keep your room and mine, so that this will still be home to you when—you come back from training-camp."

He stared at her incredulously. "Why, how did you——What makes you think that—I'm going away?"

"I saw Captain Evans's name on that envelope the other day, so I wrote to him and asked if you had quizzed him about war work," she told him shamelessly. "I couldn't help it, Clint. I had to know. I really knew anyway. Knowing you, how could I help seeing that you were mad to get away and help. Every *man* must be. But you've been afraid to broach it to me."

In his first moment of wild relief, he didn't dare trust himself to speak. When he at last ventured a response he plunged, manlike, into the least vital of the two topics. "But you don't quite realize what it would mean, Crete, tearing the whole house up that way. And the incessant confusion of having all those people around would be a frightful strain. With that spine of yours apt to go back on you at any time——It isn't as if you were a well woman."

The instant the words were out he regretted them. He saw his sister wince, but her voice was steady and eager with entreaty. "That's just it, dear. It isn't as if I were well and could do any work myself. But I can do this. I know what sick people need to make them comfortable. Oh, let me do it, Clinton."

He reached over and patted her shoulder. "I don't want to stand in the way of anything that would give you any happiness. But if it should be too much for you —and I so far away from you——"

"Even if it should be, you would come to see some day that I was right to do it. I have a right to take that chance. I have just as much right as a soldier has to stake my life against a great cause."

In the end he yielded, and together they planned the readjustment of their lives and the old home. Of the rooms on the lower floor, only the big library remained unchanged. But there were invalid-chairs ranged about the great room now and little tables holding bottles and trays.

On the Sunday evening before he left Clinton found his sister up in her room sorting over a pile of letters. "Well, your dreams are coming true, Crete," he told her. "Dr. Reynolds is delighted with this place and—you're sending a man to the service."

She looked up at him with a smile, and it flashed across him suddenly that she had done more than this. A silence fell between them, the tense throbbing silence that precedes a last farewell. He felt that he ought to say something; something comforting and cheerful. But the Morgans were reserved people, and they found confidences incredibly difficult. So he stood there looking down at her, thinking that she always ought to wear that soft blue-gray color that seemed to melt into her eyes and bring out all the richness of the dark curves of hair. It was so that he would think of her in the days that were to come—a fragile but gallant figure sitting at the old mahogany desk sorting out letters.

Suddenly she pushed them aside and rose to her full splendid queenly height. She knew that the moment of farewell had come and was not grudging it its crucial moment of life. He came toward her and put his two hands lightly on her shoulders. But words failed him utterly. For his glance had fallen upon the pile of letters which she had tied with a narrow bit of white ribbon. And he noticed for the first time that they were all addressed in the same handwriting.

CHAPTER V

Before going to investigate the knocking in the dining-room, Kenwick picked up the loaded revolver which he had brought down with him from the upstairs sitting-room. He felt himself so completely at a disadvantage against any chance invader that only such a weapon could even the score. Besides, there was the sick woman upstairs. He had her to protect. He hobbled across the hall, making as little noise as he could. But the process of getting into the dining-room took considerable time. There was plenty of time, he reflected, for the intruder to become discouraged or emboldened as the case might be.

As he crossed the room an icy blast struck him from the open window, and he told himself savagely that he wished he had left it alone. You couldn't expect a furnace to heat a house with a gale like that blowing into it. He had dragged himself to within a few feet of the pane when all at once he stopped. Two wide boards had been nailed across the aperture. It was a clumsy job, hurriedly done. Kenwick stood there gazing at it. So it was only for this that he had made the painful journey from the den! And the carpenter was gone. The customary deathly stillness prevailed.

He stood there listening for the sound of retreating footsteps but it was another sound that caught his ear. What he heard was the far off chugging of an automobile engine. He remembered now that the place was on a corner; that he had walked what had seemed miles after turning that corner before he had come to the iron gate. He was thinking rapidly. This was his one hope. If he could manage to get out to that gate by the time the motor-car reached it, he could get help. How ill the woman upstairs might be he could not guess, but they were both terribly in need of aid. At any cost he must get out to the road.

He laid the revolver upon a grim, high-backed chair and threw his whole six feet of strength against one of the wide boards. It gave under the pressure with a long tearing noise and hung outward dangling from its secure end. Kenwick took up the revolver again, worked himself out through the ample opening, and landed cautiously upon the gravel walk beneath the window. Clutching at the branch of a giant oleander bush he called up to the patient upstairs; "I'm going out to the gate. I don't know what will happen to me before I get back, and I don't care. But I'm going to get help or die trying."

There was no response. He wondered, as he started along through the blackness, whether the woman could be asleep. How could any one sleep in this ghastly place. Some people didn't seem to have any nerves. But she might be dead. The thought brought him to an abrupt halt. But in that case it was more imperative than ever that he toil on.

The rain had stopped now and the lawn under his feet was soggy and water-beaten like a carpet that has been left out in a storm. He thanked fortune that it was not slippery but gave beneath his staggering tread with a resilience that aided progress. It was impossible for him to proceed at anything faster than what seemed a snail's pace. The machine must have passed the gate by this time, but there would be others. If he ever reached that distant goal he would stand there and wait.

Across the circle of lawn, around the arc of drive, he made his laborious way with clenched teeth. And so at last he came to where the tall gate loomed black and forbidding through the darkness. The heavy chain still swung its sinister scallop before it, seeming more like a prison precaution now than a warning against invasion. As he looked at the stone fence, stretching away from it on both sides, and recalled the agony with which he had scaled it, courage fled. He'd rather die, he decided, than attempt to struggle over that parapet again. So he stood, supporting himself by one of the iron rods of the gate, listening for the sound of an engine. It came at last, growing louder as the car turned the corner a quarter of a mile away. It was evidently traveling slowly in low gear. The reason was soon apparent. Its engine was missing fire.

On through the darkness it came, its lights blazing a path for its faltering progress. There was a noise of violently shifted gears and then the heavy, greasy odor of a flooded carburetor. Behind the lights there slid into view almost opposite the tall gate a high-powered roadster. A man wearing huge glasses that gleamed through the dark like the eyes of some superhuman being sprang out and wrenched open the engine hood.

For a moment Kenwick watched him, dreading to speak lest the stranger vanish and leave him solitary as the gardener had done. And then abruptly he sent his voice hurtling through the night. At sound of it he recoiled. Only those who have suffered in solitude the agony of a nameless terror know the ghastly havoc that it can work upon the human voice. Kenwick's held now a harsh, ugly tone that had in it something like a threat. The man at the engine wheeled about and leveled his huge eyes at the spot from whence the summons came. "What the devil

——?" he began.

And then explanations tumbled through the barred gate in an incoherent torrent. They left the motorist with a confused impression of an automobile tragedy, a bed-ridden woman, a feeble-minded gardener, and a haunted house.

In sheer perplexity he began drawing off his heavy gantlet gloves as though to prepare for action. "Take it slower," he advised. "I don't get you." And then he noticed that the man on the other side of the gate was hatless and without an overcoat. "My Lord!" he cried anxiously. "You'll freeze out here, man!"

"Then for God's sake come in here and help me!" Kenwick entreated. "I don't know whose place this is but it ought to be investigated. There's a woman in here who's ill, and somebody has locked her into her room. I'm not able to do a thing for her or for myself. Do you know what house this is?"

The stranger shook his head. "No, I'm just out here on a visit." Kenwick groaned. There flashed into his mind the stories of some of his friends who had toured California and who were unanimous in their conclusion that everybody in the southern part of the state was merely a visitor. "But whom do they visit?" Everett Kenwick had once inquired and nobody could supply him with an answer.

"Then you don't know where the Raeburn house is?" the man inside the gate asked hopelessly.

The motorist shook his head again. "I'll tell you what though," he suggested. "You get back into the house out of this cold and I'll send somebody back here. I'm having engine trouble and I've got to get into town."

Kenwick was fumbling with numb fingers in the pocket of his coat. He stretched an oblong of white paper through the bars of the gate. "If you're going in town, take this," he pleaded. "It's a message I want to send to my brother in New York. Kenwick is the name and the address is on the outside."

The stranger stopped on his way to the gate and a curious expression crossed his face. And just at that moment Kenwick caught the sound of another voice speaking from inside the car. He couldn't catch the words, for the coughing of the engine beat against his ears. The man in the goggles climbed to the seat and the next minute the machine was moving jerkily away.

Cold desolation seized Kenwick. But he felt certain that the stranger would return. There was nothing mysterious nor uncanny about him. But how long

would he have to wait there on the drenched gravel before help could get back to him? It wouldn't do to catch cold in that leg and add a fever to his other troubles. He must get back into the house. Out there on the bleak road he thought longingly of its warm comfort. Everything that he had done since he came into it seemed now to have been the wrong thing. A horrible sense of incompetency, the first that he had ever known in all his vivid, effective life, surged over him. And added to this was a curious sense of having lost something. Was it Marcreta Morgan's picture that he missed? He told himself that it was, but he was only half satisfied with this assurance.

Arguing the matter with himself, he had covered half the distance around the driveway when suddenly a sharp reverberation rang through the air. It was the report of a gun. Almost immediately this was followed by a woman's scream.

Kenwick stood still, balancing himself unsteadily upon his well foot. The sound had come from the direction of the house. Did it herald a tragedy or was it merely a signal? Scarcely knowing why he did it, except to relieve the physical tension and to make his presence known, he gripped his own revolver and fired two answering shots upward into the night.

CHAPTER VI

The one idea which possessed Kenwick after dragging himself back through the broken window was to find out if the woman upstairs was safe. The journey out to the big gate and back had consumed almost an hour, and as he pulled himself in between the wide board and shattered glass he felt that it must have been years since he had gone on that painful quest. He rested for a few moments and then went into the front hall.

To his amazement he found it ablaze with light. Brilliant too was the living-room beyond. In the latter he had never used anything but the shaded lamp upon the table. Now the chandeliers in the ceiling had been lighted from the switchboard button. It was evident that some one had been all over the lower part of the house while he was gone. It must have been the woman upstairs. There was no one else on the premises except that half-witted garden boy.

Grimly resolved to discover whether his mysterious companion was still concealing herself behind locked doors or whether her apartment had been stormed by some prowler he made his way up to the room in the front of the right wing. As he approached it he called to her asking if she was all right. There was no response. He knocked. The sound echoed dully down the handsome stairway. Then in a futile sort of way he tried the knob.

This time it yielded to his touch and swung slowly open. For a moment he hesitated, dreading to snap on the light. Then the stillness grew oppressive. His quick, impatient fingers groped along the wall, found the switch-button, and pressed it. The mysterious apartment flashed into sudden reality.

Kenwick looked about him, bewildered. The light revealed a large handsome room furnished in golden oak. There was a massive double bed, bureau, dressing-table, and several luxurious chairs. A heavy moquette carpet deadened every footfall, and the rose-colored draperies at the windows admitted only a restricted view of the outer world. But it was the condition of the room, not its furnishings, that puzzled the man upon the threshold. Dust covered every polished surface. The hearth was swept clean. There had been no fire on it for months, perhaps years. On the bed was a mattress but no coverings. The mirrors on bureau and dressing-table showed a thin veil of dust. There were no toilet

articles, no personal belongings of any kind. The room was evidently a woman's but there was no hint of a woman's presence, except that in the air hung a faint perfume of heliotrope. He remembered suddenly that it was the perfume that Marcreta Morgan had always used.

Kenwick went over to one of the chairs and sat down. He felt intensely relieved. If the woman had gone away she would certainly send some one back to the house, for she knew that he was alone and injured. But how had she gone? Was there another entrance to these somber grounds? For half an hour he sat there trying to think it out. The room grew very cold. It had apparently been shut off from the furnace connection. He arose at last, stiffly, and went back downstairs, switching off the lights. In the living-room and hall he turned them off too, for they gave to the solemn rooms a garish, incongruous splendor.

He went into the den and took his old place on the upholstered window-seat. It may have been twenty minutes later that he heard the sound of wheels crunching the gravel of the driveway. He listened intently. No, this time he was not mistaken. Some vehicle was approaching the house. The stranger in goggles had been true to his promise and had sent back help, or perhaps returned himself. At last this hideous bondage was to end. He limped into the living-room and without turning on the light, peered out. There was no one in sight and no sound of voices, but at the foot of the front steps stood a long black car. It recalled to him in a flash the beetle-black limousine that he had seen in the tank-house garage.

Impelled by his entry into the room upstairs to try the front door, he turned the knob. It was unlocked. Whoever had come in or gone out had been in too much of a hurry to fasten it this time.

And then, standing there at that half-open door, Kenwick suddenly lost his headlong impatience. For the realization came to him at last that his experiences of the last twenty-four hours were no casual adventure. This was a game, perhaps even a trap. He had inadvertently stepped into a carefully laid plot. That it had been obviously prepared for somebody else did not alter the seriousness of his present position. Whoever was engineering the thing had assumed that he would do and say certain things. And now, he reminded himself angrily, he had probably done and said them all. Certainly his every move had been direct, impetuous, glaringly obvious. He would have to change his course unless he wanted to die in this accursed house. This game, whatever it was, couldn't be won by throwing all the cards face up on the table and demanding a reckoning.

The other players wore masks. If he was to have any chance against them he must adopt their tactics.

He assured himself of all this while he limped down the shallow porch steps. He hadn't the faintest notion of what he was going to do next, but decided to trust to impulse. He had reached the lowest step when all at once he recoiled. Almost with his hand upon the beetle-black limousine he discovered that it was not a limousine at all. It was a hearse.

At that same moment, he heard, coming from the near distance, the voice of some one speaking with unaccustomed restraint. It was a raucous voice talking in a harsh whisper. And then there was a sound of footsteps approaching.

Without an instant's hesitation Kenwick opened the door of the hearse, pulled himself inside, and drew it shut, unlatched behind him. There was no definite plan in his mind except to escape. And the woman had apparently fled so he felt no further responsibility for her.

The steps came nearer. In another minute some one might jerk open the door and discover him. And he remembered uneasily that now he was not armed. He had left the revolver on the table in the den. The footsteps stopped close to his head and a man's voice called to somebody at a distance.

"My orders was to come out here. That's all I know about it. But I'm not goin' to get myself tied up in any mess like this. It's up to the coroner first. It just means that I'll have to make another trip out here to-morrow."

Kenwick heard him clamber to the high seat, and heard him jam his foot against the starter, heard its throbbing response. And then he started away on his long weird drive through the black night.

He had expected his conveyance to be almost as close and stifling as a tomb, but was relieved to find that sufficient air came in through the crack of the door to make the trip endurable. The only provident thing that he had done during the whole adventure, he decided, was to put on his overcoat and hat before leaving the den. One journey bareheaded into the November night had been sufficient to warn him against a repetition of such rashness. He was dressed now as he had been when he first took stock of himself outside the tall iron gate.

The road was smooth asphalt all of the way, and the passenger, stretched at full length on the hard floor of the hearse, felt more comfortable than he had all that

ghastly day. During the ride he tried to formulate some definite course of action. For now that the solitary desolation of the last twenty-four hours was ended, he was able to detach himself from its events and to view the whole experience as a spectator.

His vivid imagination pictured the somber house in a dozen different lights. But he discarded them one by one, and his interest centered about the identity of the woman upstairs and the single shot which had pierced the stillness of a few hours before. Of only one thing he was certain—that he was going to get out of Mont-Mer as speedily as possible. It was all very well to conjecture that the house might be the disreputable retreat of some Eastern capitalist, or a rendezvous for radicals, but he preferred to solve the riddle from a distance. He had no intention of being called as a witness in an ugly exposé. It would be easy enough to write to Old Man Raeburn and explain that it hadn't been possible for him to stop off on his way to San Francisco. He fervently hoped that he would never see Mont-Mer again. Without ever having really seen it he had come to loathe it.

He had ridden for twenty minutes or more when he felt the vehicle slow down. It made a sharp turn and came to a stop. Kenwick wondered if the driver would open the doors, and he lay there waiting, staring into the dark, impassive in the hands of fate. He heard the man climb down from his seat and then the sound of his footsteps growing fainter in the distance.

Ten minutes later Kenwick cautiously pushed open the flimsy doors and worked himself out of his hiding-place. He was in an alley enclosed on three sides by the backs of buildings. Half hopping, half crawling he reached the dimly lighted street. It was almost midnight now and the little town was deserted. At the corner he found a drug-store. It looked warm, companionable, inviting. Drawing his fur-collared overcoat about his ears he hobbled to the door and pushed it open.

Inside two men were leaning against a glass show-case talking with the clerk. At Kenwick's entrance the conversation stopped abruptly like the dialogue of movie actors when the camera clicks the scene's end. The intruder, clutching at one of the show-cases for support, forced a comradely smile. "If I can't put one over here," he told himself, "I don't deserve to be called a fiction-writer."

But before he had time to speak one of the men came forward with a startled questioning. "You look all in, man; white as a sheet. Sit down here. What's the idea?"

"Pretty close call," Kenwick told him. "A fellow in a car bowled me over as I was crossing the street. He went right on, but I doubt if I'll be able to for a while."

"Well, what do you know about that?" the drug clerk challenged, as he helped his visitor into a chair behind the prescription-desk. "Say, this is gettin' to be one of the worst towns on the coast for auto accidents. Didn't get his number, I suppose?"

"No. And I'm just a stranger passing through here. I don't know many people."

"Hard luck." It was evident that the trio were disappointed in the meagerness of his story. One of them stooped and was probing the swollen leg with skilful fingers. Kenwick winced.

"You've got a bad sprain there all right," the doctor told him. "It's swollen a good deal, too, for being so recent. Have you walked far?"

"Yes, rather." Kenwick watched in silence while the physician bound up the injured member in a stout bandage. In spite of his best efforts one sharp moan escaped him.

"Your nerves are badly shaken, I can see that," the doctor decided. "Fix him up a little bromide, Gregson."

Kenwick took the glass, furious to note that it trembled in his hand. The druggist attempted to joke him back to normal poise. "A little more of a jolt and you'd have had to pass him up to Gifford, Doc. Gifford, here," he went on by way of introduction, "is shipping a body north to-night on the twelve-thirty. Bein' two of you, he might have got the railroad to give your folks a special rate if you're goin' his way."

The patient evinced mild interest. "San Francisco?" he inquired. The undertaker nodded.

"That's the train I hoped to make," Kenwick sighed. "But my money seems to have been jolted out of me and——" He went carefully through his pockets as he spoke. And then Gifford came over and stood beside him. "If you don't mind," he began, "I'd like to know your name."

Kenwick's reply was glibly reassuring. "Kenneth Rogers."

"Oh! You that young Rogers that's been visiting for a few days at the Paddington place, 'Utopia'?" It was the doctor who asked this question.

Kenwick nodded warily.

The physician extended his hand. "I'm Markham. Had an engagement to play golf with you out at the country club this afternoon. Awfully sorry you couldn't make it but I got the message all right from your sister that you were having trouble with your car out near Hillside Inn and you couldn't get away."

As Kenwick wrung his hand with easy cordiality there flashed before his mental vision the picture of the wayfarer in goggles. Could a malign fate have trapped him into taking the name of that visitor to Mont-Mer, or any visitor, who might some day arise and challenge him? He had got to get out of this place before the net that the gods were weaving about him should bind him hand and foot.

"Say, listen." Gifford forced himself to the front again, speaking with a mixture of eagerness and hesitation. "If you're goin' up to the city to-night, I wonder if ——You see, it's like this. I've got a big masonic funeral on here for Thursday morning. It'll be a hell of a rush for me to get back in time if I have to make this trip. But I promised a little woman that I'd see personally to this shipment; send a responsible party or go myself. I haven't got a soul to send, but if you——."

Kenwick shook his head. "I won't be able to leave now until to-morrow. I'll have to wait and get some money."

Gifford waved aside the objection. "Your expenses will be paid, of course, as mine would have been. I'll advance you the funds. And you don't have to *do* a thing, you know. Wellman's man will meet the train at the other end. Wait and see the casket in his hands and then you're through."

He watched the other man eagerly. For a moment Kenwick didn't trust himself to meet his gaze. He hoped that he was not betraying in his face the jubilant conviction that his guardian angel had suddenly returned from a vacation and had renewed an interest in him. In order not to appear too eagerly acquiescent he asked casually: "Who is the fellow? Or who was he?"

"Man by the name of Marstan. He wasn't known around here. His wife had to come down from the city to identify him." He glanced at his watch. "There's just about time to make the train now. I've got my car outside. It's luck, your stumbling in here like this. Sheer luck."

"Luck is too mild a word for it," Kenwick assured himself as he crawled into his Pullman a few moments later. "It's providence, old boy. That's what it is."

The bromide had begun to do its work. And his leg, properly bandaged, gave him no pain. Almost hilarious over the knowledge that daylight would find him among familiar surroundings again, he fell into the delicious slumber that follows sudden surcease of mental strain.

When he awoke the train was speeding through the oak-dotted region of San Mateo. He had refused to accept any expense-money from Gifford except enough for his breakfast, and after a cup of coffee in the diner, he sat gazing out of the window, not caring to open conversation with any of his fellow-travelers, completely absorbed in the business of readjusting himself to this environment that he had loved and from which the war had so abruptly uprooted him.

It was glorious to be back again, to catch up the loose threads of the old life. And in spite of the stark bareness of winter, the landscape had never seemed so appealing. The wide level stretches of pasture, cut by ribbons of asphalt, the prosperous little towns which the Coast Company's fast train ignored on its thunderous dash northward, the children walking to school, the pruners waving their shears to him as he sped by—all these breathed a healthy normal living that made the neurotic adventures of the past day seem remote and unreal.

Under the long shed of the Third and Townsend Depot he lingered only until he had carried out Gifford's instructions. Then he went on down the open corridor to the waiting-rooms. Outside the voices of taxi-drivers and hotel busmen made the radiant winter morning hideous with their cries. The waiting-room was warm and bright. There was no better place, Kenwick reflected, to map out his program. The air was a tonic, crisp and tipped with frost. It was too cold to be without an overcoat and yet, if Everett did not make punctual reply to the message that he was about to send, he might have to part with it for a time.

He found a seat in a corner where he would be out of the draft of incessantly opening doors. For in spite of his good night's sleep he felt weak and a little giddy. Resolving to dismiss the past from his mind and concern himself solely with the present was good logic, but difficult of accomplishment. First, and dominating all his thought, was Marcreta Morgan. The thought of her brought him a dull pain. So many letters he had written her since his return to New York, and not one of them had she ever answered. Once, in vague alarm, he had even written to Clinton, but there had been no reply. And then pride had held him silent. So he couldn't go to the house on Pine Street now. He wouldn't go, he decided fiercely, until he had a decent position and had reëstablished himself in civilian life.

Over at the news-stand a girl was fitting picture post-cards into a rack. Kenwick walked over to her and with a part of the change left from his meager breakfast bought a morning paper. While she picked it off the pile he stood twirling the circular rack absently with one hand. The Cliff House, Golden Gate Park, and prominent business blocks whirled past his eyes, but he was not conscious of them. He took his newspaper and turned away.

Halfway to the door he opened it and glanced at the sensational menu spread out for his delectation upon the front page. All at once something inside his brain seemed to crumple up. The Cliff House, Golden Gate Park, and tall office-buildings sped around him in a circle, like a merry-go-round gone mad. Somehow he found his way back to the corner seat and sank into it. And there he sat like a stone man, staring at, but no longer seeing, the front page of his newspaper.

CHAPTER VII

Two hours after Roger Kenwick had taken his gruesome departure from the house of the iron gate, a mud-spattered car turned in at the side entrance to the grounds which he had quitted. The man behind the wheel drove recklessly, careening between the double row of eucalyptus-trees like some low-flying bird of prey seeking its carrion. At the shallow front steps he brought the car to an abrupt halt as though he had found the thing for which he sought. Tugging at his heavy gloves he sprang up the steps, two at a time. "Lord! What a handsome place this is!" he muttered. "What a place for dinners and dancing—and love!"

He pressed the electric button and heard its buzz pierce the stillness of the house. "It's a crime!" He was walking up and down before the closed door, flapping his gloves against his chest. "It's a crime for a man to live in a place like this alone." He pressed the button again, keeping his finger upon it this time until he felt certain that its persistent summons must tear at the nerves of whoever was within. But still there was no response. Then he tried the knob, turned it, and went inside.

The house was in complete darkness. He felt his way along the front hall until his fingers found the switch-button. At the hat-rack he divested himself of his heavy coat, hat, and gloves. The face which the diamond-shaped mirror reflected was dark with disapproval and gathering anger. "Door unlocked at one o'clock at night! Might as well leave a child in charge of things!"

Walking with noisy, impatient tread, he ascended the stairs, taking the left flight on the landing, and snapping on the light in the upper hall. The doors were all closed. He turned the knob of the first one and went in. The sitting-room was in perfect order. He crossed it and entered the alcove beyond. It, too, was in order with fresh linen upon the bed. Having made a tour of the suite he came back and stood beside the center-table in the sitting-room. A half-burned cigar caught his eye, and he drew it out of the ash-tray and turned it speculatively between his fingers. Then, still holding it, he visited the other rooms in the left wing. They were all orderly, silent, deserted. Somewhere in his progress from one to another he dropped the cigar stump and did not notice it. Moving like a man in a dream he found himself at last over in the right wing, standing outside a heavy mahogany door. His movements were no longer speculative. They were nervous

and jerky as though propelled by a disabled engine.

He did not at first try to open this door but called in a low uncertain voice that seemed to dread a reply, "Marstan, are you here?" When there was no response he tried the door in a futile sort of way as though he were expecting resistance. When it yielded to his touch and he stood upon the threshold the desolation of the room seemed to leap out at him. He felt no desire to switch on the light here, but stood motionless in the open doorway, transfixed, not by a sight but by an odor.

"Heliotrope!" he muttered at last, and brought the panel shut with a jerk. "Some woman has been in that room!"

For long moments he stood there in the lighted upper hall. In his face bewilderment struggled with alarm. At last he made his way downstairs to the living-room and on to the den. Here he stared long at the half-drawn shades and the crumpled cushions of the window-seat. Something was gone out of that room; something that was a vivid, vital part of it. He couldn't quite determine what it was.

Over in the dining-room he examined the bowl of English walnuts with several empty shells mixed in among them and the nutcrackers lying askew upon the centerpiece. All at once he dropped these with a crash that made an ugly scar upon the polished table-top. His eyes had fallen upon the wide board nailed across the shattered window. He went over and investigated it carefully, his quick eyes taking in every detail of the crude carpentry. Under his touch the sagging lower board suddenly gave way and fell with a heavy thud to the gravel walk below.

The new-comer went back to the front hall, searched for an instant in the pocket of his overcoat, and then, clutching a black cylindrical object, he went out of the house and around on the dining-room side. His hands were trembling now, and the path of light blazing from the little electric torch made a zigzag trail across the dank flower-beds. He found the dislodged board lying with its twisted nails sprawling upward and dragged it off the path. As he dropped it his eyes fell upon an object lying beneath a giant oleander bush. At last he knew what it was that he had missed from the den. It was the Indian blanket. Mystified, he bent down and picked it up, finding it heavy with the added weight of dampness. The next moment he gave a startled cry, dropped the blanket and torch, and staggered back against the wall. And the blackness of night rushed over him like a tidal

wave.

But his was the temperament which recuperates quickly from a shock. Resourcefulness, the key-note of his character, impelled him always to seek relief in action. Cursing the sudden weakness in his knees which retarded haste, he strode, with the aid of the recovered torch, toward a small frame cottage in the rear of the garage. Here he rapped sharply upon the closed door, then pushed it open. This room, too, was empty. Pointing the torch, like the unblinking eye of a cyclops, into every corner of the apartment, he made certain of this. Then he drew a solitary chair close to the door and sat down, the torch across his knees.

More slowly now his glance traveled around the room. The blankets upon the bed were in a disheveled heap. There were some soiled dishes upon the table, a cup half full of cold tea, and under the small stove a pot of sticky-looking rice. The fire had gone out. He crossed the room and lifted the lid of the stove. Under the white ashes a few coals glowed dully. There were no clothes in the closet. It was easily apparent to him that the former inmate of the room had left unexpectedly but did not intend to return.

For half an hour he sat there motionless. Then he rose, pushed back the chair, and went out, closing the door behind him. Very deliberately he followed the side path back to the dining-room window. This time he retained the light, pressing one end of it firmly with his thumb. The soggy Indian blanket he folded back, and, stooping close to the ground, examined intently the dead cold face which it had sheltered.

