JULIA FRANCE
AND HER TIMES
GERTRUDE ATHERTON

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JULIA FRANCE AND HER TIMES

A NOVEL

BY

GERTRUDE ATHERTON

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TO
MRS. FISKE

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BOOK I
MRS. EDIS

I

THE entrance of a British cruiser into the harbor of St. Kitts was always followed by a ball at Government House in the little capital of Basse Terre. To-night there was a squadron of three at anchor; therefore was the entertainment offered by the island's President even more tempting than common, and hospitality had been extended to the officials and distinguished families of the neighboring islands, Nevis, Antigua, and Monserrat. On Nevis there remained but one family of eminence, that great rock having been shorn long since of all but its imperishable beauty.

But Mrs. Edis of "Great House," an old stone mansion unaffected by time, earthquake, or hurricane, and surrounded by a remnant of one of the oldest estates in the West Indies, was still a personage in spite of her fallen fortunes, and to-night she contributed a young daughter. The introduction of Julia Edis to society had been expected all winter as she was several months past eighteen, and the President had offered her a birthday fête; but Mrs. Edis, with whom no man was so hardy as to argue, had replied that her daughter should enter "the world" at the auspicious moment and not before. This was taken to mean one of two things: either that in good time a squadron would arrive with potential husbands, or (but this, of course, was mere frivolous gossip) when the planets proclaimed the hour of destiny. For more than thirty years Mrs. Edis had been suspected of dabbling in the black arts, incited originally by an old creole from Martinique, grandson of the woman who so accurately cast the horoscope of Josephine. For the last eighteen of these years it had been whispered among the birds in the high palm trees that a not unsimilar destiny awaited Julia Edis.

Therefore, when the word ran round the great ball-room of Government House that the big officer with the heavy mustache and curiously hard, shallow eyes, who had pursued the debutante from the moment she entered with her fearsome mother, was Harold France, heir presumptive to a dukedom, whose present incumbent was sickly and unmarried, the dowager pack (dressed for the most part in the thick old silks and "real lace" of the mid-Victorian period) crystallized the whisper for the first time and condescended to an interest in astrology.

"But it *would* be odd," said the wife of the President, "although I, for one, neither believe in that absurd old science, nor that there ever was any basis for the story. No doubt it originated with the blacks, who love any superstition."

"Ah!" said the wife of the Magistrate, "but it is curious that the blacks on Nevis,

led by the Obi doctors, besieged Great House for a night, some twenty years ago. In the morning they were driven off by Mrs. Edis herself, a whip in one hand and a pistol in the other. She handled the situation alone, for Mr. Edis was a—ill—as usual.”

“Drunk,” said the blunter lady of quality. “And so were the blacks. By dawn they were sober, sick, and flaccid. A woman of ordinary resolution could have dispersed them—and Mrs. Edis!” She shrugged her shoulders significantly.

One of the younger women, the wife of an Antigua official, chimed in eagerly. “But do you really believe she is a—a— Oh, it is too silly! I am almost ashamed to say it!”

“Astrologer,” supplied the wife of the Magistrate, who had an unprovincial mind, although she had spent the best of her years in the islands. “Look at her.”

Mrs. Edis was sitting apart from the other women, talking to the President, the Captain of the flagship, and several officers of riper years than the steaming young men in their hot uniforms frisking about the room with the cool white creole girls. Mrs. Edis had not liked women in her triumphant youth, and now in her embittered age (she was past sixty, for Julia was the last of many children), she classed them as mere tools of Nature, purveyors of scandal, and fools by right of sex and circumstance. Even in the early nineties, at all events in the world’s backlands, it was still the fashion for women of strong brains and character to despise their own sex, and Mrs. Edis had not sailed out of the Caribbean Sea since her return to Nevis, from her first and only visit to England, forty years ago. Living an almost isolated life on a tropic island, she held women in much the same regard as the unenlightened male does to-day, despite his growing uneasiness and horrid moments of vision. Upon the rare occasions when she deigned to enter the little world of the Leeward Islands, she greeted the women with a fine old-time courtesy, and demanded forthwith the attention of high officials too dignified or too portly to dance. The men, since she was neither beautiful nor young, were amused by her caustic tongue, and correspondingly flattered when she chose to be amiable.

It was difficult to believe that she had once been handsome—beautiful no one had ever called her. She was a very tall woman, already a little bowed, raw-boned, large of feature, save for the eyes, which were small, black, and piercing. Her black hair was still abundant, strong of texture, and changing only at the temples; her skin was sallow and much wrinkled, her expression harsh, haughty, tyrannical. There was no sign of weakness about her anywhere, although, now and again, as her eyes followed the bright figure of her daughter, they softened before flashing with pride and triumph.

She found herself alone with the Captain and turned to him abruptly.

“This is the eighth time Lieutenant France has taken my girl out,” she announced. “And it is true that he will be a duke?” Mrs. Edis disdained finesse, although she was capable of hoodwinking a parliament.

The Captain started under this direct attack. His large face darkened until it looked like well-laid slabs of brick pricked out with white. He cleared his throat, glanced uneasily at the formidable old lady, then answered resolutely: —

“Better take your girl home, ma’am, and keep her close while we’re in harbor.”

The look she turned on him under heavy glistening brows, that reminded the imaginative Scot of lizards, and were fit companions for her thick dilating nostrils, made him quail for a moment: like many sea martinets he was shy with women of all sorts. Then he reflected (never having heard of the black arts) that looks could not kill, and returned to the attack.

“I mean, madam, that France is not a decent sort and would have been chucked long since but for family influence.”

“What do you mean by not a decent sort, sir?”

“He’s dissipated, vicious—”

“All young men sow their wild oats.” Mrs. Edis had forgotten none of the early and mid-Victorian formulæ, and would have felt disdain for any young aristocrat who did not illustrate the most popular of them.

“That’s all very well, but France’s crop is sown in a soil fertile to rottenness, and it will take him a lifetime to exhaust it. I’d rather see a daughter of mine in her coffin than married to him, duke or no duke.”

Mrs. Edis favored him with another look, under which his hue deepened to purple: poor worm, he was but the son of an industrious merchant, and he knew that the sharp eyes of this old woman, despite the eagle in his glance and a spine like a ramrod, read his family history in his honest face.

“It’s God’s truth, ma’am. It’s not that I mind a young fellow’s being a bit wild; there’s plenty that are and make good husbands when their time comes. But with France it’s different.” He hesitated, then floundered for a moment as if unaccustomed to analysis of his fellows. “It’s not that he’s a cad—not in the ordinary sense—I mean as far as manners go—. I’ve never seen a man with better when it suits him—or more insolent when *that* suits him; and they’re more natural to him, I fancy, for he’s fair eaten up with pride—out of date in that respect, rather. It’s the fashion, nowadays, for the big-wigs to be affable and easy and democratic, whether they feel that way or not—however, I don’t mind a man’s feeling his birth and blood, for like as not he can’t help it, although it doesn’t make you love him. No. It’s more like this: I believe France to be entirely without heart. That’s something I never believed in until I met him—that a human being lived without a soft spot somewhere. But I’ve seen an expression in his eyes, especially after he’s been drinking, that appalls me, although I can only express it by a word commonplace enough—heartless. It’s that—a heartless glitter in his eyes, usually about as expressionless as glass marbles; and although I’m no coward, I’ve felt afraid of him. I don’t mean physically—but absolute lack of heart, of all human sympathy, must give a person an awful power—but it’s too uncanny for me to

describe. I'm not much at words, ma'am, and, for the matter of that, I shouldn't have got on the subject at all, it not being my habit to discuss my officers with any one, if this wasn't the first time I've ever seen him devote himself to a respectable girl. But he's smitten with that pretty child of yours, no doubt of it; and there are three handsome young married women in the room, too. I don't like the look of it."

"I do." Mrs. Edis had not removed her eyes from the old sailor's face as he endeavored to elucidate himself.

"There's many a slip, you know. The duke's not so old, only fifty odd, and marvellous cures are worked these days. Some mother is always tracking him with a good-looking girl. As for France, his debts are about all he has to live on —"

"The President just told me that he has an income independent of his allowance from the head of his house, and I have knowledge that his expectations are founded upon certainty."

The Captain, not long enough in port to have heard aught of Mrs. Edis's dark reputation, glanced at her with a puzzled expression, then gave it up and answered lightly, "His income is good enough, yes, but nothing to his debts, which he never pays."

"If he doesn't pay his debts, what do they matter?" asked the old aristocrat, whose husband had never paid his, and whose son, having sold the last of his acres, was drinking himself into Fig Tree churchyard.

The Captain laughed. "I know your creed, madam. And I must admit that France is a true blood. He never arrives in port without being showered with writs, and he brushes them off as he would these damned mosquitoes—beg pardon, ma'am. But all the same, it wouldn't be pleasant for your little girl. Fancy being served with a writ every morning at breakfast."

The contempt in those sharp, unflinching eyes almost froze the words in their exit. "My daughter would never know what they were. Of money matters she knows as little as of Life itself. Writs would not disturb her youthful joyousness and serenity for an instant."

"Damn these aristocrats!" thought the old sailor. "And what a hole this must be!" He continued aloud, "But after the luxury of her old home —"

"Luxury? We are as poor as mice. If my father had not put a portion of his estate in trust for me, as soon as he discovered that my husband was a spendthrift, we should have been on the parish long ago."

The Captain opened his blue eyes, eyes that looked oddly soft and young (when not on duty) in his battered visage. "And you mean to say, that having married a spendthrift—Was he also dissipated?"

"Drank himself to death."

"And you are prepared to hand over your innocent little daughter to the same fate? But it is incredible, ma'am! Incredible! I was thinking that you merely knew nothing of the world down here."

“It’s little you could teach me!” She continued after a moment, with more condescension: “There are no family secrets in these islands, and as many skeletons outside the graveyards as in. My husband squandered every acre he inherited, every penny of mine he could lay hands on. He reduced me, the proudest woman in the Caribbees, to a mere nobody. Therefore, am I determined that my child shall realize the great ambitions that turned to dust in my fingers. I have knowledge, which does not concern you, that this marriage—look for yourself, and see that it is inevitable—will be but an incident while greater things are preparing.”

“Oh, if you have a medical certificate! But even as a duchess—” He paused and turning his head stared at the couple waltzing past. “There is no doubt as to the state of his mind. He looks the usual silly ass that a man always does when bowled over. But your daughter? I see nothing but innocent triumph in her delightful little face. There’s no love there—neither ambition.”

“There’ll be what I wish before the week is out.”

“She’s too good for France, and she’s not ambitious,” said the Captain, doggedly. “Do you love her, madam?”

“I have never loved any one else.” The old woman’s harsh voice did not soften. “Save, of course,” with a negligent wave of her hand, “her father, when I was young and foolish. So much the better if she does not love her husband. Women born to high destinies have no need of love. What little I remember of that silly and degrading passion makes me wish that no daughter of mine should ever experience it. Leave it to the men, and the sooner they get over it, the better.”

“Ah—yes—but, if you will pardon me, while your daughter is one of the most charming young things I have ever seen, she is not a beauty, nor has she the grand manner. You, madam, might have made the ideal duchess, if there is such a thing, but not that child.”

This compliment, either clumsy or malicious, won him no favor; the old lady’s eyes flashed fire at his impertinence.

He went on undauntedly, “And why, pray, may I ask, do you think it so great a destiny to be a duchess?”

“What greater than to wed royalty itself? And that is hardly possible in these days.”

“Hardly. But, Lord God, madam, where have you lived? Women to-day are working out destinies for themselves. Now, personally, I should rather see my daughter a famous author, painter, singer, even, although I still have a bit of prejudice against the stage, than suddenly elevated to a class to which she was not born, particularly if led there by the hand of a man like France.”

“My daughter is a lady.”

“Oh, Lord, where am I? In the eighteenth century?” His pique and anger had vanished. He now saw nothing in the situation but present humor and future tragedy; and feeling that his ammunition was exhausted for the moment, he rose, bowed as

ceremoniously as his spine would permit, and moved away. Nevertheless, he was interested, the native doggedness which had enabled him to overcome social disabilities was actively roused; moreover, if there was one man whom he disliked more profoundly than another, it was Harold France, and he resented the influence which kept a scoundrel in an honorable profession, when he should have been kicked out with a publicity that would have been a healthy lesson to his class.

He left the hot ball-room and went out upon the terrace to enjoy a cigar and meditate upon the singular character with whom he had exchanged hot shot for nearly an hour. He had no clew to her disquieting personality, but saw that she was a woman of some importance despite her avowed poverty; and she was the elderly mother of a charming young creature with a mane of untidy red-yellow hair (it would never occur to the old sailor to use any of the popular adjectives: flame-colored, copper, Titian, bronze), immense gray eyes with thick black lashes on either lid, narrow black brows, a refined but not distinguished nose, a sweet childish mouth whose ultimate shape Nature had left to Life, a flat figure rather under medium height, covered with a white muslin frock, whose only caparison was a faded blue sash, unmistakably Victorian. Her skin, like that of the other creole girls reared in West Indian heats, was a pure transparent white, which not even dancing tinged with color. As the Captain had been brutal enough to inform her mamma she was not a beauty, but—he stared through the window at her—Youth, radiant, eager, innocent Youth that was her philter. To be sure, the ball-room of Government House was full of young girls, some of them quite beautiful, but they were not the vibrating symbols of their condition, and Julia Edis was. Not one of them possessed her entire lack of coquetry, that terrible innocence, which, combined with an equally unconscious magnetism, had played an immediate and fatal tune upon sated senses.

As the good but by no means unsophisticated sailor looked about him he felt more apprehensive still. Harold France, no doubt, was expert in love-making, and what island maiden of eighteen could resist an ardent wooer with a handsome face above six feet of Her Majesty’s uniform, on a night like this? He was disposed to curse the moon for being on duty, as she generally contrived to be in so many of the dubious crises of love; and to-night she had turned herself inside out to flood the tropical landscape, the sea, the mountains, with silver. The stars were pin-heads, the moon, in the black velvet sky of the tropics, looked like a sailing Alp, its ice and snows absorbing and flinging forth all the light in the heavens. The lofty clusters of long pointed leaves that tipped the shafts of the royal palm trees, glittered like swords, the sea near the shore was as light and vivid a green as by day, and the scent of flowers as seductive as the call of the nightingale. The music in the ball-room was sensuous, sonorous; and it was notorious that creole girls, cool and white as they looked, and dressed almost as simply as Julia Edis, were accomplished coquettes, always prepared for exciting campaigns, however brief, the moment a ship of war entered the harbor. Flirtation, love, must agitate the very air to-night. Such things are communicable, even to the most ignorant and indifferent of maidens. How could that child hope to escape?

He walked over to the window and looked in. The company was resting between dances, the girls and young officers flirting as openly as they dared, although few had ventured to defy the conventions and stroll out into the warm, scented, tropic night. Still, two or three had, proposals being almost inevitable in such conditions; and squadrons come not every day.

France had left Julia beside her mother and gone into the dining room to refresh himself. He returned in a moment, and not only tucked the young girl's arm within his, but stood for a while talking to Mrs. Edis with his most ingratiating air.

"He means business," thought the Captain, grimly; and then he derived some comfort from the attitude of the girl herself. She was not paying the least attention to France, although she had permitted him to take possession of her. Her big, shining, happy eyes were wandering about the room, smiling roguishly as they met those of some girl acquaintance, or observed a flirtation behind complacent backs. When the waltz began once more, she floated off in the arm of the man whose hard, opaque eyes were devouring her perfect freshness, but she paid little or no attention to his whispered compliments, being far too absorbed in the delight of dancing.

"He's made no more impression on her than if he were a dancing master," thought the Captain, with satisfaction. "She's immune to tropic nights and uniforms. Gad! Wish I were a youngster. I'd enter the lists myself."

But what could he do? He saw the satisfaction on the powerful face of Mrs. Edis, the envious glances of many mothers; no such parti as Harold France had come to these islands for many a year. And France was by no means ill to look at, if one did not analyze his eyes and mouth. He was a big, strong, positive male, with a bold, sheep-like profile (sometimes called classic), which would have made him look stupid but for a general expression of pride, so ingrained and sincere that it was almost lofty. There was not an atom of charm about him, not even common animal magnetism, but his manners were distinguished, his small brain remarkably quick, and he looked as if it had taken three valets to groom him.

The Captain almost cursed aloud. How was he to make that old woman, living on all the formulæ of dead generations, and fancying that she knew the world, understand the difference between a wild young man and a vicious one? The girl might easily be persuaded to hate a man so aggressively masculine as France, but had she, a baby of eighteen, the strength of character to stand out against the ruthless will of her mother? Moreover, it was apparent that the vocabulary of the West Indies had yet to be enriched with those pregnant collocations, "new girl," "new woman"; all these pretty old-fashioned young creatures had been brought up, no doubt, in a healthy submission to their parents, and if one of the parents happened to be a she-dragon, possibly her daughter would marry a ducal valetudinarian of ninety if she got her marching orders.

Should he appeal to France? The Captain, possessed though he was of the national heart of oak, felt no stomach for that interview. Imagination presented him with a vision, cruelly distinct, of the expression of high-bred insolence with which

his effort would be received, the subtle manner in which he would be made to feel, that, superior officer though he might be, and in a fair way to become admiral and knight, he dwelt on the far side of that chasm which segregates the aristocrat from the plebeian. France had treated him to these sensations once or twice when he had remonstrated with him for giving way to his villainous temper, or mixed himself up in some nasty mess on shore; had even dared to threaten the prospective duke, who never noticed him when they met in Piccadilly. France had, indeed, induced such deep and righteous wrath in the worthy Captain's breast that he might have been responsible for another convert to Socialism had it not been for the old sailor's immutable loyalty to his queen and flag. But he hated France the more because the man was too clever for him. If he had disgraced his uniform, it always chanced that the Captain was engaged elsewhere; it was the Captain, not himself, who lost his temper during their personal encounters; his politeness, indeed, to his superior officer was unbearable. And his family influence surrounded him like wired glass; it would have saved a more reckless man from public disgrace. His mother's brother abominated him, but used his close connection with the Admiralty to avert a family scandal; his cousin, Kingsborough, who was far too saturated with family pride, and too unsophisticated, to believe such stories as he may have heard about the heir to whom he was automatically attached, believed France's tales of envious detractors, and protected him vigilantly. Sickly as he was, he was by no means negligible politically; he did his duty as he saw it, and, a sound Tory, was a reliable pillar of his party, whether it was in opposition or in power. Lastly, France was a good officer, and, apparently, without fear.

To-night, the Captain, thinking of his one unmarried daughter, and singularly attracted by the radiant girl about to be sacrificed by a narrow, inexperienced, long since sexless mother, hated France ferociously and made up his never wavering mind to balk him. . . .

"And speaking of the devil's own—"

France had stepped out upon the terrace not far from him, and alone. For a moment the man stood in shadow, then a quick, abrupt movement brought his face into a shaft of light. France, unaware of the only other occupant of the terrace, stared straight before him. The Captain looked to see his face flushed and contorted with animal desire, knowing the man as he did. But France's face was as immobile as a mask; only, as he continued to stare, there came into his eyes what the Captain had formulated as "a heartless glitter." It made him look neither man nor beast, but a shell without a soul, without the common instincts of humanity, a Thing apart. As the Captain, himself in shadow, gazed, fascinated, and sensible of the horror which this singular expression of France's always induced, something stirred in his brain. Where had he seen that expression before—sometime in his remote youth?—where? where?—Suddenly he had a vision of a whole troop of faces—they marched out from some lost recess in his mind—all with that same heartless—soulless—glitter in their eyes. And then the cigar fell from his loosened lips. He had seen those faces—

some thirty years ago—in an asylum for the insane one night when the more docile of the patients were permitted to have a dance.

“Good God!” he muttered. “Good God!”

France turned at the sound of the voice.

“That you, Captain?” he said negligently, his eyes merely hard and shallow again. “Jolly party, ain’t it? Of course the tropics are an old story to you, but this is my first experience of the West Indies, at least. I’m quite mad about them. And all these toppin’ girls! Never saw such skins. Come in and have a drink?”

He had spoken in his best manner, without a trace of insolence. Having delivered himself of inoffensive sentiments, quite proper to the evening, he suddenly passed his arm through that of his superior officer and led him down the terrace. The Captain, overcome by his emotions and the unwonted condescension of a prospective duke, made no resistance, drank a stiff Scotch-and-soda, then cursing himself for a snob of the best British dye, returned to the element where he felt most at home.

II

Mrs. Edis and Julia slept at Government House, but rose early and returned to Nevis by the sail-boat that carried merchandise between the islands, and, now and then, an uncomfortable passenger. Its sails, twice too big and heavy, ever menaced an upset, and fulfilled expectations at least once a year. Mrs. Edis, steadying herself with her stick, took no notice of the plunging craft, or the glory of the morning. The sapphire blue of the Caribbean Sea looked the half of a pulsing world; the other half, the deep, hot, cloudless sky. Nevis, fringed with palms and cocoanuts, banana and lemon trees, glittering and rigid, drooping and dim, rose, where it faced St. Kitts, with a bare road at its base, but spread out a train on its farther side to accommodate the little capital of Charles Town and the ruin of Bath House. In this month of March the long slopes of the old volcano were green even on the deserted estates. Here and there was an isolated field of cane. The wreckage of stone walls, all that was left of the "Great Houses," broke its expanse; or the spire of a church, surrounded by trees and crumbling tombs. High above, a regiment of black trees stood on guard about the crater; their rigor softened by the white cloud so constant to Nevis that it might be the ghost of her dead fires. In the distance were other misty islands; about the boat flew silver fish, almost blue as they rose from the water; in the roadstead were the three cruisers; and countless rowboats filled with chattering negroes, dressed in their gaudiest colors, bent upon selling fish and sweets to the paymaster and youngsters of the squadron, or ready to dive for pennies.

Mrs. Edis sat staring straight before her with a rapt expression that Julia knew of old and admired with all the fervor of a young soul eager for enthusiasms. She would in any case have believed the tyrannical old woman, kind to her alone, quite the most remarkable person in the world, but her mother's lore, her long fits of abstraction, when mysticism descended upon her like a veil, not only inspired her young daughter with a fascinating awe, but gave her a pleasant sense of superiority over those girls upon whom the planets had bestowed mere mothers.

Julia roamed steadily about the tipsy boat, her mane of hair, torn loose by the trade-wind, swirling about her like flames, sometimes standing upright. Her mouth smiled constantly; her large gray eyes, one day to be both keen and deep, were merely shining with youth on this vivid tropic morning. The man gazing at her through his field-glass from the deck of the flag-ship trembled visibly, and felt so primal that he believed himself embarked upon one of those purely romantic love affairs he had read about somewhere in books.

"That's the girl for me," sang through his momentarily rejuvenated brain. "Rippin'! Toppin'! Words too weak for a bit of all right like that. To hell with all the others! Chucked them overboard last night. Hags, the whole lot. Hate subtlety, finesse, women of the world—all the rest of 'em. Wild rose on a tropic island, so fresh—so sweet—Gad! Gad!"

He almost maundered aloud. The Captain, watching him, thought he had never

seen a man look more of an ass, and wondered at his dark suspicion of the night before. What if he really were but the common wild young blood, run after by women for his looks and prospects? Why should he not meet the one girl like other men and settle down with her? But although sentimental, like most sailors, he shook his head vigorously. He knew men, and France was not as other men, whatever the cause. He was merely lovesick at present, not reformed. Of course it was possible that his diseased fancy would be diverted by one of those honey-colored wenches down among the cocoanut trees on the edge of St. Kitts, or that a second interview with a girl of such disconcerting innocence might put him off altogether. But if it should be otherwise—the Captain had made up his mind to act.

The boat reached the jetty of Charles Town. Mrs. Edis was assisted up and into her carriage, and her agile daughter pinned her hair in place and jumped on her pony. The rickety old vehicle had been bought sometime in the forties, the horses and the pony were of a true West Indian leanness, Julia's hair tumbled again almost at once, and Mrs. Edis wore a broché shawl and a bonnet almost as old as the carriage. But the odd little cavalcade attracted only respectful attention in the drowsy town almost lost in a grove of tropical fruit trees. At one end of Main Street was the court-house, there were two or three small stores, perhaps six or eight stone dwelling-houses still in repair, and as many wooden ones, but between almost every two there was a ruin, trees and flowering shrubs growing in crevice and courtyard. The great ruin of Bath House, far to the right, windowless, rent by earthquake and hurricane, choked with creepers and even with trees, looked like the remains of a Babylonian palace with hanging gardens.

The narrow road, after leaving Main Street, wound round the base of the mountain; opposite St. Kitts a branch road led up to what was left of the old Byam estate, inherited by Mrs. Edis from her father, and granted to an ancestor in the days of Charles I. Great House stood on a lofty plateau, not far below the forest, a big, square, solid stone house, built extravagantly when laborers were slaves, and with a small village of outbuildings. The large garden was surrounded by a high stone wall, and beyond the servants' quarters, granaries, and stables, were vegetable gardens, orchards, and cocoanut groves. Sugar-cane still grew on the thirty acres which remained of the old estate, but in this era of the islands' great depression, yielded little revenue. Mrs. Edis possessed a few consols and raised all that was needed for her frugal table and for that of her improvident son.

The outbuildings surrounded a hollow square, in which there was a large date-palm, a banana tree, a pump, and a spring in which the washing was done. Scarlet flowers hung from pillars and eaves. Under the trees and the balconies of the houses the blacks were sleeping peacefully when roused by a kick from the overseer, himself but just awakened by his wife. "*Ole Mis' come!*" The words might have exploded from a bomb. Julia, who by dint of argument with her languid pony, and some chastisement, was ahead of the carriage, laughed aloud as she saw the negroes scramble to their feet and rush out into the cane fields, or busy themselves with the

first service their heavy eyes could focus. In a moment the courtyard was a scene of something like activity; even the chickens were awake and scratching round the crowing cocks, the dogs were barking, the pic'nies jabbering, and along the spring was a broken row of blue, red, yellow, purple, the black or honey-colored faces of the women hardly to be seen as they vigorously rubbed the stones with the household linen.

Julia turned her pony loose, ran through the thick grove in the front garden, the living room of the house, and up between the vivid terraces with their dilapidated statues and urns to the wood, where she frisked about like a happy young animal. In truth she felt herself quite the happiest and most fortunate girl in the Caribbees. For two long years she had looked forward to her first ball at Government House, and although many West Indian girls came out at sixteen, her mother had been as insensible as old Nevis to her importunities. How many nights she had hung out of her window watching the long row of lights marking Government House, picturing the girls of St. Kitts, those enchanting creatures with whom she had never held an hour of solitary intercourse, dancing with even more mysterious beings in the uniform of Her Blessed Majesty. She had read little: a volume or two of history or travel, several of the romances and poems of Walter Scott, which she had discovered in the aged bookcase. Her mother took in no newspaper but the leaflet published on St. Kitts, and she had led almost the life of a novitiate; but the serving women had whispered to her of the fate of all maidens, and she had an unhappy sister-in-law with a beautiful baby, who, although she cried a good deal, was still another window through which the puzzled maiden peeped out into Life. But she was quite as ignorant as the murky depths of France demanded.

She dreamed of the Prince (in Her Blessed Majesty's uniform), who would one day bear her to his feudal castle in England and make her completely happy, but of the facts of love and life she knew no more than two-year-old Fanny Edis, who cuddled so warmly in her young aunt's breast. Such instincts as she possessed in common with all girls were confused and suffocated by the yearnings of a romantic mind with an inherent tendency to idealism. Beyond the narrow circle of her existence was an endless maze, deep in twilight, although casting up now and again strange mirages, faint but lovely of color, and of many and shifting shapes. She wanted all the world, but she was really quite content as she was, her mind being still closed, her true imagination unawakened. Such was the famous Julia France in the month of March, 1894.

To-day she was happy without mitigation. The ball at Government House had no sting in its wake. She had been one of the belles. Not a dance had she missed, and she knew that, thanks to one of her governesses, she danced very well. To be sure the young officers in Her Blessed Majesty's uniform had perspired a good deal, and a big and rather horrid man had tried to monopolize her, but at least he had been the best dancer of the squadron, and his rivals had looked ready to call him out. Also, the other girls had been jealous. Julia was human.

“After all, one goes to a party to dance,” she thought philosophically. “The men don’t matter.”

Dismissing France she reviewed the other young men in turn, but shook her head over each. Not one had made the slightest impression on her. The Prince was yet to arrive. And then she laughed a little at her mother’s expense.

So far, she owed the only excitements of her life to her mother’s practices in astrology. She knew that old M’sieu, who had lived at Great House until his death shortly after her eighth birthday, had instructed her mother deeply in the ancient science. Many a time she had stolen out into the garden at night and watched the two motionless figures on the flat roof of the house. They were sequestered for days at a time in Mrs. Edis’s study, a room Julia was forbidden to enter. Julia, however, had hung over that tempting sill upon more than one occasion, and long since discovered that every book on the walls related to astrology and other branches of Eastern science; had gathered, also, from remarks at the dinner table while M’sieu was alive, that it was one of the most valuable libraries of its kind in the world.

She also knew that M’sieu had cast her horoscope the very moment that old Mammy Cales had brought her up to Great House in her wonderful basket, as he had cast the horoscopes of all her brothers, whose only survivor was the wretched Fawcett. Her ears had been very sharp long before she reached the age of eight, and she knew that the planets had conspired to make a great lady of her in a great country (the queen’s of course); she also knew that her mother had cast her little daughter’s horoscope herself a month later, and the result had been the same. The dates had then been sent to the leading astrologer in Italy, and again with the same result. Therefore had Julia, happy and buoyant by nature, grown up in the comfortable assurance that the wildest of her dreams must be realized.

She had shrewdly divined that last night at Government House had coincided with the first of the fateful dates announced by the planets of her birth, and that her mother, having no intention of deflecting the magnet of fate, had postponed her introduction to the world of young men until the third of March; which, extraordinarily, had brought no less than three cruisers to the little world of St. Kitts. And the poor old planets, for whom she felt an almost personal affection, had been all wrong, even when so ably assisted by her august parent! She felt a momentary pang at the unsettling of her faith, the loss of her idols, then curled herself up and went to sleep on the soft cheek of the old volcano.

III

She was awakened by the dinner gong, booming loudly on the terrace; her predilection for the woods about the crater was an old story. She sat up with a yawn and a naughty face. Such good things she had eaten at Government House last night, and even her strong little teeth were weary of fibrous cattle killed only when too old and feeble to do the work of the infrequent horse. She detested even the Sunday chicken, invitingly brown without but as tough as the cows within, so recent her exit from the court of much repose. That chicken! No West Indian ever forgets her. She looks alive and full of pride, as, with her gizzard tucked under her left wing, she is carried high but mincingly down the dining room to the head of the table by a yellow wench or superannuated butler. When a venerable cock is sacrificed, he is boiled as a tribute to the doughtiness of his sex, but the more abundant ladies of the harem are given a brown and burnished shroud, deceitful to the last.

Butter, Julia had rarely tasted; milk was almost as scarce; but she would have been quite willing to live on the delicious fruits and vegetables of the Indies, bread and coffee. Her mother, however, forced her to eat meat once a day, hoping to check the anæmia inevitable in the tropics.

Mrs. Edis, kind as she ever was to the one creature that had found the soft spot in her heart, did not like to be kept waiting, and Julia, pinning up her untidy hair as she ran, was in the dining-room before the gong had ceased to echo. Like the other rooms of Great House, and the older mansions of the West Indies in general, this was very large and very bare, although the sideboard, table, and chairs were of mahogany. Only two of the ancestral portraits hung on the whitewashed walls, John and Mary Fawcett; the grandparents, also, of one Alexander Hamilton, who had unaccountably become something or other in the United States of America, instead of serving his mother country. Mrs. Edis disapproved of his conduct, and rarely alluded to him, but Julia sometimes haunted the ruin of the house down near the shore, where he was supposed to have come to light, and would have liked to know more of him. There was an old print of him in the garret (her grandfather, it seemed, had admired him), and she liked his sparkling eyes and human mouth. A photograph of her brother Fawcett, taken some years ago in London, was not unlike, although the charming mouth had always been weaker; but now—and this was Julia's only trouble—he was quite dreadful to look at, and came seldom to Great House. When he did, there were terrible scenes; Julia, much as she loved him, ran to the forest the moment she heard his voice.

Mrs. Edis was already at the head of the table, and for the moment took no notice of her daughter; her expression was still introspective, her face almost visibly veiled. Julia made a grimace at the dish of meat handed her by the servant.

"This is poor old Abraham, I suppose," she remarked, with more flippancy than her austere mother and her elderly governesses had encouraged. "I shall feel like a cannibal. I've ridden on his back and talked to him when I've had nobody else.

Well, he'll have his revenge!"

Mrs. Edis suddenly emerged from the veil. She looked hard, practical, incisive.

"Soon you will no longer be obliged to eat these old servants of the field," she announced. "Your island days are over."

Julia dropped both knife and fork with a clatter. "Are we going to England to live? Oh, mother! Shall I see England? The queen? All the dear little princes and princesses? Are they the least bit like Fanny?"

"Not at all, nor like any other children," replied the old royalist, who had dined at the queen's table in her youth. "No, I probably shall never see England again. Nor do I desire to do so. The queen is old and so am I. Moreover, judging from your Aunt Maria's letters, and her edifying discourse upon the rare occasions when she honors us with a visit, London must be sadly changed. The majestic simplicity of my day has vanished, and an extravagance in dress and living, an insane rush for excitement and pleasure, have taken its place. There are railways built beneath the earth, gorging and disgorging men like ant-hills. Women think of nothing but Paris clothes, no longer of their duty as wives and mothers. But although this would disturb and bewilder me, with you it will be different. Youth can adapt itself —"

"But when am I going, and with whom?" shrieked Julia. "Has Aunt Maria sent for me?"

"Not she. She has never spent a penny on any one but herself. She lives to be smart, and is the silliest woman I have ever known. And that is saying a good deal, for they are all silly —"

"But me—I—when—do explain, *dear* mother!"

Mrs. Edis paused a moment and then fixed her powerful little eyes on the eager innocent ones opposite. "Could you not see last night that Lieutenant France had fallen in love with you?" she asked.

"That horrid old thing! Why, he is nothing but a dancer. You don't mean to say that I must marry him?" and Julia, for the first time since her childhood, and without in the least knowing why, burst into a storm of tears.

"I won't marry him," she sobbed. "I won't."

Mrs. Edis waited until she was calm, then, having disposed of a square of tissue as old, relatively, as her own, continued, "It is I that should weep, for I am to lose you and it will be very lonely here. But that is neither here nor there. When the time comes we all fulfil our destiny. Your time has come to marry, and take your first step upon the brilliant career which awaits you."

"Please wait till the next squadron," sobbed Julia. "The planets may have made a mistake —"

This remark was unworthy of notice.

"I hate the planets."

Mrs. Edis applied a sharp knife and an upright indomitable fork to another

fragment of Abraham.

Julia, feeling no match for the combined forces of the heavens and her mother, dried her eyes.

“Has he a castle?”

“He will have.”

“And many books?”

“England is full of libraries, the greatest in the world.”

“Will Aunt Maria take me to parties?”

“Undoubtedly.”

“Will he find the Prince for me?”

“The what?”

“Well, I don’t mean a real prince, but a young man that I could love.”

“Certainly not! You will love your husband.”

“But he is old enough to be my father.”

“He is only forty.”

“I am only eighteen. When I am forty I could have a grandchild.”

“Nonsense. Husbands should always be older than their wives. They are then ready to settle down, and are capable of advising giddy young things like yourself. You may not feel any silly romantic love for him—I sincerely hope that you will not—but you will be a faithful and devoted wife, and as obedient to him as you have been to me.”

“I don’t mind obeying him if he is as dear as you are. Maybe he is, for you looked so much sterner than all the other mothers last night, and I am sure that not one of them is so kind. Has he some babies?”

“What?” Mrs. Edis almost dropped her fork.

“I’d like a few. Fanny is such a darling. I liked him less than any of the men I danced with, but if he has a castle, and would bring me to see you every year, and would let me run about as you do, and read a lot of books, and give me a lot of babies, I shouldn’t mind him so much.”

Mrs. Edis turned cold. For the first time she recognized the abysmal depths of her daughter’s ignorance. It was a subject to which she had never, indeed, given a thought. A governess had always been at the child’s heels. Julia had been brought up as she had been brought up herself, and she belonged to the school of dames to whom the enlightenment of youth was a monstrous indelicacy. Moreover, she was old enough to look back upon the material side of marriage as an automatic submission to the race. Women had a certain destiny to fulfil, and the whole matter should be dismissed at that. Nevertheless, as she looked at that personification of delicate and trusting innocence, she felt a sudden and violent hatred of men, a keen longing that this perfect flower could go to her high destiny undefiled, and regret

that she must not only travel the appointed road, but set out unprepared. She dimly recalled her own wedding and that she had hated her husband until kindly Time had made him one of the facts of existence. To warn the child was beyond her, but she made up her mind to postpone the ultimate moment as long as possible.

“You will have everything you want,” she said. “And as he cannot obtain leave of absence while away on duty, you will merely become engaged to him—no—” she remembered her planets; “you are to marry at once, but you will go to England by the Royal Mail, and have ample time to become accustomed to the change. Mrs. Higgins is going to England very shortly. She will take you, and if Mr. France is not there—his squadron goes to South America—you can stay with Maria until he arrives. That will give you time to buy some pretty clothes, and become accustomed to the idea of your—new position in life.”

“Will my clothes come from Paris?”

“No doubt. I have a hundred pounds in the bank and you are welcome to them.”

“A hundred pounds! I shall have a hundred frocks, one of every color that will go with my hair, and the rest white.”

“Not quite.” Mrs. Edis had but a faint appreciation of the cost of modern clothes, but she thought it best to begin at once to curb her daughter’s imagination. “It will buy you eight or ten, and no doubt your husband will give you more. But even if he has not as large an income now as he will have later, you have an instinct for dress. Your frock was the simplest at Government House last night, but I noticed that you had adjusted it, and your ribbons, with an air that made it look quite the smartest in the room. You have distinction and style. The President said so at once. You will make a little money go far.”

Julia stared at her mother. It was the first time she had heard her pay a compliment to any one. But she liked it and opened her eyes ingenuously for more. Mrs. Edis laughed, a rare relaxation of those hard muscles under the parchment skin. “Go and comb your hair,” she said, “and make yourself as pretty as possible. Lieutenant France is coming to call this afternoon, and if he does not ask for your hand to-day, he will to-morrow.”

“What shall I do with him? We can’t dance. And I couldn’t think of a thing to say to him last night. I could to some of the young men.”

“The less you say, the better! I will entertain him.”

Tears had threatened again, but they retreated at the prospect of deliverance from an ordeal as formidable as matrimony. “Mother!” she exclaimed suddenly. “Why don’t you marry him?”

“I?”

“Yes. He’ll be like my father, anyhow, and then I should not only have you still, but you could always talk to him —”

“Run and do your hair.”

IV

JULIA, her longing eyes fixed on the sea, where she frequently rowed at this hour with one of the old men-servants, had forgotten France's existence. For quite ten minutes after his arrival, she had obediently smiled upon him, giving him monosyllable for monosyllable, and tried not to compare him to an elderly calf. His opaque, agate-gray eyes stared at her with what she styled a bleating expression, but gradually took fire as her mind wandered. Mrs. Edis talked more than she had done for many years, to cover the defection of her naughty little daughter.

Nevertheless, she divined that Julia's unaffected indifference was developing the instinct of the hunter to spur the passion of the lover, reflected that an ignorant girl babbling nonsense would have detracted from the charm of the picture Julia made by the window in her white frock, staring through the jalousies with the wistfulness of youth. But when France began to scowl and move restlessly, she said: —

"Julia, run out into the garden, but do not go far. Mr. France will join you presently."

Julia had disappeared before the order was finished. Mrs. Edis studied the man's face still more keenly for a few moments, the while she discoursed about poverty in the West Indies.

There alone in the big dim room something about the man subtly repelled her, and her active mind sought for the cause even while talking with immense dignity upon the only topic of general interest in her narrow life. She had seen little of the great world, but a good deal of dissipated men, and France had none of the insignia to which she was accustomed. His bronzed cheeks, although cleft by ugly lines, were firm; his eyes were clear, and the lines about them might have been due to exposure, laughter, or midnight study. His nose was thin, his mouth invisible under a heavy moustache, but assuredly not loose. The truth was that France had not been drunk for a month, and having a superb constitution would look little the worse for his methodical sprees until his stomach and heart were a few years older. His grizzled close-cropped hair did not set off his somewhat primitive head to the best advantage, but his figure, carriage, grooming, were, to Mrs. Edis's provincial eyes, those of a proud and self-respecting man.

As the planets were reticent on some subjects, and as she truly loved her daughter, she determined to satisfy her curiosity at first hand, and lay her scruples if possible.

"Is it true that you are dissipated?" she asked abruptly.

He flushed a dark slow red, but his brain, abnormally alive to the instinct of self-protection, worked more rapidly.

"I've gone the pace, rather," he said, in his well-modulated voice. "Nothing out of the common, however. Sick of it, too. Wouldn't care if I never saw alcohol—or—ah—any of the other things you call dissipations, again."

He delivered this so simply and honestly that a more experienced woman would have believed him.

“Who told you I was dissipated?” he added. “The Captain? He don’t like me. He’s a bounder and has social aspirations. I’ve never asked him to my club in London, or to Bosquith. That’s all there is to that.”

“Ah!” Mrs. Edis had not liked the Captain; this explanation was plausible. “Why have you come here to-day?” she asked abruptly. “Do you wish to marry my daughter?”

France would have liked to do his own wooing, nibbling its uncommon delights daily, until the sojourn at St. Kitts was almost exhausted. He was an epicure of sorts, even in his coarser pleasures. But he had been warned that in Mrs. Edis he had no ordinary mother to deal with, and he answered her with responsive directness.

“I do. She’s the first girl I’ve ever wanted to marry. Do you think she’ll have me?”

His voice trembled, his face flushed again. He looked ten years younger. Mrs. Edis’s doubts vanished.

“She’ll do what I bid her do. I wish her to marry you. Of course she cares nothing for you, as yet. You will have to win her with kindness and consideration after she marries you. You can see her here every day, if you wish it, and for a few moments in the garden, alone. But don’t expect to make much headway with her before marriage. She is full of romantic dreams, and—and—very innocent.”

His eyes flashed with an expression to which she had no key, but it gave way at once to suspicion, and he asked sombrely: —

“Is she in love with any one else?”

“She never exchanged a sentence with a young man before last night, and you monopolized her.”

There was a curious motion behind his heavy moustache, but it was brief and his eyes looked foolishly sentimental.

“Good! Good!” he said, with what sounded like youthful ardor. “That’s the girl for me. They’re gettin’ rarer every day.”

“One thing more. We are very poor. I can settle nothing upon her.”

For the first time in his life France felt really virtuous, and was more than ever convinced that his youth (although he had quite forgotten what it was like) had been resurrected.

“Glad of it, Mrs. Edis. You’ll be the more convinced that I’m jolly well in earnest. Give you my word, it’s the first time I ever proposed.”

This was impressive, but the old lady continued to probe. “The Captain also said that you were very much in debt.”

“Rather. But my cousin clears me up every year or so. We’re jolly good pals. Besides, I have an annuity from the estate. And he’s always said he’d settle another

thousand a year on me the day I married. That'll do for the present to keep a wife on. Think I'll chuck the navy and settle down. Have a jolly little place in good huntin' country—Hertfordshire."

"You have great expectations, also," pursued the old lady, looking past him.

"Ah! Yes! But my cousin's rather better—" He scowled heavily. "What luck some people have," he burst out. "My father and his were twins—only mine was one minute too late. And I need money and he don't. Keeps me awake sometimes thinkin' of the ways of fate—must have had a grudge against me. Then I think, 'what's the use? Can't help it. And if he don't get well and marry, it'll be mine one day.' "

"You will inherit that great title and estate," said Mrs. Edis, piercing him with her eyes, as if defying him to laugh, or even to challenge her. "Understand that I am deeply read in the ancient science of astrology, and that my daughter was born under extraordinary planetary conditions: she is a child of Uranus, with ruler in the tenth house trine to Jupiter. That means power, an exalted position, leadership. A great title and wealth, and the most famous political and social salon of her century must be the literal reading; although if the times were more troublous, I should have interpreted the signs to mean that she was destined to wed royalty itself, to reign, in short. But as her career begins now, and as you are here so opportunely, there can be no dispute as to the true reading. You bring a splendid gift in your hands: to be a duchess of our great country is one of the most exalted positions on earth. I may add that Venus in strong position in the horoscope means much feminine grace and charm, added to power. Make sure, your wife will be the most famous duchess in England."

France thought it possible she was mad, but was thrilled in spite of his doubts. The prophecy, also, was agreeable.

"She'd make a rippin' duchess," he assented warmly.

Mrs. Edis went on, unheeding. "There is a period of darkness—trouble—possibly turbulence—sometimes the planets exhibit a strange reserve. If it were not for the ultimate fulfilling of the great ambitions I cherish for my daughter, I should let her marry no one—that is to say, I should instinctively try to prevent it, although the marriage is there—writ as plainly —"

"I hope it is for this month. I should like to marry her at once. We are here for a fortnight. I can take a cottage somewhere. If I am on duty for a few hours a day—no doubt the Captain will let me off—he's afraid of me, anyhow. Then she can go direct to England on the Royal Mail. If we don't sail at the same time,—if the squadron goes to South America,—I'll cable my resignation, and leave as soon as my successor arrives. My cousin will arrange it. I've never cared for the service—it's the army gets all the fun—never would have gone in, but my father gave me no choice; for a while I found it amusin', and of late years I've stayed in to—ah—spite Captain Dundas, who'd give his eyes to chuck me out. It's been a long and quite excitin' game of chess, and I've enjoyed it."

Again Mrs. Edis felt uneasy before the expression of his eyes, but she was now in full surrender to the planets, and besides, he was looking sentimental and rather foolish again, a moment later, as he burst out: —

“You’ll consent to an immediate marriage, Mrs. Edis?”

“Yes,” she replied promptly, although she had no intention of permitting him to carry out the rest of his program. She had recognized her opportunity of playing him and the Captain against each other to gain her own ends. “Now you can go out into the garden,” she added graciously. “And it will give me pleasure if you will remain to supper.”

But his visit to the garden was brief. Julia, who was wandering about the grove of cocoanut, banana, and shaddock trees which made a romantic jungle of the large space in front of the house, ran past him into the living room, and although she did not attempt to deprive him of the sight of her again, and only stirred sharply and then stared at her hands when her mother announced the betrothal, he was obliged to leave at nine o’clock without having had a word with her alone. He swore all the way down the mountain, his appetite so whetted that it required an exercise of will to steer straight for the ship instead of returning and raiding the house. He was unaccustomed to any great amount of self-control, his haughty spirit dictating that all things should be his by a sort of divine right. This overweening opinion of himself did not prevent him from obtaining his ends by cunning when direct methods failed, and to-night reason dictated that only patience for a few days would avail him. But he was so rude to the Captain, deliberately baiting him in his desire to make some one as angry as himself, that he was forbidden to leave the ship on the following day. For the moment, as he received this order, the Captain thought he was about to spring; but France, with an abrupt laugh, turned on his heel and went to his cabin.

V

THE President sat on the lawn of Government House reading from a sheaf of cablegrams to a group of interested guests. In this fashion came daily to St. Kitts the important news of the world; after submission to the President, it was nailed on the court-house door, and then printed in a leaflet, called by courtesy a newspaper. If it arrived when the President was entertaining, he always read it to his guests, and the little scene was one of the most primitive and picturesque in that land of contradictions and surprises. Far removed from the barbarism of utter discomfort, with rigid social laws, and a proud and dignified aristocracy, these smaller islands of the English groups are equally innocent of the comforts and luxuries of modern civilization.

Behind the house a party of young people had not interrupted their game of croquet, and Julia, who was taking her first lesson, was as oblivious to the news of the great world she so longed to enter as to the prospect of marrying a man who was mercifully absent.

Two of the group about the President's chair also disengaged themselves as soon as the reading finished, instead of lingering to comment. One was Mrs. Edis, always indifferent to mundane affairs, and the other Captain Dundas, who saw his opportunity to have a few words alone with the mother of Julia. He had made up his mind to speak, and was the man to find his chance if one failed to present itself. He led her to a chair under a palm, whose leaves spread just above her head when seated, and she was glad of the shade and rest. The Captain took a chair opposite. He would have liked to smoke, but dared not ask permission of a woman whose skirts had been made to wear over a crinoline. However, he was quite capable of arriving at the sticking point without the friendly aid of tobacco. Having the direct mind of his profession, he began abruptly: —

"Madam, there's something I've got to say, and I may as well get it out. France" (he utterly disregarded the menacing glitter in the eyes opposite) "means to marry your daughter, and I mean that he shan't. If you don't listen to me here" (Mrs. Edis was planting her stick), "I'll say it before the whole company."

Mrs. Edis sat back. The Captain went on, breathing more deeply. "It's all very well for you to say that you know the world, Mrs. Edis, because you have seen a few dissipated men and unfaithful husbands. The Harold Frances haven't come into your ken. Only the high civilizations breed them. There are plenty like him, not only in England, but in Europe and the new United States of America. They are responsible for some of the unhappiest women in the world, perhaps for the revolt of woman against man. It isn't only that they are petty but absolute tyrants in the home; clever women can always circumvent that sort; but they're the kind that debase their wives, treating them like mistresses, to whom nothing exists in the world but sex, and as they are vilely blasé, the sort of sex which is but the scientific term for love has long since been forgotten by them, if they ever knew it. Many are

born old, perverted by too much ancestral indulgence. All sorts of books are being written to protect the poor girl from the seducer, or the man who would sell her into the life of the underworld; it seems to me it is time some one should start a crusade in behalf of the well-born, the delicately nurtured, the women with inherited brains who might be of some use in the world if not broken or hardened by the roués they marry. Mind you, I'm no silly old saint. I'm not inveighing against the young blood who sows a few wild oats; I'm after the scalp, as the Americans say, of the thousands in the upper classes that are bad all through, like Harold France, and who'll get worse every day of their lives. Do you follow me, ma'am?"

"I don't think I do. The whole subject is one which I have never discussed with any man, and is deeply repugnant to me, but as my child's happiness is at stake, I waive my own feelings. Please go into details. Just what do you mean?"

The Captain gasped. "I—well—I—can't do that exactly, you know," he stammered, wiping his face with his large red silk handkerchief. "But—you see, the bad women—and men—of the great capitals of the earth—have taught these young bloods too much. Some it don't hurt. There's plenty of good men in the upper world, even when they have been a bit wild in their youth; but men like France—with a rotten spot in the brain —"

The old lady sat erect. "Do you mean to say that France is insane?"

Here was the Captain's opportunity. But, after the mental confusion of the night of the ball, not only was he disposed to question what had seemed at the moment a flash of illumination, but he knew the pickle awaiting him if he accused a man in France's position of insanity. He was risking much as it was; he was not brave enough for more. He had his own and his family's interests to consider. A suit for slander would relegate him to private life, unhonored either as admiral or knight. His wife desired passionately to be addressed by servants and other inferiors as "my lady."

"Well—no—I can't say that—"

"I ask you to answer me yes or no. Have you ever seen Mr. France do anything which leads you to believe him a lunatic—for that, I infer, is what you mean by a rotten spot. And if you have, why, may I ask, have you been so insensible to your duty as to permit him to remain in the navy?"

"Oh, I assure you, madam, you misunderstand. A man may have a rotten spot in his brain, which will make him a horror to live with, and yet be as sane as you or I."

Mrs. Edis leaned back. "You have described to me a man precisely like my husband. He drank too much, he thought too much of love-making when he was young, but he got over it. I, as a dutiful wife, resigned myself. That, I fancy, is the history of nine out of ten wives. After all, we have a great many other things to attend to. Husbands soon become an incident."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" The Captain cast about desperately in his mind. Meanwhile Mrs. Edis also was thinking rapidly. Such fears as he may have excited

having been laid, she reverted to her original purpose to hoodwink him.

She sat erect with one of her abrupt movements and brought her cane down into the gravel. “In a way you are right!” she said harshly. “Men! I hate the lot of them. After all, why should my girl marry now? If she and France want to marry, let them try the experiment of a long engagement—two years, at least. I will talk to him—put him on probation. Let him resign from the navy when he returns to England and settle down here under my eye.”

“Good! Good!” exclaimed the Captain, who knew that France would never return.

“During this visit, I’ll probe him, watch him with my girl. If I don’t approve of him, I’ll ask you to keep him—on board until you leave. In any case, he shall consent to an engagement of two years. Will you assist me?”

“Certainly, ma’am, certainly.”

And so the fate of Julia France was sealed.

BOOK II
THREE POTTERS

I

LONDON once a year has a brief spell of youth, during which she is surpassingly beautiful, gay, insolent, and very nearly as vivid and riotous as the tropics. Her gray besooted old masses of architecture are but the background for green parks where swans sail on slowly moving streams; thousands of window boxes, flaunting red, white, and yellow; miles of plate-glass windows, whose splendid display, whether torn from the earth, or representing unthinkable toil at the loom, the rape of the feathered tribe, or countless brains no longer laid out in cells but in intricate patterns of lace, hot veldts where the ostrich, quite indifferent to the depletion of his tail, walks as absurdly as the pupil of Delsarte, slaughter-houses of hideless beasts, compensated in death with silver and gold, the ravishing of greenhouses, and the luscious fruits that grow only between earth and glass,—all these wonders lining curved streets and crowded "circuses," challenge the coldest eye above the tightest purse. And in the fashionable streets during the morning are women as pretty and gay of attire as the flower beds in the Park, where they display themselves of an afternoon.

Julia, happy in her own unsullied eager youth, made the acquaintance of London when that seasoned old dame was taking her yearly elixir of life, and thought herself come to Paradise. She had hardly a word for her aunt, Mrs. Winstone, who had met her at the railway station, but twisted her neck to look at the shop windows, the hoary old palaces and churches, the passing troops of cavalry, gorgeous as exotics, the monuments to heroes, the bare-kneed Scot in his kilt, and the Oriental in his turban. It was Mrs. Winstone's hour for driving, and as her young guest's frock had not been made for Hyde Park, and Julia had laughed when asked if she were tired, the constitutional was taken through the streets and in or about the smaller parks. The coachman was far too haughty himself to venture beyond the West End, or even to skirt those purlieus which lie at its back doors.

Julia's eyes, wide and star-like as they were, missed not a detail, and she felt as happy as on the night of her first party. The journey had been monotonous, the passengers, when not ill, rather dull. Therefore was her plastic mind shaped to drink down in great draughts the pleasures promised by the city of her dreams. Moreover, never in her life had she felt so well. The eighteen days at sea, the wholesome food, the constant exercise in which a good sailor always indulges, if only to get away with the time, long days in cold salt air, had crimsoned her blood, vitalized every organ. France and the reason of her translation to London she had almost forgotten.

There had been a hurried marriage at Great House; then, almost before the wine had been tasted, the indignant bridegroom had been summoned to his ship, which, with the rest of the squadron, had sailed two hours later. There had been a succession of infuriated letters, mailed at the different islands, and Julia knew that France intended to leave the service as soon as he set foot in England; but as that could not be for weeks to come, she had dismissed him from her mind.

“Shall I live here?” she asked at length, as they drove down the wide Mall, one of the finest avenues in Christendom, and half rising to look at Buckingham Palace.

“You should know.” Mrs. Winstone had received only a cablegram from her sister. “France has a house, a bit of a place in Hertfordshire, but only rooms in town, so far as I know. The duke, however, may ask you to stop with him in St. James’s Square—for a bit. He seems enchanted to get France married, but it is rather fortunate that I have known him for years and can vouch for you. France, returning with a bride from the antipodes—well —”

“Of course the duke would expect some one much older, Mr. France is so old himself. But I’m glad he doesn’t mind, for I want to live in castles. It’s too bad Mr. France hasn’t one.”

“Is that what you married France for? I have wondered.”

Julia shrugged her restless young shoulders, and looked at the carriages full of finery rolling between the columns of Hyde Park.

“Mother told me to marry him and I did, of course. I have known, ever since I was about eight, that I was to marry at this time and start upon some wonderful career, for there’s no getting the best of the planets. I had to take the man who came along at the right moment.”

Mrs. Winstone was one of those extremely smart English women who put on an expression of youthful vacuity with their public toilettes, but at this point she so far forgot herself as to sit up and gasp.

“Not that old nonsense! You don’t mean to tell me that Jane still believes—why, I had forgotten the thing. Hinson! Home!”

As the carriage turned and rolled toward Tilney Street Mrs. Winstone, really interested for the first time, stared hard at the face beside her. Had she a child on her hands? It had been rather a bore, the prospect of fitting out and putting through her preliminary paces a young West Indian bride, mooning the while for an absent groom. But she had never seen any one look less like a bride, more heart-whole.

“Do you love France?” she asked abruptly.

“Of course not. He’s a horrid funny old thing, and his eyes look like glass when they don’t look like Fawcett’s when he’s been drinking, poor darling. And some of his hair is gray. But of course he’ll die soon and then I’ll have a handsome young husband.”

Mrs. Winstone regarded the tip of her boot. She was worldly, selfish, vain, envied this young relative who would one day be a duchess, but she had an

abundant store of that good nature which is the brass but pleasant counterfeit of a kind heart. She would not put herself out for any one, unless there were amusement or profit in it for her pampered self, but she would do so much if there were, that she had the reputation of being one of the “nicest women in London.” It was a long time—she was a widow of thirty-four, and enjoyed a comfortable income—since she had felt a spasm of natural sympathy, but she put this sensation to her credit as she turned again to the child beside her.

“I wish I had gone down to Nevis last year, as I half intended,” she remarked. “It would have been good for my nerves, too. But there is such a vast difference between the ages of your mother and myself—we are at the opposite ends of a good old West Indian family—and we don’t get on very well. If I had—tell me about the wedding. I suppose it was a great affair. Where did you go for the honeymoon?”

“No, I didn’t have a fine wedding. One day Mr. France was just calling, when the minister of Fig Tree Church was also there, and mother told us to stand up and be married. A few minutes after a sailor came running up with an order from the Captain to Mr. France to go to the ship at once. Before he had a chance to return the squadron sailed. For some reason the Captain didn’t want us to marry, and mother was delighted at getting the best of him. I never knew her to be in such a good humor as she was all the rest of that day and the next. But the Captain must have been as cross as Mr. France when he found out he was too late. Mother and the planets are too much for anybody.”

Mrs. Winstone had learned all she wished to know. Mrs. Edis would have been wholly—no doubt satirically—content with the resolution born instantly in her sister’s agile mind. France would not arrive for a month or six weeks. There was nothing for it but to make his bride so worldly and frivolous that some of this appalling innocence would disappear in the process. Mrs. Winstone did not take kindly to the task, being fastidious and tolerably decent, but having read the book of life by artificial light for many years, could arrive at no other solution of her problem.

“France has been cabling frantically to be relieved, has even sent his resignation, but either there is no one to take his place on such short notice, or some one is exerting a counter-influence—possibly your good friend, the Captain—and he must wait until the squadron returns. Meanwhile, we shall not let you miss him. The duke has sent me a check for your trousseau, and this is the very height of the season—here we are. It is a box, but I hope you will not be uncomfortable.”

Among other considerations, Mrs. Winstone did not permit herself to forget that now was her opportunity to ingratiate herself with a future peeress of Britain. “Although anything less like a duchess,” she thought grimly as she laid her arm lightly about Julia’s waist while ascending the stair, “I never saw out of America or on the stage. But the duke, good soul, will be delighted.”

The house, small, like so many in Mayfair, was all drawing-room on the first floor, a right angle of a room, so shaped and furnished as to give it an air of

spaciousness. The front window was open to the flower boxes; there was a narrow conservatory across the back, which added to its depth. Above were one large bedroom and two small ones; and those of the servants, a flight higher, were a disgrace to civilization.

But all that was intended for polite eyes presented a picture of ease, luxury, taste, smartness; moreover, had the unattainable air of having been occupied for several generations. Americans and other outsiders, settling for a season or two in London, spend thousands of pounds to look as if living in a packing-case of expensive goods, but Englishwomen of moderate income, combined with traditions and certain inheritances, often give the impression of aristocratic wealth and luxury.

Captain Winstone (recruited also from the generous navy) had inherited the house in Tilney Street from his mother, an old dame of taste and fashion, who, besides careful weeding in the possessions of her ancestors, had travelled much and bought with a fine discrimination that was a part of her hardy contempt for Victorian fashions. The house, with three thousand pounds a year, was Mrs. Winstone's for so long as she should grace this planet, and enabled her to exist, even to pay her dressmakers on account, when they made nuisances of themselves. But although she would have liked a great income, she had never been tempted to marry again, holding that a widow who sacrificed her liberties for anything less than a peerage was a fool; and no peer had crossed her path wealthy enough to be disinterested, or poor enough to share her humble dowry with gratitude. She always carried on a mild flirtation with a tame cat a few years younger than herself, who would fetch and carry, and, if wealthy, make her nice presents. If not, she fed him and took him to drive in her Victoria. Her heart and passions never troubled her, but her vanity required constant sustenance. She did not in the least mind the implication when the infant-in-waiting was invited to the country houses she visited; not only was her vanity flattered, but the generous tolerance of her world always amused her. She lived on the surface of life, and altogether was an enviable woman.

Julia was delighted with her little room, done up in fresh chintz, too absorbed and happy to notice that it overlooked a mews. A four-wheeler had already brought her box, and a maid had unpacked her modest wardrobe. Mrs. Winstone, glancing over it with a suppressed sigh, told her to put on something white, as people would drop in for tea, then retired to the large front bedroom to be arrayed in a tea-gown of pink chiffon and much French lace.

II

Mrs. Winstone, an excessively pretty woman, with blue eyes and fair hair, and a fresh complexion responsive to the arts of rejuvenation, seated herself before the tea-table and arranged her expression, determined not to betray her feelings when Julia entered in a white muslin frock made by the seamstress of Nevis. But as Julia, with all the confidence of an only child (such had practically been her position), entered smiling, her hair pinned softly about her head, Mrs. Winstone's own spontaneous smile, which did so much for her popularity, without seaming the satin of her skin, responded. She saw at once what had dawned upon even Mrs. Edis's provincial and scientific mind, that the girl at least knew how to put on her clothes, that she could wear white muslin and a blue sash and neck ribbon with an air.

"We shall have jolly times with the shops and dressmakers," she said warmly. "We'll begin to-morrow morning. You are to be presented at the last drawing-room and must go into training at once. The duke wishes it. Really, I didn't think there'd be anything so excitin' this season as puttin' the wife of Harold France through her paces. How do, Algy?"

She extended a finger to a young man who lounged in with a bored expression, and a dragging of one foot after the other that suggested excesses which were preparing him for an early grave; in truth, he was a virtuous and timid younger son, who, being able to afford but one vice, chose cigarettes, and in the privacy of his room—he lived at home—smoked the economical American.

Mrs. Winstone, with the vagueness of her kind, murmured, "my niece," and poured him out a cup of tea, while embarking smartly upon a tide of gossip anent "Sonnys" and "Berties," "Mollys" and "Vickys," to which Julia had no key. But she was quite content to be ignored, being entirely happy, and deeply interested in her aunt and her new surroundings. With a quick and appreciative instinct she admired the rectangular room with its soft light and French furniture, its hundred little treasures from India and the continent. The tea-service was fairylike, compared with the massive pieces of Great House, and eminently in harmony with the pretty butterfly and her slender fluttering hands. Mrs. Winstone, as has been intimated, cultivated an expression of complete ingenuousness, even in animated conversation, and in repose—as when driving alone, for instance—looked so drained of vulgar sensations, of that capacity for thought so necessary to the middle classes, poor dears, that even an Englishman was once heard to exclaim that he would like to throw a wet sponge at her. Her figure might have been taller, but it could hardly have been thinner, and carried smart gowns as an angel carries her natural feathers. Women liked her, not only for the reasons given, but because her acute intelligence chose that they should, and men liked, sometimes loved, her because she knew them as well as she did women, and managed them accordingly.

Her present adorer, Lord Algernon FitzMiff, was tall, loose-jointed, with sleek brown hair, a mathematical profile, and beautiful clothes. He would never pay his

tailor; never, unless he caught an heiress, own a thousand pounds. But at least a Chinaman on his first visit to England would never have taken him for a member of the middle class; and when a man is no disgrace to “his order,” who shall maintain that his life is wasted?

Julia, finding him even less interesting than her husband, was on the other side of the room admiring an old bronze brought to England in the palmy days of the East India Company, when three visitors were announced: —

“Mrs. Macmanus, Mr. Pirie, Mr. Nigel Herbert.”

“Dear Julia!” cried Mrs. Winstone, in a tone which, although subdued, made an effect of floating across space until the drawing-room seemed immense, “come and meet my friends.”

Julia, born without mauvaise honte, passed the ordeal of introduction in a fashion which delighted her aunt, and sat down under the lorgnette of Mrs. Macmanus.

This intimate friend of Mrs. Winstone was also in her thirty-fifth year, but enormously rich, as lazy of body as she was quick of mind, and, inclined to gout, quite indifferent to both youth and clothes. Her black frock would not have been worn by her maid, her stays were of the old school, her hair was parted, and about her eyes were many amiable lines. There were those who maintained that she was a snob of the subtlest dye, daring to look like a frump because of her income and her ramifications in the peerage; but they were quite wrong. Mrs. Macmanus was so little of a snob that she rarely recognized snobbery in others, hated every variety of discomfort, and could not have been more amiable and kind-hearted had she been poor and a nobody.

Mr. Pirie, although only forty-five, was already an old beau. Left with an income sufficient for a luxurious bachelor, too selfish to ask the present Mrs. Macmanus to share it when she was a penniless girl, and with none of the recommendations essential to the capture of predatory heiresses, he had lived for twenty-five years in very comfortable rooms in Jermyn Street, dining out every night during the season, taking his yearly waters at Carlsbad, visiting at country houses. In no way distinguished, people wondered sometimes why they continued, year after year, to invite him; but he had been astute enough to hang on until he had become a fixed habit, and now, should any of the ailments which come from too much dining with owners of chefs take him off, he would have been sincerely missed for a season; he was a good-natured gossip, who could put vitriol on his tongue at the unique moment. Mrs. Macmanus had been free for fifteen years, and he had proposed to her fifteen times; but not only was that astute widow content with her present state, but she never quite forgave him for not proposing before he was obliged to wear a toupee. She liked him, however, and gave him a corner at her fireside. For several years she had tried to make him work, being of that order of woman that has no patience with the idler. In her youth, she had been quite impassioned on the subject, but had learned that to backbone the invertebrate was as

easy as to turn marble into flesh. When, a few years later, the Americans discovered the hookworm, she concluded that half England had it, and became entirely charitable.

Young Herbert, who immediately carried his tea over to Julia's side, was but recently out of Oxford, reading law to please his father (an eminently practical peer), but quietly preparing himself for literature. He had a fresh frank face, which refused to look politely bored, large blue eyes, that danced at times with youth and the zest of life, and although dressed with the perfection of detail of a Lord Algy FitzMiff, his movements, like his voice, were often quick and eager. He had been cultivating Mrs. Winstone with a view to succeeding Lord Algy, since she was so much the fashion, and rippin' besides, but she vanished from his calculations the moment he set eyes on her niece, and never returned.

He had heard nothing of the marriage, Mrs. Winstone with fashionable casualness having omitted to mention it, and society being as indifferent to the performances of a man who spent his leaves of absence in Paris, as to the heir presumptive of an unfashionable duke.

"Miss France—surely—" he began. But Julia bridled. She was proud of her married state. She sat up very straight and looked at him primly.

He laughed aloud. "Really?" he asked teasingly. "Well, I suppose you are too young to like to be told you look so, but—I can't take it in. Do I know your husband, perhaps? France—there are several. You are a bride, of course."

"I have been married just twenty-four days. My husband is a lieutenant in the navy. He won't be here for a month or two yet —"

"In the navy—what—what—is his first name?"

"Harold. He has a lot of others, but I forget them."

"Not the Duke of Kingsborough's —"

"Yes, and Aunt Maria says perhaps I shall stay at some of the castles this year."

Herbert's hand shook so that he was obliged to put down his cup. He was almost a generation younger than France, and rarely entered his own club, but there are some characters that are known to all men of their class, however unpopular or negligible socially they may be. Herbert felt a sensation of nausea, and for the moment loathed this wonderful young creature that looked to be composed of light and fire. What must she really be made of to have fallen in love with a man like France? What sort of hideous inherited instincts had answered those of a man that did not even possess the common gift of magnetism? What had he made of her?

He had been bred in the severe school of his class. His composure returned and he looked at her critically. Red hair. A sensual and ill-tempered little devil, no doubt. Then he encountered her eyes, eyes so unmistakably innocent, so different from the eyes of the Mrs. Winstones, with their manufactured ingenuousness, their injected wonder at the naughtiness of the world.

But he floundered. "Oh, of course. Castles. And of course, Mr. France is very

handsome—distinguished.”

Julia was staring at him in open astonishment. “Handsome? He looks like a sheep, when he doesn’t look like a calf—that’s the way he looked when he stared at me while mother was talking to him. I had never talked to a man in my life. He must have thought me quite stupid. I am sure he was very kind to marry me.”

“Kind?”

“Mother said he was in love, but somehow—well, I have only read a few of Scott’s novels—he doesn’t seem much like a lover to me. But after I’ve seen the world a bit, and read some modern novels, perhaps I shall understand Mr. France better. I should think it would be a good thing to understand one’s husband.”

“Rather.” He was devoured with curiosity, and changed the subject hastily. “What is your idea of a man that could make love, fall in love?” he asked, not yet quite sure whether he liked her well enough even for a mild flirtation.

But Julia had liked him spontaneously. His youth, his breeding, his frank kind eyes, the mere fact that he was the first man near her own age with whom she had ever had a tête-à-tête, won her confidence, and fluttered her imagination. She regarded him dispassionately.

“You, I should think. But I don’t know very much—anything about it.”

Was this accomplished coquetry? But those eyes. “Will you tell me where you have come from?” he asked. “I—I can’t quite place you.”

“From Nevis, where Aunt Maria was born.”

“And there are no men there?”

“No young ones. I met Mr. France at my first party, anyhow. I had no friends—not even girls. My mother is peculiar—a very wonderful woman. Some day I’ll tell you about her. But she made up her mind I was to have no friends until I married.”

Herbert made another heroic attempt to repress his curiosity. “And why do you think I could fall in love—really in love?”

“Well—you see—you look elastic, springy, waxy, sappy, like the young trees. Mr. France is all made, hard, finished. He’s like an old tree with rough bark, and dry inside. I suppose he could love when he was your age, but he’s years too old now. I shall always think of him as a father—my father had a son eighteen years old when he was Mr. France’s age—and I was eighteen my last birthday.”

Herbert drew a long breath. He put his finger inside his collar and shot a glance at the rest of the party. They were discussing the resignation of Gladstone and his indictment of the peers; English people, no matter how frivolous, are never as empty-headed as Americans of the same class. Moreover, Mrs. Winstone included several flirtations in the curriculum, and looked upon Herbert as quite safe.

The question popped out irresistibly. “Then your mother arranged the match?”

“Of course.”

“And—and—you aren’t in love with your husband now that you’re married to

him? Girls often are, you know.”

“What difference does that make?”

“Well—I should think France would know how to make love even if he couldn’t love—I fancy you’ve hit him off there.”

“Well, he may, but I hope he won’t. Forty! He used to talk a good deal about wanting to settle down. So, I suppose he’ll do that, and I am sure I could run a house as well as mother.”

“Run a house! Is that the way he made love to you?”

“He never made love to me. Mother always entertained him, and he had to sail as soon as the ceremony was over, instead of taking me up into the hills, as he had planned.”

Herbert felt a wild sense of exultation and an equally wild impulse to save her. The finest type of young Englishman inherits a deep and passionate tide of chivalry, and his was whipped hard and high for the first time. A crime had been committed, a worse one menaced; this he would avert if he had to elope with the child and ruin his career. There was no room left in him for humor; it was the best plan he could think of, just as Mrs. Winstone’s plan to make her innocent little niece so frivolous, worldly, and sophisticated that in a measure she would be prepared for life with one of the most blatant roués in England, was the best her order of brain could evolve. And Julia, plastic, unawakened, inexperienced, gave the impression of being entirely agreeable to any plans that might be made for her.

Herbert, young and chivalrous as he might be, and still able to fall in love at first sight, was the product of the highest civilization on earth, and in no danger of making a precipitate ass of himself. He also was as subtle as a frank and honest nature can be, and he realized that he must proceed warily. An innocent girl can be repelled even by a young and attractive lover, and Mrs. Winstone, although she would smile at a flirtation, would be the last to countenance a scandal in her family. Moreover, it was possible that he might be mistaken in the sensations inspired by this girl with the big shining happy eyes, hair that looked as if about to crackle, and a sort of electric aura. He had been in love before, and recovered with humiliating facility. His reason spoke, but all the rest of him cried out that he was in love, desperately in love, that it was the real thing, at last. And she needed him. That clinched the matter.

He changed the subject abruptly, and, as much as possible, the current of his thoughts. “Of course Mrs. Winstone is enchanting, ripping,” he announced warmly. “Quite the youngest woman in London” (this, without insulting intent). “But after all, you *are* just grown, and must have friends of your own age. My sister, alas! is in India, but one of her pals married my brother—and her great friend, Lady Ishbel Jones—we are all great pals. I’m sure you’ll like them both —”

“When shall I meet them? Are they my age?”

“Only a little older—twenty-three. Ishbel was married when she was nineteen—

her husband is rather a bounder, but unspeakably rich, and she was one of fourteen daughters of a poor Irish peer. Bridgit, my sister-in-law, married for love—my brother is one of the best looking men in the army. She married at eighteen—and has a little chap, but she's one of the best cross-country riders in England, and a topper at golf and tennis; fine all-round sport, and loves society as much as Ishbel. *She's* sweeter, more feminine on the outside, but no more of a brick, and all-there-all-the-time than Bridgit. I'm sure they're just the friends for you."

"I'm rather afraid of them; they're really grown women, and I know quite well that I'm only a child. I realized it a bit the night of my first party at Government House, when I saw the other girls flirting; and on the steamer they teased me a good deal. But I *must* have some friends of my age. I am beginning to long for them. It is so odd—I was quite happy alone—so long as I knew nothing else. And I didn't care to marry for years, but—" She gave a side glance at the intent face as close to hers as the etiquette of the drawing-room permitted, hesitated an instant, for she was growing sensitive about her ignorance. But the friendly admiring eyes reassured her, and out came the story of the planets. It was the last straw. Herbert left the house in Tilney Street feeling the one romantic man in England, and almost shaking with excitement.

III

THE duke, a dry ascetic little man, called on the following day and approved of Julia at once. He was not only relieved that his heir had married an innocent girl of good family, but youth was needed in the house of France. His sisters were older and more antiquated than himself, and now that his health was improving, he wished to give political parties and dinners. A beautiful young woman at the head of his staircase or table was an attraction second only to a chef. He hoped she was not quite a fool, and invited her to lunch alone with him in the course of the week, with intent to ascertain if her mind was of a quality that would sprout the seeds he was willing to implant—he was by way of being intellectual himself.

But it was some time before Julia could be drawn out. The big gloomy dining-room, the little man with his dull cold eyes and languid manner, the magnificent footmen, four besides the butler, to wait upon the two seated so far apart at the table, paralyzed her spirits and courage. Moreover, she was bewildered and somewhat fatigued by five days of shopping, milliners, dressmakers, and meeting many more of her aunt's friends. She felt half disposed to cry, and nearly choked over her food. The duke was rather pleased by her timidity than disappointed; it was not often that he inspired awe (like all little men without personality it had been the dream of his life to electrify a room as he entered it, and annihilate with the eagle in his glance), and, being a gentleman of the old school, he held that young females should be diffident to their natural lords, and modest withal.

With dessert the small army of minions disappeared, and Julia's face brightened.

"I suppose I'll get used to all this grandeur in time, but aunt has only one footman, and at home—well, the blacks take turns waiting on the table, whichever happens to have nothing else to do, and they are part of the family, anyhow."

The duke was shocked, but interested; shocked that even a new recruit to the ranks of the British peerage should be so frank about domestic poverty, and interested in the innocence or the courage which prompted her to speak to the head of the house of France as if he were a parson's son.

"Quite so. Quite so," he said genially. "Harold has rather a small establishment himself, but well appointed, of course. Ah—it's let. I hope you will spend the greater part of your time with me. It is a new experience to see a young face at this table, and a very delightful one." He had never felt more gracious, and Julia smiled upon him so radiantly that he expanded still further. "Yes, you must certainly live with me. And Harold must stand for Parliament. Now that he has resigned from the navy that will be the career for him. We Frances always have careers, we have never been idlers, and I need some one in the lower House. He could not choose a better moment. The present ministry is in a state of dissolution. You will like politics, of course. All intelligent women do, and more than one woman of this family has been of—ah—quite material assistance to her husband."

“I don’t know anything about politics, but I can learn. Mother says I must. When can I go to a castle?”

The duke’s mouth was close and ascetic, but it parted in a smile that was almost spontaneous. “Of course you want to see a castle,” he said, teasing her graciously. “All children do.”

Julia flushed and tossed her head. “Well, I’m not so sorry I’m really young. I’ve been in London only a week, but it seems to me that I’ve met hundreds of women who think of nothing but looking young. So, what is there to be ashamed of?”

“Or to blush about? I perceive that we shall be famous friends. You shall go to a castle as soon as Harold returns. I’ll lend him Bosquith for the honeymoon. His own box would not be half romantic enough.”

Julia had been warned by her aunt not to confide her conjugal indifference to the duke, but she remarked impulsively: —

“One couldn’t be romantic with Mr. France, anyhow. I’d rather go there by myself, or with two or three of my new friends.”

“Great heavens!” For the first time in his life the duke (who always conducted family prayers for the servants, even in the height of the season) was almost profane. “Really—upon my word—you must not say such things—nor feel them. I am aware of the circumstances of your marriage, and that you have not had time to learn to love your husband as a wife should, but you must take wifely love and duty for granted. You are married and that is the end of it. As for romance, of course I was only joking. No doubt I was somewhat clumsy, for I rarely joke; romance does not matter in the least, and you must look forward to living with your husband as the highest of—ahem!—earthly happiness. And I must insist that you do not call Harold ‘Mr. France.’ It is not only unnatural, but American. I do not know any Americans, but am told that the wives always allude to their husbands as ‘Mr.’ In a novel I once read, ‘The Wide, Wide, World,’ they always *called* them ‘Mr.’ It must have been extremely awkward! You will remember, I hope.”

“Yes, sir.”

Julia looked down, and repressed a smile. She might be ignorant and provincial, but she was naturally shrewd and poised; the duke no longer awed her, and, indeed, seemed rather absurd. But, then, she had met so many absurd people in the last few days. She thought with gratitude upon young Herbert and his two enchanting friends, Bridgit Herbert and Ishbel Jones. In the wild rush of her new life they had passed and repassed one another like flashes of lightning, but there had been distinct and agreeable shocks, and she was to lunch with the two young women on the morrow. It was a prospect that consoled her for the ennui of her ordeal with this quite nice but very dull old gentleman.