It was the face of a man, young but haggard. The cheeks were sunken, and through the skin of his clenched hands the knuckles showed white and knotted. His hair was in wild disorder, but it seemed more the disorder of long neglect than of violent death. The helpless shrunken figure presented a pitiful contrast to that of the man who knelt beside it.

His was a large, well-proportioned frame that suggested, not corpulence but physical power. His hands were powerful but not thick. His whole bearing was self-assured, almost haughty. But it was the eyes, not the carriage, that gave the impression of arrogance. They were the clearest amber color with a mere dot of black pupil. Here and there tiny specks were visible showing like dark grains of sand in a sea of brown. A woman had once called them "tiger eyes," and he had been pleased. A child had once described them as "freckled" eyes, and he had been annoyed. As he knelt there now, searching the face of the dead man, his

eyes, under their drooping lids, narrowed to the merest slits. When at last he rose and drew the blanket back over the still form, he moved with the brisk effectiveness of one animated by definite purpose.

First, he drove the mud-spattered roadster into the garage and left it there beside the beetle-black limousine. Then he let himself into the deserted house again, went up to the second bedroom in the left wing, and began sorting over some miscellaneous objects from one of the chiffonier drawers. "Ghastly!" he muttered once. "Ghastly! I'll have to take something to brace me up."

Back in the dining-room he took one of the long-stemmed glasses from the sideboard and poured himself a drink from a bottle in the cupboard underneath. But first he scrutinized its contents under the light. "Why didn't you take it all?" he inquired sardonically of some invisible being.

For a few hours he slept with a sort of determined tranquillity. But by eight o'clock he was up and dressed, and a few minutes later he answered a summons at the front door. Swinging it open he admitted a short sandy man with the ruddy complexion of the Norsemen. "I'm Annisen, the coroner," this visitor announced.

"Yes. I was expecting you. Come in." The other man swung the portal wider. "Doctor Annisen, is it?"

The visitor nodded and stepped into the hall that was still dim in the cold light of the winter morning. He unwound a black silk muffler from about his throat. "Devilish cold," he commented. "Devilish cold for a place that advertises summer all the year round."

His host smiled with sympathetic appreciation. "California publicity," he commented, "is far and away ahead of anything that we have in the unimaginative East. My furnace-man left me yesterday and I haven't got around to making the fires myself yet. But let me give you something to warm you up, doctor."

While he filled one of the small glasses on the buffet, his guest eyed him stolidly. "Still got some on hand, have you?" he said with a heavy attempt at the amenities. "Well, this wouldn't be a bad place for moonshining out here. Guess you could put almost anything over without fearing a visit from the authorities."

There was a moment of silence. "You've got a beautiful place though," he went on at last. "But Rest Hollow! What a name for it! Rest! Lord! Anything might

happen out here, and I guess most everything has. I wasn't much surprised at the message I found waiting me when I got back to town this morning. I've always said that this place fairly yells for a suicide."

The other man's eyes were fixed upon his face with a curious intentness. It was as though he were deaf and were reading the words from his companion's lips. The coroner had raised his glass and was waiting. "No, I don't drink," his host explained. "Very seldom touch anything. I can't and do my kind of work."

Annisen set down his empty glass. "I shouldn't think you could do your kind of work and not drink," he remarked. "Well, let's get this over. I suppose you left everything just as you found it?"

There was the ghost of a smile in his host's eyes. "Glad he didn't put that question the other way around," he was thinking. "It would have been an embarrassment if he had asked if I found everything just as I left it." And then aloud, "Certainly. I haven't touched anything. The body is out here."

"Good. Gifford sent his wagon out last night, but fortunately his man knew enough not to disturb anything until I'd been out. Were you here when he came last night?"

"No. I didn't get here till later."

The two men crawled out through the broken window and in the gray light of the November morning knelt together beside the still form under the Indian blanket. Mechanically the coroner examined it and the empty revolver which they discovered a few feet away. But he offered no comment until he had finished. Then his verdict was curt. "Gunshot wound in the head, self-inflicted. When did this happen?" He took out a small book and noted down the answers to this and a variety of other questions. Then he stood for a moment staring down at the white, drawn face of the dead man.

"Young, too," he murmured. "But I suppose it's a merciful thing. There was no life ahead for him, poor devil."

They followed the path around to the front of the house where Annisen's car was waiting. "Be in to the inquest about two o'clock this afternoon," he instructed. "That hour suit you all right, Mr.——? Don't believe I know your name."

"Glover. Richard Glover. I'll be there at two, doctor."

Late that morning the hearse made its second trip out of the side entrance of Rest Hollow. A mud-splashed roadster followed it. The cortège had just passed the last gaunt eucalyptus-tree and turned out upon the public highway when it was halted. A man in heavy-rimmed goggles got out of his car and made his way across the road. His glance wavered uncertainly between the driver of the hearse and the man in the muddy roadster. He decided to address the latter.

"I heard the news last night. It got around the neighborhood. But I thought——I didn't know——Those rumors get started sometimes with no foundation of fact. But it's true then—that he is dead."

"That who is dead?"

The question seemed to be shot back at him. And he had the uncanny conviction that it emanated, not from the lips, but from the amber eyes of the man in the roadster. He stammered out his reply.

"Why—I think his name——He told me his name was Kenwick; Roger Kenwick, I think."

The roadster started again. "Yes, that's the name. Did you know him?"

"No. But wait a minute, please." The goggle-eyed man hurried back to his own car and returned with a handsome spray of white chrysanthemums. They were tied with a broad white ribbon bordered with heliotrope. "I'd like to have you take these if you will." He handed them up to the hearse-driver.

The man in the roadster fired another question. "Your name, please?"

"They are not from me. One of the ladies in the neighborhood sent them. She felt it was too sad—having him go away this way, all alone." He went back to his machine and was soon lost in the distance. And the funeral procession proceeded on its way to Mont-Mer.

The coroner's inquest was brief and perfunctory. Annisen was on the eve of retiring from office and seeking a more lucrative position in a Middle Western city where the inhabitants, as he contemptuously remarked, "were not afflicted like this place is with a chronic sleeping-sickness."

The jury returned the verdict that "the deceased came to his death by shooting himself in the head." After they had departed, Gifford held brief parley with the chief witness. "I suppose you'll attend to notifying the family?"

Richard Glover nodded. And at his direction the haggard body was removed from the cheap black coffin in which it had made the trip from Rest Hollow. Following Richard Glover's instructions, it was embalmed for the trip across the continent. But just as it was ready for the long journey, he announced to Gifford that he had received orders from the family to inter the body in the little cemetery of Mont-Mer. And so, on the following day, it was taken to the quiet resting-place overlooking the sea. In the presence of no one except the undertaker's assistants and Richard Glover there was lowered into the lonely grave a handsome gray casket with silver handles and a frosted silver plate on which was inscribed the name "Roger Kenwick."

CHAPTER VIII

The editor of the "San Francisco Clarion" tilted his chair far back and look quizzically at the young man sitting beside his desk. "Sure I remember you," he remarked. "Did some Sunday work for us some time ago, didn't you?"

"Yes, a little feature stuff when I was in college."

"And now you want to go it strong, eh? Well, we've been rather disorganized in here since the war. There's been a constant stream of reporters coming and going. But things are settling down a little now and we're not taking on anybody who doesn't want to stick. Planning to be in the city right along, are you?"

"Well, I'll be perfectly frank with you about that. I'm not. I've got to go East as soon as I get a little money. But I'm not planning to stay there. I'm coming back for good as soon as I've closed up my business."

"Why not close up the Eastern business first?"

"Can't. It's not ripe yet." There was a note of grimness in the young man's voice. "I don't know just when it will be, either. But when I do go back, I don't think it will take me long to finish it. Don't give me a reporter's job if I don't look good to you. Put me on to some feature stuff for a while."

"All right. Sit in, and I'll give you a line on a few things I'd like to have hunted down."

When he left the office half an hour later, Kenwick sought the public library. There he spent the entire afternoon and a part of the evening. It was about nine o'clock when he entered the St. Germaine, a modest hotel in the uptown district. The night clerk cast an inquiring glance in search of his suit-case.

"My baggage hasn't come yet," the prospective guest explained tranquilly. "It may be in to-morrow. If you want to know anything about me, call Allen Boyer at the 'Clarion' office."

When he had been shown to his room on the fifth floor he lighted the lamp on the stand near his bed and became absorbed in the contents of one of the weekly magazines. He read until very late and then snapped out the light, cursing

himself for having abused his eyes on the eve of taking a new position.

The next morning he was out early, eager to hunt down one of the stories that Boyer had suggested. As he swung out into the exhilaration of the crisp November morning on the scent of an assignment some of the old self-assurance and buoyancy came back to him.

Half an hour after he had left the hotel, the revolving doors swung round the circle to admit a man with prosperous leather suit-case and "freckled" eyes. The day clerk handed him a pen and registration-slip. He was beginning to sign, after a curt question about the rates, when the blond cashier, perched on a stool in the wire cage adjoining the desk, pushed a similar slip of paper toward the clerk. "Can't quite make out that name," she confessed. "Looks like Renwich. Do you get it?"

The desk official glanced at it with the casually professional air of one to whom all the mysteries of chirography are as an open book. "It's Kenwick. Plain as day—Roger Kenwick."

The pen slid from the fingers of the man on the other side of the desk. For a moment, self-possession deserted Richard Glover. He stood there staring hard at the ugly blot which he had made across his own signature. Then he crumpled the bit of paper, threw it into the waste-basket, and, suit-case in hand, went out into the street.

The day clerk darted a contemptuous glance after his disappearing figure. "Some nut," he remarked. "Told me the terms were all right and then got cold feet. I'll bet he's a crook."

"Sure he's a crook." The blond cashier spoke with cheerful authority. "I could have told you that when he first came in. I can size 'em up as far off as the front door. And I had him posted on the 'Losses by Default' page before he'd set down his bag."

The day clerk regarded her musingly. "He *had* a bag, though, and that's more than this Kenwick fellow showed. But Brown thought he was all right and let him have 526. Did you notice him this morning? Tall, dark fellow, young but with hair a little gray around the temples."

"Ye-a. High-brow. Looks like he was here for his health. Probably broke down in some government job."

"No, he's a newspaper man."

"Let's see where he's from?" She reached for the slip.

"New York. Well, I slipped a cog. I would have said he was a Westerner."

"That's right. That last chap looked more like New York to me. But you never can tell. And something seemed to hit him all wrong about this place."

With this conclusion Richard Glover was in complete accord. As he walked down Geary Street clutching his heavy bag, he was conscious with every nerve of his being that something had struck him decidedly wrong about the St. Germaine. "It might be just a coincidence," he reassured himself. "It's undoubtedly just a coincidence but—but that isn't such a very common name. My God! I begin to feel like a spy caught in his own trap."

With scarcely more than a glance at the name above the entrance he turned into the lobby of another hotel and signed for a room. It was almost noon when he appeared again and wrote a letter at one of the lobby desks. It was not a long letter, hardly more than a note, but its composition consumed almost an hour and a half a dozen sheets of stationery, which were successively torn to bits and thrown into the waste-basket. And then at last the final sheet met the same fate and Richard Glover sat tapping the desk softly with the edge of the blotter.

"No, I won't write; I'll just go," he decided. "For asking if I may come almost invites a refusal. And then it takes longer. I'll go up there this afternoon. The secret of getting what you want out of people is to take them off guard."

Following this policy he set out in the late afternoon to pay a call. At the door of the uptown address he was met by a colored maid. She offered him neither hope nor despair but agreed to present his card.

And in front of the living-room fire Marcreta Morgan read the card and flicked it across to her brother. "I don't think I care to see anybody to-day," she said. "It's your first night at home, and there's so much to talk about."

"Don't know him," Clinton decided. "Somebody you met while I was away?"

"Oh, yes, you know him, Clint. You introduced me to him yourself. Don't you remember he came here one night before you went to Washington and asked you to analyze some specimens of mineral water."

"Oh, *that* fellow! Has he been hanging around here ever since?"

"Well, no. I can't say that he has hung around exactly. But of late he has called rather often. He's really quite entertaining in some ways. You were very much interested in his specimens."

"In his *specimens*, yes."

It may have been that she resented his implied dislike. It may have been for some other reason. But Marcreta suddenly reversed her decision. "Show him in, please," she ordered. And the next moment the visitor stood in the doorway.

It was apparent as he crossed the long room that he had not expected to meet any one save his hostess. But he responded warmly to Clinton's handshake and drew up a chair for himself opposite Marcreta. "It's a pleasant surprise to find you here, Mr. Morgan," he said. "I thought you were still in the service at Washington. But it's time for every one to be getting home now, isn't it?"

Clinton Morgan surveyed him silently. It struck him that his guest was very much at home himself. For a time the conversation followed that level, triangular form of talk which so effectually conceals purpose and personality. Then Clinton excused himself on the plea that he had some unpacking to do, and Marcreta and Richard Glover were left alone.

"It's been a long time since I've seen you, Mr. Glover," she said. "You haven't been in the Bay region lately?"

"No, I've not been able to get away." His tone indicated that he had chafed under this pressure of adverse circumstance. "But it's good to get back now," he went on. "I'm always glad to get back—here."

She ignored the new ardent note in his voice. "But the southern part of the State is beautiful," she said. "Mont-Mer, particularly, is so beautiful that it makes the soul ache."

The words seemed to startle him. His eyes left the camouflaged log of wood in the fireplace and fixed themselves steadily upon her. "How do you know? How do you, San Francisco-bound, know?"

"I have just returned from there. My brother and I arrived home the same day. I spent a week near Mont-Mer visiting my friends, the Paddingtons. Do you know them?"

"No. But I think I know their home. They call it 'Utopia,' I believe?"

"Yes. And until I saw it I had always thought that Utopia was a myth."

"Mont-Mer," he mused, "does look rather like a fairy-story come true, doesn't it? There's something perilously seductive about it. It's a place where people go to forget."

"I have heard that said about it, but somehow it didn't make that kind of an appeal to me. I had the feeling that in such a place as that every sorrow of life is a bleeding wound. There's a terrible cruelty about that tropical sort of beauty. It drives memories in, not out."

For some unaccountable reason the tensity of her tone annoyed him. "You didn't like it then?"

"It's beautiful, as I have said, but—I shall never go there again."

"The place you ought to see," he told her, "is Cedargrove, about two hours' trip to the south."

"That's where the mineral springs are?"

"Yes. And what I really came to tell you to-day is that I've bought the controlling interest in the springs. It was after your brother had given me his final analysis of the water last year that I decided to do it. He said, you know, that in his opinion the medicinal ingredients equaled that of the waters of Carlsbad. I've made great plans. You see, there are twenty acres, and so far we've found eighteen springs. We've been bottling the stuff for several months now and it's selling like hot cakes. The next step is a hotel. It's not to be too colossal, but unique in every respect. That's what takes in California. Show people that you've got 'something different' and they'll jump to the conclusion that because it's different it must be desirable. That's America. I've had other chemists besides your brother tell me that the water is wonderful. The best doctors in the South declare that those springs are a bigger find than a gold mine."

He had warmed to his theme now and his amber eyes glowed. And she followed his words with that quick responsiveness that was all unconsciously one of her chief charms. "And what are your advertising plans?" she asked.

It was like a fresh supply of gasolene to an engine. He plunged into stupendous plans for a publicity campaign. "I'm doing most of the copy work myself so far. I

love the advertising game. I love telling people what they want and making them want it. I'm calling it 'The Carlsbad of America.' That will get the health-seekers, and health-seekers will pay any price."

For half an hour he talked, going into every detail of his plan. And then all at once he stopped abruptly as though he had grown suddenly weary of Carlsbad. She sat gazing into the fire, waiting in sympathetic silence, for him to resume the subject. But he didn't resume it. When he spoke again, his tone had changed as well as his theme. For the first time the conversation became keenly personal. He talked about himself with a humility that was quite new and, to his listener, somewhat startling.

"I don't think it can be a complete surprise to you," he said, "to know how much I need you; how much I depend upon your sympathy and understanding. You must have guessed something of my feeling. You are too intuitive not to have guessed."

Her frank, blue-gray eyes were fixed upon him with an expression that baffled him, yet gave him hope. "No, it is not quite unexpected," she admitted. "But I didn't realize that it had gone quite so far. It seems to have all happened rather suddenly. We haven't known each other very long; not nearly long enough for anything like this."

"No. But I've been looking for you all my life. That ought to count for something."

"For something—yes. But not for so much as—that."

"Love isn't a matter of time," he told her.

"No. But it's a matter of exploration. It's a matter of finding each other. And in the half a dozen times that you have called here, Mr. Glover, we haven't talked about the finding kind of things. No, we don't know each other. We don't know each other half well enough to consider anything like this."

"But we can get to know each other better. Is there any reason why we should not do that?"

She pondered this for a moment. "Well, for one thing, there is distance."

"There is no longer distance," he pleaded eagerly. "For I have severed my connections with Mont-Mer."

"Oh!" He couldn't tell whether the exclamation emanated from pleasure or merely surprise. "You severed your connections there because of this new Carlsbad plan?"

"Partly because of that. But chiefly because a secretaryship to a rich man doesn't get one anywhere."

"I suppose not."

Still he couldn't decide whether her interest now was genuine or only courteous. But she would give him no further encouragement than to allow him to call occasionally. And with this permission he went away well content.

Ten minutes after he heard the front door close, Clinton, in a dressing-gown and slippers, appeared on the threshold of his sister's room. "Gone, at last?" he queried. "What's Glover doing up here anyway? I thought he was securely anchored with a millionaire hermit down South."

She spoke without turning from the dressing-table where she was shaking her long dark hair down over an amethyst-colored negligée. "You don't like him, do you?"

"No, I can't say that I do."

"Why not?"

Before the directness of the question he felt suddenly shamefaced, as a man always does who condemns one of his own sex before a woman on insufficient evidence. "Oh, he's all right, of course. I have no reason really for disliking the fellow, except——Well, he seems to like you too much. And he's not your style. What did he want to-night?"

"He wanted to tell me about a new scheme he has, a really wonderful enterprise, Clint, for turning that mineral water place into a health-resort. He's taken over most of the stock and he talked glowingly about it."

"He does talk well; I'll admit that. But who is going to capitalize this venture?"

His sister smiled. "Well, Clinton, I could hardly ask him that, you know."

"No, I suppose not. And if you had, I imagine that he would hardly have liked to answer it. Anyhow, he's cheered you up, and I ought to be grateful to him for that. It was a mistake for you to take that trip to Mont-Mer, Crete. It was too

much for you."

She made no response to this, and her brother, noting the delicately flushed face and languid movements, told himself reproachfully that the mistake was in going away and leaving her to struggle alone with the hospital venture. He sat down on a cedar chest beside the window.

"Let's retint the whole lower floor, Crete," he suggested, seizing upon the first change of topic that offered itself. "Now that this place is to be a home again and not a sanitarium, let's retint and get the public institution smell out of it."

She laid down the ivory brush and turned to him. But her gaze was abstracted, and when she spoke in a musing voice, her words showed that she had not been listening. "Clinton, have you ever figured out just how much of the Coalinga oil stock belongs to me?"

He had been sitting with one knee hugged between his arms. Now he released it and brought himself upright upon the cedar chest.

"Why, no, I haven't. I don't think it makes much difference, while we're living together, sharing everything this way."

She got up from the dressing-table and walked over to the far window, drawing the deep lace collar of the amethyst negligée up about her ears as though to screen herself from his view. Out on the bay the lighted ferry-boats plied their silent passage, and on the Key Route pier an orange-colored train crawled cautiously, like a brilliant caterpillar, across a thread of track. Marcreta, gazing out into the clear soft dusk, sent a question backward over her shoulder.

"Would it be very much trouble to go over our properties some time and—make a division?"

"No, it wouldn't be much trouble, and I suppose it would be much more businesslike." He spoke briskly but she knew that her demand had astonished him. "You know," he admitted ruefully, "I don't pretend to be much of a business man. I think you may be right to insist upon an accounting."

"O Clint! I don't mean that. You know I don't mean that." Her voice held the stricken tone of the sensitive nature stabbed by the swift realization that it has hurt some one else. "You've been the best brother a girl ever had. You've been too good to me. I didn't mean *that* at all."

"What do you mean then, Crete?"

Her answer seemed to grope its way through an underbrush of tangled emotions. "I just thought it would be well for us each to know what we have because—you see, we may not always be living together like this."

CHAPTER IX

A month had passed since Kenwick became a member of the staff of the "San Francisco Clarion." The work had been going well, and the perpetual small excitement of a newspaper office brought back some of the old thrill that he had known in his college days. But every emotion came in subdued form now. There was a shadow across his sky, a soft pedal applied to every emotion. And until this was lifted he resolved to deny himself a sight of the house on Pine Street.

But during the beginning of his fifth week in the city desire overcame pride and caution, and late one night he walked up the familiar hill and looked into one of the lighted windows. There was no one in the room and the furniture and floors were covered with heavy canvas sheeting spattered with calcimine. An ugly step-ladder stood directly in front of the window, partly obstructing his view. He was about to turn away in bleak despair when the glitter of some small object in a far corner of the room caught his eye. Peering more intently under the half-drawn shade he saw that the gleaming thing was a small tinsel ball suspended from the lowest branch of a tiny Christmas-tree. It was almost New Year's day now, and the little fir with its brave showing of gilt and silver had been relegated to a distant corner to make way for the aggressive progress of the painters. The man at the window, staring in from the darkness at the drooping glory of the little tree, felt for it a sudden sense of kinship. And the Christmas-tree stared back at him with an inarticulate sort of questioning. There was to Kenwick a terrible sort of patience in its attitude. Torn away from its normal environment, transplanted suddenly and without warning into surroundings giddily artificial, and bereft of the roots with which to explore them, the little fir-tree stood there, holding in its out-stretched arms the baubles of an unfamiliar and irrelevant existence. He turned away, maddened by a fury that he did not comprehend. "Anything but that!" he cried savagely. "Anything but the patience of hopelessness!"

His thoughts were in a whirl, and he was unconscious of the fact that he was almost running down the slanting pavement. When he became aware of it he slackened his pace abruptly. He was a fool, he told himself. "Anybody watching me would size me up for an escaped convict—prowling around doorsteps at night; sneaking up to windows, like a professional burglar looking over his territory."

He let himself into his room at the St. Germaine and snapped on the light. The first thing his eyes fell upon in the bare, prim chamber was a letter propped against his mirror. It was a yellow envelope and it bore the dull black insignia of the dead-letter office. There was something ominous-looking about it. There is always something ominous about that pale yellow, unstamped envelope that issues, unheralded and unwanted, from the cemetery of letters. Inside of it was a communication written upon the St. Germaine stationery and addressed in his own handwriting to his brother, Everett Kenwick. It had been opened and sealed again, and across one end something was written. The single word seemed to leap out at Kenwick with the brutal unexpectedness of a bomb. He dropped the envelope as though it had stung him and stood gazing down at it. It stared malignantly back at him, burning a fiery path to his brain. Up and down the room he strode muttering over and over to himself that one horrible word: "Deceased! Deceased!"

The walls of the room seemed to be coming closer and closer. He felt as if he were being smothered. Taking his hat he went out into the hall, and walked down the five flights of stairs rather than encounter the elevator-boy. On the way down he decided to send a telegram of inquiry to the family lawyer in New York. The indelible pencil handed to him by the girl in the little hotel booth seemed to write the message quite of its own accord. And there was a calming sort of comfort in the impersonal manner of the telegraph-operator herself as she counted off mechanically the frantic words of his query.

As he turned away he was conscious of only one impulse; to be with somebody. He must have companionship of some sort, any sort, or he would lose his reason. From the dining-room there drifted out to him the pleasant din of human voices. He made his way inside and followed the head-waiter to his accustomed seat beside one of the mirror walls.

The hotel dining-room was full that evening. There was an Elks' convention in the city and the lobby swarmed with delegates. At his table Kenwick found three other men, and was pathetically grateful for their comradeship. Two of them were from Sacramento. The third introduced himself as Granville Jarvis, late of New Orleans. Kenwick remembered having seen him several times about the hotel. He had that quiet, magnetic sort of personality that never comes quite halfway to meet the casual acquaintance, but that possesses a subtle, indefinable power that lures others across the intervening territory. "I have something for you," Granville Jarvis seemed to say. "I have something that I'll be glad to give you—if you care to come and get it."

The other men talked volubly, including the quartet in their random conversation. Jarvis was an appreciative listener, an unmistakable cosmopolite, whose occasional contributions to the table-talk were keen-edged and subtly humorous. In his speech lingered only a faint trace of the Southern drawl. Of the three men, his was the personality which attracted Kenwick. The two Elks finished their dessert hurriedly and left before the coffee was served. Then Granville Jarvis, glancing at the haggard face of the young man across the table, ventured the first personal remark of the hour. "You've scarcely eaten a thing, and you look all in. I don't want to intrude into your affairs, but is there anything I can do?"

It was that unexpected kindliness that always proves too much for overstrung nerves. "I've just had bad news," Kenwick admitted. "It's rather shaken me up. But you can't do anything, thanks."

"Better take a walk out in the fresh air," Jarvis suggested. "I know how you feel. It's beastly—when a man is all alone."

"I am alone; that's the damnable part of it. And I've got to somehow get through the night."

The other man nodded with silent comprehension. "I'll take a stroll with you if you like, and you don't have to talk."

Kenwick accepted the offer eagerly, and for an hour he and his companion walked almost in silence. Then Kenwick, still haunted by the specter of solitude, invited the New Orleans man up to his room. There stretched out comfortably in two deep chairs, with an ash-tray between them, they discussed politics, books, and New York. "It's my home town," Kenwick explained, "but I'm a Westerner by adoption. They say, 'Once a New Yorker, always a New Yorker,' but it hasn't worked that way with me."

Jarvis smiled. "They say that about Emporia, Kansas, too, and about all the other towns ranging in between. It's a world-wide colloquialism. Don't you go back to visit, though?"

"I've been thinking of it," his host replied. And then, despite the fact that his guest was a complete stranger, perhaps because of that fact, he felt an overwhelming desire to tell him of his trouble. For there is a certain security in confiding a sorrow to a casual stranger. Every care-ridden person in the world has felt the impulse, has been impelled to it by the realization that there is safety

in remoteness. You will never see the stranger again, or if you do, he will have forgotten you and your trouble. A transitory interest has its advantages. It demands nothing in the way of a sequel. It keeps no watch upon your struggle; it demands no final reckoning. You and your agony are to the chance acquaintance a short-story, not a serial.

Jarvis was leaning back in his deep chair, one leg dangling carelessly over the broad arm. His eye-glasses, rimmed with the thinnest thread of tortoise-shell, gave him a certain intellectuality. Although he was still in the early thirties there were deep lines about his mouth. He had lived, Kenwick decided. And having lived, he must know something about life. Jarvis glanced up suddenly and met his gaze.

"Funny thing, my being here, isn't it?" he said. "Up here in your room, smoking your cigars, sprawling over your furniture as though I'd known you always instead of being the merest chance acquaintance."

Mashing the gray end of his cigar into the ash-tray Kenwick made slow-toned response. "I don't think it's curious. I don't think it's curious at all because as I look back on my life all the vital things in it have had casual beginnings. I have a steadily increasing respect for the small emergencies of life. Whenever I carefully set my stage for some dramatic event it's sure to turn out a thin affair. The best scenes are those which are impromptu and carry their own properties."

"That's flattering to a chance acquaintance, but a hard knock at your friends."

"I'm all for chance acquaintances," Kenwick responded. "Friends have an uncomfortable habit of failing to show up at the moment of crisis. Just when you're terribly in need of them, they fall sick or get absorbed in building a new house, or go to Argentina. And then, before you have time to grow cynical, along comes somebody that you just bow to on the street, and he sees you are in trouble and offers a lift. The people who really owe you something, never pay. They pass the buck to the chance acquaintance, and nine times out of ten he makes good. Makes things more interesting that way. After all, life isn't merely a system of bookkeeping."

Kenwick prided himself upon the fact that he had kept the bitterness out of his voice, but when Jarvis spoke, this illusion was shattered. "Tough luck, Mr. Kenwick. As I said before, I don't want to horn in, but I'd be glad to score another point for the C. A. if it would be of any help to you, and there's nobody else about."

Kenwick put down his cigar. "To tell the truth, there's nobody about at all. It happens that during the past year every friend I had has gone, figuratively speaking, to Argentina. Some of them used to be particularly good at helping me out with my yarns. I'm a fiction-writer, you know, and I'm under contract to finish a mystery-story for one of the magazines. I'm stuck, and it's bothering me a lot. Can't move the thing a peg. I know that the man who talks about his own stories is as much of a pest as the man who tells his dreams but if——"

Jarvis had settled down into his chair with a sigh of luxurious content. "Shoot," he commanded. "It's great stuff being talked to when I'm not expected to make any replies. What's the name of it?"

"It hasn't any name just yet, but I'll let you be godfather at the christening. This is just a scenario of the situation, with all the color and atmosphere left out." He reached over and snapped off the chandelier light, leaving only the soft glow from the little brass lamp upon the table.

"The story," he began when he had resumed his seat, "hinges upon the fortunes of two brothers—or rather the fortunes of one and the misfortunes of the other. The parents die when the elder of the two is thirty and the younger almost nineteen. The older brother has married, and at the death of his mother comes back with his wife, to live at the old home. But the sister-in-law and younger brother are not congenial, and the boy, who has ambitions for a professional training decides to go away from home to a distant university. There is very little opposition to the plan. For the sister-in-law is in favor of it, and the elder brother (who is guardian, of course, and a splendid fellow) consents on the condition that the boy spend his summer vacations at home. He hopes in this way to keep in touch with him and does.

"In the spring of his senior year, America enters the war, and the boy, now a man of twenty-three, enlists and in the autumn gets across. He sees more than six months of action at the front without getting a scratch. But at the end of that time his nerves go to pieces and he is sent first to a convalescent hospital in England and then home. There he finds the old place completely changed under his sister-in-law's régime and he is so obviously unhappy about it that his brother suggests that he accept the invitation of an old family friend and spend the winter with him in his California home. He complies with this plan, the more eagerly because it gives him an excuse to get back to the environment which he has grown to love and the associates that he knew in his college days.

"Without adventure he arrives at the little southern California town, and is met at the depot by his friend's chauffeur. But on the way out to the house they meet with an automobile accident that shakes him up pretty badly and, so far as he can determine from circumstantial evidence, kills the driver. Stranded alone and injured in an unfamiliar village, he applies at the first house he comes to for aid. It chances to be one of those palatial country homes, so plentiful in that region, which seems to have been built for the exclusive use of caretakers. For although it is completely and elegantly furnished and bears every evidence of being tenanted he stays there ill for more than twenty-four hours, absolutely alone except for the presence of a mysterious woman who is apparently locked into one of the bedrooms upstairs, and whom he never sees.

"On the second night he makes a surreptitious escape from this uncanny prison, without ever having encountered its owner, and by a happy stroke of chance, makes his way up the coast to San Francisco. Here he plans to establish himself permanently, look up some of his old associates, and get in touch with life again. But this scheme is thwarted in a most unexpected manner. For on the morning of his arrival something happens that makes chaos of his plans and starts him upon a quest, not into the future, but into the past. In the station depot he stops long enough to purchase a newspaper, and——"

Kenwick paused for an instant and glanced at his auditor.

"Go on," Jarvis commanded with that impatient curtness that is the best assurance of interest.

"He buys a newspaper," the narrator went on. "And from the date on it he learns that instead of having lost connection with the world for two days, he has been out of it for almost a year. There are ten months of his life that he can't account for at all.

"At the library he reads up and discovers that the war is over. From the newspapers and magazines he picks up the thread of world events and orients himself with regard to national and local affairs. But to connect his own past and present proves, as you may suspect, an almost hopeless task. He sends several telegrams to his own home, all of which are ignored. A letter to his brother brings, after long delay, the startling information that he is dead. The message bowls him over completely. And the more the thing preys upon his mind the more certain he is that there has been foul play. He begins to be haunted by the conviction that he is being watched. The only safe course open to him seems to

be to lead as normal and inconspicuous an existence as possible until he can hear from the family lawyer."

Kenwick broke off suddenly and reached for the ash-tray. "Well," he said, "what do you think of it?"

Jarvis stirred in his chair. When he spoke he appeared to be returning rather breathlessly from a long distance. "Great stuff," he commented. "It seems to have all the ingredients for a best-seller, except one."

"What's that?"

"Well, I don't pose as a critic of literature. But judging from the novels I've read I should say that the thing it lacks is romance. The poor devil ought to be in love with somebody, or somebody ought to be in love with him."

Kenwick's face stiffened. It was apparent that he had not expected this criticism. And he found himself envying those people who can discuss their love affairs. But not to his best friend could he have mentioned Marcreta Morgan's name. "I told you I was just giving you a scenario of this thing," he reminded his critic. "I'll work up that part of it later. As a matter of fact there is a woman in it. He proposed to her before he went into the service and she rejected him."

"And he didn't look her up afterward?"

"Well, he could hardly do that, not until he had accounted for himself. And especially as she had shown no interest in him whatever while he was away."

"You never can tell about a woman, though. The fact that he had come back a pariah and was in trouble might arouse her love."

"No, not her love; her pity perhaps."

"Well, I won't argue with an author. They are supposed to be authorities on such questions. Go on with the thing. Where *had* the chap been during those ten months?"

"I haven't the least idea."

Jarvis brought himself upright. "Why, you outrageous devil!" he cried. "Getting me all worked up over a story that you can't see the end of yourself! And how about the family estate? What became of that?"

"I haven't finished plotting the thing yet. That's why I told it to you. If I had solved all its problems it wouldn't have been necessary to inflict it upon you."

His guest rose and stretched himself. "Well, I'm afraid I wasn't much help," he said ruefully. "Fact is, I haven't any creative imagination at all. I'm the kind of reader that writers of detective yarns love. I'll swallow anything that's got a little salt on it, and I never guess right about the ending."

He fumbled in an inside pocket of his coat and drew out a card. "I'd like to have you return this call some time, Mr. Kenwick. I'm not far away from you, just two blocks around the corner in the Hartshire Building. If you care anything for photography, drop around some time and I'll show you some interesting pictures. They are a harmless hobby of mine. I fuss around in a laboratory over there most of the time, and when I'm not there I'm in the dark room."

Kenwick promised to come, and a moment later Granville Jarvis was gone. Bereft of his sympathetic presence the room seemed overpowering in its gaunt emptiness. The last two hours of genial companionship were swept aside as ruthlessly as though they had never been, and Kenwick found himself back again at that ghastly moment when he had torn open the yellow envelope. For he was to learn, in the crucial school of experience, that the sorrow of bereavement is not a permanently engulfing flood, but that it comes in waves, ebbing away under the pressure of objective living only to gather volume for a renewed attack. And in the moment that its victim recovers a staggering strength, it is upon him again, sweeping aside in one crashing moment the pitiful defenses of philosophy and faith which the soul has constructed to save itself from shipwreck.

Until after midnight Kenwick sat at the window waiting for a summons from the telephone. Then he went to bed and fell into a listening sort of sleep. But not during that night nor in the days that followed was there any response to his telegram.

CHAPTER X

It was on the morning after his conversation with Jarvis that Boyer, of the "Clarion," summoned Kenwick into his office. "Got a story here that I'd like to have you hunt down," he said, and pushed a clipping across the table. Kenwick read it with an interest that was painfully forced. It was cut from one of the local evening papers and was a rather colorless account of the spectacular achievements of one of the city's trance mediums. He noted down the address and rose with a hint of weariness.

"The thing that makes her different from the others and worth a trip out there," his employer explained, "is that Professor Drew of the psychology department over at the university has set himself the task of showing her up. She has done some rather dramatic things that have got on his nerves and the other day he gave a lecture on her methods before his abnormal psychology class and had the place packed. She has just written a book too; bizarre sort of thing called the 'Rent Veil' or the 'Torn Scarf' or something like that. It ran in the 'Record' about two months ago and they made a big hit with it."

He leaned back in his chair and surveyed Kenwick speculatively. "What do you make of it?" he asked. "This stupendous revival of interest in the supernatural? Some of our greatest writers devoting themselves to spirit-writing; some of our best citizens declaring that they get comfort and inspiration out of the ouija-board and planchette?"

"I think," Kenwick answered slowly, "that it is one of the inevitable results of the war. It has caused a big upheaval in the spiritual as well as the economic world. And one of the things that it has brought to the surface is death. Of course death has always been with us but unless it came right into our own lives we have persistently ignored it, as we have ignored the industrial problems and immigration and a lot of other things. But during the last few years death has been rampant. Everybody has had to look at it from a greater or less distance. For awhile we'll have to go on looking at it. And human nature is so constituted that it has only two alternatives. It must either ignore things or try to account for them. I don't think this renaissance of the supernatural is anything unusual. Every great war must have been followed by a frenzied season of accounting for death."

The other man glanced at him with eyes in which there was no longer impersonal speculation. "You've been touched by it too, Kenwick?" he ventured.

"Yes. My brother."

"I'm sorry." He stretched out a hand. "Well, to get back to this Madame Rosalie; get an interview with her and also with Drew. We'll give 'em each a column on Sunday. We might be able to start a controversy that would be worth while."

And so, half an hour later, Kenwick was ringing the door-bell at a shabby old house on Fillmore Street. As he stood there waiting he was convinced that his only motive for the errand was a journalistic interest. But if there is any season of life when the sane well-balanced man or woman may be tempted into the region of the occult it is during that interval between the shock of bereavement and readjustment to an altered order of existence when the soul quivers upon the brink of two worlds. The lapse of time between shock and readjustment varies with every temperament, but in that period of helpless groping we all stand close to the psychic, the unexplainable, the supernatural.

If Kenwick had expected to find Madame Rosalie's domain extraordinary in any particular, he was distinctly disappointed. It was one of those ugly old frame houses with protruding bay-windows which still weather competition with the concrete and stucco residences in every part of the city. In the front basement window was the hideous sign of a dry-cleaning establishment, and in the neighboring flat the windows were placarded with the promise to supply "Costumes for All Occasions."

In response to his summons a petite dark woman in a loose-flowing garnet robe opened the door and voiced the professional query, "You have an appointment?"

When the visitor had admitted that his call was impromptu, she considered for a moment. "I have a client just now," she explained, "and you may not want to wait until his sitting is over."

"I'll wait," Kenwick assured her. "How long does it take?" It was instantly apparent from Madame Rosalie's expression that this query was a violation of professional etiquette. As well inquire of a doctor how long it will take to perform a major operation.

Ignoring his query the medium opened the door wider and ushered her caller into the front room. It was a dim commonplace apartment furnished with flowered

cretonne-covered chairs, a defiant-looking piano, and gilt-framed pictures. "You will find some magazines here," she promised. "Just make yourself at home, please."

It would be a difficult achievement, the reporter decided, as he settled himself in one of the rigid-looking chairs. And Madame Rosalie's tone, though courteous, had not been eager or placating. It was apparent that she had plenty of business. Her manner of greeting had been more like that of an experienced and self-possessed hostess taken unawares by a guest, than of an exponent of the supernatural. She was obviously an educated woman. Her voice alone betrayed that fact, and she moved with a grace that seemed somehow incongruous in those sordid surroundings. As he sat beside the bow-windows, gazing out into the fog, Kenwick smiled grimly. "I don't know Drew yet," he murmured, "but whoever he is, I'll bet she can give him a run for his money."

Within twenty minutes he heard low voices at the far end of the hall, and then the sound of approaching footsteps. He rose and went to the door. Madame Rosalie and her client were emerging from a shadowy chamber whose door was draped with maroon-colored portières. The caller had reached the hat-rack and was jerking himself into his overcoat when all at once he stopped with words of astonished greeting. "Why, hello, Kenwick!" He strode forward with extended hand. And Kenwick gripped it with an equal astonishment. It was one of the men whom he had known well at college. "Going it strong now that you are back in civilization again?" On his face was genuine pleasure and the shamefaced expression that it would have worn if the newspaper reporter had suddenly encountered him tobogganing down one of San Francisco's hills on a child's coaster.

When he was gone the reporter followed his hostess into the room with the maroon-colored curtains. It was as shabby as the waiting-room but more comfortable and somehow expressive of a strong personality. Over a felt-covered table, strewn with cards and stubs of pencils and other aids to occult communication, was an electric bulb held in place by a loop of white cotton string. Madame Rosalie motioned him to a seat beside this table and sank into a deep chair on the opposite side.

For a moment neither of them spoke. Madame Rosalie's eyes rested upon her client with a scrutiny that was not inquisitive but almost uncomfortably searching. They were dark eyes and brilliant with the unnatural shining that is often caused by chronic insomnia. At first glance he had thought that her hair

was confined under a net; now at close range he saw that it was cut short and waved alluringly over the lobes of her ears. She had been a beautiful woman once, he reflected, but life had given her brutal treatment.

He picked up a crystal sphere that was lying upon the table. "Tell me what you see for me in that?" he commanded.

She turned it slowly under the light. Kenwick watching her, felt a little cheated by the unspectacular quality of her technic. For all the thrill which she seemed likely to give him, he might as well be opening an interview with the census-taker.

"You came," the medium said at last, still gazing into the depths of the crystal, "to consult me, not about the future but the past."

He made no response.

"You are in trouble," she went on in the same unhurried voice. "You are in great trouble—but you are not taking the right way out."

"What is the right way out?"

"You must have help."

An expression of annoyance crossed his face. She would follow up that statement, of course, with the suggestion that he enlist for a prolonged course of "readings." He was preparing a curt dismissal of this plan when suddenly she set the crystal down upon the table and looked at him with compassionate eyes. "You must have help," she repeated. "But it must be the help of some one who is dear to you—or *was* dear to you."

"Can you evoke such a spirit?"

"I don't know. I never can promise, but I'll try."

She leaned back in the chair and closed her eyes. The man, looking at her from across the table, was startled at the change in her face. For hers was that type of face which is dominated by the eyes. Without their too brilliant light it suffered a complete loss of personality. Words came at last through her slightly parted lips. "There is some one who wishes to speak to you. I think it is a woman."

"A woman!" Kenwick was not conscious that his tone held a note of disappointment. "Who is she?"

"I can't quite get the name. It's a difficult control. But she wants very much to talk to you. She says——It will be hard to forgive at first, but you must come back."

"Back where?"

The voice went on, unheeding. "She says——that she was influenced by some one else—some one stronger. You must look for that man. You must never stop looking for him——in crowds and everywhere you go you must look. And when you see his face you will know at once that he is the one, the only one who can help you. He is your missing link."

There was a long pause. "Anything else?" Kenwick inquired at last. His voice was guarded but he was strangely moved.

"There is some one calling to you. He seems to be in a prison and he is looking out through iron bars. They might be the bars of a gate. I can't see the face, but some one is calling your name."

"Shall I answer the call?"

"No. There would be no use. It is too late now."

Her eyes opened suddenly and met Kenwick's fixed upon them intent but inscrutable. He stretched his hand across the table.

"Read my palm."

She held it only a moment but her eyes seemed to take in its every line at a glance. "There is a perpetual conflict raging in your soul," she said.

He smiled. "That's true of most people, isn't it?"

Madame Rosalie had a superb disregard for irrelevancies. "Part of you is eager to plunge gallantly into the tasks of the present, but the other part is holding you back. You have the drooping head-line with the introspective fingers. It's a bad sign on the hand of the creative temperament. And you are some kind of a creative artist; painter, musician, or writer. But your head-line didn't always droop. It's a recent tendency, so you have a good chance to overcome it."

"How can I overcome it?"

"In the first place, give up all idea of trying to reconcile yourself with the past.

You can't possibly do it and the effort may—wreck you."

He got to his feet and stood looking down at her. "There doesn't seem to be much ahead for me, does there?" he said.

"There is everything ahead; all the tragedy is behind you." She was still looking at him compassionately. "You are too young," she said at last.

"Too young for what?"

"To have lost so much out of your life." Her voice was like red coals leaping into sudden flame. It startled Kenwick. "And you are choosing just the wrong way to wrestle with such a loss. You had originally a splendid initiative, an impatient desire for action. But the artistic side of your nature has assumed control of you. And the artistic temperament is long on endurance and short on combativeness. If you spent one-third of the time fighting this specter in your past that you spend trying to reconcile yourself to it, you would win gloriously."

For a few moments they stood beside the table talking of commonplaces. Once Kenwick mentioned Professor Drew, and Madame Rosalie smiled.

"I'm not afraid of him," she said. "And neither do I care to enter into a public debate with him."

She followed her client to the door. "I'm sorry I wasn't able to help you more. But you are not ready for my help yet."

Kenwick walked back to the "Clarion" office with these words ringing in his ears. The messages from the other world may have been guess-work, but at least she was a shrewd reader of character. And contrary to all his expectations she had not made any effort to win him for a permanent client.

His Sunday story, featuring her and Professor Drew, was all that Boyer had hoped for it. The astrologist was sketched with a few vivid strokes, the room with the maroon-colored curtains more in detail, and an interview reported which thrilled the souls of the credulous and held even the attention of the skeptical. There was neither ridicule nor championship in the story, and the caustic comments of Professor Drew were bare of journalistic comment. Altogether, the thing worked up well and made a hit. After reading it during his late breakfast at the St. Germaine, Kenwick suddenly decided to go around to the Hartshire Building and keep his promise to Jarvis. He found the photographer enveloped in a long black apron and rubber gloves. "Good boy!" he cried

slapping his visitor on the back. "I've been thinking about you and that cursed story you told me: can't get the blame thing out of my head. That was good stuff about the clairvoyant in the 'Clarion' this morning. Where on earth do you dig up those oddities? I recognized your pen-name."

He hung Kenwick's coat in a shallow closet as he talked. "You are in the nick of time to help me with an experiment if you will," he went on. "I want to do some research work on the human eye and I've got to have a subject. I've got a lot of cards here—featuring optical illusions and that sort of thing. Do you mind helping me for, say, half an hour? You see, the human eye and brain are the ideal apparatus for perfecting the camera and I'm working on an invention."

Kenwick complied with alacrity, glad of the opportunity to get his mind off of himself. For almost an hour Jarvis worked under the black hood of the tripod while Kenwick reported on the images printed upon the cards. When the tests were finished and he rose to go, the photographer pushed aside his paraphernalia and wiped his forehead. "Hot as Hades under that thing!" he cried. "Say, I was wondering the other day if you play golf."

"I used to go out and play with my brother at his club," Kenwick replied. "But it's been some time ago; I'd be a duffer at it now."

"Well, I've got a card that will let us into the club over in Claremont," Jarvis explained. "If you haven't got anything better to do, what do you say that we meet at the ferry building about two o'clock this afternoon and play a few holes over on the course? It's a great day to be outside. Can you make it?"

"Yes, I think so." For a moment Kenwick stood looking at his host with an expression that puzzled Jarvis. Then abruptly he turned and went away. Up the steep California street hills he strode, scarcely conscious of the effort it cost. For a horrible dread was tearing at his heart. It was not a new sensation to him, and its very familiarity made it the more hideous; that persistent dread known only to those who are struggling back over the hard road of mental prostration. The seed of it had sprouted on the morning when he had bought that fatal newspaper at the Third and Townsend Depot. And during the weeks that followed its tendrils had wrapped a strangle-hold about his life. Sometimes it almost stopped his breathing. And as yet he had never seen the thing that he dreaded. It was not yet upon any one's face. But he assured himself desperately that some day he would see it. Some day, when perhaps he wasn't thinking about it at all, it would suddenly leap out at him. In the eyes of some man or woman, or perhaps even

some little child, he would see suspicion or fear or morbid curiosity. Without being told, they would know suddenly that here was a man who had once lost his mental grip. They would be afraid that he might suddenly lose it again, and that shuddering fear would send him reeling backward into the land of shadows and specters.

He stumbled on blindly, and through the blackness of his anguish there came to him again the curious sensation that he had experienced on his second night at Mont-Mer; the sensation of having lost some material prop that could restore his courage.

The genial suggestion of Jarvis that they play golf together over in Claremont was like a cool hand laid upon his forehead. To Jarvis he must seem sane and normal, capable at least of acquitting himself creditably in the sport of sane and normal men. He ate a hasty and solitary lunch and at two o'clock met the photographer in front of the flower-booth in the ferry building for an afternoon at the country club.

CHAPTER XI

It was Sunday afternoon, and Marcreta was expecting a caller. "How long do you think he'll stay?" Clinton demanded as they rose from their two o'clock dinner.

"As long as I'll let him, I suppose."

"Well, call a time-limit, Crete." And then recalled suddenly to the realization that he must begin making the best of a situation that gave every evidence of forcing itself upon him for life, he added hastily, "What's the use of trying that new cure if you're going to pull against it all the time?"

"Do you call this 'pulling against it'?"

"I do, decidedly. Every time that man comes here you're strung about an octave higher than normal."

She looked at him, astonished. "Why, Clinton, I don't feel it myself. I'm not conscious that he affects me that way."

"He does, though. We all know people who affect us that way. And it is not a question of attraction or aversion. Liking or disliking them doesn't alter the fact that they have the power to screw us up. Sometimes, of course, it's a beneficial stimulant, but you shouldn't be taking anything like that just now. Give Dr. Reynolds a chance."

"I will give him a chance. But to-day——Well, I promised Mr. Glover that I'd listen to something that he has written."

"Help! Then he'll probably be here to supper. I didn't know he'd broken into the writing game."

"I didn't either until the other day. But I think it is some advertising for the new springs. He is very versatile. He does a number of things and does them well."

Her brother glanced at her sharply without replying. That note of championship in her voice put an edge on his nerves.

But she was mistaken in her guess concerning advertising matter for the American Carlsbad. For when she and Richard Glover were alone in the living-

room he produced a copy of one of the popular magazines. "You remember you said I might read you something to-day?" he began, drawing his chair into a better light.

"Yes. I have been looking forward to it with pleasure. But I thought it would be in manuscript. It is something you have had published?"

"My first attempt at anything in this line. It's a serial story and this is the initial instalment. You see, I had a good deal of leisure time on my hands when I was down at Mont-Mer and I've always wanted to try my luck with a pen. I call this 'A Brother of Bluebeard.'"

"That's a gruesome title, but excellently chosen if it's a mystery-story. I'm shivering already."

He settled himself with his back to the light and his profile toward her. "I may as well tell you at first that I am not bringing this out under my own name."

"Why not?"

"Because I wouldn't have felt quite free about writing it if I were standing out in the open."

"Oh, it's a true story?"

"No, I can hardly claim that for it. It's rather a fantastic plot as you will see. But every writer knows this, that when you first break into print whatever you write is supposed to be transcribed almost verbatim from actual experience, preferably your own experience. No matter how at variance with your own life-plot the story may be, the people who know you will leap to the conclusion that it is rooted in autobiography. Imagination is the very last thing that our friends are willing to allow us."

"What nom-de-plume do you use?"

"Ralph Regan. It's short and snappy and sounds as if it might be genuine, don't you think?"

He found the place and began to read in a resonant, well-modulated voice. The opening paragraph was a little stilted, a bit amateurish, but after that the story swung into bold and breathless action. It gripped its hearer with a compelling force that held her tense and motionless in her chair. Only the sound of the

reader's voice and the crisp crackle of paper when he turned a page broke the quiet of the room. Outside, a gray January mist engulfed the city, and electric bulbs from the houses across the street cut bleary patches in the mantle of fog. For almost an hour Richard Glover read in his clear, unhurried voice, and Marcreta listened, her wide eyes fastened upon his face.

When he had finished, with the irritating promise, "To Be Continued," he laid the periodical face-down upon the library-table and turned toward her. In his amber eyes was a new light. A railroad switchman who faces the company's president after saving a train from destruction might wear just that expression.

Marcreta seemed bereft of speech. She was staring at one of the lights in the house across the street as though it had hypnotized her. One of the delicate white hands was clasped tight upon the arm of her chair. Richard Glover told himself that he had never seen her look so beautiful. And for the first time since he had known her, there was not a suggestion of invalidism in her tall, regal figure. She was wearing a filmy gray dress with a touch of pink that seemed to give a heightened flush to her cheeks. He allowed several seconds to pass. Was it possible, he was wondering, that this "first story" had won that tribute most coveted by all authors—the tribute of breathless silence?

"Well?" he ventured at last. "What do you think of it?"

She brought her eyes back to the room, to the magazine lying face-down upon the table, but not to him. "I think," she said with a long sigh, "that you are a wonderfully clever man."

The light flickered out of his eyes. He leaned toward her with a pleading gesture. "Is that all you are going to say to me?"

"Isn't that enough? Wouldn't you rather have me say that than anything else?"

"You know I wouldn't. You know that there are many other things that I would far rather have you say." He came over and stood beside her chair. "Marcreta," he begged, "say just one of them. Say this—that you are glad to have me come here. I wrote that story for you; because I know that you value creative power more than anything else in the world. Are you glad that I did it? Are you glad that I brought it to you?"

She was looking at him now, all her ardent soul in her eyes. "I *am* glad," she breathed. "I can't tell you how glad."

"Then I think you ought to give me some reward. I ought to have at least——"

She put out her hand with the imperious little gesture that he had come to know well. "Not just now. Please, not just now. You see, you have rather—swept me off my feet. Isn't that enough for one day?"

"It is enough," he assured her exultantly. And when, a few moments later, he climbed into the roadster that was waiting at the curb, he was repeating the three words over and over to himself like a hilarious refrain.

Just at dusk Clinton came home and found his sister still sitting in front of the gas logs where Richard Glover had left her. His step startled her out of a reverie. "Oh, it's you, Clint! I'm so glad you've come. The house has been full of ghosts."

"I suppose so. Glover come?"

"Yes. He has come and gone."

He reached down swiftly and felt one of her hands. It was icy. "Something has happened, Crete." The words were not a question, but they demanded a reply. And she gave it without hesitation.

"Yes, something has happened. I've got to take some action about it too, but I haven't decided yet what it shall be."

He stood on the hearth-rug looking down at her with a curious mixture of annoyance and admiration in his eyes. It had always been so, he reflected. About the trivial things of life she was willing to abide by his judgment, but in every vital issue she took the initiative and pushed her own convictions through. In the moment of large emergency she had always stood superbly alone. As he looked at her a half-audible sigh escaped him. After all, this semblance of vitality was but the ephemeral stimulation of excitement. And he dreaded the bleak reaction from it; that sudden ebbing away of hope, known to all of those who have kept long vigils beside sick beds.

"Let me manage it, whatever it is," he commanded. "I've told you before that you're not strong enough for these emotional scenes. It isn't as if you were a well woman."

She lapsed into silence, and he felt a sharp twinge of self-reproach. It was that double-edged remorse that chivalrous strength always feels when it reminds frailty of its weakness.

"Whatever it is, Crete," he hurried on, "can't you defer the action until a more propitious time? Can't it wait until you are stronger?"

A little choking sound came from her. He stopped short in swift alarm. Never before in all the long years of her semi-invalidism had she let him see her give way to tears. He went to her, moving uncertainly as though through unfamiliar territory. She had covered her face with her hands as though she could shut out with them the sounds of passionate sobbing.

"I'll never be any stronger, Clint. *You* know it; *I* know it. Why do we drag on with this miserable pretense? Oh, it is killing me, but it takes so long. Why can't I die?"

He recoiled before that cry, before the havoc that it revealed to him. Inwardly he cursed himself and then he remembered Glover, as he might have remembered a gun which he had accidentally discharged, believing it to be unloaded. He couldn't endure the thought that *he* had hurt her and, manlike, seized upon the first scapegoat that offered itself. But he carefully refrained from a mention of the late caller. And when he spoke his voice was harsh with feeling. "Crete, how selfish of you. If you should die, what would become of me?"

The promptness of her reply struck him like a blow. "You'd marry. You're over thirty, Clint, and if it hadn't been for me you would have been married years ago and would be living a normal life in a home of your own. You think——" She was sitting upright now, facing him with a terrible courage. "You think I don't realize what you have sacrificed. Oh, if you only knew how I've lain awake at night, staring into the dark, praying to die so that I could set you free. You promised mother. I've always known that you did. But even if you hadn't, you would have promised yourself. And *that's* what has 'keyed me up,' as you express it. That's what is making me live an octave higher than I can stand. It isn't—any other man who is doing it. It's you."

He sat down on the broad arm of her chair as though overcome by sudden weakness. "Well, thank God you have told me this, Crete, before it eats any deeper into your soul. Sacrifice you call it. But sacrifice involves renunciation, and I have never renounced any woman for your sake. I have never been engaged—nor wanted to be."

"But you ought to," she told him violently. "You ought to, and you would if you hadn't unconsciously put the idea away from you so many times. You ought to have a home and wife and children. Oh, I know that you should, and the

knowledge has made me desperate."

A dawning suspicion showed in his eyes and then they grew hard. "It must have," he said coldly. "It must have made you very desperate indeed—if you have been considering Glover as a way out."