The duke, however, convinced that he had made an impression, and magnanimously overlooking the indiscretions of youth, kept her for an hour longer, and gave her an outline lesson in politics. He was extremely lucid and chose his

words with the precision which distinguished all his public utterances (he fancied his style); also reminded himself that he was addressing an embryonic intelligence. Julia looked at him with wide admiring eyes and thought of Herbert and Bridgit and Ishbel.

IV

THERE were, at this period of their lives, no two more frivolous and pleasure-loving young women in England than Bridgit Herbert and Ishbel Jones. The one, married three months after she had left the schoolroom, the other rescued suddenly from a ruined castle where food was often scanty and a travelling bog the only excitement, both had thrown themselves into the complex pleasures of society with such ardor and industry that neither had yet found time to discover they were clever women and their husbands two of the dullest men in England.

Mr. James William Jones (alluded to as "Jimmy" to please the enchanting Ishbel, although men let him alone as much as they decently could, unless greedy for tips of the stock market, or the salary of a director on one of his boards) was as generous with money as behoved a newcomer with a beautiful young wife, and a passion for entertaining the British peerage. He might be a bore and a bounder, but he knew what he wanted and he knew how to get it. At forty he was a millionnaire, and, resting on his labors (for Britons, unlike Americans, know when they have enough), became aware that outside of the City he was a nobody. Simultaneously he lifted his gaze to that stellar world known as Society. He read of it, he stared at it from afar—a park chair (for which he paid two pence), an opera stall for which he paid a guinea—and blinked in its radiance. He was first wistful, then angry, then determined. He had many golden keys, but was not long in learning that none would open the door guarding the golden stair. He was an ugly rather flat-featured Welshman, with eyes like black beads and the manners of his native village; he met gentlemen every day in the City, and, being a man of facts, knew himself exactly for what he was. Nevertheless, he would win society as he had won fortune, and (with no keen relish) admitted that for the first time in his life he must stoop to ask the aid of woman. In other words, he must get him a wife, and she must be a lady of high degree. By this time his conclusions were rapid. Being a city millionaire, without youth, looks, or manners, he would have to buy his wife. Ergo, she must be poor.

He immediately embarked upon a study of the British peerage, and with the thoroughness and capacity for detail which play so great a part in the equipment of the self-made, he had within a week a list of impoverished peers long enough to reach to France.

But how was he to meet any of them? He was a solitary man, having had no time to make friends, and, proud in his way, risked no rebuffs from those suave well-groomed beings who honored the City for its base returns. He had not even a poor peer on one of his boards, having, in the old days, regarded them as useless and dangerous.

It was at this point that luck (also an ally of the self-made) came at his call. He was plodding through a society paper when his eye was caught by an editorial paragraph, mysteriously worded. He read it several times, grasped its meaning, and, the hour being propitious, went at once to the editorial offices of *The Mart*, in Bond

Street. Ushered into the presence of the widowed and impoverished lady of some quality who edited the sheet, he asked her bluntly, holding out the paragraph, if “this meant that she introduced people into Society for a consideration.” She colored a dusky crimson at this coarse adaptation of her delicate literary style, but they were not long coming to an understanding, nevertheless. She agreed with him that his only hope was in a wife of the right sort, and asked him to call again a week later. When he returned, she had his record as well as his remedy. With the calm and brazen assurance of which only the well-born thrown on their uppers are capable, she demanded a thousand pounds for her letter of introduction, and another thousand if the wedding came off. He had always despised women and now he laughed outright; nevertheless, when he discovered that the letter was to a poor proud Irish peer, connected with several of the most notable families in England, and the melancholy possessor of fourteen beautiful daughters, ranging from thirty-five years of age to sixteen, he signed the check and the agreement.

The desperate Irish landlord, duly advised from London, received him with true Celtic hospitality, and practically bade him take his choice. As Lady Ishbel was the family’s flower, Jones made up his mind cautiously and promptly, asking for her hand on his third visit. His leaking unventilated quarters in the village inn, and the harsh food of the peer (like many self-made men he was on a diet) had somewhat to do with his rapidity of decision.

Ishbel wept sadly when she received the paternal decree, for she was young and romantic, and her suitor was neither. But not only had she been taught from infancy that marriage was the one escape from bogs and potatoes, and, like her sisters, had lived on the forlorn hope of being invited to London by more fortunate relatives, but she had one of the sweetest and kindest natures in the world; and when her mother wept, and her father told her that Mr. Jones, moved to his depths at the straits of a member of even the Irish peerage, had intimated that he would make him a director of one of his companies, with a salary which would insure him against hunger, and patch up his castle, and when her older sisters urged that she might sacrifice her feelings in order to marry them off in turn, she dried her beautiful eyes, and consented.

Mr. Jones returned at once to London to prepare for his bride, and, again with the help of the Lady of the Bureau, bought him a furnished house in Park Lane. This fact, his many virtues, and his approaching marriage to the “greatest beauty in Ireland” (the Lady of the Bureau by this time felt something like gratitude to her victim and resolved to give him a handsome return for his checks) were duly chronicled in *The Mart*. The marriage took place at the beginning of the season, and Ishbel’s many relatives received her affectionately and launched her at once, swallowing Mr. Jones without a grimace. Thanks to Nature, her husband’s millions, and the friendly *Mart*, she became a “beauty” in her first season, and was so intoxicated with the many and delectable dishes offered her starved young palate, that she tolerated and almost forgot her husband. He, in turn, took little interest in

her, save as a means to an end. He had bought her as he had bought women before, and, being a plain matter-of-fact person, thought one sort about as good as another. However, he gave her an immense income, and, satisfying himself that she was honest and virtuous, in spite of her irresistible coquetry, left her to her own devices.

She had little education, and no accomplishments, but she studied for an hour and a half every morning with the best masters to be found, and her natural wit and charm, added to her rich Irish beauty, and the sweetness of her disposition, endeared her even to disappointed mothers, and won her something more than popularity in the young married set. The woman with whom she soon drifted into the closest intimacy was, apparently, as unlike herself in all respects as possible.

Bridgit Marchamely, educated with her brothers, and highly accomplished, inherited a fortune from her mother, the only child of a Liverpool shipbuilder, who had married the younger son of a duke. With a mind both subtle and powerful, this lady had ruled her husband during the twenty years of their happiness, brought up her children to think for themselves, and played with society when it suited her convenience. Bridgit, the last of her four children, was the only girl, and with her fine upstanding figure, her flashing black eyes and spirited nostrils, looked as gallant a boy as any of her brothers when she rode astride to hounds in the privacy of her grandfather's estate in Yorkshire. In spite of what her tutors called her masculine brain, however, she was no traitor to her sex, and fell madly in love with a handsome guardsman in the first week of her first season. Her father thought young Herbert "rather an ass," but failing to convince his daughter, gave his consent to the match; and she had since kept the young man luxuriously in South Audley Street. She, too, had grown up in the country, being brought to London for a few weeks of opera and concert once a year only, and, her youth getting the better of her fine brain for the nonce, she lived for society in the season and for shooting and hunting and visits to the continent the rest of the year. The fashionable life is the busiest on earth, while its glamor lasts, and with a husband of the old familiar Greek god type (now exclusively English) as fond of the world's pleasures as herself, and her baby where English babies so sensibly and generally are,—in the country the year round,—it is no wonder that she forgot her studies and aspirations and became a flaming comet in London society.

She was instantly attracted to Ishbel, by the law of opposites she thought, but, as she learned in later years, by a deep-lying similarity of character and mind, at present unsuspected beneath the effervescence of their youth.

Both of these young women were almost as fond of Nigel Herbert as of each other, and although he forbore to confide to them his ultimate purpose in regard to Julia, were properly horrified at the "box that red-headed little Nevis girl had got herself into," and sympathetic with his state of mind. Men seldom confide their infatuations to other men, but they often do to women, or, if they drop a hint, woman corkscrews the whole story out of them; and these two astute friends of his got Nigel's the day he asked them to call and "be nice to Mrs. France." They were

still too young to approve of irregular love affairs, but with the optimism of their years were sure it could be arranged somehow, and called at once in Tilney Street.

Mrs. Winstone, delighted to add two young women, so much the fashion, to her set, cultivated them assiduously, confided to them the appalling ignorance of her niece, asked their assistance, and even took them shopping when Julia began to show signs of rebellion and fatigue.

At first they were merely amused; then they found the little West Indian pathetic, finally, like the Captain (alas! but such is life, dropped forever from this veracious chronicle) and young Herbert, began to revolve schemes for “saving her.”

Meanwhile the tired but happy and still unprophetic Julia was preparing for the ordeal of her first curtsy in Buckingham Palace.

V

Mrs. Winstone won the admiration of her distinguished circle and the high approval of the duke for the tact with which she managed Julia's destinies at this period. As the bride's husband was away and she had neither entered society as a maid nor in company with her legal owner, her appearance at balls and formal dinners would have created a scandal. Nevertheless, she must be educated, and Mrs. Winstone cut the difference with her never failing acumen. Her own drawing-room was thronged with "the world" nearly every afternoon; she gave many small dinners to the smartest dissenters from middle-class morality that she knew; it was the era of the problem play, and Julia saw them all, as well as the "halls," with their strange company in the lobbies; Nigel Herbert and one or two other admirers were encouraged; and the most modern and extreme of the psychological novels and plays littered the room above the mews.

But Julia, although some glimmerings of life's realities were beginning to penetrate the serene unconsciousness of childhood (enough to induce in her a certain reserve of speech), was far too rushed and bewildered to comprehend more than one-hundredth part of what she heard and saw—the novels and plays she was too tired in her few solitary moments to open. Shopping, fitting, luncheons, dinners, the afternoon gatherings, the theatre, the constant buzz of conversation about politics and scandal, kept the surface of her mind agitated and left the depths untouched. Even Nigel, in spite of his ardent eyes and tender notes, she barely separated from Bridgit and Ishbel, merely conscious that she liked the three better than any one on earth except her mother. If she thought of France at all, it was to experience a sensation of momentary gratitude to the person that had given her this brilliant experience; although, after she began to rehearse daily for the presentation, curtsying before a row of dummies until she ached, backing out with her train over her arm, the correct smile on her face, the correct measure of respect and dignity in her mien, she was disposed to wish herself back on Nevis.

Had it not been for the immense respectability of the duke, and his personal friendship with his sovereign, the application to present the wife of Harold France at the court of St. James might have received scant consideration. He was even under the ban of the royal arbiter eligantiarum. But there was no question of refusing the pointed request of the duke, whom the queen regarded as a model of all the virtues in a degenerate age; and Mrs. Edis was also remembered with favor. The Lady Arabella Torrence, a sister of the duke, was selected to present the bride, and at six o'clock on a raw May morning Julia was aroused by the hair-dresser, and, after an hour's torture, went to sleep again on a chair with her feathered head swathed in tulle.

The respite was brief. At nine o'clock two women from the great dressmaking establishment patronized by Mrs. Winstone came to array the victim in a train that filled up the entire room.

A cup of strong coffee revived Julia's flagging spirits and vitality, and she fancied herself mightily when, draped, and sewn, and squeezed, and pinched, she was free at last to admire her reflection in the long mirror. Her gown was pure white, of course, the front of the round skirt covered with tulle and sown with seed pearls, the train of a stiff thick brocade, which would be sent on the morrow to be made into an evening wrap, just as the round frock was to do duty for her first party. Such was the private economy of the presentation costume. The duke had lent her the family pearls, and they depended to her waist and clasped her head. Her skin was as white as her gown and her hair and lips were vivid touches of color. Julia smiled at her reflection, then trembled as she gathered up the train, so much more alarming than the "property" stuff she had used at rehearsals.

Word had come that Lady Arabella was waiting, and cheered by compliments from her aunt and from Bridgit and Ishbel, who rushed in for a moment, she descended to the family coach and sat herself beside her formidable relative.

Lady Arabella was a tall bony big woman, with the large hands and feet which are supposed to be the prerogative of the plebeian, an early Victorian coiffure, and an imposing skeleton religiously exhibited so far as decency permitted and fashion expected, whenever a court function demanded this sacrifice on the part of a loyal subject who suffered from chronic hay fever. She had a deep bass voice, a bristling beard, and approved of nothing modern. "When the queen was young and gave the tone to Society" was a phrase constantly on her lips. She had felt it incumbent upon herself to give the distracted Julia a series of lectures on deportment, particularly on her behavior during the sacred hour of presentation, and had improved the opportunity to let fall many edifying remarks upon the duties of a wife, the shocking manner in which the women of the present generation neglected their husbands. Although she disapproved of her nephew in so far as she understood him, she subtly conveyed to his wife that to be the choice of the future head of the house of France was an overpowering honor.

At first she had terrified Julia, then bored her, finally, as the great day approached, loomed as a rock of strength. Nothing, at least, could frighten *her*, and she was so big and so conspicuously hideous that it was conceivably possible to shrink behind her.

But there was a preliminary ordeal of which she had heard nothing, a grateful callousing of the nerves before making a bow to a mere sovereign.

Many had waited for the last drawing-room because it would be the smartest, others because it was a bore, to be deferred as long as possible; many had been in Italy or on the Riviera; others had been put on the list by a power higher than their own wills. From whatever combination of causes the procession of slowly moving carriages was as long as the tail of a comet, and at times, particularly while the gorgeous coaches of the ambassadors were driving smartly down the Mall, came to a dead halt. It was then that the sovereign people had their innings.

They lined the streets surrounding the Palace in serried ranks. Not even the

American crowd loves a “show” as the British does, Socialists and all. Their ancestors have gaped at gilded coaches and gorgeous robes and sparkling jewels for centuries, and if the day ever comes when they shall have exchanged these amiable pageants of their betters for a full stomach, who shall dare predict that they will be entirely satisfied?

What awe they may have inherited had long since disappeared. They crowded up against the procession of carriages, devouring with their curious good-natured eyes the splendid gowns and jewels, the glimpses of bare shoulders, and the beauty or bones of women apparently insensible of their existence.

For a time Julia clutched nervously at the pearls beneath her cloak, and shrank from that sea of eyes under hats of an indescribable commonness.

“My eye, ain’t her hair red!” exclaimed one young woman, with unmistakable reference. “And a little paint wouldn’t ’urt her.”

“Paint? That there’s high-toned pallor—”

“Pearl powder—”

“Oh, I sy, wot for do they let bibies like that marry when they don’t have to? I call it a shime.”

“Right you are!”

One girl, with a violent color and black frizzled hair that stood out quite eight inches from three parts of her face, thrust her head through the open window of the coach.

“Don’t you mind wot they sy,” she said consolingly. “They’re that nonsensical they can’t ’elp chaffing. And you’re the prettiest and the most haristocratic of the whole lot—I’ve been all up and down the line. And it ain’t powder! My word, but your complexion’s *grand*!”

She withdrew without waiting for an answer. Julia turned to Lady Arabella, who, throughout the ordeal, had sat as upright as if corseted in iron, and with her long haughty profile turned unflinchingly to the mob. So, it must be conceded, stupid as she was in her pride, would she have sat if they had threatened her life. As Julia asked her timidly (in effect) if the most aristocratic function of the year was always treated like a travelling circus, Lady Arabella answered, without flickering an eyelash: “Always, and fortunately for us. The lower classes love to see us on parade, and the more we give them of this sort of thing, the longer we shall keep their loyalty. Moreover, it serves the purpose—this drawing-room procession, in particular—of bringing us in close touch with the people, serves to demonstrate that we are real mortals, not the ridiculous creatures in the sort of novels they read. I always endeavor to look a symbol. I hope you will learn to do the same in time, for the lower classes are secretly proud of us and like us to play our part. You are drooping. Sit up and present your profile.”

“What’s the use of a profile without a backbone?” said Julia, wearily. “I’m so tired.”

“You must rise above mere physical fatigue,” said the old dame, severely. “People in our class keep our backbones for our bedrooms. When you are inclined to complain, think of the poor royalties, who stand for hours. And don’t finger your pearls. You are supposed to have been born with them about your neck.”

Julia’s sense of humor was not yet fully awake, but her new relative’s words were tonic as well as reassuring; she sat erect, but turned her eyes round her profile to regard this strange lower class of London, of which she had heard much but seen nothing until to-day. They were an ugly lot; beauty would seem to be the prerogative of aristocracy in England, possibly because it is well fed; they wore rough ready-made frocks, or, where finery was attempted, feathers and ribbons inferior to anything Julia had ever seen on the negroes of Nevis; and many of the hats looked as if they might be used as nightcaps to protect the elaborate masses of frizzled hair. Julia, brought up on the soundest aristocratic principles, saw in this gaping good-natured crowd but a broad and solid foundation for the historic institution above.

The coach finally rolled through the gates of Buckingham Palace. For an hour longer she stood, her slippers pinching until her native independence of character almost induced her to kick them off. But she was so tired after a month of London, an almost sleepless night, and the excitements of an already long day, that her brain worked toward no such simple solution, and before her moment came she ached from head to foot. The scene became a blur of vast rooms, of tall women, very thin or very fat, with diamond tiaras above set faces, and trains of every color over their arms, of girls that shifted from one foot to the other and breathed audibly their wish that it were over. One by one they disappeared. There was a sharp emphatic whisper from Lady Arabella. Julia started and set her teeth. “Mind you don’t sit down like that daughter of the American ambassador,” whispered the same fierce nervous voice. “Remember all that you have rehearsed.”

Julia, terrified to her marrow, did as opera singers do in moments of distress; she “fell back on technique.” Afterward she remembered vaguely making a succession of curtsies to a long row of dazzling crowns, but no effort of memory ever recalled the features beneath. She received the train flung over her arm and backed out without disgracing herself, but also without a thrill of that joy which a loyal subject is supposed to feel when in the presence of his sovereign for the first time.

“Not bad,” said Lady Arabella, graciously, as after many more moments, they entered their carriage. But Julia was yawning. When she reached the house in Tilney Street, she went to bed and refused to get up for twenty-four hours.

VI

On the day following the drawing-room a prearranged conference was held in the "palatial home" of Mr. Jones in Park Lane. It was the hideous and abandoned house of a South African millionnaire, this home, but Lady Ishbel had refurnished it by degrees, and her boudoir in particular, with its pale French silks and many flowers, its Empire furniture, both delicately wrought and solid, framed appropriately a soft aristocratic loveliness that almost concealed strong bones and firm lines. As she is to play so intimate a part in the development of our heroine, she may as well be described here as later. She had quantities of curly silky chestnut hair, long brown eyes with fine fringes and an expression both modest and piquant, a straight little nose with arching nostril, a gracefully cut mouth with pink lips, and a square little chin with a dimple in it. Her figure was womanly, not too thin, and her capable hands were seldom idle. Just now she was retrimming a hat that had arrived the day before from the milliner of the moment in Paris. It may be added that her smile was the sweetest in London; and her voice was always rich and deep, with a natural vibration quite at the command of her will. Charm radiated from her, and she was an outrageous flirt. In fact she looked with suspicion upon women that did not flirt, estimating them below the normal and not to be trusted in anything. Men adored her, even when she laughed at them, which she often did in the most distracting manner imaginable.

Mrs. Herbert was standing in her favorite attitude behind a low fire-screen, her black eyes flashing, her nostrils dilating, while her young brother-in-law paced excitedly up and down the room. He was thinner than when he had fallen in love a month since, almost pallid, and his eyes had a strained look. There was no possible doubt as to what was the matter with him.

"Don't be an ass," said Mrs. Herbert. "You are acting like the hero of a melodrama —"

"I tell you something must be done!" cried the young man. "The squadron has been sighted off the Azores —"

"Well, what are you going to do about it? She's not in love with you—doesn't care a rap —"

"What chance have I had to make her? I never see her alone, never get a chance to talk to her for half an hour at a time. You promised to help me —"

"Mrs. Winstone has never let the poor thing go for a minute. She's overdone the business. Julia's had no time to think, goes to sleep at problem plays, and knows no more than when she arrived —"

"If I only had the chance to teach her!" cried Herbert, with flashing eyes.

"Look at here," said his sister-in-law, grasping a point of the screen with either hand; "let us have this out. If your brains are not addled, they must have conceived some sort of a plan. What is it? A liaison? An elopement? I approve of neither. I'd

like to save the poor child from that man, but the frying pan's as good as the fire —"

"No liaison! I'd elope with her to-morrow if she'd go with me —"

"And disgrace a great family!" said Ishbel, softly.

"Oh, hang the family," cried Mrs. Herbert, whose mother's blood was already working in her. "The duke's an old pudding. Lady Arabella and her sisters are cracked old sign-posts; and a scandal would serve Mrs. Winstone right for not packing the child back on the next steamer to her sister with the whole unvarnished truth in a letter. Not she, however; she wants to be aunt to a duchess. What I'm thinking of is Julia. The conceit of man! What do you suppose you could give her in exchange for disgrace —"

"Love!" cried Nigel. "I tell you it can make up for anything when it is strong enough."

"Yes, when it is," said Mrs. Herbert, who, recovering from her own infatuation for a brainless beauty, was not in a romantic frame of mind. "But she doesn't love you, in the first place, and in the second, no woman can live her life on love, any more than a man can. She wants children, position of some sort, the society of other women—that last is one of woman's biggest wants, and no man ever realizes it."

"But love must be a wonderful thing," said Ishbel, who had never experienced it. "It would almost be worth any sacrifice, especially if one had had things first, only men are always so funny in one way or another; one becomes disenchanted just in the nick of time."

"No man lives who can make up to a woman for the loss of everything else," said Mrs. Herbert, decidedly. "I mean a woman with brains, and Julia has them. She doesn't know it because she doesn't know anything; but one day —"

"Oh, if I could be the one to train that mind—why not? Why not?"

"Let's come down to business. I refuse to help you either to elope or to make love to her. I fancy you'll have to wait until France drinks himself to death, or this country passes rational divorce laws. Forget yourself and think of her."

"Very well. Save her first. That is the main thing. I'll never give her up, but I'm willing to forget myself for a bit, if I can —"

"Well, make one practical suggestion."

Ishbel put the hat aside and clasped her hands. "I have long since made up my mind to offer her shelter when she needs it," she announced. "Mrs. Winstone won't, and Julia is sure to leave him."

"She must never go to him!" Herbert stormed up and down the room again.

"Perhaps he's not as bad as he's painted," said Ishbel, who was always charitable.

"Oh, you don't know! You don't know!"

"I do," said the uncompromising Mrs. Herbert. "He's a bad lot without the usual redeeming weakness of that easy form of good nature known as a kind heart; a

sensualist without an atom of real warmth; a card sharp too clever to be caught; a periodical drinker; a vile gross creature whom only the lowest women have tolerated for years, but so blasé he is tired of them —”

“We must tell her things!” cried Ishbel. “We must make her understand!”

“You couldn’t make that baby understand anything. Besides, when it came to the point, you couldn’t do it. It’s all very well to talk of enlightening girls about anything, but personally I’ve never encountered any one that had the nerve to do it. Girls in our class absorb knowledge as they grow up; instincts help; but who ever told us anything? Well, here is my plan, since you two appear to have none. We shall tell her that France is dangerous, that when he drinks he is quite mad and may kill her. She’s game, but there are certain female fears that always can be worked on. And repugnances. We will draw horrid pictures of what he looks like when he’s drunk —”

“Right you are!” cried Herbert. “No decent girl will elect to live with a common drunkard, particularly when she doesn’t love him. And if Mrs. Winstone can’t be brought round, one of you will take her in?”

“If she’ll come. Perhaps she would wish to go back to her mother. She hasn’t a penny of her own, and apparently has never heard of the self-supporting woman. But it might be managed somehow.”

“It must!” cried Ishbel. “We will hide her alternately.”

“But to what end? France might be exasperated to the point of wishing to rid himself of her, but what ground for divorce? We travel in a circle as far as Nigel is concerned.”

“I have it!” cried Nigel, whose fine imagination was fired by the most stimulative of all passions. “Give me the chance to make her love me, and then take her to America and get a divorce there. Thank heaven I have a little something of my own, and I can earn more. We’ll stay in America until the storm blows over —”

“American divorces are not legal in England —”

“Then I’ll stay there forever. Promise. Promise.”

“Not bad,” said Mrs. Herbert. “You take her in, Ishbel, and I’ll take her over. Mr. Jones would probably not consent to your desertion—a divorce must take time, even in the United States, and you have another sister to marry off next season —”

“Of course I’ll take her in, and we’ll begin to-morrow to frighten her.”

Nigel kissed them both.

But Fortune is often with the wicked. On the following morning wires flashed the news that Harold France, first lieutenant of her Majesty’s cruiser *Drake*, now on its way home from South America, was down with typhoid fever. Nobody save the duke expected a man of France’s habits to recover from any microbous assault, but that innocent and loyal relative gave immediate orders to convert several rooms of his town house into a hospital, engaged a staff of doctors and nurses, and

peremptorily ordered Julia to move over and be ready to take her place at her husband’s bedside.

VII

THE four months that followed were by no means the unhappiest of Julia's life, much as she resented being torn from her friends and the bewildering delights of London. The duke, a noble if inconspicuous pillar of the good old school, stood out for wifely duty in appearance if not in fact: the nurses barely permitted Julia to cross the threshold of the sick-chamber. But although she was of no possible use, and time hung heavy on her hands, none of her friends was permitted to call on her, and the duke himself took her for a constitutional at eight in the morning and nine in the evening. Julia's complete indifference to her husband had caused him grave uneasiness, even before the stricken bridegroom's return, and he embraced this opportunity to keep the child under his personal surveillance and do what he could to give a serious turn to a "female brain of eighteen."

Julia, prompted by Ishbel, asked to have a telephone put in her room, but the request was courteously refused, and the two loyal friends were forced to content themselves with frequent notes. After Goodwood, Bridgit went to Yorkshire and Ishbel to Homburg, but Nigel remained in town, although all three were cheerfully persuaded that France would die and life be happy ever after. Nigel regained his fresh good looks and spirits, endured the hot deserted city without a murmur, and although he naturally refrained from writing to the coveted wife of a dying man, felt a certain exaltation in watching over her from afar. It was during this period that he conceived the idea of writing a novel of the slums (the unknown appealing to his adventurous imagination), and took long rambles in unsavory precincts that were productive of more results than one.

Meanwhile Julia, brought up in submission to a far stronger will than the duke's, had ceased to rebel, and taken to heart the parting admonition of her aunt (that lady had gone with Mrs. Macmanus to Marienbad to renew her complexion) to learn all the duke was willing to teach her, and to read the novels that celebrated London society, past and present. Mrs. Winstone, too, believed that France must die, but, perceiving that her niece had a charm of her own in addition to the magnetism of youth, had another match in mind for her.

So Julia drank in the long discourses upon the abominable Gladstone and all his policies, the iniquity of the Harcourt Budget, obediently rejoiced at the failure of the second Home Rule Bill, became intimately acquainted with the other notable figures in British politics: Lord Salisbury (the duke's idol), Lord Rosebery (the present Prime Minister), fated, in the duke's not always erring judgment, to follow close upon the heels of Gladstone into political seclusion, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, Sir William Vernon Harcourt, Mr. Balfour, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, George Curzon, Lord Lansdowne, Mr. Goschen (the speaker), the Duke of Devonshire (Hartington), Mr. Morley, and Mr. Bryce. The treaty with Japan was a fruitful subject of discourse; and when the war broke out between that new military power and China, Julia, who was growing nervous, gratified the duke

by sharing his excitement. In her lonely hours she read promiscuously and thought a good deal.

She rarely flung a thought to poor Nigel, for when the big helpless form of her husband had been taken from the ambulance and carried past her up the broad stairs, the natural tenderness and pity in her nature had stirred, and something of what she felt for little Fanny had gone out to him. She would have nursed him, had she been permitted; she inquired for him many times a day, and sincerely hoped that he would recover. She had not the faintest notion of loving him, but she would be a good wife, and, no doubt, be happy. Ishbel did not love her husband and was happy, and so, apparently, were a good many more that flitted through her aunt's drawing-room with a temporary admirer in tow. Julia's future plans included no infants-in-waiting; she should become one of those great political women the planets, according to her mother's letters, had ordered her to be; how could she doubt this destiny when every circumstance was conspiring to fulfil it? So, between the sense of an inexorable fate, the serious atmosphere of her new surroundings, and the desperate struggle of her husband for his life, her mind flowered rapidly; and the duke was delighted with her. He disliked and distrusted women that stood alone, that won personal fame for themselves, even "beauties" whose notoriety threw their lords into the background; but he had a very keen appreciation of their usefulness to man, not only as dams, but as tactful distributors of political smiles. Of course there must be a certain amount of brain behind the smiles, that they occur at precisely the right moment; but any man, given fair material to work on, could do well with it and prevent mistakes. He knew that certain women in history had been the centre of famous political salons, but took for granted that they had been severely coached by men. As for the women that were famous in the arts of fiction and painting, he did not know how to account for them, therefore refused to think about them at all. Julia he regarded as a promising specimen. She was healthy, and would no doubt replenish the almost exhausted house of France; she was pretty and charming, therefore would keep her husband out of mischief; and, taking to politics as a duck takes to water, would be sure to smile, subtly, radiantly, or meditatively, as well as to listen intelligently, when the distinguished members of his party that he purposed to entertain once more were obliged to talk to her.

On the twenty-first day of France's illness his temperature went down, he slept naturally, and upon awaking asked to see his wife. Julia was admitted, and stood for a few moments by the bed, stammering congratulations and staring at the shrunken face with its ragged beard; then went to her own room and wept stormily over the wreck of what at least had been the perfection of manly strength. France's temperature remained normal for a fortnight, then suddenly shot up again, and twice, during the ensuing twenty days, he almost expired. Two doctors slept in the house when the relapse was at its worst, and the political talks were interrupted, although the duke never for a moment believed that the last of his race would die.

By this time the press was interested, for at all events France was heir-

presumptive to a great estate and title, and daily bulletins were published. Nigel began his novel in order to divert his mind from indecent jubilation; but when France's temperature dropped again and he improved from day to day with uncompromising persistence, his rival took the express to Yorkshire to confer with Bridgit. She could give him no encouragement. Julia in her letters had betrayed something of her state of grace, and during the relapse had written once in a strain that manifested the deepest anxiety.

"He'll get her through her sympathy, pity; no matter what she may be in the future, she's all female at present," remarked Mrs. Herbert, after showing these letters to Nigel. "All women have to go through the female stage, one way or another; and now will come a long convalescence during which she will be sorrier for him than ever—big man helpless, and all the rest of it. What is worse, she will become accustomed to him. Better give her up, my boy, or wait until she runs away from him. She's sure to, sooner or later,—unless he reforms. After all, why shouldn't he? A serious illness often works wonders; gives one so much time to think. And physical weakness always induces such virtuous resolutions. France may look back upon his past life with horror. Then, where will you be? Julia's a well-born well-brought-up girl of high ideals. If France treats her decently she'll stick to him, as many another woman is sticking to a husband that is all that she doesn't want him to be —"

"The more shame to them!" cried Nigel, hotly.

"Well, there are worse things than conventions and standards. Now run off and write your novel. I am told that a harrowed mind often produces the most moving fiction."

"I'll wait, but not too long," said Nigel, doggedly. "Bosquith is being got ready for them, and is only twelve miles from here. You must ask me down, and I'll manage to see her as soon as it's decent. Of course I can't cut under a man while he's being trundled round in a bath chair."

VIII

FRANCE'S convalescence was very slow. His superb physique had fought death victoriously, as, so far, it had saved him from the consequences of dissipation, but only youth could have given him a swift recovery. It was September before he was able to move to Bosquith. After the stifling London summer, Julia needed a change as much as he did. The duke, as soon as his heir was able to sit up, had taken a run over to Kissengen, but Julia had spent the greater part of every day in the sick-room, reading the sporting papers and light novels to her husband, or amusing him as best she could. France would barely let her out of his sight. His shrewd cunning brain recovered its strength while his body was still helpless, and he conceived that now was his opportunity to make this inexperienced child believe in a romantic devotion, and to win her love in return. He permitted her to take a daily walk or drive with one of the nurses, making much of his sacrifice, and was so touchingly happy to see her after these brief separations that Julia almost wept, and gave him her hand to hold, while she made the most of every trifle her observing eyes had taken note of during her respite.

He no longer repelled her; not only did his helplessness appeal to her deep womanly instincts, but she was become so accustomed to his touch that she was quite indifferent to it: she bathed his head with cologne several times a day, kissed him obediently when she came and went, and even gave him her shoulder as a pillow when he fretfully declared that his head could rest on nothing else. It was a young and excessively thin shoulder, and, as a matter of fact, France would have preferred feathers, but the profoundly calculating mind, even when the body is weak, disdains trifles.

As soon as he was pronounced well enough to travel, the wary duke returned and accompanied his charges to Bosquith. This great estate, some fifteen thousand acres, which included moors and grouse, as well as many farms with turnip fields, was the duke's favorite property, not only because of the shootings, but because the air of the North Sea was the best tonic he knew. It was for this reason that he had chosen Bosquith for the last stage of his nephew's convalescence, rather than one of his country houses nearer to London. But he had hesitated, nevertheless. Bosquith adjoined the Yorkshire estate of Bridgit Herbert's paternal grandfather, and he knew of his new relative's affection for a young woman of whom he had never approved since he had seen her riding astride over the moors with her brothers, pretending to be an American Indian. He had seen her occasionally since her marriage, and, no mean student of physiognomy, had labelled her dangerous, one of those women that set their nonsensical opinions above man's and call themselves advanced. He had no intention that the intimacy should continue, nor that Julia should see aught of Nigel Herbert, whose devotion she had artlessly revealed. As for Ishbel, who visited Bridgit every year, he would not have her in the house, as he could not admit her and shut the door in her husband's face. Somebody must take a stand, and the duke,

although he might not be able to impose himself on his generation, was not only intensely loyal to his class but alive to its dangers. No snob, Julia's lack of title and fortune did not annoy him in the least. "No one can be more than gentleman or lady," he was wont to say magnanimously, "and I have known more than one titled bounder of historic descent. But when it comes to the James William Joneses, well, thank heaven! at least they don't belong to us, and we are not bound to countenance them for the sake of their fathers; we cannot drag them up, and they will end by pulling us down; in other words they will vulgarize the British aristocracy until the masses lose their pride in us; and then where will we be? Democracy, Socialism, threaten us as it is. Our middle and lower classes at home, and our too independent colonies afar, must be made to retain their loyalty, at all costs."

Julia thought these sentiments sound, but made up her mind privately that she would never drop Ishbel or Bridgit, although she had been given to understand that the duke deeply regretted the proximity of Bosquith to the happy hunting grounds of Mrs. Herbert, and would not permit her to visit them. Her rapidly awakening intellect was seeking for partnership in her still fluid character, and although books could not develop the last, inheritances from a line of men, and at least one woman, who had always thought and acted for themselves, however mistakenly, were stirring. She had been too managed and surrounded to find herself as yet, but she had begun to suspect that the ego has a life of its own and certain inalienable rights.

The journey north sent France to bed again for three days, and for a fortnight he was wheeled about the park; then he began to hobble feebly, first on the arm of his nurse or wife, then with the aid of a stick. Julia accepted him as one of the facts of existence, regarded him proprietorally, took an immense interest in his progress toward recovery, and forgot him when she could in the library or in long walks over the moors. The castle was romantically situated on a cliff overhanging the North Sea, and in appearance, as in surroundings, was all that Julia could ask. It was very brown, two-thirds of it was in ruins, and the other third included a feudal hall, two towers, and walls four feet thick. The windows, however, had been enlarged, hot-water pipes had been put in, and no modern house was more sanitary. The duke, despite a pardonable pride in his ancestry, and an unmitigated conservatism in politics, was strictly up to date where his health and comfort were concerned. Born an invalid, he had lived longer than many of his burly ancestors, owing to a thin temperament and an early and avid interest in hygiene.

He had a second reason for bringing Harold to Bosquith. The neighboring borough was much under his influence, and he proposed that his relative should stand for it at the next general election. At the last it had succumbed to the personal manipulation of Gladstone, who had taken a lively pleasure in routing the duke; but it was conservative by habit, and not a measure of either Gladstone's government or that of his successor had met with its approval. It was in just the frame of mind to be nursed by a genial and tactful duke. France fell in with these plans, and, when able to meet the local leaders, laid aside his almost unbearable haughtiness of manner,

and assumed a bluff sailorlike heartiness which impressed them deeply.

Julia quickly revived in the bracing air of sea and moor, and as France rose late and retired early, besides sleeping a good deal during the day, and as she had acquired a certain skill in dodging the duke,—who, moreover, took his local duties very seriously,—she felt happy and free once more. The library was well furnished, the moors were purple, her bedroom was in an ancient tower, and the sea boomed under her window. She wrote long letters to her grimly triumphant mother, and, now and again, to Bridgit and Ishbel. The former, accompanied by her husband and Nigel, rode over to see her, but she was obliged to receive them in the chilling presence of her husband and the duke, and when the brief visit came to an end, was put on her honor not to leave the estate.

“As soon as Harold is quite recovered,” said the duke, “we will both drive over with you, for I am far from counselling you to be rude to any one. Only, while your husband is ill, it would be highly indecorous for you to be associating with young people; and for the matter of that, the more mature minds with which you associate during the next few years, the better—for us all, my dear, for us all.”

But Julia, at this period, was quite independent of people. Her newly awakened intellect was clamoring for books and more books. Politics, the planets, the “brilliant future,” friends, were alike forgotten. Nothing mattered but the lore that scholars and worldlings had gathered, that ravening maw in her mind. Perhaps this early ingenuous stage of the mind’s development is its happiest; it is uncritical, having no standards of life and personal research for comparison, it swamps the real ego, while mightily tickling the false, it obliterates mere life, no matter how unsatisfactory, and above all it is saturated with the essence of novelty, the subtlest spring of all passion. Julia, barely educated, found in histories, biographies, memoirs, travels, even in works of science beyond her full comprehension, a wonderland of which she had never dreamed, much as she had longed for books on Nevis. That had been merely a case of inherited brain cells calling for furniture; embarked upon her adventure, these cells were crammed so rapidly that her ancestors slept in peace, and Julia felt herself an isolated and completely happy intellect.

Nevertheless, she was young.

One night, shortly after her husband, now able to grace the evening board, had gone to his room, and the duke was closeted with the conservative agent, she went to her own room, opened the window, and hung out over the sea. The moon, whose malicious alertness Captain Dundas had deplored, was at the full and flooded a scene as beautiful in its way as the tropics. The great expanse of water was almost still, and a broad path of silver seemed firm enough to walk on straight away to the continent of Europe and its untasted delights. Just round the corner was the rose garden, which covered the filled-in moat on the south side of the castle and several hundred yards beyond. The roses were not very good ones, being somewhat rusted by the salt-sea spray, but, like the pleasaunce on another side of the castle, were a

part of the more modern traditions of Bosquith; and the duke, although entirely indifferent to Nature when she ceased to be useful and amused herself with being merely beautiful, was a stickler for tradition; the roses were never neglected without, although never brought within; pollen inflamed his mucous membranes.

The blossoms had gone with the summer, but Julia was fancying herself inhaling their perfumes when she became aware that the figure of a man had detached itself from the tangle. She watched him idly, supposing him to be one of the grooms, and wondering if his sweetheart would follow. But the man was alone, and in a moment he bent down, picked up a handful of loose stones, and leaned back as if to fling them upward from the narrow ledge. Simultaneously Julia and Nigel Herbert recognized each other.

“What—what—do you want?” gasped Julia, in a loud whisper.

“You,” said Nigel, grimly. “Come down here.”

“Impossible!” thrilling wildly, however.

“If you don’t, I’ll break in. I’ve prowled round here for three nights, and know the place by heart. The leads —”

“For heaven’s sake, go away!”

“Will you come down? I’m spraining the back of my neck, and may slip off this narrow shelf any minute. Do you want to see my mangled remains at the foot of the cliff?”

“No. No. But —”

“Come down. I must have a talk with you—have this thing out or go mad. It’s little to ask!”

Julia glanced behind her at the circular room hung with arras (to keep out draughts and conceal the hot-water pipes), and furnished with a big Gothic bed and hard upright chairs—and thrilled again. She was not the least in love with Nigel, but she suddenly realized that she was nearly nineteen and romance had never entered her life. After all, was love a necessary factor? Might not the romantic adventure be something to remember always, particularly when assisting a most unromantic husband achieve a political career, and entertaining some of the dullest men in London? She hesitated but an instant, then leaned out again.

“I’ll try,” she whispered.

“If you fail, I’ll come to-morrow night.”

“Very well, go into the rose garden—under the oak.”

She put on a dark cape and opened her door cautiously. The long corridor was lighted by a small lamp: gas and electricity, not being hygienic essentials, were not among the Bosquith improvements. All the bedrooms opened upon this corridor, but Julia knew that her husband slept, his capacity for instant and prolonged slumber being one of his assets. She crept past the duke’s door. He was an early bird, but was in the library still, no doubt, and the library was far away. He would be sure to

mount by the small stair beside it; the grand staircase led to the unused drawing-rooms, and into the immense hall, which, at this season with no guests in the castle, and a library answering every requirement of the family, was economically inexpedient. When a hereditary duke has several entailed estates to keep up besides a town house, and a paltry income of forty thousand pounds a year, he is put to shifts of which the envious world knows nothing.

Down the grand staircase, therefore, stole Julia. It creaked even under her small feet; behind the wainscot she heard gnawing sounds of hideous import; and the darkness below was unrelieved by a single silver gleam. But Julia possessed a valiant soul; moreover, was determined to have her adventure. She felt her way past the massive pieces of furniture toward a small door in the tower room beneath her own; she dared not attempt to unchain and open the great front doors studded with nails. She had used this humble means of exit before, and although the room was full of rubbish, she found the big rusty key without difficulty, opened the door, then with another fearful glance about her stole toward the middle of the rose garden. The old bushes were very high and ragged, but had it not been for an oak tree in their midst, concealment for a man nearly six feet high would have been impossible. Julia made her way straight toward the tree, and uttered a loud “Shhh—” when Nigel impetuously left its shelter.

“And even this is not safe,” she whispered, as they met. “We are too near the castle, and the duke always takes a little walk before he goes to bed. Follow me and don’t speak or make any noise.”

She led the way out of the rose garden and across the park to a grove of ancient oaks. A brook wandered among the trees. The moonlight poured in. The dark frowning mass of the castle was plain to be seen. The sea murmured. A nightingale sang. No spot on earth could have been more romantic. Julia shivered with delight, and thanked the winking stars.

But Nigel was insensible to the romance of his surroundings. Unlike the woman, he wanted the main factor; the setting could take care of itself. And he was in a distracted and desperate frame of mind. As Julia turned to him she experienced her first misgiving; his face was set and very white.

“This is where I often read and dream,” she said conversationally. “It is my favorite spot.”

“Is it? It’s awfully good of you to come out. I can’t tell you how much I appreciate it. I might have written, I suppose; but I can only write fiction. Couldn’t put down a word of what I wanted to say to you—of what I felt—” He broke off and added passionately, “Julia! Don’t you care for me—the least bit?”

“No.” Julia, not having the faintest idea how to handle such a situation, took refuge in the bare truth, at all times more natural to her than to most women. “I don’t love you, but I think it rather nice to meet you like this for once.”

Nigel groaned. Like all born artists, he understood something of women by

instinct, and felt more hopeless in the face of this uncompromising honesty and artlessness than when alone with his imagination.

“But you don’t love your husband?”

“Oh, no. Not the way you mean, at least. I’ve read a lot about love these last months, and it must be wonderful. I’ve grown quite fond of poor Harold, but I never could love him in that way. I wish I could,” she added, with a sudden sense of loyalty to the absent and sleeping husband.

“Julia, you must try to understand! You never can even tolerate that man. You mustn’t live with him. We were plotting to save you from him when he fell ill, and then we ho—we thought he’d die. But he’s, he’s—Oh, please don’t look at me as if I were a cad. I know you are a brick, and I’ve held out until he was on his legs again—and I nearly off my head. I won’t say a word against him. Let it go at this—you never can love him. That I can swear to and *you know it*. But you could love some one, and it must, it must be me! It shall be! Julia, if you could only *guess* what love means, then you might have some idea, at least, of how I love you. But even your instincts don’t seem to have awakened. And I haven’t the chance to teach you! You must give it to me! You must!”

“Do you want me to elope with you?” asked Julia, curiously. This was a highly interesting development, and after the manner of her sex, when indifferent, she grew cooler and more analytical as her lover’s flame mounted.

“No—no—not yet. I only wanted a chance to-night to tell you how I love you—to make you understand that much, if possible. Oh, God! It *must* be communicable! When you are alone and think it over—I hope—I hope—Meanwhile, I want you to promise to make opportunities to meet me. I can’t go to the castle. But you can meet me. On the moor. Here at night. I have waited long enough. France no longer needs you. He is nearly well, and will get everything he wants—”

“He wants me more than anything else,” said Julia, shrewdly. “He’s as much in love with me as you are—”

“He shan’t have you!” shouted Nigel, and Julia stared, fascinated, at a face convulsed with passion. It was the first time she had seen this tremendous force unleashed, for France had done his courting under the eagle eye of his future mother-in-law, and Nigel, during their acquaintance in London, had not progressed outwardly beyond sentiment. Julia, even while deciding that sentiment became his fresh frank face better, and shrinking distastefully from a passion so close to her, was conscious of disappointment in her own unresponsiveness. Nineteen! What an ideal age for love! And what lover could fill all requirements more satisfactorily than Nigel? But she felt as cold as the moon. To her deep mortification she was obliged to stifle a yawn; it was long past her bedtime. She answered with such haste that her voice had an encouraging quiver in it.

“Oh, don’t let’s talk about him. It’s so jolly to see you again. Tell me about your book. Have you finished it?”

“I didn’t come here to talk about my book.” Nigel’s voice was rough. He came so close to her that she shrank once more, and turned away her eyes. “Oh, I’m not going to touch you. I couldn’t unless you wanted me to, unless you loved me— That is what I want: the chance to make you love me. Will you give it to me?”

“I—I don’t see how it is possible.” She longed to run, but her female instincts were budding under this tropical storm, and one prompted that if she ran, terrible things might happen. The most honest of women is dishonest in moments of danger pertaining to her sex. Julia felt danger in the air. She also rejected Nigel’s protestations. She buckled on her feminine armor and turned to him sweetly.

“I must think it over,” she said. “I never even dreamed that you were in love with me. I should never dare come out again at night. But perhaps on the moor, some morning —”

“I should prefer that. One of the keepers or servants might see us in the park, and I don’t wish our love to be vulgarized —”

“Oh! I hadn’t thought of that! How horrid! I’ll go back this minute. You stay here until I’ve had time to get inside. I’ll write to-morrow. If you follow me, I shall never believe that you love me —”

Even while she spoke she was flitting through the grove with every appearance of an alarm she did not feel at all. Nigel ran after her.

“I’ll not follow if you will swear to meet me to-morrow morning—on the cliffs three miles north from here.”

“Yes. Yes. I swear it.” And she fled into the broad moonlight beyond the trees, while Nigel flung himself on the turf and gnashed his teeth.

Julia, when she reached the upper corridor, almost ran into the duke, but he was near-sighted, used to mice, and she cowered behind an armored knight unsuspected. When she finally closed her own door behind her, she found that all inclination to sleep had fled and that she was more excited than while the immediate centre of a love storm. She sat by the window for hours, thinking hard, and feeling several years older. Quite honest once more, now that she was safe behind a locked door, she examined her new problem on every side. It was quite possible, she confessed, that if she had loved Nigel, even a bit, she might have consented to his program, for youth has its rights; she had not been consulted in her marriage, she was more or less a prisoner, with no prospect of even youthful companionship, and the idea of being a duchess did not interest her at all. Of the meaning of sin she had but the vaguest idea.

But of loyalty and honor she had a very distinct idea. Instinct and reason told her that she never would love Nigel; otherwise, with every provocation, she must have loved him long since. Therefore would it be unfair to play with him. She would far rather be married to him than to France, for he was young and clever and charming, but even were she free now, she would not marry him. Therefore was it her duty to dismiss and cure him as quickly as possible, not ruin his youth by keeping him

dangling, after what she knew to be the habit of many women. Also, for the first time, she felt really drawn to her husband, so unconscious of her naughty adventure. After all, she was his, he adored her, and he deserved every reparation in her power. Who could tell?—she might love him. Love appeared to be in the nature of a mighty river at spring flood; no doubt it ingulfed everything in its way. She had leaped to one side to-night, but her husband—yes, it was conceivable that she might stand still and await the flood without making faces.

She felt extremely satisfied and virtuous as she lit her candle and wrote a kind but uncompromising letter to Nigel, taking back her promise to meet him on the morrow, and warning him that if he wrote to her she should give his letters to her husband. It was not in her to do anything of the sort, but she had the gift of a fine straightforward forcible style, and her letter so enraged Nigel that he left England as quickly as steam could take him, cursing her and all women.

So ended their first chapter.

IX

THE curtain had fallen on the first act of “La Traviata,” and Ishbel, for once alone in the box with her husband, glanced idly over the imposing tiers of Covent Garden. Royalty was present, the smart peeresses were out in full force and wore their usual brave display of tiaras and miscellaneous jewels, inherited and otherwise, so that the horseshoe glittered like Aladdin’s palace. There was also a jeweller’s window in the stalls, and altogether it was a representative night in the beginning of the season.

Nevertheless, Ishbel became suddenly and acutely aware that she had on more jewels than any woman in the house. Not only was there an all-round and almost unbearably heavy tiara on her small head, nearly a foot high and composed of diamonds and emeralds as large as plums, but she wore a rope of diamonds that reached far below her knees, a necklace of five rows of pearls as big as her husband’s thumb nails, and linked with emeralds and diamonds, a sunburst of diamonds that looked like a waterfall, and equally priceless gems cutting into the flesh of her tender shoulders where they clasped the only visible portion of her raiment. Ishbel was justly proud of her magnificent collection of jewels, but, being a young woman of unerring good taste, was in the habit of wearing a few at a time. Several hours earlier, however, her husband, grown jealous of the prosiliency of the New South African millionnaires, had come home with the rope and commanded her to put on every jewel she possessed for the opera that night, and the first great ball of the season to follow. As she had surveyed herself in her long mirror it had occurred to her that she looked like a begum, but when she had called her husband’s attention to the fact, and suggested some modification in her display of converted capital, he had replied curtly that he had spent a quarter of his fortune for the public to look at on her equally ornamental self, and that when he wished it displayed in toto, displayed it should be. That is the way for a man to talk to his wife when he means to be obeyed; and when the masterful and successful Mr. Jones delivered his ultimatums, few that had aught to do with him were so hardy as to continue the argument.

Ishbel had trained herself to take him humorously, to believe him the most generous of men because he had proved quite amenable to the family plan of marrying off her sisters (they were handsome and an additional excuse for entertaining), and because he never alluded to her enormous bills or forgot to hand her a check for pin-money every quarter. She had rewarded him with thanks couched in an endless variety of terms and glances, even caresses when he demanded them. When they were alone at table (as seldom as she could manage) she even coquetted with him, giving him the full play of her piquant eyes and sweet smile, and talking in her brightest manner, to conceal from himself how hopeless he was in conversation. She even pitied him sometimes; for, in spite of his riches, his interests in the City, and the great position in society that she had given him, he

seemed to her a lonely being, and she would have loved him if she could.

To-night, however, his words had rankled. They had echoed during the drive to the opera-house, stirring her most amiable of minds to a vague anger; and now, quite suddenly, she was filled with an intense mortification and resentment. Every intelligent being that has made a signal mistake in his life's order has some sudden moment of awakening, of vision. The phrase "kept wife" had not yet arrived in literature, but it rose in Ishbel's mind as she glanced from her white slender body, weary in its glittering armor, to the big heavy man opposite, sitting with a hand on either knee, his hard bright little eyes surveying her with triumphant approval. She was his property; he owned her, as he owned his house in Park Lane, the castle he had recently bought from a peer terrified by the remodelling of the death duties, his princely equipages, the noisy jewels on her person. After all, she had not a penny of her own, was as poor as when she had been one of fourteen hopeless sisters in Ireland; for he had carefully abstained from settlements, that she might feel her dependence, thank him periodically for his splendid checks. Her father had been in no position to insist upon settlements, but, had he been, would she be any better off ethically than now? They would have been but another present from the man who had bought her as he had bought his other famous possessions. If she had children, they would be his, not hers, and there was nothing he could not compel her to do, and be upheld by the laws of his country, unless he both beat her and kept a mistress.

She suddenly loathed him. That she had given him value received made her loathe him, and herself, the more. She shrank until she expected to hear her jewels rattle together, then raised her eyes again and flashed them about the house. She picked out twenty women in that glance who had sold their beauty for what their jewels represented, although, for the most part, they had the saving grace to be owned by gentlemen. But were they so much better off? Jones, at least, was now inoffensive in his manners and speech. Many gentlemen she knew were not, and one duke had a habit of catching her by the arm and leering into her crimsoning ear a horrid story. But that was not the point. What was the point? That women who married men for jewels and not for love were no better than the women of the street? Most women would have stopped there. It is a sentimental form of reasoning, eminently satisfactory to many women, and to some male novelists. But Ishbel had been born with a clear logical brain in which the fatal gift of humor was seldom dormant, and of late this brain had shown symptoms of impatience at neglect, muttered vague demands for recognition. Youth, a natural love of gayety, pleasure, splendor, reigning as a beauty, a laudable desire to help one's family,—all very well —but —

Ishbel's inner vision pierced straight down to the root (ornamentally overlaid) of the whole matter. The portionless woman, whether there was love between herself and her husband or not, was a property, a subject, an annex, nothing more, not even if she bore him children. Indeed, in the latter case she but proved the old contention

that in bearing children she fulfilled her only mission on earth.

Ishbel had heard, as one hears of all civilized activities, of Woman's Suffrage; this, too, passed in review before that search-light in her mind, and she wondered if the women asking for it dared to do so unless economically independent. She and Bridgit, when resting on their labors two years before,—a breathing spell in the grouse season,—had amused themselves in the library tracing the course of woman during those periods of the world's history when she had been famous for her innings; and both had been struck by the fact that when nations were at peace and man enjoyed prosperity and comparative leisure, woman's eminence and apparent freedom had been but her lord's opportunity to display his riches and gratify the non-military side of his vanity. Only in a small minority of cases had this eminence and freedom been the result of self-support, inherited wealth, genius, or dynastic authority: the vast majority had been toys, jewel-laden henchwomen; even the great courtesans had been dependent upon their youth and charm and the caprice of man.

No wonder so few women had left an impress on history. How could any brain, even if endowed with true genius, reach the highest order of development while the character remained flaccid in its willing dependence upon the reigning sex? And man had despised woman throughout the ages, even when most enslaved by her, knowing that on him depended her very existence. He had the physical strength to wring her neck, and the legal backing to treat her as partner or servant, whichever he found agreeable or convenient. She and Bridgit had discussed this phenomenon philosophically but impersonally, it being understood that when they did give their brains exercise, it should not interfere with their youthful enjoyment of life; nor should the exercise continue long enough to become a habit; time enough for that sort of thing when one had turned thirty. But it occurred to Ishbel in these moments of painful clarity. She had not taken the least interest in Woman's Suffrage, a movement under a cloud at this time, but she had a sudden and poignant desire to be independent, and a simultaneous conviction that no woman was worthy of anything better than being one of man's miscellaneous properties until she were. What right had women, supported by men, living on their exertions or fortunes, displayed or used at their pleasure, tricking them by a thousand ingenious devices to gain their ends, to be regarded as equals, political or otherwise? The most democratic of woman employers, unless a faddist, did not regard her employees, particularly her servants, as equals; and yet they, at least, worked for their bread, were economically independent, could throw up their situations without scandal. Ishbel had twenty-three servants in her ugly Park Lane mansion, and in the bitterness of her humiliation she felt herself the inferior of the scullery maid. She opened her eyes wide, staring out upon the world through the glittering curtain before her. What an extraordinary world it was! How silly! How uncivilized! How incomplete! What might not women attain with complete self-respect, and how utterly hopeless was their case without it!

“What are you thinking about?” asked Mr. Jones, curiously. He had been watching her for some moments.

“That I ache with all these ridiculous jewels.” Ishbel stood up and walked deliberately to the back of the box. “I feel as if I were wearing an old-fashioned crystal chandelier. Will you kindly put my cloak on?”

Jones had risen (being well trained in the small courtesies), but he showed no intention of following her.

“Certainly not,” he said peremptorily. “Sit down. I wish you to remain here until it is time to go to the duchess’s ball —”

“I’m not going to the duchess’s ball. I’m going home.”

He stared at her, his long straight mouth opening slightly, and his heavy underjaw twitching. Like many millionnaires, self-made, he looked like a retired prize-fighter, and for the moment he felt as old gods of the ring must feel when brushed contemptuously aside by arrogant youth. This was the first time his wife had shown the slightest hint of rebellion, deviated from a sweetness and tact that was without either condescension from her lofty birth, or servility to his wealth. But there was neither sweetness nor tact in her small pinched face. Her mouth was as compressed as his own could be, and the expression of her eyes frightened him.

“What on earth’s the matter with you?” he asked roughly.

“I tell you I don’t like the idea of looking like an idol, a chandelier, a begum, what you will; of having on more jewels than any woman in the house; of looking nouveau riche, if you will have it. And I am tired and am going home to bed. You can come or not, as you like.”

She put on her cloak. Jones, swearing under his breath, but helpless, caught up his own coat and hat and followed her out of the house. But although he stormed, protested, even condescended to beg, all the way home, she would not utter another word, and when she reached her room, locked the door behind her.

X

THE next morning she sought Bridgit, having ascertained by telephone that her friend was alone. The Hon. Mrs. Herbert, although "masculine" only in so far as Nature had endowed her with a strong positive mind and character, physical and mental courage, and a disdain of all pettiness (the hypothetical masculine ideal), thought boudoirs silly, and called her personal room in South Audley Street a den. Not that it in the least resembled a man's den. It was a long and narrow room on the first floor at the back of the house, and furnished with deep chairs and sofas covered with flowered chintzes, and several good pieces of Sheraton. She was known for her fine collection of remarque etchings, and the best of them were in this room. The large table was set out with reviews and new books, which she bought on principle, although she found time for little more than a glance at their contents. Her cigarette-box was of elaborately chased silver. Good a sportswoman as she was, she was not in the least "sporty," being too well balanced and well bred to assume a pose of any sort. She was a woman of the world with many tastes, who was destined to have a good many more.

When Ishbel entered, she was walking up and down, her hands clasped behind her, her heavy black brows drawn above the brooding darkness below. She, too, was in an unenviable frame of mind.

Her brows relaxed as she saw Ishbel. "What on earth is the matter?" she exclaimed.

Ishbel, who had not slept but was quite calm, sat down and told her story.

"I don't suppose you quite understand how I feel," she concluded; "for you have always had your own fortune, have never even been dependent on your father. But of one thing I am positive: if you found yourself in my position, you would feel exactly as I do. So I have come to you to talk it out."

"Of course I understand." Bridgit turned her back and walked to the end of the room. She longed to add: "It is quite as humiliating to keep a husband as to be kept by one; rather worse, as tradition and instincts don't sanction it." But there are some things that cannot be said, save, indeed, through the offices of the pineal gland; and as Bridgit, on her return march, paused and looked down upon Ishbel, standing in an attitude of rigid defiance, with quivering, nostrils and fierce half-closed eyes, possibly her friend received a telepathic flash, for she exclaimed impulsively: —

"You are in trouble, too. What is it?"

"Trouble is a fine general term for my ailment. I'm merely disgusted, dissatisfied—on general principles. Possibly it's the effect of reading Nigel's book."

"I haven't had time to read it, but I'm so happy it has created a *furore*, and hope he'll come back to be lionized. Odd he should write about the slums."

"Not at all. The slums are always being discovered by bright young men, who,

with the true ardor of the explorer, proceed to enlighten the world. Nigel—the story's not up to much—but he has the genius of expression, and, having made the amazing discovery of poverty, communicates his own amazement that it should have continued to exist in civilized countries up to the eve of the twentieth century—and his horror at its forms. Some of his scenes are quite awfully vivid. But he's no sentimentalist; he doesn't call for more charities; he doesn't even pity the poor; he despises them as they deserve to be despised for being poor, for their asininity in permitting and enduring. But he demands in their name, since the best of them are wholly incompetent as thinkers, that the educated shall favor a form of Socialism which shall not only provide remunerative employment for them, but compel them to work—grinding the idle, the worthless, the vicious to the wall, and training the new generation to annihilate poverty. Great heaven! What a disgrace it is—that poverty—to the individual, to the world, to the poor, to the rich. I never realized it until I read that book. Other 'discoverers' have put my back up. But Nigel is one of us; and when he sees it—and what a clear vision he has—"

"How splendid!" cried Ishbel, also forgetting her own trouble for the moment. "And to be able to write like that will help him to forget Julia—must make all personal affairs seem insignificant. Would that we all had such a solace!"

"Solace! We are both strong enough to scorn the word. But having been awakened, I should have no excuse if I went to sleep again. Nor you. I haven't made up my mind what I'll do yet, merely that I'll do something. I'm sick of society. It's a bally grind. Five years of it are enough for any woman with brains instead of porridge in her skull. I'm glad you've had a shock about the same time—should have administered it if you hadn't. Of course I shall continue to hunt, and keep house for Geoffrey, and watch over my child, but all that uses up about one-tenth of my energies, and no more. What I'll do, I don't know. I'm floundering. Lovers are no solution for me. They're démodés, anyhow. I'm after some big solution both elemental and progressive. Of course I shall begin with politics—by studying our problems on all sides, I mean, not having hysterics over the party claptrap of the moment. That and a hard course in German literature will tone my mind up. It's all run to seed. The rest will come in due course. Tell me what you propose to do. But of course you've had no time to decide."

"Oh, but I have. I'm going to open a milliner shop."

"What?" Mrs. Herbert sat down.

"You may think me vain, but I *know* that I can trim hats better than any woman in London."

"Yes—of course. But Mr. Jones?"

"I think I can make him consent—advance me the money—by persuading him that it is a new fad with the aristocracy—I'll point out to him several titles over shops in Bond Street."

"You have an Irish imagination. He won't hear of it."

“I’m sure I can talk him over—”

“Besides, it isn’t fair. It will make no end of talk, and him ridiculous. If you go in for independence—and do, by all means—don’t begin your sex emancipation with the sex methods of second-rate women. Men are supposed to be direct, straightforward, above the petty wiles to which women have been compelled to resort since man owned them. They are not, but, being the ruling sex, have forced the world to accept them at their own estimate. Besides, they find the standard convenient. That it is a worthy standard, no one will dispute. At least if we women cannot be wholly truthful, we need not be greater liars than they are. And we can score a point by adopting the same standard. Tell Mr. Jones that you have decided upon independence, that if he doesn’t put up the money, I will; but don’t throw dust in his eyes—I doubt if you could, anyhow.”

“Would you really?”

“Of course I would. It would be great fun. But what is the rest of your program? Do you propose to leave him? To cook his social goose?”

“No, he has been too generous, whatever his motives. No girl has ever had a better time, and nothing can alter the fact that he has rescued my family from poverty. Even if he cut both daddy and myself off his pay-roll, Aleece and Hermione and Shelah are rich enough to take care of the rest. I have done my duty by the family! No, I am quite willing to occupy a room in his house, go to the opera with him, even to such social affairs as I have time and strength for—I really intend to work, mind you, and to start in rather a small way, that I may pay back what I borrow the sooner.”

“How you have thought it all out! I wish I had something definite in sight. I despise the women that merely fill in time with intellectual pursuits, and I’ll be hanged if I take to settlement work—the last resource of the novelist who wants to make his elevated heroine ‘do something.’ I must find my particular ability and exercise it. To work with you actively in the shop would be a mere subterfuge, as I don’t need money. But never mind me—When are you going to speak to Mr. Jones?”

“This afternoon. I wanted to talk it out with you first. We Irish *are* extravagant. I was afraid I might have got off my base a bit.”

“The world will think you mad, of course. But that only proves how sane you are. I wish I could get together about a hundred women, prominent socially—merely because society women are supposed to be all frivolous—to set a pace. I assume that the average woman in any class is a fool, but there is no reason why she should remain one; and the exceptional women, of whom there must be thousands, only lack courage, initiative, a leader. By the way, what do you hear of Julia? I haven’t had a letter for two months.”

“They are to remain at Bosquith until the dissolution of Parliament, nursing their constituency. She is doing the lady-of-the-manor act, visiting among the poor,

petting babies, and all the rest of it—but putting in most of her time with her beloved books. She rarely mentions France's name."

"Never to me. But I know from one of my aunts—Peg—that he's too occupied getting back his health and pleasing the duke to drink or let his temper go. No doubt he's making a very decent husband. It may last. But whether it does or not, I'm not going to let Julia go. She's made of uncommon stuff and must become one of us."

XI

It was with some trepidation that Ishbel sought her husband in the library a few hours later, and, in spite of her resolve to "be square," could not resist assuming her most ingratiating manner. Her eyes were full of witchery, her kissable mouth wore its most provocative curves. Anything less like an emancipated wife or a prospective business woman never rose upon man's haunted imagination; and as for Mr. Jones, who had been waiting for an explanation of some sort, he thought that she had come to apologize, to confess to a passing hysteria, possibly to jealousy induced by the fact that the wife of one of the South African millionaires had worn a ruby the night before that was the talk of the town. Well, she should have a bigger one if the earth could be made to yield it up.

Mr. Jones returned home every afternoon at precisely the same hour, and to-day, having "smartened up," was sitting in a leather chair near the window with a finance review in his hand, when Ishbel entered. He did not rise, but asked her if she felt better, indicated a chair opposite his own, and waited for her to begin. She should have her ruby, or whatever it was she wanted, but not until she was properly humble and asked for it.

Ishbel smiled into those eyes that always reminded her of shoe buttons, and said sweetly, "I was horrid, of course, last night—"

"You were. And it was extremely unpleasant for me at the ball. Nobody addressed me except to ask where you were. I felt like a keeper minus his performing bear." His tone was not without bitterness.

"I am so sorry. But I could not go. I wanted to think."

"Think? Why on earth should you think? You have nothing to think about; merely to spend money and look beautiful."

Ishbel smiled again, showing her dimples. There was not an edge of her inflexible will visible in the beautiful hazel eyes that she turned full upon him. "Well, the fact remains that I did think. And this is the result: I wish to earn my living."

His jaw dropped. He thought she had lost her mind.

"It is quite true, and I mean to do it. I find I don't like living on any one. We've never pretended to love each other. If we did—well, I think I should have felt the same way a little later. As it is, I don't find it nice, living on you—"

"You're my wife!" thundered Mr. Jones. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"I've no right to be your wife—"

"You've been a damned long time finding it out—"

"Five years. Bridgit says I have an Irish imagination. I've worked it persistently for five years, and worked it to death. I not only persuaded myself that I was doing you a tremendous service, but that I was entirely happy in being young and having

all the luxuries and pleasures and gayeties that youth demands. I am only twenty-four. Five years in one's first youth is not so long a time for delusion to last —"

"Have you fallen in love?"

"Not for more than three hours at a time. Somehow, you all fall short, one way or another. I think I have fallen in love with myself. At all events I want an individual place in the world, and, as the world is at present constituted, the only people that are really respected are those that either inherit fortunes or abstract the largest amount of money from other people. Even birth is going out of fashion. It doesn't weigh a feather in the scale against money."

"You're talking like a lunatic. I couldn't have got into society with all my millions without you, or some one else born with a marketable title, and you know it." Mr. Jones was so astonished that only plain facts lighted the chaos of his mind.

"All the same you are far more respected than my poor old father, who is a lineal descendant of the O'Neil. Even if people did not respect you personally,—and of course they do,—they all respect you far more than they do me. Who would look at me if I had married one of your clerks—birth or no birth? And who regards me, as it is, but anything more than one of your best investments? I am useful to you and pay my way, but I'm of no earthly importance as an individual. I haven't even as good a position as Bridgit, who inherited a fortune, although a bagatelle compared to yours —"

"Is that what you're after—a slice of my fortune in your own right?"

"No, I only want enough to start me in business, and I shall pay it back —"

"I'll have you put in a lunatic asylum. What business do you fancy you could make a go in? Mine?"

"No. The French bourgeoisie are about the only people that have solved the sex problem: every woman in the shop-keeping class, at least, is her husband's working partner. But financial brains are not indigenous to my class. If I had one, I'd make myself useful to you in the only way that counts, and charge you high for my services. But as it is, I'm going to do the one thing I happen to be fitted for—I'm going to be a milliner."

"A milliner!" roared Mr. Jones. His face was purple. It was all very well to assume that his butterfly had gone mad; he had a hideous premonition that she was in earnest and as sane as he was. In fact, he felt on the verge of lunacy himself. He could hear his house of cards rattling about him.

"Yes," said Ishbel, smiling at him, as she had always smiled when asking him to invite another of her sisters to visit them. "I can trim hats beautifully. My hats are noted in London —"

"They ought to be. The bills that come from those Paris robbers —"

"I retrim every hat I get from the best of them. And I've pulled to pieces the hats of some of the richest of my friends. They will all patronize me. I shan't rob them, and I have at least fifty ideas for this season that will be original without being

bizarre—hats that will suit individual faces and not be duplicated. Oh, I know that I have a positive genius for millinery!”

The purple fell from Mr. Jones’s face, leaving it pallid. He stared at her, not only in consternation, but in deeper perplexity than he had ever felt in his life. Probably there is no state of the masculine mind so amusing to the disinterested outsider as the chaos into which it is thrown by some unexpected revelation of woman’s divergence from the pattern. It has only been during those long periods of the world’s history, as Bridgit and Ishbel had discovered, when men were at war, that women, poor, even in their castles, with every faculty strained to feed and rear their children, and no society of any sort, often without education, have given men the excuse to regard them as inferior beings—physical prowess at such times being the standard. But men have had so many rude awakenings that their continued blindness can only be explained by the fact that a large percentage of women, while no idler and lazier than many men, have been able to flourish as parasites through the accident of their sex. During every period of comparative peace and plenty, women of another caliber have shown themselves tyrannous, active, exorbitant in their demands, and mentally as alert as men. If they disappeared periodically, it was only because they had not fully found themselves, had exercised their abilities to no definite end. A recent German psychologist, one of the maddest and most ingenious, discovered something portentous in such periodicity as he took note of: the prominence of woman in the tenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, and again in the nineteenth and twentieth, assuming it to be the result of an excess of hermaphrodite and sexually intermediate forms, a state of affairs not unknown in the vegetable kingdom. Therefore, must woman’s periodic revolt mean nothing more than a biological phenomenon.

This theory would furnish food for much uneasiness were it not that the philosopher overlooked, deliberately or otherwise, the fact that woman’s star has flamed at some period or other in nearly every century, and that these periods have coincided with man’s ingenuous elevation of her to gratify his vanity while his chests were full and his weapons idle. Since the beginning of time, so far as we have any record of it, women have sprung to the top the moment that peace permitted wealth, leisure, and servants; and so far from their success being due to abnormality, their progress and development have been steadily cumulative. To-day, for the first time, they are highly enough developed to take their places beside men in politics, know themselves well enough to hold on, not drop the reins the moment the world’s conditions demand the physical activities of the fighting sex.

Although the great Woman’s Suffrage movement was, for the moment, in the rear of the world’s problems, thousands of women in England and America were thinking of little else, planning and working quietly, awaiting their leader. This psychological wave had washed over Ishbel’s sensitive brain and done its work quite as thoroughly as if she had gone to Manchester and sat at the feet of Dr. Pankhurst. It is the fashion to give Ibsen the credit of the revolt of woman from the

tyranny of man, but that is sheer nonsense to any one acquainted with the history of woman. Ibsen was a symptom, a voice, as all great artists are, but no radical changes spring full fledged from any brain; they are the slow work of the centuries.

“Perhaps I should have put it another way,” said Ishbel. “I fancy the point is, not that the world respects you more for amassing wealth, but that you respect yourself so enormously for having won in the greatest and most difficult game that men have ever played. Diplomacy is nothing to it. That only requires brains and training. To coax gold from full pockets into empty ones and remain on the right side of the law, requires a magnetic needle in the brain, and is a distinct form of genius. Talk about riches not bringing happiness, I don’t believe there is a rich man living, even if he has only inherited his wealth, who does not find happiness in his peculiar form of self-respect, and in his contempt for the failures. If he has inherited, it is an achievement to retain, and when he has made his fortune, he must feel a bigger man than any king. Well, in my little way, I purpose to enjoy that sensation. And to make money, to accumulate wealth, is, I am positive, one of the primary instincts—if it were not, the world would have been socialistic a thousand years ago. But the secret desire in too many millions of hearts has prevented it —”

“My God!” roared Mr. Jones. “Have you got brains?”

“I hope so.” She smiled mischievously. “I couldn’t make money without them.”

“Suppose you had half a dozen children?”

“Of course, if I hadn’t thought it all out in time, I should bring them up first. But I feel sure the time will come when every self-respecting woman will want to be the author of her own income—when no girl will marry until she is.”

Mr. Jones looked and felt like the fisherman who has gone out in a sail-boat to catch the small edible prizes of the sea, and landed a whale.

“You never thought that all out for yourself,” he growled. “Where did you get it, anyhow?”

“Last night I realized that I had been learning unconsciously for years, and remembered everything worth while I had ever heard men and women talk about. After all, you know, clever men do talk to me.”

“Clever men are always fools about a pretty face.”

He got up and moved restlessly about the large room, too full of furniture for a man with big feet, and long awkward arms which he did not always remember to hold close to his sides. He longed for his punch bag. Ishbel smiled and looked out of the window.

“What in hell’s come over women?” he demanded. “I thought they only wanted love when they talked of happiness.”

“Oh, you’re like too many men—have got your whole knowledge of women from novels. Perhaps you even read the neurotic ones that are having a vogue just now. Wouldn’t that be funny! We women want many things besides love, we Englishwomen, at least; for we belong to the most highly developed nation on the

globe. And we are the daughters of men as well as of women, remember. And we have heard the affairs of the world discussed at table since we left the nursery. That man doesn't realize what he has made of us is a proof that he is so soaked in conventions and traditions that he is in the same danger of decay and submergence that nations have been when too long a period of power has made them careless and flaccid—and blind. We want love, but as a man wants it; enough to make us comfortable and happy, but not to absorb our whole lives—"

"What?" Mr. Jones swung round upon her, his little black eyes emitting red sparks. "That's the most immoral speech I ever heard a woman make."

"I shall keep faith with you," said Ishbel, carelessly. "Don't worry yourself. I've made a bargain with you and I shall stick to it, just as I shall be perfectly square in business. All I want is to be as much of an individual as you are, not an annex."

Mr. Jones had an inspiration and resumed his seat. "Look here!" he said. "You say you play a square game, that you will live up to your contract with me; and marriage *is* a partnership, by God! Well—if you go setting up for yourself, you injure my credit. I'm in a lot of things where credit is everything. Money (actual gold and silver) is not so plentiful as you think, and the greatest coward on earth. If there should be the slightest suspicion that I was unsound—"

"Why should there be? You will continue to live here in the same style, and I shall keep my rooms, and go about with you once or twice a week—even wear some of your jewels. What more could you ask?"

"What more?" Jones was purple again. "This: I didn't marry to be made a laughing-stock of. Everybody'll say I'm mean—"

"Not if you set me up. And you can get your good friend, *The Mart*, to say that I am ambitious to set a new style in fads—"

"There are some statements that no fool will swallow—let alone sharp business men in the City. Fad, indeed—when you will be standing on your feet all day in a milliner shop—unless—" hopefully—"you merely mean to put your name over the door to draw customers, and pocket the proceeds. That would be bad enough—but—"

"By no means. What possible satisfaction could I get out of making other people do what I want to do myself? You might as well ask an author if he would be content to let some one else write his books so long as he had his name on the title page and pocketed the profits. The joy of succeeding must lie in the effort, in knowing that you are doing something that no one else can do in quite the same way. I can be an artist even in hats, and I propose to be one."

"And if I refuse you the capital?"

"Bridgit will lend it to me."

"I am to be blackmailed, so!"

"What is blackmail?"

“As if a woman need ask! Every woman is a blackmailer by instinct. I suppose that if I won’t give you the money for this ridiculous enterprise, you will leave my house—ruin me socially, as well as financially?”

But Ishbel’s wits were far nimbler than his. “No,” she said sweetly, “I can never forget that I owe you a great deal. Whether you advance me the capital or not, I shall continue to live here, and entertain for you whenever I have time.”

The mere male was helpless, defeated. A month later his name was over a shop in Bond Street, and the success of the lady whose title preceded it was so immediate that he began to brag about her in the City. But he was by no means reconciled. His order of life, that new order in which he had revelled during five brief years, was sadly dislocated. Many husbands and wives are invited separately in London society, but he made the bitter discovery that when Ishbel was forced to decline an invitation for luncheon or dinner he was expected to follow suit. He could walk about at receptions or teas if he chose, but it became instantly patent that no woman, save those whose husbands were in his power, would see him at her table when she could get out of it. There were one or two new millionnaires in society that had achieved a full measure of personal popularity, and were sometimes asked without their wives, but Jones was hopelessly dull in conversation, and had a way of “walking up trains,” and knocking over delicate objects with his elbows. And then he was unpardonably ugly to look at; moreover, evinced no disposition to pay the bills of any woman but his wife. That was a fatal oversight on Mr. Jones’s part, but no one had ever been kind enough to give him a hint.

All this was bad enough, but in addition he perceived that while society patronized Ishbel’s shop, and pretended to admire or be amused, they had respected her far more when she was reigning as a beauty and spending her husband’s vast income as carelessly as the spoiled child smashes its costly toys. There is little real respect where there is no envy, and no one envies a working woman until she has made a fortune and can retire. Ishbel had dazzled the world with her splendid luck, added to her beauty and proud descent. It had called her “a spoiled darling of fortune,” a “fairy princess,” and such it had envied and worshipped. But she had stepped down from her pedestal; her halo had fallen off; she was no longer a member of the leisured class, haughty and privileged even when up to its neck in debt. Mr. Jones’s position in the City was not affected, for men knew him too well, but society suspected that his fortune was not what it had been, and that his wife wanted more money to spend, or was providing against a rainy day. If neither suspicion was true, then she was disloyal to her class, and a menace, a horrid example. Her personal popularity was unaffected, but her position was not what it was, no doubt of that, and the soul of Mr. Jones was exceeding bitter.