She met the charge without resentment. "What other way is there for me? You see, there wouldn't be any danger of my—caring more for somebody else afterward. That is quite beyond the range of possibility now, so it would be safer for me than for some women. And physical disability, the thing that made me—that would have made me refuse a man of a different type, wouldn't count at all with him. His ambitions are purely material, and I could capitalize them. That's all he wants. It would really be quite a fair bargain."

Clinton Morgan rose slowly and stood looking down at his sister as though she were a stranger to whom he had just been introduced. "Well, by Gad!" he breathed, and for a moment was bereft of further speech. And then his words came slowly, and more as the detached fragments of a soliloquy than a response to her own.

"Crete, of all women in the world! You, with your temperament! With an idealism that I and most other men couldn't touch with a ten-foot pole—and yet you'd work out a proposition like that! I didn't know that you saw through Glover. I made that excuse for you, that you were too unsophisticated to see through him. But sizing him up for an adventurer, you frame up a contract that ——Why, I'll be hanged if I can believe it, Crete. I simply can't believe it."

She made no defense, and he went on in the same dazed tone.

"Go out on the street and pick up the first girl you meet and bring her in here. If I should make love to her and try to get her to marry me, and succeed, I'd have a much better chance of happiness than this adventure would ever give you. For, at least, I'd be swimming with both hands free. Now listen." He seemed to become suddenly aware of her presence again. "When I fall in love, I'll begin to think about getting married. But I'm not going to be hurried into it by you or anybody else. And when I decide to marry, not you nor anybody else shall stand in my way."

She reached for him with a convulsive gesture. "Clinton, do you mean that? Do you mean that nobody should?"

"I pledge you my word. But this has got to be a bargain. You have demonstrated that you know how to make one. Now don't you ever let that man cross this threshold again."

"I've got to, Clint. After what happened this afternoon, I've got to let him come—for a while."

"Why?"

"Sit down and let me tell you about it. I'll have to tell you, or it will eat up my heart. But the thing will seem incredible."

"Not to me. I think after what I've just heard that I can believe anything."

"Well, you remember that I told you he had promised to read me something that he had written?"

"Yes, advertising matter for the new Carlsbad."

"I thought it was going to be that but I was mistaken. It *was* advertising matter, but not for Carlsbad."

"For what, then?"

"For Richard Glover."

Clinton grunted. "I see. He is trying to win you by doing the *Othello* stunt on paper."

Marcreta appeared to weigh the suggestion. "I don't think it is entirely that. He wants money very badly. He has to have money, a lot of it, for this hotel venture, and he is trying every means of getting it."

"I've always been led to believe," Clinton interposed, "my friends who write have always led me to believe that story-writing (and I assume that this was some sort of story) is rather an uncertain means of capitalization for a novice."

"But this story was not written by a novice, Clint." Marcreta's voice had sunk suddenly almost to a whisper. "It was written by——"

"By whom?"

"Roger Kenwick."

Clinton Morgan stiffened in his chair. "*What?*" he cried. "You mean to say that he had the nerve to steal the thing and bring it out under his own name?"

"He is too clever to bring it out under his own name. He chose a fictitious name, and he changed the opening paragraph. But except for that and the alteration of the title, I pledge you my word, Clint, that that story is exactly as Roger Kenwick read it to me, before he went into the service."

There was a moment of silence. Clinton was recalling what she had said when he came in about ghosts. He scanned her face uneasily. And he saw in it the new expression which had startled Richard Glover. For the first time in his life he began to think of her as she might be if she were unhampered by physical infirmity. And then he fell to wondering what had passed between her and Kenwick; just how far the tragedy of his life had affected her. The Morgan reserve had kept her completely silent upon this subject and he had never had any wish to intrude himself into her confidence. He picked up the thread of the story where she had dropped it. "How could it have happened? And how did he dare?"

"I can't even make a guess at how it happened, but so far as daring goes—— Well, as I said, he is desperate for money. And the thing, as looked at from his point of view, was not so very risky. Why should it be? He must have discovered in some way that the—the author was not a possible source of trouble. And who else could care about it? Never in his wildest dreams would any one conjure up the possibility that I might know. He doesn't have the least idea, of course, that I ever knew the real author. What a nemesis! That he should have chosen me, of all the people in the world, for his audience! It's so impossible that he will never suspect it."

"But what happened after he had finished? What did you do?"

"Nothing, except to compliment him on his cleverness and try to hide every emotion that I've ever had. It was hard; I think it's the hardest test I've ever had to meet. But it has given me something that I never have had before." Her voice grew husky with sudden embarrassment. "O Clint, you were right about him. I've known for quite a long time that you were right about him, but I couldn't admit it to myself; not with the course that I had decided to take. But, Clint, although I knew he was calculating and sordid and insincere, I didn't know this about him. I didn't think he hadn't a sense of honor. If I had suspected that, it would have made everything different. But you can see," she went on eagerly, "you can see

now why I must let him go on coming here for a while? Why I can't let him get beyond my sight?"

Her brother nodded. "Give him enough rope and he'll hang himself, that's the idea, isn't it?"

"I've got to be very careful, you see. He has told me a good many things about himself of late, and I'm trying to fit them all together. Some of them don't match at all. And now that he has revealed himself, I'm beginning to doubt everything. That Mont-Mer secretaryship, for instance, looks very improbable to me now. I've questioned him about several prominent people down there, and he doesn't seem to have heard of any of them."

"Well, don't worry any more about it just now, Crete. Let's hustle something to eat and call it a day."

When his sister had gone to bed that night Clinton sat for a long time in the library, staring into the fireplace. The little scene which had been enacted there a few hours earlier had stirred him to the depths of his being. It brought him perplexity and a poignant self-reproach. The fact that she was not the crying type of woman made her emotional abandon a particularly haunting thing.

"I've been an awful ass," he muttered. "I can't see just now where it is exactly that I failed. But it's evident that somewhere along the line I've acted like one of the early Christian martyrs."

He picked up a little volume that was lying at his elbow. It was a dainty thing bound in gold and ivory. He remembered that Roger Kenwick had given it to his sister on that last night when he had come to bid her good-by. He had never looked into it before. Now he turned the pages idly. It was modern verse, and he read intermittently here and there. Among the leaves he came at last upon a folded bit of paper. It was in Marcreta's handwriting; evidently something that she had copied. He tilted it under the light and read the trio of stanzas.

I cannot drive thee from my memory;
    I cannot live and tear thee from my heart.
Is there no corner of oblivion's realm
    Whence thy uneasy spirit may depart?

If love were dead, if love could only die,
    And leave me desolation and despair;

The emptiness of day, the aching night,
All these at last my soul could learn to bear.

But ever when I think thy fire is spent
And seek the peace of death's all-sacred pain,
Behold, comes Memory with her torch a-light—
And all my altar flames to life again.

Clinton Morgan folded the bit of paper with reverent fingers. For he knew, all at once, that this was not a copy of anything, but that he had unwittingly torn aside the veil of his sister's secret soul. He felt all of the honorable man's repugnance against outraged decency. The scrap of paper seemed to scorch his fingers. With a punctilious regard for detail, which he knew to be absurd, he tried to find the exact page where it had been concealed. Then he put the volume back upon the table and went over to the window. His conjectures concerning this romance had come to an end. Now he knew, and knowing felt suddenly weighted with guilt.

He could imagine now how she must have felt as she had sat, a few hours before, listening to the paragraphs of Kenwick's masterpiece as they fell from the glib tongue of Richard Glover. There was an expression almost of awe upon his face. She could write all that, feel all that for one man, and then deliberately plan to marry another, to set *him* free! The thing seemed preposterous, and yet he knew it to be true.

And then his thoughts reverted to Kenwick, and the days that now seemed almost like the unreal days of a dream, when he had first known him over at the fraternity-house in Berkeley. He recalled the night when he had brought him home to dinner and introduced him to Marcreta and tried to make him show off for her like a trained puppy. Perhaps it would have been better if he had never brought him. But these things were in the hands of fate and fate has an infinite number of tools. Standing there at the window, gazing at the reflection of the gas logs mirrored against the black pane, he found himself growing suddenly resentful of the casual emergencies of life. Mere cobweb threads they were but upon them hung the destinies of human souls. You turned the first corner instead of the second in an hour of aimless wandering, and the circulation of your life current was completely changed. It was folly to believe that all the corners were posted with signs to be read and heeded by that secret autocrat, the subconscious mind. The intricacies of such a universe made the brain reel. It was better to believe that we played the game blind, and that the stakes were to the courageous.

He went back to the table and turned out the reading-lamp, blotting out the sight of the white and gold book.

"Lord! What a pity!" he murmured. "She would have been such an inspiration to him. It was the devil's own luck. Poor Kenwick! Poor little Crete!"

CHAPTER XII

Madame Rosalie was setting her stage for a caller. It was evidently to be an important client, for cards, crystal, horoscope, ouija-board, and other handmaidens to divination were set forth upon the table in the dim back parlor. The priestess herself, in her garnet-colored robe, moved about the room with the noiselessness of a shadow. Although it was barely dusk she drew the shades and swung the electric bulb over the end of the table. Then she stood surveying her work with the critical scrutiny of an artist experimenting for the best light upon his picture. Her too-brilliant eyes roved restlessly from one carefully arranged detail to another.

Suddenly a footstep sounded outside, and there was a buzz of the electric bell. Madame Rosalie waited exactly the correct length of time before responding to its summons. The interval was expressive neither of eagerness nor indifference. When she returned to her sanctum it was to usher into it a man who moved hurriedly, drew off a pair of heavy driving-gloves, and tossed them into the Morris-chair. The astrologist removed them quietly to a settee in a far corner of the apartment and seated herself in the chair.

"They say you're the eighth wonder of the world." Her visitor spoke with a thinly veiled sarcasm as he took his place under the light. "I might as well tell you at the outset that I don't go in much for this sort of thing. I'm here upon the suggestion of somebody else. I've known a good many of you trance mediums and my experience has been that you're strong on the future and weak on the past. You play safer that way. But it happens that I want help with the past more than with the future. What's the idea now? Are you going to hypnotize me?"

His voice was not antagonistic, only briskly businesslike. He might have been suggesting that he try on the suit of clothes which a salesman was proffering for his favor.

Madame Rosalie answered in the low, slightly indifferent voice that had surprised Roger Kenwick. "Hypnotism is a coöperative measure. I couldn't hypnotize you unless you were willing and would help me."

He laughed. "That's a good deal for you to admit. Most of you people claim to be able to do anything."

"Do you wish me to try to hypnotize you?"

"No, I don't care about it especially. It takes a lot of time, doesn't it? Get busy on something that comes right down to brass tacks."

She turned the crystal sphere slowly in her hand. "You are obsessed by a fear, and you have reason to be. There is a very serious problem confronting you, and you need help in solving it. I can't help you, but perhaps I can find some one else who can."

She gathered up a bundle of cards. At first glance he had thought they were playing-cards, but he saw now that the reverse sides were all blanks. "On each of these I am going to write a word," she explained. "I'll hold it for an instant before your eyes. Read it, close your eyes, and then look at those maroon-colored curtains over there."

Without comment he followed these instructions. Ten minutes passed while the client glanced at the cards and then at the curtains. Sometimes his gaze strayed back to the bit of pasteboard before the medium had another one ready. By the end of the hour she had cast his horoscope, read his palm, and performed other mystic rites. Then she settled back in the deep chair and announced herself ready to "project the astral body." A few moments passed in absolute silence. The medium appeared to fall into a light slumber, and the man on the other side of the table was prepared to see her face contorted by the writhing pains of the trance victim. But it remained calm, almost deathlike. His shrewd eyes were sizing her up as she slept. He seemed almost to forget that he had come for spiritual counsel, and his gaze was calculating, speculative, as though he were considering her possibilities as an ally. Suddenly a voice came from the depths of the chair. It made him jump. It was not the voice of Madame Rosalie, but one that seemed vaguely familiar.

"Marstan is dead." The words died away in a kind of moan. After an interval of silence came the message, "He says to tell you that you have found the criminal, and now is the time to act." She seemed to sink deeper into oblivion. The client waited a full minute. Then he leaned over and whispered through the stillness two words—"Rest Hollow."

The medium's head rolled from side to side on the cushions of the chair, like that of a surgical patient who is trying to escape the ether sponge. "Gone!" she muttered. "All gone!"

He swept aside the cards and ouija-board and leaned closer, his hands almost touching hers. The amused skepticism had died out of his amber eyes, and the question that he asked came in a tense whisper. "Where is Ralph Regan?"

A frown drew the woman's heavy black brows together. "Gone!" she murmured again. "Gone!"

It was not possible for him to determine from her tone whether she was answering his last question or merely repeating her response to "Rest Hollow." He tried again.

And after a moment the reply came slowly through stiff lips. "The way leads over a curving road. Follow that road to a place with a high stone fence where the gates stand always open. There you will find him."

He settled back in his chair, his eyes resting, fascinated, upon the graven face.

"Marstan is here." She spoke in her own voice now and there was in it a note of infinite weariness. "He has something to say to you."

The man smiled grimly. "I should think he would. Tell him to go ahead; I'm listening."

"He says you must give up the first plan——" She frowned in the effort of transmission. "And the second plan—and try the third. He says there is a woman working in the plan too: she has just begun to work in it. You must get her aid or she might——"

He leaned forward eagerly. "Yes? She might what?"

"I don't quite get it. It's a difficult control. But he seems to be afraid of that woman. He wants very much to warn you against——"

She shivered slightly and opened her eyes. The man had left his seat and was standing close to her side. "I hope you got what you want," she said wearily. "I don't know when I've had a sitting that has cost so much."

He crossed to the settee and picked up his gloves. "It must get on your nerves. Suppose we go out somewhere and have a little bite of supper. I know a place down on Dupont; no style about it, but they give you a great little meal. What do you say?"

She glanced at the nickel clock upon the mantel. "It's almost seven," she

demurred, "and I expect another client at seven-thirty."

"No more sittings to-night," he decreed. There was an almost insolent authority in his tone. "Time to call a halt. It's dinner-time in heaven, and spirits must live. You're coming out with me. Get on your street togs, little witch."

Without further protest she obeyed while her escort waited in the shabby entrance-hall. At the curb he helped her into the roadster, and five minutes later they were seated at a small bare table in one of the popular bohemian restaurants of the downtown district.

"No Martinis any more," he sighed, as he helped her out of her cheap coat with its imitation-fur collar. "Life isn't what it used to be, is it?" His own hat and expensive-looking overcoat he hung upon the peg in a diamond-shaped mirror bearing the soap-written injunction, "Try Our Tamales." "But they serve a placid little near-beer in this place that helps some. Bring two, waiter."

When the attendant returned with the glasses, he tossed off the contents of his at a gulp, but the woman sipped hers with the leisurely enjoyment of the epicure. Then she set it down and stabbed with her fork at the dish of green olives in the center of the table.

The soup came, a rich bean chowder, which she ate almost in silence, while her companion commented casually upon the service and furnishings of the café. They had a rear table near the swinging doors that led into the kitchen. It was not more or less conspicuous than any of the others. The atmosphere of unconventionality which pervaded the place seemed to envelop all its habitués in a sort of mystic veil that was in itself a guarantee of privacy. At the table nearest them a girl was talking earnestly to a man who sat with his arm about her. Madame Rosalie, raising her eyes from her soup-plate, encountered the bold, appraising stare of her escort. She returned it impersonally and with the flicker of a smile, taking in the "freckled" eyes and the large thin hands. And when she smiled her face re-gained something of a former beauty. The man leaned toward her with a consciously confiding manner. "You call yourself Madame Rosalie," he said. "But isn't it really Mademoiselle?"

Her smile deepened but she gave him no answer. In the delicate, lacy waist and white skirt which she had donned, she looked years younger. There was a ruby pendant at her throat but she wore no other jewel. The garish light of the café, shining upon her straight black hair, gave it a luster that was like the dull gleam of jet.

"Not Mademoiselle?" he queried again, and his smile was like the password between two brother lodge-members.

And then Madame Rosalie lost some of her inscrutable reserve. "Not *Rosalie*," she corrected. "But it's a good name; as good as any other for my trade, don't you think?"

He turned one of the clumsy glass salt-shakers between his fingers. "The name is all right," he admitted. "But—why do you do—that sort of thing? You admit yourself that it's hard on your nerves. Why do you do it—when you could do other things?"

The waiter reappeared and littered the table with an army of small oval platters. Odors of highly seasoned macaroni and ragout steamed from them. Madame Rosalie dipped daintily into the nearest dish. But in spite of her restraint, it would have been apparent to a close observer that her enjoyment of the meal was the keen avidity of one who has been long denied. When the waiter was out of hearing, she caught up the last words sharply.

"What do you mean by 'other things'?" For the first time her voice was eager, as though seeking counsel.

He shrugged. "*I* don't pretend to be a clairvoyant. Yet I know that there are other things that you could do—have done."

"How do you know it?"

"Well, in the first place, if you had been a medium for very long, the clever medium that you undoubtedly are, you would have made more money at it."

"I have made money at it."

"Not as much as you should have made. You wouldn't live as you do if you had money."

If she resented this assertion, she gave no sign of it, and he went on with the cool assurance of a physician who is certain of his diagnosis. "You may persuade yourself that you are in that business because you are interested in it or because you know that you have an unaccountable power. But you are doing it chiefly for the same reason that most of us ply our trades; because you want to make money."

"Well?" She commented, "It does supply me with a living, and you know there's a theory that we must live."

He laughed. "You don't have to live the way you do. There are much easier ways for you to accomplish that end. Have you got anybody dependent on you?"

"No, but I am horribly in debt." The admission seemed to slip from her without her permission, and when the words were out a little frown puckered her forehead. The eyes of her escort were fixed upon the ruby pendant, so obviously a genuine and costly stone. She toyed absently with it, putting a cruel strain upon its slender thread-like chain of gold. "Do you know," she said slowly, "I believe you would make a wonderful hypnotist. I believe that you could even hypnotize me."

The bold amber eyes gazed straight into hers. "But you told me, didn't you, that hypnotism had to be a coöperative measure? You said, I remember, that nobody could hypnotize anybody else unless—unless the victim were willing."

One of his hands closed over hers as it reached for the sugar-bowl. She made no effort to draw it away.

"Perhaps," she answered softly, "perhaps the victim *is* willing."

He stacked up a little pile of the oval platters and pushed them impatiently to one side. "I guess we understand each other all right," he said. "You need me and I need you. We've each come to the place where we need help. Now let's not waste any more time about it. Let's get down to brass tacks."

CHAPTER XIII

It was seven o'clock on a rainy evening, and Kenwick turned up the collar of his coat as he left the St. Germaine. Inside the Hartshire Building there was a cheerful warmth that promised well for the evening. He ignored the elevator and walked up the three flights of stairs to the floor where the photographer had his rooms. On the way, he tried to persuade himself that he was not doing this in order to gain time. But there was a good hour intervening between now and time to start for the theater, and at the end of that hour, he reflected Jarvis might not care to keep the engagement.

As he toiled upward Kenwick considered every possible detail of the scene that was before him, and then wearily discarded them all. "Why do I do it?" he challenged himself, as he reached the last landing. "How do I dare to do it? My God! I can't afford to do it; I've got to have one friend left!"

But as he had once told Jarvis, those scenes of life whose settings are scrupulously ordered usually lack dramatic climax. At the end of what he was pleased to characterize as his "confession," the photographer surveyed him with sympathetic but unastonished eyes.

"I'd begun to think that there might be something personal in it," he commented. "I could see that there was something lying heavy on your chest. It's a devilish mess, isn't it?"

The other man was looking at him with a disconcerting sharpness. But the thing for which he probed was not in Granville Jarvis's eyes.

"I seem to be such a helpless sort of brute," his host went on, and pushed a box of cigars across the table as though in an unconscious effort to make up with tobacco what he lacked in counsel. "I never can think of the right thing to do just on the spur of the minute. Inspiration has an uncomfortable habit of failing to keep her engagements with me."

"I didn't expect any advice," Kenwick told him. "But it's a relief to tell you and get it off my mind; to tell you and yet not have you think that I ought to be locked up."

"Somebody ought to be locked up," Jarvis remarked grimly. "And it's your job to find that person. Why don't you go East?"

"I am going East. I've decided to go next week. It would be hard to make you understand why I haven't done it before, but——Well, this sort of an—illness does a terrible thing to a man's soul, Jarvis. It paralyzes his initiative. It gives him the most deadly thing in this world; the patience of despair. I'm constantly *waiting* for things to clear up instead of going at them hammer and tongs."

His companion nodded. "I think I understand. It would be the hell of a situation for you back there among people you've always known, and who presumably know all about you, and not being able to bridge the gap. I can see why you wanted to get a line on yourself first, and you're right, too. After all, a man owes something to his nervous system. But since you've decided to go and brave it out back there I think I'd let things rest the way they are till you go. Sometimes life works itself out better if we don't interfere too much. Somebody is bound to make a foolish play if you let them all manage their own hands."

"And yet somebody told me the other day, Jarvis, that I was too passive in the crutches of fate; that I ought to be more combative, more aggressive."

Jarvis laughed. "I'd be willing to bet that it was a woman who told you that."

"Yes, a woman did tell me. It was that trance medium."

"I might have guessed it. By the way, I went to see her myself the other day. Your story got me interested. She ought to have paid you a liberal commission for that yarn. But I suppose she doesn't even know you wrote it. She struck me as being a mighty clever little woman. Well, it's after eight o'clock. Let's go."

They found their seats in the first row of the balcony. The house was brilliantly lighted and filling up rapidly. But although Jarvis had urged his companion to forget for a time the tangle in which he was enmeshed, it was he who returned to the theme while they sat waiting for the curtain to rise.

"The trouble is, there's a missing link in the chain somewhere. I don't mean an event, but a person. Somebody dealt those cards, of course, and whoever did it knows where the marked one is. The New York trip may be a wild goose chase after all. Did you ever think of hiring a detective to help you out?"

"Yes, I've thought of it a lot. But somehow I don't want to do it. I don't want to have anybody mixed up in my affairs as intimately as that. I can't explain my

feeling about it. But there is so much noise about this sort of thing if it once rises to the surface, and if there's any graft connected with my name, I'd like to keep the scandal private. Besides," he laughed with a tolerant self-indulgence, "I don't suppose the person lives, Jarvis, who doesn't believe that way down inside of him somewhere, sleeping but never dead, is the genius of the detective. I've made a sort of a covenant with myself that I and no other shall run this thing to cover, and do it without kicking up a noise."

Jarvis was staring speculatively at the foot-lights. "It's one of the most curious cases I ever knew. I'll tell you what, Kenwick. You're the original 'Wise Man from Our Town.' Remember him?

"And when he found his eyes were out,
With all his might and main,
He jumped into the bramble-bush
And scratched them back again."

"A dangerous experiment, I always thought," Kenwick remarked.

"So is dynamite, but sometimes we have to use it, and nothing else will take its place."

"Are you advising me to put a bomb under somebody on the chance that it might be the man who shuffled the deck?"

"No. I'm advising you to do the bramble-bush stunt. Don't jump forward; jump back."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, the more I think of it the more I believe that the solution of this mystery is to be found in the place where it began."

"But where did it begin?"

"So far as your knowledge of it extends, it began in the cañon or ravine or whatever place it was that you had the accident. If I'm not mistaken, Kenwick, that place is your bramble-bush."

The curtain rose upon the first act and there was no opportunity for further conversation. It was during the intermission between the second and third acts that Jarvis, leaning over the balcony, said suddenly, "There's a friend of yours;

fourth row on the right."

Kenwick made a cursory examination of the seats and shook his head. "Don't see him. Don't see anybody I know here to-night except Aiken, our dramatic critic."

"This is a woman. Count seven seats over in the fourth row. Isn't that lady in the garnet-colored coat your Madame Rosalie?"

"You're right; it is."

"I thought I couldn't be mistaken. There's a certain air of distinction about that woman in spite of——" Jarvis stopped, for he saw that his companion was not listening. For a moment Kenwick sat there staring down at the fourth row like a man in a dream. Then he gripped Jarvis's arm. "Look!" he cried. "Down there with Madame Rosalie."

"What's the matter? You're such an excitable cuss, Kenwick."

"That fellow who's with her. Look! Jarvis, *that's* the man!"

"What man?"

"The man we've been talking about—my Missing Link."

Together they leaned over the balcony and scrutinized, with the intent gaze of a pair of detectives, the couple in the fourth row right. It may have been coincidence, or it may have been that species of visual hypnotism known to us all, which suddenly impelled Madame Rosalie's escort to turn in his seat. His eyes swept the house with a casual glance, then lifted to the balcony. Slowly they surveyed the arc of faces above the lights. The two men leaning toward him did not move. In another instant he had found them, and for a full minute he and Roger Kenwick held each other. And then the theater went black as the curtain rose on the last act.

Just before it was over Kenwick bade his companion a hurried farewell. "I'm going down and introduce myself to that fellow. I know I've seen him before somewhere, and he may be able to give me my clue. You don't mind if I break away? I want to catch him before he is lost in the crowd."

But this hope was thwarted. For hurrying down the aisle in that moment before the rush of exit, while the audience was finding its wraps, he found two seats in the fourth row empty. Slowly he walked back to the St. Germaine, his thoughts

in a tumult. Why should they have wanted to leave before the end of as good a performance as that? Something must have happened. Could it be that they had wanted to escape him? At such long range it hadn't been possible for him to determine whether or not there was a flash of recognition in the other man's eyes, but his mysterious disappearance was haunting. On the following morning, before going to the "Clarion" office he took a car out to Fillmore Street.

At Madame Rosalie's shabby home a man in shirt sleeves opened the door. "Oh, she don't live here any more," he explained to the caller. "She moved a week ago. I'm gettin' the place ready for a new tenant."

"Do you know where she went?"

The man grinned. "Them mediums don't generally leave no forwardin' address. Their motto is 'Keep Movin'.' I will say, though, that the Rosalie woman was a perfect lady and paid her rent regular in advance."

Kenwick walked away, turning this latest development slowly in his mind, looking at it from every angle. At his office he worked mechanically, scarcely conscious of what he wrote. He was in two minds now about the Eastern trip. Perhaps it would be better to take Jarvis's advice and let things have their head a bit longer. And he was certain of some of his facts now. The face of the man in the fourth row had been like the flash of a torch at midnight. For most of the night he had been awake, going back over the painful trail of the past, fitting some of its previously incomprehensible details into their places. What a curious mosaic his life had been! What contrasts of light and shade! But as for going back to Mont-Mer——The idea made him shudder. No, that was one thing he would not do. It would be like courting the return of a nightmare.

At four o'clock he left the office and went to keep an appointment with Dr. Gregson Bennet in the Physicians' Building. Dr. Bennet belonged to that class of specialists who designate their business quarters in plural terms. His offices comprised a suite of four rooms. The sign on the door of the first one invited the caller to enter, unheralded. Complying with this injunction, Kenwick found himself in a well-lighted chamber containing a massive collection of light-green upholstery and an assortment of foreign-looking pictures artfully selected to convey the impression that their owner was on chummy terms with the capitals of Europe.

As the door closed automatically behind him, a white-uniformed figure appeared, like a perfectly trained cuckoo, from the adjoining room and

announced in level tones, "The-doctor-will-see-you-in-just-a-minute." Kenwick accepted this assurance with the grave credulity that one fiction-maker accords another. He glanced at the five other patients already awaiting their turns and picked up a magazine.

By four-thirty he had read the jokes in the back of "Anybody's Magazine" for the preceding six months. No physician in reputable standing ever removes old numbers of periodicals from his files. For what better testimony can he offer in support of his claim upon a long-established practice? As Kenwick read, he was aware that his companions were being summoned one by one to embark upon that mysterious journey from whose bourne no traveler returns, departure having been arranged for around some obscure corner, to prevent exchange between arriving and retreating patient of a "Look! Stop! Listen!" signal.

By five o'clock only one other patient besides himself remained; a little woman in shiny serge suit and passée summer hat. Kenwick put down his magazine with a long-drawn sigh, and she smiled in patient sympathy. "Gets pretty tiresome waitin', doesn't it?" she ventured.

His quick eyes took in her shabby suit and the knotted ungloved hands. She was probably the mother of a growing family, he reflected, and would not get home in time now to prepare dinner. His easy sympathy flared into words.

"It's an outrage to keep people waiting like this when they have an appointment for a definite hour. They tell me Bennet's a nerve specialist, and I believe it."

She smiled wanly, but there was an eager championship in her response. "Oh, but he's wonderful! When he once begins to talk to you, you forget all about bein' mad at him. Seems like he sees right through your head to tell what's the matter with you."

The white uniform appeared and pronounced a name: "Mr. Kenwick." He rose and followed her through the door. The second room was like the first, minus reading-matter and plus wall-charts. Here he sat, gazing at the fire-escapes on the opposite building, while the white uniform made a not completely satisfying attempt to collect family statistics. And then, at last, the door of the third room opened and Dr. Bennet himself emerged. He was enveloped in a heavy white apron that recalled to Kenwick's mind the pictures he had seen in the agricultural magazines featuring model dairying.

But if the specialist had been slow to admit him, he was equally reluctant to let

him go. When he had finished his examination, Kenwick stood beside the couch in the fourth and last room pulling on his coat. "Then you think I'm in pretty good condition, doctor?" Through the half-open door he could see the white uniform hovering, like an emblem of peace, above a steaming basin of warlike instruments.

"I should say," the physician told him slowly, "that you are absolutely sound. Your nerves are a bit too highly charged, but I imagine that is more a matter of temperament than overstrain."

"Is that all?"

"No, that isn't all. The history of your case, as you have given it to me, is a most interesting one. And you were right to let me make the examination and form my own conclusions before telling me anything about your history. I wish it were possible for you to recall the name of the physician who handled your case in France. I'd like to get the scientific beginning of the story. Without it I can only make a guess, and guessing is not satisfactory. But I think that in his place I should have taken the chance and operated. However, you can't judge; he may not have had the proper equipment. I wish you would come around next Saturday when the office is closed, and let me make some X-ray plates. I'd like to display them at the medical convention in April."

"And what do you advise me to do for my—my mental health?"

"Forget your mental health. Take some regular out-of-door exercise and mix with your friends. I can't give you any better prescription than that. If it were something done up in pink paper you'd be more apt to take it, I know."

Kenwick walked back through the darkening streets with a feeling of exultation. The pendulum of his despair was swinging backward to a height only attained by those who can plumb the depths of wretchedness. For the first time in six weeks he felt his old defiance of life. And recalling the pale ghost of a former prayer, he was ashamed of its cowardice. "*That* never happens to the desperate and the lonely," he reminded himself grimly. "The best security on earth for a prolonged life is to express a sincere desire to die. After that, you lead a charmed existence. Houses burn to the ground and not one inmate escapes; ships go down with everybody aboard; pedestrians are run over by cars and shot by thugs, but none of these things come near the man who courts them. They overtake those whom others find it hard to spare, those whose lives are vivid with purpose."

As he walked back to the hotel he found himself thinking of Marcreta again. Had he ever really made a place for himself in her life? Whether he had or not, he knew that he had never, even in his blackest moments, given her up. All the plans for his future centered still about her. Well, he had a fight before him now, and not until he won it would he make himself known at the house on Pine Street.

On the corner a newsboy thrust a paper under his face. He waved it aside. "I can read all that bunk for nothing, sonny," he told him cheerfully. The huge head-lines filled him with a spiritual nausea. The chronicle of the day's tragedies for the public to batten upon! Was there never to be an end to America's greed for the sensational?

At the St. Germaine the clerk handed him a telephone call. It was from Jarvis and urged him to call him up immediately. In his own room Kenwick complied with this request. The voice of the Southerner came to him, sharply commanding, over the wire. "Can you come around right away? I want to talk it over with you."

"Talk what over?" Kenwick's voice was almost defiant.

"Why, haven't you seen it? Well, come around anyway. I'll be here for the next hour."

When Kenwick arrived at the Hartshire he found the photographer sorting over a pile of films. But as his guest entered, he swept these into a pasteboard box, and cleared off a chair for him. "Where have you been?" he demanded. "I called you at the hotel and the 'Clarion' office twice."

Kenwick gave him a brief account of the last two hours. Jarvis grunted. "Well, I don't blame you for wanting to get the seal of scientific approval but—I can't believe that you haven't read the 'Record' yet. And you a newspaper man!"

He fished the paper out from under a stack of developing-trays and searched the columns of the second page. "Remember what I suggested to you last night, that you let things take their own course for a while? Well, it seems that they've been taking them in rather a headlong fashion." He creased back the page and handed the paper to Kenwick. "Read that and see if it doesn't give you something of a jolt."

He took the paper. The head-lines at the top of the third page riveted themselves

upon his brain.

RELATIVE SEEKS MISSING MAN

Body of Roger Kenwick to Be Exhumed at Mont-Mer

> The body of Roger Kenwick, son of the late Charles Kenwick, of New York, who died at Rest Hollow last November, is to be exhumed for examination on the demand of Mrs. Hilda Fanwell, of Reno, Nevada. Mrs. Fanwell, a widow, arrived from her home last week in search of her brother, Ralph Regan, who has been a resident of Mont-Mer for the last two years. A letter received from him in the early part of November indicated, according to the sister's statement, that he was in failing health. Being unable to come to him then, owing to the illness of her husband, Mrs. Fanwell wrote several letters, none of which were answered. The description of her brother, which she furnished the police, has resulted in a demand to the authorities to have the body of Roger Kenwick exhumed.

Kenwick let the paper slide to the table. "My Lord!" he murmured. "Jarvis, what would you do about it?"

"Why should *you* do anything about it? This Fanwell woman is apparently the oldest Gold Dust twin. Let her do your work."

But Kenwick's eyes were still fixed upon the paper. Over it a drop of acid from the developing-tray was eating a slow passage. "But to see my name tied up to a gruesome thing like that——Why, you can't imagine how it——It gives me the feeling that—that I've just begun on this thing. And I thought when I came in here that I had all the cards in my hands."

He got up from the table slowly, like a hospital patient testing his strength on the first day out of bed. And Jarvis, after one glance at his pale face, rose too. "You've got nothing to worry about——," he began. But Kenwick waved the soothing aside with a fierce impatience.

"Nothing to worry about?" he cried hotly. "Don't offer me that stuff, Jarvis. How do I know—how *can* I ever know what I may have done during those ghastly ten months?"

CHAPTER XIV

When Kenwick entered the St. Germaine on the evening after his interview with Jarvis, a man rose from the farther corner of the lobby and came toward him. "Kenwick!" he cried, and held out his hand. "I thought you never would come. I've been waiting here an eternity." It was Clinton Morgan.

When the first, somewhat incoherent greetings were over and the two men sat facing each other across Kenwick's untidy writing-table, a moment of embarrassed silence fell between them. Then, in a desperate attempt to start the conversation, "I'm afraid I've kept you waiting rather a long time," the host apologized.

"You have," his caller agreed. "It's been more than a year, hasn't it?" He spoke in a cheerful, matter-of-fact tone as though a mere pleasure-trip had intervened between this and their last encounter. But Kenwick was looking at him intently.

"You know—about it then?"

"Yes, we know all about it." Clinton Morgan leaned over and put his hand affectionately upon the other man's shoulder. "And, by George, Kenwick, I congratulate you. I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart. It was one chance against a thousand that you could win out. It's a miracle!"

Kenwick was scarcely conscious of the last sentences. His attention had stopped short at that word "we." He reached down and picked a burnt match from the carpet as he asked with a pathetic attempt at formal courtesy, "How is your sister?"

"Getting well, I believe. She has been——Well, this case of yours is a most enthralling one, Kenwick. Anybody would be interested, but particularly any one who has known you. We have been following it with great interest."

Kenwick looked at him incredulously. "How could you?"

The caller shifted his position uneasily. "Well, that's rather a long story. And Marcreta might prefer to tell you part of it herself. And that brings me to my errand. I came here to ask you up to the house. We've just got the old place fixed over, and,"—he glanced at his watch,—"it's not nine o'clock yet. If you haven't

something else on hand that——"

Kenwick cut in almost harshly. "Are you sure that your sister would care to see me? That she wouldn't perhaps be—well, afraid of me?"

Morgan laughed. "Well, I'll be there, you know, if you should get violent and begin throwing things around."

But the other man's face did not relax. His voice came low and strained as though it were being let out cautiously under high gear. "You don't understand. Nobody can, I suppose, who hasn't been through this experience." His nervous hands stiffened upon the arms of the chair. "I tell you, Morgan, it's easier for a denizen of the underworld to live down her reputation and achieve a reputable place in society than for a man or woman to regain the confidence of the world after a period of——Well, I may as well out with the damned word—insanity."

"Don't call it that, Kenwick. It wasn't that. In the trenches you got a blow that put you out of commission. But you were simply in a dazed condition; mental aberration beginning with melancholia. You were never violently insane; never dangerous to anybody else."

"How do you know? How do I know? I've suffered the anguish of hell, wondering about it. Somebody may have been killed in that accident that restored me to life. It may have been all my fault. I don't know. I've spent the last month trying to find out in a quiet way. I suppose you think I'm a coward for not going at it more directly." He looked at his companion with a defiant appeal in his eyes. "But there were reasons why I didn't want to kick up a lot of notoriety about myself. For any harm that ever came to man or woman through me, I'm eager to pay. No court decision would have to make me do it; no court decision could keep me from doing it. But I wanted to save my name if I could. I wanted to save my name so that some time it might be fit——"

"I know." Clinton Morgan interrupted hastily. The memory of that traitorous bit of paper which he had discovered in the gold and ivory book came back to him and brought a guilty flush to his cheeks. Whether he would or no, he seemed to hold in his own hands all the threads of this tragic romance. A line of Marcreta's lyric drifted through his brain:

Whence thy *uneasy* spirit may depart?

How well that word had been chosen to describe and conceal the living death which this man had suffered!

"You see," Kenwick went on, "I'm the spiritual counterpart of the Man Without a Country. I don't belong anywhere. And, more than that, I'm a charge on the public conscience. Everybody who knows about my period of—of incompetency belongs to an unofficial vigilance committee, whose duty it is to warn society against me."

Clinton groped for a reply, but words would not come. And the fact that there was no bitterness in the other man's voice, but only the level monotony which is achieved by long suppression, made it infinitely pathetic.

"If it suited your whim to do so," Kenwick continued, "you might reverse the usual order of dining; begin with pie and end with soup. And the public would regard it either as a new cure for dyspepsia or an eccentricity of genius. But if I should try it, somebody would immediately suggest that I shouldn't be allowed at large. It's the irony of fate that I, who have always had a contempt for the trivial conventions of life (such a contempt that my sister-in-law never quite trusted me in polite society), should now be in a cowering bondage to them. I live all my days in a horror of doing something that might appear erratic. And I spend the nights going back over every inch of the road to see if I have. Why don't the adherents of the fire-and-brimstone theory picture hell as a place where we can never act on impulse? As a place which dooms us forever to a hideous self-consciousness?"

Clinton Morgan spoke with a sort of angry championship. "You've had tough luck, my boy, the toughest kind of luck. But you've come out of it all right. By George, you can show the world now that you've come out on top."

"I haven't come out; that's just the trouble. I'll never be out of the woods until I've accounted for them. Did you read last night's paper, Morgan?"

"Yes. That's one thing that brought me here. Let me tell you something, Kenwick. Until about a week ago we thought you were dead. And we were relieved, for we felt that it was a happy release for you; your only way out. And then one day, not long ago, we got a clue." He still clung to the plural pronoun. "We fell over a clue, you might say, which aroused our suspicions—and we

followed it down."

"You followed it down!" Kenwick cried. "You cared enough about it for that?"

His friend's reply came through guarded lips. "You have suffered horribly during these past months," he said. "But you are not the only one who has suffered."

Kenwick glanced at him sharply. Then he seemed to sense the delicacy of the other man's position. "It's just this," Kenwick explained after a moment of silence. "Since this—this thing fell on me, I instinctively divide all people into two classes; those who knew me before it happened, and those who have only known me since. With the second group I'm always wondering if they are still unsuspecting: with the first, I'm wondering if they will ever be convinced. But go on with your story. What did you do about the clue?"

"I'll tell you about that later. It's enough to say right now that Richard Glover ____"

"Glover!" The word seemed to explode from Kenwick's lips. He leaped to his feet. "That's the name!" he cried. "That's the name that I've been groping after for two days. Sometimes I almost had it and then it would escape me. I had an idea fixed in my mind somehow that it began with a 'B.' Why, I saw that fellow at the theater the other night, Morgan. It was a most curious thing, for as soon as my eyes lighted on him the vacuum in my mind was suddenly filled. I remember traveling across the continent with him. I remember my brother Everett introducing me to him one day at home before I came West this last time. That's all I do remember about him, but it sort of connects things in my brain. I wanted to talk to him the other night and see if he couldn't help me clear things up, but when I got down to his seat, he was gone. I don't know whether he had recognized me too or not. But even so, I can't account for his wanting to avoid me. I haven't got anything against him. I might have thought the whole thing was a hallucination (for I never quite trust my own senses now), but I had a reliable witness. Now what I want to know is, why should Glover be afraid to meet me?"

"If you'll come up to the house," Morgan suggested again, "we may be able to straighten out some of these things."

When they arrived, a few minutes later, at the Pine Street home, Clinton lingered outside fussing with the engine of his car, and Roger Kenwick went alone to meet Marcreta. He found her in the fire-lighted living-room where he had parted from her, and she came to greet him with that slow grace that he knew so well,

and that seemed now to stop the beating of his heart. But if either of them had expected the first moments of reunion to melt away the shadows that lay between them, they were disappointed. For the fires of memory burn deep. And the ghastly suffering with which the two years of separation had been freighted had left marks that were not to be obliterated by those words of carefully casual welcome. In spite of their efforts at commonplace dialogue, they spoke to each other in the subdued voices of those who converse in the presence of death. By tacit consent they avoided, during the first half-hour, all mention of the tragedy which had separated them.

"We've just had the house done over," Marcreta was saying as her brother entered. "During the war it was a sanitarium, and although it has all been retinted and there are new hangings everywhere, Clinton says it still smells of anesthetics. I tell him it's only his imagination. Do you get any odor of ether?"

"No," Kenwick answered.

He found talking horribly difficult. This woman, for whom his soul had yearned, seemed now to be looking at him from across a deep chasm. Between them stretched the bramble-bush; a tangle of underbrush; stark sycamore-trees that rattled hideously in the winter wind; uprooted madrone bushes stretching distorted claws heavenward in a mute appeal for vengeance. And insistently now the question beat against his brain—had he ever succeeded in crossing that ravine? Would he ever really succeed in crossing it? With the clutch of desperation he clung to the verdict of Dr. Gregson Bennet, as he had once clung for support to those grim, high-backed chairs at Rest Hollow. He recalled having once read the story of an ex-convict coming home after his release from the penitentiary to meet that most crucial of all punishments; the eyes of the woman that he loved. To his supersensitive soul, the stigma attached to him was something that was worse than crime; a thing that branded deeper and more indelibly. That it had come to him in the discharge of duty weighed not a jot on his account-sheet. He told himself that it had been a judgment. He had always been a worshiper of intellect. It had seemed to him the one enduring possession. And now it had proved itself even more ephemeral than physical health. As his eyes rested upon her, unconscious of their own sadness, he knew all at once that Marcreta understood and was trying to make it easy for him.

"The only way to make this easy for me," he heard himself saying suddenly, "is to drag it out into the light. As long as the past lies shrouded between us, we will never be able to forget it."

It was eleven o'clock when Kenwick went down the steps of the Morgan home. He refused Clinton's invitation to ride back in the car. For he wanted to walk, to walk on and on forever in the glorious starlight. There were no stars. A gray fog had rolled in from the bay and spread itself like a huge blotter across the heavens. But he was unaware of it. Even the street lights, shining dimly as through frosted glass, seemed to shed across his path a supernatural radiance. For although no word of love had passed between him and Marcreta Morgan, he had come away from that visit with a wild happiness surging in his heart. There had been no effort to reëstablish life upon its old basis. Marcreta, with what seemed to him an almost superhuman tact, had divined the ghastly futility of such an endeavor. And instead she had conveyed to him, by some indescribable method of her own, the assurance that she would welcome, with unquestioning faith, the opening of a new and happier era. As he had sat there in the comfort of that living-room, where on a night, not long ago, he had caught a glint of a departed glory, desire and something finer had struggled for supremacy in his soul. But courageous self-analysis had driven home to him the realization that he had Marcreta Morgan at a cruel disadvantage. Whether he would or no, he had come back to her clothed in the appealing garments of tragedy. He was a pensioner on her sympathy, and in her eagerness to restore to him his lost heritage, she had unconsciously disarmed herself. The temptation to cherish and set a jealous guard upon such an advantage has overpowered men and women innumerable. Kenwick sensed the treacherous sweetness of it flooding his heart like the seductive fragrance of some rare perfume, and then in a sudden fury he tore himself free of it.

"By God! I haven't got as deep in as that!" he muttered, and was unconscious that he said the words aloud. "I haven't sunk so deep that I'd pull myself up that way!" He buttoned his overcoat about him conscious for the first time of the chill breeze. Not yet, he reminded himself sharply, not yet did he have the right to conquer.

As he took the intersecting street to cut the steep down-hill slope to the hotel, he heard the echo of footsteps behind him. He quickened his gait, impatient of any distracting element, and was instantly aware that the other footsteps had quickened theirs. For half a block he walked at a round pace. Then he stopped short and waited for the other pedestrian to overtake him. A thick-set man in a black overcoat passed him, slowed down to a creeping walk, and under the

feeble light of the corner street-lamp came to a halt. Kenwick glanced at him sharply, but the man was a stranger to him. He passed on unaccosted, but as he was stepping from the curb the stranger loomed up suddenly behind him. "Stop!" he commanded.

Kenwick turned. A heavy hand was laid upon his arm. He stood waiting, under the gleam of the bleary light, detained more by curiosity than by the grip upon his arm. From the burly figure came a burly voice. "You are Roger Kenwick."

It was not a question, but the other man gave it sharp-voiced response. "Yes. What is it to you?"

"A good deal to me. I've been waiting for you. Some people wouldn't have waited, but I'm a gentleman and I let you have your visit out with the lady. We'll take, the rest of the walk together. Beastly night, isn't it?"

Kenwick did not move, and his voice was more astonished than resentful. "I think you've made a mistake in your man. You say you have been waiting for me?"

The burly man began to walk slowly away and Kenwick fell into step beside him. "Ye-a, I've been waiting for you. And even if I hadn't been, I might have got suspicious a minute or so ago. Let me give you a tip for your own good; don't talk to yourself in public. It's a bad habit for anybody in your line of trade."

Kenwick stopped short. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, Mr. Kenwick, that you are under arrest."

The slanting pavement seemed suddenly to be moving of its own accord and Kenwick felt it carrying him along as though he were on an escalator. Then he heard himself ask dully, "What for?"

The officer looked bored. But he stood there waiting in grim patience for his companion to regain the power of locomotion. "I asked you what for?" Kenwick repeated sharply. "You've made a mistake, but you've got to answer that question. If I'm going to be hauled into jail, the law gives me the right to know why."

"Oh, cut it out!" the other admonished. "You're surprised all right; they always are. But I'll say this for you, Mr. Kenwick, there's nothing amateurish about your work. Plans all laid to make a quiet getaway East, but no dodging around cheap

lodging-houses for yours. Business as usual, and friends kept happy and unsuspecting; everything strictly on the level. You know as well as I do why I'm on your track. You're wanted for murder—for the murder of Ralph Regan."

CHAPTER XV

In the twelve hours that intervened between Roger Kenwick's arrest and his transference to the authorities at Mont-Mer, he was not allowed to see any one. As rigid a watch was kept beside his cell as though he were a hardened criminal who had on previous occasions escaped the clutches of justice. Even reporters were denied admittance, but he was permitted, in courtesy to his former position as journalist, to read the papers. In these he found, spread large upon the front pages, highly colored stories concerning his manœuvers and final capture. Only the "Clarion's" story was conservative and hinted at a colossal mistake which would lead later to more sensational developments.

When he left San Francisco, heavily hand-cuffed, a crowd followed to the depot. The trip down the coast was uneventful, and he sat staring out of the window, recalling his former ride through that same country when the pruners had waved their shears to him in a sort of voiceless Godspeed. There were no pruners visible from the car-window now, and the stark stretches of orchard looked bleak and desolate. The bare, tangled branches of the roadside poplars showed against the dull January sky like intricate designs of lacework. They seemed to Kenwick to have lost the comforting warmth of their leaves just when they needed them most.

It was almost dusk when the train drew into Mont-Mer, and here another crowd was waiting. The engine appeared to plow its way through them. Never had the quiet little city been so stirred. Never in all its decorous history had the white spot-light of sensationalism played upon it. It knew that its name was featured in every newspaper of the country.

And Kenwick found the Mont-Mer papers even more lavish in descriptive detail than those of the city had been. There was a picture of the murdered man and one of himself spread upon the front page of the evening sheet, and below, a cut of Rest Hollow, with the inevitable black cross marking the spot under the dining-room window where the body of Ralph Regan had been found. The morning daily matched this with a picture of the handsome Kenwick home in New York, and an account of the death, the previous spring, of Everett Kenwick and his wife, victims of influenza. As he read, Kenwick reflected that Richard Glover must have been very busy, very busy indeed since the night that they had

encountered each other at the theater.

And outside the county jail the city buzzed with comment and speculation. Mont-Mer real estate men were elated over this unexpected scandal in high society which had resulted in putting their town "on the map." Better a gruesome publicity, they told each other, than no publicity at all. Tourists from Los Angeles and the near-by towns motored up during the week-end and made futile attempts to gain access to Rest Hollow. The old conservative residents of the aristocratic little city were horrified, and the colony of Eastern capitalists, who made up a large part of the suburban population, were hotly resentful of the hideous notoriety which had invaded their retreat by the sea. The two country estates that bordered Rest Hollow were put on the market at what the local realty dealers advertised as "spectacular bargains."

After the body of Ralph Regan had been exhumed and identified by the grief-stricken little woman who was his sister, the links of the chain which incriminated Kenwick seemed to fall of their own volition into place. He reviewed them himself, sitting alone in Mont-Mer's bleak little jail.

There would be first the testimony of the coroner who would describe the gunshot wound. And then the evidence that he, Kenwick, had been armed on that fatal night. The woman, or whoever it was that occupied the right wing of the house, would narrate in detail all that he had said about being a good shot and would doubtless follow this with the testimony that he was obviously looking for trouble. The revolver, which he had left on the table in the den, would add its mute confirmation of these assertions. And his own mode of departure from that house, under such circumstances, was sufficient in itself to send him to the electric chair without any further testimony. Glover would be, of course, the star witness for the State, and against his glib and convincing story would be pitted the word of a man known to have been of an unsound state of mind and never proved to have recovered from it. It was this last evidence, he knew, that would acquit him. With the brand of Cain upon his forehead he would be set free. The ghastly notoriety which he had striven, with the difficult patience of the impatient temperament, to avoid, had struck him with the force of a bomb and blown him skyward to be the cynosure of every eye. Never while the world stood could he ask Marcreta Morgan to take the name of Kenwick. Acquittal on any terms was all that most men would have asked of fate. But Kenwick was made of finer stuff. And so far as his future was concerned, he was already tried, convicted, and sentenced.

A week intervened between his arrival at Mont-Mer and the day set for the trial. During that time he knew himself to be under the most relentless surveillance. By day and by night his every act was watched. With his food they brought him neither knife nor fork. On the second day of this startling omission he smiled grimly at the attendant. "You can tell the jailer," he said, "that he needn't be worried about me to that extent. You see, I've worn my country's uniform, and that spoils a man for taking the Dutch route."

The stolid-faced attendant looked at him without replying. Kenwick felt a sudden pity for him. "I suppose he thinks I'm likely to get violent and begin smashing up things at any moment," he reflected. For in the jailer's eyes was that thing for which he had been on the watch for almost two months. He pushed away his food almost untasted. When he was left alone again he walked over to the heavily barred window and stood looking down at the court-house garden. Very gently he shook one of the iron rods. "For almost a year," he muttered. "Barred in for almost a year; and the world has no intention of ever letting me forget it."

The date-palms in the grounds below swept the wintry air with long graceful plumes. How helpless they were in the driving force of the wind! And yet they were moored to something, securely rooted. The storm might buffet but would not utterly destroy them. Down the curving path which they bordered he saw a man approaching with a flat leather case under his arm. It was Dayton, the young attorney whom the court had appointed for his defense. Kenwick, who had taken his intellectual measure at their first meeting the day before, had little faith in his legal ability. But he liked him; liked his buoyant, unspoiled personality. And Dayton was undisguisedly elated over this sudden opportunity to try his mettle in so conspicuous a case. It was the chance he had been hoping for during three years of commonplace practice.

As the prisoner heard his step in the upper corridor he turned from the window. Dayton closed the portal behind him and sat down on the edge of the narrow cot. Downstairs he had just held brief parley with the jailer. "Hasn't Kenwick got any family?" he had inquired.

The official shook his head. "As I understand it, he didn't have anybody but a brother, and he died last spring, the papers said."

"No friends either?"

"Friends? Well, he wouldn't be likely to have any, would he—a feller that's been

crazy?"

"It's cursed luck!" Dayton had told him. He was still young enough to feel resentful of life's contemptuous injustices. "And he's only twenty-five; got his whole life before him. He's got to have his chance. He's got to have a fighting chance."

As he looked at his client now, he was careful to keep anything like compassion out of his eyes. He removed a cracked pitcher full of purple asters from its perilous position at the head of the bed and swept his glance over the crude table littered with envelopes in cream and pastel shades. "Correspondence still growing?" he inquired genially.

Kenwick stacked the vari-colored missives into a pile. Most of them had been accompanied by flowers, and all were signed by society women of Mont-Mer. A few bore the more guarded signature of "A Friend," or "A Sympathizer," with initials underneath. They condoled, they admonished, they even made cautious love.

"Can you fathom it, Dayton?" the prisoner asked, weighing the correspondence in one hand as though the answer to the riddle lay in avoir-dupois. "These women think I'm guilty of murder. They all seem to think I'm guilty as hell; and yet they send me flowers, and love-letters." He turned his back contemptuously upon the purple asters. "It comes over me every once in a while, Dayton, that I'm not the only person in this world who has had moments of mental aberration."

The other man reached over, took up the stack of envelopes, and examined them with curious interest. Here and there he recognized a coat of arms or a monogram. "Going to answer any of them?" he queried.

"Answer them!"

"Well, most of them seem to expect a reply. You see, you really can't blame them very much, either. These women are fed up on life. They come out here every winter seeking a new sensation."

"And I am a new sensation, am I?"

"You bet you are! Why, man, you're nothing short of a godsend. And most of these people," he swept a hand over the coterie represented on the table, "are from New York themselves. They're not writing to a stranger exactly. They know who your family is—or was. They know all about you."

Kenwick's lips stiffened. "Well, they certainly have that advantage over me."

"I don't mean to imply, of course, that they've been investigating your personal history," Dayton hastened to explain. "But Kenwick is not an inconspicuous name in the East. And then you've been in the service and——"

"I'm glad you mentioned that," the prisoner cut in. "It reminds me of something I want to say to you. When you get up to talk in court, don't you make any plea for me on the grounds that I've been in the service. That's one thing I won't stand for. The man who was in the army is a different man from the alleged murderer of Ralph Regan. I'm not going to have *his* record smeared with this horrible thing."

Dayton dropped the letters to the table as though they had bitten him. "Why, Mr. Kenwick! You've got a right to the consideration that would naturally——"

"If I've got a right to it, I've got a right to waive it. This country is flooded with men who expect to beat their way all through life on the plea that they've been in the service. And there's nothing so despicable on God's earth as that. I use my uniform to fight in, not to hide in. Get me?"

Dayton was obviously crestfallen. He got up from the hard cot and stood looking at his client gravely. Kenwick gathered up the pile of envelopes. "Take this junk out of here when you go, please. And don't let them send in any more flowers. They can save those for the funeral. But I'm not dead yet."

"You may be very soon, though, if you don't listen to sense," his adviser remarked bluntly. "I haven't wanted to get you worked up over the case, because that's poor policy and it doesn't buy us anything. But it strikes me, Mr. Kenwick, that you don't realize what a very serious position you are in."

The ghost of a smile appeared upon the prisoner's face. It was a terrible little smile, and he was not even conscious of its existence. He was only conscious that every nerve in his body ached with weariness and that he felt faint from want of food. Two pictures were stamping themselves alternately upon his brain; the dim, sinister interior of Rest Hollow, and the fire-lighted room on Pine Street. One of these incessantly erased and superseded the other. And he knew that there could be no division of their supremacy. Only one of them might survive. Day and night the memory of them racked his jaded brain. For the humiliation of his present position, not the ultimate outcome of the trial, burned him with a consuming flame.