XII

LORD ROSEBERY'S government, despite the duke's optimistic predictions, did not resign until June 24, consequently the general election was not fought until July, and during all this time Julia was kept at Bosquith; France, wholly amiable to his cousin's wishes, stuck close to his borough. He had not a political dogma, cared no more for the Conservatives and Liberal-Unionists, than for Nationalists, Liberals, Radicals, and Socialists, and he had no intention of boring himself in Westminster save when his cousin required his vote. But he had planned a very definite and pleasant scheme of life, and the enthusiastic favor of the head of his house was essential to its success. He intended to re-let his own place in Hertfordshire, and live with the duke, both in London and in the country, until such time as his patience should be rewarded and the divine law of entail give him his own. He not only craved the luxury of the duke's great establishments (as English people understand luxury), but, quite aware of the position he had forfeited among men, he was determined to win it back. Not that he felt any symptoms of regeneration, but the pride, which heretofore had raised him above public opinion, assumed a new form during his long convalescence, and prompted respectability and enjoyment of the social position he had inherited.

His cousin, although knowing vaguely that his heir had been "a bit wild," and not as popular as he might be, was far too unsophisticated to guess the truth, and too surrounded by flatterers and toadies to hear what would manifestly displease him. Moreover, although France was under such strong suspicion of card cheating that no man would play with him, he had proved himself too clever to be caught, therefore had escaped an open scandal. He had twice avoided being co-respondent in divorce suits, once by shifting the burden on to the shoulders of a fellow-sinner, and once by securing, through a detective agency, such information that the wronged husband let the matter drop rather than suffer a counter-suit. But society was not his preserve. He was a man who had haunted byways where women were unprotected, and far from the limelight; and although there had been for twenty years the contemptuous impression that he was one of the greatest blackguards in Europe, that there was no villainy to which he had not stooped, he was, after all, little discussed, for he was much out of England, and, when off duty, went to Paris for his pleasures.

But although he had rather revelled in his dark reputation, he had now undergone a change of mind if not of heart. He had had a long draught of respectability, and of deference from his future menials and the several thousand good men in his constituency who had never heard of him before he came to Bosquith, as the convalescent heir of their popular duke, and won them by looking "every inch a man"; he had a young and beautiful wife with whom he was as much in love as was in him to love any one but himself, and in whom he recognized a valuable aid to his plan of social rehabilitation. Established in London as hostess of one of its oldest and most exclusive private palaces, with every opportunity to

exercise her youthful charm (like the duke he despised brains in women), she would take but one season to draw about her a court anxious to stand well with the future Duchess of Kingsborough. And he was her husband. They could not ignore him if they would; and they would have less and less inclination, viewing him daily as a man ostentatioulsy devoted to his wife, taking his parliamentary duties very seriously indeed (he knew exactly the right phrases to get off), and living a life so exemplary and regular that his past would be dismissed with a good-natured smile (for was he not a future duke?), or openly doubted for want of proof. He knew that some people would never speak to him, others never invite him to their tables, although he might, with his wife and cousin, receive a card to their receptions; but, then, London society was very large, and he could endure the contempt of the few in the complaisance of the many.

His first quarry was the duke, already disposed to like him extremely, as they were the last males of their race, and latterly quite softened by certain sympathies and anxieties for his afflicted relative that had never infused his dry smug nature before. He was also one of those survivals that like anecdotes, and France, in his wandering life, had insensibly collected an infinite number. Naturally the most silent of men, he now made himself so agreeable that the duke, long companionless, himself suggested the permanent residence of the Frances under his several roofs, overrode all his cousin's manly objections, and looked forward to a revival of the historic splendors of Kingsborough House with something like enthusiasm. France cemented the new bond when he appeared, as soon as his convalescence was over, at morning prayers, and even compelled the attendance of the rebellious Julia.

This alien in the great house of France detested family prayers. They were very long, the duke's dull languid gaze travelled over his shoulder every time she sat when she should have knelt, and they came at an hour when she wanted to be on the moor or riding along the cliffs. But when she openly expressed herself, her husband, although he picked her up and kissed her many times, unobservant that she wriggled, replied peremptorily: —

"Not another word, my little beauty. To prayers you must go. It's a rotten bore, but it's the duty of a wife to advance her husband's interests. Get our mighty cousin down on us, and we live in Hertfordshire all the year round."

Although she hid the thought, Julia would have submitted to more than prayers to avoid living alone in a small house in the country with her husband. She had heard so much of duty during the last year (even her mother's letters were full of it), that she had set her teeth in the face of matrimony, persuaded herself that France was no more offensive than other husbands, that hers was the common lot of woman, and, after reading Nigel's book, that she was singularly fortunate in not having been born in the slums. But although she refused to admit to her consciousness a certain terrified mumbling in the depths of her brain, she did acknowledge that she no longer had the least desire for a child, and that she hated the scent of the pomade on her husband's moustache. It was a pomade that had been

fashionable for several years, and was used as sparingly as possible on France's bristles; but lesser trifles have killed love in women, and Julia, frankly unloving, conceived an unconquerable aversion for this sickly scent; to this day it rises in her memory as associated with the abominable injustice that had been committed on her youth.

But she kept her mind and time fully occupied. She visited the sick, rode her good horse, and read until there was nothing left in the Bosquith library to satisfy her still insatiable mind. Then, for the first time, she realized that she had not a penny in her purse, had not had since her first few weeks in London. She made out a list of books she wanted, surmounted her diffidence, and asked her husband if she might order them from London. France, when she approached him, was smoking a pipe by the library fire, his cannon-ball head sunken luxuriously into the cushions of the chair, and his glassy eyes half closed. He pulled her down on his knee and read the list, then laughed aloud and pinched her ear.

"Never heard of one of these books, but they have an expensive look—wager not one of them costs under a pound. That would mean about ten pounds—by Gad! That would never do. I'm economizing and you must, too; for although we shall live with Kingsborough, we can't expect him to pay for our clothes and all the rest of it. Besides, I don't want an intellectual wife—had no idea you read such bally rot. Intellectual wives are bores, get red noses, and rims round their eyes. Jove! Think of those eyes gettin' red and dim. I'd make a bonfire of all the books in England first. No, my lady, it's your business to look pretty, and to remember a famous saying of our future king: 'Bright women, yes; but no damned intellect.' We want to have a rippin' time as soon as Salisbury is in again, and I won't have you frightenin' people off."

"I never supposed you would care so much for society," said Julia, lamely. "I always think of you as a sailor."

"I want what'll be mine before long—what I've been kept out of long enough," he answered savagely.

Julia was shocked. It was the first time he had betrayed himself, so anxious had he been for her good opinion, so careful not to excite himself with tempers until his heart was quite strong again. As she left his knee and turned her disconcerting eyes on him, he recovered himself with a laugh.

"I believe it's all your mother's fault. She told me it was your fate—by all the stars!—to be a duchess, and I don't think I've got it out of my head since. But you know I'm devilish fond of my cousin—only one I've got, for those old hags don't count. I'll chuck such ideas, and—" his voice became sonorous with virtue—"think only of his kindness and of serving my country when my time comes."

The time came in July, and he carried his borough almost without effort, so irresistible was the conservative reaction. He was not much of an orator, but not much was required of him. He made a fine appearance on a platform, and when, after a flattering introduction by the chairman, he stood up before a sympathetic

audience, and between some scraps of party wisdom, furnished by the duke, doubled up his aristocratic hand and wedged it firmly into his manly thigh, and brought out in all its inflections: “Indeed, I *may* say—Indeed, *I* may say—Indeed, I may *say—Indeed* I may say!” the applause was stupendous.

Julia, sitting behind him with the duke, had much ado not to laugh aloud, but, then, Julia was an alien, and had no appreciation of gentlemen’s oratory.

She had taken more interest in the wives of the voters, and been relieved to find that their poverty was rather picturesque than bitter—Nigel’s book had given her a profound shock—but had wept at some of the tales told by women that had relatives in London and the great manufacturing towns of the north. After France’s final triumph, when he had been carried back to Bosquith on the shoulders of several honest yeomen, followed by a cheering mob of several hundred more, she asked him impulsively (being electrified herself for the moment) if he might not serve his country best by making a crusade against poverty. But he looked at her in such genuine bewilderment that she dropped the subject.

XIII

To France's intense disgust Parliament met on August 12, that consecrated date when grouse are first hunted from their lairs. There was nothing for it, however, but to go up to London with the triumphant duke and sit on a bench through at least one hot hour each day. The rest of his hours he spent at his club, to avoid meeting his patriotic relative, and Julia, for the first time, found herself possessed of a certain measure of liberty. To be sure, she was several times caged in the House of Commons, and once slept above the peers, but for the most part she was left to herself, the duke almost forgetting her in the joy of his occasional chats in the lobby with Lord Salisbury, and the excitements provided by Mr. Chamberlain. He had neither hope nor wish for the onerous duties of a cabinet minister, but for many years politics had formed the only excitement of his rather colorless life; whether his party were in or out, he always managed to be of some slight use to it in the upper House. He was laughed at sometimes by the giants of his party, but on the whole regarded as a safe reliable man, and received doles of flattery to keep his enthusiasm alive.

Everybody was out of town except Ishbel, who was casting nets for the rich tourists, and Julia sat for hours in the gay little shop on the second floor of an old building in Bond Street, watching her friend with wide admiring eyes, and even envying her a little. This, however, she suppressed. She was to be a duchess, and that was the end of it. She would fill her high destiny to the best of her ability, but she wished that meanwhile she could earn a little money, or some unknown relative would leave her a legacy. France was still "economizing" and gave her no allowance; she literally had not money for cab fare. She was determined, however, never to ask him for money again, so deep had been her mortification when he had refused her simple request for books.

Parliament remained in session something over a month, being prorogued on September 15. The duke returned to Bosquith for the rest of the grouse season, opened his house in Derbyshire for the pheasant shooting, and went again to Bosquith for partridges and hunting. This time there were guests. Many of them were carefully selected from the most ardent supporters of the present Government; but Mrs. Winstone, who, deeply to her satisfaction, was invited to coach and assist the young chatelaine, was permitted to invite "a few younger people, but no really young people." The duke was alive to the necessity of maturing his heir's wife as rapidly as possible. The company was always an extremely distinguished one, as Mrs. Winstone took pains to impress upon the somewhat indifferent Julia; not the least exalted members of the Government honored the various parties, and a good many of the younger men accepted invitations which would force them into association with Harold France, partly to please Mrs. Winstone, partly out of curiosity, and principally because the duke's shootings, always kept up but seldom placed at the service of guests, were famous. Julia, alive to her responsibilities, set

her mind upon becoming an accomplished hostess, and although the everlasting talk of politics and sport bored her, she was rewarded with a few pleasant acquaintances, who in a measure consoled her for the temporary loss of Bridgit and Ishbel.

There was a fine old Jacobean mansion on the estate in Derbyshire, and Julia reminded herself that she was realizing a youthful dream, admired the brilliant appearance of the women at dinner, and went occasionally to the coverts. But the immense beautiful house had the more notable attraction of a fine library, and Julia's happiness was further increased from October until the middle of February by the fact that she saw less of her husband than formerly. No more ardent sportsman breathed; he could kill all day, and when he came home at night was agreeably fatigued and ready for sleep. He was as much in love as ever, but it was long since he had been able to command all the pleasures of his class, and he meant to enjoy every good that came his way to the last nibble. No more methodical soul ever lived. Julia sometimes wondered if he were not a creature manufactured and wound up, like Frankenstein, rather than man born of woman, but it was long before she found the clew to his character.

When they returned to Bosquith, Julia had even more freedom than during the weeks devoted to the puncturing of grouse and pheasant. The women had joined the men for luncheon during the grouse season, tramping the moors in very short skirts and very thick boots; and in Derbyshire, the coverts not being too far from the house, the men had returned for their midday meal. But the farms, with their turnip fields, were many miles from the moors which surrounded the castle of Bosquith; the women showed less enthusiasm; and it was out of the question for the men to return, even in a break, for luncheon. Therefore, did the women, including Mrs. Winstone, sleep late, and Julia found the morning hours her own. She enjoyed her freedom at first in long rides alone, and with no particular object, but in the course of a week she accidentally made the acquaintance of one of the tenants, Mr. Leggins (the sportsmen had exhausted his field and moved on), and she found his somewhat radical discourse refreshing after the undiluted and therefore unargumentative conservatism of the castle's guests. Mr. Leggins, indeed, when the intimacy had progressed, did not hesitate to express himself on the injustice of annually sacrificing his best fields to the sporting pride of hereditary lords of the soil. One argument in England against giving women the vote is that they are all conservatives at heart, but Julia, at least, seated under the mighty beams of the old farm-house, with a bowl of bread and milk before her, listening to the old man inveigh against the iniquity of laws that forced a family like his own to pay rent from generation to generation, a rent which increased with every improvement made by the tenant, instead of being permitted to buy their land and feel "as good as the next man," assumed that there was something wrong with the world, and often wondered if she were not in the sixteenth century, when the farm-house had been built; wondered still more why the world progressed so rapidly in some things and remained stationary in others. Mr. Leggins, in those early morning hours, told her something of Socialism, and she began to have grave doubts if she should ever

become a duchess, if those lagging millions would not suddenly awaken and come to the front with a bound.

But these grave questions agitated her fleetingly at this period, for there were other attractions at the Leggins farm. It embraced a famous ruin, and the farmer kept a small public house of “soft drinks” for its many visitors. This was Julia’s first glimpse of the genus tourist, and its very difference from the guests at the castle entranced her. She often spent the entire morning watching and often talking to strange people with frank inquisitive eyes and an amazing thoroughness in exploration. Many had accents undreamed of in her short sojourn on this planet. Mr. Leggins called them “Americans,” and Julia sunned herself in their breezy democracy, and resolved to read their history as soon as she returned to London and its public libraries; no recognition of their existence was to be found at Bosquith. Julia had seen several Americans in Ishbel’s shop, but they had been so very elegant, and such good imitations of the British grande dame, that they had not impressed her.

These short-skirted, “shirt-waisted” people, with flying veils—generally blue—attached precisely or rakishly to hats, sailor or alpine, with faces, more often than not, gay and careless, but sometimes with an anxious line between the brows as if fearful they might “miss something” while photographing even the diamond panes of the farm-house windows, thrilled Julia with the sense of a new world to discover, of a country which must be divinely free since it once had snapped its fingers in mighty England’s face, and now elected a President every four years (this much Mr. Leggins had told her), and gave its humblest man a vote. Of the peculiar tyrannies which have grown up under the Constitution of the United States (tyrannies impossible under an autocracy) Julia, of course, knew nothing; and although she had no cause to complain of monarchical tyranny in Great Britain, she was beginning to feel the stirrings of a dim resentment against the insignificance of her own estate. Not only had Ishbel talked to her a good deal during the short session of Parliament, but she observed for herself that the duke’s house parties were organized with pointed reference to the pleasure and comfort of the male sex. The men were given the best rooms, the board was set with the heavy food necessary to the replenishment of their energies, they shot all day long, barely opening their mouths to speak at table, and often went to bed immediately after dinner. The women were invited merely to ornament the table and make the men forget their fatigue, or to amuse them if they felt inclined now and then to vary sport with flirtation. For these heroic ladies not one amusement during the shooting season was designed; of course they would hunt later. No men were asked save those that shot. Even “old Pirie,” and Lord Algy went out with the guns. Julia wondered why these women came, and finally concluded that some came in search of husbands or lovers, others to keep an eye on husbands or lovers. Some, no doubt, enjoyed the rest at no expense to themselves, but all were frankly bored. Now and again Julia, at tea time, heard a woman discourse upon the happy fate of the American woman, who had “things all her own way,” and to whom man was a slave. Listening to the animated babble

about the table in Farmer Leggins's living room, where the Americans imbibed milk, bottled lemon-squash, and sarsaparilla, Julia longed to ask the prettiest of them if they were spoiled wives. France professed to adore her madly, but he neither petted nor spoiled her. She was his prize exhibit, his woman, his harem of one, and he was immensely satisfied with his discrimination and his luck. He never even asked her if she were content, if she were bored. What liberty she had she was forced to scheme for, like these visits to the fascinating public house of Farmer Leggins. Had the duke or even Mrs. Winstone seen her sitting at that table, sometimes cutting bread, always talking to people she had never seen before and never would see again, they would have been outraged; and, no doubt, as the times were too advanced to shut her up, she would have been compelled to ride with a groom, and give her word to ignore farm-houses (save when votes were wanted), and to speak to no one to whom she had not properly been introduced. But all three of her guardians were happily ignorant of her performances, and no mortal ever enjoyed her liberty more, or took a naughtier delight in it.

One morning she was sitting beside Farmer Leggins uncorking bottles and ladling out milk (his son Sam's wife, who kept house for him, was away), when three people alighted from a carriage who interested her immediately. Not only were the woman and the young girl, and even the boy, dressed more smartly than was common to the tourist in that part of the country, but they suddenly ducked their heads in a peculiar way, and entered the farm-house hat first. The rest of the room was occupied by a party of school-teachers, who invariably wear out their old clothes in Europe, and Julia gave the newcomers her undivided attention. Mr. Leggins also rose with some alacrity, and placed them at a small table by themselves, waiting until their pleasant voices assured him that they had all their appetites demanded.

"They're Californians," whispered Mr. Leggins, as he returned to Julia's side. (As the reader is now acquainted with every known dialect, it is not necessary to torment him with the Yorkshire.) "San Franciscans, to be exact. I always can tell them by the way they put their heads down in a breeze—wind always blows in San Francisco, and it's second nature to butt against it. I know the earmarks of every state in their union—section, at least—and not only by their accents. You can know a Californian because he hasn't any, but the others would butter bread, except when they happen to have had brass long enough to rub it off in Europe. Even then they keep a bit of it. But I know them by other things. This party of school missuses is from what they call 'the East'; they've every one got suspicion in their eyes, and are that close! It's a wonder they don't bring scales to weigh my bread. The 'Middle West' people are like children, pleased with everything, and crazy about ruins; free with the brass, too. The 'Southerners' look as if they ought to be rich and ain't, but never haggle. The high-toned 'Easterners,' haven't an exclamation point among them, are so polite they make you feel like dirt, pay with gold and count the change. Where on earth is Sam?"

Sam had disappeared shortly after showing the school-teachers over the ruin, and the Californians had risen, manifestly awaiting a guide.

Sam (who occasionally stole away to watch the shooting) was not to be found. Julia volunteered to show the party over the ruin.

“I’d be that grateful!” exclaimed Mr. Leggins; and to the Californians, “There ain’t much to the ruin, and she knows it as well as Sam.”

The lady looked at her curiously, for the guide wore her habit, and manifestly was not of the house of Leggins, but she expressed herself satisfied, and followed Julia across the bridge that spanned the ditch. The young girl was too weary with much travel for interest in anything, but the youth had already fallen a victim to Julia’s charms, and manœuvred to reach her side. He was a fine-looking lad, tall for his years, which might have been fifteen, with a shock of black hair, keen black-gray eyes, and a dark strongly made face. It was a new-world face, with something of the pioneer, something of the Indian in it, but, oddly enough, almost aggressively modern. Julia had observed him under her lashes, and wished he were older. Few men tourists came that way, and this boy was of a more marked type than any of them.

“My, but this is bully!” he exclaimed. “You won’t mind my saying it, but I’ve been watching you for half an hour—couldn’t eat—but—well—I never saw a prettier girl even in California.”

“Then you *are* a Californian?” asked Julia, much amused. “And a San Franciscan?”

“Now, how can you tell that?”

“Mr. Leggins says you all hold your heads forward on account of the winds—to keep your hats on, I suppose.”

“Jiminy, that’s clever! Fancy an English farmer having sense enough for that. Ours are pretty stupid—perhaps because they live so far apart. This whole island isn’t as big as the state of California.”

“You don’t mean it,” gasped Julia, not in the least resenting this characteristic boast.

“And there are real forests in it—primeval.” The youth was delighted with the impression he had made. “Not woods that you can see the horizon from the middle of. Great Scott! this island is cut up. You can’t get rid of the towns, except on these big estates. Why, in the manufacturing districts they tail into one another. In California —”

“Dan!” said a reproving voice from the rear. “Stop bragging. This is my brother’s first visit to Europe,” added the lady, with a smile. “And like all Americans in similar circumstances, he observes only to contrast and deprecate. He’ll behave much better on his next visit. That first protest is only defiance, anyhow—to still the small voice which tells us how new and crude we are in the face of all this antiquity and beauty.”

“Oh!” said Julia, smiling. “I fancy that if I visited your country, I should be too awed even to feel my own littleness.”

“That is the prettiest speech I ever heard!” The lady extended her hand. “Won’t you tell me your name? Mine is Bode, and this is my sister, Emily Tay, and my brother, Daniel Tay.”

“I am Mrs. France. It is delightful to know your names —”

“Mrs.!” gasped the boy, his face falling until he looked almost idiotic; but Mrs. Bode’s eyes sparkled.

“Not of Bosquith?” she asked.

Julia nodded gloomily.

“I have met Mrs. Winstone, and last summer I read all about you when your husband was so ill.”

“Read about me?” Julia’s mouth opened almost as wide as young Tay’s. “Where?”

“Oh, our correspondents don’t let us miss anything, and that was a big plum for the end of the season. I know all about your romantic marriage, and your still more romantic West Indian home.” She had bred herself too carefully to add, “and that you will one day be a duchess”; but the words danced through her mind, and she felt that she was having an adventure. Julia was in no condition to notice any faux pas; her imagination was visualizing her insignificant self in the columns of a newspaper seven thousand miles away, and she felt a strange thrill, such as what small deferences she had received from servants and toadies had never excited in her: the first vague pricking of ambition.

“There was a picture of you in the Sunday supplement of one of the papers,” went on Mrs. Bode. “Of course I guessed it wasn’t you—looked suspiciously like one of our own belles touched up —”

“My picture! I’ve never had my picture taken.”

“The more pity,” said Mrs. Bode, with gracious gayety. “I should beg for one as a souvenir, if you had.”

“Gee whiz! My camera!” cried young Tay, recovering himself, and whipping the camera off his shoulder. “Will—would you stand?”

“Of course!” Julia not only had fallen in love with her new friends, but rejoiced in doing something which she instinctively knew would annoy her husband. When woman’s ego is fumbling, it is only in these world-old acts of petty and secret vengeance that it triumphs for a moment over the sex that has bruised it.

She posed, with and without her hat, against the gray walls of the ruin, in a group with Mrs. Bode and Emily, and again with young Tay alone. Then she lit her candle and led them down the winding passage to the room where Mary of Scotland was supposed to have slept on her way to Fotheringay. As they emerged once more into the court, she impulsively asked them to come that afternoon to the castle for

tea.

“I am sure my aunt will be enchanted to see you,” she added, “and I can show you over Bosquith, which is much more interesting than this.”

“I’ll be delighted,” said Mrs. Bode; and Julia, who had experienced a moment of fright at her temerity, took courage again at the American’s matter-of-fact acceptance. Pride also came to her aid. Why should she not ask whom she chose to Bosquith? Was she not its chatelaine? Her aunt was one of her guests, monitress though she might be. To be sure, she had been forbidden to ask Bridgit or Ishbel, but, then, the duke had a personal dislike for both—he now thought Ishbel quite mad and had written her father a letter of condolence; he was hospitable in his way, and could find no objection to these delightful travellers that knew Mrs. Winstone.

She blushed and stammered, “I must ask you not to say anything about my helping Mr. Leggins, and being so much at home here —”

“Of course not!” Mrs. Bode, as she would have expressed it, “twigged instanter.” “We met while exploring the ruins, and got into conversation.”

“You are so kind. And you will come at five—no, four, and then I can show you the castle before tea.”

“We shall be there at four. Thank you so much.”

They parted, mutually delighted with their morning’s adventure, the ladies going to their carriage, and young Tay gallantly assisting Julia to mount her horse.

“Jiminy!” he whispered ecstatically. “You’ve got hair! And eyes! Stars ain’t in it! Say, I’m awful glad I’m going to see you again, and I’m awful glad I can take your picture back to California with me!”

He was only fifteen, but Julia blushed as she had never blushed for Nigel. It may be that our future lies in sealed cells in our brains, as all life in the universe, past, present, future, is said to be Now to the Almighty. Under certain lightning stabs it may be shocked into a second’s premature awakening.

Julia, however, was annoyed with herself, said “Goodby” rather crossly, and rode off.

XIV

Mrs. Bode was one of those astonishing Americans who, often with no social affiliations whatever, even in their native city, or living on the very edges of civilization, have yet so wide and accurate a knowledge of the cardinal families of the various capitals of the world, that they would be invaluable in the offices of Burke, Debrett, and the Almanach de Gotha. Whether this enterprising variety of the genus Americana invests in these valuable works of reference, or merely studies them in the public libraries, ourselves would not venture to state; but that is beside the question; some highly specialized magnet in their brains has accumulated the knowledge, and less ambitious Americans, even aristocratic foreigners, are often humbled by them when floundering conversationally among the ramifications of the peerages of Europe. These students, if New Yorkers, take no interest in the "first families" of any state in the American Union save their own, but if a malignant chance has deposited them on what stage folk call "the road," then are their mental woodsheds stored with the family trees of their own state, *and* New York. Never of any other state: Washington is "too mixed"; Boston is "obsolete"; Chicago is "too new for any use"; San Francisco is too picturesque to be aristocratic; the South can take care of itself; and the rest of the country, with the possible exception of Philadelphia, would never presume to enter the discussion.

Nor is this the extent of their knowledge. They can talk fluently about all the great dressmakers and milliners that dwell in the centres of fashion, and even of those so exclusive as to cater only to the best-bred Americans, and they are always the first to appear in the new style, even though they have no place to show it but the street. Moreover, they know every scandal in Europe, scandals of aristocrats and prime donne, that no newspaper has ever scented. They discuss the great and the famous of the world as casually as their own acquaintance, dropping titles and other formalities in a manner that bespeaks a keen and secret pleasure that the less gifted or less energetic mortal may sigh for in vain.

Mrs. Bode came of good pioneer stock, her sturdy Kansas grandfather, Daniel Tay, having been among the first to brave the hardships of the emigrant trail and make "his pile" in California. Not that he made it in one picturesque moment. He was only moderately lucky in the mines. But he could make pies, and miners were willing to pay little bags of gold-dust for them. He set up a shop for rough-and-ready clothing in Sacramento, with a pie counter under the awning. At all times he made a handsome income, and when the miners came trooping in drunk and reckless, he cleaned up almost as much as the gambling-houses.

In due course, he migrated to San Francisco, and, abandoning a plebeian method of livelihood of which his wife had learned to disapprove, embarked in a commission business including hardware and groceries. In those wild and fluctuating days he made and lost several fortunes. When his son, Daniel Second, grew up, he was a fairly prosperous merchant, with connections in Central America

and China. His coffee, spices, teas, and such other delicacies as even the renowned California soil refused to produce were the best on the market; and had it not been for the old gaming fever in his blood, which sent him on periodic sprees into the stock-market, he would have accumulated a large fortune and permitted his wife and daughters to assist in the making of San Francisco's aristocracy. But they were always being either burned out or sold out of their fine new houses, and Mrs. Tay died a disappointed woman. The Southerners held the social fort and she had never crossed its threshold. To be sure, she had washed the miners' overalls in the rear of the Sacramento store while the pies were being devoured in front, but ancient history is made very rapidly in California, and there were signs that several no better than herself were "getting their wedge in."

Mr. Tay soon followed his wife into the imposing vault on Lone Mountain, but not before adjuring his son to "let stocks alone." The advice was unnecessary, for Daniel Second was a shrewd cautious man, immune from every temptation the fascinating city of San Francisco could offer. He put the business he had inherited on a sure foundation, rebuilt modestly whenever he was burned out, and was impervious to the laments of his pretty second wife that they were "nobodies." Mrs. Tay felt that heaven had endowed her with that talent most envied of women, the social, but her husband was more than content to be a nobody so long as his financial future was secure; and it was not until his oldest daughter, Charlotte,—or "Cherry" as she was fondly called,—came home from boarding-school for the last time, that he was persuaded to buy a large and hideous "residence" with a mansard roof, a cupola, and bow-windows, suddenly thrown on the market by a disappearing capitalist, and "splurge a bit."

The splurging carried them but a short distance. St. Mary's Hall, Benicia, where Cherry had received the last of her education, was an aristocratic institution, and she had made some good friends among the girls. But although they came to her first party, and she was asked now and again to large entertainments at their homes, it was more than patent that the Tays were not "in it." There was no reason in the world why they should not be, for they were not even "impossible" (as the old folks had been); but whether Mrs. Tay was less gifted socially than she had fancied, or people so long out of it were regarded with suspicion or cold indifference by the venerable holders of the social fort, or Tay's modest fortune was not worth while, in view of the enormous fortunes that had been made recently in the railroads and the Nevada mines, and "Society was already large enough," certain it is that Mrs. Tay and her step-daughter spent long days in the library of their big house in the Western Addition, consoling themselves with books (and who shall say that Burke and the Almanach de Gotha were not among them?) or "the finest view in the world."

This unhappy state of affairs lasted for two years, and then Cherry had an inspiration. One of her father's friends was the owner of a powerful newspaper, and he had a friend as powerful as himself in the state whence came the present Minister

to the Court of St. James. Armed with letters from these two makers and unmakers of reputations, Cherry took her mother to London and requested to be presented at court. The request was granted, and this great event, as well as their subsequent adventures in the most good-natured society in the world, were cabled to the San Francisco newspapers.

Mr. Tay had snorted in disgust when the plan was unfolded to him, but had yielded to sulks, tears, and hysterics. One season, however, was all he would finance; but his wife and daughter, although they had hoped to remain abroad for two years, returned with the less reluctance as they were now “names” in the inhospitable city of their birth. These names had been embroidered for four months with royalty, a few of the best titles in Burke, and many of the lesser. (“Precious few will know the difference,” said Cherry, scornfully.)

Their position, as a matter of fact, was somewhat improved; Cherry was admitted to the sacred Assemblies, and people allowed themselves to admire her Parisian gowns, her pretty face, and refined vivacious manner. At the end of the season she captured the son of one of the new great millionnaires. The Tays had arrived. The past was forgotten by themselves if not by other walking blue books, that fine scavenger element in Society which allowed no one permanently to sink “pasts,” ages, ancestral pies, saloons, brothels, wash-tubs, or any of the humble but honest beginnings which fain would repose beneath the foundations of San Francisco. But the Tays, like many another, fancied their past forgotten, whatever the fate of their neighbors; and, as a matter of fact, they were now so firmly established that three divorces could not have dislodged them. Mrs. Bode, in her superb mansion on Nob Hill, forged ahead so steadily that she enjoyed excellent prospects of being a Society Queen, when the old guard should have died off, and Mrs. Tay had stuccoed her house, shaved off the bow-windows, flattened the roof, replaced rep and damask with silks and tapestries, and both were happy women.

All this may sound contemptible to those that enjoy a proper scorn of Society; but it must be remembered that as the world is at present constituted, women, not forced to work for their living, and born without talent, have little outlet for their energies. And of these energies they often have as full a supply as men. Besides, they don’t know any better.

Mrs. Bode was thirty-two at the time the Tay family entered Julia’s life, and although she had been abroad many times since her marriage, this was the first visit of her younger brother and sister; Mr. Tay “having no use for Europe and the Californians who were always running about in it when they had the finest slice of God’s own country to live in.” But Mrs. Bode was an avowed enemy of the “provincial point of view,” and justly prided herself upon being one of the most cosmopolitan women in San Francisco society. She was determined that her little half-sister, to whom she was devoted, having no children of her own, should enjoy all the advantages she so sadly had lacked, and Dan’s obstreperous Americanism had “tired” her. So, for the last eight months, with or without the amiable Mr. Bode,

and in spite of cables from pa, who wished Daniel Third to finish his education as quickly as possible and enter the firm, she had piloted her charges through ruins, picture galleries, cities ancient and modern, museums, and mountain landscapes; besides forcing them to study French and German two hours a day with travelling tutors; until Emily yawned in the face of everything, and Dan threatened to cable to his father for funds and return by himself. But Mrs. Bode, whose own leave of absence was expiring, held them well in hand, and announced her intention of bringing them over every summer. This program she carried out as far as Emily was concerned, but it was fifteen years before Daniel Tay found time or inclination to leave his native land again.

Their reception at the castle was all that Julia could have wished. Mrs. Winstone was delighted to see them, Mrs. Bode being impeccable in her critical eyes inasmuch as she had no accent, did not flaunt her riches, and was never so aggressively well dressed that she made an Englishwoman feel dowdy. If she had been told of the Sacramento store, with the pies in front and the wash-tubs behind, it would not have affected her judgment in the least. She would have replied that all Americans had some such origin; and nothing amused her more than their ancestral pretensions. “New is new, and republics are republics,” she said once to Mrs. Macmanus, when discussing a grande dame from New York. “What silly asses they are to talk ‘family’ in Europe! We like some and we don’t others, and that’s all there is to it.”

As neither painted, she and Mrs. Bode kissed each other warmly, and, the American having had her fill of ruins long since, they went off to a comfortable fireside to gossip, leaving Emily and Daniel to Julia. The little girl was openly rebellious, when ordered to investigate the ruined portion of the castle, but Daniel would have followed Julia straight out into the North Sea. He had never been insensible to the charm of girls, but here was a goddess, and he proceeded to worship her in the whole-hearted fashion of fifteen, and with an enthusiasm the more possessing as it knew no guile.

They wandered through old rooms and passages, under and over ground, ivy-draped and stark, Julia recounting the castle’s many histories. Emily lagged behind and wilfully closed her ears. Finally, having emerged upon the flat roof of a tower, she saw that she could find her way back to the garden without getting lost, announced her intention curtly, and ran down the spiral stair.

“Good riddance,” said her brother, as he and Julia sat down to rest. “But I don’t blame her. This is the last dinky old castle that I look at this trip. America for me, anyhow. Don’t think I’m a Western savage—that is what Cherry calls me—it’s awfully good of you to climb round like this and spiel off such a lot, and this really is the dandiest castle I’ve seen. But I’ve been dragged through about a hundred, and as for pictures—wow! They can only be counted by miles. I’ll never look at another as long as I live. Give me chromos, anyhow. We have some in the garret at home, and I like them better than the old masters—got some color and go in them, and not

so much religion.”

Julia laughed outright. She thought him a young barbarian, but refreshing as the crystal water of a spring after too much old burgundy—this simile inspired by memory of the army of aristocrats she had met since her arrival in England. These gentlemen, most of them splendid to look at, were either formal and correct even when most languid, or bit their ideas out in slang, giving the impression that they thought in slang, dreamed in slang, indubitably made love in it; but it was a slang, which, loose and ugly as it might be, often meaningless, seemed to cry “hands off” to all without the pale. Some were affected, but all of these were affected in precisely the same way. Each and every one was full of an inherited wisdom which betrayed itself in manner and certain rigid mental attitudes, even where brain was lacking. To Julia, at this moment, they seemed in an advanced stage of petrifaction. Even Nigel was a grandfather in comparison with this bright green shoot from the new world. And Julia warmed to his frank admiration. The men to whom she had done duty as hostess since the 15th of September had paid her little or no attention. They were interested in some one else, they found her too young, they were too tired for flirtation after a long day with the guns, or they were wary about “poaching on the preserves of a cad like France. He had a look in his eye at times that would warn any man off.”

Whatever the cause, Julia, whose natural feminine instinct for conquest had been awakened during her brief season in London while she was still a girl, and who missed Nigel’s adoration, was willing to accept her due at the hands of fifteen, nothing better offering. Besides, the boy amused her, and she was seldom amused these days.

“Tell me more about California,” she said; and under a rapid fire of questions Dan artlessly revealed the history of his family (he was very proud of it), and, incidentally, told her much of the social peculiarities of his city. It was a strange story to Julia, who knew nothing of young civilizations, and was profoundly imbued with a respect for aristocracies. She felt that she should place this young scion of a quite terrible family somewhere between the steward of Bosquith and Mr. Leggins; but when she looked squarely into that open ingenuous fearless almost arrogant face, the face of an intelligent boy born in a land whose theory is equality, and in whose short life poverty and snubs had played no part, she found herself accepting him as an equal. His face had not the fine high-bred beauty of Nigel’s nor the mathematical regularity of her husband’s, but the eyes were keener, the brow was larger and fuller, the mouth more mobile than any she knew; and these divergencies fascinated her. But she drew herself apart in some resentment as he asked her abruptly: —

“What does your husband do for a living?”

“Do—why, nothing.”

“Nothing? Great Scott! What sort of a man is he? When American men don’t work, even if they have money, we despise them. They generally have to, anyhow.

If they inherit money they have to work to hang on to it. Some of them drink themselves to death, but they don't count."

Julia had colored haughtily, but wondered at her eagerness in exclaiming: "My husband was in the navy, but he has resigned and is now a member of Parliament."

"Well, that's doing something, but not much. I remember, now, Cherry told me he's going to be a duke. Then, I suppose, he'll do nothing at all."

"Oh, yes, dukes have to look after their estates; they don't leave everything to their stewards; they take a paternal interest in the tenantry; sometimes they are magistrates, and sometimes they go to the House of Lords."

"Well, that's just playing with life, to my mind," said young Tay, with conviction. "A man isn't a man who doesn't earn his keep and make his pile. I'm almost sorry my father is well off: I'd like to make my own fortune. But there's this satisfaction; if I don't work as hard as he does, when my time comes, I'll be a beggar fast enough. Competition's awful; and even people that do nothing but cut coupons for a living often get stuck. People are rich to-day and poor to-morrow, when they're not sharp. Makes life interesting. But just living on ancestral acres—Gee! I'd die of old age before I was twenty-five."

"I wonder if that is the way Ishbel felt?" murmured Julia, thoughtfully. Ishbel's sudden departure from the tenets of her class had astounded her, and, in spite of explanations, she was puzzled yet.

"Ishbel?"

"Lady Ishbel Jones. She is the daughter of a poor Irish peer, and married a very rich City man. After five years of society and pleasure—she is beautiful and charming—she suddenly decided she wanted to make money herself and opened a hat shop in Bond Street. She would just suit you."

But young Tay frowned and shook his head vigorously. "Not a bit of it. Women were not made to work, but to be worked for. If I had my way, every man should be made to support all his poor women relations, and if the women hadn't any men relations, then I'd have the other men taxed to support them. It makes me sick seeing girls going to work in the morning when I am starting for my ride in the Park. And a rich man to let his wife work! I call that downright disgusting."

Julia, much to her astonishment, resented this speech. "That's tyranny of another kind. Women are not dolls. You talk like a Turk."

"Turk? Dolls!" He arose in his wrath. "I'd have you know that American women do just about as they please, and American men are famous for letting them." He added, with his natural honesty: "Some are strict and old-fashioned, like my father, but nobody could say he wasn't generous. And what I told you is the reputation of American men, anyhow."

"Well, sit down again, please. I am surprised. I thought you would respect Ishbel."

"Not I. She'll spoil her looks, and then where'll she be?"

Julia, in a moment of prescience, asked with a mixture of wistfulness and disdain, “Do you care so much for mere beauty?”

“Betcherlife. I hate ugliness, and I love pretty girls. We have them in San Francisco by wholesale. To be ugly is a crime out there. I intend to marry the prettiest I can find just as soon as I’m old enough.”

“And some day—when she loses her youth and beauty?”

“Oh, I’ll love her just the same, for she’ll be my wife, and I’ll be old myself then, and have nothing to say. But I’ll have had the pick. I intend to have the pick of everything going.”

“Going?”

“In life. I must teach you our slang. English slang has no sense.”

“I fancy I could understand you better if you did. But I’ve seen men whose wives were once young and pretty, and who are always after some beauty twenty years younger than themselves—thirty—forty —”

Then she blushed, feeling that such a display of worldly knowledge was a desecration in the presence of fifteen summers.

But young Tay answered indifferently: “Oh, we’ve plenty of those at home. The bald heads always make the worst fools of themselves. But I mean to have a real romance in my life and stick to it. Shall only have time for one, as when once I put on the harness I mean to keep it on. I’m going to be one of the biggest millionnaires in the United States. Say, what made you marry so young? You don’t look more than sixteen.”

“I’m nineteen,” replied Julia, haughtily.

“Well, don’t get huffy. You ought to see how extra sweet Cherry looks when some one tells her she looks ten years younger than she is —”

“So does Aunt Maria!” Julia laughed again. “Fancy a boy like you noticing such things.”

“I’m fifteen, not so young for a man, particularly when he’s been brought up in a family of women. He gets on to all their curves—I tell you what! And I can tell you that many an American boy of fifteen is supporting his mother—whole family.”

“You don’t mean it!”

“I do. It’s not so easy, but it’s done every day. I don’t pretend there are not lots that let their sisters work, but that’s either because they can’t get along, no matter how hard they try, or because there’s a screw loose—foreign blood, most likely. No real American would do it. If pa died to-morrow, I’d quit school and go right into the firm. Nobody’d get the best of me, neither.”

It was impossible to resist such firm self-confidence. Julia looked at him in open admiration.

“Say!” he exclaimed, with one of his dazzling leaps among the peaks of

conversation. “Would you mind letting your hair down?”

“Why—What?”

“I’d like to see all of it.” And young Tay spoke in the tone of one unaccustomed to have his requests ignored. “Do.”

Julia looked him over, shrugged her shoulders, then took out the combs and pins. After all, he was only a boy, and she was feeling singularly contented. It was seldom that she had experienced more than a fleeting moment of companionship. She had come near to it with Nigel, Bridgit, and Ishbel, but they seemed years older than herself, and vastly superior. She would have been unwilling to admit it, but at this moment she really felt sixteen.

“Jiminy!” exclaimed young Tay, as the breeze lifted the shining masses of hair. “There’s nothing to beat it even in California. Red? Not a bit of it. It’s the color of flames, and flames are a clear red-yellow—like Guinea gold.”

He didn’t touch it, but his eyes sparkled as he watched it float, or hang about her white face and brilliant eyes in their black frames. “Gee! But I’d like to marry you. Why couldn’t you wait awhile?”

“It wouldn’t have done any good,” said Julia, who, like most females, was of a literal turn. “I shouldn’t be here, but in the West Indies, and you might never go there.”

“Well, what’s done’s done,” replied the boy, gloomily, and with the agreeable sensation of being the blighted hero of a romance so early in life. “What sort of a chap is your husband? I shall hate him, but I’d like to know —”

“He—well—he’s—”

“You’re not so dead gone on him,” said the boy, shrewdly.

“Not what?”

“More slang. Not—oh, hang it, it doesn’t sound so well in plain English. That’s what slang’s for. How old is he?”

“Forty-one.”

“Great Scott!”

The boy betrayed his own youth in that exclamation, in spite of his precocious wisdom. Forty-one suggests senile decay to arrogant fifteen. Julia’s own youth leaped to that heartfelt outbreak, and she burst into tears.

Young Tay forgot that he was in love with her, and patted her heartily on the back. “Oh, say! Don’t do that!” he cried. “But what did you do it for?”

Julia, to the first confidant she had ever had, sobbed out her story. Daniel pranced about the roof of the tower and kicked loose stones into space. “I—I—hate him,” concluded Julia, then stopped in terror, realizing that she had never admitted as much to herself. But she squarely faced the truth. “I do. And—I’m—I’m frightened.”

“See here.” Daniel sat down beside her once more. “You’re only a kid, and this is the very worst I ever heard. Talk about cruelty to animals! I’ve read some of those novels that are always lying round the house—English high life, and all that rot—but I supposed they were all made up. I never believed that mothers really made their daughters marry against their will. Why, somehow, it sounds like ancient history. Say—this is what you must do—come to California with us. Cherry’ll manage it. She’s rich, all right, and manages everything and everybody. Then just as soon as I’m old enough I’ll marry you—see?”

“How could I marry you when I’m married already?”

“Divorce. Plain as a pikestaff. And I’ll take bully good care of you, and never look at another girl.”

Julia dried her eyes. The plan was alluring, but in a moment she shook her head. Her keen intuitions warned her not to mention the planets to this ultra-occidental person, but there was another argument equally forcible.

“My husband would kill us both. He—he—I’ve never seen him in a temper—he’s taking care of his heart—but I *feel* he’s got a horrible one, and he seems to enjoy saying that if ever I looked at another man he’d strangle us both —”

“Pooh! I guess they all say that when they’re first married —”

“And he’s cruel to animals. Englishmen are seldom that. It isn’t that I’m really afraid of him now—it’s that I have a presentiment that I shall be some day. His eyes are sometimes so strange—not like eyes at all—just glass—he—he—doesn’t look human then.”

“He must be a peach. Gee!—but I’d like to punch him. You’ve got to come with us. That’s certain. I’ll talk Cherry over to-night. She’d just love figuring in a sensation with the British aristocracy.”

“Perhaps she wouldn’t care to offend it,” said the more astute female. “From all I hear, the rich Americans that come to London don’t do much to —”

“Don’t mind my feelings! Queer themselves. I guess not. But I’ll bring her round. Oh, don’t put your hair up!”

“It is time to go back.” Julia gave her hair a dexterous twist, wound the coil about her head, and pinned it in place. “You must have your tea.”

“Tea!” The contempt of composite American manhood exploded in his tones.

“Well, you can have whiskey and soda, although you’re rather young —”

For the first time Daniel’s magnificent aplomb deserted him. He flushed and turned away his head. “That’s where you’ve got me. I’ve had orders from pa not to touch alcohol or tobacco until I’m twenty-one. If I do, I’ll lose my chance of being taken into the firm, be put to work as a clerk somewhere, and get no more education. If I pull out all right, I’m to have ten thousand dollars plunk on my twenty-first birthday. You see the San Francisco boys, particularly when they’ve got money, are pretty wild. I don’t say I wouldn’t like to be once in a while, just for the

fun of the thing, but I promised to please pa—he was so uneasy, and I'm the only son. But when I get that ten thousand I'm going to blow it in on a big spree—have suppers in the Palace Hotel, and throw all the plates out of the window into the court—just to show what I can do; then settle down. What I've made up my mind to do, I'll do. I'm not a bit afraid of liquor or anything else getting the better of me."

Julia, who was watching him, was puzzled at the expression of his mobile face. It was not so much that its natural strength was relaxed for a moment by some subtle source of weakness, as that the strong passions of the man stirred in their heavy sleep and sent a fight wave across the clean carefully sentinelled mind above. Julia did not pretend to understand, nor did any ghost in her own depths whisper of the future. She put her arm about his neck and kissed him impulsively.

"That's splendid of you. And don't you ever drink. It killed my father, and it's killing my brother. And it makes people so hideous to look at. Now come down. I don't want Aunt Maria to scold me. They don't mean it, all these older people, but they humiliate me all the time. You are the only person I've met in England that makes me feel it's not silly to be young."

She picked her way daintily down the rough staircase, young Tay after her, again with that sense of being willing to follow her to the end of the earth. He even drank a cup of tea. But the ancestral hall, with its women in gay tea-gowns, and a few men who had returned earlier than their more ardent companions, made him feel suddenly very young and very American. He looked at Julia, whose place at the tea-table was occupied by Mrs. Winstone, and who was attracting as little attention as Emily, and felt more chivalrously in love than ever.

XV

Mrs. Bode had come that afternoon to Bosquith with the well-defined intention of receiving an invitation to return and spend a week. Mrs. Winstone, who was about to be deserted by Mrs. Macmanus, and was growing more bored daily, now that the novelty of playing hostess for the Duke of Kingsborough was wearing thin, and meditated a round of visits to more amusing houses at no distant date, was delighted at the advent of the vivacious American and needed no subtle arts of suggestion to invite her for the following Monday. The children were included in the invitation, but Emily begged to be permitted to visit a school friend at present in London, and Mrs. Bode returned with the enamoured Dan.

She had been astounded, then amused at his plan to abduct young Mrs. France, but found herself forced to appeal to his reason. He had stormed about the hotel sitting-room, calling her names for the first time in his life: “snob,” “coward,” “heartless woman,” “no sister.” Mrs. Bode, whose good-nature was one of her assets, and immune to unspoken insults long since, refused to be offended, wisely repressed her desire to laugh, pretended sympathy, did not once allude to the fact that he was merely fifteen, and talked to him as a wise woman ever talks to a man whose common sense is for the moment in abeyance.

“Come back and get her when you are twenty-one,” she advised. “By that time you will be a full partner in the business, and father can’t balk you. You know how romantic *he* is! And you also know his old-fashioned prejudice against divorce, his Puritanical morals generally. A nice figure we should both cut in his eyes if we returned with the runaway wife of an Englishman who hadn’t given her the ghost of an excuse. I happen to know France is mad about her. I also know she hasn’t a cent of her own, and she looks as proud as they make ’em. Do you fancy she’d live on our charity for six years? Not she. Even if she were mad enough to come, she’d go to work —”

“Work? My wife work? *She* work?”

“There you are!” And, as a matter of fact, this argument clinched the matter. The moment he was alone with Julia after his arrival at Bosquith he informed her that within twenty-four hours after he was made a partner in the firm, and his own master, he should start for England—should use the ten thousand for that purpose instead of going on a spree. He should take her at once to the quickest place in America for divorce, and then marry her. Julia was much too feminine to laugh, vowed never to forget him, and during his stay at the castle devoted herself to his entertainment. He showed no disposition to be sentimental, and as it was a novel experience, and he was always bright and amusing, besides telling her much of his strange continent, she enjoyed herself thoroughly.

Young Tay, aside from his natural jealousy, took an immediate and profound dislike to France, a sensation inspired in most moderately decent men by that

reprobate, even when he was on his good behavior. Dan went so far as to avoid his vicinity lest he punch him. As for France, he was little more than aware of the youth's presence in the castle, and thought Julia damned good-natured to talk to him. That they spent their days riding over the moors, or along the cliffs, or sitting in the various romantic nooks of garden and ruin, he had, of course, no suspicion, or he might have concluded that his wife carried her notions of hospitality a bit too far.

When young Tay left, Julia kissed him good-by, gave him a lock of her hair, intimated that six years would seem an eternity, promised to write once a week, then cruelly forgot him, save when his postcards arrived.

At first they came in a shower, then straggled along for a year, finally ceased after an apologetic one from college. Julia answered a few of them, but boys of fifteen, no matter how clever and companionable, cannot hope to make a very deep impression on nineteen; and Julia had much to drive him from her mind, in any case. She rarely saw Mrs. Bode during that lady's frequent visits to London, and, had she thought about the matter at all, would have ticketed Tay as one of the few amusing episodes in her life, and assumed that he had gone out of it forever. A young wife, revolting in profound distaste from her husband, and at the same time high-minded and fastidious, is the most unimpressionable of human beings. All men are alike hateful to her.

XVI

In December and January two historical events caused an excitement into which Julia threw herself so whole-heartedly that for a time she managed to forget her personal life; taking pains to become intimate with every detail, she was obligingly conversed with by some of the important older men at Bosquith, and pronounced by the younger to be "waking up."

On December 17 the President of the United States, Mr. Cleveland, sent his famous message to Congress concerning the long-standing dispute between England and Venezuela as to the boundaries between that state and British Guiana. The United States had proposed arbitration; Lord Salisbury would have none of it, intimating that England knew what belonged to her without being told. Whereupon Mr. Cleveland hurled his bomb: Congress, after being reminded of the Monroe Doctrine (which accumulates mould from long intervals of disuse), was requested to authorize the President to appoint a boundary commission whose findings would be "imposed upon Great Britain by all the resources of the United States."

There was a financial panic (in which, incidentally, Mr. Jones lost a great deal of money), the newspapers thundered, Mr. Cleveland, at Bosquith, as elsewhere, was called an "ignorant firebrand," and "no doubt a well-meaning bourgeois," everybody tried to understand the Monroe Doctrine that they might despise it, and for nearly a week war between the two countries seemed imminent.

Mr. Cleveland went fishing and was unapproachable until the excitement had subsided. Lord Salisbury consented to the Boundary Commission, with modifications; and the whole matter was forgotten on New Year's Day in a far more picturesque sensation, and one productive of far graver results: England was electrified with news of the Jameson Raid. Over this episode feeling for and against the impulsive doctor ran so high, before all the facts came to light, that more than one house-party was threatened with disruption; although in the main it was the young people with warm adventurous blood that sympathized, and alarmed older heads that condemned. "Little Englanders," "Imperialists," exploded like bombs at every table, even after a hard day with guns or hounds. But although the excitement lasted all through the hunting season (with which it did not interfere in the least), the chief advantage derived from it by Julia was a romantic interest in a new and mighty personality. For long after she kept a scrap book about Cecil Rhodes, followed his testimony before the special committee in Westminster with breathless interest, trying to find it as picturesque as Macaulay's "Trial of Warren Hastings," which she read at the time; and, until life became too personal, consoled herself with the belief that he was the man heaven had made for her. This fact would not be worth mentioning save that half the women in England were cherishing the same belief. These liaisons in the air have cheated the divorce court and saved the hearthstone far oftener than man has the least idea of.

The duke returned to London two days before the opening of Parliament, and

took his household with him. France, now quite restored to health, bitterly resented leaving the country before the hunting was over, and Julia, who felt her happiest and freest when on a horse, and had proved herself a fine cross-country rider, had no desire to be shut up in a gloomy London house during what for England was still midwinter. But France dared not sulk aloud, and Julia was doing her best to be philosophical. Besides, she was to have a purely feminine compensation.

Mrs. Winstone, accepting the invitation of Mrs. Macmanus, had gone to the Riviera to remain until mid-April, but before she left she had given France several hints on the subject of his wife's wardrobe for the coming season. In consequence, on the morning after their arrival in London, he entered his wife's room at seven o'clock, attired for his morning ride, awakened her, and handed over a check for fifty pounds.

"Your aunt says that some of your fine clothes are not worn out and can be remodelled, but that you must have others and hats and all that rot. Women's things cost too much, anyhow. They ought to make their own things. I've seen women do it. You must manage with this now, and as much more six months hence. It's a bally lot, but you've got to have some sort of finery for our ball on the fifteenth. Don't pay anybody till the last minute. They're such silly asses it does me good to wring 'em dry. Besides, what are they made for? By and by when you know more about money, you can send me the bills for the same amount. But afraid to trust you now. Know women. By-by."

He kissed her casually (not being in a mood for love-making) and Julia sat up and blinked at the check, the first she had ever held in her hand; Mrs. Winstone having had charge of her mother's little wedding present, and the larger sum placed at her disposal by the duke.

She now knew something of the value of money. She also knew that her husband's income, between his annuity, the rent of his place in Hertfordshire, and the duke's allowance, was quite two thousand pounds a year. This would have gone a short distance if he had been obliged to set up in London for himself, but, living with the duke, his only expenses were his club dues, his valet, and his clothes, which he didn't pay for. She had expected no less than two hundred pounds, and wondered at his meanness. There could be no other reason for the smallness of the check: there was no question of his fidelity to her, he pretended to despise cards (Julia already guessed that men would not play with him), and he did not even have to pay for the keep of his horse, as the duke's mews were at his disposal.

Julia thought upon Mrs. Bode's immense allowance with a frown, and wished she were an American, sent a fleeting thought to the still faithful Dan, and wondered if he would really come for her one of these long days.

To be sure Ishbel had spent quantities of money, but only to gratify an upstart millionnaire; and although Julia had now met many women with bewildering wardrobes, she knew that they were paid for in divers ways, when paid for at all. Still, she doubted if any of them had a husband as mean as hers, for most men, no

matter how selfish, have a certain pride in their wives, and, in the absence of settlements, make them a decent allowance. And she, a future duchess of England, to get along on a hundred pounds a year!

“I should be paid high for living with him,” she thought as she rang for her tea; and had not the least idea that she was voicing the sentiments of thousands of wives, from the topmost branch of the peerage down to the mates of laborers that slaved to make both ends meet and had less to spend than a housemaid; whose rewards for work were her own.

But Julia was not troubling her young head with problems sociological and economic at this time. She knew that she had missed happiness, but she craved enjoyment, pleasure, excitement, and, if the truth must be told, unlimited sweets. The duke disapproved of anything but the heavy puddings of his race, varied only by “tarts” drenched with cream; and Julia had discovered an American “candy store,” and her sweet tooth ached.

As soon as she was dressed, she sought Ishbel and held a consultation with her in the little boudoir above the shop.

Ishbel could not suppress an exclamation at the amount of the check.

“Surely the duke—” she began.

But Julia shook her head. “Aunt Maria said he could not be expected to do more, as we live with him, and he gives Harold a thousand a year. But I know she expected me to have far more than this. She told me she had had a very satisfactory talk with Harold and was sure he would be generous.”

“Perhaps you can talk him over—”

“I’ll never mention the subject of money to him if I can help it. Why doesn’t the law compel every man to settle a part of his income on his wife? It should be automatic.”

“We are not half civilized yet—all laws having been made by men! But every woman of spirit gets the best of them one way or another, although her character often suffers in the process. That was the obscure reason of my strike for liberty. I see it now. There is nothing for you but to practise the time-honored methods. You have been placed in a great position and you must dress it. Get what you want. Your position assures you credit. Dressmakers are used to waiting, poor dears, and so are shopkeepers. Your husband will be forced to pay the bills in time. You will have to be adamant, impervious to rowing, when the days of reckoning come. Tell him that it is clothes or a flat in West Kensington, where nothing will be expected of you —”

“I hate it!” cried Julia, her eyes blazing, and her hair looking redder than flames. “I hate such a life.”

“Of course you do. So do thousands of other women; but as long as society, with all its abominable demands, exists, and men are unreasonable, just so long will we limp along on credit, and gain our ends by devious methods. Now to be practical. I shall make your hats at cost price, and France will not keep me waiting much longer

than most people do. This afternoon I'll go and look over your wardrobe. I know a splendid little dressmaker—Toner, her name is—who remodels last year's gowns and brings them up to date. She is the only person you will have to pay at once, for she really is badly off. For your new reception gowns, ball gowns and tailor things, you will have to go to the smartest houses. I shall introduce you, but it is hardly necessary; they will fall down before you —"

"I shall feel like a thief!"

"Of course. You will be one, but only temporarily, and it will be much more disagreeable for you than for them. Your husband is not bankrupt, and must pay your bills. I wonder where you get your squeamishness from—at your age? You belong to our class, and from what you have told me of your life at home —"

"I know! Mother thought I didn't know it, but I did. Children see everything. But it horrifies and disgusts me. I suppose I must be innately middle class!"

"Dear me, no. You are merely ultra-modern. I wonder what has waked you up before your time—and with no outside influences? Odd. Well, I fancy sensitive brains get messages, are played upon by waves of the intense thought that is in operation all the time, trying to solve the problems of existence. Bridgit was right. I thought it would take longer."

"What do you mean by that?"

"She'll explain when she gets hold of you! Oh, thank heaven I am my own mistress, and need never accept a penny from a man again,—and am done with the crooked ways of my sex."

She looked radiant, and Julia exclaimed: —

"Why, you are more beautiful than ever. You haven't gone off a bit."

"Why should I?" asked Ishbel, in amazement.

"Well—I made friends with an American last autumn, and he thought it dreadful for women to work."

"It is a toss-up which women suffer the greatest injustice from their men, the English or the Americans. At least our oppressions have developed us far ahead of them. They've only scratched the surface of their minds as yet—those that are known as the 'fortunate' ones. Of course there is a big middle class, scrimping hard to make ends meet, and, no doubt, having quite as much trouble with their men as we do. They will catch up with us far sooner than those walking advertisements of millionnaires, who think they are independent and spoiled, and are only slaves of a new sort. It is well, by the way, that I set up when I did. Jimmy not only lost thousands during the panic, but has developed a mania for speculation. I think it is because he has so much less of society than formerly, and wants excitement."

"Does he blame you?" asked Julia, going to the point as usual. "Of course people don't want him without you. I hear he wasn't asked to a single house party."

"Yes, he blames me. My conscience hurt me for a time, but I talked it out with

Bridgit, and we both came to the same conclusion: during those five years I paid him back with interest. If he can't take care of himself now, it is his own lookout. I am living to repay him what I borrowed, for he has thrown it at my head more than once, his losses not having improved his temper. That is the reason I am not going out at all this year."

Julia, twirling her check, stared at her. The immense amount of reading she had done had set her mind in active motion, developing natural powers of reason and analysis. And unconsciously, during the last six months, at least, she had been studying and classifying the many types she had met. She knew that Ishbel, as she uttered her apparently heartless and unfeminine sentiments, should have looked hard, sharp, or, at the best, superintellectualized and businesslike. But never had she looked prettier, more piquant, more feminine. Her liquid brown eyes were full of laughter, her pink lips were as softly curved as those of a child that has never whined, and her rich voice had no edge on it. Charm radiated from her. In a flash of intuition Julia understood.

"It is because you like men—that you don't change," she said. "You never will. But how do you reconcile it? You despise them —"

"Oh, dear me, no. I adore them. No charming man's magnetism is ever lost on me, and I am in love with three at the present moment. That is all, besides my work, that I have time for. Only—I don't have to marry any of them, and find out all their little absurdities. I idealize them, sentimentalize over them, and that pleasant process would color the grayest of lives."

"Suppose you should really fall in love?"

"Oh, I am quite safe until thirty, then again until forty; then again I shall have a respite until fifty. Perhaps by that time we shall carry over till sixty. It would be rather jolly. And the certainty of falling in love once in ten years is not only something to look forward to, but ought to satisfy any reasonable woman."

"I wonder if you are what my American friend called bluffing."

Ishbel blushed, dimpled, looked the most lovable creature in the world and the most temperamental. But she laughed outright.

"Of course I bluff, my dearest girl. I bluff every moment of my life; I bluffed myself, poor Jimmy, and the world for five years. Now I bluff myself into thinking I am radiantly happy because I am independent, whereas as a matter of fact, I am often tired to death, hate the people I have to be nice to—it is not so vastly different from matrimonial servility and management, except that you are more easily rid of them, and they are always changing. But I stick to this, shall stick to it until I have made enough to invest and give me an independent income; no matter how much I may long to be lazy or frivolous, to dance, to flirt week in and out at house parties—partly because I now enjoy that supreme form of egoism known as self-respect, partly because the spirit of the times, the great world-tides urge me on, partly because, when all is said and done, work fills up your time more satisfactorily than

anything else. I had exhausted pleasure, was on the verge of satiety. That would have been hideous. But I purpose to bluff myself one way and another to the end of my days. I am convinced it is the only form of happiness.”

Julia drank all this in. She knew that although Ishbel spoke in her lightest and sweetest tones, she uttered the precise truth, and that she was deliberately being presented with a window out of which she should be expected to look occasionally, instead of remaining smugly within the conventional early Victorian walls of her present destiny. Julia was used to these little lessons in life from her older friends and liked them, but she sighed, nevertheless. She was proud to develop so much more quickly than most young women of her too sheltered type, but on the other hand she longed at times for youth and freedom and an utter indifference to the serious side of life. For the moment she regretted her reading, wished ardently that she could have been a girl in London for two seasons. Being put into training for a duchess at the age of eighteen may gratify the vanity, but, given certain circumstances, it extracts the juices from life.

Ishbel, as if she had received a flash from that highly charged brain, leaned over and kissed her impulsively. “Oh, you poor little duchess!” she exclaimed.

But Julia was shy of demonstrations and asked hastily: —

“How is Bridgit? It is nearly a year since I saw her, and she only sends me a line occasionally like a telegram.”

“Not as happy as she would be if she were earning her bread, but she is rapidly finding her métier. All this last year, inspired in the first place by Nigel’s book, she has been investigating the poor and the poor laws, visiting settlements, hospitals, factories, laundries—you know her energy and thoroughness. The result is that she is close to being a Socialist—of an intelligent sort, of course—pays her bills as soon as they are presented, despises charities, and is convinced that women should become enfranchised and have full control of the poor laws.”

“She must be rather terrifying!”

“She has succeeded in terrifying Geoffrey, and I fancy with no regrets. He is having a tremendous flirtation with Molly Cardiff and is little at home.”

“And Nigel?”

“Still on a Swiss mountain top, writing another book. Of course he is in love with you still, poor dear!”

Julia was not displeased, but replied philosophically: “It’s well he’s not here, for I should want to talk to him, and I never could. Harold is insanely jealous.”

“Oh, that will wear off. They are all like that at first. Englishmen of our class are not provincial, whatever else they may be.”

But as Julia followed her downstairs to try on the newest models in hats, she felt that she had got no cheer out of the last observation. She had a foreboding that Harold would become worse instead of better.

XVII

It was the night of the 15th of March. Invitations had been sent out three weeks since for the great party, which on this date was to inaugurate the reopening of Kingsborough House. The footmen had been put into new livery, but although the reception-rooms on the first floor, long swathed in holland and cobwebs, had been aired, cleaned, and polished, Julia's tentative suggestion that the heavy carpets, curtains, and furniture of the early Victorian era be replaced with the more enlightened art of to-day was received with a haughty and uncomprehending stare. Julia had not returned to the subject. Banishing her scruples, she threw all her energies and taste into the replenishment of her wardrobe. As Harold had announced in terms as final as the duke's stare that he would take his wife to no dances, where other men would have the right to embrace her, she had confined her apocryphal expenditures to such gowns and their accessories as would be needed at afternoon and evening receptions, luncheons, and the races. The dinner gowns of her first trousseau, although many of them had been worn at the house parties, were "smartened up" by the invaluable Mrs. Toner, and looked fresh and new.

The maid had been dismissed and Julia stood before the mirror in her large gas-lit bedroom, looking herself over carefully, without and within. She had sent for France, and there must be no weak points in her courage.

The vision in the mirror alone gave her courage (being as natural as a human being can be, she was still a vain little thing), and poised her spirit. After several consultations between herself, Ishbel, and the greatest French dressmaker in London, it had been decided that as this party would be her real introduction to society, and as she was little more than a girl in years, her gown must present a certain effect of simplicity. Therefore was Julia arrayed in white tulle and lace, over clinging liberty satin, and embroidered with crystal as fine as diamond dust. With her tropical white skin and flame-colored hair, this skilful costume gave her a curiously elusive and spritelike appearance. She wore some of the Kingsborough jewels: a diamond tiara, not ridiculously large, and several ropes of pearls. Few eyes can compete with the brilliancy of diamonds, but Julia's did, assisted by the black brows and lashes which most women preferred to believe were artificial. She was not an imposing figure, for her height was only five feet three and a half in her French slippers, and her figure was still thin, although the bones of her neck and arms were covered; but as France entered the room he thought her quite the loveliest and daintiest creature in England.

"By God!" he cried, his heavy glassy eyes flashing. "You are rippin'! Never saw even you so well turned out."

He had rushed forward, but Julia waved him back.

"You mustn't touch me when I'm got up for the public," she said imperiously. "You always muss my hair, and they will be coming in half an hour. I sent for you

not to be admired, but because I have something to say to you.”

“Say?” repeated France, sulkily. His wife’s virginal coldness was one of her profoundest fascinations, but submissive she should be, nevertheless. “What can you have to say?”

“I merely want to tell you the cost of this gown.”

“What do you mean?”

“That it cost a hundred pounds.”

“What—what—”

“Just double the amount you gave me. And the rest of my wardrobe, with which I am to do you and the duke credit this season, has cost twice as much more.”

“What in hell are you talking about?” France tried to thunder, but his breath was so short that he could only splutter. “How dare you —”

“You never pay for your clothes until you have been summonsed a dozen times, why should I?”

“But I have to pay in the end! How *dared* you? I know how women can get on with a little money. Do you think I don’t know anything about ’em? Extravagant as the devil, all of you, but able to do on half what it costs a man to turn himself out, all the same. What are maids for? Every woman could make her own clothes if she tried. I told you—My God! My God! If my word ain’t law—a hundred pounds!”

He was waving his arms, and Julia moved out of their reach, although she continued to look him in the eyes. His were bloodshot. “I shall have everything I want, or need, so long as I live with you,” said his wife, deliberately. “If you don’t want to pay for my clothes you can put me out. I could earn my living. Ishbel would teach me to trim hats.”

“You—you—”

France sat down, his mouth hanging open. Then with a curious instinctive movement he covered his face with his hand. When he removed it, his face, although still red, was closed and hard, and his eyes shone with a new desire.

“You’ve got a will of your own, young lady.”

“I have!”

“Well, by God, I’ll break it.”

“Try it.” Julia shook out her shimmering train.

“Three hundred pounds in one go!”

“Your income is two thousand a year, and you are practically at no expense.”

“It’s not your place to know what my income is, nor what I do with it.”

“But you see I do.”

France looked down, once more concealing his eyes. It was a part of his plan to show himself to the world as a devoted husband, to accept every invitation, save those for dances, to walk with his wife daily in the park, as soon as the fine weather

began; in a word, to efface his past. He inferred that Julia had guessed something of this, and, having the whip hand, meant to use it. To antagonize her would be fatal. He longed to beat her: in fact, he felt a curious thrill at the prospect; but between the duke and the world, his hands, for the present, at least, might as well be pulp. He was amazed and bewildered to find that he had married something more than an exquisite bit of youth—conversation between them was almost unknown; and although it would be amusing to break her, he knew that he must temporize until the duke died. He believed that this happy event must occur before long, as the duke, fancying himself, under new medical advice, stronger than he had ever been, had overtaxed his frail constitution during the shooting season, and complained much of fatigue since his return to town. “By God!” he thought, “I’ll beat her the very day he dies.” And, although subtlety galled his abnormal vanity, he brought out in a fairly amiable tone: —

“Look here, old girl, you mustn’t let me in too deep. Remember I’m not Kingsborough yet. It’s not that I can’t pay these three hundred pounds—although the truth is, I’m economizing to pay off old debts, many of them debts of honor—used to gamble a bit when I was in the navy. So, don’t let me in any deeper, and when the old boy chucks it, you shall have all you can spend.”

“Meanwhile, I wish four hundred a year,” said Julia, inexorably.

“Oh, I say! These things should last you for two years. I know women —”

“You haven’t introduced them to me. If you don’t give me four hundred a year I’ll run into debt for that amount, and you are liable. I was married without being consulted. I don’t love you and never shall, but I submit to your demands, because it is my destiny. I am to be a duchess, and that is the end of it. Meanwhile, I shall get everything out of this tiresome life there is in it. You and my mother forced me into it, and I shall have compensations. I shall be as well dressed as any of the great ladies I am to associate with, many of whom I shall one day outrank. I shall see Ishbel and Bridgit just as often as I choose, and I shall buy all the books I want. I am going to job a brougham —”

“No! Not much!”

“I am going to job a brougham, and if you forbid it, there will be trouble with Kingsborough. From something he said the other day I know he assumes that I have one already. He knows you can afford it. He uses that ark in the mews, and I don’t want it, anyhow. For a long time I thought I never should speak to you on the subject of money again; you hurt me so that time I asked for a few books; but I have thought it out, and the result is this: while I am determined to have what I need without asking you, I think it only fair to warn you. Besides, I should grow nervous waiting for the bills to come in, for row after row.”

“You are damned hard for a young ’un.”

“I am not hard. I have made up my mind. That is all there is to it.”

France’s face convulsed with passion, but once more he controlled himself,

although his hands worked.

“If I give you four hundred a year, will you promise to let me in for no more, and to pay for the brougham?”

“I’ll not let you in for more, but you shall pay for the brougham.”

“By God! You look like an arum lily standing there, and you are a little red-headed she-devil! This is the first time any woman has ever got the best of me. I’ve always treated ’em like cats.”

He rushed out of the room, afraid to trust himself further, and Julia, horrified at life, while experiencing a certain zest at having ground her legal master under her heel and watched him squirm, marched out and took her place beside the duke and Lady Arabella Torrence at the head of the grand staircase.

XVIII

JULIA's new French slippers pinched, and her tiara pressed on certain nerves of her head, as the more humble hat pin has been known to do. The procession up the staircase seemed endless. To Julia it looked like a river of jewels; she had ceased to know or care who were the mere women beneath it. Not all of the men were foils. Royalty, the entire cabinet, and the diplomatic corps were present; gorgeous uniforms, sashes, and orders saved many men from being mistaken for waiters.

As the first guests were ascending, Julia had turned to the duke and said sweetly: —

"I have asked Ishbel and Bridgit, and they have promised to come."

"You have what?" asked the duke, his dull eyes glowing.

"They were my first friends in England, and as I am your hostess, it occurred to me that I had the right to issue a few invitations on my own account. I merely mention it, that you may not be betrayed by surprise when you see them."

"You have taken a purely feminine advantage—waiting until this moment to tell me—when I can do nothing!" It was long since the duke had felt himself on fire with passion.

"Of course we all take our advantages where we can, and are as deceitful as possible," said Julia, smiling into his snapping eyes. "Those are primal weapons, and you gave them to us. Here come some terribly important people."

The duke had been forced to swallow his wrath, and, in a few moments, forgot it in the sudden stream of arrivals. After a time fatigue overcame him and he slipped away, leaving Julia alone with Lady Arabella (yellow and bony in white embossed velvet and rubies). France was making himself agreeable to the dowagers. The interview with his wife had inspired him with a longing to go out and entice some wretch of the streets to a hiding-place, where he could beat her to a jelly, but the gall in his blood did not affect his shrewd cunning brain, which steadily pursued its object. To-night was his first opportunity to be gallant to women, politics and sport having claimed him since his illness; and after a few well-turned compliments, he talked of nothing but the beauty and virtues of his wife. Perhaps the duke was the only human being who really liked him, for, without magnetism or charm of any sort, he left both men and women cold where he did not repel; but to-night he acquitted himself so creditably that several mothers thought upon their loss with regret.

Julia's mind was beginning to play her strange tricks. Carlyle's "French Revolution" had been among the books at Bosquith, and its style had so fascinated her that she had read it twice. It so happened that a number of extremely handsome women with white hair honored the Kingsborough ball to-night. Some were young. All were gorgeously bedecked. The intense hard glitter of diamonds dissolved into mist, took on fantastic shapes: graceful powdered heads, glittering with jewels, on

the top of pikes, warm pampered bodies blocking the stairs.

It was not so much that Julia's mind was awakening to the problem of the poor, the menace of the unemployed and the underpaid; in truth, she generally shuddered and turned away when Bridgit and Ishbel discussed the subject; but these spectacular women on the grand staircase of Kingsborough House seemed so ripe! They looked so useless, so languidly magnificent, so overbred, so close to the apotheosis of their destiny, that—again her fancy veered—Julia half expected to see a row of footlights behind them; then a sudden shifting of scenery, and the tumbrel and guillotine. The time came when Julia knew many of them well enough to deal out a greater measure of justice than the outsider that hurls the word "parasite" at every woman fortunate enough to possess what the poor all want—wealth. She learned that many of them worked harder for their political husbands than an army of secretaries, that others rose, during the season, at an hour when they fain would have slept off the fatigue of the day before, in order to get through a mass of correspondence relating to the particular problem, political, social, or economic, they were striving to solve. Many of these women were mothers to their tenantry, watching over the growth and education of every girl and boy born on their estates. Others went daily to settlements, some to districts so abandoned as to be practically hopeless, and requiring a mettle far higher than the mere soldier needs when racing his fellows to battle. Some worked with churches, others with societies, others alone; nearly all were interested in one charity or another, many trying to feel their way through the obvious method of relief to some cause they could grapple with, since the power to legislate was forbidden them. Scarcely one of those women, dressed from Paris, weighted down with jewels old and new, but faced the serious side of life at some hour during the twenty-four; but although Julia came to know this, the impression of the terrible immaturity of civilization, caused by the blind vanity and selfishness of human nature at the outset, and persisted in through the centuries in spite of lessons written in blood, and of the gross unfairness of life, never left her. If she was in the toils of youth at present, and far more interested in herself than in the world and its problems, the mere fact that these blue marsh lights could dance across her mind occasionally, would have satisfied her more advanced friends that when the awakening came it would be sudden and final.

But not to-night. Her visions fled. She looked down into a pair of dark satiric eyes, and her own flashed back a more than courteous welcome. Ishbel had come some time since, and after piloting the delighted Mr. Jones up and down for half an hour (wearing his diamonds and looking the radiant wife), had deposited him between two of the haughty dowagers he loved, and fluttered off with her court. But Bridgit was late. She had demurred at coming at all, being "sick of the game"; but had yielded to Julia's importunities, partly to "please the child," partly because her mischievous soul suspected that the invitation did not emanate from headquarters, and delighted in giving the duke "a turn." She might be well on the road to Socialism, and have come to the end of her capacity for mere pleasure, but she had not lost her sense of humor; and inborn arrogance of class never dies, no matter how

amenable the brain to reason, and to a sincere democracy which manifests itself so effectively in manner. Bridgit's paternal grandfather was a duke with three more quarterings to his credit than Kingsborough's, ancestral performances known to every student of history, and two strains of royal blood with and without the bend sinister; therefore, did Mrs. Herbert feel that she was doing the old pudding an honor in coming to his musty barrack whether invited or not. And, automatically no doubt, she had attired herself in the fashion of her class, of the women in whose company she was to spend a night once more. She wore a gown of gold colored brocade opening over a round skirt of rose point. Rising out of the coils of her wiry black hair was an all-round crown of diamonds, and on her neck, falling to the soft lace of her corsage, was a chain of diamonds and pear-shaped pearls. With her fine upstanding figure, her towering height, and flashing black eyes, she might make the most compelling figure imaginable at the head of a rebel army singing the Marseillaise, but to-night there was no more stately dame in Kingsborough House.

Julia, somewhat in the fashion of royalty, passed on the people separating them, and grasped Bridgit's hand, revivified by the sight of a dear and familiar face.

"Oh, I'm so glad," she cried, indifferent to stares and the displeasure of Lady Arabella. "And they must nearly all have come. Do wait for me —"

She stopped short. She had had eyes only for Bridgit. Mechanically they had travelled on to Bridgit's escort. The man standing with his hand outstretched was Nigel Herbert.

"He got home this afternoon," said Mrs. Herbert, casually. "I knew you would like to see him, so I brought him on. How do, Lady Arabella? Always loved you in rubies."

"Huh!" said Lady Arabella. She would have cut this dangerous apostate if she had been equal to the effort; but to freeze that bright powerful gaze, by no means without malice, was beyond her capacity, so she merely sniffed and advised her to seek the duke, who would be as delighted as herself to welcome Mrs. Herbert to Kingsborough House. She was of the many that blundered over sarcasm, and her soul shivered under the sweetness of Bridgit's acceptance.

Meanwhile Julia was exclaiming to Nigel: —

"Oh, but I *am* glad to see you! And *do* go to the blue room and wait for me. It's downstairs behind the library."

Nigel's face had flushed, then turned pale; the first moment of the renewal of their acquaintance had been an awkward one for him. It was with some difficulty that he had been persuaded to come at all. For many reasons he had wished never to meet her again, and had returned to England only because it was necessary to see his book through the press; a melancholy experience with the last having lost him his faith in proof-readers forever.

But when he saw the welcome in those big shining eyes, the happy smile on those young parted lips, he forgot even the subtle changes he had noted in her face,

while still unobserved, and he flushed again, his heart beat rapidly. “Does she care?” he thought wildly. “Not now! Not now!—But —”

Julia was staring with almost childish delight at the frank handsome face of her first friend in England. She forgot the romantic hour at Bosquith, forgot that she had sat up all night to contrive an extinguisher for the embarrassing passion of this misguided young man, remembered only that here was a real friend; moreover, one possessing that magnet of sex lacking in Bridgit and Ishbel (such being the cross currents in her still imperfect soul), so congenial that she could have flung her arms about him at the head of the grand staircase of Kingsborough House. She had never met any one she liked half as well.

He caught his breath sharply, whether in relief or disillusion, he did not pretend to guess at this moment.