As he stood now at the barred window, he was doing that thing to which, ever since his arrest, all his energies had been directed. Hour by hour, minute by minute, he was welding together the joints of an armor. With a slow but ceaseless persistence he was girding himself with a graven-faced indifference that must be his shield against the barrage of the gaping, curious world. And this man, standing so close beside him, and in reality so far away that their spirits were scarcely discernible to each other in the distance was telling him that he seemed unaware of the peril of his position. That wave of deafening depression which engulfs the human soul in the moments when it realizes its utter loneliness surged over him like a tidal wave. He stood looking at Dayton and wondering what manner of man he was.

"I don't want to play up anything now that will sound like dramatics," the lawyer went on in a soothing voice. "But we've got to face this thing as it is. You know Glover, don't you?"

"No. But Glover knows me. He has that immense advantage. And he is using it to the full. He has been fighting a man who's got both hands tied behind him."

Dayton appeared to take new courage from this summary. "Well, I see you've got a line on his methods anyway, and that's something. That gives us our starting-point. And besides having both hands free, he's also got his eyes open. You've been blindfolded a part of the time. He never has."

There was a sound of a key grating in the lock. The dialogue ended abruptly and Kenwick turned from the window. On the threshold was a shabby, faded-looking little woman guarded by the relentless sentry. Kenwick advanced to meet her, apologizing for the discomfort of the backless chair which he offered.

"No, I don't want to sit down, thanks," she told him hurriedly. "I'm not goin' to stay but a minute." She twisted her ungloved hands nervously together under a scrawny wool scarf. "It's just this, Mr. Kenwick; I asked them to let me come just to tell you this——"

The prisoner stood waiting. The realization came to him that she was afraid of him, and he tried to help her to begin. "You are Mrs. Fanwell, aren't you?"

"Yes. But—you don't know me, do you?"

"No, I just guessed at who you were." His eyes rested compassionately upon her thin, eager face, her poverty-stricken mourning. She was obviously relieved at

his quiet composure. "I just wanted to tell you this; that it's not revenge that I'm after. I've had a hard life, any way you look at it. But I'm in Science now and I'm tryin' to tear hate out of my heart. I haven't got any hard feelin's against you, for I don't believe, I never will believe that you really meant to do it."

"Won't you sit down?" Kenwick suggested, and forced her gently into the chair. Then he stood beside her, one hand resting upon the paper-littered table. "You believe, do you, that I—am responsible for your brother's death?"

She was looking past him, through the narrow window where Dayton stood watching her curiously. "I don't know just what to think. But I wanted you to know that I'm not wishin' you—any violent end. I never dreamed there was anything so horrible connected with his death when I came out here. But I felt that I had to know about him; I had to find out."

"Of course you had to find out," Kenwick agreed earnestly. "This thing must be cleared up in your mind—in everybody's mind. May I ask you a personal question, Mrs. Fanwell, to help me clear up a part of it myself? Were you dependent upon your brother to any degree for your support?"

"Dependent on *Ralph*?" The astonishment in her tone was sufficient reply in itself. "Oh, no. I was tryin' to help Ralph out, as much as I could without lettin' my husband know. It was hard, havin' always to stand between them. But I couldn't blame my husband either. He was always hard-workin' himself and he hadn't any patience with poor Ralph. He thought he ought to get a steady job at carpentry; that was his trade, and he made good at it till he got sick and began takin' that terrible stuff. It was the ruin of him."

"You mean that he took—drugs?"

She nodded. And Kenwick hastened to cover the pitiful little secret which he had laid bare.

"It was only for this reason that I asked, Mrs. Fanwell. If I am proved guilty of this crime, you shall receive whatever money recompense it is in my power to give. This is not an attempt to pay for it, but only to ease my own conscience."

The woman's eyes filled with tears. She leaned beseechingly across the table, clutching, with strange incongruity, one of the perfumed envelopes. "Then you *are* guilty!" she cried. "Oh, Mr. Kenwick, why don't you confess? All the lawyers have told me that if you confess, they can't give you the death sentence.

And you hadn't ought to be in—in a place like this. Now that I've seen you I know that what the others say isn't so. You did it when you was crazy. You never would have done it if you had been in your right mind."

She rose and moved slowly toward the door, her gaze still fixed upon him with a mixture of pleading and horror. He followed, and opened the door himself. "I'm glad you came, Mrs. Fanwell. It was very kind indeed of you to come."

She stopped with her hand upon the knob. "I don't care what he says," she told him tremulously. "I don't care what anybody says; they can't none of them make me believe that you would have done it if you'd known what you was about."

When she had gone Kenwick drew a long sigh. The thing had come near to shattering his laboriously constructed mask. He spoke sharply to the man at the window. "What in the world did she mean by that, Dayton? They're certainly not trying to make her believe that I killed her brother when I was in my right mind?"

Dayton took a few slow steps toward him. "I was trying to lead up to that when she came in. But it's just as well to have had you get it from her. Now maybe you'll take more stock in it. That is exactly what they're trying to make her think; what they'll try to make the court think. Glover is going to try to prove (and he'll come within an ace of doing it, too) that when you were in your right mind you deliberately plotted to kill that man. He has the witnesses and the motive, and the thing that he's going to attempt to saddle upon you, Mr. Kenwick is—murder in the first degree."

CHAPTER XVI

On the day set for the trial of the Regan murder case the court-room at Mont-Mer was crowded. Long before ten o'clock men and women were flocking into the building, eager for the most desirable seats. Residents from some of the country districts brought their lunches and prepared to spend the day.

The court-house was an antique structure heated only by wood stoves, but the fur-coated and the threadbare rubbed elbows and were oblivious of drafts. For it is in the audience chamber of a criminal court that those who seek will find the true democracy. One touch of sensation makes the whole world kin.

A few hours before the trial Clinton Morgan arrived in town and was permitted to see the prisoner. The vigilance of the Mont-Mer officials did not preclude visitors, rather welcomed them as a possible means of gaining valuable information from the suspected murderer when he was off his guard. Dayton, who was in conference with his client when Clinton entered, was immensely relieved by the appearance of this new actor in the drama. "This thing seems to me to be a little too one-sided, professor," he remarked when introductions were over. "The court-room over there is jammed with people who expect to see us done to death. It's good to have an ally loom up in the offing."

He left them alone for a few moments while they waited for the sheriff, and Clinton measured his friend with an anxious eye. "I don't know what you could have thought of me for not coming sooner," he said, "but I couldn't possibly get away. You look all in, man. Haven't they been giving you anything to eat?"

"As much as I wanted." As he returned the grip of his hand, Kenwick was wondering if Clinton Morgan suspected that this encounter, in a prison cell, between himself and the brother of Marcreta filled his cup of humiliation to the brim. Her name was not mentioned by either of them. Clinton's whole attention was centered upon the developments in the case.

"You're not going to take the stand yourself, are you, Kenwick?" he questioned, standing with one foot upon the backless chair.

"I was, but Dayton has advised against it."

"Absolutely. You'd be at an immense disadvantage."

"I suppose so. I can furnish proof from Dr. Gregson Bennet, in the city, that I'm perfectly normal now. But after all, that doesn't really count for much with anybody but myself. It was such an immense comfort to me when he made the examination. I came away from his office feeling that it was going to clear up everything. But no matter what science says, I'll always be at a disadvantage."

Clinton laid a hand upon his shoulder. Ever since his first sight of him he had been trying to conceal the fact that Kenwick's altered appearance was a shock to him. And like the attempts of most straightforward men, the effort had been a failure. "Why, buck up, man," he admonished now. "They can't convict you, you know; not under—the circumstances. You haven't been thinking that?"

"I've been thinking a good many things since I came back to Mont-Mer," Kenwick answered slowly. "You see, Morgan, I know more now than I did when I was trying to ferret this thing out up in the city. For one thing, I know a little more about my adversary. As I've figured out this story now, it goes something like this.

"After that adventure out at Rest Hollow, Glover found himself in a hole. But there were three ways out of it for him. If he wanted to retain the grip that I think he has upon my estate, he had to choose between these. The first one was to make it appear that I was dead. This seems, at first thought, to be a hazardous venture, but it was not so difficult in my case as it would have been under normal circumstances. And when he first decided to take it I think he supposed that I was dead. He had every reason to think so. The man to whom he had entrusted me had mysteriously disappeared, and he had some strange woman come down and identify as himself a stranger who had been killed in an automobile tragedy; a very easy thing, in reality, you see. When Glover discovered, upon inquiry around town, that there had been such an accident, he concluded that I had been killed and that the man who was responsible for it was afraid to let him know and had made his escape after having himself declared dead. I haven't a doubt that Glover thought I was the man who was shipped up to San Francisco in a casket. And believing this, the whole thing seemed to play right into his hands. He knew, of course, that he couldn't keep his hold on my fortune forever, but he wanted to play the game until he got as much as he could out of it.

"But suddenly he discovered, by some means, that his whole hypothesis was

wrong. He discovered that I was alive, and what was infinitely more appalling, that I was apparently restored to competency. He had been willing to risk my possible reappearance, you see, for if I were ever discovered wandering about deranged somewhere, I would have no means of identifying myself and, after a medical examination, would simply be committed to some institution. He would not have to connect himself with that at all. But since I had come to life mentally as well as physically, he had to take the second course—prove me irresponsible and have me sent to an asylum. How he went about this I don't know, but I'm sure that he must have attempted it. And I don't know either why he failed, for as I look back now upon some of my moves I can see that they might have appeared—erratic."

"I think," Clinton told him dryly, "that any of us could furnish convincing proof that we have been, at certain periods of our lives, dangerous to the public safety."

But Kenwick went on, unheeding this attempted solace.

"At any rate, Glover apparently failed in this attempt. So in order to get himself out of this mess, there is only one thing now for him to do." He broke off, eying his visitor with somber eyes. "You know what that is, Morgan. In order to save himself, he must prove me to be a cold-blooded murderer. Can he do it? Why shouldn't he? I'm certainly not in a position to offer any convincing opposition. A contemptuous pity is what I have read in the eyes of every person whom I've seen since this thing came to light. I don't suppose there is a person in this town who thinks I am innocent. I don't know whether Dayton himself does."

"But what motive could you have had for murder, Kenwick? You say that you never saw this Regan in your life."

"*I* say so, but what does my testimony amount to? And especially what does it amount to when I am trying to save my own skin? I told you once, Morgan, and I tell you again that it's impossible for a man to live down my sort of a past. He may get his eyes back out of the bramble-bush, but he'll never be able to make the world believe that he can really see with them. I feel sorry for Dayton. He's working day and night on this case, and he's a nice fellow. But he hasn't got any chance to make good on it. I feel sorry for him."

"I have been thinking," Clinton mused, "that there might be something out at Rest Hollow that would furnish a clue to help solve the question to the satisfaction of the jury, as to just when you arrived at that house, how long you stayed, and so on."

"The place is full of clues, of course," Kenwick admitted. "But by this time they have all been carefully arranged. Dayton went out there, and he told me that the public are not being admitted to the grounds at all. The place is under guard night and day. There may be danger there for Glover; I don't know anything about that, of course, but he knows. And whatever else you may say about him, you can't say that he has been asleep on this job."

The door opened to admit the sheriff. He shook hands with Clinton Morgan and nodded to Kenwick. In absolute silence the trio walked through the semitropical grounds to the court-house. As they entered the packed audience chamber the buzz of conversation stopped, and in deathly silence Roger Kenwick took his place.

The barrage of eyes leveled upon him was only partly visible through the haze that for the first few moments blurred his vision. He told himself that it was like that last charge, through blinding smoke, that he had made across No-Man's-Land. Then the scene cleared and individual faces emerged from the mist. There were the weather-beaten faces of ranch workers, the smug, complacent faces of those whom life has petted, the resolute faces of those who have come to see grim justice administered. Among them, here and there, was a scattering of veiled faces; women eager to see, but ashamed of being seen. Kenwick wondered contemptuously if some of the writers of the perfumed notes were among these.

During his dispassionate survey of the spectators he was acutely conscious of the presence of a man sitting at the far end of the table around which the lawyers were assembled. He had felt this personality when he first entered, but had reserved his attention until the blur of his surroundings should clear. Now he turned slowly in his chair and looked straight into the "tiger eyes" of Richard Glover. There was neither anger nor appeal in his own face; only a curious, questioning expression. An anthropologist who has stumbled upon some strange human relic unknown to his research might wear such an expression. Any physiognomist could have read in Kenwick's gaze the question, "What is this all about?"

And here again his adversary had him at a disadvantage. For his was not the mobile temperament which gives visible response to its emotional experiences. Life played upon Kenwick as upon a highly strung instrument, and drew from him whatever notes she needed in the universal symphony. But Richard Glover permitted no hand but his own to manipulate the keys of his life-board.

It was ten o'clock now but the trial seemed long in beginning. The judge had barely noticed Kenwick's entrance and continued an inaudible conversation with some one at his high desk. The district attorney, a florid little man who seemed to find difficulty in keeping on his eye-glasses, fussed with a mass of papers at the end of the long table and spoke occasionally to the bald-headed man on his right, who was evidently his colleague. Dayton leaned back in his chair and tapped the table impatiently with his pencil. Kenwick was surprised to see that the nervousness which his attorney had shown when he had visited him in jail seemed now to have completely disappeared.

There was an eminent surgeon among Kenwick's New York acquaintances who suffered from a nervous malady that was akin to palsy, and yet who, in the vital crisis of an operation, had a hand as steady as an embedded rock. He found himself wondering curiously now whether Dayton would develop under pressure an abnormal sagacity. Some miracle would have to intervene if he was to be saved from the ravenous clutches of fate.

Other persons were entering the court-room now and taking places that had evidently been reserved for them. Dayton leaned over and presented them at long distance to his client. "That fellow that just came in is Gifford, the undertaker. He got the jolt of his life when this thing blew up. Don't think he'll be much of a witness. He gets rattled. That chap with him is Dr. Markham. Ever see him before?"

Kenwick nodded. "He bandaged my leg that night in the drug-store. He'll remember it, too, for he was a little suspicious at the time that the sprain was older than I admitted. And I think he knew the man whose name I chanced to give as mine."

"Yes, that was a bad break, your chancing upon the name of Rogers. A fellow by that name was visiting out at the Paddington place, and although the doctor had never seen him, he had an engagement to play golf with him that afternoon out at the country club. Fortunately the man himself left town the next day so it wasn't as bad as it might have been. But it was an unfortunate thing, such a beast of a thing, that you should have given an assumed name at all."

"I suppose so. But that one seemed safe enough; it was my own name backwards. And I'd been through enough during the last twenty-four hours to make me cautious and secretive. And as it turned out, the taking of another name *was* the thing to do, Dayton. If I had hurled 'Roger Kenwick' into that group, I

imagine that some one would have made connections and turned me over to the lunacy commission. My guardian angel was on the job when I decided to keep my identity a secret that night."

Dayton surveyed him with obvious satisfaction. It was a good sign that Kenwick had thrown off some of his former apathy. And yet there still remained a cold indifference about him, a sort of contemptuous disregard of the crowded room, that for a man of Kenwick's caliber and social position seemed to him inexplicable. He had an uncomfortable conviction that this inscrutable self-possession would not take well with the jury; that it somehow gave credence to the theory of the prosecution that the prisoner was a hardened criminal. The local reporters were already busy with their pencils. And Dayton could visualize a paragraph in the evening sheet beginning, "Roger Kenwick himself showed a complete indifference to the proceedings which——"

The conference with the judge had ended and he was rapping for order. The charge against the prisoner was read and the tedious task of impaneling the jury began. Dayton paid little attention to the formal process of getting the legal machinery into action, except to object in a decisive voice to three or four of the prospective jurymen. Aside from these interruptions, he continued to identify the various witnesses to his client, in an impersonal, entertaining manner, like the official guide on a personally conducted excursion.

A short, ruddy man in long overcoat entered and cast impatient eyes about the room for a seat. One was immediately brought in for him from an adjoining room. "Annisen, ex-coroner," Dayton explained. "He's got a fine position now as health officer somewhere in Missouri. He hated like hell to come back and get mixed up in this fracas. You see, he never was a howling success out here; made the mistake of knocking the climate when he first came out, and no southern California town can stand for that. And then, he had too many irons in the fire all the time, and neglected his official position sometimes. I have a haunting suspicion myself that he didn't spend any too much of his valuable time over the examination of your supposed remains. We don't need to fear him; he'll be a reluctant witness."

He swung about in his chair to announce himself satisfied with the twelve men who had been selected to try the case, and then engaged for a moment in conversation with the district attorney.

Kenwick turned his gaze to the window where he could see the date-palms from

a new angle, their curving leaves motionless now in the still wintry air. The swinging doors of the court-room fanned incessantly back and forth, but he no longer felt any interest in the hostile faces of the witnesses. His mind was wandering back along the sun-lighted path of his boyhood to the days when he had mother, father, and brother, and had never suspected that he would ever lose any of them. It was a good thing, though, he told himself bitterly, a good thing that they were gone; that the last of the Kenwicks should go down in disgrace without spreading the cankerous taint to anyone else of that proud name. The imminent exposé appeared to him all at once in the guise of a mighty tree, which was holding its place in the earth only by a single supporting root. Now that root was to be chopped away. The house of Kenwick was to fall. But in its fall it would harm no one else. For the tree had long stood alone, solitary and leafless amid the white wastes of life.

He became aware at last that the buzzing noise of the court-room had increased. There seemed to be some new excitement in the air. He brought his eyes back from the courtyard and glanced inquiringly at Dayton. But he had leaned forward in response to a curt signal from the district attorney. Every one except the jurymen was talking in low tones with some one else. In their double row of seats the twelve newly-sworn judges sat solemnly silent, freighted with a sense of their responsibility.

Whence the news came Kenwick never knew, for during the moments just preceding he had been deep in reverie and had lost connection with his surroundings. But whatever it was, it seemed all at once to be upon every one's tongue. Those who did not know were eagerly seeking information from their neighbors. Kenwick's eyes swept the room, puzzled. Dayton would doubtless tell him when he finished his conference. But before he had time to gain the knowledge from this source, it was hurled at the court-room from behind the lawyer's table. The district attorney evidently deemed this the only way to quiet the increasing tumult. He got to his feet, and flapping the fugitive eye-glasses between his fingers, faced the judge and made one brief statement, unembellished by explanation or judicial comment.

"Your Honor, news has just been received from a reliable source that the house at Rest Hollow has burned to the ground!"

CHAPTER XVII

The case of the people of the State of California against Roger Kenwick opened with the testimony of Richard Glover, chief witness for the prosecution. Glover took the stand quietly and told his story in lucid, clear-cut sentences, pausing occasionally to recall some obscure detail or make certain of a date. The court reporter found it easy to take down his unhurried statements. From time to time the "freckled" eyes of the narrator rested upon the man in the prisoner's box with an impersonal, dispassionate glance. And always he met those of Kenwick fixed upon his face with a sort of awed fascination. Just so might the victim of a snake-charmer watch him while he disclosed the secret of his power.

Richard Glover told how on the afternoon of February 10, 1918, he had been summoned to the home of Everett Kenwick in New York and entrusted with a commission. He was not known to the elder Kenwick, personally, he said, but had been a boyhood friend of Isabel Kenwick, his wife. Prompted by her recommendation, Mr. Kenwick had chosen him for the delicate family confidence which they imparted.

It appeared that the younger brother and only living relative of Everett had enlisted in the service, and after several months of severe fighting at the front had been wounded. He had been sent to a convalescent home in England where his physical health had been almost completely restored. But the surgeons had discovered that the blow on his head had caused a pressure upon the brain, which they deemed incurable by means of surgery, and which they said would ultimately result in some form of mental aberration. So they had sent him back to New York, diagnosed as a permanent invalid, and had recommended that a close watch be kept upon him until such time as it might be necessary to commit him to an institution.

During the first few weeks after his return it became apparent to the brother and sister-in-law that this diagnosis of the unfortunate young man's condition was correct. He was given isolated quarters upon the third floor of the house and unostentatiously watched. Letters which he wrote were intercepted and his friends notified that he had become irresponsible. Valuables and possessions which had been intimately associated with his past life were removed from his reach, since they appeared to confuse him and hasten his mental collapse. At the

time when he, Glover, was summoned to the Kenwick home, prominent brain specialists had been consulted and had agreed that an operation would be extremely dangerous to the patient and might not succeed in restoring him to normality. And Mr. Kenwick, after what must have been weeks of painful pondering, had decided not to risk it but to follow the advice of the physicians and provide for his brother unremitting guardianship. Mrs. Kenwick had strongly favored a private sanitarium, but to this her husband would not consent. He was stricken with grief and was determined that Roger Kenwick's share of the family estate should be spent upon his comfort. And he refused to relinquish all hope of his brother's ultimate recovery. In spite of the consensus of professional opinion to the contrary, he still clung to the hope that the patient, aided by rest and youth, would recuperate. And he was a shrewd enough business man to realize that private sanitariums for the mentally disabled thrive in proportion to the number of incurables which they maintain. Complete recovery for his brother was the last thing that he might expect if he surrendered him to the mercies of such an asylum.

And so he had commissioned the witness to rent for him the California home of Charles Raeburn, an old family friend, who had built it for his bride about twelve years before, but had closed it and returned East following her tragic suicide there a few months after their marriage. Raeburn had offered it to the Kenwicks with the stipulation that the apartments which had been his wife's boudoir and sitting-room should not be used. And Everett Kenwick accepted the suggestion, feeling that if he were in his brother's position he would wish to be as far away as possible from the surroundings in which he had grown up, and particularly from the curious eyes of former acquaintances. Glover had undertaken the errand and departed immediately for Mont-Mer to open the house and employ a suitable caretaker.

"Just a moment, Mr. Glover." It was Dayton who interrupted him. "On the occasion of your call at the Kenwick home, did you see—the patient?"

"I did not. They had particularly chosen a time for the interview when he was undergoing treatment at a physician's office."

"Why did they object to your seeing him?"

"I don't think they did object, but they felt that it would be unwise just at that time. The young man was obsessed with the idea that the house was full of strange people; that there was a constant stream of guests coming and going.

There was no reason why I should see him, so they planned to avoid a meeting."

"As a matter of fact did you ever see him while he was under your surveillance?"

"No."

"On what occasion did you first see him?"

"On a street in San Francisco about two months ago."

"On that occasion did he see you?"

"I think not."

"Proceed."

The witness went on to relate how he had departed that same evening from New York, had opened up the house at Mont-Mer, and secured the services of a man whom he chanced to meet on the train and who was able to produce evidence that he had once been head physician at a Los Angeles sanitarium.

Here Dayton cut in again. "What was the name of this man?"

"Edward Marstan."

"Proceed."

Arrangements having been made with him, the witness communicated with Everett Kenwick, according to agreement, and the patient was sent West in care of an attendant, one Thomas Bailey, now deceased. Glover himself had been in Los Angeles at the time of their arrival, but had received word from Marstan that the patient was properly installed at the Raeburn residence, and the attendant returned to New York.

Dayton's voice interposed once more. "Is the Charles Raeburn home known by any other name, Mr. Glover?"

"Yes—by the name of Rest Hollow."

"Proceed."

"My own concern in the affair was simply that of business manager," the witness continued, "so I remained in Los Angeles for I could manage the financial end of it just as well from that short distance."

The district attorney suddenly broke the thread of the story here. "Then you deliberately avoided an encounter with the patient?"

"I did."

"Why?"

"The maladies which are classed as mental are particularly repugnant to me. I was under no obligation to see him, and I had a business of my own to which this was merely a side issue."

"But it is true, is it not," Dayton cut in, "that you received a generous salary from Mr. Everett Kenwick for this—long distance supervision?"

"I received from him an allowance to be spent upon the upkeep of the grounds, the comfort of the patient, the wages of an attendant, and so on. I sent him a monthly statement of the bills when I had received and checked them."

"You say you had another business; what was it?"

"Publicity writer for the Golden State Land Co. of Los Angeles."

"They own large mineral spring holdings in our neighboring county on the south, do they not?"

"Yes."

"And how long had you been interested with them at the time of this interview at the Kenwick home?"

"About six months, I think."

"Did Mr. Kenwick know of this other business interest?"

"Certainly. That is one thing that led to his choosing me as his agent. He knew that I was permanently located in southern California and that I had established myself with a reputable company. It was a guarantee of permanence—and character."

"One moment longer, Mr. Glover, before you go on. Was the elder Mr. Kenwick aware of the fact that while you were in his employ you never visited Rest Hollow but once?"

"I did visit Rest Hollow. I went there every month to see that the place was

properly kept up and the attendant on duty. But I always went at night. I held my interviews with Dr. Marstan alone."

"Go on."

The narrative skipped now to the following November when the witness told of having received a communication from Dr. Marstan informing him that, owing to a mechanical accident, Roger Kenwick had recovered his sanity; that he, the physician, had carefully tested him and was fully convinced of this. It had been impossible just at that time for Glover himself to go to Mont-Mer as he was ill. And before he had had time to send more than a brief note in reply, the attendant wrote again saying that his former patient was bitterly opposed to having his brother know of his recovery, and had threatened him, the doctor, if he betrayed the news. Kenwick, he said, wished to use his present position to get more money out of his brother for some investment that he was then planning, for he knew that in case his recovery were known, it would be a long time before the court would grant him the control of his property, and his father's will had provided that he was not to inherit his half of the estate until he should have reached the age of twenty-five.

The witness had not thought it expedient to notify Dr. Marstan of the elder Kenwick's death, so that he could not report this to the patient. They had evidently had hot words upon the subject of the disclosure of the patient's condition, Marstan being highly scrupulous and not being willing to retain his position as keeper when it was merely nominal, an arrangement upon which the young man himself insisted.

In order to prevent the patient from carrying out some sinister threat, Marstan had locked his charge into the house and gone into town probably to consult a lawyer upon the proper course for him to pursue. This much he could surmise from a half-written letter which the witness himself had found on the evening that he returned to Mont-Mer.

"And that was the state of things when you arrived at Rest Hollow on the evening of November 21?" Dayton asked.

"That was the state of things."

"Describe the condition of the house and grounds on the evening of the tragedy."

The witness did so, with the same unhurried attention to detail.

"And when you came upon the body of the dead man under the dining-room window, why did you conclude that it was your former charge, Roger Kenwick?"

"Every circumstance seemed to point to it. And I found upon the body possessions that seemed unmistakable evidence."

"Describe those possessions."

"A wrist-watch with the initials R.K. upon the inside; a silver match-case with the one initial K.; a linen handkerchief with that initial."

"But you said, did you not, in the early part of your testimony, that the patient's personal possessions had been taken from him when he became incompetent?"

"They had. But all of his things were in Doctor Marstan's possession. They were in his apartments, and any normal person could easily have found them, and naturally Kenwick would have demanded them."

"Had you ever seen a picture of Roger Kenwick to aid you in your identification of his body?"

"No. But I knew his age, and it seemed to correspond exactly with that of the dead man. Furthermore he looked like a person who was wasted by ill health. I hadn't a doubt that it was he."

"How did you think that he had met his death?"

"By suicide. I believed then that the doctor had been mistaken and that he had not made a complete recovery."

"When did you begin to suspect, Mr. Glover, that instead of being dead, the prisoner was a deliberate murderer?"

"Not until I discovered that he had made his escape from Rest Hollow. I saw his name on a hotel register in San Francisco and I became alarmed and put a detective on his track, for I felt responsible for him and was not convinced that he should be at large. But the detective reported to me that Kenwick showed absolutely no signs of abnormality. Then I came down here and followed the back trail. And I discovered that Marstan had been killed in an automobile accident on the day when he had come into town for legal aid. By inquiring of the gardener at Rest Hollow I learned that he had seen a young man out under the dining-room window talking to Kenwick early in the afternoon. The prisoner

was entreating this stranger to let him out and——"

"Let that witness give his own testimony. That will do, Mr. Glover." Then, as he was about to leave the stand, "No, just a minute. You say it was about midnight when you discovered the body. Did you notify the coroner?"

"That was my first impulse; but I found that the telephone was out of order, so I decided to wait until it was light before going in for him. But in the morning, just as I finished dressing, he came. He told me that he had been notified by some one else."

"By whom?"

"I don't know. He said that he was out of town when the message came in, and found it awaiting him when he returned. I got the impression that he didn't know himself who had reported the tragedy."