“I’ll wait for you,” he said, and made way for the next arrivals.

Some ten minutes later Julia turned to Lady Arabella.

“They are beginning to straggle,” she said. “If you don’t mind I won’t stay any longer.”

“I do mind,” severely. “And your place is here, child as you are.”

“I can’t see why. . . . More guests. . . . Who cares about a child? And you are vastly more important.”

“You have acquitted yourself very creditably. . . . Besides, people are curious to see you, and nobody cares for an old thing like me.”

“Half of them are still glowing with the honor of having shaken hands with you —you go out so seldom. . . . Besides, my slippers pinch. I want to put on an old pair.”

“I always wear slippers a size too large and made by a surgical shoemaker, on occasions like this. You must do the same. I should have told you.”

“I’ll order a pair to-morrow, but that doesn’t do me any good now.”

“Very well. Run along.”

XIX

THE blue room, furnished by the late duchess, and undisturbed by her loyal son, was of that sickly azure hue once affected by pale blondes. The walls were further ornamented by bits of sentimental tapestry, the chair backs with anti-macassars, stitched and woven by her Grace's own white hands. There was an entire sofa,—but why harrow the soul of the reader, even as Nigel's soul should have been harrowed as he sat with closed eyes awaiting Julia? As a matter of fact, he forgot the hideous room at once, and, heroically dismissing Julia from his mind that he might be quite composed when she entered, dwelt with satisfaction upon his interview with his father a few hours earlier. That eminently practical peer had cast him off when he fled from England, leaving a curt note to announce his intention to devote himself to the art of fiction. He might have starved after the fashion of more orthodox bidders for immortality, had it not been for a small personal annuity which enabled him to live comfortably in Switzerland while engrossed in his book. It was during this period, living in a mountain inn, without luxuries, paternal menace and thwarted passion behind him, that Nigel learned the profoundest lesson art teaches: its power to pulverize the common human emotions and desires. Only the true artist, of course, gets the message, is capable of immolation conscious or otherwise, of elevating art above life.

Nigel was a born artist and had in him the makings of a great one. Nevertheless, the discovery that nothing really mattered but his work, that only his characters lived, and personal memories were dim, not only surprised, but deeply mortified him. Being a man, as ready as the next to love, and to fight and die for his country, it alarmed him to discover that he carried within him a possible rival to his manhood, the highest attribute, etc. But he was not long consoling himself. He progressed to rapture over the discovery, ended by being humbly grateful. He was a man all right, that needn't worry him; he was willing, therefore, to admit that to be an artist was a greater endowment still. And it gave him a sense of independence, of liberty, of superiority, to which the air of the high Alps contributed little or nothing.

Then came the intoxication of success, of that immediate recognition so many have hungered for in vain. Lest his head be turned and his art suffer, he went on a walking trip through Germany, Italy, and France, sleeping in inns and receiving neither letters nor newspapers. Nor did he meet any one he knew. He even avoided Englishmen lest he prove himself unable to resist the temptation to lead the conversation round to his book. Not only was he a sincere artist, but he blindly clung to this new and friendly magician that made the world so agreeably little.

When he returned to his eyrie, full of his new book, he found a letter from his practical papa, forgiving him, since success had attended his dereliction, and enclosing a check. Nigel responded amiably, then flung himself once more at his desk, anxious to learn if the embryonic book contained the same brand of enchantment as the first: the vision of Julia had haunted his lonely footsteps. It did.

Julia fled. He forgot his family, himself, his success. Once more he was pure artist, therefore entirely happy.

But he was still young. The second book had now gone from him. Art slept. As he heard the rustle of a train, the hearty welcome, the proud words of his father, deserted his memory, his heart almost stopped. Nevertheless, as he rose to greet Julia his face was expressionless of all but suave languid politeness. He, too, "fell back on technique." And this easily adjusted armor of the aristocrat is the best of his assets. When a man smiles in the face of death, without bravado, it merely means that he is well bred. His heart may be water.

Nigel was intensely irritated with himself for having been betrayed into something like emotion at the head of the stair, and he spoke with a slight drawl as he shook Julia's hand.

"Awfully good to see you," he remarked. "You look rippin', too. Will you sit here?"

"Let me get this crown off. It weighs tons." Julia unfastened the Kingsborough diamonds and deposited them irreverently in a chair, then took the one Nigel offered. "I'd have left it upstairs, but I suppose I shall have to walk about later. I do hope I shan't have to wear it often. Thank heaven, I'm not a duchess yet!"

Nigel knew the pitfalls in that engaging frankness and steeled himself.

"Oh, you'll like it when the time comes," he said indifferently. "How's the duke?"

The duke had always been such a negligible quantity, both physically and socially, that no one felt self-conscious in referring to his demise a trifle earlier than the conventions prescribed. Julia certainly felt no false shame as she replied: —

"Better—rather. He shot, and even rode to hounds now and again. He's looked a bit off his feed since our return to town, and I know Harold believes he's not going to live much longer; but that's because he's made up his mind that he's waited long enough. I hope Kingsborough'll brace up. Of course I came to England prepared to have him die at once, but, somehow, you can't live in the house with a man and wish him dead—at least, I can't. Besides, as I said, I'm in no hurry. In fact, I prefer it this way."

A shadow passed over her face, and Nigel asked with less languor: —

"Why?"

"Oh—I think it a good thing for a man to have a mental occupation, and waiting for dead men's shoes is an occupation—rather! Ra-*ther*, as the boys say. I don't know Harold so awfully well, but I have an idea he would be lost—and quite impossible—if he couldn't scheme about something. He's the sort of man that always has a grievance, loves to think himself abused if only because it gives him an excuse to plot and imagine himself getting the better of somebody. Besides—this is more like playing with life. The real thing must be full of responsibilities that don't mean so much, after all. Now—sometimes—I can fancy I am a girl, masquerading,

and I can do all sorts of things I couldn't do if I were of any importance."

"And just how much of a girl do you feel?" he asked with bitter emphasis.

It was not possible for Julia to turn any whiter than she was at all times, but her expressive eyes grew so dark that they deepened the whiteness to pallor. For a moment she looked older, and, swiftly as it passed, Nigel detected an expression of fear and horror in the gaze that no longer met his, but looked beyond. He caught both arms of his chair, and held his breath. But in an instant it was as if a hard little hand had rammed memory down into the depths of consciousness and bolted a lid above it. Julia's eyes flashed back to his, full of mischievous gayety.

"Now don't indulge in romantic fancies about me," she said. "If I proclaimed from the housetops that I don't love my husband, that I was married by my mother, no one would pay the least attention. Everybody knows it and nobody cares. What is done is done. I have a philosophical nature myself. Remember that my horoscope was cast three times. And I have my compensations."

"What are your compensations?"

"Oh, books, my best friends—you among them!—a certain freedom I find here in London, and mean to have more of, and clothes! clothes! You have no idea what pretty frocks I have. That isn't all. It's great fun to get the best of Harold—to give him another grievance! But I do get the best of him—and of the duke, too, occasionally. There's a curious satisfaction in it—"

"Be careful! You'll be hard, first thing you know."

"The harder women are, the happier they are, I fancy. A sort of fine steel armor that you could hide in your hand but that covers you from head to foot. I've used my eyes these last two years. That is all that keeps most women from being ground to powder. One can try to keep soft inside, you know."

"There's one thing I don't know—what you are driving at. I can't make out whether you are changed altogether, or are the same delicious child, or if you are trying to keep your old personality intact, while forced to admit to partnership an ego you have manufactured in self-defence. One moment you look wise, almost hard, the next—"

"I refuse to be stuck on a pin in your psychological cabinet. But I suppose you've got us all there. Herbert Spencer says—"

"Oh, for God's sake, don't become a clever woman! Whatever—"

"Why not? Don't you fancy that would be a compensation?"

"You clever! It would be too awful!"

"You talk like Mr. Jones."

"Hang Mr. Jones. Ishbel was entirely right; and she is one of the few women on this earth that can be clever, as deep as the pit, and never let a man find it out. But you! You are too straightforward and honest. Not that Ishbel isn't honest; she's a brick; but she has a special talent—possibly it lies in her coquetry. You have little or

no coquetry. You are in a state of flux at present, and if you decide for the second ego, if you become hard and clever, you never could disguise it. So beware, or you'll not be able to love and be happy when your time comes."

"You mean to make some man happy!"

"What is the difference?"

"Oh, lots. I try not to think. I want to remain young as long as I can. But I can't help observing that men like geese,—what they call feminine women. I suppose you mean that clever women find too many other resources, and therefore are independent of men. Ergo, they don't make men happy."

Nigel colored. "Something of that sort."

"I shouldn't have thought it of *you*. Fancy your being just the ordinary male, after all."

"Let us drop generalities and my humble self. I am thinking of you. We don't live in a moral world or age. Like all women you will, sooner or later, demand happiness as your right. In other words, you will wake up some day and want love. Then you will have lost the power to charm. You would never be content with a fool, and clever men rarely love clever women—not with their eyes open. You are quite right as you are. Enjoy life. Let its problems alone."

This impassioned plea for her youth left him almost breathless. For the moment he was not conscious of loving her himself, of pleading for his own future before it was too late. His languid dignity had retired from the field; he felt only that he had arrived in time to avert a tragedy, and so impersonal that his chest lifted slightly. The next moment he was gasping under a douche of cold water.

Julia had thrown her head back and was looking at him with softly shining eyes, her lashes half covering, and filling them with little black lines.

"I'll tell you a secret," she whispered. "I've never told any one. I'm—I'm in love."

"What!"

"You'll never breathe it?"

"Who—who—"

"It's a man I've never seen."

"How can you love a man you've never seen? What a baby you are!"

"I didn't say I loved; I said I was in love. And a man I've never seen is the only sort I could go that far with. I hate every man I know, simply because he is a man; and I never want really to meet, even to see, this one. But it's great fun to be in love with him, to live in an inner world of one's own."

"Oh!" Once more Nigel writhed with jealousy.

"And that isn't all." Julia's eyes grew even more burdened with dreams. "When I have to be kissed— At first I just set my teeth— Now I shut my eyes and imagine

it’s the other.”

Nigel stood up. His face was white. His hands shook.

“And who, may I ask, is this fortunate person?”

“I don’t think I can tell you that.”

“You shall tell me. I have some rights. I was your first friend, and I loved you myself.”

Julia looked at him out of the corner of her eye. He had used the past tense, but he looked more like the present.

“I never thought I could breathe his name,” she whispered. “But I can tell you. It’s Cecil Rhodes.”

“Rhodes? Upon my word, you have good taste!” Then he burst into irrepressible laughter, and threw himself back in his chair.

“Oh, what a kid you are! What a baby! And I thought you were on the road to become a clever woman.”

Julia smiled mysteriously and picked up her crown. Her voice and eyes were more ingenuous than ever. “I told you, partly because you are my only man friend, the only man I don’t hate, and partly because you would have made love to me yourself in another minute. But if you tell Bridgit or Ishbel —”

“Never!” Once more Nigel laughed until the tears blotted his vision.

“Now I must go out and walk about and try to look like a duchess in a semitransparent shell. Will you give me your arm?”

XX

A WEEK later, Julia, who had gone to bed early, woke up suddenly at midnight. For a moment she lay wondering what had awakened her, used as she was to the long unbroken sleep of youth. She became conscious of a steady rhythmical sound in the next room, quite different from the prosaic music to which she was accustomed. When she realized that it was her husband pacing back and forth, back and forth, like a captured beast of the forest, she trembled for a moment, then invoked her nerve, slipped on a dressing-gown, and opened the door.

The lights were blazing. France, his coat off, his hair on end, was pacing up the room as she entered, and when he reached the wall, he flung his hands against it as if to push it outward. Then he turned and saw his wife. His eyes were bloodshot.

"Go back to bed," he said thickly. "I don't want you."

"What *do* you want?" Julia walked toward him, fear lost in her curiosity. "What is the matter, Harold? Are you ill? If you are, I must take care of you."

He stared at her for a moment. There were times when he hated her, others when he was quite mad about her; during the intervals of varying length he did not think about her at all. To-night he suddenly experienced a new sensation. He needed a friend badly, and it was her business to fill any office he chose to impose upon her.

"Look here," he said. "Would you do me a good turn?"

"Why, of course."

"And use all the brains you've got and hold your tongue?"

"Try me."

"Think you could fool Kingsborough?"

"Oh, quite easily."

"Well, it's this: I've got to get away for a time—out of this. I ain't a child, ain't used to walkin' a straight line. Never had so many rules to live by since I was a small boy. Navy was nothin' to it—and two years! *Two years*—" He clutched his hair with both hands and shouted: "I've got to get away for a bit! Do you hear? Got to get away! Ain't used—"

"Do you mean that you want to go away and drink?"

France's jaw fell. He took a step forward.

"What d'you mean? Who's ever said—"

"No one in particular. But one learns a good deal in two years. Didn't you used to drink now and again—disappear—"

"What if I did? I'll wring your neck if you peach—"

"I haven't the least idea of telling any one. It is the sort of family secret one doesn't share. Where do you intend to go?"

"I'd hardly thought—it doesn't matter. How can I fool him? If he found me out,

he’d chuck me, cut me down to the last penny, he’s such a damned milksop—and in my shoes, in my shoes! Think for me. My brain’s no good. It’s on fire. Let him find out and it’s all up with you, too, my lady. It’s your business to stand by me. Wonder I didn’t think of that before.”

“You’ll go to Paris to-morrow to consult a heart specialist—”

“I tell you I’ve got to get out of this to-night. If I don’t, the roof’ll be off before breakfast. Do you suppose I can wait for a lot of palaver? I’d have been off before this, but I can’t think of a ghost of an excuse.”

“You can’t find a better than that, and you can go to-night. He knows your heart is weak, or was. I’ll tell him I became terrified and packed you off without delay. Get out your portmanteau, and I’ll look up the trains in Bradshaw.”

XXI

"How very odd!" said the duke, in a tone of manifest annoyance. "How very odd!"

They were in the library and Julia had imparted her information.

"Not at all," she replied indifferently. "He would have gone before this, but feared to worry you—thought he would feel better. Last night he was so bad that I put him out of the house."

"You put Harold out?"

"Yes. That will give you an idea of how he was feeling, when he was willing to mind me!"

"Hm! Why didn't you go with him? A wife should never leave her husband for a day, particularly when he is ill!"

"We neither thought of that until the last minute—he was so nervous and there was only time to pack and catch the train—I was racking my brain over Bradshaw. I offered to follow, of course, but he said he preferred I should remain and keep our engagements here—he's developed such a love of society, poor Harold—he seems haunted by the fear that we might drop out—you see, he was once a little wild—"

"Never really!" said the duke, emphatically. "Why shouldn't he sow a few oats—a fine young fellow? Not that I approve; but it is natural enough."

"Of course, poor dear, and he fancies that people think him far worse than he was, and he has an idea that I am useful to him—"

"Quite so. That is what you charming young wives are for. But I cannot think why Harold should feel obliged to go to Paris. We have heart specialists here."

"Oh, but no one to compare with—with—Corot. And Harold knows him, you see, and has such confidence in him. He should have gone a week earlier, when—the—ah—thumping began."

"Thumping? Dear me! Is Harold as bad as that?"

"Oh, it only means that he needs the right kind of tonic—after so long a siege of fever—and all that sport—and the political campaign—you see, he should have had himself looked over sooner; but at Bosquith there was only the country doctor, and then—he hated to leave us. I don't think he'd have gone this morning if I hadn't insisted. And he was dreadfully worried for fear you'd be angry."

"Oh, well," said the duke, mollified; "after all, he knows his own affairs best. Ah—wait a moment."

Julia, who was escaping, breathless with the lies she had told, and longing for fresh air, halted, and the duke swung round in his chair and laid the fingers of one hand over the back of the other.

"Sit down again for a moment, my dear," he said, not unkindly, although he had

assumed what Julia called his preaching manner and his praying voice.

She sat down on the edge of a chair. The duke resumed.

“There is a matter I have had in my mind since the night of the party. I don’t like to scold you, for in the main you are a very good child and a dutiful wife—really, I have little fault to find with you. But—ah—you must have seen that I was much annoyed when I learned, that without my consent, and in spite of my expressed distaste for those two young women, you had asked them to my house.”

“Of course I knew you would be annoyed.”

“Indeed? I supposed you merely thoughtless!”

“Oh, no.” Julia turned her large brilliant gaze upon the small slate-colored eyes whose dullness was lighting with indignation. “I told you—perhaps you have forgotten—that as you have made me your hostess, and expect me to devote a large part of my energies to acquitting myself creditably, I feel that the position carries with it certain rights. So I invited my best friends.”

“But you knew that I disapproved of them!”

“Without reason. They are of your own class, and their reputations are immaculate. Why should I snub my friends? The invitations went out in the names of all three of us.”

“That has nothing to do with it. I do not wish you to associate with these young women. Their tendencies are dangerous. They have stepped out of their class and must take the consequences. Old orders would not change if men were firmer—When Harold returns I shall ask him to put his foot down. I cannot expect you to obey me, but you are bound to obey your husband.”

“I shall not in the matter of my friends. I have told him that if he interferes with me in any way, I’ll leave him and go into Ishbel’s shop.”

“WHAT?”

The duke half rose from his chair, then fell back, gasping. Where was the responsive amenable child of two summers agone?

The child continued. “Yes, I am doing my best. I am a dutiful wife, and I try to look and act” (she almost said “like a future duchess,” but her nimble mind leaped aside in time) “as if I had been entertaining all my life. I listen to Lady Arabella’s lectures, and Aunt Maria’s, to say nothing of yours and Harold’s. Even Lady Arabella says I’ve done very well. But I have a few rights of my own, and if I’m interfered with I’ll do as I said. I don’t care so much for all this. I’d rather be free like Ishbel.”

“You have no comprehension of the duties of a wife,” gasped the outraged duke, “or of your position. That a member of my family —”

“It is not so much that I am asking. Lots of women have lovers —”

“Lovers!” The duke almost strangled. “What does a child like you know about lovers? And in my house—you have never heard such a subject mentioned.”

“Oh? I can tell you that a lot of the women that have visited us —”

“Hush! I shall listen to no insinuations about my guests. You wicked little thing!”

“No. I was about to tell you that I’ve no intention of being wicked. I should hate a lover.”

“Indeed! I am happy to be reassured.” The duke always felt at his best when sarcastic, and he sat erect and looked severely at this naughty child who did not in the least comprehend what she was talking about.

“You are too young to argue with,” he said. “Not that I should ever think of arguing with a woman of any age. As regards Bridgit Herbert and Ishbel Jones, if your husband upholds you in your friendship with them I have nothing further to say except that I absolutely refuse to have them in my house again. But if Harold does not—this is what you must understand once for all: your husband’s word is law.”

Julia smiled.

“What do you mean?” The duke had a curious sinking in the pit of his stomach, and wondered if he too should not consult a specialist.

“You men are so funny.”

“Funny! Madam!”

“Yes, that is the word. Ishbel told me they were when I first came over, and I’ve found it out since for myself.”

“Funny!”

“Terribly funny.”

“If you don’t explain yourself—”

“I mean—for one thing—just one!—that you never find out we have our own way in spite of you. You think you are tyrants, and there isn’t one of you that can’t be led round by the nose—managed. Well, I don’t like that method. I won’t bother to manage any man. You’re not worth the trouble, and it’s a confession of inferiority on our part, anyhow. The more I see of you, the less inferior I feel. Besides, I enjoy speaking out, having things understood without a lot of beating round the bush. I’ve discovered that I’ve good fighting blood, and I’ve learned that women have plenty of resources outside of husbands; all that is necessary is to find the courage and the energy to enjoy them. But so many don’t. They’re all in love with one thing or another—husbands, lovers, society, fine houses, clothes, luxury—so they ‘manage’; and it has spoiled men, flattered them for centuries that they were the stronger and wiser sex; and, of course, demoralized women. No one can expand without the courage that comes of being able to speak the truth. Men can afford to be truthful whether they are or not, so they have gone ahead of us. I shall become demoralized all right, but not in that way. Not in any way that I can help. I shan’t lie—for myself—and I shan’t employ crooked methods. My mother told me to marry, and I did, because at that time I thought it right and natural to obey. Besides, I suppose one

man’s much the same as another. I am resigned. I shan’t cry as some women do. One woman down at Bosquith last summer used to come into my room when I wanted to sleep, and cry out, ‘I hate life! Oh, how I hate life!’ She was afraid her husband would find out about her lover and she was sick of the lover besides. Now she has a new lover —”

“Hold your tongue!” The duke for once in his life thundered. “I forbid you to say another word —”

“Oh, I’m not very much interested in those things. What I intended to say was that I’ll do my duty, since married I am, but I’ll also do as I choose in some things. You can’t stop me. You might have done so in the days when Bosquith was built, but a lot of you seem to forget that times have changed—they change every minute, if you did but know it.”

“So it seems! I should think they did! *Great* heaven!”

The duke paused a moment as if he expected heaven to respond. Receiving no inspiration, he concluded with dignity: “I must think this matter over. You may go.”

Julia almost ran out of the library and up to her own room. Then could the duke have seen her he would first have received another shock, then misinterpreted what he saw, and plumed himself. For Julia sat down and wept. She had lied hideously, worse still, glibly. And for the first time she quite realized that of late she had developed a poise, a fertility of resource in dealing with the mean tyrant that dwelt in the men to whom she was almost subject, that for the moment horrified her. Was it true that she was growing hard? She wished she had talked more confidentially with Nigel instead of flippantly dancing away from the subject. Was she no longer young? She had a real passion for truth. Were there to be no conditions in which she could indulge it? She glanced back over the past two years. There had been a time when she spoke the literal truth on all occasions; now she spoke it when it was feasible, or impressive, but rarely without forethought. It was seldom that she let herself go. She felt a hatred of civilization stir, wondered if in the whole planetary system there was a world where truth was the standard, where every man was himself, where the petty lies which made the great ones inevitable were unknown. A prophetic ray suggested that such conditions might involve complications unless human nature itself were of a new brand; but she was not in the mood to follow the thought to its logical finish. She wanted freedom here, and it appeared to be impossible of attainment. But at least she would strive for independence. To both of the men who shadowed her life she had read what the Americans called the riot act. That, at least, was something accomplished. She could not be accused of deceit, despised because she paid the tribute of her sex to their superiority.

Suddenly her spirits darted upward on wings. She was free of her husband for a week, perhaps longer. She bathed her eyes and danced about the room. But when she realized the source of her exultation she turned hastily from it, dressed, and went to Ishbel’s shop.

XXII

DURING the fortnight of France's wassail the duke and Julia avoided each other by tacit consent. His Grace found himself uncommonly absorbed in politics, attended no less than three important dinners; and, ascertaining Julia's engagements, dined at the House upon the one occasion when she dined at home. Therefore, were there no elaborate and recurring explanations of Harold's prolonged absence, and singular epistolary neglect of his cousin. Julia, as she passed the duke on the stair, mentioned casually once or twice that her husband was detained by his doctor's orders, might be for six or eight days to come.

The duke had resolved that he would not be betrayed into another war of words with this or any woman, nor would he recur to the subject of Julia's offences until he had fully determined what to say to her, what course to take. And as for the life of him he could not make up his mind, she was left to her own devices.

And these devices were many. Julia resolved to forget her husband's existence, and enjoy herself in new ways. She went to nine parties and danced until dawn. She saw Bridgit, Ishbel, and Nigel every day, rode on the tops of omnibuses, and lunched in A B C's, Italian restaurants, and the Cheshire Cheese; these last three dissipations in company with Mr. Herbert. He also took her frequently to the National Gallery, and administered her first lessons in art. They even visited the Bond Street exhibitions and one or two private studios.

Nigel made no attempt to flirt with her; he was by no means sure that he still cared for her, so changed was she, although her magnetic charm was unaffected. But she would seem to have lost the ideal and unique quality that had roused his deeper feeling, and that gone, he felt no desire for the residuum. Certainly, it was not worth the sacrifice of his career; although of course it was very jolly to be the chosen friend of such a radiant creature (of whom men were beginning to take much notice), and he made up his mind to remain in London during Julia's period of liberty, then return to Switzerland and his new book. He was rather glad of this test than otherwise, the opportunity to make sure that the only rival of his work had been routed. Sometimes, however, he wished that he might love Julia frantically, these days, thus receiving an additional proof of the might of art; but that hard bright surface repelled him. He felt that he no longer knew her, should not until life had taught her a more thorough knowledge of herself. Meanwhile, poor child, if she was determined to enjoy herself to the limit while her beast was on the loose, it was the least he could do to help her; so he lectured her on art in the morning and danced with her at night, or saw to it that she had the best partners in the room. The fortnight passed very quickly, and Julia, exerting her strong will, felt eighteen once more and quite happy.

France returned one morning early, looking rather the worse for wear. After a coaching from his wife he sought the duke, and, in his bluffest sailor manner, apologized for his abrupt departure and his failure to write: he had been put to bed

and commanded to rest, undergone a series of examinations, been so blue and bored that he should have made his cousin as bad as himself. The duke was quite satisfied, and when France took the precaution to add that sooner or later he should be forced to return for another examination, his affectionate relative sighed and hoped Julia would awake to her duty and present another heir to the house of France.

During the next two years France disappeared some five or six times. His departures were preceded by excessive irritability; he returned as complacent as a cat after canary. Intermediately he was much himself. Julia became expert in seeing little of him. During the season she dragged him about with an unflagging energy that caused him to welcome the few hours he was able to snatch for sleep, and the duke unwittingly assisted her by demanding his daily presence in the House of Commons. During the shooting and hunting seasons his sportman's fever took care of itself, although she subtly persuaded him to take up the rod, and to go to Scotland for deerstalking. She realized that if she continued to live with him a certain amount of "management" was inevitable. To tell the whole truth and live under the same roof with France was manifestly impossible, and the feeling of destiny (planetary) was too strong to permit her to leave him and achieve a complete independence. She thought as little as possible, read and studied a great deal, and played to the top of her capacity.

There was political excitement from time to time, and Julia learned that one secret of content was to forget her deep and hopeless disappointment in herself by keeping her mind animated with the greater affairs of the nation. No doubt this is the most fruitful source of woman's interest in politics as they exist to-day. Unlike art, which compels true oblivion, it is a wholly artificial interest, since mentally unproductive; and of secondary import, since women are not permitted to employ their abilities in the service of their country. But although, no doubt, the women of the future will look back with much amusement upon the futile, the pathetically egotistic activities, of their predecessors, there is no question that an interest in public affairs, no matter how impersonal and unremunerative, save to the spirit, has the advantage of dissociating the mind from those mean and petty interests that send the average woman to the scrap heap.

Julia, even without the hints of Bridgit and Ishbel (Nigel went abroad soon after France's return), would no doubt have discovered this philosophy for herself, for she came of a family distinguished in colonial politics since the islands were inhabited by the white man, and her present atmosphere was almost wholly political. The duke fussed more than any woman, France was forced to assume an interest he did not feel, and the greater number of their guests believed themselves to be making history. The duke, since his health would not permit him to be prime minister, found his compensation in sitting at the head of a table surrounded by those eminent Conservatives and liberal-Unionists whose names were in every man's mouth. Therefore was Julia not only obliged to listen intelligently, but soon began to feel a keen pleasure in sharpening the edge of her mind and in holding

opinions and drawing conclusions of her own. When the war between Spain and the United States broke out she took the American side, partly out of perversity, as everybody she met was passionately for the sister European power, even after the Government policy declared itself and laid its heavy hand on the press, partly because the increasingly modern tendencies of her mind led her to sympathize with the fluid imperfections of youth as against the atrophied faults of age. But although she found her opponents in argument immovable in their sympathy for Spain, and (congenital) disapproval of the United States, the experience gave her the deepest insight she was likely to have of the fundamental good humor of the English, as well as their sense of fair play. Unequivocally as they resented the conduct of the United States and hoped for her humiliation, it never occurred to them to visit their indignation on the individual, and London was full of Americans at the moment. One afternoon Julia was taking tea with Mrs. Winstone when Mrs. Bode came rustling in, flushed and indignant.

"What do you think?" she demanded, before she had taken the chair Mr. Pirie hastened to place for her. "Hannah Macmanus asked me to go with her to the private view this afternoon, and when I arrived at her house I found her with the Spanish colors pinned on her chest! Wouldn't that jar you? And I an American—her guest! When I exploded—asked her why she didn't send me word not to come, she seemed quite surprised, said she never let politics interfere with private friendships. But I bolted, couldn't contain myself. I do think you English are too odd!"

"Oh, we're merely a bit hoary," said Pirie; "we've really lived, you see."

"Hope your history's not all behind you," retorted Mrs. Bode. "Well, I'll take a cup of tea. If *you* were wearing the Spanish colors, Maria Winstone —"

"They don't become my own coloring," said Mrs. Winstone. "But, mind you, I'm all for Spain and hope you are going to be whipped. If we were quite alone I should confide that I didn't care a straw one way or another, but fashion is fashion, and I'd no more dare defy it than I'd dare indulge in an individual style of dress—must be strictly contemporary or run the risk of looking my age."

"I never know when you English are joking," said Mrs. Bode, discontentedly. "Your humor (if you really have any) isn't the least bit like ours."

"Our effects are got by telling the brutal truth," said Pirie.

But the excitement afforded by this war was brief, and soon forgotten. Kitchener's reconquest of the Soudan was picturesque enough in its details to compel the attention of far happier mortals than Julia, but was hardly of a nature to disturb the serenity to which Pirie had made allusion. Fashoda caused but another ripple on the surface, and even when the moving finger appeared on the South African horizon the prevailing feeling was annoyance, and astonishment at the temerity of the Boers. In spite of the warnings of Lord Wolsely and General Butler, England persisted in looking at the new republic through the wrong end of the opera glass. Early in August, Julia, at a county dinner party, sat next to one of the most intelligent of the South African millionnaires then living in England. He had lived

his life in South Africa, and mainly among the Boers; he had made his fortune there, and taken a prominent part in politics. No man should have known the characters of the Boers better than he, nor the advantages possessed by a hard persistent race that had learned every trick of native warfare from the negroes they had subdued. And yet he made a speech to Julia that she never forgot.

“You know, Mrs. France,” he said pleasantly, “we don’t want to kill anybody. We’ll just walk quietly through the Transvaal and take it.”

It was shortly after this dinner and the feeling of renewed confidence in England’s destiny it induced, that Julia suddenly lost all interest in politics. She had found many compensations in her life, and looked forward to many more. The duke had shown uncommon tact in intimating that her husband was quite equal to the task of controlling her, never returning to it himself; Julia, on the other hand, having no desire to live alone with her husband, took pains to fill creditably the duties of her position, and showed her host the pretty deference due his age and rank. So had wagged life for two more years. And then the most unexpected, the most incredible, the most completely disorganizing, thing happened. The duke fell in love and married.

BOOK III
HAROLD FRANCE

I

THE wedding took place early in September. Immediately after the announcement of the duke's intentions, France had rushed upstairs to Julia and indulged in such an outburst of rage that she fled to another part of the castle, and left him to wreak his vengeance on the furniture. Having relieved himself, he was able to meet the relative, for whom his lukewarm affection had turned to hatred, with his usual glassy surface, and, silent at all times, save when delivering himself of anecdotes, he was not in danger of betraying himself in the unguarded word. He held out until a week before the wedding, and then had a heart attack and parted from his sympathetic cousin for his semi-annual pilgrimage to Paris.

"Of course we'll have to get out of this," he said to Julia as he was leaving. "He wants us to stay, but you know what that means. Our day is over, curse him. Nothin' for us but White Lodge. Lucky I couldn't rent it again. *Luck!* Mine's gone. I don't know when I'll be back. Am really goin' to Paris this time. You go to Hertfordshire and settle yourself. Make it comfortable, but no extravagance."

"Couldn't we take a flat in town?" asked Julia.

"Town? Not I. There's good shootin' and huntin' in Hertfordshire, and that's all I've got left. Hate town. Thank heaven, I can chuck politics. That's my only comfort."

"But you love society; at least, your position in it."

"What's the good without a fortune? Besides, we're not an hour from town at White Lodge, and there's good enough society in the county. Mind you return every call."

Then, much to Julia's delight, he took himself off.

The duke and his new duchess, a youngish aunt of Bridgit Herbert's, who had angled quietly for him ever since he had emerged from his seclusion and entertained his neighbors, cordially invited Julia to remain at Bosquith for the rest of the season, but she was anxious to get away and readjust herself in solitude. Besides, her presence was necessary at White Lodge; and it is hardly necessary to state that she won the duke's approval by doing the obvious thing.

In truth she was somewhat dazed, in no state for a display of originality. The unexpected trick of fate had disconcerted her hardly less than her husband, for not only had she grown into her position as the future duchess of Kingsborough during the past five years, but she was profoundly shocked to find that her mother's planets

had made a mistake.

Nothing had occurred to disturb her belief in the ancient and romantic science of astrology since her arrival in England. On the contrary, some of the cleverest and most eminent men she had met professed tolerance of it, and, she suspected, felt something more. On the other hand, she had found England so full of other fads, with no possible scientific basis, that her respect for astrology had grown rather than diminished. But she could only conclude that the whole thing was a monstrous delusion. Like many religions it filled a want, and its picturesque qualities had captured men's imaginations and enabled it to survive. She received several incredulous letters from her mother on the subject of the duke's marriage, finally one filled with concentrated astonishment, fury, and despair. This was some time later, when Julia had written that she must cease to hope, as there was no doubt the new duchess would have a family. Mrs. Edis ended her letter characteristically: —

"I have lived in a fool's paradise for years. Now I simply exist until my time comes to die. I might have endured this annihilation of my only religion, but not of the crowning ambition of my life. In this matter I feel that you are to blame. You should have had children. You should have managed the duke so that he would never have thought of marriage, instead of becoming a woman of an entirely different and alien generation, as I find you in your letters. I should prefer that you do not write to me until I write again. Of course I do not forget that you are my child and the only one I have left, now that your wretched brother and his wife are dead—for I do not count this fidgeting grandchild I have on my hands—but so great is my disappointment in you that I cannot face the prospect of your letters at present—filled as I know they will be with that silly shallow modern philosophy which makes the best of things in the shortest possible time."

Julia felt sorry for her mother long before she received this letter, but she soon discovered that this was her only regret, barring the fact that she must see more of her husband. For a fortnight she was quite alone at White Lodge, a charmingly situated property not far from the village of Stanmore and facing a wild expanse of heath. The housekeeper engaged the servants, leaving her young mistress to a complete liberty and solitude for the first time in her life. As Julia wandered through the thick woods of the little park between the garden and the heath, or rode alone in the dawn, or explored the historic villages and romantic lanes and properties of Hertfordshire, she realized how weary she was of the pleasant uniformity of London society, of entertaining in the country for sportsmen and statesmen; admitted once for all that to be a great peeress of Britain would bore her to death. Whatever ambitions she might develop, now that she was free to be an individual ignored by the planets, to be a great lady was not of them, and during these delightful weeks she dreamed of discovering some overlaid talent with which she should achieve a real place in life.

It did not occur to her to leave her husband. Noblesse oblige would have kept her at his side in his fallen fortunes, even had she not felt an even keener sympathy

for him than when he had struggled for life during the early months of their marriage. She had ceased to fear him, forgotten her prophetic moments, so secure did she feel in her power to manage him, and so little, for the past year at least, had she seen of him. She would console him to the best of her ability for the bitterest disappointment such a man could feel, make White Lodge as brilliant as possible, dress on fifty pounds a year, and ask nothing in return but the liberty to study, and develop the talents she was sure she possessed, deeply buried as they might be. Before a week had passed, she had completely readjusted herself, and looked forward eagerly to several years of comparative quiet during which her mind should mature and make ready for the great discovery.

But a quiet life was not for Julia, then or ever.

II

JULIA, after the light supper which she had been thankful to substitute for the long dinner of the past four years, wandered slowly through the fields drinking in that peace which descends upon Hertfordshire at nightfall, in all its perfection. She leaned her arms on a fence, enjoying the Wordsworthian landscape: the wide fields with their hayricks like houses, the quiet cattle, the slowly moving stream, the soft masses of wood melting into the low sky. The red band had faded behind the sharp church spire. The night moths fluttered. The stillness was too soft to be profound, too sweet to inspire awe.

But although she loved this twilight beauty and peace of England, of which she had had but a taste now and again, being usually at table during the most poetical hour of the English day, she felt a sudden antagonism to it to-night, as too perfect, too finished a thing for the world to possess while so many of its dark problems were unsolved. Although she had persistently refused to study the underworld under the escort of Bridgit, turning instinctively from all that would shatter the illusions among which she chose to live, she had not been able to shut out bare knowledge, and Nigel's second and fourth books had been even more enlightening than his first. She smiled as she thought of Nigel, whom she had not seen since the end of her first matrimonial vacation. He had left England soon after and not returned. His father, incensed at his avowed Socialism, and mortified at the conspicuous failure of his third book, an exquisite bit of pure art, had definitely renounced him, and he was living quietly and happily in picturesque corners of Europe. Julia, knowing his passionate love of beauty, envied him the power to gratify it, his complete surrender to the artistic life. She wondered why he kept on writing of the grimy horrors of England, when he might give the world his dreams of the wonderland beyond the Channel. To be sure, that unique combination of the propagandist and the artist made for greatness, but his last book, which she had finished only an hour since, had darkened her mind, and unfitted her for surrender to the beauty and peace of the English twilight.

Why was the enlightened class so stupid? Why did it not eliminate poverty and the terrible pictures that must haunt every sensitive mind, instead of waiting for mob rule, and its inevitable sequence of a dictator and return to first principles? Socialism must come from above. When the laboring classes used the word they meant democracy, in which every man would have a chance to acquire riches; mere comfort and security, with no opportunity to loot the universal till, had no charms for them. Man is adventurous and greedy, and the lower his place in the scale, the more insensate his dreams.

Nigel's books, in their cold impersonal realism, did not inspire her with any great respect or liking for the poor. She knew that he was employing his art and his seductive story-telling faculty not only in the cause of humanity, but to help avert a convulsion in which his own class would go down. She knew that if it came to open

war, a blood-revolution, the theories and principles of which his reason approved would fly off on the red winds and he would get behind the guns on his own side. The intellectual aristocrat may serve the cause of general humanity in entire honesty and conviction, but the moment class is arrayed against class he will fight, not with the passions of his brain, but of his instincts, and with that almost fanatical contempt and hatred of the common people when daring to assert themselves he has inherited with his brain cells. Nigel had admitted this freely to Julia, confessed that while he was keen to devote every year of his life and every phase of his talent to eliminating poverty, he never heard of a laborer's strike which inconvenienced the public that he did not burn at their impudence and long for their annihilation.

"But it is this duality that makes the game interesting," he had concluded. "I only hope I shall never be put to the test. There are many other things I should enjoy writing about far more, but I always feel that I don't matter in the least. If I was given a brain on top of my instincts, it was to advance the cause of humanity and civilization. At all events that is the way I see things, by such light as I possess."

He had gone on to say that he had become an advocate of Socialism because, so far, it was the best solution the human mind had evolved, but that all the artist in him lamented its lack of appeal to any part of man but his brain. Unpicturesque, dry, hard, but growing more practical and expedient year by year, if it failed eventually, it would only be through lack of a soul.

Would Nigel be the man to find this soul? He had a measure of genius; why not? She felt proud of him that he could induce the thought, then, in a moment of hardly realized sex jealousy, wished that it might be discovered by some woman. Herself? Why not? But at this point she laughed aloud, and turned her face toward home. Banish the ugly facts of life. Enjoy this divine peace while it lasted.

She left the field and sauntered down the crooked lane full of sweet scents and haunted by the white night moths. Skirting the wall that surrounded White Lodge, she entered by the front gates, but, loath to leave the twilight, mounted a stump and leaned her arms on the coping. The heath, a wild rolling bit of nature, mysterious in the dusk, was deserted but for a gypsy caravan. She remained out every night until dusk had melted into dark, ravished by the serene beauty of this typical bit of England, believing that in time it would help her to solve the riddle of her mind. For her soul she asked nothing, believing her capacity for happiness in any form to have been killed long since, but demanding some mental compensation more personal and permanent than books. If she dreamed long enough in this wonderful English twilight, gave her imagination rein—who could tell? And there was something more than a possibility that this liberty to dream and develop might spin out indefinitely. Even if the war with those tiresome Boers should prove as brief as the duke and her South African acquaintance predicted, Harold, deprived of other diversions, might go out to South Africa for such excitement and sport as the campaign would be sure to afford. And big game might exert its fascinations for a year or more.

She lifted her head suddenly, then thrust it forward, and peered into the shadows

on the other side of the avenue. The trees of the park were closely planted, and their aisles, dim at noon, were black at this hour. But something moved, a shadow in a shadow! Julia, who had rarely known a tremor of fear, felt her knees shake, her breath come short. It could hardly be a poacher, for the preserves were behind the house, nearly a quarter of a mile away; no poacher would be lurking by the park gates when he could slip into the coverts at a dozen points. There was a lodge at the gates, but it was untenanted. No one at the house could hear her, no matter how loudly she might call, and—and—she watched the shadows with dilating eyes—there was no doubt that a man moved within twenty yards of her.

Suddenly it occurred to her that it must be one of the gypsies come to beg, and watching for his opportunity. She caught at the tails of her flying courage, and stepped out into the avenue.

“What do you wish?” she asked firmly. “If you have come to beg, I have no money here, but you can go to the house and I will tell them to give you food.” Then, as there was neither answer nor movement, she added with a fair assumption of indifference, “You can follow me.”

She started up the avenue, walking deliberately, while filled with a wild desire to run. For still there came no answer from the depths of that black plantation, nor, for a moment or two, any movement. Then she heard the soft crackling of twigs under a light foot, and, glancing irresistibly over her shoulder, saw a moving shadow. She felt her skin turn cold, and once more that insidious trembling attacked her limbs. She realized with both horror and indignation that she was in the grip of fear, she who had gone through earthquake and hurricane! For a moment mortification routed terror, gave her a momentary respite, and she halted and called sharply: —

“Why don’t you come into the avenue? Come out at once and walk ahead of me.”

The steps halted. There was no other answer. “Peace!” That was no word for a dark plantation at night! It was a silence so profound and so awful that it seemed to shriek. Julia clenched her shaking hands, took a step forward and peered into the wood. A shadow detached itself from the darker background and swayed deliberately.

Courage fled. In full surrender to fear, the most awful sensation that the human nerves can experience, she dashed up the avenue. In the confusion of her brain she fancied that she was standing still, that her feet had turned to lead, that her breath had left her body. Then the confusion was cut by a flash of thought. It was no man there, but some evil spirit that haunted the plantation. As every house on Nevis and St. Kitts had its ghost, she had grown up in a firm and unconcerned belief in the visits of the dead to their ancient haunts, and Bosquith boasted seven ghosts. But she had never seen one, and to accept a popular creed and find yourself pursued by a hollow visitant in a lonely park, far from human support, induces mental states entirely unrelated. It might even be a vampire! Julia shrieked, sobbed, almost

leaped, as she heard that light crackling of twigs not three yards behind her.

Suddenly the steps ran ahead of her. Her wide staring eyes saw that shadow within a shadow, barely outlined, flit past among the trees, then stop, sway again. She sprang back among the trees on her side of the avenue. The shadow came slowly forward, then turned suddenly and ran back into the depths. Julia crouched with chattering teeth. They were plainly audible. So was her panting breath.

Again there was silence. Julia's body, by a mere reaction independent of her will, recovered its power of motion and darted up the avenue once more. Again that light crackling of autumn leaves. But her will showed a flicker of vitality, moved in the depths of her disorganized brain. She visualized it, as she had once seen it in a diagram, dragged it upward, ordered it to keep her from fainting, to hold her strength until she reached the garden. She could see the lights of the house. Her mind grew clearer. She realized that she was running like a deer. A few more steps! Then she heard those behind bear down upon her with the swiftness and noise of an express train. She was caught about the waist. As she lost consciousness she heard a loud guffaw.

She opened her eyes, realized that she lay on a garden bench, that a heavily breathing creature stood beside her. For a moment she dared not lift her eyes, seized again with a fear that seemed to distend every nerve in her body, even as she felt something vaguely familiar in the form beside her. There was another burst of intense amusement. She sprang to her feet with blazing eyes and confronted her husband.

"You!" she gasped. "You!"

France rocked to and fro with mirth. "Yes!" he finally ejaculated. "Gad! I'm as much out of breath as you are—holdin' my sides! What a lark! Never knew it would be such fun to frighten anybody. Rippin' sensation. And you were frightened dumb, by Jove! Hardly believed it of you, but suddenly thought I'd try."

"You coward! You brute!" One has to be calm and detached to find original phrases. In moments of real emotion the time-worn and the ready-made dart out of the mind as naturally as thought of dinner above hunger. "For anything that calls itself a man —"

"No insults, my lady, or I'll do worse. It's you are the coward—only time I ever got a rise out of you! Didn't know you had any kind of excitement in you, by gad!"

"You brute! You brute!"

Julia, as much astounded as indignant, and vaguely alarmed, as she had sometimes been in the early months of her married life, turned to walk to the house in a dignified retreat. But France caught her in his arms.

"No you don't, my lady. Give me a kiss."

Then, for the first time, passion flamed in Julia. The twilight turned crimson. She beat him on the chest, the face, the head. She kicked him, and strove to unite her hands about his neck and choke him. She longed for a knife, for a pistol. She

seethed with hatred and the desire to do murder. And France only laughed, and brushed off her hands with his great hairy ones, while with one arm he clasped her hard and rained kisses on her unprotected face. And he never ceased laughing with an intense quiet amusement, his eyes glittering as they did when he went to hangings, when he once had happened to witness natives tortured in the Congo, as they did at certain performances in Paris calculated to gratify the primitive lusts of man. France had always envied those Eastern potentates that amused themselves with the death agonies of their slaves just before heads were sliced off; but for him and his sort there are still compensations to be found in the depths of civilization.

III

Mrs. Winstone sat in her charming drawing-room in Tilney Street, by a fire that cast a warm glow over her delicate good looks, further enhanced by a tea-gown of violet Liberty velveteen and Irish lace. The tea-table was beside her, and grouped about it were Mr. Pirie, Mrs. Macmanus, and Lord Algy—reinstated in her affections after an interval of fickleness; all were comfortably nibbling muffins and drinking their horrid mess of tea and cream while looking as gloomy as possible.

It was "black week" of December, 1899. Methuen, Gatacre, and Buller had met with humiliating reverses in South Africa, Sir George White was shut up in Ladysmith with twelve thousand men, and the Boers were proving themselves possessed of a generalship, which, combined with the stores of ammunition they had been accumulating since the Jameson Raid, a complete knowledge of their puzzling hills, the strategic devices they had learned from the natives, and an indomitable spirit, had finally succeeded in quenching optimism in Great Britain.

"Jove, you know," said Algy, "it can't be only that they're on their own ground—cursed ground, too, you know. Fancy the beggars knowin' how to fight."

Mr. Pirie crossed his legs and smiled complacently. "I flatter myself that I was one of the three or four men in England that anticipated this. Wolsely warned us. Butler warned us. We wouldn't listen. How could we be expected to when the South Africans here never believed the Boers would fight? And here we are!"

"I won't believe it—that they can hold out a month longer," said Mrs. Macmanus, resolutely. "It's only a temporary advantage, because no British general would ever count upon a trickery of which he is incapable himself. And what is life without hope? I hated the thought of the war. Is it true that Bobs and Kitchener are to be sent out?"

"Beginning of Chapter II. Wish I were not too old to go out. You'll be volunteering, Algy, I suppose?"

Lord Algy looked up with something like animation in his pale eyes. "Rather," he said. "One more lump, please. Was accepted yesterday." And two months later, with as little fuss, he died at Pieter's Hill.

"Oh, dear!" cried Mrs. Winstone. "What will become of us all? Fancy your doin' such a thing, Algy! All the men are goin', whether they have to or not. London will be too dull. Geoffrey Herbert's regiment is under orders, and such ducks are in it. I wonder if Bridgit cares?"

"She won't miss him," said Mrs. Macmanus, dryly. "She could hardly see less of him there than here, but she's got a heart and no doubt would spare a tear if he fell."

"I'll tell you who cares," said Pirie, "and that's Jones. He's loaded down with Kaffirs, and is in a blue funk. Glad I unloaded when every one else was rushin' at

’em—thought the war would be over in two weeks, old Jones did, ha! ha! He can’t get rid of a share.”

“Will it matter to Ishbel?” asked Algy.

“Not a bit,” said Mrs. Winstone. “She’s paid him off long since, and opened a dressmakin’ establishment, besides her hat shop. It’ll be just her luck to have all the smart people go into mournin’ at once.”

“Well, thank heaven the jingoes have shut up a bit—what is the matter?”

Mrs. Winstone had exclaimed, “How odd! I just saw Julia go up the stairs.”

At the same moment a maid entered and announced that Mrs. France did not wish any tea, but would wait upstairs until Mrs. Winstone was free.

“Tell her I’ll be with her presently, unless she’ll change her mind and come down. Now, what can be the matter? Come to think of it, I haven’t seen her since she went to White Lodge in August or September. Haven’t got over my disappointment yet, and preferred to forget her for a while. I do hope France hasn’t been misbehavin’ himself.”

“You may be sure he has,” said Mrs. Macmanus; “consolin’ himself for his second facer—no doubt he’s heard the news from Bosquith.”

“What a bore,” exclaimed Mrs. Winstone. “Julia gave me the impression when she first arrived in England that she’d rear at too heavy a bit; but she should be well broken in by this time.”

“Do you think so?” asked Pirie. “That sort never is broken in. High-spirited filly that runs all right under a light rein, but one cut and she’s over the traces. She was clever enough to manage France as long as he was satisfied, but doubt if she’ll have any resource except open war when he’s been bored and disappointed long enough. Hope he’ll volunteer and get himself killed with the least possible delay. Front’s a good place for rascally husbands; and as they’re generally automatically brave, no matter how degenerate, let us hope for a good cleanin’ out of undesirable husbands before we polish off the Boers. Good idea! It would reconcile even Hannah to war.”

“Rather. Poor Julia! You don’t mean to tell me, Maria, that you haven’t looked after her these three months she’s been alone with France?”

“Looked after her?” cried Mrs. Winstone, indignantly. “She is a married woman of nearly five years’ standing, and quite able to look after herself. Why should I be annoyed? Do toddle along, all of you. I want to hear the worst at once. Come back to dinner, Algy, and give an account of yourself.”

She went slowly up to her bedroom after her guests had gone, endeavoring to arrange her features into a semblance of cordiality. She deeply resented Julia’s failure to capture the great prize which would have been so useful to herself. One cannot remain young and fascinating forever, and if one has not riches to substitute, the next best thing is a wealthy relative in the peerage with whom one can always be on intimate terms. She and the present Duchess of Kingsborough, a good plain soul, but astute withal, would never hit it off. Surely, Julia, if she had played her cards

carefully, could have kept matrimonial ideas out of the duke's mind. No doubt she had antagonized him with her independent notions and theories, which any really clever woman always kept to herself. Julia, in her mind, was a failure, and Mrs. Winstone detested failures.

But as she entered her bedroom and saw Julia standing by the hearth, she said brightly, "So glad to see you, dear," and kissed the cheek presented to her. "Sorry you wouldn't come in and meet my cronies—why—what is the matter?"

Julia had turned her face to the light.

"Good heavens! Are you ill? Really, you must be careful—you were thin and white enough already—and—and—" her irritation found vent. "Your clothes are not put on properly."

Julia, who had looked at her aunt with longing eyes, stiffened and said coldly: "Probably not. You see, I had to run away, and I dressed in a hurry. I could not make even the attempt until Harold had drunk a certain amount—and it takes a good deal —"

"What on earth do you mean? Run away?" Mrs. Winstone sat down. "Surely you can come to town when you choose."

"I am forbidden to leave the grounds."

"But—you know, you really shouldn't run away—this is only a mood of Harold's. You should be careful to do nothing to make yourself conspicuous. You are not in a position to afford it. No doubt many ill-natured people have—laughed at you. You've had a frightful come-down, and that sort of thing always delights spiteful women—who envied you before. And Harold—poor thing—no doubt he guesses this—has wanted to keep quiet for a time. Upon my word, I think it is rather the decent thing to do. That is the reason I haven't dug you out. And of course he is horribly disappointed —"

Her fluent tongue halted, and she moved uneasily. Julia's figure was rigid, but although Mrs. Winstone had addressed the window, she felt that those big disconcerting eyes she had never quite liked were fixed upon her.

"Ah!" said Julia. "Disappointment? That is a mild word to apply to his present frame of mind, or rather the one in possession until he began upon his present course of consolation. His former was such that I am forced to leave him."

"Now—what do you mean by that?"

"I mean that I am married either to a maniac or a fiend, and that if I remain with him long enough I shall either be killed or go mad."

"Oh! You young things are so extravagant in your expressions—and you never were quite like any one else. France is a bad lot more or less, but you have managed him wonderfully. Go on managing him, but for heaven's sake don't make a fuss."

"I've left him, and I shall not go back. It would be impossible to exaggerate. I haven't enough imagination."

“Do you mean that he—beats you?” Mrs. Winstone hesitated over the ugly word. She did so hate the ugly things of life, even mere words. She felt nothing of the morbid curiosity another woman might have felt, but as long as she could not escape this confidence, better have it over as soon as possible.

“No. For some reason he has not—yet. He locks me in a room and snaps a whip at me by the hour, promising that at a given moment it shall cut through my skin. Why he has not cut me to ribbons, I don’t know, except that he enjoys tormenting me mentally, and defers the other pleasure. He has practised every other form of mental torture he has been able to conceive. He wakes me up twenty times a night, flashing a light before my eyes, or shrieking in my ear. He makes me sit up in bed and listen to the most awful stories, and the bloodcurdling ones are not the worst. He threatens to pinch me from head to foot, but so far merely pretends to —”

“For heaven’s sake hush! I can’t listen to such things. How does he treat you before the servants?”

“Oh, always amiably.”

“I thought so. You haven’t a leg to stand on so far as the law is concerned. He’d deny everything blandly, and you would be set down as an hysteric.”

“I think he is insane.”

“Possibly. That may be the explanation of Harold France. But that will do you no good, either, so long as he is able to hide it. Two alienists must see him in a condition that is, unmistakably, insanity, and sign a certificate to that effect. Only a short time ago the husband of an American friend of mine acted at times in such an eccentric manner that there was no doubt in the minds of those who saw him as to his state. But he fooled the doctors. She feared for her life, and two of her brothers had to come over and inveigle him on board an ocean liner—in the United States, it seems, they are not so particular. And quite right in this case, for the man is now raving.”

“Do you mean to say that the laws of England will not take care of me?”

“Not unless you can persuade him to beat you before the servants. Then you might get a separation—not a divorce without infidelity. I think you had best go back to Nevis.”

“I’ll not do that. Mother has been angry with me for a long time. Just after the Tays were at Bosquith I wrote her I was unhappy and disappointed—and horrified. You see, Daniel Tay made me feel almost a child again, and I longed for my mother’s sympathy. She wrote back that I was a romantic and ungrateful child; that I had enough to make any girl happy; and that there was nothing really wrong. All men were nuisances. She seemed afraid I might run away and spoil her plans. Since then our letters have been stiff and infrequent—until the duke married, when she was more angry with me still. Now we don’t write at all. Besides, I never wish her to know of this. She may be hard, but she is old, and she has had disappointments enough.”

“And what, may I ask, do you mean to do?”

“Surely the law—”

“The law will do nothing—as matters are at present. And for heaven’s sake keep out of the courts.”

“Very well, then, I’ll go to work.”

“Work?”

“Yes. I intended to do that meanwhile, in any case. I went to Ishbel’s on the way here, but Mr. Jones is ill and I couldn’t see her. So I thought you would let me stay here —”

“Oh, of course. But I don’t like this silly idea of yours, at all. Much better you go back to Nevis. That is the only real solution. People here will think you have merely gone to pay a visit to your mother—natural enough—and when you don’t return—well, people are soon forgotten in London.”

“And I shall be comfortably buried! I shall, of course, go to Nevis sooner or later, but not while I am in trouble. And I never could remain there. After five years of England? I am as weaned as you are. I should die of inanition.”

Mrs. Winstone got up and moved about the room restlessly. In her well-ordered life few problems were permitted to enter, and not only did she resent this sudden influx of deadly seriousness, but she practised a certain form of cheap “occultism” much in vogue: avoiding everything that contained an element of darkness, depression, and disturbance, and everybody that persisted in having troubles. She manufactured an atmosphere to keep herself young and happy much as she manufactured her famous expression daily before the mirror, and anchored herself so successfully in the warm bright shallows of life that what springs of emotion she may originally have possessed had dried up long since. But she could still feel intense annoyance, and she felt it now. Moreover, she was puzzled. As the tiresome creature’s only relative in England, she should be equally criticised if she refused her shelter and sympathy in her trouble, or if she identified herself with her revolt. What in heaven’s name was to be done? Well, this was December, and the world out of London. And this war would fill everybody’s thoughts if it only lasted long enough. She returned to her chair.

“My dear! Really! What shall I say? You know I only came up for a day or two —on my way to a lot of visits. Came up to see Hannah, who is off for Rome. There are only two servants in the house. I am off again to-morrow; but of course you can stay here if you are sure he doesn’t know where you are.”

“He’ll know nothing for a week.”

“Ah! I have it! How clever of me! I’ll write him that I’ve packed you off to Nevis. That will gain time. Perhaps he’ll go there in search of you —”

“I prefer that the law should free me fairly. I’m sick of lies.”

“The law will do nothing. Put that idea out of your head. Have you any money

in hand?”

“About thirty pounds.”

“The duke ought to make you a separate allowance. Possibly he would if you told him how matters stand, and promised to keep quiet.”

“He would not believe me, not for a moment. It is his cherished fiction that no member of the British aristocracy can do wrong, much less a member of his family. He would preach, tell me that I had hysterical delusions, and send for Harold. I prefer him to know nothing about it.”

“I won’t have you in a shop.”

Julia rose.

“Oh, for heaven’s sake sit down. Don’t let us talk about it any more. Stay here for the present. Something is sure to turn up. You’ll find it very dull —”

“Oh!”

“Did you bring any clothes?”

“A portmanteau, that is all.”

“Well! Better go to your room and rest. I’ll write at once to France, telling him that you sailed to-day. If he doesn’t read it for a week, so much the better.”

IV

JULIA slept the sleep of exhaustion that night. She awoke with a start, screaming, and cowered, before she realized that it was Mrs. Winstone who stood by her bed.

But that lady, true to her creed, pretended not to see. “It is eleven o’clock,” she said lightly. “What a sleeper you are! I am off, but Hawks has orders to take care of you. I’ll ring for your breakfast. I’ve left my addresses for the next two months in my desk. But I hope you’ll get on. Of course I could get you invited to any of the houses, but France would hear of it, and my clever fiction would be spoiled —”

“I could not visit. I shall be very well here. You are too kind.”

Mrs. Winstone thought she was, particularly as there was not the least prospect of reward. A cutlet for a cutlet. However, noblesse oblige. She bestowed a kiss on Julia and sailed out.

After her bath and breakfast Julia made a careful toilet for the first time in many weeks. Sometimes she had not brushed or even unbraided her hair for days.

She telephoned to the house in Park Lane. Mr. Jones was better and Lady Ishbel had gone to the shop. Julia left the house immediately and drove to Bond Street.

There were several people in the show-room. She went up to the boudoir which had witnessed so many gay little teas and so many confidential chats. It was an hour before Ishbel came running up the stairs and flung her arms about Julia.

“You dear thing!” she cried. “How I have worried about you. You wouldn’t answer my notes. And you look like a ghost! I was afraid —”

“You are in trouble, too. You look worn out —”

“Oh, poor Jimmy! He’s ruined, and has had a stroke. There’s tragedy for you. How he fought—and he hated to take my jewels, poor dear. I’m hunting for a little house to take him to—he clings to me; it’s pitiful. The doctor wants him to go to a nursing home, but I couldn’t! I’ll do my best. And,” with a sudden dash into her more familiar self, “all my beaux will go to South Africa; I shall have time for my invalid. That’s all there is of my story. Tell me yours.”

“I’ve come to take you at your word—you once promised to teach me how to trim hats—to help me earn my bread —”

“So! It’s come! Bridgit and I have been expecting it.”

Julia told her story, all that could be told, as briefly as possible. She was, in truth, deeply ashamed of it, and, after her aunt’s rebuff, felt no longer any yearning for sympathy. But Ishbel wept bitterly.

“How I wish we could have rescued you in the beginning, as we planned! It was criminal of us to give it up.” She dried her eyes. “There! It has done me good to cry. Literally I have had not a moment to shed a tear on my own account. Of course I’ll put you to work at once, and when I get a little house you will live with me. It will be too nice. I’ve never had half enough of you. I suppose you could tear yourself

away from Mrs. Winstone. How did she receive you?”

“Oh, she’s frightfully cut up. ‘Scandal’—‘work’—I don’t know which she fears most. But I could see she was relieved to learn that Harold had kept himself inside the law.”

“She must feel as if she were the author of a book called ‘The lost duchess!’ Well, we won’t mortify her publicly for some time. Of course you must stay out of the salesroom for a while, or France would trace you. In the workroom, no one, not even Mrs. Winstone, will be any the wiser. Will you come house-hunting with me?”

A fortnight later, Ishbel, with that latent energy of which she betrayed so little in manner and appearance, had furnished a villa in St. John’s Wood, installed Mr. Jones and the servants, and turned over the house in Park Lane to the creditors. As she was obliged to keep both a valet and a nurse for Mr. Jones, there was no spare room for Julia, but there were lodgings close by, and it was arranged that she was to dine every night at the villa.

Perhaps there is no accommodation on this round globe as dreary as a London suburban lodging, but Ishbel adorned the little rooms out of her own superfluities, and Julia was so thankful to be alone and free that she would have settled down to the dingy carpet and grimy furniture without a murmur. And she had no time to mope or think. It would be long before she recovered the buoyancy of her nature, for she had told Mrs. Winstone and Ishbel little of the horrors of those three months alone with her husband. But when indignities are too odious to take to the most intimate and sympathetic ear, the only thing to do is to banish them from the memory; and this Julia did to the best of her ability.

She found a certain fascination in working with her hands, although she did not take kindly to the crowded workroom. Ishbel, who never drove any of her people when she could avoid it, made her hours as few as possible. But her seclusion was of short duration. France wrote to Mrs. Winstone, threatening her with the law, but, taking her communication literally, flung himself off to South Africa. After his departure Julia spent a part of each day in the show-room, although she continued to trim hats; her fingers proving nimble and apt, she was determined to learn the business. In the show-room she met many of her old acquaintances, and Mrs. Winstone waxed so indignant that communication between them ceased. The duke, who never found politics amusing when his party was busy exterminating mosquitoes, and who at the moment was wholly absorbed in his wife and in his prospects of an heir, remained at Bosquith for a year on end; if he thought about Julia at all, he supposed her to be at White Lodge.

Her personal life flowed on peacefully for eight months. The past faded into the limbo of nightmares. She made little more than enough to pay for her rooms and two meals, but even had she found time to miss the beautiful garments she had loved, she would have had no occasion to use them. No one entertained. All England was in mourning. Hardly a family of any size but had lost one or more of its men, particularly if the men were officers. Ishbel’s milliners and dressmakers

worked all day on black, nothing but black. So constant, and always sudden, was the demand for mourning trousseaux that she and Julia often worked at night after the women, worn out, had gone home.

And those that had no men at the front to be killed were ashamed to admit it, to be out of the fashion, and swelled the demands for mourning. The Americans, resident in London, felt “out of it” in colors, and even those come on their annual pilgrimage were advised to wear black-and-white or dull gray. Ishbel and Julia laughed sometimes over their work and speculated as to the origin of other fads, but they were too busy and too tired for more than the passing jest. All England was sad enough without pretence, and worrying not only for relatives and friends at the front, but for the nation’s prestige. Julia and Ishbel, at dinner, talked of little else but the news in the evening bulletins, and often it was of a personal nature. Nigel Herbert had been among the first to volunteer, had been wounded at Vaal Kranz, recovered, and was fighting again, besides corresponding with one of the great dailies. Two of Ishbel’s admirers had died at Ladysmith, one of enteric, the other in a reckless sortie. Still another was in hospital with two bullets in him; and beyond the brief despatch which conveyed this news to the press, she had heard nothing. His going had solved a problem, but she was thankful for her work. Geoffrey Herbert had been killed at Paardeberg, and Bridgit had gone out to the Cape with hospital supplies.

Of France not a word was heard until June 12th, when his name was among the list of wounded at the battle of Diamond Hill. Two months later Julia read of his arrival in England.

V

On these warm August evenings Ishbel and Julia had their dinner in the garden under a beech tree. Ishbel's bright courage seldom failed her, but she was grateful for Julia's companionship and help during this the most trying period of her life, and Julia, glad to be necessary to some one, above all to her favorite friend, responded without any of the usual feminine fervors, and the harmony between them remained unbroken. Mr. Jones, helpless in body and bitter in mind, demanded every moment his wife could give him, but occasionally permitted Julia to take her place and read the war news aloud.

Between the defeat of the Boer forces at Diamond Hill and the beginning of Kitchener's "drives," there was less demand for mourning garments; the war, indeed, was believed to be over. Ishbel and Julia rose later and left the shop earlier. Both were haggard and needed rest. They made a deliberate attempt to enjoy their evening meal, refusing to discuss immediate deaths and hypothetical disaster, and tabûing personal topics. There was still plenty to discuss, and so many reminiscences of officers that had left their lives or their looks in the South African graveyard, that it was easy to steer clear of private anxieties. But one evening after the cloth was removed and they were alone, Julia said abruptly: —

"I had a letter from Harold to-day—directed to the shop. He had just learned that I had not gone to Nevis. He did not say who gave him my address —"

"Yes?" The word had a fashion of flying from Ishbel's lips at all times. Now she sat forward in alarm. "Yes?"

"He says that I am to return to White Lodge to-morrow."

"But of course you will not!"

"Of course not. I consulted a solicitor some time ago. He cannot compel me to live with him. On the other hand —"

"Yes?"

"As I am unable to get a legal separation I cannot prevent him from forcing himself into my rooms, annoying me in a thousand ways. He might even come to the shop and make a scene."

"Well, it is my shop, and I can have him put out. Did you tell the solicitor other things? Is there really no chance of a legal separation?"

"He did not seem to think well of my reasons for wanting one. I could not bring myself to tell him much, and I have kept it in the background so long it seemed rather dim and flat—the little I did tell him. He said that mental cruelty existed largely in women's imaginations. Then he consoled me by adding that if I refused to return, Harold might be betrayed into some overt act before witnesses, perhaps later give me cause for divorce. But I don't think so. He is very cunning. His instinct for self-protection is almost abnormal. I told the lawyer I believed Harold to be insane,

and he was quite shocked; said there was too much talk already of insanity in the great families of Britain, and it was doing them harm with the lower orders—intimated that it was my duty to keep such an affliction dark if it really had descended upon the house of France. When I told him I knew that at least two of Harold's ancestors had been shut up for years at Bosquith, and not so long ago, he fairly squirmed. Then he advised me to conceal both my knowledge and my suspicions if I hoped for a divorce. The law is far more tender to its lunatics than to their victims. Harold, shut up for twenty—thirty—forty years would continue to be my husband on the off chance of his cure—while I consoled myself with the prospect of his release! On the other hand, if left at large he may give me cause for divorce. That was the only argument that appealed to me. My legal friend ended by advising me to return to Nevis—this, I feel sure, in the interests of the British aristocracy. I'd like to make over a few laws in this country."

"That is what Bridgit says. The women of the lower classes might almost as well be slaves in the Congo. They can't divorce a merely drunken brute, and a legal separation does them little good. If a man wants to desert his family all he has to do is to go to the Midlands or the North and disappear in a coal mine, while his wife, unable to marry a better man, sinks to the dregs in the effort to support herself, perhaps half a dozen children. The laws in this country might have been made by Turks. Who ever hears of a man being punished because he is the father of the child a wretched girl has murdered? Oh—some day—let us hope—But we have the present to deal with. Have you answered France's letter?"

"Yes, I wrote him that I never should return to him, that I had had legal advice, that I was able to support myself, that I wished never to hear from him again. Also, that any further letters I received from him I should return unopened to his club. I did not write a page, but I fancy he cannot mistake my meaning."

"I am afraid he will persecute you, but you must be brave. If necessary, you might hide in the country for a bit, or go over to Paris for me —"

"I shall stay here at work. He can do his worst."

But, alas, it was always Harold France's good fortune to be underrated. Julia, well as she knew him, had never yet gauged the depth and extent of his resources. Some strange arrest in his mental development, possibly a forgotten blow during boyhood, or a prenatal check, had left him with a quick, cunning, malicious, scheming mind which otherwise might have been brilliant, unscrupulous, and resourceful in the grand manner. Possibly it might have been useful as well; and this may have been the secret of those vague angry ambitions, always seething in the base of his cramped brain. Whatever the cause, his mind required a constant grievance to feed on, and whatever his limitations, they were never too great to interfere with the success of his devilish purposes.

Three mornings later Ishbel and Julia arrived in Bond Street at a few minutes before eleven. Royalty was expected at a quarter past, and as they ascended the stairs they were not surprised to see the forewoman, pale and trembling, standing at

the turn. When royalty had arrived—unheralded—the day before, she had almost wept, and her assistant had succumbed and been obliged to leave the room. It was the first time that royalty had honored the shop in Bond Street, smart as it was, and when the princess left she had announced that on the morrow she should return with her two girls. Ishbel had felt sure that her women would not close their eyes during the night, and be quite unfit for the strain of the second visit. Therefore, she laughed merrily as she saw Miss Slocum's twisted visage.

"Brace up! Brace up!" she cried. "You have nearly twenty minutes yet. And am I not here? Mrs. France and I will wait on their royal highnesses —"

"Oh, your ladyship," wailed the woman. "It ain't that—or, I mean I could stand it much better to-day. I'd made up my mind. No! It's worse!"

"Worse?"

The woman glanced up the half flight behind her. The door leading into the show-room was closed. "Oh, your ladyship, there's two awful creatures in there, and their royal highnesses coming in ten minutes. I told them to go —"

"But I don't understand. Every one has a right to come here. I can't have any of my customers put out for royalty. I am not being honored by a call. This is a shop —"

"Oh, yes, my lady, but you don't understand. You've never had this sort —"

"What sort?"

The woman's voice quavered and broke. "Tarts, my lady. Regular Piccadilly trotters, that's what!"

Ishbel was as dismayed as the woman could wish. Followed by her equally horrified friend she brushed the forewoman aside, ran up the stair, and entered the show-room. The large windows, open to the gay subdued roar of Bond Street, let in a flood of mellow sunshine. The square room, not too large, and with a mere suggestion of the First Empire in its wall paper and scant furniture, was a severe yet delicate background for the most charming hats ever seen in London. Of every shape and size, but each touched with a fairy's wand, these harbingers of autumn, hopefully prismatic, and mounted on slender rods, seemed to sing that woman's face was naught without its frame, and that in them alone was the problem of the floating decoration solved.

But alas! no such fantasie was in the air this morning. "Creatures," in truth! Two females, loudly dyed, rouged, blackened, bedecked in cheap finery, were overhauling hats, mantles, and chiffons, despite the protests of the livid assistant. Ishbel went directly up to the largest and most aggressive.

"I am so sorry," she said with her sweet remote smile and her bright crisp manner, "but I must ask you to go. Some other time I shall be most happy to show you the things, but just now everything must be put in order as quickly as possible. I am expecting patrons who are in town only for the moment. As you see, this room is not very large. Be quick, Jeannie, will you?"

She turned her back on the two women, but the largest walked deliberately round in front of her.

“I say,” she said, “are you the boss?”

“I am—Jeannie—”

“I say. What’s a shop for if ladies can’t call and see things? Is this a private shop for your friends?”

“No, but this morning is exceptional. I really must ask you to go—” she glanced at the clock. It was nearly ten minutes past eleven, and royalty was hideously prompt. “I dislike being rude, but I must ask you to go at once.”

“Really, now!” The woman sat herself on the little sofa before the mantel and spread out her gaudy skirts. “I ain’t going to be put out. Brass is brass, and mine’s as good as any. Wot you say, Frenchie?”

“That’s what.” Her partner was holding a large hat on her uplifted arm, and twirling it from side to side. “And I want a hat. Don’t mind trying ’em all on, one by one.”

“If you don’t go at once, I shall call the police.”

“Police? Wot for? Ain’t we behaving ourselves proper? I call that libel, I do.”

At this moment the door, which Ishbel had taken care to close, flew open, and royalty entered, followed by two slim young daughters. The eyes of the lady on the sofa bulged, but her presence of mind did not desert her. She sprang to her feet and threw her arm round Ishbel’s waist.

“Your hats are too sweet, dearie,” she exclaimed. “I shall take four to-day and come back to-morrow —”

At the same moment the other woman, who had dropped the hat, lit a cigarette.

Royalty gasped, made a motion not unlike that of a mother hen when she spreads her wings to protect her chicks from a sudden shower, then shooed her girls out and down the stairs.

Ishbel made no motion to detain her. No explanation was possible. She saw ruin, but she merely removed her waist from the embrace of the woman and turned her white composed face upon both of the invaders.

“Will you explain what spite you have against me?” she asked.

“Oh!” cried Julia, passionately. “Can’t you see? France has sent them.”

“Right you are, dearie,” said the younger cocotte, smoking comfortably. “And here we stay till you pack up and go home to your lawful husband. Lucky you are to have one. Oh, yes, my lady, you can call in the bobbies, but this is the middle of Bond Street, and we’ll raise such a hell of a row as we’re being dragged out there won’t be anybody else coming up here in a hurry.”

Julia turned to her. “If I leave this shop and promise never to return, will you agree to do the same?”

“If you go back to your husband. If you don’t, here we, and more of us, come every day, unless, of course, her ladyship has us put out! Your leaving the shop won’t help matters any. You go back to White Lodge. France is an old pal of mine, but it isn’t often we see his brass. Jolly lark this is, too.”

“Very well,” said Julia. “I shall go.”

“You shall not!” cried Ishbel, passionately. “My business is ruined in any case. We can go to America —”

“And leave Mr. Jones? He is dependent upon you for shelter. Your business is not ruined. Of course the princess will not come again, but you have powerful friends that will explain to her and prevent the story from spreading —”

“Right you are. France ain’t aiming to spite her. But he’ll ruin every friend you’ve got unless you go home, double quick.”

“I shall go this afternoon.” And Julia ran down the stairs and out of the building before Ishbel could detain her.

VI

JULIA took a closed fly at Stanmore, and in the avenue of White Lodge her eyes moved constantly from one window to the other. But on this bright hot afternoon there was neither sound nor motion in the woods. She feared that the house might be without servants, but as the fly entered the garden she saw that the windows were open and that smoke rose from the kitchen chimney. White Lodge was built round three sides of a shallow court, and after dismissing the fly, she attempted to open the door on her right, as it was close to the stair which communicated with the hallway outside her own rooms. But this door was locked. So apparently were the central doors, but the one opposite and leading into the dining room was open, and not caring to ring and announce herself, she crossed the court and entered; although this meant that she must traverse the entire house to reach the comparative shelter of her own apartment. The large rooms were full of light, but she was nearly ten minutes arriving at her destination, for she opened every door warily, and explored dark corridors with her eyes before she put her foot in them. But even on the twisted stair she met no one, and the house was as silent as the wood.

When she entered her boudoir, she saw that the door leading into her bedroom was closed. For a moment she was grateful, as it was a room of hideous memories, and she intended to sleep on her wide sofa as long as she was obliged to remain at White Lodge. Then she remembered that its inner door led into France's rooms, and that she intended to move a heavy piece of furniture across it.

She opened the door cautiously and looked in. This room was very dark and close; the heavy curtains were drawn across the windows. By such light as she had let in she could define nothing but shapeless masses of heavy furniture, not an outline; it would have been difficult to tell a man from a bedpost. She was about to close the door and ring for a servant when the one opposite opened and the big frame of her husband seemed to fill the sudden panel of light. There was not a key in the boudoir, nor time to move furniture. Julia retreated behind a table.

France crossed the inner room at his leisure and entered. Julia almost relieved the tension of her feelings by laughing aloud. Every man that had come back from the Boer war looked ten years older, but she had seen no one before that looked ridiculous as well. Not only were his stiff hair and moustache gray and his bony face gaunt, but the copper color of the tan he had acquired during the months preceding his weeks in hospital clung to his pallid face in patches, making him look as if afflicted with some foul disease; and he had lost a front tooth. His glassy eyes, however, were less dull, and moved restlessly.

"Howd'y do?" he said. "Didn't expect you till to-night or to-morrow. Good girls! Good girls!"

He was about to turn the corner of the table when he paused abruptly and his jaw fell. He found himself looking into the barrel of a small revolver.

“Sit down,” said Julia. “I’m willing to talk to you for a few moments, but if you come a step nearer, I’ll shoot.”

France made a movement as if he would spring. The pistol advanced, and he stood staring into the thing. He was a brave man on the battlefield, but he had never looked into the mouth of a firearm at close range, and he disliked the sensation it induced. He gave a loud laugh and sat down.

“Oh, well, my lady, have your dramatics. I can wait. What’ve you got to say? Seems to me you should have a good deal. Nice pair of liars you and your aunt!”

Julia took the chair directly opposite his.

“I have come back—”

“Oh, I say! That thing will go off. Pistols were not made for women to fool with.”

Julia put the pistol in her lap.

“I have returned to White Lodge to protect Ishbel, and for no other reason. Your plot was fiendish, and you won out. But I win now. I shall not leave you again, but I shall be my own mistress. I shall no longer call you names nor attempt to make you understand how I loathe you, but if you ever enter my rooms again or attempt to touch me, here or elsewhere, I shall shoot you without further notice!”

“Oh, you will! And how long do you think you can keep that sort of heroics up? You’ve got to sleep, and there’s not a key in your rooms.”

“There will be to-morrow. I left orders with the locksmith in Stanmore. I need not sleep to-night, and I shall meet him when he comes, and stand guard with this pistol. You interfere at your peril.”

“And do you think that keys can keep me out?”

“I shall use both keys and heavy pieces of furniture. You cannot enter without making noise enough to rouse me. And if you succeeded, you would gain nothing. I can always kill myself. I would boil in oil before you should ever touch me again.”

“You are hard for such a young ’un,” muttered France. “Gad, your eyes are like ice!” He made a motion as if to cover his own eyes, but they flashed with exultation, and he dropped his hand.

“Look here,” he said. “You can’t get the best of me. I gave you to understand there was to be no compromise. You were to come back to me, or your Ishbel would be ruined. Well, that’s what I meant. You chuck that pistol, and you do everything else I tell you to do, or I send those tarts back to the shop.”

“I can do no more to protect Ishbel than I have done already. But I shall not live to see my best friend disgraced and ruined.”

“Curse you!” shouted France. “Curse you!”

“Now suppose you listen to me a moment. Since you left England I have consulted not only a solicitor but an alienist —”

“A—a—what—”

“I believe you to be mad—”

“Don’t! Don’t!” France’s face was gray and loose. His eyes rolled with terror.

But Julia went on remorselessly, pressing the suggestion home.

“The doctor told me that it might be years before you would develop acute mania. Unfortunately, your rotten spot has not developed the lust to kill, or you would easily be got rid of. You can practise your former methods of cruelty on me no more, but let this fact compensate you—keep you quiet. Use it as a cud; chew on it and exult. It should satisfy you for the rest of your life. This is it: you have destroyed my youth, you have killed my soul, you have ruined my power of enjoyment in anything, you have left me nothing but a mind to carry me through the rest of my days. Even if you had died in Africa, I should never have given even a thought to loving and being loved like other women. For me you symbolize man and all the horrors that are in him. I live because my mind compels it, and because my mother is still alive. If this statement does not give you food for gloating, if you are incapable of understanding what I mean, then—” She laid her pistol on the table again and tapped it significantly.

But France took no notice of the pistol. He was staring at her with his jaw relaxed, and his eyes still full of horror.

“Did—didn’t—he say I might never go mad?”

“So you have thought of it yourself?”

“No—no—not really. But out there when I lay all night on that cursed veldt, and expected to die before they found me—I thought—thought—I had gone pretty far here, even for me—No! No! *No!* I never really thought it—it was only when I came to in hospital I was jolly glad to find that it had only been delirium—any one might mistake delirium—curse you, you red-headed witch! I had forgotten all about it.”

“And do you suppose that even if you had no inherited tendency to insanity, you could go the pace you did, do the things you have done for years, and not rot your brain —”

“How many men go the pace —”

“Not yours. If you hadn’t compelled me to return to you, I should have had you watched —”

“You mean to say you’d lock me up —”

“I shouldn’t waste a minute. You ought to be locked up on general principles. It’s a half-baked civilization that permits you and your sort to be at large. Strange laws! Strange justice!”

France gathered himself together and stood up, but he leaned heavily on the table. “You’ve got your revenge,” he said thickly. “Nothin’ I ever did crueller to you or any one than tell a man his brain’s rotten—and makin’ him believe it! Oh, God! Those eyes! If ever I do go mad, I’ll see nothing else.”

“Better think no more about it.” Julia, having subdued her keeper, felt a pang of remorse and pity. “Take my advice and go to Bosquith for the shooting —”

“And see that brat?”

“The duke will think the more of you. Remember he is not compelled to allow you a thousand a year. He has a sensitive vanity, and resents lack of attention. Besides, the sport will do you good.”

“And you?”

“I shall stay here.”

“And never leave the place?”

“I shall go to London for the day whenever I choose, and I shall ride and walk about the country. I have no desire to see any of my neighbors.”

“Very well. I’ll go. I’ve got to pull myself together. I can’t do it here. I’m still off my feed, or you wouldn’t have bowled me over like this. Before I come back, I’ll have thought out how to deal with you —”

Julia tapped the pistol again. “I have five others. I shall conceal them in different parts of the house, and carry this always.”

France gave a strangled cry and began to curse, with reviving enthusiasm.

Julia rose and leaned across the table.

“Be careful,” she said softly. “Keep calm. You are forty-six, your heart is not good, and blood cannot surge through your brain much longer with impunity. Unless you choose to court apoplexy —”

But France had bolted from the room. An hour later he was on his way to Bosquith.

VII

He didn't return for a month. During that time Julia did not go to London. She was glad to be alone and to rest. For the first time she realized how tired she was, and enjoyed lying in bed late and being waited on. She felt as hard as she appeared to France, and cynically made up her mind to select from life such of its physical and mental pleasures as she could command and enjoy, since personality was denied her. She saw no hope in the future except the preservation of her bodily and mental integrity. Whatever else France might compel her to do, or however live, she must submit, as she could not spend her life flourishing a pistol. Now that she had found herself, knew that she no longer feared him, she guessed that he would take no further pleasure in frightening her; but the mere fact of his presence in the house year after year was enough to turn her into a mere shell. That she was already one she did not quite believe, despite her bitter declaration, for she knew the tenacity of youth and the buoyancy of her nature; but ten—twenty—thirty years!

And how long would her nerves last? To be forced to live under the same roof with a man whose mere glance made her nerves crawl was bad enough, but to sleep night after night, for months on end (save when she could persuade him to visit), a few yards from a possible lunatic, must wear down the stoutest defences of will and reason. There was a double cause for sleeping with one pistol under her pillow and another under a book on the table beside her bed. The situation had something of grim humor in it as well as adventurous excitement, and Julia shrugged her shoulders and felt grateful that she had inherited her mother's nerves.

But she thought as little as possible, since thinking did no good. Moreover, in years she was young, and although her spirit was curdled and dark at present, its quality was fine and high; and for such spirits life is rarely long enough to bury hope, save for brief moments, alive.

For the present she read and walked and rode, her surface contentment increased by the cheering news from Ishbel that one of her powerful aunts, who was a personal friend of the outraged royal lady, had made a satisfactory explanation; and the princess, to signify her forgiveness and sympathy, had ordered several hats sent to her for inspection. It was not to be expected that she would risk a second shock by venturing into the shop in Bond Street again, but she was a conscientious soul, always recognizing the duties toward mere mortals imposed upon those of divine origin; and as discretion was a part of her equipment, the story never got about town. Ishbel's business was saved. But it was a long time before Julia dared to enter that shop again.

She heard France return, late one night. She rose at once, put on her dressing-gown, and sat on the edge of her bed-sofa, waiting. But although he made an even greater noise and fuss than usual, summoning the entire staff of servants from their beds to wait on him, and spent at least an hour in the dining-room, he did not pass her door.

She met him on the following day in the living-room, a few moments before luncheon. He greeted her with an almost regal courtesy, asked after her health, and then preceded her into the dining-room. During the meal, although he looked the personification of serene amiability, he did not address a remark to her. Julia, puzzled but relieved, noted that he looked far better than when he had gone to Bosquith, that his hands were steadier, and that he drank nothing. At the end of the meal he rose with a slight bow as if dismissing her—from his thoughts, no doubt!—and left the room without smoking. It was probable that he was nursing his nerves.

The next day she learned that he had bought a string of hunters and a pack of fifty couples. A corresponding number of grooms and helpers appeared in the stables, as well as a pack huntsman, a kennel huntsman, and whippers-in. Hunting is the most expensive luxury, counting out dissipations, in which an Englishman can indulge, and Julia wondered at his sudden extravagance. True, he had never stinted himself in anything, and he was one of the best-dressed men in England, but, then, he had always schemed to make some one else pay, and since his social restoration his tailor had "carried" him. Relieved as she was at his avoidance of her, and to be excused from making conversation at the table, curiosity overcame her in the course of a week, and one night at dinner, when the servants had left the room, she asked him if he had joined the Hertfordshire.

"I have," he said graciously.

"I thought hunting was so terribly expensive."

"What of that?" he asked, with his new grand air. "Whatever is due my position I am not likely to forget."

He uttered this copy-book sentiment, so different from his usual loose slang, as if he had rehearsed it, and Julia began to perceive that he had cut out a new rôle for himself, and was wearing it with his usual methodical consistency.

"But can you afford it? You know this is a matter which does not admit of debt—"

"I am not in the habit of being catechised, but I am willing to gratify you. I satisfied myself at Bosquith that neither my cousin nor his child has many months to live."

"But I heard that the child was healthy, and that the duke was uncommonly well."

"They are both in the last stages of tuberculosis, Bright's disease, or diabetes, I have not made up my mind which. And I also satisfied myself that Margaret will have no more children."

"Oh! I see. Then you expect to succeed shortly."

"Within a year."

"Then perhaps when you have what you've always most wanted in life, you will let me go my own way."

For the first time his glassy eyes lit a small sinister torch, although they did not meet hers. They had not met hers since his return.

“You will be my duchess and do your little to support the prestige of the great house into which you have had the good fortune to marry. If you leave me, or in any way bring discredit upon me and my family, you know one penalty. Others you will learn if you cause me even the lightest displeasure.”

Julia laughed outright. “Really, Harold, you were about the only man I had never thought funny—for good and sufficient reasons! Now you are too absurd, with your airs of superiority over the mere female, and your new rôle of stage lord. You were more impressive when you were the ordinary male brute, for at least you were natural. You never were intended for an actor.”

“Actor?” His tones were still even. It seemed impossible to ruffle him. “I have told you that I expect to be Duke of Kingsborough in six months.”

“Even so. What duke do you know that puts on such airs? Even Kingsborough pretends to be simple and democratic.”

“The great peers of England have made a mistake in affecting a democracy it is impossible they should feel. They have only lowered the dignity of their position. I propose to raise it. When I am Kingsborough, I shall restore the ancient glories of Bosquith, and live as the old feudal lords lived, with an army of retainers, and a tenantry to whom my lightest word is law. I shall entertain as kings have forgotten how to entertain, and in no village on my estates anywhere shall an election ever be held again.”

“Good Lord! Do you fancy you can turn back the clock? This is the twentieth century.”

“I am not the only one who believes that the clock will turn back—to absolute monarchy. It is the only solution—barring Socialism—if we are to escape mob rule.”

This was the one thoughtful remark he had made, and she looked at him with a trifle less suspicion, then remembered having read an intensely conservative article in one of the reviews, not long since. She had left it in the library, she recalled. But it was odd that he should open a review. She had never known him to read anything but French novels and the *Pink ’Un*. Was he trying to educate his mind, late in life? Far be it from her to discourage him, even if it did lead to impossible dreams. She rose from the table.

“Well, it will be picturesque,” she said. “I suppose I shall wear gold brocade to breakfast —”

“I have not risen,” said France, in an even remote tone.

“Oh? What? Are you practising on me?”

France turned almost purple. But he made no reply. He merely rose with great dignity and left the room. Julia watched him cross the court with as much interest as amusement. His back was imposing, regal. Nature certainly had started in a lavish

mood to fashion him, then suffered from a fit of spleen when she finished his shoulders, and vented it on his head—without and within! Poor devil, what mortifications awaited him! For the moment she forgot the bitter debt she owed him.

VIII

On the following day, at luncheon, France remarked:—

"I shall leave cards on the county. When they are returned, no one will be admitted. I do not wish you to have any relations with my neighbors."

"I haven't the least desire to have any relations with our neighbors."

"And you will exercise on foot hereafter. I shall want all the mounts."

"Very well."

"If you wish to go to London, you will walk to Stanmore. I have given orders at the stables that none are to be taken from you, and the servants will take none to Stanmore."

"Very well."

Julia looked up, and their eyes met for the first time. In his was the strange glitter that had terrified her early in her married life and with which she had grown horribly familiar during her previous sojourn at White Lodge. It was an expression of utterly soulless mirth, such, no doubt, as lit the eyes of savages while watching their victims at the stake. She saw at once that he was devising new methods of tormenting her and debated whether it would be wiser to laugh at him or to let him think he was accomplishing his purpose. Being now poised and entirely without fear, it was her disposition to reveal herself, if only as a compensation for what he had made her suffer; but, on the other hand, she wanted what peace she could get; she felt no desire to vary the monotony of her life by egging him on to a point where, in spite of her pistols and her courage, he could easily, with his devilish resource, make her life unbearable. She believed that if she possessed her soul in patience, he would weary of the game and leave, even if he did not fulfil her hopes and go quite out of his mind first. She decided to temporize, and dropped her eyes.

"You make my life very hard, but I can only submit," she murmured.

"I wish you never to forget that you are, so to speak, a prisoner of state."

Julia controlled her muscles and replied demurely: —

"The king commands. I have only to obey. I shall probably expire of ennui, but, after all, I am only a woman, so what matter?"

"Quite so!"

Julia raised her lashes. The dancing glitter in his eyes was appalling. There was no doubt in her mind at that moment that his complete loss of reason was but a question of months. So much the better if she must merely humor a madman; that, at least, was "managing" without loss of self-respect. She sighed, and looked wistfully out of the window.

"I suppose you do not intend to permit me to follow the hounds?"

"Certainly not. I intend that you shall remain within the walls of White Lodge

for the rest of your life and do nothing.”

“Oh, very well.”

Having banished all expression from her eyes, she looked at him again. This time he was regarding her with condescension and approval. “You may go to your room,” he said.

She thanked him and retired in good order.

He did not address her again for quite a month. Then he informed her that there would be a large hunt breakfast at the house on the following morning, and commanded her to appear. He had already entertained a number of red-coated men at breakfast, and Julia wondered at their complaisance in admitting him to something like intimacy; for, in spite of the position he had enjoyed for a time as a respectable benedict and heir to a dukedom, he had never made a friend, and it was patent that he was swallowed with many grimaces. But she guessed that noblesse oblige had much to do with it. The man had been accepted when placed in a position by his powerful relative to press home his social rights; therefore, was it impossible, in his fallen fortunes, to retreat to their old position, unless he proved himself a flagrant cad. Besides, he had fought bravely in South Africa, and personal courage and patriotism compensate for many shortcomings. Moreover, he was an admirable cross-country rider. He was safe enough for the present.

She dressed herself with some excitement on the following morning, for it was long since gayety of any sort had entered her life. But when she stood in her house gown among some twenty men and women in pink coats and riding habits, all chattering of the prospective meet, and of the one two days before, she felt sadly out of it, and wished she had been permitted to remain in seclusion. It was nearly two years since she had presided at a hunt breakfast, and then she had worn her own habit, and been as keen for the chase as any of her guests. But as she stood with a group of women waiting for breakfast to be announced, and answering polite questions, assuring her indifferent neighbors that her frail health alone forbade her joining them in the field, she was astonished to find that she did not envy them, nor did she feel the least desire to race across the country after a frantic fox. It seemed such a futile attempt at self-delusion in the matter of pleasure. What had come over her? Had she seen too much of the serious side of life during her eight months in London?

If she had wondered at France’s benevolence in permitting her to meet his guests and preside at his table, she was not long receiving enlightenment. They sat opposite each other in the table’s width, and before ten minutes had passed, he opened upon her batteries which hardly could be called masked. She had almost forgotten him, and was laughing merrily at a sally of the good-natured youth who sat on her left, when France leaned across the table and said softly: —

“Not so loud, my dear. You have forgotten your manners this last year. This is not Nevis.”

Julia was so completely taken by surprise that to her intense annoyance she colored violently. But she instantly understood his new tactics, and blazing defiance on him, regardless of consequences, turned to her neighbor. Whatever she might submit to in private, pride commanded that she hold her own in public.

But every time that she answered a remark addressed to her by some one opposite, his dry sarcastic glance crossed hers, and once he said, raising his voice: “Workin’ in a bonnet shop doesn’t improve manners, by Jove. But my wife is only a child yet, and my cousin Kingsborough and Lady Arabella worked too hard over her not to have been rewarded if she could have remained with them. Of course, I’m only a rough sailor.”

There was an intense and painful pause after this speech, although Julia paid no attention, and once more permitted her musical laugh, not the least of her charms, to ring out. She fancied this was the last time the county would honor White Lodge, but shrewdly surmised that it was the last time they would be invited. They had been brought together to satisfy her husband’s passion for inflicting torment.

And not once did he betray himself. He looked superior, tolerant, lightly annoyed, but never vicious. His guests pronounced him a cad by the grace of God, but too great an ass to know what he was up to. They had long since accepted the fact that he was off his head about his wife; and, although this was damned uncomfortable, could only conclude that he was trying in his blundering way to apologize for her; why, heaven only knew, as she could give him cards and spades on breeding. Julia secretly hoped that he would suddenly lose his self-control and burst out in a torrent of abuse, but France still had sentinels posted at every turn in his brain, and played his part throughout the breakfast without an instant’s lapse. He laughed tolerantly whenever he caught her making an observation or airing an opinion, but it was not until just before they rose from the table that he made another attack. The incessant sporting talk had ceased for a moment, and some one had mentioned Nigel Herbert’s books, apropos of his fine record in South Africa.

“Is he goin’ to hammer away at Socialism for the rest of his life?” asked one of the young women. “Awful bore, because he’s an old pal of mine, and I’d like to read him. Do use your influence, Mrs. France. He thinks a towerin’ lot of your opinion.”

“Oh, now! now!” broke in France. “Don’t encourage my little wife in any of her nonsense. She’s straight, all right, but an awful little goose about men. Hope you haven’t turned her head, Lansing,” addressing the young man beside her. “She’s only a child yet, and devoted to me, but I don’t want to be teased noon and night for a new toy.”

“By God,” muttered one of the men, “let’s take him to the duck pond. Serves us right for coming here. Wish I’d opposed his election. Silly asses, all of us. Leopards don’t change spots. But she’s a brick.”

Julia, at least, had won the admiration of the company by her attitude, after the first attack, of serene unconsciousness. She might have been deaf and blind, and at

the same time there was no betraying note of defiance in her voice or flash in her eyes. It was impossible to call France cruel, but the guests, as they filed out, and got on their mounts as quickly as possible, voted that it must be harder to be shut up with a bounder like that than to have lost the prospect of being a duchess.

After they had gone, and Julia had brought the angry blood from her head by a long tramp in the opposite direction, she recalled a visit she had once paid with France to the castle of a young peer of the realm who had married a wealthy American girl for whom he had conceived an intense dislike. This man had appeared to take a peculiar pleasure in mortifying his wife in company, by an irresistible play of wit directed at herself. Julia had felt a passionate sympathy for the helpless young duchess, who had neither the subtlety of tongue nor the bad manners of the man who was spending her money, and had expressed her wrath to France in no measured terms. France forgot nothing. When he felt the time had come for a new weapon, he selected one that is in every husband's armory, and, although he used it clumsily, possessing nothing of the young duke's cold irony and glancing wit, there was no chance that it should miss its aim.

Julia was apprehensive that France, irritated at his failure to provoke her to retort, if not to tears, might seek other vengeance. But when they met on the following day it was evident by the expression of his eyes that he was quite satisfied. The arrogance of his manner, indeed, led her to suspect that his faith in himself was too great to recognize failure if it sprang at him, and for small mercies she was thankful.

It was nearly three months before he addressed another remark to her beyond polite phrases calculated to impress the servants. But one morning, shortly after the first of the year, he sent her word that he wished her presence in the library. She went at once and found him sitting before the table in a magisterial attitude. Before him was a long itemized bill.

"You have been ordering books," he said in a voice of cutting reproof, as if speaking to a dependant who must be shown his place. "I gave you no permission to run up bills of any sort."

"I have always ordered books—for years, at least—it did not occur to me."

This time Julia was deeply mortified, and showed it as plainly as he could wish.

"You pretend to loathe me—your own word—and yet you are not too proud to run up bills for me to pay."

Julia's gorge rose, and her humiliation fled. "You compel me to live with you, and I am entitled to compensation. Besides, after all, you are my husband and I see no reason why you should not pay my bills. If you permit me to live away from you, that is another matter. I had nothing charged to you while I was earning my living."

"If you want books, my lady, you can write to your mother for the money to pay for them. Silly ass I was to marry a girl without a penny. Who else would have married you if I hadn't, and you thrown at my head? You ought to be thankful for

bread and butter and a roof. No girl has a right to marry a man in my position unless she brings him her weight in gold.”

“What a pity I shall cost you so much when I’m a duchess,” said Julia, mildly. “You would better let me go at once.”

“When you are a duchess, you’ll have clothes, but you’ll have no books, and no more liberty than you have here. As for this bill, I’ll pay it—when I get ready—but I shall write to-day and tell them that you have no further credit. You can go now.”

Julia, as she left the room, felt dismayed for the first time. What should she do without books? The winter was very wet, and English winters are very long, and often wet. She was forced to remain indoors a good deal; and to sit and hold her hands!

In the course of another month she found a new cause for uneasiness. Several times she awakened suddenly in the night and listened to heavy breathing outside her door; and when France was unable to hunt he prowled unceasingly about the house in the daytime. It was all very well to wish he would go quite out of his mind, but to be forced to accompany him through the various stages might be too great an ordeal even for her sound nerves.

IX

She stood one morning at her window, staring out at the rain. She had evaded the question for days, but she faced it now. What was she to do? She had always despised women with nerves, the strong fibre of her brain and the steel frame in her apparently frail body balancing her otherwise abundant femininity. When women had complained to her of nerves, cried out that they hated life, she had felt like an entomologist looking at specimens on a pin. When they had demanded sympathy she had asked them why, if they didn't like their life, they didn't go out and make another. Bridgit and Ishbel had done it, and she had heard of many others, although few of these were in her own class. Had not her sense of fate been so strong, she should have gone herself years ago.

These superfluous women had not taken kindly to her advice, and when she had added that strength was the greatest achievement of the human character, they had merely stared at her. These confidences had not been many, but one woman had replied petulantly that politics and charities were not in her line, and one had reminded her gently that a woman did not always hold her fate in her hands. She had despised this woman more than any of the others. In her youthful arrogance and consciousness of powers of some sort, she had equal contempt for the woman who submitted to detested conditions, and for the man who was too poor to keep up his position and yet grumbled, without seeking the obvious remedy.

But her spirit was chastened. She had discovered one woman, at least, that was quite helpless, and it seemed to her highly ironic that this, of all women, should be herself. She had felt her independence so keenly during the eight months she had earned her bread, working as hard as any of her humble associates, after she had persuaded Ishbel that she was broken in. She had often been tried to the point of fainting, for she had been accustomed always to the open-air life, and it would take more than eight months and a strong will to make a well-oiled machine of her; but she had persisted, never thought of looking for easier work, always rejoicing in her liberty and in the independent spirit that had bought it. Moreover, she had formed the habit of work, and soon after her return to White Lodge she had begun almost automatically to wish for a regular occupation of some sort. She had understood then why Ishbel loved her business as she never had loved society and its pleasures. But after she had made over all the clothes she had left behind at her flight, and retrimmed all her hats, she realized that there is no joy to be got out of useless work; with the exception of the hunt breakfast she had not even crossed the path of one of her neighbors. Her evening gowns alone had proved necessary, as France, the day after his return, had issued an edict that she was to dress for dinner.

She had by no means forgotten her old desire to write, but although she had essayed it more than once, particularly during the past month, she could rouse her mind to no vital interest in fiction, although she had come upon themes enough during her sojourn in the world. She wondered if such productive faculties as she

may have been born with had withered under the blight of her married life; not knowing that the genius for fiction survives the death of every illusion, being, as it is, quite outside the range of personality and watered by the lost fountain of youth. She had not, however, dismissed the belief, cunningly nursed by Bridgit and Ishbel, that she had talents of some sort, and that the expression of them would manifest itself in due course.

But now? What was she to do meanwhile? Where should she seek refuge against a possible disaster in her nervous system which might wreck her life? There was nothing here. If she fled to London and obtained employment of any sort, even in an obscure shop, France would carry out his threat and ruin Ishbel, one way or another. If he dared not employ his original method again—and why not? He was cunning enough to know that one sensational episode might be explained away, but not two of the same kind. There is nothing people weary of so quickly as explanations.

If she could only take up a difficult language. She had studied French and German during four of her years in the world, and knew the power of a foreign tongue to dominate the brain. She had intended to take up Italian, and it was the resource for which she most longed at the moment. But she could as easily furnish the library downstairs.

She was about to turn from the window and go for a ten-mile tramp in the rain, since nothing was left her but physical exercise, when she saw a fly crawling up the avenue. She was not particularly interested, as the occupant was more than likely to have a dun or a writ in his pocket, but she lingered, watching idly. The least event broke the monotony of her existence.

As the fly approached the end of the avenue, the door was flung open and a man jumped out impatiently, paid the driver, and walked rapidly toward the house. It was Nigel Herbert.

Julia’s first impulse was to run downstairs and embrace him. Her spirits went up with a wild rush. But she rang the bell and asked the servant if her husband was in the house. He was tearing across country with his pack on an independent hunt. She ordered a fire built in the drawing-room, rearranged her hair, and put on a becoming house frock of apple-green cloth. She observed with some pleasure that her skin was as white as ever, if her chin and throat were not as round as when Nigel had seen her last. Excitement brought the old brilliance to her eyes, and she smiled for the first time since the hunt breakfast. She ran downstairs and into the drawing-room. Nigel, who was standing before the fire in the chill room, met her halfway and gave both her hands a close clasp.

“Oh, this is so delightful—so delightful—how did you think of it—when did you come back—” Julia delivered a volley of questions, not only because she was excited herself, but because she saw that Nigel had come charged with so much that he could say nothing at the moment.

They sat down and continued to stare at each other. Nigel was far more changed than Julia. The smooth pink face she had first known was lined and rather sallow,

his eyes had lost their careless laughter, his lips their boyish pout.

“Oh, South Africa! South Africa!” said Julia, softly. “How it has changed all of you.”

“Rather!” said Nigel, sadly. “Those that are left of us. Perhaps you don’t know that I am literally the last of my name now, except my poor old father—who has forgiven me once for all. I had four brothers and six cousins when this war began. Now I have scarcely a friend of my sex. At all events I know the worst. There is no one left to mourn for but my father, and he’ll go soon. But I haven’t a pang left in me—not of that sort. God! What a cursed thing war is! A cursed, useless, souless thing! But I’ll treat that subject elsewhere. I’ve come here to see you, and I don’t fancy we’ll be uninterrupted any too long—”

“Oh, he rarely takes luncheon here—and you are to take yours with me. Do you know that I haven’t had a soul to talk to since last November?”

“I know. And that is what I have come to see you about. I—” He got up and walked to the window, then back, his hands in his pockets. “The last time I made love to you—the only time, for that matter—you put me off, turned me down—”

“Alas! I only went out that night because the romantic situation appealed to me. What a baby I was! And since! Oh! oh! oh!”

She sprang to her feet, and running over to the fire, knelt down, pretending to arrange the logs. Tragedy rose on the stage of her mind, but at the same time she felt an impulse to laugh. The hard shell in which she had fancied her spirit incased, sealed, had melted the moment the man she liked best had appeared with love in his eyes. But tragedy swept out humor and took possession. She flung her head down into her lap and burst into tears. They were the first she had shed and they beat down the last of her defences.

“Oh, Nigel! Nigel!” she sobbed. “If you knew! If you knew! I never have dared tell one-tenth. I dare not remember—”

Nigel, like most of his sex, was distracted and helpless at sight of tears. “Yes! Yes!” he exclaimed, bending over and trying to raise her. “I know. You need not tell me. Please get up. I have so much to say—I can’t say a word while you are like this.”

She let him lift her and put her back in her chair. He made no attempt to take her in his arms.

He took the chair opposite hers and smiled wryly. “I don’t fancy I’m as impulsive as I was! Ishbel told me when I returned last week. If I had heard—say, during the first year of our acquaintance—I should have got one of these new motor cars and flown to your rescue without a plan. But much water has flowed under our bridges since then!”

“Don’t you love me any longer?” Julia sat up alertly and dried her eyes.

“I’ve always loved you and I fancy I always shall. But—well, we are only young once—young in the sense of love being the one thing to live and breathe for. And,

then, I have had a resource! There have been many months when I have been able to put you out of my head altogether. That is what work, productive work, does for a chap. And after—well, soon after that night at Bosquith, I hated you for a time. You could never be the same delicious wonderful child again. That would have broken my heart if I had not both hated you and taken the first train into the kingdom of Micomicon. Even when I found you so charming, when I saw so much of you, that next season, I still congratulated myself that I was jolly well over it. But—well—you never really ceased to haunt me—you had a way of asserting yourself in the most disconcerting fashion. When I heard of the duke's marriage, I began to worry—I knew that life would not go as smoothly with you—I had heard from the girls that you managed France very cleverly, saw comparatively little of him. Out there in Africa, I never was alone at night that I didn't find myself thinking of you. But I never guessed—When the girls told me, I thought I'd go off my head. It's too awful! Too awful!"

"It's not so bad now. I have five pistols in the house."

"I know. But what a life! It is so hideous that it is almost farcical."

"People's troubles are generally rather absurd when you come to think of them. And I fancy I'm a good deal better off than a lot of women. Many have husbands that are worse than lunatics, and as the divorce laws won't help them, they suffer in silence, without a ray of hope. At least I may hope mine will betray himself in public sooner or later. I can manage him in a way, and of death I have not the least fear—"

"Oh! It is all too dreadful! How old are you? Twenty-five? It's awful! Awful! But you must end it—"

"If I could conceal two alienists in the house long enough—"

"But you can't. Nor would their certificate give you real freedom. I've no doubt he'll go raving mad in time—but when one reflects upon what he might do first! No! I have not come here without a plan, and here it is: You must go to the United States at once and get a divorce. There is a place called Reno, where one can be got at the end of about ten months. Bridgit will go with you. We held a conclave over it—we two and Ishbel—not the first! Great heaven! What an eternity ago that seems—" He laughed bitterly. "Once—was it only seven years ago?—we three talked the subject over and came to much the same conclusions, but our plans were frustrated by France's illness. Well—we were all young then, but it was a good plan and we readopted it. You must get away from this without delay—there has been enough! When the divorce is granted, I'll follow and marry you if you will have me. If not, we'll provide for you in whatever part of America you choose to live in. But I hope you'll marry me. I don't think I ever really loved you before. When Ishbel told me! When just now you crouched by that fire!"

"Oh, how good you all are!"

"I've not taken to philanthropy. I want you more than I ever did when we were

both careless and young and arrogant. I never thought it could be. But either Time or what you have endured with that man has annihilated everything. Can you go to-morrow?”

“Oh! I must think. I don’t know. It is all very alluring. But I am not sure.”

“You mean that you don’t love me?”

“Oh, if I could! If I could!”

Julia sprang to her feet and threw out her arms. “Away from all this!—from the memory of it! The horror! And there are other memories behind those three months! I don’t know! I have felt so sure I never could forget. And if I cannot forget, I cannot love you or any man. I have never felt so sure of anything as of that.”

“You are but twenty-five, remember. The mind is not crystallized at that age. Even memory is fluid. I believe that anything can be forgotten, given change of scene—at your age, at least. A year in the United States, and all this will be a dream. At the end of ten months in a life which is like a French poster out of drawing, you will be a different being—no, you will have lived with your old sense of humor, and be the same enchanting creature—Oh, we young people take life so tragically, my dear, and we succumb so generously to time and distance! Blessed antidotes to life! Time and change! And you are full of buoyancy, to say nothing of your brains. Once I regretted that you had any. Where would you be without them? A woman must find them a pretty good substitute when man fails her. Oh, I have learned! The land of shadows in which we writers of fiction live is peopled with the luminous egos of women as well as with their conventional shells; we have only to take our choice! And you—I shall find Julia Edis again, with all her enchanting possibilities at least half developed. Oh, you are wonderful! When one thinks of what you might have become—of the brainless women that brood and brood. Will you go?”

“I must think! I must think!” The powerful suggestion in his words seemed to have delivered Julia Edis from the tomb to which she had crept in terror, but hidden and shivered intact. She ran up and down the room, she even thrust her hands into her hair as if to lift its weight from her struggling brain, that it might think faster. Freedom! The new world! The annihilation of memory! A quick divorce which would deliver her forever from the terrifying creature she had married, over to the protection of the new world’s laws. It was an enchanting prospect. She drew in her breath as if inhaling the ozone, drinking the elixir of that land of youth and freedom. And happiness! Happiness! Why shouldn’t she love Nigel —

But she stopped short and dropped her hands. Her whole body looked paralyzed. The youth seemed to run out of her face.

“It is impossible,” she whispered. “I cannot take with me his power to avenge himself, and he will do that by ruining Ishbel —”

“We have talked all that over. Ishbel will manage to protect herself. What are bobbies for —”

“It won’t do. A policeman at the door! People would soon hear of it—and stay

away. Besides he is a fiend for resource —”

“Yes—but Mr. Jones can’t last much longer. And then—well, I fancy Ishbel will marry Dark—he’s on his feet again, and will be home before long.”

“Ishbel will never give up her work. Remember she took it up because it seemed to her the most vital thing she could find in life, not because she was driven to earn her bread. And it has become a sort of religion with her.”

“Ishbel never had been in love then! But if she kept the business on, she would have a husband to protect her. You would be out of it —”

“But not yet!”

“We are none of us willing you should wait, Ishbel least of all.”

“I know, but I can’t sacrifice her. I should be a beast. Harold is capable of writing the most frightful anonymous letters to hundreds of people —”

“Why the devil isn’t he rotting in South Africa? When I think of the hundreds of fine fellows—Oh, well, I’ve given over trying to understand space and fate. But I wish I could have run across him down there. I’d have shot him like a dog if I’d got the chance, and never felt a pang.”

“So should I! That is the most dreadful result of it all—the hardness, the callousness, the cynicism —”

“Oh, it will all fall from you. We don’t change much under the armor Life forces us into. Dismiss Ishbel from your mind. Take care of yourself. What is Ishbel’s business when weighed against a lifetime of horror and demoralization? Nobody knows this better than Ishbel. I fancy if you don’t go, she’ll chuck the business. It’s a deuced unpleasant position for her. And she has made enough to live on comfortably until she can marry Dark —”

“I don’t believe it. It might be years —”

The butler entered and announced luncheon. Julia smoothed her hair, feeling much herself again.

“I can see the force of all your arguments. And I am tempted. I don’t deny it. But you must give me time to think it over. Perhaps I exaggerate about Ishbel. But there is another point: I was not consulted in regard to my first marriage. I should be something more than a fool if I rushed blindly into another, no matter what the temptations. Still—Come, you must be starved.”

X

LIFE moves in circles. Some are larger than the span between infancy and senility, but that is about the only difference we know of. It is a far cry from the primigenous mere female, or even the Sabines, to the women that compose the advance guard of their sex to-day, but when man wants to win and wear this highest product of civilization, he would better kidnap her, and pay her the compliment of arguing with her brain later. Her impulses are still primitive, but they must be taken by assault. The more he reasons, the more vigorously will she throw up mental defences, and, what is worse, in the utmost good faith with herself.

This, of course, in regard to women that already know something of life, or that have an instinctive love of liberty and independence. The maternal girl, and she is legion, may safely be left in charge of the race, and wooed in the orthodox fashion favored of society. But the women that exert a powerful attraction for men, either exceptionally advanced themselves, or exceptionally weak in character while possessing every charm of mind, women that are approaching closer and closer to that exact balance of masculine and feminine attributes which, when attained, will give them the one perfect happiness, setting them free, as it must, from the present curse of the race, the longing for completion, are already too close to independence to be won by simple methods. It is little, after all, that man can give them. They are conscious of too many resources both within themselves and in life; after a man's novelty has worn off, they are more likely than not—certainly apt!—to find him their inferior in brain, and almost inevitably in character, full of the little weaknesses and dependencies of childhood. If they make these discoveries after marriage, the man has some small chance of keeping his spouse, particularly if he has won a measure of respect by audacity and brute force plus sympathy, but too much consideration for a woman who is almost half male while he is still but one-fourth female will lose him the game.

Nigel, of all the men that Julia had met, was the best equipped to appeal to sentimental, romantic, and clever young women, who were at the same time cultivating their wings for the higher flights. As a matter of fact, he had appealed to a good many women of various sorts in his earlier twenties when he was all freshness, frankness, adoration, and honest eager youth. Later, when he wore the literary halo with ease and modesty, his charm was not diminished; and it was easy to predict that when the war was really over and London, her mourning laid aside, roused herself to do honor to her heroes, Nigel would come in for thrice his share of lionizing. As a matter of fact, he did, and he philosophically accepted it as a compensation for the lack of better things.

When he stepped from the fly on that gloomy Wednesday morning and walked across the dripping garden, the dark and romantic wall of woods behind him, he looked as gallant a knight as ever came to the rescue of a damsel in distress; and Julia, as dreary as Mariana in the moated grange, was in the proper frame of mind to

be taken by assault. She was still very young, she was very lonely, she was on the verge of despair; her imagination, always active, had been bred in youth by dreams, and developed later by real castles and titles, purple moors, London society, and great expectations. She hailed from the West Indies, one of the most romantic spots to look at on earth, and all the circumstances of her life there had been exceptional. She was still more or less romantically environed, when you consider the old world dinginess, inconvenience, and isolation of White Lodge, a presumptive lunatic always threatening developments, and that she was as much cut off from her friends as if she literally were in an underground dungeon with walls instead of trees dropping the constant tear. Take all this into consideration, and add the momentous fact that she had never loved, and had arrived at the susceptible age of twenty-five, that she was more attracted to Nigel than she ever had been to any man, that underneath her despair and her manufactured stolidity she was full of eager curiosity and the desire to live, and it will readily be seen that if Nigel did not win her, it was strictly his own fault.

He should have retained the fly. He should have descended upon her like a whirlwind (having ascertained that France was out of the way,—which, as a matter of fact, he did at Stanmore), refused to listen to protests, caused in her bewildered mind what psychologists call an inhibition, swept her out into the fly, up to London, on to an Atlantic liner (passage already engaged), turned her over to Mrs. Herbert (thus eliminating every possible excuse for reproach during the subsequent and less glamorous period of matrimony), joined her at the earliest possible moment in Reno (where Bridgit and Reno would have seen that she was sufficiently amused), and when she walked out of the court-house with her decree, met her with a license. That is the only way to manage them, my masters. Try it, or take a back seat, now and forever.

But Nigel, alas! in spite of his manly qualities, was the most considerate and tender of men. The very idea of kidnapping a woman would have horrified him. He had all those instincts of the hunter upon which men pride themselves, but he wanted to hunt according to the rules of the game. It would have given him the most exquisite pleasure to woo Julia day by day, in Reno or out of it, and it never occurred to him that this program might induce a yawn in Julia.

She sat up all that night thinking. It was a rosy panorama he had unrolled before her, this charming young man that she might have loved if he had not given her so many opportunities to like him. He was a rich man and would one day be richer. They would live in New York and other wonderful cities of America, play with the kaleidoscopic society American novelists wrote about, hunt in the Rockies, steep themselves in the romance of California, vary this exciting program with frequent trips to Europe and the Orient. England would be closed to them, lest France cause her arrest for bigamy, as one of many offensive actions. On the other hand, he might release her by divorce. Then she could marry according to the laws of her country, and all the world would be her oyster.

Above all, and Nigel had emphasized this point during their afternoon conversation, she would have a strong and devoted husband to protect her, to shield her from all that was harsh and unlovely in life, to study her every wish, and make her a queen among women.

Curiously enough it was this last alluring set of promises that lost him the game. Nothing he had said to Julia had appealed to her so forcibly at the moment. He had never looked so handsome and so manly, so distinguished, so perfect a specimen of his type. His face had flushed until the lines and the sallowness had disappeared, his eyes forgot the things they had looked upon this last year, forgot that their inward gaze saw his heart a tomb crowded with beloved dead; they flashed with hope and passion, with undying love for the one woman that must ever make to him the complete appeal. She had almost put her hands in his then and there. But he had left soon after, and without even kissing her. Dear knightly soul! Julia never forgot his tender consideration, but on the other hand she never regretted it.

For when she had finished visualizing the United States of America and all their centres of delight, to say nothing of certain states of Europe and Asia, which she longed unceasingly to visit; when she had dwelt upon the deep relief of turning her back forever upon Harold France (France prowling about the halls and breathing heavily against her door materially assisted Nigel at this point); when these phases were disposed of, and her imagination, weary, left the brain free to face the particular ego of Julia France, in some ways so typical of woman, in others individual and peculiar, a very different set of ideas marched to the front and argued pro and con.

Did she want another husband, no matter how good, how devoted, how generous, how strong? It was now nearly a year and a half since she had lived with France, but if the memories of her married life were no longer active, no longer embittered her existence, she had by no means buried them, and they affected her attitude toward all men. Had Nigel swept her out of England and into that strange bizarre world of America, no doubt the experiences in the new land, assisted by the fiction that she was about to begin life over, really would have annihilated memory; but thinking it all over in the cold small hours of an English winter morning, wrapped in a blanket and shovelling coals into a small unwilling English grate, she failed to visualize love as the sweetest thing in the world.

Even so, this inability to respond to the genuine love that was offered her might not have prevented her ultimate acceptance. The man’s foe was far more deadly.

Looking into herself, Julia slowly understood that what she, in her youth and inexperience, had mistaken for hardness and callousness, was in reality strength. Nature had endowed her with strength of character and independence of mind. For eighteen years her mother had dominated her, almost without her knowledge; then she had been flung into the world and treated to a succession of experiences which had left her gasping and dizzy, without either the maturity or the opportunities to develop herself with deliberation. But the subsequent years had done their work;

ultimately certain influences, sufferings, horrors, terrors, had pushed her on to a point where she must sink or swim. In swimming she had proved that she belonged to the army of the strong, not to the vast and insignificant majority of her sex that found their only strength in man.

She was strong. She fully realized it for the first time. All the spurious cynicism and philosophy of youth fell away from her; she saw herself for what she was, a woman, equipped with a nature of flexible steel, able to endure any test without snapping, fashioned not so much for endurance as for conquest. Conquest of what? She speculated, that something which so long had striven for expression moving dumbly. Never mind, it was there; she should find the connection in time.

Her mind rapidly reviewed the whole field of woman. She had no statistics, but she knew that several millions of her sex were forcing the world to recognize them as breadwinners, independently of any assistance from man. It was magnificent, the opportunities of to-day, when compared with the meagre resources of the past, and the repeated struggle of woman for expression and independence almost from the dawn of history. They had found themselves at last, the twentieth century was theirs, and they were driving rapidly toward the goal of complete equality with man. But how many of these women were strong enough to go through life without love? None, she fancied, until they had undergone a process of disillusion similar to her own. Then she rejoiced in what for so long had seemed to her the harshest of destinies; for sitting there in the cold dawn, the one perfect destiny seemed to her to be an utter independence of soul and mind and body, the power to cultivate every faculty toward a state of development in which one human being, having in perfect balance the highest potencies of both sexes, should stand alone, indifferent to all extrinsic aid. And this perfect balance could be attained only by woman, unhampered as she was by the animality of man.

Perfection. The word started her off on another train of thought. How was this perfection of strength, character, mind, and poise to be attained? To stand alone without aid from man or woman was neither a means nor an end. She had none of the common need of religion. It could play little or no part in her development. Nor could happiness be found merely in perfecting self toward a standard which must inevitably deteriorate into self-righteousness. To stand alone is the most magnificent ideal of the human character, but that strength must be used toward some end beyond self. She groped along and began to see clearly. She must work for the race. She must regard herself as a chosen instrument of usefulness, as, indeed, all exceptionally gifted people were. And for this she was peculiarly equipped, not only by nature, but by life. Had she not married at all, or at the most, casually, her woman’s nature would have protested against any such program, demanded its rights first; but these sources of disturbances were choked with hideous weeds, and Julia was unable to conceive that the weeds might rot in time and the waters rise refreshed. She felt that she was fortunately accoutred, and she longed for her opportunities.

What they might be she had no inkling as yet, nor was she conscious of love for her kind, and a desire to be useful to it on general principles. Her ambition, if ambition it could be called, was centred in her brain. If she had been chosen for a work, she would perform it. What else, in fact, was there for her to do? It had not needed Bridgit and Ishbel to teach her contempt for the morbid type of female that exaggerates sex until it becomes a disease, the women that play with their nerves until they have become mere neurotic systems without either sex or brains, and that exhibit egos either in private or public whose swollen deformities cause a momentary thrill and a prolonged disgust. Abnormal without individuality. It was an ideal carefully avoided by all the sane strong women Julia had met.

For the present, she could only wait and endure. She could not even go out and study the great problems of life, those problems she had chosen to ignore. But there is hardly any greater test of strength than passive endurance; and the time of her liberation could not be far off. The day Ishbel married Lord Dark she should leave France and look for work in London.

Nigel's fate was settled before the rising of the sun. Far away on what to Europeans seem the confines of civilization, in other words, San Francisco, a youth was growing to masterful manhood, who, in due course, would avenge him, and, incidentally, much else. But of that poor Nigel could know nothing, nor would he have felt consoled had he foreseen; when he received Julia's letter, whose finality was as convincing as a black midnight without stars, he wished that he had left his wretched heart and bones in South Africa, retired to the country with his broken father, and began another book. There was still the Nöbel Peace Prize to work for, and he felt peculiarly fitted to win it. It may be stated here that he did, and all England (of his class, and one or two strata just below) was astonished that an Englishman should have competed for a prize that involved a damnifying of war. It deeply disapproved.

XI

THE hunting season closed. France still rode for several hours every day, but it was patent that his restlessness was increasing. When he was not riding, he was walking, and he walked more than half the night about the house and grounds. Oddly enough, however, the serenity of his mien was unruffled, and Julia came upon him several times standing before a long mirror in one of the halls, his head so high that the muscles of his neck creaked, his eyes flashing with a pride and triumph no harassed king ever felt on his coronation morn. As a rule, he left the table the moment the meal was over, preferring to take his coffee alone out of doors or in the library, but one day Julia, who was beginning to take a certain scientific interest in his developments, arrested his attention as he was about to rise.

"Didn't you tell me once that Kingsborough and the little chap were delicate? I heard the other day that both are remarkably fit. The little boy always has been, and the duke gets stronger every day."

She looked at him ingenuously as she spoke, quite prepared for an outburst of rage, but he only bestowed upon her a smile of withering contempt.

"They are merely indulging in what the Americans call 'bluff.' I happen to know that they are both full of disease and cannot last the year out. I shall be Duke of Kingsborough before Christmas."

"How nice. That is the reason, I suppose, you don't mind all these duns. We may be sold out any day, you know. Summonses are becoming as thick as rain, and I am told that not a man in the stables or kennels has been paid —"

"They all understand perfectly. The summonses and grumblings are a mere matter of form. I have promised an enormous rate of interest and higher wages when I have moved into Kingsborough House and Bosquith. The other estates I have already agreed to let to American millionnaires. They are impatiently awaiting Kingsborough's death."

"Ah? Where have you met the millionnaires?"

"They have been hunting with the Hertfordshire all winter, and we have discussed matters at my solicitor's."

Julia knew that he had not been to London for several months, save for the queen's funeral, but forbore to press the subject. She remarked amiably: —

"What a fine income you will have!"

His eyes flashed. "Ah, yes! Millions."

"Surely not quite that."

"Millions. Kingsborough's income alone is two millions."

"I thought it was forty thousand pounds."

"Forty thousand for a duke of Kingsborough! No emperor has a vaster revenue."

“How jolly. My robes of state shall be woven of pure gold. Meanwhile, why don’t you go to Paris for a while? I notice that you are restless, since you have nothing to ride after, and nothing to kill. You keep me awake at night banging about the house.”

“Do I?” France’s eyes flashed with something besides triumph, but it passed almost at once. He was losing interest in her. As he rose, bent his head graciously and sauntered out into the garden, he forgot her absolutely in a new vision that had haunted him since the queen’s funeral. There for the first time he had seen sovereigns en masse. The sight had thrilled him; he had made up his mind to signalize his succession by the greatest banquet London had ever known; all the reigning princes of Europe should attend it. The letters of invitation were already written. He had written them many times, finding one of the keenest pleasures he had ever known in the process, congratulating himself that for the first time in his life he was about to have associates worthy of his name and ego. But although he had never heard the word paranoia, and while at Bosquith had finally dismissed from his mind the haunting thought of insanity (it was outside of reason that he, Harold France, could even sprain the wonderful organ he had inherited with other unique characteristics from the most illustrious house in Europe), nevertheless, instinct warned him to lock up his letters of invitation, and keep his grandiose dreams to himself. Only to Julia, and only when she spurred him to speech, did he admit a very little of what filled his thoughts day and night.

But he was well aware that his nerves were on edge, and he was beginning to be troubled with pains in his head. He slept little, and when he thought of it took a malicious pleasure in disturbing his prisoner, whom he could imagine sitting on the edge of her bed pistol in hand.

But it was not the pistol that kept him from breaking down the door and laughing in her face. He had anticipated amusing himself with her female terrors as soon as the hunting season closed, but he found himself grown quite indifferent not only to her charm, but to the exquisite pleasure it had once given him to torture her. His dreams and visions, his increasing delusions, filled his life. Woman was too contemptible to consider; were it not that it gratified his growing passion for autocracy to have a prisoner of state, he might have amused himself by turning her out of the house in the middle of the night and dogging her footsteps to Stanmore or Bushey.

He still compelled her attendance at table, but otherwise took no notice of her whatever. So absorbed was he that he failed to observe that his wife was now well supplied with books and no longer looked desperate or even discontented. Her three devoted friends had made an arrangement with her bookseller to send her all that she ordered from his catalogue, and Bridgit had turned over her membership with the London Library. One of the first books she sent for was a recent work on insanity. She was not long discovering that France was a paranoiac, and she wrote to her aunt, asking her to invite him to dinner, and two alienists to meet him. But Mrs.

Winstone was shocked at the suggestion, not only because she hated increasingly the “grimy,” in other words serious, side of life, but because it would be a thankless task to assist in proving that a member of one of the great families of Britain was a lunatic. She chose, therefore, to believe Julia quite mistaken, that France was merely a trifle more impossible than ever, and assumed the high moral ground that it would be unfair to take advantage of a trusting guest. Julia concluded that to write to the duke would be equally ineffective, besides making an enemy of him for life, and she knew that France would not be induced to dine with either Bridgit or Ishbel. He had always hated both of them. There was nothing to do, therefore, but wait for him to develop acute mania, and to keep a pistol in her pocket; taking her walks abroad while he was forced to sleep, and locking herself in her room when she was not at table.

It was during this strain on her nerves that she began to long for the repose of the East. Orientalism was in her brain cells. What imagination her mother possessed had been projected toward the East for long before and after her birth. The science of astrology is the birthright of the East, the very word sways and parts the shadowy curtains that hang before civilizations old before the Occident was born, evokes the gorgeous heavy sinister pictures of ancient cities, of vast arid plains where only the stars were alive. This mysterious poetical science had been the romance of Julia’s youth, and the East was the one quarter of the globe, save Great Britain, that she had ever heard discussed. In London she had escaped theosophy and other made-up fads of the same nature, but although the call of the East had often and for long been overlaid in her consciousness, it never failed to make itself heard if she stood before a picture portraying India, Arabia, Persia, or read of personal adventures in the East by writers with the rare gift of atmosphere. In the loneliness and terrors and constant tension of her present life she forgot the call of the too modern, too similar life, across the Channel, hearkened increasingly to that of the East. It promised a vast repose, an endless feast of beauty, unfathomable mysteries, a life as different from that of the West as it was in the days of Mohammed, Zoroaster, or Christ.

Julia’s first passion was slowly growing in the unsatisfied depths of her mind, but that is the last name she would have given it. She was yet to realize that imaginative people with productive activities, however latent, have passions of the brain or ego as intense and profound as ever one sex compelled in the other in the interests of the race. Julia, abominating all that the word love implied (a state of mind inevitable unless she had been coarse and callous), but young, fervent, and conceptive, was both situated and tuned to be caught in the eddies of an impersonal passion. It might have been art, but she was not an artist; study and politics had failed her, and although psychology interested her, she was too restless for science in any form; therefore, she had no sooner chanced upon one or two picturesque old books of Eastern travel than she succumbed to the passion for place. She sent for no more books save those that carried her to the Orient. Her imagination blazed. She was transported into a new and enchanting world. Her good resolutions to live for the race were forgotten. The moment she was free she would fly to the East and live.

She was almost happy. Then she descended into England and the purely personal life with a crash. Ishbel sent her a marked copy of a newspaper containing the announcement of Mr. Jones's death, a week later wrote that she should marry Lord Dark as soon as a decent interval had elapsed, and commanding her to leave France and come to London, where employment awaited her.

Julia became her cool practical self at once. She packed her boxes, sent for a fly when France had gone for one of his merciless rides,—he was killing his horses,—and left this note behind her: —

> "Mr. Jones is dead. Ishbel will marry Lord Dark as soon as possible. If you make a second attempt to wreck her business you will have him to reckon with. He is, in any case, well able to take care of her, and no doubt she will give up the business. As there is now no way in which you can injure her or any of my friends, I have made up my mind to leave you once for all. You will save yourself trouble by recalling that we are in the twentieth century and that the law does not compel me to live with you.
>
> "JULIA."

XII

BRIDGIT met Julia at the train and there was purpose in her eye. Julia laughed, knowing that her time had come, but returned the warm embrace with which she was greeted, and allowed herself to be carried without protest to the house in South Audley Street. Mrs. Herbert was no less handsome and fascinating than of old, but if anything she was still more upright of carriage, determined of eye, and expressive of ardent purpose. Widowed long before the war, Geoffrey's death had made no change whatever in her life, although she had sent after him the sincere and hearty regret she would have felt for the loss of any friend. As she was needed in South Africa she had gone there, made herself useful without any fuss, and returned as soon as she could to her work in England. This work was now clearly defined. Bridgit Herbert, indeed, was not the woman to spend any great amount of time seeking or floundering. No dreamer, her mind, once awakened to the futilities of the life of pleasure, her energies roused, she had applied herself immediately to a survey and study of her times, and found the work which coincided with her particular talents. Horrified and disgusted with poverty, she sought and found the obvious remedy in the Socialism of the advanced and more practical of the Fabians, although the "ideology" of the older Socialists would have made little appeal to her. Soon convinced, however, that Socialism could make little headway against the individualistic and acquisitive mind of the twentieth century male, her fighting blood had warred with her direct practical mind until she had happened to go to the north with an inspector of factories, and listened to somewhat of Christabel Pankhurst's propaganda in behalf of Woman's Suffrage among the trade-union organizations, a factor in politics of increasing power. She was struck, not only by the abominable grievances of the working women in general and the factory women in particular, but by their intelligence; nor was she long discovering that the average of intelligence all over England was higher among poor women than among poor men. Where a man grew dull in the routine of his work and further blunted his faculties in the public house, his wife, with her manifold petty interests and schemings to make a little money go a long way, and filled with ever changing anxieties for her children, was far more alert of mind and eager for improvement. It did not take either Mrs. Pankhurst or her sleepless daughters to remind Bridgit that in this great body of women lay the future hope of Socialism, or of any reform directed against the elimination of poverty. But this army was of no more consequence at present than an army of ants. It must have the ballot, and Bridgit had spent much of her time in the last two or three years among the working women of England, educating them to a sense of their responsibilities. It was not until 1903 that the women of the middle class were generally roused from the apathy into which they had fallen, with the exception of spurts, since 1884, and the Woman's Social and Political Union was formed by Mrs. Pankhurst; but when Julia arrived in London, the old movement was beginning to lift its head, and Bridgit Herbert was

not the only hopeful and far-seeing mind at work.

“And what is it you want?” asked Julia, listening to the old familiar and beloved roar of London. They were in Mrs. Herbert’s den, and the hostess, her eyes still radiant with hospitality, was standing behind the low fire-screen with a hand on either point. Julia wondered if White Lodge were a nightmare.

“The vote. Because the time has come, men having made a mess of most things, for women to apply their higher faculties to the domestic affairs of the nation; also because the condition of poor women and children in this country is appalling, and men have proved their utter indifference to a fact which is also a factor in so many great incomes. Moreover, men have had their day, just as monarchies and aristocracies have had their day. The day of woman and the working-class is dawning, and it is high time.”

“And are women ready?”

“Those that are not can be taught. That is what we are for.”

“We? I suppose,” with a sigh of resignation, “*that* is my métier, what I have been struggling toward all this time.”

“You recognize that you have abilities at last, then?”

“Oh, yes, and I shouldn’t wonder if I had ambition, but just now I don’t feel either ambitious or energetic. I’m wild to go to India and the rest of the East—”

“Oh, nonsense, we’ve a great fight coming, and you must brace up and be one of the generals. Time enough to idle when you are old. Just now, until we can shut France up and ask the courts to give you an income, you are going to be my secretary—”

“Do you really need one?”

“Do I? Well, rather. I had one of the best, but her mother is ill and she may not be able to return to me for months. You’ll have tons of letters to write.”

“So much the better, for I couldn’t live on even your charity.”

“Charity? When my only chance to have an intimate friend is in a secretary, I am so rushed? I’m companionless, but life is frantically interesting.”

And if Julia found herself unable to reach this pitch of enthusiasm, she certainly found the new book of life offered for her daily reading quite absorbing enough to fill her time and thoughts. Her clerical hours were short. The rest of the day, and often during half the night, she was seeing all the problems at first hand. She went daily with Bridgit to the East Side and saw poverty outside of books; poverty, unthinkable, criminal, fleshless, stinking. At night she dreamed that all the babies in the world were wailing for food, all the mothers were emaciated, with eyes of bitter resignation, all the little girls pinched and old and hard. Herded misery, hopeless filth, black despair. Julia was quite unable to recall the reverse side of the picture, in which many were healthy in spite of poverty, and cheerful if only because temperament is stronger than circumstance. She hoped that some day she should

fully wake up and burn with a zeal as great as Bridgit's, but now her brain was tired, and, had she but known it, she protested against living for others until she had lived for herself first. Quite as unconsciously her mind was made up to live her Eastern romance the moment she was free. She heard not a word from France, but guessed the truth; he had forgotten her. If this were the case, however, it might mean that at any moment he would be a dangerous lunatic, and she felt that the duke should be warned. As this was a delicate task, and as her uneasiness grew, she finally, on Bridgit's advice, wrote to his firm of solicitors. Solicitors are probably the most conservative members of conservative England; but full of duty withal. The junior member found himself overtaken by a storm near White Lodge and craved hospitality of his patron's distinguished kinsman. France, either because suspicion was still active in a brain not clouded, but blazing with a light unknown to common mortals, or because he happened to be in a good humor, had never appeared to better advantage. The solicitor returned to London so inflamed with indignation that the letter he wrote to Julia breathed his contempt for her entire sex. Julia shrugged her shoulders and dismissed the matter from her mind. Let them work out their own destinies.

When she was not haunting the slums, she was attending meetings: Fabian, labor, working-women, coöperators', old and new suffrage; at all of which the eternal problem of poverty was the main topic of discussion. She was also taken to visit the slaughter-houses, where the ignorance and savagery of the women employed was primeval. She visited the textile factories of the north, where the work of women and children at the loom was relieved only by alternate hours of drudgery in the home, and where there seemed no object in living whatever. The pit-brow women, at least, had developed the strength and endurance of men, and no doubt would have proved equally efficient in war.

Manchester was a very hot bed of social reform, and Julia was shown all the horrors to which reform owed its concept. She wondered increasingly at the frail fabric of aristocracy and wealth that tottered on its heaving foundations, and conceived some measure of respect for its cleverness.

This drastic experience was enlivened now and again by glimpses of Ishbel, still the merriest, and now the happiest, of mortals. The lines of fatigue and anxiety had disappeared, she was once more the prettiest woman in London, and she needed but the halo of her future position as Countess of Dark to make good people wonder how they could have forgotten it. Julia thought her the most fortunate of women, if only because she was realizing all the romantic dreams of her girlhood on the bogs. Dark was handsome, clever, kind, almost unselfish. He was profoundly in love and he had a very decent income. Above all he had the most romantic title in the British peerage—Earl of Dark! No wonder those fluttering moths of American girls wanted titles. Such a one would make the dullest man in England look romantic to yearning republican eyes, when even an Ishbel was enchanted at the prospect of owning it.

"And yet I am the most practical of mortals—the half of me!" she said gayly,

one day, as they sat in the boudoir over the shop, drinking tea unseasoned with reform. “Odd and modern combination!”

“But you’ll give up the shop?”

“Not really. It is coöperative now, and too many would suffer if I neglected it altogether, or withdrew. I must continue to see that it remains a success, for it is something to have solved the problem of living for a few women, at least.”

Julia hastily changed the subject.

“Shall you become a society beauty again?”

“I’ve hardly thought of it. I mean to be happy, and I think we’ll travel and live in the country for a year. Society is always with us. That first year! No duties shall share an hour of it.”

“Right you are. I never could love and never want to, and I’m quite resigned to becoming a torch-bearer, suffering martyrdom, if necessary, in the cause of woman, but meanwhile I’ve something up my sleeve. I dare not mention it to Bridgit again, and shall have to run away when my time comes, but I can confide in you. The moment I am free I am going to India—Persia—Arabia—and stay there until some other part of me is gratified, I hardly know what. I only know that the call is unceasing and that I never can accomplish anything here, whole-heartedly, at least, until I have got that off my mind.”

“By all means, go. It’s unhealthy to repress your strongest personal desires, and you are young yet. I wonder, by the way, if you will ever have the zeal of these other women? You have a sort of sardonic humor —”

“I want a career, and in this rising inevitable woman’s movement lies my chance. When my time comes, my zeal will be great enough—for all they can give me I’ll pay them back a hundred fold. I want power if only because nothing less will pay the debt of these last years, and I am horribly sorry for the poor of the world. When I am ready I shall jump into the arena with my torch, but I’ll find myself wholly in the East first.”

“Why not go now? I can let you have the money.”

“No, I’ll wait.”

As it happened she did not have long to wait. She and Bridgit were driving home one evening after talking to an intelligent club of East End women, when they heard the familiar cry of “Extra,” and a flaming handbill was waved in front of the window as the brougham was blocked. Bridgit, whose quick glance overlooked nothing, exclaimed, “Great heaven!” and leaned out, throwing the boy a sixpence.

“What is it?” asked Julia, languidly. She had been forced on to the platform, and was still cold from fright. “A strike?”

Bridgit lifted the tube and gave an order to the coachman that made Julia sit erect.

“Kingsborough House.” Then to her companion, “France tried to kill the duke

this afternoon.”

They found Kingsborough House in confusion, the flunkys looking as flabby as if the ramrods in their backs had dissolved, leaving nothing but the sawdust stuffing. The duchess was in hysterics upstairs (“she is sure to be an anti,” remarked Mrs. Herbert); the duke was under the care of his doctor; but Lady Arabella received them, and graciously observed that she was glad to see that Julia still felt herself a member of the house of France. She told them the story, which was brief enough. France had suddenly appeared that afternoon, and upon being shown into the duke’s study had sprung upon his kinsman before the footman had closed the door, demanding that he should abdicate in his favor, threatening him with immediate death if he refused. The footman had called other footmen, and it had taken four of them to hold France down while the duke, his coat torn off and his face bleeding, had himself telephoned for the police. France meanwhile had struggled like a demon, shouting that he had come to kill not only the duke but the boy, that his time had come to live and theirs to die, that they were deliberate malicious enemies who stood between him and the greatness which would permit him to send his invitations to the crowned heads of Europe; and “heaven knows what else,” added the distressed Lady Arabella. “To think of poor Harold going mad. At first we thought he might merely have been drinking, but with the police came poor Edward’s doctor, and he pronounced him as mad as a hatter. Do stay here with me to-night, Julia. You are a clever little thing, and always keep your wits about you.”

Julia remained at Kingsborough House for several days. When the duke heard what little of her own story she was willing to tell, and that she had endeavored to protect him through his solicitors, he was honest enough to admit that he would have been hard to convince of a kinsman’s insanity, and generous enough to be grateful to her. Indeed, so relieved was he at his narrow escape, and at the report of the lunacy commission which incarcerated France for life, that he bubbled over with something like human nature; and, as the expensive sanatorium would cut deeply into his cousin’s original income, announced his intention of giving Julia for life seven hundred and fifty of the thousand pounds he had so long allowed her husband. Julia refused this offer, until the duke told her impatiently that if she did not take it he would merely pay Harold’s expenses in the sanatorium, and leave her to the courts, also that she was legally a member of his family, and pride, therefore, absurd. Julia turned this over, and concluding that the house of France owed her a good deal more than it could ever pay, consented and thought no more about it. A month later she was on a P. and O. steamer bound for India.

BOOK IV
HADJI SADRÄ

I

UPON Julia's return to England in April of 1906 she was greeted with the news of the destruction of San Francisco by earthquake and fire. Nigel, to whom it had occurred to her to send a telegram from Flushing, met her at Queenboro', and, his imagination fired by the great physical drama, it was the first piece of news he imparted. Julia, although she was looking straight into a pair of ardent handsome eyes (Nigel had recovered his looks, and the subtle marks of Time enhanced them), sent her mind on a flight of seven thousand miles to centre about the young American friend that she had so nearly forgotten.

"He must be—let me see—five- or six-and-twenty," she announced.

"Who?" Nigel's eyes flashed.

"A Californian I met when he was a boy—Mrs. Bode's brother. You can't mean that everybody was killed."

"Let us hope not. First reports are always exaggerated. But the Californians in London are frantic—can't get a penny on their letters of credit, either. Indeed, nothing outside of our own bailiwick has excited us as much as this in many a long day."

"I felt some big earthquakes in India—"

"Oh, nothing like this," said Nigel, who would brook no cheapening of the magnificent panorama in his mind. "With the possible exception of the eruption of Mont Pelée, this is the most dramatic thing that Nature has done in our time. Think of it! Not a second's warning. The most important city on the Pacific Coast and its half million people wiped out. The earth rocking miles of blazing buildings for hours. Precipices along the coast plunging into the sea! The hills rolling like grain. Jupiter! What a sight from an airship! Would that I had been there to see."

"I don't fancy you would have seen much from an airship, if there was any smoke with the fire. Have you reconstructed all that from bald cablegrams?"

"The bald facts are enough—"

"To have made your imagination happy. I have always said that you would satisfy it yet with a work of pure romance. But I don't mean to joke. It is too awful. I heard only a confused rumor on the train yesterday. Poor Dan! But I feel sure that he could take care of himself, and of a good many others—if there was any chance at all."

"Possibly. But enough of horrors. I want to look at you." (They had a

compartment to themselves.) “You must have enjoyed yourself quite as well as you meant to do. I never saw any one so—well—improved, although that sounds banal. It never occurred to me that you could be prettier than when you first came to London, but you are. Your eyes—what is it?”

“Oh, my eyes have seen things. I have done a good deal more than enjoy myself.”

“Have you come back to be the high priestess of some cult?”

“Not I. I have sat at the feet of wise men in Benares and in Persia, and learned—a little. We Occidentals are never initiated into the deeper mysteries. They despise—or fear—us too much for that. But even a little of the wisdom of the East must widen our vision and prove an everlasting antidote to the modern spirit of unrest—about nothing.”

“And enable you to forget your friends for four years? We have each had three letters from you and three or four times as many post cards.”

“One secret of enjoying the East is to forget the West. And for at least a year I was intoxicated—drunk is more expressive—with its enchantments. The spell broke in Calcutta, where I spent a winter in society. Then I went to Benares to study.”

“You could have told me as much in a cablegram. What took you to Acca?”

“I went to see Abdul Baha Abbas, and investigate the new religion. My master told me of it in India, and I found that in Persia, after losing some twenty-five thousand by massacre, it had got the best of its enemies by converting the government. Even the women are receiving the higher education. So I went on to headquarters. Not that any religion could make a personal appeal to me, but I had an idea about this one. The idea proved to be reasonable, and, accordingly, I have brought you the Bahai religion as a present.”

“Brought me? What should I do with it?”

“Make use of it to your own glory and the benefit of the race. We have always agreed that Socialism would never prevail until it acquired a soul. That admirably constructed but unappealing machine needs the Bahai religion to give it light and fire; and the Bahai religion, sane and practical as it is, needs a good working medium. Combined, they will sweep the world. With your skill and enthusiasm, you will find the task congenial and not too difficult. Like Socialism, the new and practical sort, Bahaism must begin at the top and filter down, for it makes its appeal to the brain, to the advanced thinker, to those that feel the need of a religion, but have long since outgrown all the silly old dogmas, with their bathos and sentimentalities, primarily intended only for the ignorant. Unity in rights. Freedom of the political as well as the spiritual conscience. In other words, the elimination of all that provokes war; which means universal peace. Peace. Peace. Peace. That is the keynote of the Bahai religion, as love was intended to be of Christianity. All the best principles of the five prevailing religions are incorporated in this, all the barriers between them razed, and all the nonsense and narrow-mindedness left out. And the

keynote of all this? Knowledge. True knowledge, intellectual as well as spiritual. The universal spread of science and the development of the arts, to war in men's minds—the real battleground—against the greed of money which makes man so stunted, uninteresting, and miserable to-day. One language, one people, one faith. No hierarchy. Good morals and charitable deeds as a matter of course. The worship of one God, and the universal peace, to be founded in the centre of the civilized world. Unity and Peace! Then we are promised that the earthly world shall become heavenly. Not in our time. But it will be interesting to help start the ball rolling, and to watch it roll. Every man is supposed to have a latent desire for perfection. There is your cue. There lies the brain of this religion. What a subtle appeal to vanity, man's primal and deathless weakness! Even greed only ministers to it. If I wrote fiction I should take this cue myself, but as it is I have brought it to you. Go to Acca, get it all at first hand, and write your immortal book."

"So you did think of me that far?" Nigel stared at her, fascinated, but with his man's ardor checked. In spite of her frank delight in greeting him, the spontaneous friendliness of her manner, she seemed to him incredibly remote. The eyes that looked straight into his had new and unfathomable depths, and he wondered if she had not learned more of Eastern lore than she had any intention of admitting.

"Of course," she said, smiling. "And I have speculated a great deal about you. All I know is that you won the Nöbel Peace Prize—a wonderful book! I read it—and your last—in the colonial edition. But I know nothing else about you. Have you fallen in love with any one else?"

"No, I have not," said Nigel, crossly, "and I am not so sure that I am still in love with you. I only know that you haunt my imagination and make all other women seem flat."

"Ah! We could be the ideal friends. But hasn't anything happened to you besides merely writing books and becoming a peer of the realm?"

"Oh, yes, I have been discovered by the United States of America."

"They were long enough about it. But they always get hold of the little men first."

"Well, I might be one of the little ones, judging by the fuss they are making over me. Reams of stuff in magazines and the Sunday newspapers—all about my 'great' works; in which I find myself credited with an assortment of philosophies no two men could carry; at least a hundred attitudes toward Life; and incredible designs upon the peace of the world—although still others maintain that I am merely a dilettante aristocrat playing with picturesque material. I am so bewildered that I hardly know what I am myself. Some of the adverse criticisms are so good that I forget the writer doesn't in the least know what he is writing about. The only thing clear to me is that my income is trebled, and that I am offered unheard-of sums (from the modest European point of view) to write for their magazines and newspapers. I have even been invited to go over and lecture, and am promised a unique advertisement: 'The Peer among Authors.' Fancy trying to be original after

that! I believe I have also a cult—and am making hay while the sun shines; for I am given to understand that crazes don't last long over there. Each of us, as discovered, —sometimes a few of us at once,—is the 'greatest of modern English authors.' I should think their own authors would combine, capture the press, and train their guns on us, and their eloquence on their public: it would appear that the American public, in art matters, believes everything it is told long enough and loud enough. Far be it from me, however, to complain. It has enabled me to put a new roof on my old castle—as good as an American wife, without the bother—and buy a villa on the Riviera—which I am hoping you will consent to occupy with me."

"Not I. You go to Acca, and I to my work here. If it hadn't haunted me, assisted by indignant letters from Bridgit, I doubt if I ever should have left the East. But if the East is in my blood, some magnet in the West directed at my brain cells dragged me home. Besides, what have I developed myself for? Now is the time to find out."

Nigel sighed. "The old order changeth. You women are not far off from getting all you want, no doubt about that, but you will lose more than you gain."

"From your point of view. It is not what *you* want. We shall get what *we* want, which is more to the point."

"Well, I can't blame you," said Nigel, honestly. "Man was bound to have his day of reckoning. For my part I hardly care, being a lover of change, and wanting to see all of this world's progress it shall be possible to crowd into my own little span. And although you are far from all the old ideals, it would be the more interesting to live with you. I have always had a sneaking preference for polygamy—one wife for children and solid comfort, and one for companionship—to keep a man from roving abroad."

To his surprise Julia colored and a look of distress and apprehension routed the bright composure of her face.

"I should like children!" she exclaimed. "They would not interfere with my work, either. Why should they?" Then she darted off the track of self. "Tell me of Ishbel. She is happy, I feel sure, and she has two dear little babies. I am the godmother of the first."

"Yes, but she haunts that shop. It was running to seed without her, and she had no sooner taken hold again than the work microbe woke up. Dark doesn't fancy it, but says there's nothing for a sensible man to do these days but take woman as he finds her and chew his little cud in silence. He doesn't forget how both Ishbel and Bridgit calmly shuffled off their husbands when they had no further use for them."

"Work. I fancy that was the real magnet that brought me back. I revelled—revelled—but the reaction set in like a rising tide, and at last was quite as irresistible. I should have come back before this, but I wanted to remain in Acca until I was convinced that the Bahai religion was all it attempted to be. Go there at once. Abdul Baha has promised that you shall live in his house. Moreover, they want a big author to exploit it in the West before it has been misrepresented and

cheapened by the swarm of little writers, always in search of what they call ‘copy.’ ”

“I should feel like a bally hypocrite. I’ve no more religion in me than you have. If God is in man, and self is God, then that atom we call self is what is given us to lean on without asking for more. To demand help outside of ourselves is a confession of failure.”

“Of course. But how many have penetrated the secrets that far? The majority must have a religion to talk about and lean on. When they get the right one, the world will be a far more comfortable place to live in. That, to my mind, is the whole point. You and I have useful brains, and it is our business to help the world along. In my inmost soul, I don’t care any more for the cause of woman or the rights of the working-class—save in so far as it gives me the horrors to think of any one being cold and hungry—than you care about religion; but I shall work just as hard for both as if I never had had a thought for anything else. Now tell me about Bridgit.”

II

NIGEL left her at the door of her hotel and did not see her again for two days. Little did he guess the reason. He carried away to his club (both resentfully and sadly) the picture of a new Julia, all intellect, poise, and mystery; a Julia from whom the impulsiveness, ingenuousness, and young enthusiasm had gone forever, left in that unfathomable East which gives knowledge and takes personality; a cold brilliant creature, with developed genius, no doubt, but with nothing left to beg unto a man's heart and senses. And this, indeed, was one side of Julia, and the only one she purposed the world should see; because in time it was to be her whole self, and she a happy mortal.

When she shut the door of her sitting-room in the gloomy exclusive hotel in one of the quiet streets near Piccadilly, to which she had telegraphed for rooms, she subsided into the easiest chair and cried for half an hour; nor did she ascend from the slough of her despondency for the rest of the day. For the past four years she had lived virtually out of doors. As her angry frightened eyes looked back they recalled nothing but floods of golden light, an endless procession of Orientals, gleaming bronze or copper, turbanned, hooded, dressed in flowing robes of white or every primal hue; streets, crooked, latticed, balconied, sun-baked; gorgeous bazaars; life, color, beauty, romance (to Western eyes) everywhere. She was come to a London wrapped in its old familiar drizzle; huddled over the small grate, its cold penetrated her marrow; in the narrow street, dull, grimy, flat, there was rarely a sound. As she had entered the ugly entrance hall below she had been met by two solemn footmen, one of whom had conducted her slowly up three flights of stairs (there was no lift in this exclusive hostelry); another followed an hour later with her luncheon of good food cooked abominably. The butler stood in front of her like a statue and pretended not to observe her swollen eyes.

If she had been wise, she would have gone to the Carlton or the Ritz, where at least she could have descended at intervals into a very good similitude of luxury and magnificence, been able to fancy herself in the midst of "life"; she would have dined with brilliantly dressed and animated people, and, incidentally, been cheered by French cooking. But, like many others, she favored the small hotel where one was almost obliged to bring a letter of introduction, where one was supposed to be "at home" with personal servants; and where, indeed, one was as deeply immersed in privacy and silence as if quite at home in North Hampstead. Julia, who had been consoled for the loss of the dainty dishes of the East by the kaleidoscopic pleasures of the continent, choked over her shoulder of mutton, large-leaved greens, and hard round peas unseasoned, boiled potatoes, and pudding, wept once more after the remains and the butler had vanished, cursed women, and half determined to take the night train for Egypt and Syria.

She had not wanted to "be met," shrinking from too prompt a reminder of the past. Now she wished that everybody she had ever known had crowded the platform

at Victoria, and “rushed her about,” until she felt at home once more in this huge and dismal and overpowering mass of London. And as ill-luck would have it even her two best friends would be denied her for days, possibly for weeks. Ishbel was in Paris. Bridgit was in Cannes recovering from severe physical injuries incurred in the cause of woman. At one of the great Liberal meetings in the north, during the General Election, she had risen and demanded that the new Government declare its intentions regarding the enfranchisement of women. She had been pulled down, one man had held his hat before her face, and when she struggled to her feet again, protesting that she had the same right to interrupt the speaker with questions as any of the men that had gone unreproved, she had been dragged out by six stewards and plain-clothes detectives, with as much vigor as if she had been the six men and they the one dauntless female. They had mauled her, twisted her, pummelled her, and finally flung her with violence to the pavement. She had gathered herself up, although suffering from a broken rib, attempted to address the crowd in the streets, been arrested and swept off to the town hall. She had given a false name that she might be shown no favor, and the next morning, refusing to pay her fine, was sent to gaol for seven days. She had lain in a cold cell for nearly twenty-four hours unattended, in solitary confinement, and on a small allowance of food which she could not have eaten if well. At the gaol she asked to be sent to the hospital, but before her request was granted, a member of the new Government ascertained her name, and, horrified at the possible consequences to himself, paid her fine summarily, and sent her to a nursing home. Here she had lain until her broken rib had mended, and was now in the south of France assuaging a severe attack of intercostal neuralgia.

This story, told by Nigel, had filled Julia with an intense wrath, and struck the first real spark of enthusiasm in her for the cause of woman, but it burned low in these dull hours of loneliness and nostalgia, and she wished that her magnificent friend had remained as in the early days of their acquaintance, whole in bone and skin, and untroubled of mind.

But if Julia was acting much as the average woman acts during her first hours alone in an immense and inhospitable city, which the sun refuses to shine upon, a city that knows not of her existence and cares less, she was furious with herself, even before she recovered. Where was the poise, the serenity, the grand impersonal attitude, she had learned from her subtle masters in the East? Where the full calm determination with which she had returned to take up her self-elected duties, to gratify a long latent but now full-grown ambition to build a unique pedestal for herself in the world; in other words, to achieve fame and power? Out there it had been both easy and natural to plan, to dream, to vision herself at the head of womankind, burning with the enthusiasm of the artist, even if the cause itself left her cold. She had believed herself made over to that extent, at least; and now she dared not see Nigel Herbert lest she marry him off-hand, and insure herself a life companion and the common happiness of woman.

She denied him admittance, even refusing to go down to the telephone (such were the primitive arrangements of this exclusive hostelry), and vowed that once more, peradventure for the last time, she would wrestle with her peculiar problem and inspect her new armor at every joint.

For Julia, even during her first year in India, had learned lessons untaught by Eastern philosophers. She had no difficulty in recalling the moment when that green shoot had wriggled its head out of what she called the morass in the depths of her nature. She had been floating one moonlight night in a boat propelled by a turbanned silhouette, on a small lake surrounded by a park as dense as a jungle. From the head of the lake rose a marble palace of many towers and balconies, whose white steps were in the green waters. Just overhead was poised the full moon, —a crystal lantern lit with a white flame. A nightingale was pouring forth its love song. Warm, delicious odors were wafted across the lake from the gardens about the palace.