This last testimony corresponded in every detail with that given by Annisen, who described minutely his findings upon the body, the discovery, a short distance away, of the loaded revolver with a shot fired out of it, and the haggard condition of the face, indicating long invalidism. The body, he said, had lain in the morgue until the following afternoon and been viewed by scores of the morbidly curious. Not one person had recognized it, nor apparently entertained the slightest suspicion that it was not the unfortunate inmate of Rest Hollow. And so he had felt justified in accepting Richard Glover's declaration of the dead man's identity. He knew that the patient's keeper had been killed in an automobile accident the day before, and every circumstance seemed to point to a suicidal frenzy.

His story was followed by that of a gawky, frightened-looking boy who kept his eyes riveted upon the prosecution's chief witness while he talked. He disclaimed all knowledge of the arrangements concerning the patient's guardianship, his business being merely to care for the garden and furnace. He had never come into close contact with the patient himself; had only seen him at a distance sometimes, wandering about the grounds alone. He had always seemed perfectly quiet and harmless, but he, the gardener, had been afraid that he might some time have a "spell" such as he had heard of in similar cases, and so had kept carefully out of his way.

In the late afternoon of November 21, he reported, when he returned from a far corner of the place where he had been pruning, he had found the patient lying in

a faint on the floor of the garage. With some effort he had dragged him into the house and left him in the drawing-room, after bandaging his swollen leg as well as he could and forcing part of a glass of whisky down his throat. Then he had departed, after first making sure that the doors and windows on the ground floor were securely fastened. Late the following afternoon he had seen the prisoner standing at the dining-room window and had heard him call out in a threatening way to him. A moment afterward, without the slightest warning, the patient had doubled his fist and smashed the pane of glass to fragments. Convinced that this was one of the "spells" which he had dreaded, he had waited until he thought the patient was in bed and had then returned and boarded up the window.

Here Dayton interrupted. "And you believed the man in the house to be ill and alone, and yet you felt no concern about his care?"

"I didn't think he was alone. I had seen a woman around the place that afternoon, and I thought she was his nurse."

A murmur swept around the breathless court-room. Everybody in the audience made some comment to his neighbor upon this new development. The judge rapped sharply for order. "Go on," commanded the district attorney.

The witness proceeded to relate that he had gone to bed that night feeling nervous over the patient's conduct and had resolved to give up his employment at Rest Hollow. About eleven o'clock he had been roused from a fitful sleep by a knock at his door. Upon opening it he had found Gifford, the undertaker, standing on the threshold. Here he endeavored to recollect the exact words of the night caller, and after a moment's pause, produced the greeting: "Get up, boy. Do you know that there's been murder committed on this place to-night?" With Gifford he had hurried around to the dining-room side of the house and had discovered the dead body lying there under an oleander bush, near the very window which the patient had so unaccountably broken that same afternoon. Terrified, he had not paused to give the body even a fleeting glance, but had stumbled back to his room and made a hasty bundle of his clothes, determined not to pass another hour on that place. He remembered Gifford calling after him that he was not going to touch the body until the coroner had seen it. Ten minutes later he had fled, leaving his door unlocked behind him.

He was dismissed from the stand, and after a moment of whispered parley, came the demand, "Call Arnold Rogers."

A young man wearing heavy-rimmed glasses took the stand and told of his

encounter with the prisoner on the evening of November 21. He described the scene at the gate in careful detail, halting frequently to correct himself. The district attorney interrupted him in mid-sentence.

"Did it strike you at any time during the dialogue, Mr. Rogers, that the man inside the grounds might be—irrational?"

"Yes, but that idea did not occur to me until the end of the interview. Being a complete stranger in the community, I knew nothing about him, of course, but his voice and method of appeal struck me as being a little abnormal, and when I was starting away and he stretched a letter through the gate and asked me to mail it for him I was convinced that he was not rational. I was formerly a director at one our State hospitals for the insane and I know that the mania of patients to write letters and ask visitors to mail them is one of the commonest symptoms of their affliction."

"And so you paid no attention to that appeal?"

"I was escorting a lady. I planned to take her home first and then return or send somebody. My car was disabled and I felt responsible for my companion."

"Who was the lady?"

"My sister, Mrs. Paddington. I was visiting at her home. And when we had gone on our way she told me, what I had already begun to suspect, that the inmate of Rest Hollow was a mental invalid; that he was well cared for, and although the case was pathetic, we need feel under no obligation to return. His attendant, we reasoned, had already discovered him by that time and taken him back to the house. We had both dismissed him from our minds when about half an hour later a woman rushed up to our door, breathless from a long trip by foot, and told us that the inmate of Rest Hollow had killed himself; that she had found him lying dead under the dining-room window. I don't remember just who 'phoned the news in to the proper authorities, but I think it was she. My sister offered to send her into town in one of her cars, and did so. We never knew her name nor saw her again."

"And you credited the woman's story as it stood?"

"We saw no reason to doubt it. It fitted exactly with our encounter at the gate. The time was a coincidence, too. We assumed that the young man's attendant had not arrived in time to save him from suicide. And there was another reason, too,

why we did not care to give the matter more intensive investigation." He stopped and glanced appealingly at his questioner, but there was no relenting in the lawyer's eyes. "My sister had a guest visiting her to whom the name of Roger Kenwick brought—unhappy associations. She was unfortunately present at the arrival of the woman from Rest Hollow, and after the shock of the announcement was over we carefully avoided all further discussion of the tragedy. The following morning, in courtesy to our guest, I went over to the Raeburn house with some flowers from the Utopia gardens, and verified the report that the patient was dead. The next day my sister's friend left for her home in San Francisco and we considered the affair a closed incident."

The testimony of the other witnesses for the prosecution was given in due order, and the case summed up against Roger Kenwick charged him with having laid a deliberate plot to murder Marstan, his former keeper, he being the only man, he thought, who could interfere with his financial plans, and prevent him from playing upon his brother's chivalric affection.

It was pointed out that only a month before his recovery the Kenwick estate had trebled its value, owing to the fact that leather goods, which were the source of the Kenwick income, had trebled in value since the beginning of the war. From newspaper accounts and discussions with Marstan himself, the recovered patient had shrewdly sized up the situation and laid his plans. It was previously stated that the elder Kenwick had, before his brother's misfortune, kept a jealous grip upon the family purse, and that during his college days at the State University, Roger Kenwick had been obliged to eke out his allowance by doing newspaper work on one of the San Francisco dailies. Only in his softened mood was Everett Kenwick to be counted upon for continued generosity.

On the day of the tragedy, the ward had watched Marstan closely and had seen him depart for town. Earlier in the afternoon he had himself shown signs of violence in order to sustain the impression that he was still irresponsible. Kenwick's plan to kill his warden was perfectly safe, for he knew that if the crime ever came to light he could be cleared on an insanity charge. His worse punishment would be commitment to an institution, from which he could later be released by proving himself cured.

On the way out from town the doctor's car had pitched over a cliff, killing him instantly. Kenwick, ignorant of the tragedy and lying in wait for his victim, saw a man steal in late at night through the side entrance. No callers ever came to the place, so having no doubt that it was the returning warden, he had crept up

behind him in the darkness and shot him in the head with the revolver which his attendant always kept loaded for an emergency, and which the patient by spying upon his warden one night, had discovered.

A few minutes previous to the murder he had played a skilful part at the front gate, holding up the first person who passed and telling an incoherent story which he knew, coming from him, would not be believed, and which would be of valuable assistance in case it were ever necessary to prove an insanity charge.

When he discovered that he had killed the wrong man, he adopted a plan which proved him not only rational but unusually astute. From a previous conversation with the dead man, whom he now recognized as a fellow who had once come in to assist with some work on the car, he knew him to be a stranger in the community. He knew himself to be equally unknown, except by name, and it was an easy matter to exchange identities. So Kenwick had transferred to the dead man certain of his own personal possessions which he discovered after his mental recovery. He had selected these carefully and with diabolical cunning, placed them in the other man's pockets, and then made his escape from the place either by foot or in the wagon of the undertaker, which must by this time have arrived.

When he reached Mont-Mer, the testimony continued, he had given a fictitious name, gained the sympathy and credence of the doctor and undertaker, and finally, by a clever ruse, escaped from town as custodian of the body of the very man whom he had planned to kill. Knowing that Marstan was dead, he felt himself completely secure and foot-free to carry out his designs. The only person upon whom he did not reckon, because he didn't know of his existence, was Richard Glover.

The one missing link in the story was supplied by evidence which, although circumstantial, seemed undeniably convincing to the jury. The woman who had notified the coroner must also have been an inmate of Rest Hollow, the mistress of Marstan, who had lived in ease and luxury, unknown to the physician's employer or any one else. She knew that her reputation lay in Kenwick's hands. She was tired of Marstan and was eager but afraid to escape. The criminal had supplied her with the means at small cost. The time of the disclosure of the crime had been skilfully worked out between them. And it had been executed with a masterly skill. Depot authorities had reported later that a woman traveling alone had bought a ticket on the late train for San Francisco that evening. The station-agent remembered the incident perfectly. By good luck Kenwick had caught the same train. They had traveled to the city together.

Glover, who had been recalled to the stand and was giving this testimony, stated that upon dismissing the detective from his employ he had followed the case himself and was certain that Kenwick and his accomplice had lived together intermittently in San Francisco, and that he had been supplying her with funds.

It was at this point that Roger Kenwick, who had been sitting like a man frozen to his chair, suddenly electrified the court-room by springing to his feet. He had forgotten his surroundings, was contemptuous of the formalities, oblivious to everything save the insolent assurance in Richard Glover's eyes, and the steady gaze with which Marcreta Morgan's brother was regarding him. His sensitive nostrils quivered like those of a highly strung race-horse. His hands, those hands so impatient of delay, were clenched till the knuckles showed through the drawn skin like knobs of ivory. He struggled to speak but no words came. Then he became aware of the fact that the sheriff was forcing him back into his seat. Dayton leaned over and whispered sharply to him. "Sit down, man. You'll kill your case. What do you want them to think of you?"

The words recalled him to his surroundings. From sheer physical weakness he

sank back into his chair. Another moment intervened while the auditors relaxed from the moment of tension. Then out of the deathly silence came Dayton's voice again, calm and with no trace of excitement.

"You say that when you first discovered the prisoner in San Francisco you employed a detective to help you on his case, Mr. Glover. Look around the court-room. Is that man present?"

"He is." There was a shade of reluctance in the reply.

"What is his name?"

"Granville Jarvis."

The next moment Glover had stepped down from the stand and resumed his place at the far end of the long table. Dayton leaned across to his client. "Jarvis?" he inquired, his pencil poised above his pad. "Granville Jarvis; is that the name?"

The light had gone out of Kenwick's eyes and the fire out of his voice. He had crumpled down in his chair like a man suddenly overcome with a spinal disease. He looked at Dayton with dead eyes.

"The name," he said bitterly, "is Judas Iscariot!"

CHAPTER XVIII

It was two o'clock before court, which had been dismissed for lunch after Richard Glover's testimony, convened again. During the noon hour a tray containing the only tempting food which the prisoner had seen since his incarceration was brought up to his cell. It had become apparent to the jailer that he had friends, and perhaps he was moved thereby to a tardy compassion. But Kenwick, despite Dayton's admonition to "Brace up and eat a good meal," waved it indifferently aside.

"I'm done for," he said simply. "I don't see how any twelve men could hear the evidence that was presented this morning and find me innocent. And by the time Jarvis gets through telling anything he likes, and proving it——Well, it appears that every person who has been connected in any way with me since this trouble fell upon me has taken advantage of my misfortune to enrich himself. I don't care much now what they do with me. When you lose your faith in humanity it's time to die. I'm no religious fanatic, Dayton, but for these last two months I've thanked God on my knees every night of my life for having brought me back into the light. Now I wish that I had died instead."

Dayton made no further effort to rouse him from his despair. For although not of a sensitive or particularly intuitive temperament himself, he had come to realize the utter impossibility of finding this other man in his trouble. "You don't seem to have much faith in me," was all he said as he made some notes on the back of an envelope. But he finally induced his client to eat some of the food upon his tray and after the first few mouthfuls Kenwick was surprised to find that he was ravenously hungry.

"That's something like," the lawyer approved, as they made their way back through the court-house grounds. "Now you're good for another three hours."

It hadn't seemed possible to Kenwick that he was, that his nerves could stand the strain of hours and hours more of this, and there was no assurance that the ordeal would end to-day or to-morrow. But Dayton's easy assurance gave him a new grip upon himself.

They found the audience waiting and eager. None of them seemed to have moved since they had been dismissed for recess two hours before. Only the jury

were absent, but five minutes after Kenwick's arrival they filed in and took their places. The district attorney appeared to have lost interest in the case. He sat staring out of the window with a sort of wistful impatience as though he were visualizing a potential game of golf. Dayton glanced at some notes on the table at his elbow and issued his first command. "Call Madeleine Marstan."

In response to this summons one of the veiled women in the rear of the room rose and came forward. She was quietly dressed in a gown of clinging black silk and a black turban with a touch of amethyst. Every eye in the court-room was fixed upon her, but she took the oath with the unembarrassed self-possession of one long accustomed to the public gaze. Kenwick, turned toward her, detected a faint odor of heliotrope.

"Where do you live, Mrs. Marstan?" Dayton inquired.

She gave a street and number in San Francisco.

"What is your occupation?"

"I am an actress."

"Do you know the prisoner?"

Without glancing at him she replied, with her unruffled composure, "I do."

"How long have you known him?"

"About two months."

"Describe the occasion on which he was first brought to your notice."

She settled back slightly in her chair, like a traveler making herself comfortable for what promised to be a long journey. "It was on the afternoon of November 19 that my husband, a physician, came into our apartment in San Francisco and announced to me that he had just secured a remunerative position with a wealthy man down at Mont-Mer. He said that the work would begin immediately and we must be ready to leave the following day. I asked him for more details and he told me that the position was a secretaryship which would involve little labor and afford us a luxurious home with excellent salary. He had never been a success in his profession, owing chiefly to the fact that he was dissipated, and I had seriously considered leaving him and going back to the stage. But I had decided to give him another chance, and since he appeared to find my questions

concerning this new work annoying, I agreed to go and allow him to explain more fully when we should arrive.

"We went down in our own car and arrived at Rest Hollow in mid-afternoon. My husband showed me over the house and grounds and I thought I had never seen such a beautiful place. There was no one about when we came, and after he had given me every opportunity to be favorably impressed with the new home, we went to an upstairs sitting-room in the left wing, and he told me, while he smoked one of the expensive-looking cigars that he found there, further details concerning his employer. I learned that he was an invalid, a young man by the name of Roger Kenwick, who was recuperating from too strenuous service overseas. We discussed the matter for only a few minutes before my husband announced that it was time for him to go to the depot and meet his charge, who was being brought up from Los Angeles by the previous companion, who had taken him there to be outfitted with winter clothes.

"This development in the case rather startled me, and as we walked along the upper hall and over into the right wing, which he said had been recently cleaned but was not to be used, I demanded more specific details concerning the arrangement. I wanted particularly to know why there was to be a change of 'secretaries' and whether the young man himself was willing to accept the companionship of people whom he had never seen.

"My husband had been drinking. I think he must have found a well-stocked wine-closet at Rest Hollow. And he finally grew furious at my insistence. The more angry he became the more he betrayed to me the fact that there was something to conceal. He had never told me the name of the man who had offered him this position, but I knew that there must be an intermediary. While I continued to question him he opened the door of one of the rooms in the right wing, hoping, I suppose, to distract my attention. We went on with our discussion there. And at last I refused pointblank to have anything to do with the affair, and told him that I was going to leave him and go back to the profession that would afford me an honest living. This infuriated him. He lost all self-control and confessed then, what I had already begun to suspect, that young Kenwick was a mental patient and had been in no way consulted in the arrangement. This disclosure terrified me, for I knew that my husband was not a competent person for such a responsibility. Hot words followed between us, and ended in his knocking me senseless on the floor. When I recovered consciousness, perhaps an hour later, I found myself locked into the room with no possible means of escape. The blow had dislodged a vertebra and I was in

horrible pain. For a long time I lay on the bed massaging the injured place and trying to get comfortable.

"Early in the evening I heard some one being dragged into the house from the rear. I was unable to see anything, of course, but I could distinctly hear footsteps and the subsequent running around of an attendant. I concluded that my husband had returned drunk, and I was relieved to know that he had evidently not brought the patient with him. I knew that I had no recourse but to wait until the stupor had worn off and my husband came to release me. I spent a wakeful and wretched night. In the morning——"

Here a vivid and convincing description of her first encounter with the patient ensued. She drew a clear-cut picture of her own horror in hearing footsteps outside her door and of having the name "Roger Kenwick" called in through the closed portal; of her terror at finding herself unaccountably alone with a man whom she believed to be a violent maniac.

Here Dayton held up the narrative. "What evidence did he give to convince you of his insanity?'

"None at first. He seemed to talk quite rationally, and fearing that I might make him angry if I kept silence, I made evasive answers to his questions. He prepared food and sent it up to me at what I know now must have been immense physical cost to himself. I had come to the conclusion that he, like myself, was the victim of some foul conspiracy and had decided to risk confiding in him when all at once his manner changed. He began to talk wildly of finding a loaded revolver and of shooting any one who came near the place. A few minutes later, for no apparent reason, I heard him smash a window in the room just under mine. My terror increased a hundredfold, for I know absolutely nothing about the proper care of the insane. Late that same night I heard him crawl out through the broken window, and he called up to me that he was either going to get help or commit suicide.

"Almost insane myself now with terror, I waited until I heard his footsteps grow faint in the distance, then worked at the lock of my door, and at last succeeded in picking it with a pen-knife. Then I rushed downstairs, turned on the lights, and tried to make my escape. I had several of my own personal keys in my possession, and with one of these I opened the front door, which had been securely locked, I suppose by the gardener. My one frantic object was to get away and find my husband.

"But just as I got the door open I heard a shot fired from the side of the house. I hurried around there, and when I reached the spot from which the sound had come, I found just what I feared—a man lying dead under the window. I thought, of course, that it was the patient who had killed himself in a mania, as he had threatened to do. Filled with horror at the idea of leaving him there alone and uncovered in the storm, I ran back to the living-room, picked up the first thing at hand (an Indian blanket), and threw it over him. Then I hurried to the nearest house, about a mile away, and gave the alarm.

"Believing that it was my husband's neglect that had caused the tragedy, my purpose was to find him and get his version of the story before I betrayed him. So I furnished no further information to the authorities in town save that Roger Kenwick, the inmate of Rest Hollow, had committed suicide. I really knew nothing else about it but that bare fact.

"But that night I discovered, when I reached Mont-Mer, that my husband had been killed in an auto accident while coming out from the depot. I went to the morgue and identified his body, ordered the remains to be shipped north for interment, and left, unknown to any one, on the late northbound train. The undertaker told me that there had been no other victim of the tragedy, so I reasoned that the story which Mr. Kenwick had told me about a sprained leg was true, after all, that he had been injured in the catastrophe and had, by a curious freak of chance, found his way back alone to the very place that was awaiting him and in which he had been living for the preceding ten months."

Dayton declared himself satisfied with the testimony and turned the witness over to the prosecution. The district attorney had recovered his interest. "Mrs. Marstan," he said, groping for his glasses, "can you produce a certificate of marriage to Dr. Marstan?"

"I cannot. Important papers, including that, were among the few things that I took to Rest Hollow in November, and you have been informed that the place is completely destroyed."

"That will do."

She stepped down from the stand, and for the first time her eyes rested upon the prisoner. In them was an expression that would have given him new courage had he seen it, but Roger Kenwick sat motionless as a statue, his gaze fixed immutably upon the floor. It was only when the name of the next witness was called that he came back to a sense of his surroundings. "Call Granville Jarvis."

Dayton surveyed the Southerner sharply before he put his first question. "You are the detective whom Richard Glover employed in San Francisco to shadow the prisoner?"

"I am."

"How long were you in Mr. Glover's employ?"

"About two weeks."

"Two *weeks*? Why did you give up the case then?"

"Because at the end of that time I was convinced that Roger Kenwick was neither mentally unbalanced nor guilty of any crime. I communicated this opinion to Mr. Glover and resigned from further service."

"But you still continued to shadow the prisoner?"

"I still continued to cultivate his acquaintance. I considered him one of the most interesting men I had ever met."

"And your connections with him since then have been of a purely friendly character? Not in any way professional, Mr. Jarvis?"

"No, I can't say that. For a few weeks after I had resigned from Mr. Glover's service I was asked to take up the case again from a different angle; employed, I may say, by some one else."

"By whom?"

For just an instant the witness hesitated. Then, "By Mr. Clinton Morgan."

"Describe that incident, please."

Jarvis clasped his hands behind his head and stared off into space. "It was near the end of December that Professor Morgan came to my rooms one evening and asked my assistance on the case of Richard Glover."

For the first time since the beginning of the trial, the chief witness for the prosecution betrayed an unguarded emotion. The narrow slit of amber, showing between his drooping lids, widened.

"My caller," Jarvis went on, "explained to me that he and his sister, who were friends of Roger Kenwick, had stumbled upon a clue the previous day that had

made them suspect that there was foul play about his death; that perhaps he might even be alive after all, and a base advantage taken of his helplessness."

Here Dayton interjected a question. "Was there any special reason why Professor Morgan should have chanced upon you as the detective for this investigation? Had you had any previous connection with him?"

"Only an academic connection. He knew, through university affiliations, that I was out here on the coast doing some research work for Columbia in my chosen profession—criminal psychology."

"Then you are not a detective?"

"Not in the strict sense of the word. The finding out of a criminal is only the introductory part of my interest."

"Proceed with your story, Mr. Jarvis."

"Well, Professor Morgan and I had lunched together several times over at the Faculty Club on the campus, so I was not greatly surprised to receive a call from him. Furthermore, having heard the other side of this case, I was much interested in the opportunity to study it from a new angle. For while I was in Mr. Glover's employ, I had, unsuspected by Kenwick himself, subjected him to a variety of exacting psychological tests. Under the pretext of making some photographic experiments in which I was at that time interested, I had enlisted his aid on several occasions and in this way had made a rather thorough examination of his five senses, his power of association, his memory (both for retentiveness and recall), and had tried him out, by means of various athletic games, for muscular coördination, endurance, poise, and many other essentials of normality. In only one of these did I find him defective. And that one was memory.

"My research was made the more interesting by the fact that shortly after I undertook the work for Mr. Glover the subject gave me, voluntarily and quite unsuspectingly, the complete story of his strange adventure at Rest Hollow, an adventure for which he frankly confessed that he could not account. It coincided exactly with the hypothesis which I had established for him; that he had at one period of his life been mentally unbalanced, and that he had in some way re-gained his sanity but not completely his memory. When I knew that there was likely to be a crime attributed to him (for Mr. Glover had hinted as much) my interest doubled. For Mr. Kenwick had on various occasions shown himself possessed of the highest ideals and a fineness of caliber which I have not often

encountered. And so, in the employ of Professor Morgan, I shifted the focal point and turned the search-light of science upon the accuser. It has resulted in the most startling revelations."

There was an inarticulate stir in the crowded room. From the rear seats men and women strained forward to catch every word as it fell, clear-cut and decisive, from the scientist's lips. Jarvis sat with one hand thrust into his pocket, and his keen eyes fixed upon the group of lawyers below. A casual observer of the scene might easily have mistaken his position and assigned to him the role of prosecuting attorney.

"There was an insurmountable barrier, of course," he continued, "to my making any personal examination of Mr. Glover, as I had done with the former subject. One man was innocent and unsuspecting; the other, I felt certain, would be on his guard. And he was. Since I left his service, Richard Glover has avoided me. So a more indirect means of accomplishing my task had to be devised. After some consideration I decided to enlist the aid of an ally whom I knew to be both clever and discreet."

A long-drawn sigh swept the court-room. It was that sigh, a mixture of eagerness and satisfaction by means of which an audience at a theater indicates to the actors that the performance is living up to its advertisements.

"Mr. Kenwick himself," the witness went on in his calm, even voice, "had called my attention to a certain Madame Rosalie, a spiritualistic medium, who was taking the city by storm. He had interviewed her for his paper, and from his description I imagined that she might be able and willing to assist me. So I went to see her, and at the first mention of Mr. Kenwick's name she became intensely interested."

Here Dayton's voice, sounding a curious little note of exultation, broke in again. "You have referred to this medium as 'Madame Rosalie.' Was that her professional or her real name?"

"Her professional name. Her real name, as she disclosed it to me on the occasion of my first call, was Madeleine Marstan."

Another moment of silence and then the witness proceeded. "Having told me her real name, she went on to describe her unexpected encounter, a few days previously, with Roger Kenwick, who she had thought was dead. It seemed that when Kenwick had come to her for a sitting, his name had been accidentally

revealed to her by another client, and it had struck her with the force of a blow. For it recalled to her mind a horrible adventure at Mont-Mer, which she narrated for me then in detail. At first she had surmised that this must be some relative of the unfortunate young man, and she had done all she could, she said, to start him upon the track of the tragedy. When she discovered that it was the man himself, she was glad to place all her powers at my disposal. For she had returned to the city in November with two dominating purposes; first to find some employment which would bring in quick money and so pay her husband's debts and clear his name, and second to discover, if possible, the identity of the man who had led them both into the miserable Mont-Mer trap, which resulted so disastrously for every one concerned in it. She had not been able to make a stage contract, she said, for the season was too far advanced, and so she had turned to the occult, in which she had always felt a deep interest, and for which she knew herself to have an unaccountable talent. Fortunately her strange psychic ability had caught the attention of one of the university faculty and she had been given just the publicity which she needed.

"And so we deliberately plotted between us the scientific testing of Richard Glover. I prepared a list of apparently random words in which were mingled what I call 'dangerous terms'; that is, words which were connected with the adventure at Rest Hollow. When these and the other tests were ready, I induced Glover, by means of a casual suggestion from a mutual acquaintance, to seek the aid of 'Madame Rosalie.' I felt certain that if he were not intimately connected with the tragedy he would scorn this idea, and that if he were, it was exactly the time that he would turn to the supernatural for aid. And I was not mistaken. For almost immediately he called upon the clairvoyant. And his response to the tests for association was amazing even to me. If I may quote from the list of words ——" He drew a folded paper from his pocket. "Among many perfectly irrelevant terms I had smuggled in such words as 'blanket' and 'window' and 'oleander.' Madame Rosalie reported that his gaze always returned to such suggestive words (despite her admonition to look at something else) before she could change the card. The subconscious response to evil association was almost perfect. There were many other tests, of course, and by the time he had completed them he had shown an intimate knowledge of the crime at Rest Hollow and an uneasiness from which any skilful psychologist could take his starting-point. And then, as a culminating incident, he supplied to the medium, quite of his own accord, the name 'Rest Hollow,' and put to her the unexpected question, 'Where is Ralph Regan?'

"Having been thus convinced that he was the man we sought, Mrs. Marstan and I continued our investigations together. She went out with him, upon several occasions, and once, by pre-arrangement, accompanied him to the theater. On the same evening I invited Kenwick, and, all at once, called his attention to Glover. The response was like match to powder. The visual image of his former warden restored, in large degree, his memory. He was eager to reëstablish the connection. Mrs. Marstan had been careful to point out Kenwick to her escort, and the result was just what we had foreseen. It was he who evaded the encounter, supplying a pretext upon which he and Mrs. Marstan immediately left the theater.

"But Glover now suspected that he was entrapped. He had already, I knew, put another detective upon Kenwick's track. When news was published of Mrs. Fanwell's arrival in Mont-Mer, and the subsequent demand to have the disappearance of her brother investigated, he decided that his only course was to act at once. Mrs. Marstan, aided by her unmistakable psychic ability, had advised him to follow his third plan, and this plan was to have Kenwick convicted of murder."

"And this was the report that you turned over to Professor Morgan at the end of your investigation?" Dayton inquired.

"This was the report. I was working on it with him up in San Francisco until late last night. We almost missed the train trying to fit together the final details. But I think the story, as I have given it to you, is now complete."

"Now, one other thing, Mr. Jarvis. In the first part of your testimony you said that Mr. Morgan told you that he had stumbled upon a clue that had made him suspicious of Glover. Did he disclose to you the nature of that clue?"

"Not at first. I told him that I preferred to work upon some theories of my own, unprejudiced by any evidence that he might have to offer."

"And how many times have you seen Mr. Morgan since then?"

"Only once. We came down from San Francisco together last night."

"Then you made no reports to him before?"

For the first time, the witness hesitated. Then his reply came with the customary clearness. "Not to him. I have reported to Miss Morgan on several occasions."

"Then you have been really working with her upon this case?"