Julia, whose soul had been steeped in all this beauty, her senses swimming with pleasure, suddenly, with no apparent volition, sat upright and gasped with resentment. Why was she alone on such a night? Why, in heaven's name, was not a man with her,—the most charming man the world held, of course (there never was anything moderate in Julia's demands upon Life)? why was not this perfect mate, his own soul steeped, his senses swimming, even as were her own, sitting beside her, looking at her with eyes that proclaimed them as one and divinely happy? It was the night and the place for the very fullness of love, and she was alone. How incongruous! How inartistic! What a waste! Women have been known to feel like this in Venice. How much more so Julia, in the untravelled undesecrated depths of India, at night, with the moon and the nightingale and the heavy warm scents of Oriental trees, and shrubs, and flowers!

When Julia realized where her unleashed imagination had soared, she frowned, deliberately laughed, and opened her inner ear that she might enjoy the crash to earth. But she sat up all that night. From her room in the guest bungalow (her friends had provided her with many letters), she could look upon the white palace, gleaming like sculptured ivory against the black Eastern night, hear the waters lapping the marble steps. Strange sounds came out of the quarters devoted to the superfluous wives and their female offspring: passionate melancholy singing, sharp infuriated cries, monotonous string music, infinitely hopeless.

And she was free, free as the nightingale, free to love; young, beautiful, with the world at her feet. What a fool she was!

Although she had now been in India for nearly a year, this was the first time the sex within her had stirred, and she had been one with scenes lovelier than this, revelled from first to last in all the beauty and variety and mystery and color which she had craved so long in England. In spite of dirt and stench, of entomological bedfellows, bullock carts, and lack of every luxury in which the British soul delights, she was too young and too philosophical to have permitted the worst of

these to interfere with her complete satisfaction. And it had, this wondrous East, absorbed and satisfied her until to-night. She had asked for nothing more. And now she wanted a lover.

Looking back upon her life with France, she discovered that she had practically forgiven him the moment she had been assured of his insanity. No doubt he had been irresponsible from the first. This admission had subconsciously wiped out his offences, and with them the memory of that whole odious experience. She still blamed her mother, but she had pitied France when she thought of him at all. The heavy noxious growth in her soul had withered and disappeared, the dark waters turned clear and sparkling. She was ready for love, for the rights and the glory of youth.

Kneeling there, gazing out at the enchanted palace, watching the moon sail over the misty tree-tops to disappear into the dark embrace of the Himalayas, her annoyance passed, she exulted in this new development, these vast and turbulent demands. She would find love and find it soon.

With Julia to think was to do. The next day she set out on her quest. To love any of these Indian princes was out of the question, even though she might live in marble palaces for the rest of her life. There was nothing for it but to go to Calcutta and present her letters to the viceroy and notable British residents. She found Calcutta the most ill-smelling city on earth, but its society was brilliant and industrious, and she met more charming men than in all her years in England. For some obscure reason Englishmen always are more charming, natural, and even original in the colonies and dependencies than on their own misty isle. Perhaps they are more adaptable than they think, more susceptible to “atmosphere” than would seem possible, bred as they are into formalities and mannerisms of a thousand years of tradition, too hide-bound for mere human nature to combat unassisted.

Moreover, in India they wear helmets, which are vastly becoming, and white linen or khaki, which wars with stolidity. Julia met them by the dozen and liked them all. She danced six nights out of seven, flirted in marble palaces whose steps were in the Ganges, on marble terraces vocal and scented. She had never been so beautiful before, she was quite happy, she was indisputably the belle of the winter, she had several proposals under the most romantic conditions (carefully arranged by herself), and she was wholly unable to fall in love.

At the end of the season she understood, and was aghast. She demanded the wholly impossible in man, a man that never will emerge from woman’s imagination and come to life; a man without common weaknesses, who was never absurd, who was a miracle of tenderness, passion, strength, humor, justice, high-mindedness, magnetism, intellect, cleverness, wit, sincerity, mystery, fidelity, provocation, responsiveness, reserve; who was gay, serious, sympathetic, vital, stimulating, always able to thrill, and never to bore; a being of light with no clay about him, who wooed like a god, and never looked funny when his feelings overcame him, and never perspired, even in India.

In short, Julia packed her trunks and went to Benares to study Hindu philosophy.

But although she was not long finding her balance (in which humor played as distinguished a part as her learned masters), she never wholly ceased to be haunted by the vision of the perfect lover and the complete happiness he must bestow upon a woman as yet not all intellect. There were times when she sat up in bed at night exclaiming aloud in tones of indignation and surprise, "*Where* is my husband? Mine? He *must* exist on this immense earth. Where is he?"

She knew that other women of humor and intellect, Ishbel, for instance, had ended by accepting the best that life purposed to offer them, and been quite happy, or happy enough. But she dared make no such experiment with herself. Genius of some sort she had, and she guessed that geniuses had best be content with dreams and make no experiments with mere mortal men. She knew that if she exiled herself to America, or the continent of Europe, with the most satisfactory man she had met in Calcutta, or even with Nigel Herbert, she ran the risk of hating him and herself before the honeymoon was out. Nevertheless, the woman in her laughed at intellect and went on demanding and dreaming.

But all this did not affect her will nor hinder her mental progress. While automatically hoping, she was hopeless, and bent all her energies toward accomplishing that ideal of perfection she had vaguely outlined the night at White Lodge when once more settling the fate of Nigel. Here in Benares, sitting at the feet of men that appeared to live in their marvellous intellects, and to be quite purged of earthly dross, it seemed simple enough to her strong will and brain. Of mysteries she was permitted more than one glimpse. She felt herself drawing from unseen, unfathomable sources a vital fluid which she chose to believe would in time restore in her that perfect balance of sex qualities, that unity in the ego, which had been the birthright of the man-woman who rose first out of the chaos of the universe, who was happy until clove in half and sent forth to wage the eternal war of sex, even while striving blindly for completion. She learned that in former solar systems, whose record is open only to those so profoundly versed in occult lore that their disembodied selves read at will the invisible tablets, that chosen women had attained this state of perfection, of absolute knowledge, of original sex, and with it immortality. Immortal women. Wonderful and haunting phrase! At certain periods of even earth's history, they had reappeared in human form to accomplish their great and individual work. But their number so far had been few, and they were easily called to mind, these great women that stood out in history; indispensable, mysteriously powerful; disappearing when their work was done, and leaving none of their kind behind them.

Julia's favorite teacher, an old Sufi Mohammedan named Hadji Sadrä, told her that the world, the Western world particularly, was ripe for them again, that now their numbers would be many, for modern conditions made their general supremacy possible for the first time in Earth's history. There was no movement in the East or West that this old philosopher was not cognizant of, no tendency, no deep persistent

stifled mutter; and although he had all the contempt of the ancient Oriental brain for the crude attempts of the Occident to think for itself, he had a growing respect for Western women, and told Julia that all conditions, both in the heavens and on the earth pointed to the coming reign of woman; led in the first place by those reincarnated immortal souls of whom he was convinced she was one, possibly the greatest. So he interpreted her horoscope, laughing at the narrow wisdom of the Western mind which could see naught but a ridiculous position in the peerage of Europe; the starry hieroglyphics plainly indicated that she was to rule her sex and lead it to victory.

All this was highly gratifying to Julia (to whom would it not be?), and feeling herself destined to greatness, found its spiritual part simpler of achievement than if the suggesting had been lacking. In this ideal of perfection there was no question of eliminating human nature, with its minor entrancing elements, its sympathy, tenderness, its power to love; merely the complete control of a highly trained mind over the baser desires, the contemptible faults, the foolish ambitions and temptations, which keep the average mind in a state of bondage, restless, vaguely aspiring, always dipping, and never happy. Nevertheless, love could be but an incident. The highest ideal was to stand alone. The greatest attributes of the masculine and female mind united in one mortal brain, the ability to obliterate the world at will and live in the contemplation of knowledge, the irresistible power which comes of absolute mastery of self and of living in self alone,—unity in the ego, independence of mortal conditions—here was the perfect ideal which Julia was bidden to attain, which few but Orientals have even formulated.

On this high flight had Julia been sustained during the following years. But, sitting in her gloomy, chill and tasteless London sitting-room, she looked back upon it as a fool’s paradise, and felt merely a dismal traveller in a strange city; but recalling a threat of Hadji Sadrä, dared not send for the man she still liked best in the world.

III

NIGHT came, and the night had no terrors for Julia. Her Hindu master had taught her the science of relaxation, and given her certain powerful suggestions, one being that she should fall asleep within half an hour of going to bed and not awaken for eight hours.

The morning, therefore, found her refreshed; and although she was still annoyed at the discovery that she had not made herself over once for all, she had no intention of rocking her feminine ego in her arms again for some time to come. Another lesson she had learned was to switch thought off and on; she relegated her femaleness to the depths, and turned her attention to the work that had drawn her to England. The monthly bulletins with which Mrs. Herbert had remorselessly pursued her, alone would have kept her informed on every phase of the Woman's War, and she had heard somewhat of it elsewhere. She was satisfied that in this new and menacing demand for the ballot, women were prompted neither by vanity nor mere superfluous energy, but by an experience with poverty which had taught them that this great problem was their peculiar province. They were prepared to devote their lives to its solution, to court sacrifices such as man had never contemplated; and they had the time, the instinct, the practical knowledge, which would enable them, if armed with political power, to solve this hideous and disgraceful problem once for all.

Julia had driven through a famine district in India and felt her brain wither, her veins freeze, as she stared at mile after mile of starving skeletons, lying or huddled by the roadside, feebly begging with eyes that seemed to accuse the Almighty for multiplying the superfluous of earth. What to do for these wretches, dying by the million, she had no more idea than Great Britain herself; but if it was beyond human power to grapple with the question of starving millions in a season of drought in India, so much the more reason to attack the less desperate but no less abominable question in a land where the poor were the result of the callousness of man. In dealing with this complicated problem many lessons would be learned that might later be applied to poverty on the grand scale.

The ballot, therefore, was but a means to an end, and to assist in winning it she had returned; meaning to devote to it all her time, her energies, and her talents. But must she join this new "militant movement"? She frowned with distaste. As to many at that date, it seemed both foolish and vulgar. Moreover, like all fastidious women that wish for fame, she shrank from notoriety, from figuring in any sort of public mess. However! She should soon be given her rôle, and whatever it might be, she was resolved to play it to a finish, and without protest.

Meanwhile she was eating her breakfast, the one appetizing meal in England, and when she was further refreshed, she opened the newspaper on the tray, remembering the disaster in San Francisco. The news was more encouraging. The city was still burning, but the loss of life had been comparatively small, and the

inhabitants were either escaping in droves to the towns across the bay or camping on the hills behind San Francisco. Once more Julia's thoughts flew to Daniel Tay, and she conceived the idea of writing to him. Surely an old friend could do no less, and now if ever he would be grateful for remembrance.

Therefore, as soon as she was dressed, she went to the desk in the drawing-room and committed the most momentous act of her life. She wrote to Tay a long and lively letter, full of feminine sympathy, of concern for his welfare and for that of his city. There were many allusions to their brief but unforgotten friendship (she had almost forgotten it!), references to his boyish sympathy, and assurances that she was now well, happy, free, and full of interest in life. "Do write to me," she concluded. "That is, if you ever receive this; and tell me all about your life in the past ten years. Did you go on your ten-thousand-dollar spree? Have you made your great fortune? Are you ruling the destinies of your city? I have always felt sure you would never stop at being merely a rich man. And Mrs. Bode? And Ella?" (alas!) "I do hope they have not suffered too much in this terrible disaster. If you like, if you have not wholly forgotten me all these years, I'll write you of my life in the East these past four, and much else. I remember how freely I used to talk to you, dear little boy that you were, and I don't think I have ever talked so freely to any one else. It would be rather exciting to correspond with you. But if you have quite lost interest in me, at least remember that I have not in you,—no! not for one moment—and long to hear how you have weathered this frightful calamity."

Now, why do women lie like that? Julia was as truthful as any mortal who is a component part of that complicated organism known as society may be, but she wrote these lines without flinching, quite persuaded for the moment, indeed, that she meant every word of them. Perhaps here lies the explanation, in so much as all memories are alive in the subconsciousness, and leap to the mind the instant their slumbers are disturbed by the essential vibration; there to assume full and dazzling control. Let it go at that.

Julia, as a matter of fact, looked somewhat dubiously at the last paragraph of her letter. It was not in the least Oriental. She was also astonished at the length of the letter itself. She had long since discovered, however, that there are some people to whom one can write, and many more to whom one cannot. Oddly enough Nigel Herbert was of the last. He wrote a colorless letter himself, never striking that spark which fires the epistolary ardor; but Julia reflected that she could write for hours on end to Daniel Tay; she felt as if embarked on some vital current which leaped direct from London to San Francisco, no less than seven thousand miles. She sealed the letter.

Then she discovered that the sun was out and remembered that she had an aunt. Her feelings for her only relative in England were not of unmixed cordiality, but it would be something at least to bask for a little in the presence of one so entirely satisfied with herself. Moreover, she wanted news of her mother; and this duty was inevitable in any case.

She determined to walk the short distance to Tilney Street as she wished to post the letter herself. Still exhilarated at the writing of it, she ignored the mud of the streets, sniffed the old familiar grimy air, with some abatement of nostalgia for the East, and even found amusement in the windows of Bond Street.

When she came to the first pillar box and applied her letter to its yawning mouth, she paused suddenly, assailed by one of those subtle feminine presentiments which her long residence in the Orient had not taught her to despise. She withdrew the letter and walked on, smiling, but disturbed. She even passed two more boxes, but at the fourth shot the letter in. Her planets had long since made a fatalist of her, more or less. And she had adventurous blood.

She found Mrs. Winstone risen, groomed, coifed, with even her smile on, and seated before her desk in the front ell of the drawing-room, answering notes and cards of invitation.

“Ah, Julia!” she said casually, as she rose and offered her cheek. “Home again? How nice. But that coat and skirt, my dear! Quite old style.”

“Rather!” said Julia, making herself comfortable. “I took them out with me. Who’s your tailor now?”

“Oh, a new man. A duck. I’ll take you to him this afternoon. Just left one of the big houses, so his prices are quite possible—at present. Glad you’ve kept your complexion. How is it you don’t sunburn?”

“I don’t fancy people born in the tropics ever do. Glad you haven’t grown fat.”

“I’d put on a bit if it weren’t the fashion to look like a plank back and front. I’ve got to the age where I’d look better filled out. ’Fraid I’m really gettin’ on. Beaux are younger every year.”

“You look quite unchanged to me,” said Julia, politely. “How’s the duke?”

“Quite fit, I believe. They’re still at Bosquith. Margaret broke her leg huntin’.”

“Have you heard from my mother lately? I have not, for several months. I had hoped to find a letter here.”

“I got her usual quarterly page the other day. She seems well enough. I’ve been to Nevis since you left. Nerves got rackety, and the doctor told me to go where I’d really be quiet. I was! But I shouldn’t wonder if I went again some day. Never looked so well in my life as when I came back. Simply vegetated.”

“And how does my mother look? I cannot imagine her changed—but—it is a good many years!”

“She looks exactly the same. Ain’t you ever goin’ back?”

“Not until she sends for me. I can’t help feeling that she doesn’t want me,—prefers not to be actively reminded of the last and most tragic disappointment of her life. I sometimes wonder that she writes to me. Her letters are even briefer than those to you.”

“Perhaps you are right. She hasn’t forgiven you—or herself. I tried to tell her

some of your charmin' experiences with Harold,—there was so little to talk about, I thought it might be interestin' to see how she took it,—but she wouldn't listen!"

"Poor mother! What a life! I wonder if she would let me have Fanny?"

"Fanny?"

"Yes, I am quite alone, you know. I could do for her nicely, and it would almost be like having a child of my own."

"I detest Fanny," said Mrs. Winstone, with some show of human emotion. "She's a minx. Jane will have her hands full three or four years from now."

"She was such a dear little thing."

"Well, she's a little devil now. I don't say she mightn't be halfway decent if she'd led a life like other children, but she's never played with a white child, and rules those pic'nies like a she-dragon—she's not too unlike Jane in some things. Her only companion is a washed-out middle-aged governess, who might as well try to manage a hurricane. Jane vows she shall never marry. Her mistake in France seems to have fixed her hatred of man once for all, and although Fanny bores her, she's of no two minds as to her duty toward the brat. She is never to meet a young man of her own class, if you please, and as soon as she is old enough is to be trained in all the duties relating to the estate. Nice time Jane'll have preventin' Fanny meetin' men if only one sets foot on the island; and there's talk of rebuildin' Bath House. She's overcharged with vitality, that child, she's a will of iron, and she's already an adept at deceivin' her grandmother—no mean accomplishment! And she'll get worse instead of better in that ghastly life. I wouldn't trust her across the street three years from now."

"Oh, the poor little thing! She must be rescued. Surely if my mother doesn't care for her she'll be the more willing to give her up. But she must, a little. She was strict with me, but always kind and even affectionate."

"She's not to Fanny. She looks upon her as a plague; and with good reason, for a noisier or more messy child I never saw. But she'll do her duty as she sees it."

"I believe Fanny is really adorable. I shall write at once and beg for her."

"You won't get her, and you needn't regret it. I'm no fool where my sex is concerned: Fanny's the sort that's put into the world to make trouble. What are your plans? Shall you take a flat in town?"

"It will depend." Julia paused a moment and then hurled her bomb. "I've come back to enroll in the Woman's War."

"What?" Mrs. Winstone looked about to faint; then her expression became stony. "Why, women are disgracin' their sex, makin' perfect fools of themselves! Bridgit Herbert must have gone mad. All her friends will cut her. A woman of her class fightin' men and sleepin' in prison! She deserved all she got, and so will you if you've anything to do with these tatterdermalion females shriekin' for notoriety. That's all they're after. Forcin' their way into the House of Commons! No wonder the men are disgusted. It's a middle-class movement, anyhow. You! That's the

reason, I suppose, you don’t mind wearin’ a coat and skirt four years old.”

“Oh, but I do mind! I hope you’ll take me to your tailor this very day.”

“There! I knew you were jokin’. I should simply retire if I had a suffragette in the family. Come down to luncheon and then we’ll go out and shop.”

IV

DURING the early weeks of this same year, Christabel Pankhurst had established in London a branch of the Woman's Social and Political Union founded in Manchester in 1903 by Mrs. Pankhurst. The rooms were in Park Walk, Chelsea, and here were the headquarters of that "Militant Movement" so execrated by the National Union of Woman's Suffrage Societies, and by Society in general. Their numbers were few, their funds were almost nil, their years, with one or two exceptions, absurdly young, they were thrown entirely upon one another for sympathy and approval, a goodly proportion had already been severely pummelled by men twice their size, and in the proportion of three or more to one, and several were still in hospital, injured, perhaps for life. But they had made all England talk about them, and a few, a very few, farsighted men had apprehended them as a definite and permanent factor in the politics of the twentieth century.

Of these was Nigel Herbert, and it was from him that Julia learned all that she did not know already of their history. Bridgit had sent her clippings from newspapers containing references to the opening of the campaign by Miss Pankhurst and Annie Kenny, at the first great Liberal meeting of the General Election in October, which resulted in their arrest and imprisonment. At Acca she had heard the movement discussed by English pilgrims; and in English newspapers, read in continental reading-rooms, she had come across many comments—indignant, sarcastic, infuriate—upon the performances of these outrageous females. But from Bridgit she had not heard since a few days before that lady's own battle royal, and it was to Nigel that she turned for unimpassioned information. He had told her something in the train, and he gave a concise history of the new movement as soon as he was permitted once more to sun himself in her presence.

"They're here to stay," he said. "I know six or eight of them personally; been making a study of them, although they don't know it. They're like no other women under the sun—nor any sun that has ever shone. They've a new group of brain cells, and something new and big is coming out of it. The only historical analogy I know of is those old martyrs that died in the cause of some new departure in religion; those that make such excellent subjects for stained-glass windows. They've got the same look those old leader-martyrs had when chained up to the stake and waiting for the faggot. The same grim patient mouths, the same clairvoyant eyes, as if looking straight at the unborn millions liberated by the martyrdom of the few. Their enthusiasm is cold—and eternal. They are as deliberate as death. There are no better brains in the world. Precious few as good. They never take a step that isn't calculated beforehand, and they never take a step backward. Discouragement and fear are sensations they have never experienced. When they are hurt they don't know it. They fear injury or death no more than they fear the brutes that maul them. In short, they're a new force let loose into the world; and the geese outside put them down as hysterical females. But if this silly old world had always been quick to see

and wise to act we'd have no history. So there you are."

And the next day Julia accepted this estimate without reserve. Having introduced herself at headquarters, registered, and paid her dues, she sat for a time listening to a quick incisive debate upon all steps to be taken in the House of Commons, on the night of the 25th, in case the Woman's Suffrage Resolution, for which Mr. Kier Hardie had secured a place, should be talked out by its enemies.

After a time Julia forgot to listen, being quite convinced that they would act as they purposed to act, and make no misstep. Their looks interested her far more than their words. With possibly two exceptions, whose flesh gave them a superficially conventional appearance, they did not look like women at all. They looked pure brain, sexless, selfless, ruthless. Most of them had as little flesh as it is possible to carry and live, as if Nature herself had sent them into the world trained and hardened for fight and for no other purpose whatever. Julia saw not the slightest evidence of personal ambition in those grim set faces, with eyes that were preternaturally keen in debate, and, to use Nigel's word, clairvoyant in repose; merely that stern inflexible purpose which has been the equipment of martyrs since Society emerged out of chaos; but directed by a mental power, a modern balance, that saved them from the stupidities of fanaticism. That they were ready to go to the stake, or the hangman, she did not doubt, and it was possible that some of them would, unless the enemy came to its senses in time; but that they would fail in their purpose ultimately was as unthinkable as that they would ever lay down their arms. Truly a new force unleashed. Were these the immortal women?

Julia felt thrilled, exalted. All the iron in her nature, a gift of inheritance which had saved her from degradation and melancholy and the common foolishness of women; which, in a word, had made her stronger than life, rose from its long sleep and exulted. Here was a career, and here were associates worth while. The cause of woman in the abstract had left her cold, but when she realized the immense brain power, the unqualified courage, the unhuman endurance, imperative to put the right sort of new life into a great but long moribund cause, and sweep it to a triumphant finish, she felt on fire with enthusiasm; the abilities she had so long played with crystallized suddenly and leapt at their opportunity. Some day she should command these women, or their successors, and to do that would be as great a feat as to lead them to victory. She was more than willing to consecrate her personal ambition to the future of her sex, but that she never could lose sight of it would but give her an additional power. She could become as grim, as relentless, as indomitable as they, but she doubted she could ever be as selfless, or if she wished to be. For a moment she envied as much as she admired them, but the personality she once had believed murdered by her husband had long since revived with a double vitality, and the time was not yet when it could dissolve in the crucible of a cause.

When the meeting broke up she asked to be given active work to do, being well aware that one must serve before fit to command. They had been taught to expect her by Mrs. Herbert, and her offer of service as well as her donation was thankfully

accepted. One of their number was told off to instruct her, and she was ordered to hold herself in readiness to go to the Midlands and take part in a by-election, working to defeat the liberal candidate if he persisted in his attitude of hostility to woman's demand for the vote. She and her present instructor, Mrs. Lime, should heckle him when he spoke, canvass, distribute suffrage literature, and speak against him in the market-place, or at any corner where they could gather a crowd.

The latter part of the program was by no means to Julia's taste, but she had made up her mind to obey orders, and she took them in the same matter-of-fact fashion in which they were delivered. Mentally, she shrugged her shoulders. If these women could stand it, she could. There was not a coarse, a vulgar, a hard face among them. And should she not exult in the prospect of a stirring career, the constant outlet for her energies, the lethe for her womanhood? The more adventurous the details, the better!

"She looks like Lady Macbeth," said one of the girls as Julia departed with an armful of literature, and accompanied by Mrs. Lime. "Cool, calculating, ambitious, intellectual, unscrupulous in the grand manner."

"H'm," said another, dubiously. "Lady Macbeth had her weaknesses, and lost her mind,—something Mrs. France must retain if she is to be as useful to this cause as Mrs. Herbert and Lady Dark would have us believe."

"Lady Macbeth up to date, then. The original was shut up in a castle with too few interests and opportunities; nothing to distract her mind. And remember she accomplished her purpose first."

V

If one will dig deeply enough into the psychology of those great enthusiasms which have altered the course of history, one will generally discover some personal, overlaid, self-forgotten motive which bred the martyrs and kindled the leaders necessary to arrest the attention of the world, and make the vast number of converts essential to give any cause dignity and insure to it victory. It may be an acute disappointment in human nature, some assault upon highest instincts or treasured convictions, or even disappointed ambition; but above all is it likely to have its seed in that burning hatred of injustice which animates all minds with a natural bias for reform. The Prophets may have been inspired and preordained, but leaders and martyrs hardly, although they are entitled to the first rank in the history of the Great Causes.

With Bridgit Herbert it had been not only the profound reaction of a fine mind from the empty life of society, but the bitter recognition that she had lavished the wealth of her nature on a handsome fool, who laughed and kissed her when her ego struggled out of its embryo and looked for wings on his. Then had come the amazing discovery that the men she most liked, of whose friendly devotion she had felt assured, had no possible use for her when they found that she purposed to console herself with her intellect instead of with themselves; that so slight was the impression the greatness in her nature had made on them, they would be the first to balk her on every issue she held most dear. Her vanity soon healed, but she had been cut to the quick; and all the obstinacy, scorn, and strength in her arose, and counselled her to pay back to man something of what woman had suffered at his hand throughout the ages.

It is possible that if Christabel Pankhurst, bred on suffrage as she was, had not been refused admission to the Bar when she applied to the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn Fields, she might not have conceived the Militant Movement at the psychological moment. Julia needed no further inducement to enter the career she once for all elected to follow that afternoon in Chelsea, but she, too, needed the sharp personal jolt to banish the abstract, and substitute the concrete enthusiasm; and she got it long before her impersonal ardor had time to cool.

Ten days after she had received her first instructions, she arrived with Mrs. Lime in the Midland town where the by-election campaign was to open. Mrs. Lime was an experienced heckler, and was already acquainted with the inside of prison and gaol, but unknown in the Midlands. Julia had found much inspiration in Mrs. Lime, a typical product of that awakening which began in 1901. Her small body looked as if it might have an unbreakable skeleton of steel, and her gaunt, dark, rapt face was deeply lined, although she was but twenty-four. Like Annie Kenny, she had been a half-timer at the loom at the age of ten, and had worked in the cotton mill until she married a plumber eight years later. Her husband died when she was twenty-two, and she was using his savings in the cause which she knew to be the one hope for

thousands of girls, overworked and underfed, as she had been. In her early youth she had managed, against desperate odds, to acquire an education of sorts, and her speeches were remarkably effective; terse, logical, and informing. Once she would have worshipped the luminous beauty of this new recruit, but now she merely regarded it as a practical asset.

“Don’t let yourself run down,” she said to Julia as they sat in their hotel the night before the opening of the campaign, discussing their own. “Keep that hair bright, and wear your good clothes, as long as you’ve got them. Our ladies think too little about clothes, and its natural, being at this business all their lives, as you might say. But with you it’s different. You’ve got the born style, and you’d have hard work looking dingy. Don’t try. You’ve got just the air and the beauty to attract the crowd at the street corner, although you’ll soon be too familiar a figure to the police to get past the door. But ugly little things like me can do the heckling.”

The Liberal candidate made his first speech on the following night, but neither Julia nor Mrs. Lime found it possible to enter the hall. Men were learning wisdom. All women without cards or escorts were barred. Both the girls were roughly handled as they attempted again and again to obtain entrance; and as there was no crowd outside to address, they went back to the hotel to await the candidate’s return. They sat in the passage, and when he came in, shortly after eleven o’clock, Mrs. Lime immediately confronted him.

“You will tell us, if you please,” she said, “what you mean to do about giving the ballot to women.”

The candidate, who had congratulated himself upon accomplishing the exclusion of suffragettes from the hall, and had even taken the precaution to leave by the back door, colored with annoyance; and his eyes flashed contempt upon the plain little figure planted in his path.

“I state my intentions on the platform,” he said haughtily, and attempted to brush past her. But Mrs. Lime changed her own position and once more impeded his progress.

“Your intentions regarding votes for women,” she said in her even emotionless voice. “You are said to oppose it. I warn you that unless you assert that this is not true, and that you will do all in your power to assist us in winning the ballot, we shall do all we can to defeat you in this election.”

“We?” He laughed outright. “How many more of them are there like you?”

Julia rose and came forward. “Two,” she said. “And two against one is a proportion never to be despised.”

The man stared at her and his overbearing manner underwent a change.

“Oh, you!” he said. “Well *you* might get something out of a man if you tried hard enough.”

France had more than once burst out that his wife had the north pole in her eyes, that it was a waste of time to look for it anywhere else; and the frozen stare which

this candidate received dashed his mounting ardor. He frowned heavily. “I say!” he said. “Get out of this. It’s no business for you.”

“Since when have politics ceased to be the business of English women? You will declare for us publicly and unmistakably, or I shall make it my business to defeat you.”

He stared at her again, this time in some dismay. He had yet to learn the power of women in general, when possessed of the brain and courage and holy fervor that are no mean substitutes for beauty and family, but he well knew the power that women of the class to which this antagonist belonged had wielded in the political history of England. For a moment he hesitated. What was a promise to a woman? And it would be safe to get rid of this woman as quickly as possible. The other, of course, didn’t matter. But he was an honest man in politics, whatever his other failings, and he would as soon have given the vote to the devil as to women. He turned on his heel.

“Do your worst,” he said. “That’s all you’ll get out of me.”

The next day Julia hired a motor car, and they pursued the candidate from town to town and village to village. He was contesting a large borough, whose member, returned at the general election, had died suddenly. It contained several towns and many villages. In the latter, Julia and Mrs. Lime visited every cottage, petted the children, distributed their literature, promised all they conscientiously could if the ballot were given to women, and implored help in defeating a man who was an avowed enemy. They converted most of the women, and made no little impression on the men, most of them colliers, who gathered about their car in the evenings. The car impressed the men almost as much as the eloquence of the speakers. Their thick heads, generally thicker at eight in the evening, were as impervious to female suffrage as the heads at Westminster, but Julia and Mrs. Lime had borrowed all the arguments of the Conservative candidate and used them with no less eloquence, and the more penetrating ingenuity of their sex.

At every hall they were refused admittance. Julia soon grew accustomed to being pulled about; her arms were black and blue; and she had twice been obliged to invest in new hats both for herself and Mrs. Lime. Her diffidence had vanished, and, her fighting blood up, and now completely interested, she spoke whenever the opportunity offered.

One dark night, when they had had the usual experience at the hall entrance, they were prowling about hoping to find an unguarded door, when they espied a scaffolding under one of the high windows. It was elevated on a rough trestle. The same idea animated them simultaneously. Without a word they climbed the precarious foothold, tearing their skirts, and splintering their hands, and felt their way along the scaffolding until they were close to the window. Then they unrolled their white banners inscribed “Votes for Women,” and waited. The candidate, who possessed the inestimable advantage of belonging to the party just come into power, was lauding its virtues, promising all things in its name, and reiterating the

abominations, now somewhat stale, of the party that was responsible for the colossal war taxes, and the industrial depression. There were pertinent questions asked, which he answered good-naturedly; for although he would fain have gone through his carefully rehearsed speech uninterrupted, he was far too keen a politician to insult a voter.

“Now!” whispered Mrs. Lime, and simultaneously two heads appeared at the window, two banners were waved, and Julia, having the more carrying voice, cried out: —

“And how about Votes for Women?”

If a flaming sword had appeared, there could not have been more excitement. The candidate turned purple. The chairman jumped to his feet, crying “outrageous,” and the audience took up the word and shouted it, some shaking their fists. Several men ran down the aisle.

“The stewards!” whispered Mrs. Lime, “and they’ll be joined by the door police.”

It was darker than ever without, after the glare of the hall, but once more they felt their way along the scaffolding, reached the uprights, and clambered down just as a dark mass turned the corner of the building.

There was no time to cross the street. Mrs. Lime seized Julia’s hand and darted under the trestle. “Lie down with your face to the wall, and close,” she commanded.

Their clothes were dark and they were unobserved by the men, who stood for a moment looking up.

“I’ll go up this side,” said one of the policemen, after straining the back of his neck in vain, “and you go up the other. The rest look in that shed behind. That’s where they likely are.”

The men mounted gingerly, the others disappeared. Mrs. Lime gave Julia a tug, they wriggled out, and ran round to the front entrance. Before those on the rear benches knew what was happening, the two girls were halfway down the middle aisle. Then another roar arose.

“Put them out! Put them out!”

Julia and Mrs. Lime attempted to mount a bench, but were pulled down. About them was a sea of astonished indignant faces, such as, no doubt, confronted the British working-man years before when he so far forgot himself as to demand equal political rights with the gentry and the employer. Julia laughed outright as she saw those scandalized faces, but it would have fared ill with them when the police and stewards came running back, had not several gentlemen, who, unwilling to see violence done to women, however they might disapprove of their tactics, formed a bodyguard, and escorted them to the door. Quite satisfied with their night’s work they went to their inn and slept soundly.

VI

So far they had not spoken in any of the larger towns, for in this manufacturing and colliery district it was difficult to collect a crowd in the market-place except on Saturday nights, and heretofore heavy rains had kept the men indoors with their pipe and beer. But they distributed their literature on the streets, and in shops and hotel dining-rooms, visited every house to which they could obtain entrance, and scored one signal triumph. The Conservative candidate, watching their progress, and having no fixed scruples to violate, came out sonorously for Woman. He even called on them personally and promised his active help in Parliament if they would canvass for him. They did not place too much faith in his word, but they were out to defeat an enemy, one who was also a member of that party responsible for all the indignities visited upon their cause. By this time that momentous night had come and gone when Mrs. Pankhurst and her band were forcibly ejected from the latticed gallery above the House of Commons, after hearing their bill talked out; and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, after receiving the deputation of representative women with amiability and encouragement, had astounded them with the warning that they were to expect nothing from his Cabinet. So war had been declared on the Government, and this was merely the first of the by-elections which was to give the women an opportunity to exhibit their power.

“We’ve a chance!” said Mrs. Lime, as the Conservative candidate smiled himself out of their presence. Her dark eyes were full of light, her sad mouth smiling. “Oh, but a chance! If we could only win! There’d be some head-shaking up there at Westminster.”

“Well!” said Julia, also triumphant, “at least we’ve made the Liberal candidate look persecuted. I know that every time he catches sight of us he longs to call the police.”

The following day was Saturday and they arrived at one of the most important towns in the district. The sun was out and it was immediately decided to take the corner hustings. By this time, Julia had quite forgotten her old objection to street corners; it seemed to her that she had forgotten everything she had known on any subject than the one in possession; and she was further inspired by the discovery that her tongue possessed both persuasiveness and power. Even bad speakers like to hear themselves talk as soon as they have mastered fright, and never was there a good one that would not rather be on the stump than off it. Julia was enjoying this hard fighting as she had never enjoyed anything in her life.

The town was surrounded by cigarette factories, and on this Saturday afternoon it seemed to Julia that every girl they employed must be promenading the streets with her hooligan swain. They were bold-looking creatures, cheaply and loudly attired, and universally hilarious. By this time Julia had concluded that the common people of this section of the Midlands were more common, more rude, more offensive than any she had encountered in England, with the possible exception of

the barbarians in the London slaughter houses. Even Mrs. Lime remarked sadly that comparative prosperity did not seem to improve her class. But Julia had yet to learn that these young people had a brutal license in their natures, a ribald savagery, that was a part of their general indifference to morals or any sense of decency.

She and Mrs. Lime immediately divided the town into districts, and seeing a group on a corner near to which there was a convenient box, Julia mounted her platform and began to address the eight or ten young men and women. At first they merely gave a rough laugh; then one cried out: —

“W’y, it’s a bloomin’ suffragette! Oh, I say, wot a lark! W’y ain’t ’er golden ’air ’anging down ’er back?”

Julia had heard remarks of this sort before, although her speaking experience had lain almost altogether in the villages, where the human animal, less sophisticated, is also less aggressive. In a few moments the group had become a crowd that blocked the street, and she quite believed that no speaker had ever looked into so many hard and hostile eyes. The face of every man wore an insulting grin. She went on unperturbed, however, welcoming them at any price, for this was her first opportunity to address a town crowd. The more hostile, the better. She was confident of getting their ear in time.

But it was soon evident that they had no intention of giving her their ear. They roared with laughter, they gave unearthly cat-calls. Finally one hurled a vile epithet at her. This was a signal which unloosed their proudest accomplishment. When they had exhausted their vocabulary, and it was a large one when it came to obscenity, they began again; but finding that she looked down at them undisturbed, merely waiting for a pause, they began to grow angry, and pushed forward. Julia’s box was already against the wall, there was no possible means of retreat, and there was not a friendly face in that ugly crowd. But she was not conscious of any fear. Not only was she fearless by nature, but she had been trained during these last four years to impassivity in any crisis. What she really felt was the profound disdain of the aristocrat for the brainless mob, and although she did not realize this at the moment, it did flash through her mind that here was one section of the poor that might go to the devil for all the help and sympathy it would ever get from her. But of these and other uncomplimentary sentiments she betrayed no more than she did of fear, although she was not sufficiently hardened to suppress an inward quiver at the foul language with which she had now been assailed for some ten minutes.

“Oh, I say!” cried one of the girls, when her companions finally paused to draw breath. “Is she a bloomin’ stature? Let’s put some life in ’er.” And another shrieked, “Wot’s golden ’air for if it ain’t ’anging down ’er back? Let’s put it w’ere it belongs.”

“That’s right.”

The crowd surged forward. Julia, looking into those primitive faces, the faces of good old barbarians, full of the lust to hurt, wondered if her time had come. She made no doubt that they would tear the clothes off her back, perhaps trample her

underfoot, for they had lashed their passions far beyond their limited powers of restraint. She squared her shoulders. For the moment the world looked to her full of eyes and fists. Then she hastily glanced to right and left. Down the street two blue-clad figures were advancing, accompanied by the Liberal candidate and another man. She drew a long breath of relief. She had grown to look upon the British policeman as her natural enemy, but now she hailed him as her only friend on earth.

She raised her arm and indicated the approach of the law. One of the men followed her gesture, and shouted, “The bobbies.” The clinched hands dropped and the crowd fell back. As the two policemen strode up Julia expected to see official fists fly, and as many arrests made as two men of law could handle. To her amazement the policemen pushed their way through the mob and jerked her off the box.

“Nice doings, this,” cried one, indignantly. “Obstructing traffic and collecting crowds. Ain’t you suffragettes ever going to learn sense?”

“I!” cried Julia, with still deeper indignation. “You had better arrest your townspeople. Couldn’t you hear them using language that alone ought to send them to jail? And couldn’t you see that they would have torn me to pieces in another moment? Why don’t you arrest them?”

“It’s you we’re going to arrest. It’s you that’s obstructing traffic and collecting crowds, not them. They’re out for their ’arf ’oliday.”

“But I tell you they threatened me with violence.”

“Serves you right. You come along, and if you make any fuss you’ll get hurt, sure enough.”

And Julia, filled with a wrath of which she had never dreamed herself capable, was dragged off between the two policemen, while the crowd jeered and howled, and the Liberal candidate stood on the other side of the street laughing softly.

Once her fury so far overcame her that she struggled and attempted to break away, but one of the men gave her arm such a wrench that she walked quietly to the Town Hall, thankful that anger had burned up her tears.

At the Town Hall she was charged with disorderly conduct and obstructing traffic, and promptly committed to a cell, to await trial on Monday morning.

So Julia spent twenty-four hours in prison. She could have summoned sleep at night had she been disposed, but nothing was farther from her thought. She was too infuriated to sleep and forget for a moment the gross injustice to which she had been subjected by the laws of a country supposed to be the most enlightened on the globe. She had mounted a box to make a peaceable—not an incendiary—speech, something men did whenever they listed, and with no fear of punishment. Her denouncement of the Liberal candidate and her plea for Suffrage would have contained no offence against law and order; but she had been treated as if she had incited a riot, while the vile creatures that had insulted and threatened her were not even reprimanded.

In a mind naturally fair and just, nothing will cause rebellion so profound as an act of gross injustice. Had Julia, from a safe vantage point, seen Mrs. Lime or any other woman treated as she had been, her soul would have boiled with righteous wrath; but it takes the personal indignity to sink deep and bear results. Julia in that long night and the day that followed, cold, half-fed, alone, in a vermin-ridden cell, forgot her ambitions, her artistic pleasure in playing a part well, and became as rampant a suffragette as any of the little band in Park Walk. She would war against these stupid brutes in power as long as they left breath in her, fight to give women the opportunity to do better. Something was rotten when justice worked automatically without logic; and if men were too indifferent to effect a cure, it was time another sex took hold. No wonder these chosen women were indifferent to femininity, and gowns, and all that had given woman her superficial power in the past. What mortal happiness they missed mattered nothing. They were equipped for one purpose only, to avenge and protect the millions ignored by nature and fortune, and the victims of man-made laws; and if they were mauled, and torn, and despised, and killed, it was but the common fate of the advance guard, the martyrs in all great reforms; they were quite consistent in being as indifferent to sympathy as to the denunciations of the fools that saw in them but a new variety of the unwomanly woman.

And so Julia received her baptism of fire.

VII

On Sunday afternoon, her wrath had burned itself out, but not its consequences. As she had no intention of making herself ill she was about to lie down and sleep, when her door was opened and she was told that she was free.

This was by no means welcome, for she wished to express herself in court, refuse to pay her fine, and go to gaol, that being the program of the suffragettes. But she was told to depart, and no explanation was given her. Wondering if the duke had been telegraphed to, and brought swift influence to bear, she left the prison with some uneasiness; her old-fashioned relative was her one source of apprehension. If disapproval overcame his sense of justice and he cut down her income, she should have that much less to devote to the Suffrage cause.

At the inn she found that Mrs. Lime, who had escaped arrest, was out, and ordered the maid to bring her bath. When she had finished, the maid returned with her tea, and stood by sympathetically.

"So you've been to prison?" she asked.

"I have," said Julia.

"That's no place for you, mum. Wot's the perlice thinking of, giving you wot for like that?"

"Do you belong to this town?"

"I do, mum."

"Then, let me tell you, it is a disgrace to a civilized country."

"Oh, I say!"

Julia, who wanted to talk to somebody, gave an account of her adventure with the mob, and while omitting their language, let it be understood in her descriptions of their appearance and performance.

The woman nodded emphatically. "Right you are. It's them factory girls. They're no good. Trollops, all of 'em. W'y, d'you know, I worked in one of them factories for seven years, and I was the only girl in the lot that kep' me virtue." (She looked like a black-and-tan terrier and was not much larger.) "That I did, though!" And she nodded her head as if keeping time to a hymn.

Julia, who had finished her tea, stood up and began to unpin her hair as a hint that she would like to be alone. But the woman set down the tray and exclaimed in a voice of rapture: —

"Oh, my eye, wot *hair*! Oh, but I've always admired golden 'air, me own's that black."

"It's very disreputable hair at present," said Julia, amiably. "It hasn't been down since yesterday morning. Naturally I couldn't use the prison comb—if there was one!"

“Oh—would you—would you let me brush it, now?” cried the woman, eagerly. “I’ve never ’ad me ’ands in ’air like that. I’d enjoy it, that I would.”

“Why—if you like.” Julia, who was tired, felt that it would not be unpleasant to have the services of a maid once more.

She sat down and the woman began to unbraid the long plaits.

“Are you sure you have the time?” asked Julia, perfunctorily.

“Oh, yes. Me ’usband’s ’ead waiter, and the master would give up the ’otel before ’im; and he—Jim—-don’t dare say nothing to me, for fear I’d caterwaul. I can do that awful. Oh, my eye, but this is ’air!”

She shook out the long strands and held one up to the light. “Oh, Gawd!” she cried, with mounting fervor. “No wonder them trollops wanted to mar you. They were jealous, that’s wot. They’d ’ave cut it off if the perlice ’adn’t come along, and pinned it on their own ’eads. And beauties they’d ’ave been!”

“Do you suppose they were drunk?”

“ ’Alf and ’alf. It wasn’t time to be full up, but you oughter see them in the market-place at ten o’clock!”

“What makes them so brutal, then? I’ve never seen anything like them in England.”

“Oh, I fawncy they’re about the worst England’s got. Maybe it’s the cigarette factories does it, I cawn’t say. But they’re a rotten lot, and all me sisters was the same. I ’ad a blond sister, but her hair was more whitish, not gold like yours. She was pretty and more gentle-like, but she went to the bad fast enough. I swore I’d keep me virtue an’ I did. I never spoke to a man I wasn’t introduced to proper until the night I met Jim in the merry-go-round—in the same seat, he was, and he made up to me—fell that in love he couldn’t see straight, and when he tried ’is nonsense, he got wot for and then he respected me from that day forth—I’ve read me penny dreadfuls, you see. Well, we got married proper, and now we ’ave two good positions, and may own a public some day. It pays to be virtuous, it do. He isn’t the only sweetheart I ever ’ad, either,” she rambled on; and Julia, seeing that nothing would quench her, resigned herself, for the woman’s touch was deft and light. “I ’ad a fine ’andsome sweetheart once—Jim ain’t nothing to look at, and would drink if I didn’t caterwaul so—’andsome and upstanding he was, and all the girls was after him; and he was steady, too, had one job and kep’ it. He was in a big Manchester draper’s shop. He used to come ’ere, and I used to visit me aunt—he was me cousin and ’is name was Harry Muggs. He was in love with me that desperate he’d swear he’d kill himself if I didn’t ’ave ’im. He knew I’d kep’ me virtue, and he thought me grand. Once he was down ’ere after me ’ard, and we took a walk and come to a pond, and when I told ’im once more I wouldn’t ’ave ’im, and started to go ’ome, I was that tired saying no, he caught me round me waist and ’eld me over the pond and swore he’d drop me in if I didn’t ’ave ’im. I was that frightened I thought I’d die, and I screamed like I was stuck. But I wouldn’t give in, and then he threw me

on the bank and run off and I've never seen 'im since."

"Why didn't you marry him, if he was such a paragon?" asked Julia, languidly.

"Oh, I couldn't, mum. He was a chance child. Me aunt 'ad 'im by a butler where she lived. I 'adn't kep' me virtue for *that*—wot's the matter—"

Julia was doubled up.

"Oh—nothing—really—I think I must be a bit hysterical after my experience. Would you mind telling me what the weather looks like? It was rather threatening when I came in."

The woman went to the window and lifted the sash curtain. "It damps, mizzles like," she said dubiously. "But I don't fawncy it'll rain 'ard. 'Ere comes your friend. She was ready to drop last night. My, but she's that stringy to look at."

"Would you mind telling her that I am here? She must be anxious."

The woman departed unwillingly, her eyes fixed to the last on the hair Julia was braiding. A moment later Mrs. Lime came in. She looked thinner and gaunter than ever, but her eyes burned with sombre enthusiasm.

"Oh, you poor dear!" she exclaimed. "But you mustn't mind, for the more unfair treatment we receive, the sooner will the right-thinking people of the country be roused, and the more recruits we shall get. That's where the law shows its stupidity."

"I didn't mind in the least," said Julia, dryly. But she made no confidences. That violent upheaval and readjustment were sacred to herself.

"There's another thing," said Mrs. Lime. "A reporter was with the Liberal candidate and the policemen at the time of your arrest. He's also the correspondent of a London paper. He hunted me up at once to get some particulars about your family, etc.—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Julia. "Did you tell him?"

"Why, of course. We cannot have too much publicity, and you will be a great help to us. The story will be in the London newspaper to-morrow morning as well as here. No doubt there will be a London reporter down to interview you—"

"Ah!" Julia's color had been steadily rising. "I can't have that."

"There's only one thing to think of," said Mrs. Lime, severely, "and that is the cause. People complain that we're sensational, trying to attract public attention. Why, of course we are. Rather. How otherwise can we make ourselves known, much less felt, become a political issue, if we don't take the obvious method? No newspaper would notice our existence if we didn't make ourselves 'news' and force their hand. Peaceful demonstrations, like shrinking personalities, belong to the dark ages of Suffrage, when nothing was accomplished. Now, if that reporter comes down from London, you must talk. Jump at every chance to further the cause that's given you. It isn't so often we're interviewed."

"Very well," said Julia, and half wished she had changed her name and dyed her

skin and hair.

As Mrs. Lime had anticipated, a reporter of one of the less conservative London newspapers arrived on the following morning. He was accompanied by the correspondent of a chain of American newspapers, commonly referred to as “Yellow.” Mrs. Lime saw them first and gave a full account of the campaign. Then Julia descended, and having made up her mind to talk, she talked to some purpose. When she finished, there was no confusion in either of the young men’s minds as to her opinion of the Government, the police, and the prison system of England. Her description of the mob was so graphic that the American correspondent nodded with approval.

“Say!” he exclaimed. “You ought to have six months of this experience, and then go over to the U. S. and lecture. You’d make money for your cause all right, all right. Better think it over.”

“That’s not a bad idea,” said Mrs. Lime, with enthusiasm. “We will think it over.”

During the afternoon the girls once more started off on the heels of the candidate. But their work was almost done. The polling took place on the following Thursday. Almost as much to their own amazement as to that of every one else, the Liberal candidate was defeated by a small majority. But if it was the first demonstration of the power of the Militants in by-elections, it was by no means the last.

There was no question in the London press of ignoring this issue and its cause. With one accord it expressed astonishment, indignation, and righteous wrath, at the unpatriotic selfishness of a set of women that were a disgrace to their country and their sex.

VIII

Mrs. Lime was recalled to London, and Julia, being now full fledged, was ordered to make a tour of certain districts of the north and west, speak in all circumstances, and make converts not only to the cause of Suffrage, but to the Woman's Social and Political Union.

Julia for the next four months spoke nearly every day, sometimes twice a day. She had encounters with the police, although she tactfully avoided street corners, and they hardly could eject her from a hall she herself had hired. There were towns, however, where the feeling among men was so strong against the new manifestation of Suffrage, that owners refused to rent her their halls, and then she spoke either in a friendly drawing-room, at a working-girls' club, on the common, or, on Sunday, in an open field. On the whole, however, she had far less trouble with the authorities than she expected and fewer unfriendly demonstrations. Occasionally, the rear benches were occupied by hooligans employed to howl her down, and to these infringements the police were deaf; but in the audience there was usually a sprinkling of respectable men who had come to hear what she had to say; and when they were tired of the interruptions, they arose as one man and disposed of the intruders.

She found herself addressing great and greater crowds, for the north was awakening in earnest; the laboring women had been ready for years, and now the middle class, long torpid, was furnishing recruits every hour. Annie Kenny's second and long imprisonment caused wide-spread interest as well as indignation, and her release was celebrated by great meetings of welcome both in London and the provinces. After addressing crowds in Lancashire, and receiving an ovation, she went to Wales to speak, and Mrs. Pethick Lawrence and Bridgit Herbert, once more whole and belligerent, held a series of meetings in Yorkshire.

Like a heather fire the new gospel of Suffrage swept over the north, and where a few months since the W. S. P. U. had struggled along with a few hundred members, it now reckoned its thousands.

Julia, like many another aspirant for fame, found that she must submit to have notoriety thrust upon her first. She was regarded as "news" both by the British and the American press. Reporters followed her about, she had been ordered by headquarters to have her photograph taken, and it frequently embellished the sumptuous weekly newspapers. There was no question of her popularity as a speaker, aside from the growing popularity of her subject. She not only spoke with a full command of the principles and intentions of the new movement, often brilliantly, and always well, never with sentimentality, and often with power, but she was a charming figure to look at. She had sent for her trunks and her maid.

She rarely felt tired, for the artificial method of relaxation which she had been taught, and practised daily, gave both brain and body a more complete rest than

sleep itself. Therefore, was she always in form, and never looked worn. As her fame grew, more and more of the county people attended her meetings, and many distinguished names upon which the Government relied for opposition were added to the list of converts.

She was also complimented by covert offers from the pillars of the anti-suffrage party, and one supporter of the Government went so far as to make love to her; then, finding himself inoculated with his own virus, retired in discomfort after a dry reference by Julia to Parnell and Mrs. O'Shea.

"How do you like being famous?" asked Mrs. Herbert one day. They had planned to meet for Sunday.

"Famous? Is that what you call it?"

"Rather. We live in the twentieth century. The advertising poster is the modern work of art. I'm told your picture has appeared in every illustrated paper in the United States. It's not only your beauty and brains and Kingsborough connection. Some people have a magnetism for the public, and you are one of them. You strike the spark."

"The oddest thing about it all is that there doesn't seem to be the least jealousy among the women in London. They might easily resent that a newcomer with no more ability than themselves should suddenly shoot up into what you call fame. It's almost uncanny."

"Jealous? Not they. What they're after is freedom and power for women, and they don't care tuppence whose sun shines the brightest in the process. They're depersonalized, those women."

"All the same it's uncanny. It makes them the more formidable. As Nigel says, they're a new race. I believe I'm growing just like them. I'd go to the stake myself, or blow up Westminster. The only thing that worries me is the attitude of the duke. Of course he is furious, looks upon me as a disgrace to the family, particularly since I can't keep out of the newspapers. I've had two letters from him, threatening to withdraw my income if I don't retire into private life. He's not the man to take back what he has given, without qualms, but I fancy he will, and that will leave me with exactly two hundred pounds a year,—all that I am allowed from Harold's estate. That would merely keep me, and so far I've never called upon the Union's exchequer. I wish I might always be able not only to pay my own expenses, but contribute largely to the fund."

"The duke running the W. S. P. U. is sufficiently humorous. However, you've nothing to worry about. The American public would pay much gold to hear you speak, and you can always write."

IX

EARLY in September Julia spoke in Bradford and Keighley, and on the following Sunday she slipped away and went to Haworth, not only to rest and read a number of letters forwarded by her solicitors, but to worship at the shrine of the Brontës.

She took a fly at the station in the valley, but halfway up the steep road which leads to the village she descended precipitately; the fly and the horse had executed a right angle. She walked the rest of the distance, the rough stones giving a foothold, and soon reached the long crooked street which begins with the Black Bull Inn and finishes at the moor. Short streets ending nowhere radiated from this central thoroughfare at irregular intervals. There was no business to speak of in Haworth. The men worked in Keighley or Bradford, the young women in the worsted mills of the valley. Julia, driving the day before, had watched the long procession of girls, shawls pinned about their heads, file out of the factories, and, two by two, cross the valley either to the road that led up to Haworth, or to another village higher above the moor. It was the proud boast of Haworth that every inhabitant had a bank book, and Julia felt it would be a relief to visit one village where there was no poverty. It looked trim and prosperous, picturesque though it was, and such men and women as were to be seen had none of that pinched hopeless look which had put fire into so many of her speeches.

After she had duly admired Branwell Brontë's chair, which the landlady of the inn assumed she had come to see, and had made it understood that she really intended to stay overnight, she was shown to a large room upstairs, overlooking the churchyard. The inn, in fact, formed one of its walls, and there were flat stones directly beneath her window. It was a gloomy crowded churchyard, with toppling box-tombs and heavy dusty trees, its farther boundary the low stone parsonage that had sheltered the Brontës. They, too, could read the inscriptions on the stones from their windows. Small wonder they died of consumption.

From the street came the sound of children's voices and wooden clogs. Her room, with its old four-post bed, was almost sumptuous. Julia would have liked to stay a month. But time pressed. She established herself comfortably and slit the large envelope containing her letters.

At sight of one she sat upright and changed color, but put it aside to read last.

The first she opened was from the duke. He wrote tersely and to the point. This was his final warning. The next time she should receive his communication through his solicitors. Another was from Hadji Sadrä containing much advice and some approval. Her mother, to whom Mrs. Winstone had sent numerous printed accounts of her "performances," wrote as briefly as the duke and even more to the point. Julia was a public woman and a disgrace to her blood. (It would never have occurred to Mrs. Edis to add that she was a disgrace to her sex.) The request for Fanny had some time since been curtly refused.

Then she looked at the envelope of Tay's letter, and finally opened it. To her surprise it was dated May second. It began characteristically.

> "Do I remember you? Gee! Well! Rather, oh, princess of the eyes and hair. Things have happened since last we met, not forgetting April sixteenth of the current year, but I can see you as plainly as I saw the chimney fall on my bed on the date just mentioned. Yes, I've grown some, and you may imagine me, at the present moment, if you please, dressed in khaki and top-boots, with a beard of three weeks' growth (I'm as smooth as a play-actor generally) and almost as much dirt; for water, like everything else in this now historic town, is mighty scarce. At the present moment I am stifling in the linen closet, that being the only room in my wrecked home without a window; if I lit a candle where it could be seen I'd be liable to a bullet in my devoted head, such being the stern ardors of those new to authority. I've not had a minute to answer your letter in the daytime. What between standing in the bread-line for hours on end (often with a Chinaman in front and a nigger behind) that my poor old parents may not starve—every servant deserted on the 16th—and cooking two meals a day in the street (lucky I've always been a good camper), and hustling round Oakland the rest of the time, trying to patch up the house of Tay, besides inditing many pages of foolscap to assure the eastern and Central American firms we do business with that we are still at the same old stand (so they won't sell us out to somebody else),—well, my golden princess of the tower, you can figure out that I'm pretty busy.
>
> "I wish you could have seen the old town, for there'll never be a new one like it, conglomeration of weird and separate eras as it was; but on the whole I'd rather you saw it now. It makes the Roman Forum look like thirty cents. Imagine miles of broken walls, columns, and arches, of all shades of red and brown and smoky gray, yawning cellars full of twisted débris, one heap of ruins with a dome like an immense bird-cage, still supporting something they called a statue, but never much to look at until its present chance to appear suspended in air. If it wasn't the wreck of *my* town, I'd have some artistic spasms, but as it is, I'm only thinking out ways and means to get rid of these artistic ruins as quickly as possible.
>
> "It's rather fine, do you know, the enthusiasm of these homeless, meatless, pretty-well-cleaned-out inhabitants, for the great new city that is to be. We all feel like pioneers—and look like them!—but with this difference: we *know* that we are in at the making of a great new city, and the old boys never knew what was coming to them, or how soon they'd move on. Here we stick, and sixty earthquakes couldn't shake us off, or take the courage out of us. It is almost worth while.
>
> "And, oh, Lord, how we do love one another. (Or did.) No 'Society.' All Socialists (accidental and temporary but real). It's a good object-

lesson of what the world would be if there was no money in it. But alas! over in Oakland—where there is a little business doing—the phrase ‘earthquake love’ is now heard, and carries its own subtle meaning. I don’t fancy the original man in us has altered much. He just got a jolt out of the saddle, but the saddle is still there and so is the man.

“It seemed odd to get your letter, fairly reeking with the Old World, in the midst of all this chaos, and for at least half an hour I was transported, hypnotized. You’re some writer, dear lady, and in those all too brief paragraphs I saw considerably more of England than I have recalled during the past ten years—to say nothing of what you call the East. What an experience of life you have had, you dainty princess that should be kept in a glass case. But thank God you’ve shut *him* up. By Jove, I believe if this hadn’t happened I’d have taken the first train east (our east), and the first boat over to renew my former distinguished offer. I’ve never been hit so hard, and I’ve known some corking girls, too. I don’t say I haven’t been hit, but not all the way through; at all events you have the honor of having received my one proposal. Perhaps I’ve worked too hard to think seriously of getting married, and I’ve gone little into society—sometimes one party a winter. Yes, I was well on the road to making my everlasting pile when the old city went to pot, but this fire (the earthquake wouldn’t have stopped business twenty-four hours, bad as it was) has set us all back ten years. But I’ll get there all the same, and I rather like the prospect of the fight.

“So! You’re in sympathy with the suffragettes? I can’t see you in any such rôle, and hope you’ll have a new fad by the time you get this—heaven knows when that will be, for our post-office is stuck in the mud, and those across the bay are so congested with mail that it will take another earthquake to turn them inside out. I got your letter by a miracle.

“To go back to your suffragettes, I haven’t heard a word about them since April 16th; or any other outside news, for the matter of that. The newspapers set up at once in Oakland, but nobody is interested in any news outside of this afflicted district, and the newspapers don’t print any. All Europe might be at war and we wouldn’t be any the wiser. Nor would we care a five-cent piece if we were.

“But I hope they’ve been suppressed, and that when I get over—as I will the moment I dare leave—they will be as dead as William Jennings Bryan. At all events I hope you will be well out of it. I don’t like the idea one little bit. Why don’t you come here? To a traveller like you that would be but a nice little jaunt. The railroads are going to advertise our poor old city as the greatest ruin in the world, and we hope the tourist will swallow the bait and drop a few thousands in our lonesome pockets. This house will be patched up as soon as the great American Working-man can be

induced to work, but at present he is camping on the hills and eating out of the hand of the Government. Until that paternal hand is withdrawn not a stroke will he do. But we could put you up somehow, and maybe you'd enjoy it.

"Poor Cherry lost her house on Nob Hill, and all that was in it—except her jewels. She put those in a pillow-case and hiked for the Presidio—her machines were commandeered at once to carry hospital patients to safety, to say nothing of dynamite. Now, she's camping with us and does the house work, and pares potatoes, while I fry them—on a stove we've rigged up just off the sidewalk, and surrounded with inside window-blinds. She's game, like all the women, doesn't kick about anything, and only screams when we have one of our numerous little imitations of the grand shake. Emily, luckily for her, had married and gone to New York to live, but her personal income will be nil for some time to come. Her name is Morison, if you ever happen to run across her.

"Well, dear little princess, my candle is guttering, and I can't buy another to-night. No stores in S. F., and it's a toss-up if I remember to get another to-morrow in Oakland. The moment two men are gathered together—well, you have imagination—we talked nothing but earthquake and fire for a week after April 16th, and now we talk nothing but insurance. What's more, I've had architects at work for the last three weeks drawing plans for our new business house, and when I can induce the great American Working-man to clean out the débris, I'll get to work and do something besides talk. But what a letter from a pioneer and busted capitalist! Yes, please write to me and tell me the story of your life—perhaps I should explain that that is slang. But you couldn't write enough to satisfy me, and the minute I'm free (as free as an American man ever is) I'll make tracks for little old London—unless you come here. Why not? Do. You shall have your daily tub if I have to haul water from the bay. And I *can* cook. If I've got any imagination, you've a lien on it all right. Perhaps you think this is what you call chaff. Just you wait. I'm not what you call reckless, either, but—Oh, hang it! I'm in no position to write a love letter.

"Yes, I'm twenty-six, but I can tell you there are times I feel forty. I've worked like a dog these last five years, and not only at business. We—a few of us have been trying to clean up the politics of this abandoned town. Well, it's all to do.

"Really, no more; I'm writing in the dark.

"But always your devoted

"DANIEL TAY."

X

JULIA smiled all through this letter, and wondered if the original boy in some men ever grew up, and if even in the United States there were another Daniel Tay. Then she read it over again, and then she answered it. The moment she took up her pen she came to herself with a shock. She had been travelling between San Francisco and Bosquith, and now she realized that she had nothing to write him about but her work in the cause upon which she was embarked. She had, these last months, bestowed barely a thought on all that had gone before, and she did not feel the least desire to write of anything else. Would it bore as well as disillusionize him? Well, what if it did? To write to him again was irresistible, but she must write out her present self; if he didn't answer—well—perhaps, so much the better.

But, beyond the subject, she was at no pains to bore him. She took pride in writing him a far better letter than her first and gave the liveliest possible account of her numerous adventures. She even told him all she had felt during those twenty-four hours in prison, something she had never intended to confide to any one; but although she would not have admitted it, she had a secret hankering for his complete sympathy and understanding.

"And you've no idea," she concluded, "what a wonderful thing it is to have a vital interest in life, to live wholly outside of yourself, to strive for a sort of perfection, while at the same time your vanity is titillated with the thought that you are helping to make history. I really do not know whether I have any personal ambition left or not. When I started out I was consumed with it. This great cause was merely but a means to an end. But now—I don't know whether it is because I have never a moment to think of myself, I am so busy, or whether the cause is so much greater than any individual can be—I don't know. I don't know. The balance may be struck later. The only thing I strive to hold on to is my sense of humor."

When this letter was sealed, she had a sudden access of conscience and indited another to Nigel, whom she had quite neglected since her departure from London. She reminded him that he had published nothing for a year, and asked him to consider her suggestion that he go to Acca and write the Bahai-Socialism novel. "I shall worry until you do," she concluded this epistle, "for it would be a thousand pities if the subject were cheapened by the horde of third-raters, always nosing for new 'copy.' The Bahais want a big man. And how you would enjoy writing on Mount Carmel. Do write me that you will go at once."

The landlady knocked and announced that her dinner was ready. She snatched up Tay's letter and made an instinctive movement to put it in her bosom, but was reminded that her blouse buttoned in the back. Nor had she a pocket. So she put the letter into her hand-bag, and wondered if fashion would be the death of romance.

After dinner, she started for the moor. She wanted a spray of white heather, and to walk in the paths of the Brontës. The long crooked street of the village was

deserted, the good people lingering over their Sunday meal. But Julia felt little interest in them. As she reached the end of the street and looked out over the great purple expanse undulating away until it melted into the low pale sky brushed with white, she was wondering which of these narrow paths had been Charlotte's and trying to conjure up the tragic figure of Emily, one of her literary loves. She walked for several miles and managed to find the nook in the glen which she had been told by the landlady of the Black Bull was the spot where Charlotte had sat so often to dream the books that must have transformed her bleak life into wonderland. No object she for all the sympathy that had been wasted on her. Immortality! Julia, whose ego was enjoying a brief recrudescence, felt that it was a small thing to be half starved and lonely, afflicted by a drunken brother, and sisters dying of consumption, when consoled with an imagination that not only swamped life for this poor sickly little mortal, but must have whispered to her of undying fame. And she had contributed her share to the cause of which this devotee at her shrine was a symbol, vastly different from all that is modern as she had been; for had she not been of the few to make the world recognize the genius of woman? She had, in truth, been one of the flaming torches.

Julia climbed out of the glen and started to return. After she had traversed several of the knolls, she saw that the moor down by the village was alive with people. The landlady had told her that all Haworth took its Sunday afternoon walk on the moor, but she still felt no interest in them, and renewed her search for white heather.

She passed the first group and nodded, as she had a habit of doing, for she had come to feel as if the toilers of England were her especial charge. They smiled in return, and one stared and whispered to the others. Julia guessed that she had been at the meeting in Keighley the night before. The crowd became thicker and she was soon in the midst of it. She would have been stared at in any case, for strangers were rare in Haworth. Tourists came for an hour to visit the Brontë Museum, and hastened off to catch their train. And Julia was fair to look upon and exceeding well dressed. The girls turned to look after her with approval, and when she made her way out of what would seem to be a large family party gossiping pleasantly, and, wandering off, stooped once more, a girl followed and asked her shyly if she were looking for white heather.

"Oh," said Julia, "would you help me? I should like a spray for luck, and as a memento of your village."

"It's hard to find, miss, but we can look. I've found many a bit."

They strayed off together, Julia good-naturedly answering the eager questions. Suddenly the girl turned.

"Why!" she exclaimed. "They're all coming this way, and that excited!"

Julia looked and saw that the whole company was streaming toward her. They paused, held a hurried conference, and then one of the younger women came directly up to the stranger.

“We are thinking,” she said diffidently, “that you may be Mrs. France, who spoke last night at Keighley, and has been speaking all over the north.”

“Yes, I am Mrs. France,” said Julia, wondering what was coming.

“And you really are a suffragette?”

“That is what they call us.”

“We’ve never seen one, only one or two of us who were at the meeting last night. The rest of us didn’t go, we was that tired, and we’re wondering if you wouldn’t give us a speech here.”

“Oh—really—I rarely speak on Sunday, and even suffragettes must rest, you know.”

The woman’s face fell, but she said politely, “Of course. We know what work is. But we may never have another chance—and we’re that curious. We’d like to know what it’s all about.”

Julia hesitated. What right had she to refuse this simple request? It was her business to advance the cause of Suffrage and make converts wherever she could. Nor was she tired. She was merely in a dreaming mood, and wanted to think of the Brontës; to anticipate, as she realized in a flash of annoyance, the rereading of Tay’s letter. She had deliberately been trying to forget it.

“I will speak with pleasure,” she said. “Have you something I could stand on? I’m not very tall, you know.”

“One of the men went for a table. We made sure you would be so kind.”

The man was even now stalking up the moor with a kitchen table balanced on his head. As Julia walked toward the smiling company she felt once more the ardent propagandist.

“If I may, ma’am,” said a tall young man. He lifted her lightly and stood her on the table.

“Now,” said Julia, smiling down into several hundred faces, a few set in disdain, but for the most part friendly, “what is it you wish me to tell you? How much do you know of this great movement?”

“Well,” said one of the older women, “we read a lot about militants, and suffragettes, and fighting the police, and going to prison, and big meetings all over England, and we’d like to know what it’s all about. That’s all.”

“You might begin,” said one of the men, with a faint accent of sarcasm, “by telling us what good the vote’ll do you when you get it.”

Julia began by reminding them of the interest that so many of the factory women of the north had taken in the enfranchisement of their sex for several years before the militant movement began, and of the many Annie Kennys whose eyes were opened to the injustice of the absence of a minimum wage for women. One of the men interrupted her.

“Yes, ma’am, and if you raise women’s wages so that they can no longer

undercut men, the lot of ’em’ll be kicked out.”

“Not all. The best will be retained, for the best are as efficient as the men. The inferior ones will find other employment, or be taken care of by men, who will then be able to support their families. They can return to their place in the home, that woman’s sphere of which we hear so much.”

This was received with cheers, but the man growled: —

“It’ll take time. It’ll take time. Better let well enough alone.”

“As it is the women that suffer, it is for them to say whether it is well enough. Of course it will take time. We do not promise Utopia in a day—nor ever, for that matter. But, if you will take the trouble to observe, it is the women of this country that are waging war on poverty, not the men. Without the ballot they are forced to advance at a snail’s pace. On all the boards to which they are admitted they do the work, and the men, who outnumber them, defeat every project for the betterment of the poor that would force the ratepayers to disgorge a few more shillings. Doctors, and all thinking and humane men, for that matter, would be thankful if these boards were composed entirely of women, for they alone understand the needs of other women and of children. Man lacks the instinct, to begin with, and has long since grown callous to the sources of his income. Higher wages mean smaller dividends, and he chooses to close his eyes to the fact that his dividends are largely due to the toil of wornout women and stunted children; of women that have all the duties of their households to discharge after they come home from the mills, children whose minds must remain as undeveloped as their ill-nourished bodies.”

“You want to go to Parliament, and right all that, I suppose?”

“We have not even thought of it. What we want is the power to send men to Parliament, who will be forced to keep their election promises if they would be returned a second time. Doubtless an ultimate result of the ballot would be a Woman’s Parliament which would deal exclusively with the Poor Laws. Then the men who oppose us now will be profoundly relieved that they no longer are obliged to waste valuable hours solemnly sitting upon such questions as the proper sort of nursing bottles to be adopted for pauper children, what shall be done with milk, or whether cabbage is a normal breakfast for school children. Do you know that if the House sat day and night for 365 days of the year, they could not begin to dispose of all the bills brought before it, and that many of these bills are of a pressing domestic nature? However well disposed, they cannot deal adequately with the Poor Laws, and that they do not welcome the assistance of women is but one more evidence of that conservatism in men’s minds which is a logical result of having had their own way, uncriticised, too long. Their fear of us is childish. They would not be thrown out of business. Every day they are confronted by questions of the gravest nature—questions of national and international policy which require their best faculties and all of their time. Women have more time than man ever thinks he has, in any case; and we have the maternal instincts and the nagging conscience which would force us to discharge our duties to the poor.

“Let me add that the women of this new militant movement have eliminated from their compositions all the old sentimentality and bathos which weakened the Suffrage cause for so many years. Sentimentality is sympathy run amôk. It roused that distrust of men we are fighting to-day, and made many of their public utterances asinine. You will hear no frantic protests to-day that women want the vote because they have as much right to it as men. That is a good argument in itself, but the women of to-day have progressed far beyond that or even of the old war cry, ‘Taxation without representation.’ They are animated, in their greater experience, by one purpose only, the desire to eliminate poverty and all the evils, moral and physical, that are always its partners; to reduce the hours of work and increase wages, to give every child good food, a decent education, and a comfortable home. The millions must work, but we are determined that they shall work for their own comfort as well as for that of their employers, that they shall have a reasonable amount of leisure and of the pleasures of life, cease to be machines whose only object in living is to contribute to the comfort and idleness of the thousands above them. We appreciate the wastage among the poor of England. Given strong bodies and a fair education, many would rise in the world and have respectable if not distinguished careers. What we further desire is to give these exceptional boys and girls a chance, the same chance they would have if born in the middle class. Beyond that we promise nothing. The point now is, not only that the misery in this country is appalling, but that these boys and girls have no chance of rising out of the rut unless possessed of positive genius. Hundreds have latent talent, thousands a certain amount of ability which would raise them above the station in which they were born —”

“Are you a Socialist?” demanded an abrupt voice.

“Yes, and England is already half socialistic in her institutions, only the pill has been gilded with less offensive names, so that she need not recognize it. But that old-time Socialism, which was only a weak step-sister of anarchy, no longer exists save in the minds of the old and tired theorists. The younger men and women who are giving their brains and time to the question would do nothing so futile as to divide the wealth of the world into small and equal shares. The modern Socialists would have as little mercy on the idle and vicious and lazy as Society has. All must work, and if the confiscation of much land forces the aristocrat to work, so much the better for him. All will be given the chance to work, to rise. More than that no mortal laws can accomplish, or should attempt, in justice to the human race. Socialism perfected is neither more nor less than the primal law of Nature reëstablished, rescued from the vagaries of a blundering civilization and crystallized into brain. Man will work, do his share, or go out into the by-ways, lie down and die.

“A word as to our much-abused Militant Tactics. Although we are women we are by no means too proud to learn from men. If you will glance back to that time when the laboring men of England were demanding the franchise,—in the ’30’s,—

you may recall that they did not confine themselves to heckling, holding indignation meetings, forcing their way into halls where great men were speaking, and demanding their rights. They arose and smashed things. They burned the Mansion House in Bristol, the Custom House, the Bishop's Palace, the Excise Office, three prisons, four toll houses, and forty-two private dwellings, and they set several towns on fire. So far we have borrowed only the mildest of their tactics. We have hurt no one physically, and we have been moderate in all our demonstrations; but because we are women we are as severely criticised as if we had blown up the entire Cabinet and set fire to London. Such is the hopeless conservatism of the human mind. But because we *are* women and enlightened, we hope we never shall have to resort to measures so extreme. We hope to educate the average mind out of its conservatism. If we fail, then of course we shall have to forget that we are women and emulate the great sex which now thinks it despises us, but is proving every day how much it fears us. As yet, it does not fear us enough. That is the whole trouble at present."

Although she had too much tact and experience to talk down to any audience, however humble, she knew when to drop the abstract and divert with anecdote and illustration. Her address had been listened to respectfully, and interrupted with many a "Hear! Hear!" and when she paused, flung out her hands, smiled, and said, "Now let me tell you the true story of several of our adventures with the police," they clapped and cheered. She talked for ten minutes longer, and her anecdotes, while making them laugh delightedly, inspired as much indignation as if they had been delivered with solemn passion; no doubt more so. When she finally leaped down, they escorted her in a body to the inn, where those that were not too bashful shook hands with her heartily; and many vowed they would "turn it over" and "pass the word on" to those that had not had the good fortune to hear her.

XI

JULIA, excited, and well content, ran up to her room. As she opened the door she was astonished to see Bridgit Herbert standing at the window, scowling at the tombstones.

"You! How jolly!" she cried, as Mrs. Herbert turned. "How did you trace me? I purposely left no word —"

"You forget your maid—"

"What is the matter? You look— Sit down."

"I've come north to see you. The devil is to pay."

"The Militants haven't disbanded—"

"Good lord, no. They're all right. It's I that have gone clean to the devil."

"You?" Julia stared at her. Mrs. Herbert certainly looked worn, even haggard. The fresh color was no longer in her dark face, her black eyes were heavy as if with much wakefulness. Even her spirited nostrils hung limp.

"Do come out with it!" gasped Julia.

"I'm in love," said Mrs. Herbert. And she sat down.

"Oh!" exclaimed Julia. And then she added thoughtfully, "What a bore."

"Isn't it? And I thought I was immune, having had the disease so hard the first time. But the young thirties! Oh, lord!"

"Can't you get over it?"

"Can't you imagine how I've tried? That's the reason I look like this. It's a wonder he doesn't run when he sees me. But it's no use. I'm done for."

"What sort of a man can he be to bowl you over? Do I know him?"

"Possibly. He's a cousin of Geoff's, although I never met him till lately, as it happened. They weren't friends, and he was away nearly all the time I was coruscating in society. His name's Robert Maundrell; he's also a cousin of Lord Barnstaple, who married that beautiful Californian. It was at their place, Maundrell Abbey, where I went for the Twelfth, that the mischief was done. I met him at Cannes, but he was clever enough to amuse me without rousing my suspicions; to interest me, and then make me miss him a bit. At just the right moment he reappeared—at Maundrell Abbey! Heaven! but it's bad. After all I've gone through for the cause, after standing on my own two feet for years, not giving a hang if all the men on earth were exterminated—rather wishing they were! I feel like a slave. It's hideous to feel that you no longer belong to yourself."

"But you won't chuck the cause?"

"Rather not. But the trouble is that I thought I was made on the same pattern as those women up in London, desexed, all brain and nerve and religious devotion to an ideal. And now I'm—Oh, lord! And to make matters worse I'm marrying a man

who cares about as much for the cause as he does for Mohammedanism. Oh, damn! And I thought myself possessed of the true martyr's fire. I wonder if you are?"

"Bridgit!" said Julia, with equal abruptness. "Be quite honest. Did you never think of this, never dream of falling in love once more—of the real thing?"

Mrs. Herbert stood up and thrust her hands into the pockets of her covert coat. For a moment she glared at Julia, then shrugged her shoulders. "Well—I don't fancy I admitted it at the time—but I also fancy it was in the back of my head more or less. Oh—here goes—I used to wake up in the night and wonder in a sort of fury where *he* was—what are you laughing at?"

"Oh, I fancy we idiots are all alike."

"So you've been through it, too? Good. But you'll probably win out. You've got the ruthless will, like those others. Oh! I worship the very air they breathe. They are the true women of destiny, equipped at every point, a new sex. And I—the worst of it is, when I did give my fancy rein it was to imagine a man who would be a great intellectual force in the world, a great editor or statesman to whom men deferred, who would fight single-handed, if necessary, to give the vote to women. I shouldn't have cared a bit if he had sprung from the people. Should have rather liked it, as I'd have felt the more consistent. But—well, we make ideals out of imported cloth, and then we marry our own sort. I fancy Nature takes a hand in manipulating our instincts. Oh, lord!" And she began pacing up and down the room.

"You haven't told me anything about Mr. Maundrell. He can't be a fool —"

"Rather not!"

"What attracted you to him? I don't fancy I ever met him —"

"You'd remember him if you had. He's beastly good-looking, and he's travelled and explored, and is as well-read as any man I ever met. He went out as a volunteer in the South African war and got three medals, one with clasps. Now he's standing for Parliament—at a by-election next week. Oh, he's all right, as the Americans say, only he doesn't care a hang for Suffrage —"

"He'll make you desert us—"

"No, he won't. I may be an ass, as the man said in 'The Liars,' but I'm not a silly ass. If he were as bad as that, I'd have been strong enough to resist him. No, he's big in all his ideas. He only exacts the promise that I shall take part in no more raids, run no further risk of gaol, and not make engagements that would separate us. Otherwise, I can speak in public, and give up every moment of my time to Suffrage when he is not at home. He will also vote for our bill when it comes up."

"It's not so bad."

"Oh, it could be worse. But I wish I'd met him when I was eighteen, or had proved my strength by rooting this out, or had never met him at all. I'd have preferred the second, for I gloried in my strength. I'm not one of the chosen, like those women up there. That's what rankles. I wonder if you are!"

She sat down abruptly and leaned forward. “I wonder? You’ve beauty. There’s the rub. They won’t let us alone. They give us the chance.”

“Tell me,” said Julia, hastily, “how did he ever make you consent? He must have had a difficult wooing.”

“He almost shook his fist in my face, if you will know; swore he’d have me if he had to beat me into submission—oh, worse! He didn’t frighten me, but he fascinated me. If the primal woman is born in you, there she is for good and all. I had the haunting sense that this man was my mate, the other half of me, and when a woman gets that idea into her head she’s done for. It’s more than passion, more than any longing for companionship. All sorts of subtle chords vibrate, inheritances from all the women, complex and simple, that have contributed to her brain cells. When those chords begin to hum you’re done for. I’m not one of the chosen, that’s all there is to it. I’ve got to marry and be happy.”

And then they both laughed.

In a moment Julia said grimly, “The only thing to do is to set your ideal of man so high that no mortal can fill it.”

“Rot. When the man comes along that can set those chords humming, ideals fly off in company with good resolutions. Now tell me your experience. You’ve had one of some sort. It’s only fair you should tell me. I’ve admired you more than any living woman, and I’d feel better if I could admire you less. You look ruthless, and you’ve had a good training to make you so—I used to rejoice at it—but, well, you are young and beautiful and you’ve red hair. Out with it.”

Julia, who under all her careless frankness, was intensely reserved, colored and hesitated; but this exasperated baring of her haughty friend’s inner self merited response, and she told the tale of her sudden awakening in India, of her deliberate search for a lover. Mrs. Herbert nodded triumphantly.

“But you see,” added Julia, “I couldn’t find him, because I wanted too much. They all made me laugh sooner or later, and a finer set of men I never met. They are all picked men out there, so to speak. They must be almost perfect physically, or they couldn’t stand the climate; they are absolutely without fear; they have every manly qualification, in fact, and quite enough brains. Many were charming. But they all seemed to melt into one composite man and made no deeper impression on me than if they were a statue erected to the glorification of British manhood. One can’t marry that.”

“All the men in the world are not in India. How about Nigel?”

“I like him better than anyone, but I can’t fall in love with him. I don’t fancy I’d have the chance again even if I wanted it. He’s now the head of his house and the last of it, and he takes his duties as a Whig peer with Socialist tendencies very seriously. To marry me would put an end to his public usefulness, for he would have to live out of England. When a man of Nigel’s sort reaches his age he faces his responsibilities, and when he balances them against a love-marriage that would cut

him off from a good half of them he keeps out of temptation. I like him all the better for it, and if I had not become almost depersonalized in this cause, the woman in me might —”

“I don’t think it’s Nigel, but I do believe that one day you’ll have a battle to fight —”

“Not now. For a few days after I came back from India, perhaps. But I doubt if I ever have time again even to think of it. When I’m not talking, or speaking, or writing, I deliberately relax, as my master taught me, and that banishes thought. Every morning—during my walk—I recall some bit of the knowledge I was taught by Hadji Sadrä, and I could do this if my mind were excited, threatened with a deluge. Oh, I have had discipline of all sorts!”

“It sounds formidable enough. Perhaps you are one of the chosen. But —”

“I even wrote a long letter this morning to a man I might say I don’t know,” continued Julia, now in the full tide of self-revelation. “And it interested me mightily for the moment —”

“Ha!”

“Not at all. He was a boy of fifteen when I met him at Bosquith. I had forgotten his existence, but when I heard of the frightful disaster in San Francisco, his home, I thought it only decent to write to him. Of course he answered, and as his letter was lost for months—I only got it yesterday—and as he really has been through a tragic experience—he lost his fortune, and just missed losing his life—it was the least I could do to write again.”

“H’m. There’s nothing more fascinating than a correspondence with a man you don’t know. I’ve had one or two. The saving grace is, that you are always disappointed when you meet them. They are commonplace, if only by contrast with the arbitrary figure in your imagination. But it’s a bad sign—or a healthy one—that you can be interested even to that extent while conducting a Suffrage campaign with the fury of the martyr in your soul—I can’t imagine any of those women up there —”

“It means nothing to me!” said Julia, angrily. “And if I hadn’t posted my letter, I’d tear it up. I don’t care in the least whether I ever see him again or not. And I probably won’t, for I wrote of nothing but the cause. I couldn’t think of anything else. He’ll hate that. Besides, he can’t leave California for years yet. You know what those American business men are. He’s keen on making his millions. That’s all he thinks of.”

“Good. See that you don’t go to California when they send you over to lecture. Let me see his letter?”

Julia made an instinctive, almost tigerish, and wholly traditional movement toward her bosom. Then she remembered that the letter was in the hand-bag, laughed, and produced it.

“Why not?”

Mrs. Herbert's black eyes flashed through it.

"H'm!" she commented. "He seems to be a jolly sort. He's a man. And there's a sort of fresh Western breeze in his letter. I can smell and hear the Pacific—and see those wonderful ruins. I love that expression—'makes the Roman Forum look like thirty cents.' That's fifteen pence—one and three. It's not effective at all translated. But I've always liked American slang. There's something big and free and young about it. And so is this man, I should say —"

"Oh, nonsense! Don't romance about him, please. He's the antithesis of the man I'd made up in my imagination when I bolted from Calcutta —"

"That makes just about as much difference as if I had made up my mind that Robert Maundrell should fall in love with somebody else. Mr. Tay may give your ideal one in the eye that will make it look like—thirty cents. Describe him to me. Is he good-looking?"

"I don't know," said Julia, crossly. "I've forgotten. He was a dark wiry boy with a lean face and a square jaw. He suggests the North American Indian, but is a new type altogether—Western American, no doubt. But I'd rather talk about you. You've disappointed me, but I don't see why you should be quite so cut up about it. Ishbel is married and in love and has two babies, but she has come out as an ardent suffragette; so much so that her business has suffered —"

"Yes, but she marches in no parades, and takes part in no raids. Dark will stand for a good deal, but he's threatened to go to India if she goes too far; and she won't. Trust her. She's just like any other woman in love. And Dark's a good fellow, not the sort a woman would care to sacrifice. So is Robert. There you are."

"I love Ishbel as much as ever," said Julia, thoughtfully. "But somehow I don't find her as interesting —"

"A happy woman has no psychology in her. Her mind may go on developing, but her ego is at a standstill. That's where I'm aiming! And I wanted to stand alone! I'm not the myself I thought. That's what cuts. After those six men mauled me and broke my rib, and I lay in that wretched prison all night, I thought I was seasoned for life. And I wasn't!"

Julia sprang to her feet. "What's the use of worrying about what can't be helped?" she cried angrily. "Let's go down to supper."

XII

A FORTNIGHT later Julia was recalled to London. She took a small flat in Clement's Inn, Strand, where the W. S. P. U. was about to establish itself. She learned immediately that on the first day of the autumn session of Parliament a deputation of women intended to go to the Lobby of the House and send word to the Prime Minister that they expected some assurance from him regarding the prospects of franchise for their sex. Hundreds would await the news without.

By this time there was no danger of any definite move by the women being overlooked by the press, and they were treated as news no matter with what lack of sympathy. As to be spectacular whenever the opportunity offered was a part of their policy, they overlooked no means to that end; quite aware that Julia was as valuable an asset as they were likely to have, she was drafted to make one of the deputation to the House of Commons on October third. By this time other women of the aristocracy had flocked to their standard, and several prominent in the arts, but Julia had a very special personality, and a value for the press which insured her a separate "story" whether or not she were the chief figure in any of the carefully rehearsed scenes executed by the Militants. Therefore, having received her instructions for the third, she called on the duke the night of the second. She had not heard from him since the letter received at Keighley, nor had she heard from his solicitors.

The duke was in the library and rose ceremoniously as she was shown in, but did not offer his hand. Julia took the same chair from which she had defied him in a period of her life that now seemed identical with a lost personality.

"I should have called long ago," she said, "but you were at Bosquith when I returned from Syria, and I have been out of London ever since."

"I am quite aware of your movements during the past five months." The duke spoke with all his innate formality, and infused his tone with icy sarcasm, but Julia had detected in a glance that he looked far more of a human being than of old. Bridgit had told her a strange tale of riding over to see her "Aunt Peg" when that dame was suffering from a broken leg, and catching a glimpse of the duke in an adjoining room, flat on the floor, with his boy and two little girls racing up and down his small but sacred person. Julia had accused Mrs. Herbert of trying to impose on her credulity, but as she inspected that meagre countenance she found it decidedly less gray and tight than formerly, the eyes brighter, the prim lines of the mouth relaxed. Yes; he was, conceivably, the uxorious parent.

"Of course I know you must hate what I am doing. If you and thousands like you didn't hate it, we shouldn't be doing it, if you don't mind a bull. But that is the point, you see. We intend to fight to the last ditch, and then win. You don't guess this and so you prolong the fight. I haven't come to convert you, but because I know exactly how you feel. You have behaved splendidly toward me, for I know you have longed, for months, to recall your generous allowance. You can't make up your

mind to violate your word, so I have come to renounce it myself.”

“Ah!” The duke rose and began pacing up and down the room. “Yes—you would suspect—you are clever enough. Ah! If you would only divert your cleverness into a respectable channel. How could you go off your head about this atrocious nonsense?”

“Nonsense? Come down to Clement’s Inn and talk to the women for a few minutes. You might not approve of us any more than you do now, but you would no longer use the word nonsense. You might hate, but you would be forced to respect —”

“Respect? Respect women that have parted with the last shred of female decency, that are distracting this poor country with their puerile demands, when she is faced by such grave problems within and without that we need every ounce of our energy, every moment of our time —”

“Quite so. That is one of our staple arguments. We are only asking to help you. Turn the Poor Laws over to us, with the ballot, and you will have that much more time and energy to devote to the survival of the House of Lords, and to the survival of Great Britain among nations.”

“And have a new and worse problem on our hands to distract us! It is bad enough now with half female England gone mad and making this great Empire ridiculous in the eyes of the world—do you fancy *we* are mad enough even to argue the question of giving you *power*? Never. You can raid the House of Commons and force your way into the house of the Prime Minister, and fight with the police and go to gaol, and shriek and parade, until the day of doom, and you’ll be no nearer your object than you are to-day. That is what has made me lose all patience with *you*. I trained your mind, I watched you grow under my roof into as intellectual a woman as is possible with the limitations of the female brain; I guided you in your study of politics, and, save when you took the wrong side out of sheer perversity, I was quite satisfied with you. And now! It has saddened and angered me beyond description to see you making a public spectacle of yourself, suffering bodily injury, disgracing yourself, your sex, and your country, in a ridiculous and hopeless cause.”

“Well, you see, we don’t believe it to be hopeless, and that sustains us.”

“What difference does it make what you believe?”

“Not so much now, except as a means to an end. You said a moment ago that we had lost every shred of female decency, in other words, forgotten that we were mere women. Does not that strike you as portentous?”

“It strikes me as hideous.”

“I mean that when women have been battered and mauled and hurt, as we have been, without a second’s loss of courage or resource; when we have not once failed to score every point we have preconceived, from the heckling of candidates half out of their senses, to arresting the gaze of the civilized world,—doesn’t it strike you that we may be something more than mere women?”

“Yes, fools, and shameless ones.”

“Well, I share Nigel Herbert’s theory, that we are a new sex and a new race. A new force let loose into the world, is how he expressed it. When I went north five months ago the Union in London numbered only a few hundreds. Now it’s as well known as the Liberal party. And all of the new active members have the same set grim intent look, although many are still in their teens. I believe they were born that way and only waited for the call. Not one of them looks as if she had ever given a thought to a lover —”

“And you extol them for that?”

“No, I merely mention it. You see, all revolutions demand and breed their martyrs; people who were born, so to speak, to fight and die in that cause and for no other purpose whatever. Hundreds of thousands will join us as converts, but only a limited number will join the fighting army. That sort of thing is in a woman or it isn’t. Many will help us with money and name and sympathy, vote when their time comes, and cheerfully accept such political duties as may be thrust upon them, but they are too soft, what you call too womanly, to fight. We make no complaint. The race must go on and these women may be depended upon to take care of it. But all these girls that are flocking to our standard, that speak to jeering crowds on street corners, that are hustled and twisted and pinched by policemen—when they interrupt meetings, or sell literature on the street—they are made of different elements, they are the ones chosen to win a cause, not to enjoy its victory. What matters it to them whether they are maimed for life, whether their youth goes before they have known any of its rights? Nothing. It is not of the least consequence. We sacrifice them as ruthlessly as they sacrifice themselves, as we would sacrifice ourselves. It is only the principle that matters. Let them die in a good cause, and be grateful for the opportunity. So they would, if they gave even that much thought to self. That is what you cannot understand. If you did, you would know what I mean by the word portentous —”

“How do you like the prospect of looking like those women—gray and dingy as the bark of an old tree?”

“Oh, they don’t all look gray and dingy. We have handsome women in the W. S. P. U.—several that are older than I. Many women are born dingy. Others have merely that freshness of youth which is as likely to vanish after one year of domestic life, as after the same time spent in fighting for a cause that will improve the lot of women in general. Don’t worry about me. What looks I have are indestructible. I learned secrets in the East. I know how to rest—a lesson many of these young enthusiasts wouldn’t learn if I could teach them. They are screwed up to be martyrs and won’t have anything else. But the heads of any movement must be all that and more, so I have no intention of going to pieces.”

“I am told that if—I—a—withdraw the seven hundred and fifty I have allowed you, you may be persuaded to go to work on a newspaper or make money in some other way—I understand you give the greater part of your income to this

abominable cause —”

“Yes. I know how you must feel about that. I made sure you would withdraw it before this —”

“I have tried to! I have been on the point of writing to my solicitors twenty times. But it would be the first time in my life that I had ever broken my word, taken back what I had given, and I have not been able to make up my mind to do it.”

“I know, so I shall do it for you. I’ll write to your solicitors to-morrow. I shall still have two hundred a year, and I am sure now that I can make money —”

“Make money! It is sickening. Women of our class don’t talk about making money.”

“No, but a good many of them would make it if they could, and more than you know turn an honest penny —”

“Oh, let me keep my illusions!” The duke flung himself into a chair and grasped the arms. “Can you imagine what it is to me to see my great country going to the dogs? Socialism, democracy, the daily increasing power of a class that in my youth knew its place and kept it? And now women degrading their sex and proselytizing thousands that would have remained content with their duties to home and society if let alone! Why, you hear nothing but this infernal Suffrage—” The duke was never so impressive as when mildly profane. “Margaret, of course, is unaffected, but the women that gather at my board! They babble about nothing else, whether for or against. To my mind the very subject among all decent people should be tabû. I sometimes feel as if I could hear the greatest nation the world has ever seen rattling about my ears. My poor country! And I would have her impeccable always in the eyes of Europe—” (It was characteristic that he omitted the rest of the world.) “I would have her lower and middle classes respect her unquestioningly, without presuming to rule. The present Government is an abomination, and the number of labor representatives in Parliament is a disgrace in the history of England. And now the women! They should have pity on our troubles and give us their assistance, instead of adding to our problems and making us ridiculous. A fine reputation we are getting abroad—that we can no longer manage our women, that we are obliged to resort to physical violence, as if we were returned to the dark ages! Oh, that we could shut them up in harems! Let the Turks take warning.”

“Well, you can’t shut us up, and you can’t manage us, and that is the whole point. English women have grown up on politics; they have learned as much at the table as in the schoolroom; the bright ones have grown more and more like their fathers, and now you behold the result. As for the Mohammedan women—Ferrero calls attention to the fact that the British in India have noted that in public administration certain women keep the spirit of economy with which they manage a home; and that is why, especially in despotic states, they rule better than men. So, give us, who have had a vastly wider experience, the vote, and be grateful that we are willing to help you.”

“Never. You will never obtain the franchise. Put that idea out of your head. Why not go and live on the continent for a while? The society in Vienna is delightful —”

Julia rose. “I’ve said all I came to say, and more. I am very grateful for your generosity in the past, and I only wished to disabuse your mind of any fear you might have of subjecting me to privations. I shall manage splendidly. I pay very little for my flat in Clement’s Inn —”

The duke writhed. “I can’t do it!” he cried. “I can’t! I gave you my word, and that is the end of it. Besides, you lived with me so long that you are, in a sense, of my house. Keep the money, but for heaven’s sake, come to your senses. I only ask one favor now. Take no part in these disgraceful raids and street scenes.”

Julia hesitated, but she was betraying no secret, for the women never struck without warning. “I’d like to thank you, go, and say no more, but I think I should tell you that a number of us are going to attend the opening of Parliament to-morrow and demand a hearing. Of course, there may be trouble with the police —”

“Do you mean that those termagants will begin to worry us on the very first day of Parliament?”

“We lose no time. We’ll get in if we can, and if we can’t—well, we’ll make ourselves felt, one way or another.”

“I—I’d be grateful if you would give me your promise to stay at home.”

“You see I have given my promise to go to the House.”

“The police will certainly interfere. I fancy they will take the first opportunity—That is only a hint.”

“Oh, we are quite convinced that the police have their orders from the Government. But we mind nothing. Nothing! At the same time let me tell you that we are not going to-morrow with the intention of creating a disturbance. We are not in love with rows, and although we are willing to be hurt, we are not in love with that, either. How we behave depends entirely upon how they behave.”

The duke regarded her for a minute. Then he looked down and tapped a penholder on the table. “Very well,” he said. “Go with the others, I only trust and pray—I intercede for you every morning at prayers—that you won’t be accidentally hurt in these forays, and that you will come to your senses before long. As soon as you do we should be happy to have you come and live with us. I—I have always missed you.”

He rose. Julia ran over and threw her arms about his neck. “You are a dear!” she cried. “And you always were nice to me in your funny way.”

The duke laughed, and disentangled himself.

“There, there!” he said. “You look now about as old as you did when you came to us. You are not quite remade. I shall hope.”

XIII

> "Corker. Please write often. Hearing from you too good to be true. Letters like what rain would have been on April 16. Suffrage and get over it. No game for you. Don't get hurt again. Writing.
>
> "TAY."

Julia found this cablegram on her table when she returned on the following evening from the House of Commons. Its extravagance relaxed the angry tension of her mind, and she could imagine no future moment in which she would be in a more fitting mood to answer it. She removed her battered hat, washed the dirt and blood from her hands and face, and her pen was soon flying over large sheets of the W. S. P. U.

> "Long before you get this you will have read in the newspapers the more sensational details of to-day's encounter between the Militants and the police, and of its abominable sequel; but there are details the newspapers never print, and when I relate a few of them perhaps you will understand why I am not likely to lose sympathy with this cause. Besides, to-day, I have a grievance of my own which has put me in such a state of fury that if I couldn't relieve my mind in a letter to you, I should probably go out and get into more trouble.
>
> "You will have read that twenty of our number, including Mrs. Pankhurst, Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, and Mrs. Cobden Sanderson, succeeded in obtaining entrance to the Lobby of the House of Commons, sent for the Chief Liberal Whip, and persuaded him to go to the Prime Minister and ask if he intended to do anything during this session toward the enfranchisement of women. The Prime Minister sent word back that the Government had no intention of giving the vote to women during their term of office.
>
> "How many times have they gone to that Lobby full of hope, inspired by the justice of their cause—however, sentimentalizing is not in our line. This was the most direct rebuff they had received, and they made up their minds to hold a meeting of protest then and there. One of the women sprang upon a settee and began to address the others. The police had been watching for a signal. In five minutes they had dragged and driven the women out of the Lobby, knocking Mrs. Pankhurst down, and mauling Mrs. Lawrence and the rest in their usual fashion. When the women waiting outside saw how their comrades were being handled, they rushed forward, and soon were engaged in a hand-to-hand encounter with the police. Even those that merely spoke to the women of the deputation were

struck or arrested. Seven were dragged off to the police station, and a few moments later, Mrs. Cobden Sanderson, knowing that Mrs. Lawrence was ill, and not willing that the girls should go to gaol without an older woman, managed to get herself arrested.

“Of course, you want to know what I was doing all this time. That is what I am writing to tell you, for therein lies my grievance. And let me tell you that I have a red-haired temper, quite out of tune with princesses on towers. You might as well know me as I am and not romance about me any more.

“I went with the deputation to the House, being one of those drafted, and marching at the head of a large body of members of the Union that accompanied us, but had no hope of gaining admittance. At the Strangers’ Entrance we were met by the usual number of watchful police, and the Inspector asked at once which was Mrs. France; the others craned their necks and took in all my points when I was indicated. I was then informed that I could not enter, that the orders were positive. There was no time to waste in protest over minor matters, another was chosen in my place, and I was left outside with the rank and file. I was annoyed, and had no difficulty in guessing the cause of my exclusion. The duke may despise the present Government, but he had not scrupled to bring his personal influence to bear on it in order to save me from possible hurt—or notoriety.

“However, it is one of our principles to waste no time over spilt milk, but immediately to place ourselves in readiness for the next opportunity. I stood quietly with the others as close to the entrance as the police outside would permit, and waited. At the end of what seemed interminable hours, during which a large crowd gathered, many friendly, for the public is beginning to respect our pluck and persistence, some jeering and making abominable jokes, our women standing as erect and patient as soldiers, with eager set faces, ready to fight if need be, but quite as ready to disperse peaceably if their deputation were treated with respect—well, suddenly the doors were flung open and out tumbled a medley of women and police. Mrs. Pankhurst, with closed eyes and rigid limbs, as if defying the worst, pushed along on her heels, and finally flung to the ground; Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, struggling indignantly, torn and mauled; the rest treated as if they were circus beasts of the forest that had got loose in the arena,—out they came in a wild disgraceful scrimmage. What a cartoon for posterity to gape at!

“Of course we made a rush for our friends and leaders, inspired with precisely the same instinct to go to their assistance as if they and we had been Men. One of our rigid principles is never to attack the police, to assume that they are merely obeying orders; and even when they treat us

with their customary brutality, to struggle, but not to strike; it being our desire to show, if possible, that a great battle can be won in these days by brains instead of force.

"Therefore, although we attempted to reach our leaders, it was merely to rescue them if we could; at all events to show our sympathy and indignation. But we did not reach them. The police outside were waiting for their signal; they immediately closed in and began striking and pushing us about, at first not ungently: they merely bashed hats, knocked a few shoulders, and twisted a few arms. But as fast as they dispersed one group, or turned to attack another, we made a new rush; some in the direction of Mrs. Pankhurst, others toward those being led off to the police station, others, myself among them, intending to force our way into the House, and make another demonstration in the Lobby. Mrs. Lime had managed to keep by my side, for she intended to enter with me. But suddenly she caught sight of a girl being abominably mauled by a policeman, and made a brave attempt to rescue her. The policeman dropped the girl, seized Mrs. Lime, whirled her about, gripped her by the shoulders, and, rushing her against the palings of Palace Yard, struck her breasts against the iron again and again. That sight sent me off my head. I forgot instructions, forgot the lofty impassivity I had been taught in the East—an admirable recipe for occasions like this, but, as yet, beyond me—I leaped on the man and struck him on the back of the head with all my might. He dropped Mrs. Lime and whirled about on me as furiously as if my fist had been as hard as his own, but when he saw me, he merely dropped his arm, scowled, and said:—

" 'Go home! Go home! You'll get hurt,' and ran over to pull two women apart who had locked arms. Then I realized what I had dimly been conscious of, that my only injuries were to my clothes, and that these were but the result of the general scuffle; every policeman had avoided me or brushed me off. They had received orders to do me no harm. Among all those hundreds of indomitable women I alone was to go scot free. The idea so enraged me that I flew at another policeman and struck him, determined to go to prison with the others. But he, too, brushed me off, although he was already panting and angry, and no doubt would have liked to strike me and then drag me to the police station. I attacked another, and he turned his back on me with an oath, seized a girl who was merely pushing her way quietly through the struggling mass, her face set and gray, her eyes with that strange intent look worn by nearly every face belonging to our women—seized her, threw her down, and kicked her in the side.

"Well—I managed to drag her and Mrs. Lime out of the crowd, put them into a four-wheeler, and take them to Westminster Hospital. They

will die, no doubt; if not now, then later, devoured by the most horrible of all diseases. But if we have lost them, we shall have gained forty in their place, for this insensate policy of the Government has its logical consequence—illustrates the old truth, 'The blood of martyrs is the seed of reform.' Have they never read history?

"And yet, sometimes I despair. We shall win in the end, of course, for it is as impossible to exterminate this new force as to chain the Atlantic. But when? And shall we be here to see? We are only mortal, after all, and our bodies, strong to endure as they are, can be broken by men. And the great mass of women are so slow in awakening. In spite of the tremendous increase in our numbers during the past year, and the interest we have aroused, our recruits are a mere handful when compared with the female population of Great Britain, in general. Not until all, or at least three-fourths, of those women have awakened and rallied to our side can we win. Of that I am convinced. One thing I strove to do in the north was to convert the political women, those that always assist the men so potently at every general election. If we can persuade these women to desert the men and fight for women alone, we shall have made a great stride. This autumn I am to renew my acquaintance with my old associates and visit country houses during the autumn and winter, making converts of women who would be of inestimable benefit to us. But that is a sort of inactive service under which I chafe. Would that we could rouse all the women at once, form a rebel army, take to the field and fight like men. Perhaps we shall be driven to that in the end. It is all very well to plan to win by brains alone, and it would be to our immortal glory if we did, but it is to be considered that we are opposing men either without brains themselves, or who have been bred on the idea of physical force and really respect nothing else. Well, whatever happens, I only ask that I may be here to see. I am willing to give my brain and body and soul and every penny I can command to this cause, but I want to give the last of myself at the last minute, all the same.

"Now, write and tell me honestly if you would have me desert these women, when I can be of signal assistance to them in not one but many ways; and if you think I would be anything but what this cause has made of me if I would.

"JULIA FRANCE."

BOOK V
DANIEL TAY

I

THE great amphitheatre of the Albert Hall was filled from arena to dome: some ten thousand women and three hundred men, exclusive of police. Slim young women in the white uniform of stewards and decorated with the badges of their unions stood at the back of the gangways. On the platform, against flowers and banners, sat the officials of the Woman's Social and Political Union and of the several unions it had inspired. Of the most important of these, Julia France had been elected president eighteen months before, and to-night sat at the right of Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, who occupied the chair in the absence of Mrs. Pankhurst.

The great rally had a fourfold purpose: to celebrate the victory of the Militants in the general election, during which they had fought the Liberals in forty constituencies; their energy, cleverness, and resource being not the least of the factors which had transferred eighteen seats to the Conservatives (thus throwing the Government upon the Labor and Irish vote for support); to protest once more against the inhuman treatment of the hunger strikers in Holloway gaol; to add to the £100,000 fund; and to listen to Mrs. France's account of her three months' lecture tour in the United States.

When Julia had risen to speak, she had been greeted by a magnificent demonstration. Every woman in the audience had sprung to her feet, cheered, and waved her banner for five minutes. This enthusiasm was not inspired by Julia's notable tour only, nor to the money she had brought back with her, but to her four years' record of steadfast and valuable work in the Militant cause, the large number of recruits she had brought in by her personal efforts, the many Liberal candidates she had helped to defeat at by-elections, her religious devotion to a work for which nothing in her previous life would seem to have prepared her, and above all, to the great gift for leadership she had displayed during the last year and a half. For her indomitable courage, her indifference to personal comfort, and to bodily suffering when maltreated by police, stewards, or hooligans, or endured in gaol, they had no applause; this was a mere matter of course. But in addition to her services, Julia was a favorite with all of them: she was picturesque without being sensational, a brilliant powerful persuasive speaker, and a lovely picture on the platform. Moreover, she possessed (and desperately clung to) the priceless gift of humor, and humor in suffragette ranks was rare. Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughters, great speakers as they were, had not a ray of it; and even Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, the most genial of women, fell under the spell of the world's tragedy the moment she rose to speak.

To-night, Julia, knowing that most of the minds present were oppressed by the sufferings in Holloway, made the account of her American experiences as diverting as possible, although she finished with a passionate denunciation of the Government, and an appeal to her audience to proselytize unceasingly, until their numbers were irresistible.

When she sat down, Mrs. Lawrence, preparatory to making her appeal for funds, gave a graphic and terrible picture of the hunger strikers, who, forcibly fed through the nose and throat with surgical instruments of torture, were now having a dose of martyrdom that compared favorably with any in the records of the Inquisition. Julia, too well acquainted with the horrible details, glanced over the House and nodded to Ishbel Dark and Bridgit Maundrell, seated in a box. Ishbel was still the prettiest woman in any assembly she chose to grace, and her attire, as ever, looked like the petals of a flower. Bridgit, severely tailored, albeit in velvet, was sitting forward tensely, her eyes flashing at the iniquities of man. Julia noted with amusement that Maundrell was behind her, and listening with an expression no less indignant. Dark consistently refused to show himself at Suffrage rallies, although more sympathetic of late, but Maundrell was not only complaisant, but converted. To have lived with Bridgit for three years and failed to be impressed by that burning and immovable faith would have stamped him superman, and the next step was to surrender to a cause capable of making such an apostle. He already had made a number of speeches, in and out of the House, advocating the extension of the franchise to a limited number of women, and as he was a man of distinguished abilities, there was much rejoicing in Suffrage ranks. He had even permitted his wife to take part in the last great raid on the House, although, without her knowledge, he had circled near her, and diverted the attention of the police when she had been too eager for trouble. He had no intention of letting her go to gaol and ruin her health.

But the Westminster police avoided arresting women of Mrs. Maundrell’s position unless their official faces were slapped. For that matter they were growing more and more averse from arresting women at all, and had been heard to wish that the Parliamentarians would come out and do their own dirty work. The women had so far won their liking and respect that when the Government wanted them knocked about, they were forced to order up reserves from the slums. The Westminster officers formed woman-proof cordons about the Houses of Parliament, effectively protecting the men within, but repulsed their assailants good-naturedly, only making arrests when the women were inexorable. When Julia, determined upon arrest in one of the raids of 1909, made a technical assault upon a tall policeman’s chin, he had whispered: “Harder, Mrs. France. Give me a good crack on me cheek. That’ll be assault, as the Inspector’s looking this way, and I’ll have to arrest ye.”

The great number of Militants arrested, the injustice of their trials and sentences, the severity of their treatment in gaol, had succeeded as nothing else had done in arousing the women of Great Britain. Very nearly a million had declared themselves in favor of Suffrage, and many of these had joined one or other of the forty-one

societies and unions.

Only the mean-spirited, the hopelessly old-fashioned, and the sex idolaters had failed to rally to their cause. Never in the history of England had there been such monster mass-meetings, such impressive parades, such a widespread upheaval. If these rebels had been Socialists, or any other body of men demanding concessions, they would have won their battle long since.

Mrs. Lawrence passed on to her favorite subject, the injustice of visiting the penalties of the law upon desperate girls for infanticide, while ignoring her partner in crime. Julia, whose mind had wandered to her own prison experiences, happily over before the hunger strike was organized, and the devices to which she had resorted before she had compelled arrest in spite of the duke's vigilance, suddenly, without an instant's transition, began to think vividly of Daniel Tay. She started and sat up straighter, drawing her brows together in perplexity. Her thought was very consecutive these days.

During their long but irregular correspondence—often conducted on his part by cable—she had thought of him exclusively while writing, or reading his characteristic letters, and then dismissed him from her mind. There was always a certain excitement in "talking" confidentially into a mind on the other side of the globe, and his epistles, however brief, were sympathetic. He had long since given up his attempt to turn her from her purpose; he recognized her as a force, and asserted that he was proud of her. She fancied that he no longer cared to meet her again, but found his own amusement in the novelty of the correspondence; and she too no longer experienced tremors at sight of his handwriting. But she was conscious of a bond, and welcomed an occasional vibration from the other end of the line.

And now she suddenly found herself thinking of him intensely. She peered out into that acre of faces. Could he be present? Hardly, as he had written but a few weeks ago that he was "up to his neck" in business and politics. The famous Graft Prosecution was sitting expectantly on the edge of its grave, dug by corrupting gold, the rallying of every dishonest business man in San Francisco to the standard of the scoundrels in politics, and a few mistakes of its own. Business, too, was "awful," San Francisco's luck not having turned since the morning of the earthquake. No, he could not be present, but she stirred uneasily, nevertheless. She was highly organized, and quick to respond to the concentration of another mind upon her own. Once more she searched that mass of faces, but they seemed to melt into one. She banished Tay from her mind. He returned promptly. She frowned, but gave it up and let her mind drift.

Mrs. Lawrence had made her usual stirring appeal for an addition to the growing fund, and the money was rolling in. The girl stewards were running back and forth, and Mrs. Lawrence was reading aloud the promise cards as they were handed up, while her husband made the additions on the score board. Some £5000 had been subscribed amidst continuous applause, when Julia forgot Tay and almost laughed aloud as she heard Mrs. Winstone's name read out to the tune of £20. "Alas!" this

convert had cried plaintively to Julia, a few days before. “What will you? Haven’t I always said that one secret of lookin’ young was to dress in the fashion of the moment, not have any silly style of your own? And you’ve got to keep your mind dressed up to date as well as your figger. I’m not goin’ to gaol and ruin what complexion I’ve got left, but I’ve taken a box at Albert Hall and I’m havin’ meetings in my drawin’-room. It’s a God-send to have a new fad, anyway. All the old ones were motheaten.”

Julia lost her breath. She felt her body cold and rigid, and all its blood flown to her face.

“Daniel Tay, £200,” read Mrs. Lawrence.

And the women cheered, as they always did when a man offered himself up for encouragement.

Julia stared at her hands and tried to close her lips! So! He was here! She was furious with herself for her agitation; she also cast a hasty glance over her costume. Ishbel and her maid attended to her wardrobe, keeping her admirably dressed; nothing was asked of her but to wear her clothes, and this she could always be relied upon to do with distinction. She had hardly been aware of the color or fashion of her gown until this moment of searching investigation, and was gratified to observe that it was of white chiffon cloth and gentian blue velvet; made with simplicity, but long of line, and moulded to her round slim young figure. She wore a long chain of blue tourmalines and moonstones, the colors of her Union, and presented by her American admirers. Her abundant flame-colored locks were braided about her head as in the days of Bosquith, little curls escaping on her brow and neck.

Her self-possession returned, and looking out, she deliberately smiled, a very hospitably sisterly smile. She believed that Tay would move, change his seat abruptly; but everybody was moving, and many were standing. To recognize him would be impossible unless he came directly up to the platform. She rather wondered that he did not, being an informal creature. Then she looked forward confidently to finding him at the stage door.

The meeting broke up, amidst renewed cheers and waving of flags. Tay was not at the stage door. After lingering for a few moments in conversation, she went round to the front entrance. But only the police stood there, a long stately and useless rank. They all saluted Julia, and one told her he had missed her. Finally she permitted him to put her into a cab, and drove to Clement’s Inn with her black brows in a straight line. She excogitated until the brilliant idea struggled out that Tay had intrusted his donation to some friend, who had recklessly unchained himself from his desk in that unhappy city of San Francisco.

II

WHEN she had entered her flat she sat down at her desk and scowled more deeply still. She was angry not only at her past agitation but at her present disappointment. For seven years now, save for brief lapses, almost forgotten, she had been complete mistress of herself. During the last four she had so far sunk her personality into the great impersonal cause of her adoption that she had had no time to moon about herself after the fashion of idle women.

Work! Had that been the secret? How commonplace, and how expositive! Who, indeed, when speaking, planning, fighting, proselytizing, writing innumerable leaflets, newspaper and magazine articles, drilling recruits, attending thousands of meetings, to say nothing of organizing her own Union and fighting army, would find a moment's time to cast a thought to man save as present enemy and future co-worker. Even when in gaol, from which she had been mysteriously released both times at the end of a week, she had deliberately slept when not writing articles in her head. In America she had not gone farther west than Chicago, but she suddenly realized that if the question of including California in the itinerary had arisen she should have felt something like panic, possibly the same superstitious fear that had assailed her at three pillar boxes four years earlier. Well, indeed, that Tay had sent his contribution. She had no desire to have her work interrupted, nor to go through any female throes. To know that she was still hospitable to them was bad enough. Switch him out! She took her typewriter from its case, haughtily refusing to sleep.

The telephone beside her rang. She put the receiver to her ear, wondering who dared interrupt her at night in times of peace. Although a truce with the Government was not formally declared until February 14th, the Militants were resting on the laurels won in the General Election.

A man's voice answered her "Hello!"

"Who is it?"

"Guess!"

"I—I can't."

"Well, I hope my voice has changed some."

"Oh—so you *are* here. How generous of you to give us those £200!"

"Generous nothing. You fired me up so with that speech that I came near subscribing my entire letter of credit, and then borrowing back enough to pay my hotel bill and get out."

"Why didn't you come up to the platform afterward, or wait for me in the lobby?"

"Frightened out of my wits. I'm never shy at the other end of the telephone, so thought I'd meet you this way first. If you'd made the usual female speech, I should have remained quite myself. But with all your wit and fire, you're so finished, so

polished—and you look that way, too. My teeth are still chattering. Somehow, in spite of everything, I suddenly realized that I'd always remembered you as the little princess on the tower."

("And I in the fatal young thirties!") "Nonsense! I've merely worked hard these last four years. No one ever dreamed of being afraid of me. Of course you'll call to-morrow?"

"I think I might summon up courage if you would infuse a little cordiality into your voice. You've thawed a bit, but not too much."

"You took me so completely by surprise. I had just made up my mind that you had asked some friend to make that donation in your name."

"Never should have thought of such a thing, although you could have had all I've got at any moment. What time may I call to-morrow?"

"When did you arrive?"

"This morning. Saw at once that you were going to speak, and thought I'd see what you were like before I ventured. What time may I call to-morrow morning?"

"Let me think—I've always a thousand things to attend to in the morning—"

"Please cut them out. You need a rest, anyhow. I'd like to call at eleven."

"Well—why not? We might go to the National Gallery—"

"What! You're not going to begin on that? Reminds me of Cherry and the torments of my youth. I'd like to talk to you for twelve hours on end, and take you out to lunch and dinner, but I'll go to no morgues!"

"Oh, very well. It will be quite delightful. But as it will be what you call a strenuous day, perhaps I'd better go to bed now. Good night."

"Good night, Militant Princess."

When Julia hung up the receiver she was still smiling. Then, to show how completely mistress of herself she was, she went to bed and slept.

III

THE next morning Julia looked dubiously about her little sitting-room. A workshop, truly. No hint here of the charming woman's boudoir. It would have been impossible for Julia to live in tasteless surroundings, and the walls were covered with green burlap, the carpet was of the same shade, the chairs were of leather, the big desk was of old oak. But there was not a picture on the walls, not a bibelôt, only books, books everywhere; and in the corners piles of papers. She rang for the maid that took care both of her and the flat (her meals were brought in unless she went out for them), and ordered her to make the room as presentable as possible while she took the walk with which she began her day. It was raining, but no weather kept her indoors, and she walked rapidly to Kensington Park and back.

When she reëntered the flat she petrified the maid by ordering her to bring forth her new coats and skirts for inspection. There was a rough but handsome green tweed for heavy wear, the inevitable black cloth, and a more elaborate costume of electric blue cloth with a white velvet collar and fancy blouse, intended for the simple functions of her present life. She arrayed herself in the last without an instant's hesitation, then after trying on the graceful little hat three times, decided that it would be more hospitable to receive an old friend in the hair he admired.

"Have I any tea-gowns?" she asked abruptly.

"Tea-gowns, mum?" Collins barely articulated. "No, mum. You've never had use for tea-gowns."

"How odd, when I often come home tired."

"I've never seen you really tired, mum."

"Everybody is tired at times—and—and—I always wanted tea-gowns."

"I'll go at once to her ladyship's—"

"Yes, do. No, go to the big French houses—I've given Lady Dark so much trouble. Buy me two, ready-made. A pale green one, and a white one with sapphire-blue ribbons—or cornflower blue. It doesn't matter."

"Yes, mum." And Collins went on her errand joyfully.

"Now what a fool I am," thought Julia. But she did not recall the maid. She carried the forgotten typewriter into the next room and deposited it on the bed, then sat down and reflected that Swani Dambaba, her Hindu master, had often reminded her there was nothing like a short, but thorough, vacation from the mind's accustomed travail, to recuperate the mental faculties and prepare them for still more arduous labors. She had thought of one thing only for four years. This, no doubt, was the opportunity her mind had impatiently awaited, for its Suffrage activities had lain down to sleep without a preliminary yawn. Her secretary had come and gone, mystified.

Promptly on the stroke of eleven she answered a sharp rap and extended both

hands with a cold friendly brightness she could always adjust like a visor. Tay flung his hat on a chair and shook her hands for quite a minute. Obviously his diffidence was a thing of overnight, for it was not in evidence as he smiled down upon her with his keen clever eyes.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed, “but you look good to me. You haven’t changed a bit. To tell the truth, if business hadn’t forced me to come over here, I don’t believe I’d ever have come—was so afraid you’d be old and ugly —”

“Old and ugly!” cried Julia, indignantly. “When I’m only—” She paused abruptly. Tay knew that she was thirty-four, and she was willing that he should know, but, quite like any woman after twenty-eight, she couldn’t force the combination past her lips.

“I know, but you’ve worked like a man, and been in so many free fights. Batting cops over the head, sitting on roofs in the rain to devil politicians at the psychological moment, to say nothing of gaol, doesn’t improve women, as a rule. I was almost certain you would have lost your complexion—and your hair!”

“Well, I haven’t. Do sit down. Will you smoke?”

“Will you?”

“I never smoke in the morning.”

“No more do I. Don’t let my nerves get ahead of me.”

“It would be delightful to see you all again,” said Julia, amiably, as he took off his overcoat and made himself comfortable. Then she plunged into the safe subject of Mrs. Bode and her amusing experiences in London during the Spanish war, meanwhile examining him with cool smiling eyes, which appeared to dwell upon the cheerful memory of his sister. She was gratified to find him as well dressed and groomed, even to the crown of his sleek black head, as any man he might meet in Piccadilly, and confessed that she would have been intensely disappointed had his attire been as Western as his vocabulary. His accent was also agreeable, without nasal inflection, and although it lacked the cultivation of the best English voice, it was manly even over the telephone. He had grown several inches taller, although he had been a tall boy, and his figure was straight and well set up. Save for the keen depth of the black-gray eyes, and the accentuated squareness of chin and jaw, he had changed surprisingly little. Even as a boy he had held his head high; now he had the air of one accustomed to command a large number of men. His manner, while courteous and amiable, betrayed possibilities of impatience. She could quite appreciate what he had once written her, that he was “some pumpkins on the street.”

He looked steadily at her as they talked, and she detected an expression both defensive and wary at the back of his eyes, reflected in the slight smile on his firm, rather grim mouth. She guessed that he had no intention of falling in love with her again. Every once in a while, however, his eyes flashed with admiration, and then he looked quite boyish; his smile was spontaneous and delightful. But she suddenly realized that he would not be as easy to understand as she had thought.

“You might have sent me a photograph,” he said abruptly, tired of Cherry. “I have a large collection of libels, cut from weekly magazines, but —”

“How odd you never asked for one.”

“I guess I didn’t want the charming picture in my mind disturbed. I feared you might have grown to look masculine, at the least. It’s queer you haven’t, you know.”

“None of us looks masculine, although a good many look sexless, if you like. Don’t you want to come down to the offices and meet the big ones?”

“I—do—*not*.”

“I thought you were so interested—”

“As far as I am concerned the entire movement is concentrated in you. You may be the type, but I don’t believe it, and anyhow I don’t care.”

“Well, you saw some of them on the platform last night.”

“I saw no one but you. In fact I had an opera-glass trained on you throughout the whole show.”

“Oh! Did you? But you haven’t told me what brought you over.”

“We’re trying to open an important connection in London, and our representative cabled me to come over and help him. An American has to sit up nights to keep an Englishman from getting ahead of him, much as an Englishman has to sit up watching a Scot. This is the top of civilization, all right—and all that term implies. No wonder your women are ahead in their particular game.”

“But the American women are now almost as keen on Suffrage as we are.”

“Yes, but in their way, not yours. I’m for giving them the vote, for they’ll help us to clean up, and incidentally develop their minds. But your women are a century ahead—not that we’ll ever have such women. Thank God, we haven’t the men to breed them. You’re up against the hundred-per-cent male. That is enough to make women stronger than death. With us it’s more likely to be the other way.”

“You don’t look henpecked.”

“No more I am, nor ever shall be. Our women only think they do the tyrannizing. Give a woman her head in trifles, all the money she can whine or nag for, and she thinks she’s the whole show. That’s the way we manage ours. What they don’t know doesn’t hurt them.”

“I rather think that’s worse. We at least know what we are fighting.”

“Exactly. And it has made great fighters of you. None better in the history of the world. That shows how much cleverer the American man is than the Englishman. We lie low like Br’er Rabbit, and say nuffin. American women are discontented, want the earth, but can find nothing to sharpen their axes on, and that is good for us. They may help us in the United States, and we’ll be glad to have ’em, but they’ll never rule. Now I am willing to bet my unmade millions that the Englishwomen will be ruling this country fifty years from now, perhaps twenty. I expect to live to see a woman Prime Minister. You, perhaps! Awful thought!”

“I should like it,” said Julia, frankly. “And I’m glad I wasn’t born an American.”

“Oh, you are *you*. I don’t class you geographically—except—well, I read up after I’d got a letter or two from you, and it set me thinking—also talking with an astrologer we have in San Francisco, who’s some nuts on Oriental lore. We came to the same conclusion, that you were a lightning streak straight out of the past—not Earth’s past, but some previous solar system —”

“Oh!” Julia sprang to her feet, startled quite out of her visor. “San Francisco! You! It is too uncanny!”

“Hoped I’d get a rise out of you. Nothing uncanny about it. Some of the weirdest characters, not to say scholars, have drifted out there. California is not the God-forsaken hole you may have been led to believe. I’ll admit that lore of any sort is not exactly our business man’s idea of recreation, and but for you I might be in happy ignorance of Oriental mysteries myself.”

“And how much do you believe?”

“Oh, sometimes I laugh at it—and myself, but—perhaps I like the queer romance of it. Lord knows it’s sufficiently un-American. Now that I’ve seen you once more—I’m not so sure how much of it I do believe. You don’t look several hundred thousand years old, not by a long sight. I hope you have a young appetite. Will you come over to the Savoy, or is that not allowed in Militant circles?”

“Nonsense. Once, perhaps; but now I’d lunch with a coal heaver if I chose.”

“Thanks! I have a taxi downstairs—”

“Waiting? You *are* extravagant! Like your cables. They were too funny.”

“Not at all. I’m more at home in a cable office than in bed.”

“But I thought you were all so badly off in San Francisco?”

“My dear princess, the harder up a San Franciscan is, the more money he spends. I can’t explain; doubtless it’s a law of nature. But if you’ll put on a hat to match that charming frock —”

“I’ll be ready in a second. How nice that you notice what a woman has on. I had almost forgotten that pleasant characteristic of a few men.”

“I shall be here a month, and hope to pass on your entire wardrobe.”

And they went as gayly forth as if indeed the good old friends they fain would feel but could not; but young withal, and agreeably titillated.

IV

If a man and a woman tentatively interested in each other would part for years at the end of a long day together, during which they had talked until every subject on earth seemed exhausted, and ennui inevitable, the cure would be effected before the disease had declared itself. An appreciative thought now and again, a passing regret, other minds as stimulating, the episode is closed. Astute wives have been known to apply a form of this treatment to husbands and the objects of their roving fancy; perchance in time it will be recognized as a sort of love vaccine and scientifically administered.

Julia and Tay talked almost uninterruptedly until eleven o'clock that night, and existed comfortably apart for nearly a week. Julia plunged into routine work with renewed ardors, refused to look at her tea-gowns, and when she thought of Tay at all was rather glad they had met at last and had a jolly talk. Tay sent her a box of roses (automatically), but was too busy to think about her; for the increased importance of his house, to say nothing of his reluctant millions, depended upon the success of his efforts in London. But on Saturday he found himself idle, and promptly thought of Julia. A brief talk on the telephone ended in an invitation to dine at Clement's Inn that night; and with his desire for feminine society once more alert, and for Julia's in particular, he appeared with his usual promptness.

Julia, who had grown methodical, had put on the green tea-gown as a logical result of its purchase for the delectation of her old friend; and he gave it instant approval.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "That's the sort of thing you were made for. You look less of a Suffragette than ever. I hope that when you have accomplished your horrible purpose and have nothing to do but vote, you will receive me in a boudoir the same shade."

"I shouldn't wonder if I did have a boudoir one of these days— You look rather nice yourself in your evening clothes— That would be a good idea for all of us. We'll take a rest cure first, and then feminize ourselves just enough."

"Rather flat, though, to receive women in boudoirs, for no men will go to see you—them."

"Oh, won't they? Men will readjust their old ideals when they have to, and be glad of something new in women."

"Yes, but that sort won't care a hang about boudoirs."

"They will about mine. And I'll promise it shall be large enough for people with long legs. I hope the waiters won't stumble over yours when they bring in the dinner."

Tay had had some misgivings about this dinner, having been asked to speak once or twice before women's clubs, foregathered at the luncheon hour. But Julia

had not lost her taste for dainty edibles, and he hardly could have fared better anywhere, save in the city of his birth.

“How is it you know so much about food?” he asked as the dishes were being removed. “You say the Suffragettes are not even masculine, they are sexless. No wonder they could stand gaol. No doubt they live on ancestral memories.”

“Gaol has ruined most of their stomachs, all the same, and I should have choked over every morsel I ate, if I hadn’t deliberately thought about something else—detached my mind.”

“Can you do that?” he asked, looking at her curiously.

“Rather. I learned a good many secrets in the East. I can control both my mental and physical machinery.”

“How appalling! If you found yourself falling in love, I suppose you’d just turn on your mental hose-pipe and wash it out by the roots.”

“Something like that.”

“Julia,” said Tay, removing his cigar and looking at the ash, “what would you really do if you ever did fall in love?”

“I never shall.”

“Ah? Is prophecy included in the mental make-up of the new sex?”

“I mean I’ll never have time.”

“But you’ll win this fight, and then, mercifully, have time to think of other things. There *are* a few things besides Suffrage in the world even now, you know.”

“We won’t have so much more time; perhaps less. Our work will only just have begun.”

“Yes, but the holy martyr’s fire will have burned out for want of something to feed on. Your interests will be more diverse, at least, your minds less concentrated. Men have time to fall in love, you may have observed. You’ll all begin to look about.”

“I doubt it. We’ve been through too much ever to be quite like other women.”

“Nonsense, Julia, nonsense. You can’t get ahead of Nature. She may take a back seat for a time, but she, being really unhuman, never sleeps. She watches her chance and the moment it comes she gets her fine work in. She hits good and hard, too; all the harder because she appropriates to herself some of the vengeance of the Lord.”

“That’s a man’s reasoning, but it is beside the question as far as I am concerned. Insane people live forever.”

“Have you any prejudice against divorce?”

“Rather not. One of the first things we accomplish is a reform of the unjust divorce laws of this country. But I doubt if even women will consent to the divorce of the insane. It can be done in only one or two states of your own country.”

“True. But a marriage can be annulled if it is shown that one of the parties to the

contract was insane at the time of marriage.”

“Marriage can be annulled on the same ground here, but not without more horrors of detail than any woman who had lived with a man for eight years would care to suffer.”

“A simple statement would be enough in Reno—why do you laugh?”

“I have heard of Reno before.”

“Ah?” Tay sat up alertly. “Who else—who has wanted to take you out to Reno and marry you?”

“Oh, that is over long since. He remains a dear friend, my one intimate man friend—except you, of course—but we never meet any more except by accident. He has great responsibilities and is a good deal older now. It has become quite impracticable. Neither of us would desert England.”

“Did you ever love this man?”

“Not enough.”

“What is he like?”

“Oh, the best type of Englishman, and more, for he has genius, and uses it in the interest of the race.”

“Sounds like an infernal prig.”

“He is not!”

“Oh! Is he good-looking?”

“Rather!”

“Do women like him?”

“It shows how really remarkable he is, that he has never been spoiled by them.”

“Are you trying to make me jealous?”

“Of course I am not! I hope I have pulled all my pettiness up by the roots—long ago!”

“You are one of the purest types of female I have ever met. If you weren’t, you wouldn’t radiate charm from every electrical hair on your head.” He had been trying to stride about the little room. He stopped short and leaned both hands on the table. “Julia,” he said, “do you want to know exactly what I think of you?”

“What could be more interesting?”

“I think you are a magnificent bluffer. No, don’t flash those arc-lights on me. I mean you bluff yourself, not the world. You are sincere, all right. But you’ve hypnotized yourself. Ask your old Mohammedan if I’m not right. He gave you a suggestion or two, from all accounts.”

“If you were not talking nonsense, I should be angry. I’m quite well aware that I was deliberately prepared for all this, and long before I went to India. Wait until you meet Bridgit; she’ll tell you her part in it. And even if I were hypnotized? Are not we all more or less? Hypnotized by the currents of life, by its waves beating on our

brains? Some are drawn to one current, some to another. It all depends upon our particular gift for usefulness. This happens to be my métier. Sooner or later, whether I had gone to India or not, even if I had not known Bridgit, even if—a friend had not written the book that started us all in this direction, I should have drifted into my current. Only I had the good fortune to be steered soon instead of late."

"Not bad reasoning." Tay stared at her for a moment, then took up his restricted march. "All the same there are layers and layers that you have deliberately covered up. Pretended they are not there. That is what I mean by bluffing."

"Oh, you don't understand us. Wait until you have met twenty or thirty more."

"Yes, wait! I don't propose to know even one more. And I don't care a continental for the whole Militant bunch. Not even rolled into one magnificent manifestation of sexless sex. I am quite willing to believe they were born that way, and have no desire to dwell on the thought. You are a different proposition."

"Not at all."

"Exactly. When a woman is made soft and beautiful and dainty, she's made for man, don't you make any mistake about that. Nature is no fool. She hasn't so much of that sort of material that she can afford to waste it. The number of undesirable women in the world is simply appalling. Mind you—" as Julia nearly overturned the table in her wrath, "I don't argue that she's made for that and nothing else. No man has less use for the pretty fool. Nor have I a word to say against this cause you are exercising your talents on. Go ahead and win. It's a great cause, and deserves a good deal of sacrifice from great women. But for God's sake don't go on making a fool of yourself. The real you is under all that manufactured impersonal edifice, and sooner or later, it'll wake up and knock the impersonal edifice into a cocked hat."

"Never!" Julia sat down again.

Tay took his own chair and leaned across the table.

"Julia," he said. "I have heard you speak once. I have read a good many of your more serious speeches. I have had a great many letters from you, all—except those in which you seemed to find some relief in your Eastern experiences—on this one subject. You have given a good deal more than concentration of mind to this cause. You have given it an amount of white-hot passion that not one woman in a million possesses. What are you going to do with that when the cause is won?"

"You are describing all the women—"

"Damn the other women. Do me the favor to leave them out of the conversation. I don't happen to be a fool, and if I haven't managed to fall in love all these years, that doesn't mean I know nothing about women. There is a certain quality of mental passion that springs from sex only. Now you've got it, and you've got to reckon with it. When do you expect to win this fight?"

"This year. We are almost sure now that the Government is ready to yield, but doesn't wish to appear coerced. That is the reason we shall declare a truce."

"Ah? It may be longer than you think. But not so very long. And when that is off

your chest, I'm going to marry you."

"You? You're not a bit in love with me."

"I'm not so sure. I came over determined not to be, for although I like strong women, I don't like 'em too strong. But your personal quality is stronger still—magnetism?—call it what you like —"

"Oh, if that is all, you'll soon get over it. Remember you are going back to America in a month —"

"Perhaps. That, however, has nothing to do with it. You knocked me out at fifteen, and you're about to do it again. What have I waited for all these years? I've felt superstitious about it before —"

"I don't love you the least bit, and never could." And Julia made her eyes look pure steel.

"Oh, couldn't you? Julia—" He leaned farther across the table and looked into the steel with no appreciable tremor. "Julia, play the part you look for just three minutes and a quarter."

"Do you want me to kiss you?" asked Julia, furiously.

"Don't I? I want nothing so much on earth, not even to get the best of those four-flushers in the City."

"Do you suppose I'd kiss a man unless I intended to marry him?"

"I hope not. I'm quite ready to do the right thing by you."

"Oh, I wish you would stop joking. It's rather indecent, anyhow."

"Not a bit of it. And what do you suppose I've come into your life for? To take up your education where Mrs. Maundrell and your Orientals left off. I'm part of the course. I'm inevitable. And if I've surrendered, why shouldn't you?"

"Surrender? I repeat that you are not a bit in love with me."

"And I repeat that I am not so sure. After we parted the other day, I was comfortably certain there was nothing in it for me, that I was as safe as a cat up a tree. But these last two days—well, I began to be uneasy. I wouldn't look it squarely in the face, but I was haunted with the idea of something wanting. I was uncomfortable away from you, that is the long and the short of it."

"You merely wanted some one sympathetic to talk to. I shall introduce you to all my old friends."

"Delighted to meet them. Or—shall I chuck business and take the next steamer?"

He was pale now and staring hard at her, perplexity and some astonishment deepening in his eyes.

"Good idea," said Julia, coolly.

"You provocative little— Were you ever a coquette?"

"Of course not."

“I wish I had been ten years older fifteen years ago. However—” He threw himself back in his chair. “I’ll not cut and run. I’ll be hanged if I do know whether I love you or not. You’ve a physical essence that goes to the head, but you are too self-centred, too unified, to give the complete happiness we men dream of. Fifteen years ago!”

“Do you mean I’m too old?”

“In a way, yes. You have lived too much in these fifteen years, although in one sense you haven’t lived at all. But you have the strength of ten women, and a man would have to be a good deal weaker than I am to want that much counterpoise. And yet you pull me like the devil, and I have admired you more these fifteen years than any woman on earth —”

“Really, you mustn’t disturb yourself,” said Julia, who was now so angry that she looked merely satirical. “I should not marry—neither you nor any one—if my husband were dead and the cause won. Winning the vote for women is merely a necessary preliminary, and my work for them but a part of an ideal of development I conceived even before I went to the East. I have a theory that the world will not improve much until a few women achieve a state of moral and mental perfection far ahead of anything the race has yet known. Such an achievement is impossible to man because he is either oversexed, or the reverse, and in both cases incapable of achieving perfect unity in himself, and absolute strength. But to woman it is possible. There will only be a few of us. Man needn’t worry. The world will always be full of the other kind. But to stand alone! To feel yourself equipped to accomplish for the world what twenty centuries of men have failed in—despite even their honest endeavor—do you fancy that one of us would exchange that great work for what any mere mortal could give us?”

“Whew!” Tay’s eyes, that had looked as hard as her own, flashed and smiled as he sprang to his feet and put on his overcoat. He held out his hand.

“Let’s cut all this out for a time,” he said. “Perhaps you’ve put me off, and perhaps you haven’t. Perhaps you are right. But if you are not, well, out to Reno you go. Is it to-morrow you take me to call on your aunt?”

“Yes. Will you come here?”

“I will. Goodnight.”

After he had gone Julia for an hour stared straight at the wall as if deciphering hieroglyphics. Then she smiled and went to bed.

V

Mrs. Winstone had put on her new intellectual expression. Her lids were slightly drooped, thus banishing the young stare of wonder; her brows were almost intimate, and she had powdered her nose with an art that elevated the bridge.

When Julia and Tay arrived at the house in Tilney Street she was standing beside a table at the end of the drawing-room. One hand rested lightly upon it, the other held a slip of paper. On her left sat Mrs. Maundrell and Lady Dark, on her right Mrs. Flint, a working woman from the slums of Bloomsbury, and an eminent leader in the Militant ranks of her own class. The room was well filled with charmingly gowned women, some mildly but financially sympathetic with the cause of Suffrage, others as mildly adverse. All looked mildly expectant.

"Aunt Maria said nothing about this," whispered Julia to Tay. "We'll sit at the back until it's over—that is, if you think you can stand it."

"I'll do my best. Like you, I can detach my mind."

"Ladies," began Mrs. Winstone, in a deep grave voice, and not seeing Julia, wondering who on earth the attractive-looking stranger could be, "we all know too much of the great cause which brings us together to-day for me to waste any words on its history. Suffice it to say that—a—" (she referred to the slip in her hand) "it is now a cause which no woman that respects herself can afford to ignore, a cause that for the first time in history has united all classes of women in one indissoluble bond. It originated in the great middle or manufacturing class, eloquently known as the backbone of England, and quickly spread to what is in our generation the most powerful of all, the working class. Thirty members of this great class sit in the House of Commons, but their better part is still clamoring at the gates. I refer, of course, to the thousands of working women now enrolled in the Militant army. One of these, the most—a—distinguished of its leaders, has kindly consented to talk to us to-day. She has her scars of battle. She has stormed the house of the Prime Minister, both when he lived in Cavendish Square, and after he was elevated to the more historic Downing Street. She has six times fought with the police guarding the House of Commons, and three times served a term in Holloway. Her recruits are numberless—Ladies, allow me to introduce Mrs. Flint."

She sat down and spread out her train. Mrs. Flint rose amidst the pleasant impact of kid, and Julia murmured to Tay: —

"A fine bluffer, my aunt, if you like. But all Englishwomen seem to speak well, by instinct."

Tay was groaning in spirit, but soon gave his ear to Mrs. Flint, who made a short pointed and effective speech. Her restraint and simplicity alone would have commanded attention. She began by remarking with grim humor that she had not been at all worried by the punching and kicking of the police, as her husband had beaten her every Saturday night for ten years until he disappeared, leaving her to

support and bring up seven children as best she might. But although she had long since forgiven him for all this, it being quite in the nature of things, she had enjoyed kicking the policemen back and clawing when she got her chance, as they belonged to that sex which had ruined the lives of two of her girls: one had flung herself into the Thames, and the other come home with her child, shattered in body and mind. Then, dismissing her personal affairs, she went on to speak of the wrongs of working women in general, their miserable wages for men's work, and the new hope that filled their lives at the prospect of women being able to force men to keep their election promises and command a fixed and adequate wage for women's work, shorter hours, and improved social conditions; conditions at present beyond the efforts of women on the municipal boards or even of the Friendly Societies. There was no ranting against man. Mrs. Flint recognized that he couldn't help himself, having been born that way, and incapable of understanding the limited endurance, and the needs, of women and children. She paid a just tribute to the few humane and enlightened men that had improved conditions in the past, but added that she saw no disciples among the present men in power. The only men that seemed to give any thought to the improvement of the poor were the Socialists, and they did nothing but talk and write pamphlets. They showed nothing of the life and the fighting spirit of the women now engaged in a war which would cease only when they were either all dead or victorious. When she had illustrated her address with a number of brief but terrible anecdotes, she finished with an eloquent appeal to her hearers to take part in the next raid on the House of Commons, should the Government fail to keep its tacit promise; and sat down amid a lively applause, as sincere as her speech.

"By Jove!" said Tay. "A working woman! Wish you could see ours. But we have the scum of Europe. Mrs. Flint is the undiluted British article. After all, it doesn't speak so badly for your men that such women have been allowed to breed in this country—also your own lot. Ever think of that?"

"Rather, and they must take the consequences. We prove ourselves the more logical sex inasmuch as we demand the logical result. Now! Bridgit!"

Mrs. Maundrell spoke like a fiery torrent, reënforcing Mrs. Flint's personal experiences with several of her own, garnered when she had worked in the slums; and impressing her audience with their duty to go out and fight to mitigate the lot of the poor, even if they had not sufficient self-respect to demand the ballot because it was their right on general principles.

Ishbel followed, speaking with her usual calm practical sense, and her appeal was to the immediate pocket. The funds of the unions must constantly be replenished, and she asked all present, in the soft accents of one unaccustomed to denial, and with her most enchanting smile, to subscribe liberally to the union represented by Mrs. Flint. She herself would distribute the promise cards.

"When I go back," said Tay, "I'll drum up all the useless beauties I know and start a class for their education in public speaking, and in thinking of something besides themselves. No wonder these women hit the bull's-eye every time."

And he cheerfully parted with five pounds when the distracting Ishbel told him how she had longed to meet this old friend of her own dear friend, and begged him to dine with her on the following evening.

“And you really must take advantage of this truce, dear,” she said to Julia, “and see a bit of the lighter side of life once more. We’ll be just a family party—like old times!”

“Nigel? Is he in town?” asked Julia, in alarm.

“No, he’s in Syria; writes from some hotel on Mount Carmel. I believe you suggested —”

“Ah! At last! I feared he never really would care for the idea.” But the relief in her voice was not in the cause of the Bahai religion.

Here Mrs. Maundrell bore down on them, and her eyes flashed from Tay’s face to Julia’s with an expression of angry misgiving. But Julia was cool and smiling, and Tay shook her hand heartily and protested that he had long thought of her as another old friend. Mrs. Maundrell liked him so spontaneously that she was more alarmed than ever.

“Come and meet my aunt,” said Julia, hastily, and bore him off.

Mrs. Winstone, who knew nothing of the correspondence, almost betrayed her surprise as the two approached her, and wondered if Julia really were going to turn out a woman. At all events she had shown taste in her sudden departure from sixteen years of inhuman indifference. The hostess greeted the one man present with warmth.

“So glad you could come, and so sorry I’m goin’ away. It would have been too jolly to know Charlotte’s brother. But I’m startin’ for my old home in the West Indies on Wednesday.”

“What?” cried Julia. “You never told me.”

“How very odd. But my nerves need a rest. Hannah and Pirie are goin’ with me.”

“To visit my mother?” gasped Julia.

“Rather not. Bath House has been rebuilt, in part. They are goin’ to take the baths for their gout. Any message for your mother?”

“Give her my love, of course.”

“Why not come along?”

“Well, you see, Aunt Maria, I am not quite casual enough, if I am English, to leave my party on a day’s notice.”

“So glad I’m not a leader. I always do what I want, without botherin’ about anybody else. Makes life so simple. How do, Hannah? Have you survived it?”

Tay had been swept off into a vortex of suffragists and antis, all arguing with determination. Julia sought out Ishbel and had a talk in a corner with that ever

soothing friend.

VI

"JULIA," said Tay, as they emerged into Tilney Street, "what is your idea of something real devilish?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that after that flow of soul, I am in a mood to whoop it up, paint the town magenta, get up on a box in Hyde Park and holler, but not to suffragettes. And I want your company. Can't you feel that way?"

"Perhaps," admitted Julia, laughing. "What a boy you still are."

"Not so much of a boy as you think, but enough. But I don't know your tastes in crime. Give me a hint, and we'll do it."

"I'm afraid I haven't any."

"You are as truthful as a woman can be, so investigate your possibilities and own up. Admit that under my demoralizing influence you are suffering some from reaction."

"I believe I am." Julia laughed again, with youth in her voice.

"I surmised as much, if only on general principles. I am subject to violent reactions myself. You've been good too long. If you don't take a mild fling or two, your nervous system will dictate that you rise in the night and blow up the Prime Minister. Suppose we walk, as it isn't raining. That, for London, is almost variety enough. Now, if you made up your mind to go on the wildest spree you could think of, what would it be? A French ball, with a hump and a limp; or a day on the Thames, if it happened to be summer, all alone with one man in a punt?"

"Let me think." Julia had quite fallen in with his mood. "I think I'd go on a sort of platonic honeymoon with the most companionable man I knew—you, for instance—to some foreign town, one I'd never visited, and where we could hear the best music. There would be a certain excitement in avoiding English people lest they misinterpret what was eminently proper, if quite irregular."

"I could never have conceived of such a hilarious program. But if that is your best, it would be better than nothing. As it is winter, I suppose we would shiver over our respective radiators when not at the opera."

"Oh, there are always the museums and art galleries —"

"More and more intoxicating. My idea of complete happiness is to wear out my old shoes and the back of my neck in art galleries —"

"As it is winter, think of the exercise."

"I prefer using a pair of dumb-bells at an open window. Do you happen to know of any musical European town where we could get food fit to eat?"

"Oh, there is always some good restaurant, and of course we could dine together —"

“And breakfast, and lunch, or I don’t go. Of course you’ll send me to a different hotel. Shall you take a sitting-room —”

“Oh, that wouldn’t do at all. Besides, it wouldn’t be necessary. We’ll be out all the time. There are always the theatres at night, when we don’t go to the opera.”

“As I don’t understand a word of any language except my own and Spanish, I can slumber peacefully while you improve your mind and feel wicked. I don’t see where I come in on this game.”

“Joking aside, Ishbel and Dark are going to Munich next week, and we might go along. My mind is a bit relaxed since the arrival of your upsetting self. It might be well to humor it.”

“Ah!” Tay had frowned, but his brow cleared suddenly. After all, he might see more of the real Julia with a chaperon, than if she were tormented by recurring alarms. “Very well. Munich, by all means. Anything to cut you loose from Suffrage. Promise right here that you will chuck it until we return.”

“I shall try to forget it—if only that I may return to it with a mind completely refreshed.”

“Exactly. But I haven’t yet had an object lesson in your switching-off trick, so I’ll strike a bargain with you right here: if you mention Suffrage, I shall make love to you. If you don’t, I won’t.”

“I promise,” said Julia, hastily. “I really should like to feel quite young and frivolous for a bit. And love is as deadly serious as Suffrage.”

“So you will find when I get ready to make love to you.”

“Can you get away—I thought you were so busy?”

“I’ll get away, all right. Just as well to jar their calm deliberation by flaunting my scornful indifference. Here we are. We’ll meet to-morrow night.”

And they parted gayly at the gates of Clement’s Inn.

VII

As Ishbel had promised, it was but a family party at her house on the following evening, and after dinner, the men went to the billiard room, the women upstairs. Julia was to stay overnight, and after she and Ishbel had made themselves comfortable in negligées, they met in the boudoir for a talk. Bridgit was striding up and down as they entered, her hands clasped behind her. As they dropped into easy chairs, she took up her stand before the fire-screen.

"Julia," she said fiercely, "you are going to fall in love with that man."

"I am in love with him," said Julia, coolly, lighting a cigarette.

"Good!" said Ishbel. "It is high time."

"High time!" cried Mrs. Maundrell. "You could fall in love and I could fall in love, and no damage done. We have married Englishmen and gone straight ahead with our work. But not only is Julia the leader of a great party which demands her undivided allegiance, but this man is an American."

"Perhaps he would live over here," suggested Ishbel, who was normally hopeful. "He is far more sympathetic with our cause than Eric."

"Not he. He is more American than the Americans—perhaps because he is a Californian. He told me all about his fight for reform in San Francisco—never heard anything so exciting—and he's going to try it again after they've had another dose of corruption under the present mayor. Besides, there's going to be a big fight this year to put in a reform governor, and he means to take part in it. He'll never desert. It will be Julia —"

"Don't excite yourself," murmured Julia. "I didn't say I meant to marry him."

"But why not?" asked Ishbel. "We are sure to win this year, and then you will have done your great work. We should always need you, of course, but it will be mainly educational work for a long time, and the others can do that. It will be ages before women get into a Cabinet or even into Parliament. And—splendid idea—you could drill the American women, become the leader over there. With your experience and reputation you would be simply invaluable to them."

"Suppose we don't win this year?" asked Julia, languidly.

"We won't!" said Mrs. Maundrell, emphatically. "They're merely hedging. There's nothing for us but to fight the Liberals at every general election until we get the Conservatives in."

"I don't believe it," said Ishbel, who, like many of the women, was certain of victory in that year of 1910 which was to bring their "Black Friday." "The Government may hate us, but they have given ample proof that they fear us; they know it is time to make friends of us. They will consent to the enfranchisement of only a limited number, of course, but I wouldn't care if they only enfranchised the wives of Cabinet ministers. Let them make the fatal admission that woman has a

political and legal existence and the rest is only a matter of time.”

“Yes, and nobody knows that better than themselves. They may be brutes, but they are not fools. I don’t hope for it—perhaps not even from the Conservatives—until fully four-fifths of the wives of this country have risen and devilled the lives out of their husbands. And the average British female is about as easy to wake up as a stuffed hippopotamus. She merely protrudes her front teeth and says, ‘How very *odd*!’ No, Julia can’t leave us. Fatal gift, that of leadership. Must take the consequences, old girl.”

“Who said I wouldn’t? Women have fallen in love without marrying before this. I intend to remain in love for a fortnight longer. Then I shall forget it and return to work.”

“Yes, if you can. I fought, fought like the devil. Didn’t I confide in you? Didn’t I look like the last rose? You are strong, but so am I. Let me tell you that love is a disease —”

“Quite so. There you have it. Love *is* a disease—of the subconscious or instinctive mind. It is a profound auto-suggestion, induced, in the region where the primal instincts dwell, by the superior suggestive power of some one else, and can be treated mentally like any disease of the body.”

Bridgit flung herself on the floor and clasped her knees. “How diabolically interesting! Tell us how you do it.”

Ishbel smiled and lit another cigarette.

“I may not be able to do it myself. Love, like sleep, the circulation of the blood, the digestive apparatus, to say nothing of drug and drink habits, is controlled by the subconscious mind. We can unwittingly give ourselves suggestions, but not deliberately. But all mental diseases, short of insanity, can be cured by counter-suggestions, administered by an expert. If I found that my will was helpless before intermittent attacks of love fever, and all that horrible accompaniment of longing and aching we read about, to say nothing of confusion of mind which unfits one for work, I should go to Paris and put myself in the hands of an eminent psychotherapeutist I know of. He would throw me into a semicataleptic state, or hypnotic, if I were not amenable in the other, and give me counter-suggestions until I was as completely cured as if I merely had had an attack of insomnia, or had taken a drug until it had weakened my will.”

“How beautifully simple! Why didn’t you tell me when I was in the throes, and doubtful of its being for the best?”

“I didn’t think of it. It only occurred to me when I was beginning to feel—perplexed. Now, as I really need a rest, and can take it in this interval of peace, I am going to see what the preliminary surrenders are like, and enjoy them. That much I owe to myself. And I shall not have its memory destroyed, neither.”

“No, don’t,” said Ishbel. “Merely have it put in cold storage. Suspended animation. You might be able to marry Mr. Tay, after all. It would be a pity to lose

it altogether. Should you have to fall in love all over again, or should you go back to your psychowhatyoucallhim and have the original suggestions replanted? Will he keep them in alcohol in a glass jar like those things in the Sorbonne?”

“You can jest, my dear, but I am talking pure science. And I learned it at the fountainhead. The Anglo-Saxon world is slow to accept anything it thinks new, but suggestive therapeutics were practised two thousand years B.C.”

“No one could be less conservative than I, although I have an adorable husband and two babies. Some day that may be thought radical. My mind is hospitable to all your lore, but I want to hear you work it out to its logical conclusion. What shall you do if you suddenly find yourself free to marry Mr. Tay—delightful man!—before he, with or without the aid of psychos, has recovered from you?”

“I have other reasons for intending to marry no man. And as for Dan—he is not even sure he is in love with me —”

“Oh, isn’t he?” cried Bridgit and Ishbel in chorus.

“Well, granted he is; he was not when he came over. He was convinced that I had grown hard and masculine, altogether terrifying; he was quite over his boyish infatuation. Now, he is attracted because he is delighted to find me not so much changed outwardly from his old ideal, and much more interesting to talk to. Besides, his masculinity is alert at the prospect of a difficult hunt. But when he is once more on the other side of the world, he will recover.”

“Julia,” said Ishbel, “you haven’t studied that man’s jaw-bones. And he has had his own way too much. He is tenacious. Now, as you are a human woman, you will adopt my suggestion. You will take him with you to Paris, and persuade him to go in for alternate treatments. Sauce for the goose, etc.”

“No,” said Julia, frowning.

“Julia!” said Ishbel, severely. “Are you losing your sense of humor?”

“Of course not!” Julia sprang to her feet. “But, you see, all this is A B C to me; and as it’s merely funny to you, you think there must be an air pocket in my mind into which my sense of humor has dropped —”

“No, dear, not a bit of it. We all know that you learned more in the East than you’ll ever tell, and we’ve heard vague rumors of Charcot —”

“Oh, his hypnotism is all out of date. The present men are as scientific as the ancients —”

“Well, don’t be too hard on us, Julia, and pity Mr. Tay. Take him with you to Paris. I mean it. It’s the least you can do.”

“I’ll not.”

“And why not, dear?”

“Oh, you see,” said Julia, “the unexpected might happen, and I might want to marry him. And when men recover, they recover so completely; not to say console themselves with some one else. I shall have the suggestion made, that if I ever

should—but I'm not going to say another word about it. Good night." And she ran out of the room.

"I don't doubt she could do all that," said Ishbel, as Bridgit gathered herself up. "But one thing I am positive of, and that is that she won't."

"I rather hope she will. Then we can have a private conference with the psycho and tell him to plant the haunting image of Nigel in the place of Tay, dispossessed. Then we'll all be happy."

"Do you believe Nigel cares still for Julia?"

"Don't I? But he's strong, if you like. He can't marry her in England, so he thinks of her as little as possible and does the work of two men."

"But if he can't marry her?"

"I'll tell you something if you'll vow not to tell Julia—or Mr. Tay."

"Very well."

"France has been having bad heart attacks. I have it from Aunt Peg."

"Julia is as likely to hear it from the same source."

"Not she. The duke has forgiven her, but has no desire to be reminded that he has a suffragette in the family. Never reads the Militant news, and all the rest of it. So Julia spares his feelings and never goes there. (I spare him the sight of me!) I don't want her to know it until Mr. Tay is safely at home in his absorbing San Francisco. It would never do, Ishbel. I'd like to see Julia happy myself, but she can't leave England. And she'd be happier with Nigel, for he's her own sort. I like Mr. Tay; he's really frightfully attractive—but—after Part I of love-plus-matrimony had run its course, they'd have a bad time adapting themselves. The real tyrants are the masterful Americans, because in their heart of hearts they regard women as children, handle them subtly, won't fight in the open. Now remember, you've promised. If Mr. Tay found out that France was likely to die any minute, he'd 'camp' here, as he expresses it, until he could marry Julia out of hand. He has a jaw, as you've observed yourself."

"Yes," said Ishbel. "I've promised, but I rather wish I hadn't. I like fair play."

"We are in war," said Mrs. Maundrell, coolly. "Good night."