"Yes, almost entirely with her."

There was a very obvious reluctance in his voice now, but Dayton went on imperturbably. "When you came down from San Francisco last night, Mr. Jarvis, was Professor Morgan's sister in your party?"

"Yes."

Dayton swept a glance over the rows of faces before him. "Is Miss Morgan in the court-room now?"

"She has just come in." The promptness with which the witness had given his earlier testimony served to make his present reluctance the more apparent.

Dayton brought his eyes back to the witness-stand. "That will do."

Jarvis stepped down. The voice of the auditors, beginning in a subdued murmur, rose in marked crescendo. No word in it could be distinguished from another. Yet upon Roger Kenwick's sensitive nerves this message from the outer world registered. It was unmistakably applause.

For the first time since the trial began, he felt his mask of graven indifference slipping from him. He was trembling in every fiber, and with one unsteady hand he made a pathetic effort to quiet the other. And then there fell upon his ears like the crash of thunder Dayton's curt command, "Call Miss Morgan."

CHAPTER XIX

As the men standing in the far aisle made way for the new witness, Kenwick sat with averted eyes. Through the open window he stared out at the court-house palms which grew to gigantic size and then diminished under his blistering gaze. It was a monstrous thing, he told himself, for Clinton Morgan to allow this; to permit his sister to subject herself to such a strain. What could he be thinking about? But underneath his miserable apprehension for her there was something else; something else that sent the fiery blood rioting through his veins. For she must have been willing. Over and over he repeated to himself this assurance. She must have been willing to come to his defense, for had she not been, they could have found a way to avoid it.

Marcreta Morgan, in long fur-trimmed motor-coat and dark veil, took the place which Granville Jarvis had vacated. She had none of Madeleine Marstan's calm self-assurance, but although she gave her testimony in a low voice, it was distinctly audible throughout the court-room. She sat with one gloved hand clasping the arm of the chair and her eyes resting upon Dayton. Only once, at the very end of the examination, did she raise them to meet the argus-eyed spectators. Dayton put his questions in an easy conversational tone as though he and the witness were alone in the room.

"Miss Morgan, how long have you known the prisoner?"

"About two years."

"Describe the occasion of your first meeting."

She did so in words that sounded carefully rehearsed.

"And after he left San Francisco to go East and visit his brother did you ever hear from him?"

"Yes. He wrote frequently, telling me about his brother's recovery from illness and other affairs, and then later that he had decided to enlist in the army."

"At that time, Miss Morgan, had you ever known the State's witness here, Richard Glover?"

"It was about that time that I first met him."

"Describe your first encounter with him."

Again the carefully prepared report. But she was gaining in self-possession now, and the veil seemed to annoy her. With steady fingers she reached up and removed it. Clinton Morgan, watching her from the front row of seats, with a hawklike vigilance, was suddenly reminded of that Sunday night in the old library when she had first broken her long silence concerning Roger Kenwick, and had seemed all at once to come into a belated heritage.

The jurymen were leaning slightly forward in their seats, their eyes fixed upon the regal, fur-coated figure with delicately flushed profile showing clear-cut as a cameo against the frosted window-pane. Dayton thought that he caught an elusive fragrance that reminded him of something growing in his mother's garden.

"And how many times," he proceeded, "how many times have you seen Richard Glover during the past year?"

"I can't say exactly. For several months after our first meeting I didn't see him at all. But during the last three months his calls have been more and more frequent."

"Has your brother known of these visits?"

"My brother was in government service in Washington until about two months ago. He didn't know of them until he returned."

"And has he approved of them?"

"No, I can't say that he has."

"Did he ever give any reason for his opposition?"

"He told me that he suspected Mr. Glover of being an adventurer who was in need of——"

Here the district attorney interrupted. "We object. The suspicions of another person are irrelevant, incompetent, and have nothing to do with the case."

"Sustained," the judge decreed. "Stick to the facts, Mr. Dayton."

"During those three months, Miss Morgan, has Richard Glover made an effort to

induce you to marry him?"

Her reply was given in a very low voice, but Dayton was sure that the jury caught it and he did not ask her to repeat. It was evident that the audience heard it, too, for another murmur rose and trailed off into silence before the lawyer went on. "Is it true that *you* were the one who discovered the clue which led you and your brother to seek the services of Mr. Jarvis on this case?"

She acknowledged it with a single word.

"And what was that clue?"

The gloved fingers closed a little closer over the arm of the chair. And then followed a story which caused Roger Kenwick to tear his gaze away from the fantastic palm-trees and fix it upon Richard Glover's face. There was no resentment in his eyes, but only the dawning of a great light. Granville Jarvis, watching him as a physician might watch beside the bedside of an unconscious patient, knew by the leaping flame in those somber eyes that the last lap of the long journey had been covered, and that Roger Kenwick's memory had come home to him. But if that knowledge brought him a scientist's satisfaction, he gave no sign of it. After that one intent moment, his eyes returned to the witness-stand and fixed themselves upon Marcreta Morgan's face. Dayton was proceeding relentlessly.

"If you knew from the first that Richard Glover had stolen this story which he read to you as his own, why didn't you relate the circumstance to Mr. Kenwick when you saw him on the night that he was arrested for murder?"

The reply came haltingly, as though the witness were feeling her way over uneven ground. "My brother and I had consulted Mr. Jarvis about that and he had advised against it. He didn't wish to arouse any suspicions in—in the prisoner's mind just then. And—well, you see, Mr. Kenwick and I had not seen each other since his—illness and during that first meeting we both avoided everything connected with—with the tragedy as much as possible. Of course if we had known that this charge of—of crime was to be preferred against him, I suppose we would have acted differently."

This was no carefully rehearsed response, but nothing that she could have said would have disclosed more clearly the inside workings of the opposition's conspiracy. The web that had been woven around the prisoner had enmeshed with him every one who had ever been intimately associated with his past.

And now that romance had entered upon the sordid scene the whole aspect of the case was changed. The air became charged all at once with an electric current of sympathy. To every man and woman in the room Richard Glover now appeared in the guise of a baffled adventurer, and Roger Kenwick as a man who had loved, and because of cruel circumstance had lost. But had he really lost? The crux of public interest shifted with the abruptness of a weathercock, from mystery to romance.

"You assert, Miss Morgan, that you knew this story, 'A Brother of Bluebeard,' to be the one which the prisoner had read to you before he left for the East almost two years ago. What proof could you furnish of this?"

"At the time that Mr. Glover read the story to me I had in my possession the sequel to it, which Mr. Kenwick had sent me in manuscript for my criticism, just before he left for training-camp. It used many of the same characters and was rooted in the same plot."

"Could you produce that manuscript?"

"Mr. Jarvis can produce it. I turned it over to him."

The former witness leaned forward and laid a heap of pencil-written manuscript upon the table. But Dayton scarcely glanced at it. With one hand he pushed it aside, and then shifted the current of his interest into another channel. "When, and by what means, Miss Morgan, did you discover that Roger Kenwick had returned from France mentally disabled?"

Her reply to this question came in a voice that was struggling against heavy odds for composure. "It was exactly one year ago to-day that I received that news. Several letters of mine to—the prisoner were returned to me unopened. And with them came a communication from Mr. Everett Kenwick telling me that—that it had become necessary for them to send his brother to a private asylum."

"Did you know where that asylum was?"

"Not then. He told me that he was debating over several different places but that he had almost decided upon a friend's home in southern California. He didn't tell me where this home was. I think he realized that—that I would rather not know."

"And when did you discover that that place was Mont-Mer?"

"On the night that Mr. Kenwick was reported dead."

A murmur that was distinctly a wave of sympathy filled the chamber. But eagerness to catch the next question quieted it.

"After that first letter telling you about the prisoner's misfortune, did you ever hear from Mr. Everett Kenwick again?"

"Only once. Just a week before he died, he wrote again. He had just lost his wife and he seemed to have a premonition that he was not going to live very long."

She was feeling for her handkerchief in the pocket of the fur-trimmed coat. Some of the men in the court-room averted their eyes. The face of more than one woman softened. Clinton Morgan sat regarding his sister with a curious composure. In his eyes was that mixture of compassion and awe that he had worn on the night when the gold and ivory book had betrayed to him her secret.

"Yes?" Dayton went on gently, but with the same relentless persistence. "He wrote to you again? And what did he say?"

"He said that he wanted me to have something that had belonged—to his brother. He told me that he felt that Roger Kenwick would have wished me to have it. And with the letter there came a box in which I found——"

She had finished her search in the pocket of the motor-coat, and now she held something between her gloved fingers. "Mr. Everett Kenwick himself had only received it a short time before. There had been some delay and confusion about it, owing I suppose to his brother having been sent home—in just the way that he was. He himself never knew that he had won it. But it was such a wonderful display of courage——And the French officer whose life he had saved sent a letter, too, saying that France was grateful and wanted to express her appreciation in some way so——"

And then she held it up before them; before the lawyers and the jury and the crowd of spectators—a bit of metal on its patch of ribbon. Holding it out before them, she sat there like a sovereign waiting to confer a peerage. And not the judge's gavel nor the commanding voice of the district attorney could still the tumult that rose and swelled into tumultuous applause.

On the day following the notorious Kenwick murder trial, the Mont-Mer papers

carried little other news. A special representative from the "San Francisco Clarion" and several Los Angeles journalists fed their copy over the wires and had extras out in both cities by eight o'clock.

"Kenwick Acquitted" was the head-line which his own paper ran, with his picture and one of Richard Glover sharing prominence upon the front page. And because of Kenwick's previous connection with this daily and the fact that the two star witnesses for the defense were well known in the Bay region, the "Clarion's" story was the most comprehensive and colorful.

It opened with a report of Dayton's speech which, it appeared, had electrified every one in the court-room, including the prisoner himself. But it had been unnecessary for the attorney to make a plea for his client, after the quietly dramatic testimony of the last witness for the defense. In thrilling terms the "Clarion" described Kenwick's final service at the front, when he had made his way alone across No-Man's-Land and saved for France one of her most gallant officers, and had given in exchange that thing which is more precious than life itself. Only through an accident, which had killed the man who had meant to batten upon his misery, had he been released from a pitiable bondage.

Having thus sketched in his "human interest," the reporter proceeded to tell the story which had proved so overwhelmingly convincing to the jury and audience. How, in his skilfully planned narrative, Richard Glover had transposed the identities of the two dead men. How, upon receiving his commission from Everett Kenwick, he had first turned over his charge to Ralph Regan, admitted by his own sister to be an addict to drugs and a ne'er-do-well whom she was helping, in a surreptitious way, to support. How the accounts, forwarded from the Kenwick lawyer in New York, showed that Regan must have received out of the arrangement only his living and enough of the drug to keep him satisfied but not wholly irresponsible. How, upon his own infrequent visits to the patient (whom he himself had conducted across the continent instead of the mythical Bailey) Glover had foreseen two months before the tragedy that Regan could no longer be relied upon and had told him that he was about to be dismissed.

How he had then secured the services of one Edward Marstan, whom he believed to be without family, and who represented himself as a physician in good standing but heavily in debt. How the arrangement had been made that he assume charge of the patient at the Mont-Mer depot, whither Kenwick was to be brought up from a day's sojourn in Los Angeles by Regan. How the physician, accompanied by his wife, had arrived from San Francisco that very day; how

Marstan had quarreled with his wife, and leaving her unconscious in a room at Rest Hollow, had gone into town to get his charge. How, on the way out from town he had been killed in an accident while driving his own car, and how, by a curious fate, Kenwick had been restored to sanity and had found his way back alone to his former asylum.

The story then went on to relate how Ralph Regan, evidently desperate over his loss of a home and drug supplies, had returned to Rest Hollow by stealth the following night, either to make a plea to the new caretaker or to search for drugs, and of how, finding the house dark and apparently deserted, he had forsaken all hope of reinstatement and had ended his life with the revolver which he had brought either for murder of Marstan or for suicide. The shot which he fired, the paper stated, had evidently been used to test his own nerve or the cartridges; and it had done its work. Letters written to his sister a few weeks before the tragedy, and produced by her in court, indicated a depression amounting to acute melancholia.

Recalled to the witness-stand and subjected to crucial cross-examination, the gardener at Rest Hollow had broken down in his testimony, admitted that he was afraid of Glover, and that although he had been in too dazed a condition on the fatal night to examine the body of the dead man, he knew Ralph Regan to have been the former attendant and had frequently talked to him about the patient's symptoms, about which Regan appeared to know little and care less.

The narrative then went on to tell how Richard Glover had discovered among the possessions of his charge certain manuscripts which he deemed suitable for publication, and how he had, after the death of the elder Kenwick, sold one of them under the name of Ralph Regan, choosing a real rather than a fictitious name in order that he might shift the theft to helpless shoulders if it were ever discovered. How he had, with the Kenwick capital entrusted to him, invested in large realty holdings which had completely absorbed his attention. How he had padded his accounts in order to wring extra money from Everett Kenwick under the guise of "special treatments" for the patient and so on. How on the night of the fatality he had driven to Rest Hollow from Los Angeles to give some final instructions to the new employee, and how, stumbling upon the dead body of Regan, he had been shocked to find himself involved in a tragedy. How he had then cold-bloodedly decided to have the body identified as Kenwick, partly to save himself from the charge of criminal neglect and partly because he knew that Everett Kenwick had left in his will a bequest that was to come to him "for faithful service" upon the death or recovery of his brother. How, not dreaming

that his charge would ever recover, he had thus used his death as a means of gaining extra funds which he badly needed just at that time.

How he had accordingly selected certain of the patient's personal possessions with which he had been entrusted, to deceive the coroner. How all the subsequent action had seemed to play into his hands: the coroner's easy acquiescence in the suicide theory and the identity of the body; the chance discovery, through Arnold Rogers, that the story of Kenwick's self-destruction had already been accepted by the community.

How, preceding the coroner's inquest, Glover had spent the morning tracing the antecedent action of the tragedy and had heard of the accident which had killed Marstan. How he had erred in suspecting that the real victim of the tragedy was Kenwick and that the attendant had had the body identified as his own and then made his escape, fearing to communicate the news of the disaster to his employer. How he, Glover, had been startled to discover later that Kenwick was not only alive but had apparently recovered his mental health.

The remainder of the story was given as the testimony of Madeleine Marstan, well-known favorite in the former Alcazar stock company, and Granville Jarvis, expert psychologist, whose skilful work was a strong plea for the admission of that newest of the sciences into court-room procedure.

During this latter testimony, the "Clarion" asserted, interest had been divided between the ultimate fate of the accused and the valuable contributions which the laboratory experiments of the witness had given the case. The word-tests which he had provided to the medium were, he had explained, one of the surest means of discovering the train of associations which lodge in the guilty mind. He had never been convinced that Glover himself had committed a murder, but suspected that his crime lay in trying to fasten it upon a man whom he knew to be both innocent and helpless. The cards, containing a mixture of irrelevant and relevant words, had been shown him and then he had been instructed to turn his head in the opposite direction. These instructions he had carefully observed except in the cases of terms which held evil associations. In such cases his eyes almost invariably turned back to the card with the printed word. Such terms as "gravel" and "oleander" had produced this attraction. But they had also aroused his suspicions. And from the day of his first call upon "Madame Rosalie" the situation between them had been a succession of clever manœuvers. Neither one of them had dared to let the other go. But in this encounter Mrs. Marstan had had the advantage. What he was able to find out about her was little compared with

what she had discovered concerning him.

That she possessed unmistakable psychic powers could not be disputed. By a means of communication, which she could not herself explain, she had received at the time of Roger Kenwick's interview with her a message from the spirit of Isabel Kenwick, confessing that it was she who had unwittingly brought Richard Glover into his life, and entreating his forgiveness.

As to the concluding story of the actress, it was concerned with her description of how she had identified the body of her husband at the morgue on the evening of her flight from Rest Hollow; of how she had turned all arrangements for its shipment and burial over to the Mont-Mer and San Francisco undertakers, desiring to figure as little as possible in connection with the death of the man who had ruined her life. Of how she had succeeded in paying the debts against his name and had recently signed a stage contract with an eastern theatrical company.

When the trial was ended the crowd that jammed the room rose and surged toward the man in the prisoner's box, like a human tidal wave. "Keep them back, Dayton," Kenwick implored. "I don't want to talk to them."

Somehow his attorney managed to check the onrush, and the throng of congratulatory spectators was headed toward the exits. The room was almost empty when some one touched the prisoner's arm.

"Can you give me a few words?" It was one of the local reporters. "You're a newspaper man yourself, Mr. Kenwick, and you know how it is about these things."

Kenwick shook him off. "Come around later, to the hotel, if you like," he said, and turned to take a hand that was timidly held out to him.

"I didn't know whether you'd be willing to speak to me or not, Mr. Kenwick. But I just wanted to tell you that I'm satisfied, more than satisfied with—the way it has all come out."

"I am glad to hear that, Mrs. Fanwell," Kenwick told her gravely. "I would never have been quite satisfied myself unless I had heard you say that. I wish you would leave your address with Dayton, for, you see, I feel a little bit responsible for you, and I would like to put you in the way of getting a new hold on life."

The only other person in the room with whom he stopped to talk was Madeleine

Marstan, who stood in conversation with Dayton near the door. To her his words of thanks were the more eloquent perhaps because they came haltingly, impeded by an emotion which he could not master.

"It was nothing," she told him. "Nothing that I didn't owe you, Mr. Kenwick."

"I don't see that you owed me anything," he objected. "As the affair has developed, we were both the victims of an ugly plot. It certainly was not your fault. And once out of that accursed house, *you* were free."

"Not my fault—no," she repeated, "but my responsibility afterward." She gazed past him out of the window where, at the curb, Arnold Rogers was assisting a fur-coated figure into the Paddington limousine. "You see, Edward Marstan was my husband and——Well, some day you may come to realize, Mr. Kenwick, that when a woman has loved, there is no such word as 'free.'"

At the foot of the stairway Kenwick spoke with an almost curt suppression to Granville Jarvis. "I'm going over to the hotel with Morgan. Come over there."

The other man made no reply save a slight inclination of his head, and there was in his eyes an expression which haunted and mystified the released prisoner.

"Jarvis is a wizard," he said to Clinton Morgan as they walked the few short blocks to Mont-Mer's leading hostelry. "If they ever let down the bars of the court-room to men like that, they'll revolutionize legal procedure. He seems to have seen this case from every angle."

"From more angles than you imagine," his friend replied. "And he had let me in on some of the most interesting of his findings that were not revealed in court. For instance, he examined that gardener this morning, just for his own satisfaction. The boy was willing, even flattered by the attention. Jarvis told me afterward that a witness like that ought to be ruled out of court. And he is typical of the mass of men and women who assist in acquitting the guilty and sending the innocent to the gallows. The average physician examining him would pronounce him normal. He can hear a sound distinctly, for instance, but he is afflicted with that common defect, the equivalent, Jarvis says, of color-blindness in the visual realm, which makes it impossible for him to tell whether the sound comes from behind or in front of him. And he lacks completely a visual memory. He could recall the exact words that Gifford said to him on the night of the suicide but he couldn't remember whether the body was covered or uncovered when he saw it. And as for the tests with Glover——By the way, what are you

going to do with Glover?"

"I don't know yet. I haven't got that far. I think I can forgive him everything except that infamous story about Everett being close with me while I was under age. Why, I had too much money while I was in college, Morgan. That's the chief reason why I didn't push my literary work with greater zeal. The creative temperament is naturally indolent. It requires a spur, not necessarily a financial one, but so much the better if it is. Of course Glover and I will have to have a financial reckoning. I can see now why my frantic messages to our family lawyer were never answered. I suppose he's had dozens of communications from people purporting to be connected by blood or marriage with the Kenwick estate. Yes, Glover has got some things to answer to me for, but——" His mind flew back to that last evening that he had spent in the fire-lit living-room on Pine Street. "He brought hell into my life for a time," he ended slowly. "But he brought—something else into it, too."

It was half an hour later, after Kenwick had bathed and dressed for dinner, that Granville Jarvis came up to his room. Kenwick admitted him with an inarticulate word of greeting. Then while with fumbling fingers he put on a fresh collar, he made an attempt at normal conversation.

"Been expecting you," he said. "Morgan is down in the lobby. We'll all have dinner here first and then——"

"Can't do it," Jarvis cut in. "I have another engagement for dinner, and I'm leaving town on the eight-forty northbound. I just ran up to say good-by and—good luck."

"Where are you going?"

Jarvis smiled. "To Argentina, so far as you are concerned. But you can call it Columbia if you like. I'm returning to my work there. You see, I've been away on leave."

"You've got to stay long enough for me to tell you something," Kenwick's voice cut in authoritatively. "But you couldn't stay long enough, Jarvis, for me to thank you for what you've done."

His caller held up a hand. "Please don't. Not that—please."

"But," Kenwick went on, "you've got to hear an apology. I was just about on the verge of a collapse over there, and when you got up in court as the representative

of Glover——Well, I didn't know the game, you see and I thought——"

"I know; Brutus." It was Jarvis who finished the sentence. "And in a sense, you were right," he went on slowly. "For what I did, I did—not for you."

"You did it for science, of course; because to you I was an interesting case. But what can I ever do to repay you? How can——"

"I have been paid." The same haunting, baffling expression was in the scientist's eyes, and he was not looking at the man whom his testimony had freed.

"Oh, I don't mean money!" Kenwick cried hotly. "I know you have that!"

"I don't mean money, either." He forced his gaze back to his host. And then that sixth sense which is in the soul of every creative artist awoke in Kenwick's being and made his eyes luminous with understanding.

Jarvis picked up his hat from the chair into which it had dropped. "I'm going out to the Paddingtons' for dinner," he said casually. "I'll have about——" He snapped open the cover of his watch, then closed it again. "The most devilish thing about life on this planet, Kenwick, is that we can't do very much for each other. The game is largely solitaire. But for any good that I ever did I've been well repaid. Any man ought to be satisfied, I think, when the gods allow him two full hours—in Utopia."

CHAPTER XX

It was the morning after his acquittal that Kenwick and Marcreta Morgan drove out of the Paddington gateway in one of the Utopia machines. They turned to the left and took the stretch of perfect asphalt road that led to the old Raeburn house.

The mystery of its destruction had never been explained. Richard Glover, and every one else who was connected with the case of Ralph Regan, had proved a satisfactory alibi. The owner of Rest Hollow had been notified by wire of its destruction and he had replied with orders that the grounds were to be kept locked and admission denied to all callers. It had undoubtedly been one of the handsomest homes in a community of handsome homes, but since the first days of its existence fate had destined it for tragedy. And perhaps its owner was relieved to know that only a pile of whitening ashes marked the grave of his own romance and the prison of another man's hope. At all events, the mystery of its passing never has been solved, and conjecture concerning it is still a favorite topic around the tea-tables of Mont-Mer's fashionable suburban district.

"But I want to *see* it in ruins," Kenwick had told Marcreta after their first radiant hour together. "I want to know that it is really gone off the face of the earth, so that when it comes to me in memory I can assure myself that it is only a dream."

They turned the last corner and came suddenly in sight of the tall iron gate. Across it a sinister chain swung ominously, warning the world away from communication with that most dreadful affliction that can befall a human soul. The ruins of Rest Hollow loomed somber and shapeless before them, and Roger Kenwick brought his car to a stop in the very spot where Arnold Rogers had once halted, hesitated, and then gone on his way. Guarding the pile like a battered but relentless sentinel was the tall, charred chimney of the dining-room. As he looked at it, Kenwick's hand sought instinctively for that of the woman beside him, as though to assure himself of her reality. And then he heard himself ask the question that for so long had beaten against his brain.

"How could you do it? How could you send me away that night, dear, into the horrors of war and—this, without hope?"

"I couldn't know," she told him desperately. "I couldn't foresee what was coming. And I wanted you to win a place in the world. I wanted you to win, as I knew

you could if you were unhampered by——"

"Unhampered!" He echoed the word incredulously, as though it were quite new and its meaning not clear. "Is any one ever hampered by love and inspiration and all that——"

"You don't understand," she said. "Nobody can understand physical disability except those who have suffered it. My mother had a sister who was a bed-ridden invalid. She helped her husband to find his place in the world and keep it. But he never seemed to realize that she had helped him. He always thought, though I suppose he never said, that his marriage had held him back. And she died at last of a broken heart. Through all my youth I had her tragedy before me."

There was a moment of silence between them. And then Kenwick spoke slowly. "You hadn't much faith in me, Marcreta. You admit now that you loved me, yet you hadn't much faith—in my character or my——"

"But love comes a long time before faith, Roger. It always does. And I was younger then. I didn't know so much about life and—and character. But, oh, when they wrote me about this! I would have given anything on earth to have lived over again our last night together!"

"I know! I know!" His voice was vibrant with self-reproach.

"Your brother must have been splendid," she went on. "He wrote me such a wonderful letter. But he couldn't soften it; nobody can ever dilute the big tragedies of life. We must drink them unstrained. I knew that you were somewhere in this county, and when I came down here, just that one time, I liked to feel that I was near you. I couldn't have endured to see you, but I wanted to be near you for a little while before—I did anything else. And then that night when you came back, I couldn't be sure——Everything was so changed. You were so different from the carefree boy who had gone away. I knew, of course, that you would be; in a sense, I wanted you to be. But I didn't want you to feel bound by anything that had gone before. I was afraid you might feel that way. Oh, a woman is at such a disadvantage, Roger. She is always at a disadvantage if the man she loves is honorable and chivalrous."

"I had work to do," he reminded her gently. "I had to quiet the title to my name. For when a woman marries a man, Marcreta, she marries his past, every bit of it. Before I could offer my life to you again, I had to be certain that every minute of it was clean and decent and above reproach. I was not willing to let any of it go

on the grounds of irresponsibility. I never would have been satisfied. And you never would have been satisfied. There would always have been for both of us terrible moments of doubt. The bramble-bush lay between us. I had to tear it away first; I had to tear it away and look bravely at whatever lay underneath."

A shaft of golden sunlight suddenly broke through the January clouds and slanted across the road. Roger Kenwick's eyes followed it as though seeking for the treasure that might lie revealed at last at the end of a rainbow. A sharp exclamation escaped him. And he felt the quick response of the hand that still lay in his.

Drawing the heavy motor-cloak closer about her, he helped Marcreta Morgan out of the car and guided her to a spot about a hundred yards on the other side of the iron gate. "I remember now!" His words came in the low, awed voice of one who suddenly encounters in broad daylight some object that has played conspicuous part in an evil and oft-recurring dream.

"At last!" he said, and stood rooted to the roadside gazing at the thing for which, during the last two months, he had been so desperately groping. "This one thing," he went on, "this one thing about those impenetrable months here I do remember. I believe that if I had chanced to see it on that afternoon of my recovery, if I had only chanced to come this way instead of around by the other road, it might have restored to me some memory of this place."

They stood now on the edge of the strip of pavement, where dead leaves spread a spongy carpet between the asphalt and the barbed-wire fence that bordered the opposite estate. And what they looked upon was a huge boulder, half embedded in the earth. By some mighty and persistent force it had been rent asunder, and now, up through the cleft which tore its surface with a long jagged scar, a sapling eucalyptus-tree, perfectly shaped and beautifully proportioned, had pushed its way. A zephyr or perhaps a bird had sown the seed in this rock-bound prison. And with a vitality that appeared incredible it had taken root and grown there, stretching vigorous, red-tipped leaves heavenward. In some miraculous manner its tap-root had found the sustaining soil, and its flame-colored crown the sunlight. There it stood, on the lonely road to Rest Hollow, a living torch of liberty, flaunting its heroic triumph above the shattered body of its foe.

"On the day that Glover first brought me here, I saw that tree." Kenwick's voice was scarcely more than a whisper. "I remember looking out at it from an opening in the fence. I didn't know just why I was here, but I had a sense of—I can't

describe it to you—but it was a sense of *imprisonment*. I knew that if I wanted to get out of that place I couldn't do it, and there's no feeling on earth like that. And then I saw—this, and it thrilled me. In a curious, unexplainable way it gave me hope. I don't recall anything else about the place, and I don't remember whether I ever saw this again. But during these last two months I have been looking for something that I knew I had lost out of my life, and here it is."

Marcreta Morgan reached over and touched the sapling's damp bark with reverent fingers. From a cleft in the conquered boulder came the pungent odor of the crushed leaves that were sustaining this new life. She turned to the man beside her with shining eyes.

"The resurrection!" she cried.

He drew her close to him beneath the tender branches of the valiant little sapling.

"An imprisoned soul," he whispered, "liberated at last—by the miracle of love."

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