VIII

"JULIA!" came Tay's voice over the telephone. "We are in adjoining hotels! I never felt so truly wicked in my life! How do you feel?"

"Cold. My stove won't warm up."

"Mine looks like a polar bear on end. I expect it to open its jaws and devour me. Wish it would if what you English chastely call its inside is warmer than its out. I've just had an exhilarating supper of cold ham, beer, and double-barrelled crusts, which appear to be a staple. I suppose you have had precisely the same, as this is Germany and the hour 11.30 P.M."

"Yes, and I'm going to bed this minute and forget it. Good night."

"One minute. To-morrow morning?"

"Hadn't we better wait till the Darks arrive?"

"Not much! Do you think I'm going to moon about a strange town by my lonesome? If we could travel together —"

"There are so many English people in Munich, and I am in the position of Cæsar's wife at present —"

"Don't dare to mention the word—the fatal word. Now, expect me to-morrow morning at nine-thirty. If you are not downstairs on the minute, I'll send a procession of bell-boys up to your room until the hotel is ringing with the scandal."

"Very well. It would be rather stupid."

"Glad you see the point. By the way, what have you told the police you are? I longed to write anarchist and see what would happen. I compromised by writing, 'Proprietor of a Free Lunch Counter and Antigraft Sausage Factory.' "

"You didn't!"

"Cross my heart."

"I hope you'll have a visit from the police first thing in the morning. I wrote 'Ward in Chancery'; thought that rather funny."

"Best English joke I ever heard! Well, go to bed, Princess of the Tower. Mind you stay on it."

Lord Dark had been detained at the last minute, and Julia easily had been persuaded to go on alone with Tay. Both had made merry at first over the mock elopement; but the trains were crowded and cold, the wait at Cologne was long and colder still, and both were unsentimentally relieved to arrive at their destination. Here, at least, in the beautiful city of Munich, they really could enjoy a day or two of complete liberty. Julia had not had the faintest notion of secluding herself.

On the following morning as Tay left his hotel he saw her waiting in front of her own. As she smiled and waved her hand he experienced a slight agreeable shock. "Aha!" he thought. "I really believe she has switched off. For all mercies, etc."

Julia’s eyes were dancing with anticipation, the firm lines of her mouth had relaxed, and it looked even younger than when he first met her, for then it had curved with some of that bitterness of youth which she had long since outgrown; although it had been replaced first by a cynical humor and then by pride and determination. This morning she was smiling almost as she may have smiled through her first party at Government House. And she was looking remarkably pretty in her forest-green tweed, and the sable toque and stole she had taken from their long storage.

“Did you ever feel such air?” she cried. “After the heavy dampness of London, it goes to one’s head. I can almost see the Alps, as well as feel them.”

“It’s positively immoral, this climate,” said Tay, shaking her hand vigorously. “How do people ever sleep here? Now I know why they drink so much beer—to keep their feet on the earth.”

“We’ll walk miles and miles.”

“So we will. Sorry I couldn’t keep my engagement with you for breakfast, but they fairly shoved that frugal meal into my bed. When we have walked a few hours, we’ll drop in somewhere and eat veal sausages and drink chocolate. That, I am told, is the proper stunt about eleven o’clock. Certainly in this climate one could digest the maternal cow between meals.”

They had been walking briskly, but paused at the Maximilianplatz. The closely planted trees and shrubs of the long narrow park were covered with ice and glittered blindingly in the bright winter sunshine. Even the tall houses on the further sides of the streets that enclosed it had icicles depending from the windows, glittering with the prismatic hues. Overhead soft thick masses of cloud hung below the deep rich blue of the sky. People were hurrying along in their furs, the shop-windows were full of color. A royal carriage passed, as blue as the sky, and an old man saluted his loyal subjects.

Tay whistled.

“Lucky for you it’s so hard to get married in a foreign town, or my promises might go up in smoke. This is just the place for a honeymoon.”

“Isn’t it? Let’s imagine we are just married and doing Europe for the first time.”

“You can do the imagining,” said Tay, dryly. “My imagination will take a well-earned rest for the present. We’ll return to Munich later.”

They wandered about the narrow crooked shopping district for a time, then up the wide Ludwigstrasse, almost deserted at this hour.

“Good clean street,” said Tay, approvingly. “And I like these flat brown old palaces. They look like Italy without suggesting daggers and poison.”

Julia didn’t answer, and Tay looked at her curiously. Her head was thrown back, her mouth half open, as if inhaling the crystal air. There was a faint pink flush in her white cheeks, and her lips were scarlet. Her shining happy eyes were moving restlessly, as if to take in all points of the beautiful street at once. Tay was about to

ask her a question that had been in his mind since they started, when she caught him suddenly by the arm.

“Look!” she exclaimed. “Do you see that party there across the street? They have skates! I remember now, Ishbel said there was fine skating in the park. Oh, how I should love to skate once more!”

“Then skate!” cried Tay. “We’ll follow them.”

“But of course you don’t. There is no ice in California.”

“But of course I do. You forget I spent four winters in New England. Let me tell you, I didn’t miss a trick.”

“Do you fancy we can hire skates?”

“I fancy we’ll skate if you want to. Come along. We mustn’t let them out of our sight.”

They followed the group of girls and boys into the Englischer Garten, a vast and glittering expanse of ice-laden trees. The lake was already well covered with skaters, young people for the most part, as it was Saturday, wearing worsted sweaters, scarves, and mitts, and all looking very red, very ugly, and very happy in a stolid deliberate way. Tay found skates without difficulty, and after a few minutes’ uncertain practice, they skimmed smoothly over the surface.

“I wish we had it to ourselves,” said Tay, discontentedly. “If it were not for these unromantic mortals, we could imagine we were in a sort of polar fairy land. I’ve seen the ice-storm in New England but never on such a scale. We are quite in the middle of a frozen wood.”

“If the people of Munich were as artistic about themselves as they are about their city, they would all dress in white for skating. Then what a sight it would be! But at least they look happy.”

“So do you.”

“I am, oh, I am!”

“May I ask if it is because you have the rare privilege of a day in my exclusive society?”

“Partly that. But not all. Can you make curves? I never shall forget my delight when I skated for the first time—after being brought up in the tropics! Fancy!”

“Perhaps it didn’t take so much to make you happy in those days.”

“Oh, far more! Far, far more! I have been really happy since then.”

“If you don’t mind what you call it.”

“Where do you suppose the swans go in winter?”

“Haven’t an idea, and care less. Look out!”

They almost collided with a large corsetless lady in a white sweater, a red woollen scarf tied round her purple face, and a gray skirt exhibiting massive pedestals. She glared at the fashionable intruders, but described a curve of surprising

agility, although as she propelled herself to the other side of the lake she gave the impression of waddling.

Julia snatched her hand from Tay's and shot after the expansive back. "Catch me!" she cried. And for the next twenty minutes Tay pursued her, sometimes almost heading her off, sometimes almost grasping her waving hand, only to find her flying to the other end of the lake. She looked like an elf, with her green dress and golden hair, and was not for a moment lost sight of in the undistinguished throng. Tay, whose blood was up, chased her until he finally brought her to bay, when she threw herself down on the bank and held out her skates to be unbuckled.

"Good symbol," said Tay, as he knelt before her, "I'll catch you every time, my lady. Don't ever try running away, or you'll merely get tired for nothing."

"I'm the better skater!"

"You are. But I'm a good sprinter. Do you want to race me?"

"Rather!"

He delivered up the skates, and when they reached a straight expanse of road, they drew a long breath, hunched their shoulders, and started on a dead run.

To Tay's surprise she kept abreast of him for nearly fifty yards, making up for what she lacked in length of limb with a fleetness of foot that gave her the effect of a bird in full flight. Then he shot past her, and came back to find her panting, but with dancing eyes.

"I am so hungry!" she cried. "Is it time for sausages and chocolate?"

"It's time for lunch, or whatever they call it here. Do you suppose we can find a cab? Much as I dote on exercise I think a cab after coffee and rolls some three hours agone would suit me."

"Where shall we lunch?"

"I'll sample your hotel, if you don't mind, and you will dine with me."

"And afterward we must go to one of the big cafés for coffee. That is the proper thing."

"You shall have your way in trifles so long as I have beaten you twice."

They found a cab near one of the gates of the park, and drove as rapidly to the hotel as the fat driver and lean horse could be persuaded to go, and both too hungry for further nonsense. They had an admirable luncheon, in spite of the fact that it was not the "high season," and then were directed to the Café Luitpold for their coffee. It was full of students, the "trees" covered with their caps of every color, and the atmosphere dense with smoke. They found a table in an alcove, and Julia lit a cigarette with the agreeable sensation of having come at last to the real Bohemia.

"Now," said Tay, "I've got you where you can't escape, and there are no English people to overhear. I propose to know what you think you are this morning. You are playing some sort of a part, and a charming enough part it is, but for complete enjoyment I must be on. I only half understand. Out with it."

Julia leaned her head against the wall and smiled.

“I don’t mind telling you in the least. I am just eighteen, and I have just arrived from Nevis. I never had time to be really young, you know. So here is my opportunity.”

“You look the rôle, but how—well, you are young enough in any case; but how do you manage to relight the eighteen candles? You’ve lived *some* since then. I couldn’t do it!”

Julia smiled mysteriously. “We never really exhaust any phase, particularly of youth. It is merely stowed away waiting for the current. Mine leaped up at the first signal. You appeared with the battery, and presto!”

“You suppressed it mighty well for quite two weeks.”

“Oh, I could have buried it deeper still, but I didn’t choose to. I deliberately shook it out of its cave where it was comfortably hibernating, and put all the rest in its place.”

“Why didn’t you do it before? I can’t be the first young and ardent admirer you have met. You are thirty-four—you have been free eight years—it is incredible. Is it merely the first good chance you have had? I don’t know whether I like being your stalking horse or not.”

Julia leaned her elbows on the table and looked him straight in the eyes.

“That has something to do with it, but not all. If you had come a year earlier, when I couldn’t have left for a minute, it would have been different, of course. But there was this sudden lull, and, you see, I am frightfully in love.”

The shot was so unexpected that Tay turned white, then the red rushed to his face. He had been lounging. He sat up stiffly and leaned forward.

“Julia!” he said. “Be careful. I shan’t stand for any flirting.”

“Oh, I’m much too young to flirt—I mean I hadn’t heard the word when I left Nevis. Of course I’m in love with you—fancy I have been for years. I don’t mind in the least if you no longer are in love with me.”

“I’m in love all right, but I’d like mighty well to know which of the several Julias you’ve treated me to I’m in love with.”

“Don’t you like this one?”

“I’d like nothing better than to know that you really were eighteen and that I could teach you all you would ever know.”

“You’ll teach me all I’ll ever know about love.”

“Ah!”

“The past is a blank as far as I am concerned. I can wipe anything off the slate.”

“I don’t know—I don’t know— Charming as you are now, I found you enchanting fifteen years ago, and quite as fascinating in another way when we met again. I don’t think I want the other Julias obliterated.”

“But you can stand this one for a week?”

“I’ll ask for nothing better—for a week. But—somehow—you look almost too young to know what love is. You look like a child pretending.”

“I am and I’m not. I can’t annihilate the years, but I can send them to the rear, and put youth, and all that means when it has its rights, in front—and keep it there as long as I choose.”

Tay stirred uneasily. “I’ve seen women of thirty—forty—in love before this, and they always look rejuvenated—but—well, I wish you had never lived those years in the Orient. You’ve got yourself too well in hand. It’s uncanny.”

“Oh, if you prefer me as the general of a Militant army,” and she drew herself up, her features arranged themselves in an expression of stern composure, her eyes were steady and exalted, and her mouth subtly older.

“Drop it!” said Tay, savagely. “Drop it! That at least you are to cut out for good and all. I’m quite content with you as you are—” Julia’s face was relaxed and smiling once more. “It is enough to know your possibilities. Remain as you are until you have developed under my tuition; and forget your Oriental learning also.”

“That is just the one thing I never would part with. Without it I should be no match for you.”

“Tell me one thing right here. Do you fancy yourself something more than mere woman? I mean did those old wiseacres in the East convince you that you were a soul reincarnated for a purpose, even before they taught you too much of their psychic lore? I don’t know whether I like the idea or not. Living with a reincarnated immortal soul several hundred million years old, developed that much beyond ordinary women, might not be all that a mortal man desires. How in creation could I ever live up to you?”

“Don’t look so far ahead. Do I look like anything but a very mortal woman at the present moment?”

“You look so adorable that if there were a little more smoke in this room I should kiss you. But—you little devil!—you have chosen the most public place in Munich to tell me all this, and you waited until you got out of England, where I did have a chance to see you alone —”

“Of course. Love-making would spoil it all. Nothing can ever be as enchanting as just being in love and asking for no more.”

“Can’t it? Well, you can have your little comedy here, and I’ll take matters in my own hands when we get back. You’ve got things all your own way now—hang it! hang it!”

“Can’t you, too, feel young and irresponsible? You really would be happy, and make me happy. And it would be something to remember!”

“I feel more like going out and getting drunk. However—have your own way. I’ll play up —”

“No, feel.”

“No doubt I shall. Your utter youth was contagious enough this morning. I’ve got some will myself. But say it again— Is it possible that you really love me?”

“Yes, I do,” said Julia, softly. “Never let that worry you.”

IX

THEY spent the following day wandering with the crowds that fill the Munich streets on bright Sundays, and the Darks arrived at midnight. The next morning they all went to the lake, this time finding a very different class of skaters in possession. Munich has a small fashionable set whose members dress as fashionable people do everywhere. To-day, the women in their short cloth or tweed frocks and rich furs, their faces rosy with cold and exercise, enhanced the glittering beauty of the landscape; and the young officers were quite as decorative.

"Some class," said Tay. "In Europe there's no choice between the aristocrats and the peasants. In my country, now, you couldn't take your oath that all these birds of paradise weren't clever shop-girls, until you got close enough to take notes. But here even a snub-nosed baroness, dressed like a housekeeper, shows her class."

"That's about all we've got left," said Dark. "You helped yourself to a sort of ready-made imitation of it, as you did to everything else it took us twenty centuries to grind out. Think you might be generous and give us a little hustle in return. Can I help you, Mrs. France?"

He buckled on her skates and they joined the throng on the ice, Tay following with Ishbel. Lord Dark, something in the fashion of his wife, was a man of almost romantic appearance covering a practical character and a keen alert brain. He was as pure a Saxon in type as still persists, with fair hair and moustache, straight proud features, and languid blue eyes in thick brown frames. His tall figure was lean and sinewy, but carried listlessly. Thrown on his own resources, he would not have been driven on to the stage, out to South Africa, or become a vague "something in the City"; he would deliberately have applied himself to the science of money-making and mastered it, his ends accelerated by his indolent manner, so tempting to sharpers. Having inherited a considerable fortune, he was content with a career on the turf. His racing stud was notable, and rarely a year passed without adding to its reputation. He also amused himself with politics and society. Devoted to Ishbel for years before he could marry her, he was now as completely happy as a man may be whose wife is giving a large part of her energies to a cause of which he fastidiously disapproves. Broadminded, he was quite willing that all women outside of his particular circle should vote, but wished that his ancestors had settled the question and spared his generation. Astute in all things, however, he not only gave his wife her head up to a certain point, but of late had done what he could to help rush the thing through and have done with it. Ishbel, like Julia, was pledged to ignore the detested subject during this brief vacation.

"Jolly place, Munich," he observed. "We always come here in August for the Wagnerfeste. You see all Europe as well as hear good music in comfort, which is more than you could ever say of Baireuth. We've never been here in winter before. Have you read up a bit? There ought to be good winter sports in the mountains."

“Rather. I don’t fancy Mr. Tay was here an hour before he discovered there was tobogganing (rodelling) and skiing at Partenkirchen. He’s talked of little else.”

“Good! Then we’ll be really happy for a week.”

Meanwhile Ishbel was gently extracting a declaration of Tay’s intentions toward Julia by the diplomatic method of assuming all.

“It is too dreadful that you will take Julia from us,” she said plaintively. “Couldn’t you live in London?”

“Not yet.” Tay turned upon her a face of almost boyish delight. “But if she’ll really have me, we could come over every summer. Do you think she will?”

“In the end, of course. I’ve known Julia for sixteen years, and waited for her to fall in love. She never does anything by halves. But she may think she can’t leave England yet.”

“I wish these women didn’t take themselves so seriously,” said Tay, viciously. “One would think the fate of England depended on them.”

Ishbel laughed. “How like Eric! But we are used to the sixteenth century masculine attitude. It wouldn’t matter so much about me, except that every one of us helps to swell the total, but Julia is a great leader, with a wonderful power of attracting attention, making recruits, and inspiring her followers. We couldn’t spare her if the fight was to go on, but if it is won this year—well, I have told her to go and leave the rest to the other women in command.”

“Oh, you have! Bully for you! What did she say?”

“She wouldn’t commit herself. If I were you, I’d simply marry her.”

“So I shall, if I’m convinced she really cares for me.”

“You don’t doubt it?”

“I don’t know. She’s a puzzle to me. Sometimes I think she’s the most natural being on earth, and at others—well—the so-called complex women aren’t in it.”

“She’s both, but none the less interesting.”

“Oh, she’s interesting, all right. But she’s become such an adept at bluffing herself that I doubt if she always knows just where she’s at. Just now she’s bluffed—or hypnotized?—herself into thinking she’s interested in me. But I have an idea she could switch off in the opposite direction as easily.”

“Julia is a bit odd,” admitted Ishbel. “Especially since she came back from the East. Even before she went, she wasn’t much like anybody else, owing, no doubt, to that strange old mother of hers; but au fond she’s the most loyal and sincere of mortals. And it takes matrimony—a love-match—to clear a woman’s brain of cobwebs. Marry Julia and take her to the young world, and I’ll venture to say she’ll forget all she learned in the East, and a good part of her inheritance. Then she’ll be the most charming of women.”

“That’s the way I talk to myself when I’m not in the dumps. But do you really want her to marry an American? It would be more like you to want to keep her over

here.”

“I did once plot and scheme to make her marry a very dear friend of us all, Lord Haverfield—Nigel Herbert—you must have read his books.”

“Ah!”

“That was rather imprudent of me. But it’s all over long ago. Julia never cared for him, and I have always said that when she did care for any man, I’d turn match-maker in earnest and do all I could to help him marry her—that is, if I liked him—and we’re all quite in love with you.” She flashed the sweetness of her charming countenance on him, and he thought her almost as beautiful as Julia. “I want her to be happy, for she was once terribly unhappy. Her experience was truly awful —”

“I never want to think of it,” said Tay, hastily. “I refuse to remember that she has ever been married. Look at here—will you promise to be on my side if she goes off on one of her tangents?”

“I will!” and she gave his hand a little shake. She longed to tell him that France might die any minute, but she had once more given her word to Bridgit, and could only hope that France would take himself off before Tay left England. “But if the worst comes to the worst, I’ll get round it somehow,” she thought.

A moment later a rapid change of partners was effected, Tay threw his arm lightly round Julia’s waist, and they waltzed down the lake to the amazement of the less agile Germans.

“Suppose you look up,” said Tay. “If you’re blushing because I have my arm round you for the first time, I’d like to see it.”

Julia laughed and threw back her head. She was blushing, and her eyes sparkled. “I’ll admit I never felt so happy in my life.”

“Are you as much in love with me as you were two days ago?” he asked dryly.

“Oh—rather more, I think.”

“If you like the sensation of my arm round you at a temperature of ten above zero, in full view of all Munich, can you imagine the ineffable happiness of being kissed by me in the vicinity of one of those tiled stoves with the door shut?”

“Then if all these people should suddenly disappear, you wouldn’t care to kiss me in the midst of this enchanted wood?”

“I’d kiss you wherever I got a chance, and what’s more I’ll do it. So prepare yourself.”

“Your promise!”

“Promise nothing. I absolve myself right here. And you talk Suffrage if you can!”

“Alas, I don’t want to. But I shan’t let you make love to me.”

“Oh, yes, you will,—when and where I please.”

Julia looked a little frightened. “Oh, no—we mustn’t go that far —”

“You merely want to flirt and make me miserable? Well, I’ve had just as much of that as I propose to stand. You’re laying up a frightful retribution, my lady.” He tightened his clasp and drew her as close as the skates would permit. “Be consistent,” he whispered. “You are eighteen. You remember nothing. We are really engaged, you know. You are mine this week. We have four days more. Put that imagination of yours to some good use. Believe that we are to be married this day fortnight.”

“If I go too far—you would never forgive me.”

He laughed grimly. “If you go that far, you’ll go farther. Of course I understand you. It’s a proof of the adorable innocence you have managed to preserve that you don’t know what playing with fire means to the man. You propose to abandon yourself discreetly, get a certain excitement out of words and coquetry while we’re here safely chaperoned, and then throw me down hard in the cause of duty when we return to London. Well, that’s not my program. Now, we’ll say no more about it.”

They climbed up the interior of the great statue Bavaria, in the afternoon, to gaze at the tumbled peaks of the Alps glittering through the haze that promised fine weather. Then the women rested for the opera of the evening, and Tay and Dark smoked in one of the cafés, talked horse and business, and, incidentally, drifted into a friendship that was to lead to strange results. Dark had influential friends in the City and promised Tay his immediate assistance in bringing his prospective partners to terms. Tay, who liked sport as well as most American men, although he had little time to devote to it, forgot that he was in love while “swapping” stories of the race-track. Both, secretly despising the other’s nationality, discovered that when men are men they are pretty much the same the world over. They cemented the bond by cursing Suffrage with all the epithets, profane, picturesque, savage, and humorous, in their respective vocabularies, and left the café arm in arm, feeling that they had talked woman back into her proper sphere and that all was well with the world.

X

THOSE were the last days of the Munich Opera-house in all its glory. Mottl, prince of conductors, was alive; Fay, Preuse-Matzenauer, Bosetti, Bender, Feinhals, the incomparable Fassbender, sang every week, and, now and again, Knote and Morena. To-day death and disaster have overtaken that great company, and few are left to make the pilgrimage to Munich worth while.

"Die Walküre" was given on Monday night, and included nearly all of the staff. The hotel portier had reserved seats for the English party in the first row of the balkon, and they had a full view of a typical Wagnerian audience. In these days, owing no doubt to the American residents, the entire auditorium, as well as the balkon and loges, was well dressed. No more did the hausfrau come in her street costume of serviceable stuff turned in at the neck with a bit of tulle, but made shift to wear a demitoilette of sorts, and light in color even if of mean material. The fashionable Müncheners outdressed the Americans and occupied the first row of the balkon and the loges. Even the royalties presented a far better appearance than in the old days, and the large number of officers present alone would have given the house a brilliant appearance. The upper tiers were picturesque with the girl students in their Secessionist costumes and bazaar heads, the men with their untidy hair and flowing ties. But the crowning grace of the "Hof" at all times is that no one is allowed to enter after the overture begins, nor dares to speak until the curtain goes down.

Julia had carefully arrayed herself in her most becoming gown, a white Liberty satin under pale green chiffon, so casual in effect that it looked as if held together by the sheaf of lilies-of-the-valley on the corsage. Ishbel was resplendent in black velvet and English pink; and the party was the cynosure of the audience below, standing with its back to the stage and frankly inspecting the balkon until the last bell rang and the lights went out.

The tenor was wrenching the sword from the tree, and Fay was standing with her famous arms rigidly aloft, in one of the prescribed Wagnerian attitudes, when Tay saw Julia move restlessly, sit forward with a frown, and then sink back with an expression of sadness so profound that he longed to ask what ailed her now, but had no desire to be hissed down or put out by the fat doorkeeper. When they were in the buffet, however, during the first pause, and he had walked up two trains and nearly lost his cufflinks in a determined effort to procure ices, and they were alone at a table in a corner, he referred to the incident, if only to prove that no performance, no matter how great, could divert his attention from her.

"Oh, I was only thinking," said Julia. "I wonder where the Darks are?"

"Engaged in a wrestling match, probably. Aren't you always thinking? What struck you so suddenly in the middle of that alleged dramatic scene where the fat man, purple in the face, was struggling to get a tin sword out of a paper tree and

trying to sing at the same time? Never was so excited in my life.”

Julia laughed. “I was sure you were not musical.”

“You insult San Francisco. We are the most musical people in America. The very newsboys whistle the opera tunes. But I like to see a decent sense of the proprieties observed. Those two could have said all they had to say in five minutes. Set to music, it should take about fifteen. However— Tell me what struck you all of a heap.”

“Oh—well—I—”

“Shoot!”

“What?”

“More slang. Fire away.”

“Do you expect to know all my thoughts?”

“I don’t, but I’d like to.”

“I wonder! However—I don’t mind telling you. It occurred to me rather forcibly how much simpler women’s problems were in those days. Two young people, isolated from the world, meet and spontaneously fall in love. They are creatures of instinct, and ignorant of any law except Might. A sleeping potion in the savage husband’s nightly horn settles that question, and they run away into the forest and are happy—would be happy forever more if let alone. But in these complicated days —all our obstacles are inside of us! Any one can find courage to defy the primitive and obvious —”

“Plenty of primitive people right in the midst of civilization,” interposed Tay, grimly.

“Yes, I know, and in your country divorce is easy. But for the highly civilized, life, even with divorce, is anything but easy. Women question that condition called happiness when it would appear to offer itself, examine it on all sides. They know men too well—life—above all, themselves. Or they have assumed impersonal duties and responsibilities. Or their brains have become so complex that love alone cannot satisfy. They would have love plus far more! If the choice must be made, they dare not cast for love, in their fear of disaster. Nothing is so dishonest as the so-called psychological novel, which leaves two thinking moderns in each other’s arms at the end of a forced situation, with their natures unchanged, all their problems—their inner problems—unsolved. They never can be solved by love, marriage, children, the good old way. The sort for whom all problems can be treated by the conventional recipe are not worth writing about. But it is a terrible proposition; for these highly civilized women have the automatic desires of their sex for love and happiness—intensified by imagination! But—they know that a greater need still is to fill their lives and use their brains.”

Tay had turned pale. “The modern man, unless he is an ass, gives his wife her head.”

“That is beside the question. The real trouble doesn’t sound particularly attractive when put into plain English: it is the raising of the ego to the *n*th power that makes these women want to stand alone, resent the idea of finding completion in a man.”

“Then let us pray that they will all die old maids, and their race die with them.”

“No hope! Children of the most commonplace parents are the products of their times. Heredity is modified from generation to generation. Otherwise, we should all be Siegmunds and Sieglindes. Their little brains are impregnated by forces seen and unseen. Hadji Sadrä would explain it by the theory of reincarnation, or by planetary conditions at birth—the only reasonable explanation of Shakespeare, by the way, if he wasn’t Bacon. But although, no doubt, many of the great do return to complete their work, there are not enough to go round. And there is a simpler explanation. In these vibrating days the very air is flashing and humming with secrets for those that have the magnet in their brains. Bright minds learn from life, not from their old-fashioned parents. Oh, the breed will increase, not diminish! Happiness, old style, is about done for. Women will be happier in consequence—or in another way. I don’t know about men. They have reigned too long. And then they are simple ingenuous creatures, the most tyrannical of them, and pathetically dependent upon women. Women are growing more independent every day, more indifferent to that sex ‘management’ of men, which so far has constituted a large part of man’s happiness.”

Tay was angry, therefore more jocular than ever. “Don’t forget the adaptability of even the male animal, also that man is born of woman; also brought up by her. I don’t worry one little bit about the future happiness of man. As for the Home—apartment-houses and the decline and fall of servants have about relegated it to the last stronghold of the old-fashioned love story—the country town. I said just now that I’d like to know all your thoughts. Well, I shouldn’t. My idea of happiness is a lifetime with a woman who would always be more or less of a mystery, who would have her own life—inner and outer—as I should have mine. And I’m not so sure that mine would be simple and ingenuous. Marriage with her would be a sort of intense personal partnership, with separations of irregular recurrence and length. Then, my lady, there would be a constant ache; passion would never wear itself out; and neither would be looking for novel affinities elsewhere.”

Julia smiled. “It sounds very enticing. But that isn’t the point. The subtlest enemy—it is that desire to find our highest completion alone.”

“A bully good phase for the next world. Something to look forward to. The Fool’s Paradise in this life is the grandest failure on record. Men and women are not constituted to perfect by their lonesomes. Otherwise the mutual attraction of sex would not be what it is. No woman that a man wants was ever intended to complete herself; nor can she become so highly developed in this life as not to find it quite safe to follow her instincts on her own plane.”

The second bell had rung and the buffet was nearly empty. He leaned across the

table and brought his face close to hers. “If you are dead sure that I never could make you happy, that you never could love me, that you haven’t a human instinct that I could gratify, then chuck me. But if you are only psychologizing on general principles, then chuck that as fast as you can. I don’t want to hear any more of it, and I shan’t pay any more attention to it hereafter than if you were speculating about possible grandchildren inheriting a taste for drink from your brother. Switch off! You are eighteen.”

Julia sprang to her feet with a laugh, her seriousness routed. “Right you are! Come, or we’ll be locked out.”

Both Dark and Tay stolidly refused to remain for the last act, and the party went to the best of the restaurants for the supper, which was to take the place of dinner; the opera had begun at six o’clock. The meal was cooked by a chef, and they lingered over it until long after the Wagnerites were in bed. Dark and Tay were in the best of spirits, for however they might love music, they loved dinner more; Julia and Ishbel, who were disposed to be sulky, soon recovered, and the party was so gay that even the yawning waiters smiled and felt sure of recompense. When they finally left the restaurant, Munich might have been the tomb of its history. Not a cab was on the rank. Not a policeman was to be seen. When they reached the small paved square before the loggia, Dark threw his arm about Julia, and they waltzed until Tilly must have longed to step down and join them. A delighted giggle did come from the sentry-boxes before the side portals of the palace as Tay and Ishbel followed the example of their companions. It is not often that the Munich night is disturbed by anything more original than roistering students. The moon was out, the cold air crisp. They could have danced for an hour, but Ishbel suddenly reminded them that they were to start for Partenkirchen in a few hours, and they raced one another to their hotel.

XI

THEY spent the rest of their week at Partenkirchen, a village in a mountain valley, surrounded by a chain of glittering peaks. The village was little more than one steep street bordered by inns and shops, but there were farms in the valley and on the nearer hillsides. The natives wore high fur caps, not unlike the cossack headgear, and seemed to exist for decorative purposes only, although alive to the lure of tourist silver. The hotel at the top of the street was very modern, with a good cook, little balconies for those that would enjoy the view, and many nooks in the rooms downstairs for those that would talk unhindered if not unseen. At this season there were no other English or Americans, but a sufficient number of Europeans of the leisure class to make the dining-room brilliant at night and animated at all times.

Julia and Ishbel had provided themselves with short white skirts of thick material, white men's sweaters, and white Tam o' Shanters. The men couldn't wear white, but looked their best, as men always do, in rough mountaineering costume. They climbed, skated, skied, and tobogganed; and, under Julia's gentle manipulation, kept close together. It was natural that Tay should fall to Ishbel in their outings, and only once or twice did he manage to drag Julia's sled up the hill, or direct her uncertain footsteps when on the snow-shoes. Then she was so excited with the new sport that she paid little attention to him. She threw herself into it with the zest of a child, and he couldn't flatter himself that her merry laugh was forced, nor the dancing lights in her eyes. Nor was he depressed himself by any means; the tonic air went to the heads of all of them, and they enjoyed themselves with an abandon possible only to those that have seen too much of life.

But on the last day, Ishbel, who saw through Julia's manœuvres, deliberately stayed in bed with a headache, and Dark, without warning of his intention, departed early with a guide. Tay and Julia met alone at the breakfast table.

"Now!" he said gayly. "I've got you. What are you going to do about it? If you shut yourself up in your room, I'll break the door down."

"As if I'd do anything so silly. How I wish we could stay here a month."

"Why not?"

"I left no address, and I may have stayed too long already —"

"Sh-h!"

"You could not, either."

"Oh, yes, I could. Dark has been pulling wires, and I'm dead sure now that the thing will go through."

"I'm so glad! But no doubt you could have managed it by yourself sooner or later. I fancy you'll always be a success in business."

"Thanks. If you mean to insinuate that business and cards are in the same class, I'm not a bit discouraged."

“Pour me out another cup of coffee. I believe American men like to wait on women.”

“It’s part of our game. You see how honest I am. You’ll marry me without illusions.”

“Shall you boss me frightfully?” Julia looked at him over her cup, and he nearly dropped his. He kept his bantering tone, however.

“The more you do for me, the more I’ll spoil you. It will be quite an exciting race. How should you like being spoiled for a change?”

“It would be glorious. So irresponsible.”

“Exactly. That’s what makes many a man get drunk. Few sensations so delightful as that of complete irresponsibility.”

“Do you get drunk?” asked Julia, in mock alarm.

“Gorgeously. Am I not a good San Franciscan? Not too often, however. Bad for business.”

“You never told me if you went on that spree when you got those ten thousand dollars. Or didn’t you get it? Perhaps you anticipated, and your father wouldn’t—what did you call it—plunk?”

“I didn’t, and he did, and I did. I whooped it up for just five days. To tell you the truth, I didn’t find as much in it as I expected, but felt I owed it to myself. Wish now I’d come over and eloped with you.”

“Ah!” Julia made a rapid mental calculation. He would have arrived at about the time Nigel was laying his last desperate siege. Poor Nigel! Julia could picture Tay’s wooing and methods. Would he have won where her more courtly knight had failed?

“Suppose I had never turned up?” asked Tay, abruptly. “That husband of yours can’t live forever, is many years older than you, anyhow. Do you fancy you would have eventually married Herbert? Corking books! He must be some man.”

Julia had flushed to her hair. “How did you know I was thinking of him?” she stammered.

“Were you? Well, those flashes happen, you know. You haven’t answered my question.”

“It is quite impossible for me to tell, even to imagine, what I might have done if you—well, if you had not come over again. I’ve never really thought of marrying Nigel, but there would be a certain rest in it—not now, but later, perhaps. And we think and work with much the same objects.”

“Nothing in rest till you’ve had the other thing first. How much thinking did you expend on that other thing before you were submerged in the unmentionable?”

Julia blushed again, then laughed. “Oh, well—some day, I’ll tell you a funny experience I had in India.”

“Tell me now.”

“Over empty coffee-cups and fragments of buttered rolls? Not I. What shall we do first? Skate?”

“If you like. Do you want to toboggan afterward?”

“I think I’d like a tramp through the woods. We’ve never really investigated them.”

“Good. Come along.”

They found the lake deserted and skated in silence until Tay remembered her promise.

“This is a sufficiently romantic spot for confidences,” he observed. “And in full view of the waiters of the hotel, who appear to have nothing to do but watch us. Tell me your Indian experience. Whom did you think you were in love with over there?”

“Nobody. That was the trouble.”

“Did he love and ride away, perhaps? That’s just the sort of experience you need.”

“Well, I’ve never had it,” said Julia, indignantly.

“A man never minds telling when he’s been left, but I doubt if a woman ever admits it even to herself. You’re weak-kneed creatures, the best of you, and need nine-tenths of all the vanity there is in the world to keep going.”

“I believe you really despise women. But you’re just the sort that couldn’t live without them.”

“Right and wrong. I shan’t explain that cryptic statement. Fire away.”

“You’ll laugh at me.”

“If I really could laugh at you, I’d be half cured. I try, but it does no good. What would be funny in another woman is tragic in you—and pathetic.”

“Ah?” She was prepared to be indignant again, but met a new expression in the eyes with which he was intently regarding her. “What do you mean by that? I am not to be pitied.”

“You poor isolated child! I’ve never felt sorrier for anybody in my life. But never mind. Tell me your Indian experience.”

“Well—one night—a warm heavenly Indian night—I was alone in a boat on a lake. There was a great marble palace at one end. The nightingales were singing in the forest; and such perfumes!”

“Gorgeous! Why wasn’t I there? Some fun, love-making in southern Asia. But this is just the setting for real enjoyment of the story. Go ahead.”

“Yes, I never could be in a sentimental mood in this temperature. Well, I was completely happy—I had been happy for nearly a year in India, enjoying its strange beauty and never wishing for a companion. It was happiness enough to be alone and free. But that night—suddenly—I felt furious —”

“Ah! I begin to catch on.”

“I wish you wouldn’t always guess what I’m going to say.”

“Shows I’m the real thing. Go on.”

“I did wish with all my soul—every part of me—that I had a lover and that he was there. Heavens, how I could have loved him! I felt abominably treated by fate. Up to that time I hadn’t even thought about love. My experience had been too dreadful. I had felt sure that all capacity for love had been withered up at the roots. When a man looked at me as men do look at women they admire very much, it was enough to make me hate him. But I suddenly realized all that had passed. I had come to the conclusion that Harold had been mad from the beginning, so I could do no less than forgive him. That seemed to wipe it all out.”

“When did this happen?” asked Tay, abruptly. “What year?”

“It must have been—in 1903.”

“Oh! Cherry hadn’t been to England for two or three years. She went that year and came back with a good deal of your story—got it from your aunt, of course. I remember I thought about you pretty hard for a time. Was on the brink of falling in love with another girl, and it all went up in smoke. What time of the year was it?”

“Late autumn.”

“Yes! I told myself it was tomfoolery. That you had forgotten me; and I had pretty well forgotten you. Nevertheless, I couldn’t get you out of my head. You believe in that sort of thing, I suppose!”

“Oh, yes. I wonder!”

They were both pale and staring at each other. “Well, go on,” said Tay. “What next?”

“I made up my mind that I would find some one to love; and take the consequences. I went down to Calcutta, and for a whole winter tried to fall in love. There were many charming men, but it was no use.”

“Now are you convinced?”

There was a bend in the lake, which Julia had artfully avoided. Tay swung her suddenly around it, and in spite of her desperate attempt to free herself, caught her in his arms.

“Now,” he said, “I propose to show you that temperature has nothing to do with it. Keep quiet. You are on skates, remember.” And he kissed her.

“You can kiss me again,” said Julia, after a moment or two.

“I thought so.” And he kissed her for several minutes.

“You look quite different,” murmured, Julia finally.

“I can look more so. Skates and worsted collars that take your ears off are infernally in the way.”

“Will you always joke?”

“My dear child, if I didn’t joke, I might really frighten you.”

Julia shivered. “I’ve been frightened for days. I knew this would come. If I’d been really wise, I’d have run away.”

“It wouldn’t have done you one bit of good. Never try that game. If you do, I’ll jump right up on the platform in Albert Hall and kiss you in the presence of ten thousand suffragettes—damnable word!”

“I believe you would.”

“I would.” And he kissed her again.

This time she didn’t respond, and he gave her a little shake. “Forget it. You’re to think of nothing but me this long day we have all to ourselves. Time enough in London for you to set up your ninepins for me to bowl over. You’ve shown what you can do. Lady Dark told me that you did nothing by halves, and you’ve just proved it. To-day for love. Do you hear?”

Julia smiled radiantly. “I couldn’t think of anything but you for more than a minute if I would. That was one thing that terrified me at night—when I had time to think— I had switched off with a vengeance! The past seemed blotted out. I wonder! I wonder!”

“I don’t. And I never saw a mortal woman look so happy. Your faculty of living in the moment is a grand asset, my dear. Ten months— Good lord! It takes all of that time to establish a residence in Nevada, and all the rest of it. However— Well, let us go for a walk in the woods.” He glanced about with a quickening breath. “Blessed spot! We’ll come back to it one of these days.”

XII

"It shows how much in love we are that we don't mind this luncheon," said Tay, who made a face, nevertheless. They had decided to remain away from the hotel all day, and were fortifying themselves at the inn on the lake. The meal was the usual one of watery veal, fried potatoes, and pastry. "I remember eating 'kalb' when I was in Germany before until I choked. Can any one explain why there are more calves in Germany than anywhere else on the face of the globe? You don't see so many cows. The offspring must arrive in litters like pigs."

"And the German, true to his creed, is furious if you flout his commonest staple." Julia smiled, but, in truth, her mind was deeply perturbed, and she spoke mechanically. There had been no more love-making, for guests and peasants had met them at every turn of the woods. Her Hindu master had once told her that profound as were the suggestions he had given her, and systematic as was the control she had been taught to acquire over herself, either might suffer interruption unless she lived in India for many years longer. A violent awakening of the primal emotions, the assault of a mind and nature, temporarily, at least, stronger than her own, and that devil that lives in the subconsciousness would sit on his hind legs and chuckle.

During the hours that had succeeded those moments of unquestioning surrender on the lake, her thirty-four years with their highest accomplishment had crept back, and she had ceased forever to feel eighteen. The immediate future rose before her like a black wall pricked out with menacing fingers. There was no question as to where her duty lay for the moment, as to what she must accomplish before she could think of happiness. All the steel in her nature had reasserted itself, her brain was cold and keen. She would put an end to the present state of affairs this very day. But how? How?

She continued pleasantly.

"Perhaps it would have been better to go back to the hotel."

"Not much. The hotel is associated with three evenings of fruitless manœuvrings to get you alone in one of those corners. Besides, Lady Dark may have recovered. I'll take no chances. You are to be mine alone for an entire day."

"We could stay a few days longer."

"No, on the whole, I want to wind up London as quickly as possible. So must you. I shall send you on a steamer ahead to make sure of you."

Julia laughed. "How like a man. We could hardly be happier than we are now. Why not let well enough alone, for a bit?"

"Well, you see, I am a man, and therefore differ from you as to what constitutes real happiness. I want to get the cursed Reno matter over as quickly as possible. Besides, I am due at home. The business might wait, but there's a big piece of

political work to pull off, and I must do my share in prying my poor rotten state out of the slough.”

Julia’s mind took a leap. “I believe you are really ambitious,” she said, with bright sympathetic eyes. “Politicians don’t work for nothing. Do you know you never have told me a word of your ultimate intentions?”

“I’ve been too busy talking about you. I was only too glad to side-track my own affairs for a time. We were all so strung up during the graft prosecution that we jumped at anything that would give us a chance to forget it, and recuperate our energies.”

“Well, you have had a change! Do tell me how you have planned out your life. Do you look forward to being President of the United States?”

“Not as much as when I was fifteen.”

“Oh, you will always joke! Can’t you fancy what your future is to me? You are capable of great things, and I don’t for a moment believe that you care for nothing but money making, varied by an occasional rush at reform. Do be serious.”

“My dear, I never felt more serious than I do at this moment. God knows I’m only too grateful for your interest. It struck me as ominous that you never asked me.”

“I didn’t dare,” murmured Julia. “A man’s career is a so much more brilliant thing than a woman’s ever can be, for he has two distinct sides. We women are bound by our physical limitations to one side. We must make new traditions—and new bodies to transmit —”

“Hold on! Let us avoid that subject as long as possible.”

“But tell me.”

“Well, here is the way I am fixed: I am for reform, my father is not. I am a full partner in the firm, but I can’t use the firm’s money for an object to which my father is bitterly opposed. But I have been making money on the outside, investing and reinvesting, and, in two years at most, I shall have an independent fortune, irrespective of my father’s large estate. Then I intend to go in for politics, doing all I can meanwhile to educate the people in the precepts of the true democracy and to keep the Reform party on top. I intend to hold conspicuous office in California, then go to Congress. You can call this ambition, if you like; no doubt ambition is mixed up with all deep sense of personal usefulness. It takes a good-sized ego to permit you to fancy yourself able to reform long-existing conditions; and egoism and ambition are good working partners. I shall work for my own state first, and then for the country at large. That is the way for Americans to begin, or, at all events, the way we do begin, our country being what it is. State pride is almost as strong as national. Moreover, a man must prove himself in his own state before he can get a chance to command the attention of the nation. If a man happens to belong to a notoriously corrupt state like California, and manages to shine by contrast, his opportunities are so much the greater! But the nation is the thing. Every Union man

during the Civil War fought for his flag, not for his section. But our country is now a republic only in name. We are piling up problems our founders could not anticipate, and if they go on unchecked, they will land us either in an autocracy, or in the worst form of tyranny known to history,—mob rule. It is the business of a few of us to avert a French Revolution. Just at present we are between two camps, Monopoly and Labor-Unionism, and have almost forgotten that we are citizens of a free country. Our skins have been safe so far, owing to the lack of brains and initiative in the masses; also, because they are far from starvation. But let that condition arise—before the Money Power has been made to open its eyes, or has been controlled by legislation—then horrors beside which the French Revolution will be mere picturesque material for novelists. A few thinking men with money enough to give them weight with the solid moneyed class at the top—where the reform must begin—as well as to place them above suspicion, and who have cultivated common-sense and patriotism instead of greed, must do the business. Let's get out of this."

XIII

WHEN they were walking over the crisp snow in the woods—now deserted, for hotel guests and peasants alike were at the long midday meal—he resumed the subject. Her vivid sympathy and interest had brought back the bitter struggle of the past two years with a rush.

"How I wish you had been with me when we made our graft fight," he said, looking at her with fond eager eyes. "What a mate you would have been. When the whole town is howling at a man because he is trying to do the right thing, he needs just such a woman as you to keep the courage in him. The concerted opinion of the majority has an insidious power! Sometimes we wondered if we could be right, if we were not all dreamers, unpractical, doing our city more harm than good. The whole country was aghast at our exposures, business was almost dead, capital refused to come our way; the poor old city that had been wrecked by the most fearful natural calamity of modern times—$500,000,000 went up in smoke—seemed to cry out against us for holding her down, to beg for a chance to limp out of her bog. But we looked ahead, convinced that there could be no permanent prosperity for San Francisco until the sore was scraped to the bone and sterilized; in other words, until the political scoundrels and the get-rich-quick element, that obtained their crushing franchises by corrupting a packed Board of Supervisors, and bought everybody, from the boss and the mayor down to the man in the street with a vote to sell, were either gaoled or so discredited that they would be forced into private life or out of the state. We unseated the boss and the mayor, the supervisors having come through, and we were able to indict several of what we call the higher-ups—the men that had done the buying. I never had much hope of convicting these men, for in California, in its present state of moral development, it is next to impossible to convict a rich man. If you get an honest judge, there are always men in the jury that have got in for no purpose but to be bribed. But we won out in another way. The long trial aired the abominable practices of these corporations, and, together with the many sensational episodes—the shooting of the prosecuting attorney in court, and the suicide of the would-be murderer in prison before he could be put on the stand, the kidnapping of the only editor that fought with us,—woke up the state; it talked of little else, and talking, thought, and was ashamed. The city machine got ahead of us, for the mayor we had managed to seat was too virtuous to build up a machine of his own; but we hope for great things in the state itself when our Reform candidate runs for the office of governor this year. Perhaps it was unreasonable to hope for more at the beginning, and it was a tough fight to get that much.

"Oh, God!" he cried bitterly, "the rottenness of young communities with potentialities of wealth. Human nature in the raw, when it is still in the ingenuous stage of greed, is a damnable thing. It has never shown any originality since the world began. Socialism may clip its wings, if it ever gets control, but—here is the

cursed anomaly: you can't hope for Socialism until a miracle eliminates greed from the nature of man; for it is men that must grant Socialism, and Socialism means the balking of greed. Even if some unforeseen set of circumstances forced it upon us, I doubt if it would last. You can no more eliminate greed from men than you could eliminate sex by forcing men and women to dress alike, shave their heads, and say their prayers three times a day. But the world is better in some respects than it was a century ago, and this is primarily due to the untiring efforts of the minority. But, again, the work must be done by a few men—the few that are awake and can see farther than their noses. Well, my dear, I hope and pray that I am one of those men. There you have my program, so far as a mere finite mind can project it."

"Now I know why I have been permitted to love you," said Julia, softly, and looking at him with glowing eyes. "Hadji Sadrä told me that he should watch over me, and that if I dared love a man who would pull me down, instead of being far greater than I could ever hope to be, he would blast me, transform me into a mere commonplace female, but haunted by the memory of what I had been —"

"How much of all that do you believe?"

"Ah! I saw marvellous exhibitions of power. They are common enough in the East, but one would hardly dare relate them in this part of the world. If I longed with all the concentrated powers of my mind for Hadji Sadrä, he would come to me in a flash—with that secondary material body they call the astral, and we call the ghost. If I were terribly perplexed, I should send for him —"

"I want no go-betweens, particularly Mohammedan ghosts."

But Julia had no intention of letting him down.

"I wonder I could remember him, or any one else! It was only because I suddenly realized what all this means—that I may have another and far greater part to play —"

"You see that at last! Perhaps I should have appealed to you before. But—it is only to-day that I have felt really close to you—really loved you, perhaps. I fancy I was merely infatuated before." He took her in his arms, and she looked up at him with the deepest sympathy a woman can express, particularly when gifted with eyes that are the dazzling headlights of a finished and powerful machine behind. "Oh, if you could only know," he continued in tones of intense feeling, "what it will mean to me to have you, not only to love, but to work with! I really want with all my soul to be of use to my country, to be one of the few that are willing to work for her unselfishly, to leave a decent name behind me. It is thankless work, fighting the majority, battling for an ideal nobody wants, to be the butt of the press, accused of sordid motives, balked at every turn. The only sort of patriotism the average American understands is sounding promises by ambitious politicians and huge donations from repentant millionnaires. To raise the morale of a people, and in the process prevent them from growing too rich, may mean the respect of posterity, but it also means the hatred of your contemporaries. The Big Voice! It confuses the mind and the standards. The constant failures, the recurring sense of hopelessness,

of futility, the inevitable contempt for the masses you are striving to emancipate from themselves,—many a man that has started out with the loftiest and most selfless ideals loses courage, shrugs his shoulders, and falls back. I am no better and stronger than many of them. I have dreamed one minute, the next wondered how far I would go, how long my enthusiasm would last. Material success is easy enough, and always rewarded by approbation and respect! *What is the use?* I am young still, but I asked myself that question more than once, for even my family were all against me. My father was furious. He is honest, but his business has been his god. I left home and went to a hotel—to avoid the everlasting discussions at table. My old friends cut me on the street. I was regarded as an enemy of society, and society cast me out. The rest of our little group shared the same fate. We were obliged to keep one another's courage up. That we carried our lives in our hands and were liable to assassination at any moment was the least of our trials. The Big Voice! We felt as if we were at the foot of an avalanche, or some other inexorable enemy in Nature herself, trying to push it back with our hands. Inevitably there were black moments when we felt we were fools, especially when we faced certain defeat. And it's all to do again, not once, but many times. Do you wonder that the light side of my nature has given me many cynical moments, or that I have seethed with disgust, or wondered if I would last? But with you—ah! If I had ever dreamed you lived, I believe I never should have despaired for a moment. But my only memory of you was of a charming and lovely child. And it is only to-day, here, that I have realized what it means for any of us to stand alone. With your faith and your brain, with you always beside me, sympathizing, helping—I never shall lose courage for a moment. I could accomplish anything—everything—"

This sudden vehement disclosure of the serious depths of his nature under its surface gayety, with more than one glimpse of heights and powers she had barely divined, had thrilled Julia even more than his passionate love-making. All her own greatness responded, and for a moment or two she had been swept irresistibly on that tide of self-revealing words. She had a vision of the complete passion, the perfect union. But her brain remained cool. She never lost sight of her purpose.

She sprang from him suddenly and flung out her arms. Her eyes looked black. Her skin shone with a peculiar radiance like white fire. So she had looked more than once on the platform during her last moments of irresistible appeal; when her bewildered audiences had felt as if dissolving in a crucible from which there was no escape. "Oh," she cried in low vibrating tones of intense passion, "now I know you—the real You! I'll never fail you. You are wonderful, and I worship you! I believe we can be happier than any two mortals have ever been. But, Dan, I must go to you free, with a conscience as clean as your own. You must see that. You are too great not to see it. I must be tormented with no regrets, no remorse. If I should leave at this moment—'rat' like any scoundrelly selfish politician—desert these women publicly while all the world is watching them, make them ridiculous—oh, I don't mean that I am indispensable; there are too many great women among them for that— But don't you see that if I threw them over to follow an American to the other

side of the world, now, while their fate hangs in the balance—why, it would amount to nothing less than a cynical declaration that we are all alike when it comes to a man—that we fight for a great impersonal cause only so long as no man comes along to play the old tune on our passions—why—Good God!—they would be the butt of every malicious wit in the kingdom. Their cause would be set back a generation. And I? I should be execrated by women the world over. I, who am now a sort of goddess. My immense following is due as much to the youth and beauty which I have appeared to immolate so indifferently, as to all my talents put together. What use should I be to you if I scuttled the ship and deserted it? What place could I take among the women of your country? Do you think they would listen to me, that I could teach them, help them? They would laugh in my face!”

She caught him by the shoulders, her eyes piercing into his, which stared at her full of sombre perplexity. She went on in a rapid monotonous voice, which fell on his brain like a rain of fire: “Why didn’t you come for me, as you promised? I should have gone. Four years ago! I was free. Something was always knocking at my mind. I knew that I had useful energies of some sort. They were always groping to find vent. If you had come, if you had told me then what you have told me to-day, I should not have hesitated a moment. I should have known that my work was to be done with you. But you forgot your promise. The bond was not strong enough. Why did you wait until I had become a public figure, written about daily—until I had hopelessly compromised myself? Oh, can’t you see that you have made me the most tragic figure among women? I love you so that I long with all those other and far greater forces within me—that you have brought to life—to go, to be happy, to give you all you want and deserve, to become truly great—with you! Oh, I am the most unhappy woman on earth—and the happiest!”

Tay had tried to interrupt her several times. But he was dazed. She looked like a sibyl. He felt disjointedly that he had less desire to claim her as a woman than to ascend with her to the plane whither she seemed to have borne herself. He had been shaken out of his own reserve and bared his soul for the first time in his life; his defences were down, she seemed to have entered his mind and taken possession. Human passion would appear to have fallen to ashes. His senses felt numb, he was vaguely conscious of a material dissolution that left his soul free to mingle with hers.

She gave him no chance to speak. Her words flowed on with the same fiery monotony.

“You have taught me what duty means. I believe I never was really capable of the sacrifice of self before. I worked to fill my time, to forget my depths. Then because the greatness of that work really put my womanhood to sleep! But you! I have not a personal ambition left, not a want apart from you, but this terrible duty. I want to live in you, for you. You! You! You!” Tay had a confused idea that he was turning into a demi-god. “But I must go to you free—that I may never look back—that I may know and give complete happiness. I must be all woman, not a mere

brain, humiliated, ashamed, tortured by regrets. *And you must go at once, at once, at once.* If you stay, if you prove too strong for me, if you force me to go with you—and I love you so I might go—then we never shall know the meaning of happiness for a moment. I will follow you before long. If we don't win the battle early this year, I will train some one to take my place. I shall speak, appear in public less and less, drop out by degrees. I shall soon be forgotten—long before I can marry you. But to leap from the front rank of these women straight into a divorce court in a city whose name is a synonym for vulgarity, that is never mentioned without a laugh or a sneer— Oh, you see! You see! What an anticlimax to all these years on a pedestal! What a wife for you, a public man! Oh, God! I should be the ruin of your own career —"

"Julia!" exclaimed Tay, trying to get his breath.

She fell back limply against a tree, as if exhausted with her own passion, but neither voice nor eyes lost their power.

"Oh, go! Go! Go! If you don't, I shall be in the dust. I shall be incapable of love in my abasement. I know myself. To love, to be happy, I must be free. I must have my self-respect. I can't love, tortured by shame and remorse. I want love and you more than anything on earth, but I want them utterly. Oh, go!"

For a moment or two Tay had been conscious of an angry struggle in the depths of his mind. He suddenly became master of himself. He shot a glance at Julia as piercing as her own, and she gasped and flung herself face downward on the snow and began to sob. He made no attempt to pick her up for the moment.

"You have strange powers, Julia," he said. "If I were weaker than I am,—and God knows I am weak enough,—I should be slinking through the woods with my tail between my legs, hypnotized out of my manhood, and ready to lick your hand for the rest of my life." Julia stopped sobbing and listened intently. Tay walked up and down before he spoke again. "But mind you, I don't question your sincerity, your love, whatever the devilish arts you tried to practise on me. Every leader of a great revolution is a fanatic and a Jesuit. And, methods aside, every word you spoke was sound common-sense. I don't care to assume the responsibility of injuring those women, and I believe you would be incapable of happiness if you handed their enemies another weapon—a pretty deadly one it would be!"

He picked her up and dusted her off. "I am going," he went on grimly, "and I shall wait exactly six months. Or rather—" He caught her hands in his powerful grip, his eyes blazing into hers. "I shall never see you again, not even with your royal consent, unless you swear to me here that you'll not try that on again. That you'll be woman to my man from this time forth—that and nothing more. I'll be damned if I'll live with a woman who doesn't play a square game. Swear it."

"Oh, I do, I do! Oh, Dan!" The tears were running down her face, honest tears, for she was frightened, while rejoicing. "Do believe that I was only doing my best—I knew that you wouldn't listen—I had only one object —"

“Oh, as I told you, I have never questioned your queer complicated honesty. Only, being a perfectly normal person myself, I prefer to postpone occult trickery until I reach the next world. No doubt it will be all in the day’s work there. But I’ve got my job cut out in this, matching my earthly wits against the next man’s. Now, you’ve given me your word! If you ever go back on it —”

“Oh, never!” Julia was now really limp, and looked wholly feminine. Tay took her in his arms once more and dried her tears. “It’s my fate to love you,” he said, with a sigh. “And that’s about the size of it. I’m sorry you ever went to your East, but live in the hope I can make you forget it.”

“And do you love me as much as ever?” asked Julia, unintellectually.

Tay laughed outright, the ancient formula almost routing the memory of those moments when the same woman that uttered them automatically had launched her ruthless will into his relaxing brain. “Oh, yes,” he said, “I love you, all right, and for good and all. Now, we’ll be practical. I shall leave England the day I wind up my affairs in London. That should be in less than a week. I am going to ask you to stay here until I sail. I am resigned to going without you, am willing to admit that a separation of a few months is inevitable—but, all the same, the less temptation, the better. Besides, I shall need all my wits in London— If you were there —”

“Oh, I’d rather stay, far, far rather! I don’t think I could stand it, either. Here, at least, I can keep out of doors, exercise until I am past thought —”

“Well, don’t change your mind. I *insist* that you stay here. If you return to London while I am there—well, I’ll not say just what I won’t do. Enough that I should not return to America alone. Come, let’s get back to the hotel.”

XIV

JULIA went at once to Ishbel's room. She found that conspirator sitting on the little balcony enjoying the view of ice peak and forest. Ishbel sprang to her feet when she saw Julia's face.

"Oh— Ah— So—"

"Quite so," said Julia, dryly. "But never mind. I have won out for a bit. He has promised to go to California at once and wait while I eliminate myself by degrees. I have promised to follow in six months. Of course I shall if I can. If I can't—well, I must make him listen to reason again. But I hope —"

"Of course, you can't bolt," said Ishbel, who was burning with sympathy for both. "But surely you can manage to let yourself out in six months. Your vice-president is an efficient woman; and then we are sure to win this session —"

"I don't know! If we did, of course I'd make some excuse and go at once. But—otherwise—I can't leave them for a divorce court until I have taught them to forget me—disassociated myself from them —"

She dropped on the edge of the bed, face and body expressing utter discouragement. Ishbel half opened her lips, then went out upon the balcony lest she break her word and tell Julia that France was dying. But a moment's reflection convinced her that this information would only complicate matters at present. She thought hard for a few minutes, then ran back into the room.

"Julia!" she exclaimed, "I have an idea! Why not go to Nevis? Your mother is very old. You haven't seen her for many years. You can give out that she is ill—or I will if you won't. My conscience wouldn't hurt me a bit, for old people are always ill. No doubt you'll find her with rheumatism, lumbago, dropsy, Bright's disease, diabetes, tumors, or a few other ills incident to old age. It would make just the break you need; and it's just the time to go, for your officers can attend to everything. Also—you could stay on and on."

Julia looked up with some return of animation in her heavy eyes.

"It's not a bad idea, if I could go."

"Of course you could, and the minute I get to London I'll set the whole shop to work on your tropic wardrobe. You can get many things ready-made, anyhow—people are always going out to India on a moment's notice."

"I'll think it over while I'm here. I'm to stay until he sails."

"Ah!—I hate to leave you alone. Shall I stay with you?"

"I think I'd rather be alone."

"Yes, I understand." She sat down on the bed and put her arm about Julia's relaxed form. "I want you to promise me that you will marry Mr. Tay, whatever happens. You've a right to happiness, if ever a woman had, and this is your only chance, my dear. There's only one real man in every woman's life, and happiness is

the inalienable right of all of us. Even Bridgit was forced to admit that.”

“Oh, I intend to marry him. But when? That is the question!”

“As soon as possible. You have given four uninterrupted years to this work, and you have done great things for it. That is enough —”

“We have all gone in—that inner band—to devote a lifetime to it if necessary.”

“Don’t you suspect that those women have an extra something in their make-up that the rest of us lack?”

“I have accomplished as much as any of them—”

“Quite so. And enough. Don’t you feel that the spring has gone out of you?”

“Just now, yes.”

“You’ll never work with the same spirit again, for you never can be impersonal again. You would feel a hypocrite, for you would always be resenting the loss of what you really want most in life. You’ve a duty to yourself, to say nothing of Mr. Tay; and you’re not going to a frivolous useless life—not with him! No one is indispensable to any real cause, and in ours there are too many to carry on the work without the supreme sacrifice on your part. Promise me, at least, that you will go at once to Nevis. It would be the beginning of the solution.”

“I’d like to go.”

“You really must want to see your mother, and your old home,” continued Ishbel, insinuatingly. “One’s mother and one’s birthplace are the great refuges in time of trouble. You were very fond of your mother when you were a child.”

“I’m fond of her now, but she seems to have lost all affection for me.”

“Never believe it. She is a strange proud old woman, but she has always loved you. Go back to her. There is your refuge.”

“You are playing on my deepest feelings, but you are right. Nevis! When you are crushed, your own land calls you. And, as you say, I haven’t much work in me at present.”

“Then you’ll go?”

“When you get to London, telegraph me how matters stand. If it looks as if the truce would be a long one—yes, I’ll go. I believe I want to go more than anything else in the world—except one! Perhaps I’ll get a grip on myself down there. Perhaps I’ll find that—well, that I love this great cause best, after all.”

“Not a bit of it!” cried Ishbel, in alarm. “Don’t try to persuade yourself of anything so unnatural and foolish. Do you realize how few women have complete happiness offered them? I could shake you.”

Then she reflected that Nevis was a tropical island; and another scheme was forming in her agile brain. “Well, never mind all that. You are worn out now. It is not a matter to discuss, anyhow. Stay out of doors here, and I will prepare your wardrobe. Then you can start as soon as you return to England. I will tell Collins to

pack your other things. Eric will secure your accommodations on the first steamer that sails after Mr. Tay's. Now lie down. Or shall you come down to our last dinner?"

"No, I am not going to see him again. I'll be glad when he has gone, and that, at least, is over. But I'll go to Nevis, if all is quiet in England."

XV

THEY left on the evening train in order to catch the morning train out of Munich. Julia, who had been sitting inertly in her room, too listless to go to bed, heard the carriage rattle down the street, and sprang to her feet with a wild sense of protest and despair. It required all her self-control to refrain from ringing for a droschke and following before it was too late. Then, angry at this complete surrender to her femininity, she undressed and went to bed.

Here, she discovered to her dismay that California was not farther off than sleep. Perversely, she would not relax, nor go through any of the other forms with which she had always been able to summon sleep when excited. She doubted if they would conquer these new impressions, but refused to give them a trial. She lay awake until nearly dawn, the events of the day marching through her brain with maddening reiteration. She dreaded sleep, also, for now at least her brain was stimulated, and she guessed that it would be correspondingly depressed upon awakening. So it was. The weather, also, had changed. It was raining.

When Julia heard the heavy raindrops splashing on her balcony, she sat up with a gasp of horror, then laughed grimly. But this conspiracy of Nature gave her a certain obstinate fortitude, and she rose at once, took a cold bath, and dressed. But when she opened her door to go down to the dining-room, her courage failed her, and she rang and ordered breakfast to be brought upstairs.

"What am I to do?" she thought in terror. "What am I to do?"

It rained all day. Julia had brought no storm clothes. She prowled about the halls, getting what exercise she could, but dared not go downstairs. She sent for books from the library, but they might have been written in Greek. She summoned resolution to go to the dining-room at seven o'clock, but turned at the door, and ran back to her room. She saw Tay at every turn, and to sit alone at the table with his empty chair opposite, was beyond her endurance. Nor could she eat the food brought to her room. She went to bed again, and slept fitfully.

She awoke in the small hours to hear it still raining, and this time she fell into a fury over her demoralization.

"And this is love!" she thought. "Terrors! Ignominy! A will turned to water. I'd not be more helpless if I were in a hospital with typhoid fever."

Her mind suddenly flew to the conversation with her friends on the night she had last dined with Ishbel. Should she go to Paris and rid herself of the disease once for all? What prospect of happiness if love were able to induce a misery keener than any of its compensations? If she could feel like this now, knowing that he loved her, and that the separation was but a matter of time, what might she not suffer if he ceased to love her, if he gave her cause for jealousy, if she found herself disappointed in him? It would be worse, far worse. Now, at least, she was—not free; no one ever felt more of a slave—but at least with the power to attain freedom.

There would be a deep satisfaction, to say nothing of relief, in the knowledge that she never need think of him again—this man that had destroyed her fine poise, her remarkable powers, made her the slave of the race, the victim of the ancient instinct, a mere instrument upon which Nature was playing her old tune in contemptuous disregard of those years in which she had dwelt on impersonal heights seldom attained by young and beautiful women. She almost hated him. Better have done with it at once. In all her life with France she had never known depression like this, for love adds the sense of impotence to calamity.

She got out of bed, without ringing for her bath, and began to pack her trunk. She didn't care if she never took a bath again. She hated herself, and she hated Tay. Above all she hated the rain.

But in the midst of her packing she sat back on the floor and scowled. To receive suggestions one must be perfectly amenable. There must be no reserve at the back of the head. Although she ground her teeth, she admitted that she would permit no man, no science, to destroy the image of Tay in her mind, root him out of her life. Nor would she confess herself a coward—nor violate the jealous instincts of her sex. If the time came when she must banish him, she would do it herself. Good God! She was female all through. Suffering was a part of her birthright. She would give up not the least of the accompaniments of love.

Cursing herself for a fool, she rang for her bath, dressed herself, and determined to walk out of doors, if the valley had turned into a lake.

But by the time she had swallowed her coffee and rolls the skies had cleared, and she started out with a guide and a sled. There was always excitement in tobogganing. For a bit the keen air revived her, but the hills and valley had new terrors, for every step reminded her of her lover. Black protest left her, but was followed by a sadness so profound that she feared to dissolve in the presence of her guide, and sent him home. She had planned to visit the lake, but she found that it would be as easy to break her word and follow Tay to London.

A new and horrid fear had begun to haunt her. Did he really love her as he had loved her before she had made him, for a few moments, at least, the plaything of her will and her science? He had forgiven her, but must not such a memory rankle, eventually induce a permanent resentment—fear—hatred possibly?

She returned to her room, the only place unassociated with him. But although it was a refuge in a sense, she found little comfort in it, for the very atmosphere was thick with her long hours of misery. She sat down and made a deliberate attempt to banish her depression, that manifest of Nature's resentment at even the temporary balking of her desires.

"The ancient instinct!" she thought bitterly. "We are all the same fools when it comes to a man—*the* man—when the race is trying to struggle on through its victims." She looked back upon the past eight years as upon a period of transcendent happiness. More than ever she was convinced that the only unmitigated happiness lay in self-completion, in independence of the sex in man. Love was a

splendid disease induced by Nature to further her one end; accompanied by moments of hallucination called happiness, but which in the last analysis were but the prelude to a lifetime of every variety of sorrow and disillusion. On the other hand, the women that steered safely clear of this smiling island with a thousand jagged teeth beneath the rippling waters, and elected to stand alone, were free to accept the other great gifts of life, to attain to a form of serenity and content, beside which love and its delusions were the earthly hell. In the last four years she had never cast a thought to love, the future had loomed as perfect as the present. And she had weakly slid down into chaos!

The immortal women! Oh, lord! Oh, lord!

She reviewed her life from the time when, the wife of an abhorred husband, she had begun, unconsciously at first, to build up that strength, which, when the crucial tests came, enabled her to control, in a measure, the present, to exult in the knowledge that she had proved herself stronger than life; instead of losing her mind, or becoming the plaything of men. She had even dismissed Nigel Herbert when he came with freedom and something like happiness in his hand; proud of her strength to work out her destiny unaided.

Strength! Her mind flew from this vision of past solidarity to her years at the feet of the wise men of Benares. It was not pleasant to dwell upon the compliments of Hadji Sadrä, but she recalled his initiations and suggestions, and those of Swani Dambaba; they had given her a power over herself and others seldom possessed by Occidentals. But she could hardly formulate them; they were enveloped in a haze, as elusive and remote as dreams. Had she been but cunningly equipped to play her part in the great battle; and, the part played, was she perchance set free to follow the commoner destiny of woman? There was some satisfaction in the thought, but her ego felt slapped in the face. She had fancied her destiny mightily, and this anticlimax was no part of the program of the immortal women. Still, why not? Her inner vision, sharpened though it might have been by her masters, could not pierce the future, nor her judgment, while captive in the gray matter of the mortal brain, presume to determine exactly what destinies those immortal women had mapped out for themselves on earth. For all she knew Tay might have been composed to save his country, and hers the glorious part to help him.

But at this point she sat down on the floor once more and finished the packing of her trunk. None knew better than she the distinguished powers of the human mind for self-deception. With her own personal gift for subtle reasoning, to say nothing of her imagination, she could persuade herself in another fifteen minutes that it was her duty to take the first steamer for New York and await Tay in the facile state of Nevada. She should reason no more, but be guided by events. Meanwhile let love devour her, burn her up, torment her with fears, exalt her with visions of the perfect union. But not in Partenkirchen. She should amuse herself in Berlin until Tay’s final telegram set her free to go to Nevis. “The dog to its kennel,” she thought grimly. “That’s the place for me. I’ll find my balance there if anywhere.”

XVI

On the evening of Julia's departure for Nevis, Ishbel entered her husband's study and perched herself on the arm of his chair.

"Eric," she said, "when you have made a promise you can't break, is it wrong to get round it, if it is for the good of some one you are very fond of?"

"What are you driving at? Nothing more interesting than the workings of the female conscience under fire."

"You like Mr. Tay?"

"Rather. Never liked a man more. Deuced good chap all round."

"You think that he and Julia should marry?"

"I do. But am not so sure they will. Julia's a hard nut to crack."

"Quite so. But I want her to be as happy as I am."

"Right you are. Tay's the man."

"There's something I promised Bridgit not to tell either Julia or Mr. Tay. But I didn't promise not to tell you."

Dark laughed. "I begin to see daylight. I suppose even Bridgit doesn't encourage you to have secrets from your husband."

"You *are* a dear! Well, it's this. France is very low, has a bad case of heart and may go any minute."

Dark whistled. "That would simplify matters."

"Yesterday I called at Kingsborough House and gently wormed the whole truth out of the duchess. The attacks are growing more and more frequent. The doctors don't give him a fortnight."

Dark stood up, "I see! I see!"

"I didn't dare tell you until Mr. Tay and Julia had both left. If you had told him, he wouldn't have gone, and Julia would hold out, here in England. But on Nevis, on a tropical island! All these associations and duties will seem like a dream down there, and one hasn't much energy in the tropics, anyhow, to say nothing of being steeped in an atmosphere of romance. I want you to cable Mr. Tay—so that he will get your message when he arrives in New York day after to-morrow—that France is dying, that Julia has sailed for Nevis, and that if he is wise, he will go there at once—he can get there first, I should think, for the Royal Mail takes eighteen days—and marry her the moment he gets another cable from you announcing France's death. Do you mind?"

"Rather not!"

"Tell him to say nothing to Julia about France's condition until he is quite certain she is free—"

"Do you want me to go stony—"

“Oh, what do a few pounds matter—”

“When arranging people’s destinies! Well, go on.”

“Julia must not return to England. If she did, Mr. Tay would have to begin all over again. I don’t like anything that looks like treachery to the women, but still —”

“I do,” said Dark, dryly. “Permit me to take the whole matter over to my own conscience. That’s what a man is made for, among other things. Tay shall marry Julia if I can help him manage it, and the women can go where I’ve consigned them several times already. Now, I’ll go out and send that cablegram.”

BOOK VI
FANNY

I

DURING the long voyage Julia dismissed her work and its obligations from her mind, and resigned herself to that form of happiness women are able to extract from the mere fact of being in love, even when indefinitely separated from the object. Her fear that she might have alienated Tay by her excursion into his brain had been banished by his letters, and she was free to enjoy herself miserably. She was delighted to find that he filled every waking moment, that neither literature nor the several pleasant people with whom she made acquaintance could send him to the rear, and she cultivated long hours of solitude and idleness during which she thought of nothing else. She projected her spirit into the future and California, and dreamed of happiness only: politics, reform, and the improvement of the race were not for dreams. The only real rival of love is Art, for that in itself is a deep personal passion, its function an act of creation, fed by some mysterious perversion of sex, and demanding all the imagination's activities. This rival Tay was mercifully spared, and the god of duty, always arbitrarily elevated and largely the child of egoism, stands a poor chance when gasping in the furnace of love. Abstractly, Julia purposed to return to her duty when its call became imperious, but during this period of liberty she felt she would be more than fool to close her eyes to any of the beatic pictures composed by her imagination and the tumults of sex.

Of course there were hours when she felt profoundly depressed and miserable, when she stormed and protested, and hated the fluid desert that prevented her from changing her course and fleeing to Tay. But this, also, was novel and exciting and part of love's curriculum; she revelled in every manifestation of her long-denied womanhood, and was further thrilled with the belief that no woman had ever suffered such an upheaval before. She wrote a daily letter to Tay, revealing herself without mercy, and found a keen delight in this new power of his to annihilate the profound reserve of her nature.

The only thing she didn't tell him was of the return of her old longing for children. That inherent desire had slunk into horrified retreat at France's betrothal kiss, and had visited her but fitfully in India, but now it reasserted itself almost as tyrannically as her longing for the man who was the mate of her sex as surely as of her soul and brain. She even felt a passionate delight that she soon could satisfy it vicariously in Fanny. She had never ceased to love this child she once had cuddled daily in her arms, and was far more excited at the prospect of being with her again, than of seeing her strange old mother. To be sure, her love for that once fond parent

had risen in all its old strength during this carnival of the primal, but Mrs. Edis at her best was unresponsive, and after the long separation unlikely to thaw for some time to come. In Fanny she could find satisfaction for her maternal yearnings until they found their natural outlet. And she should take her back to London, with or without her mother's consent. Fanny! What did she look like? She had been an adorable little dark baby; surely she must have inherited the beauty of the family. Some were dark and others almost blond, like herself, but both the Byams and the Edises had always been famous for their looks. Even Mrs. Winstone had grudgingly admitted that Fanny had exterior promise, and if she had turned out a beauty, Ishbel should give her the best of girl's good times in London. And she herself should have something to cling to during these awful months—perhaps years—of separation.

After she changed steamers at Barbadoes and began the leisurely journey up the Caribbean Sea, she was much diverted by the beauty of the long chain of islands, and began to thrill with the prospect of seeing her birthplace once more. Her roots were in Nevis; it held the dust of generations of her ancestors; it was the one perfect, peaceful, and happy memory of her life, and never could she love even California as well. She knew that she should have flown to it in her trouble were it empty of both her mother and Fanny.

After the steamer left Antigua, she never took her eyes from the stately pyramid, shadowy at first, detaching itself with a sharper definition every moment. When she was close enough to see the green on its sweeping lines, its waving fields of cane, its fine ruins of old "Great Houses," the white roads, deserted save for an occasional laborer or a colored woman swinging along with a basket on her head, a pic'nie clinging to her hip, the waving palms on the shore, the white cloud that hovered by day over the lost crater, and extinguished the island at night, she ran to her stateroom to quell an almost unbearable excitement. But Collins was packing, and Collins was already puzzled, perturbed, and speculating. No quicker antidote to tumultuous emotions could be devised. Julia's tears retreated, and she began to rearrange her flying locks before the mirror; but it was impossible to keep the exultation out of her voice.

"We're nearly there, Collins!"

"Yes, mum."

"It is my old home! Just think of it, I haven't seen it for sixteen years."

"Yes, mum."

"I'm sure you will enjoy staying here for a bit, Nevis is so beautiful. There's nothing in all Europe like it."

"I shan't be sea-sick. I'm thankful for that."

"How do I look? I haven't seen my waist line since I left London."

"I dressed you this morning, mum. You look quite all right. Shall I really sleep in a Christian bed to-night, and have a decent cup of tea?"

"You shall, you shall! And if my mother still kills stringy old cows, I'll get good

English beef for you from Bath House.”

“Thank God, mum. Everything on board ship tastes that horrid I could eat a cow cooked particular, no matter how stringy. Don’t lean on the rail too much. Linen crushes that easy.”

Julia, who wore a linen coat and skirt of crash brown linen, with a hat and parasol, and shoes and gloves, of a darker shade, nodded at herself in the glass and returned to the deck. For the moment Tay was forgotten.

The steamer was rounding the island and she stared at Bath House, the greatest hotel in the world in its time, a picturesque ruin in her memory, now rebuilt in part and showing many signs of life. Colored servants were hanging out of the upper windows cheering the ship, and gayly dressed people were sitting on the terrace. But Julia, although for a moment she resented the least of the changes in her island, soon forgot Bath House as she eagerly gazed through her field-glass at the groups down by the jetty. There was the usual crowd of whites and negroes, some with much business to attend to when the ship cast anchor, more with none whatever. In a moment she detached a group striving to detach itself from the pushing crowd—all Charles Town seemed to have turned out—and saw Mrs. Winstone, Mr. Pirie, several people of the same class, and one young girl. Could that be Fanny? Once more her hands shook. The girl was dancing up and down, waving her handkerchief. It must be. Julia laid aside her field-glass and waved in return. Then the delay seemed endless.

The water had become suddenly alive with boats. Little black boys were diving for pennies. It was a gay tropical picture; and, behind, the palms and the cocoanut-trees, fringing the suave flowing lines of the great volcano.

The ladder was swung, the first officer gave her his arm, and she descended to the boat, followed by the uneasy Collins, who looked at the heaving waters below that frail craft with dire forebodings. But Julia had no sympathy in her for Collins. Her thoughts were on Fanny, when they were not adjusting her mask of bright cool serenity. She had no intention of making an exhibition of herself in public.

All doubt of Fanny’s identity was set at rest, for a girl’s long supple figure was flying down the jetty, and she was waving frantically and calling out, “Aunt Julia! Aunt Julia!” Julia received a momentary shock, not quite sure that she liked being called aunt by this tall girl, who looked more than her eighteen years. But that was a trifle and she gazed with both fondness and admiration at the blooming beauty of the girl who now stood quite alone on the edge of the jetty. Fanny was very dark, showing the French strain in their blood (Mrs. Edis’s father had found his wife on Martinique); her large eyes and abundant hair were black, her skin olive and claret, her full large mouth as red as one of the hibiscus flowers of her native island; her figure, both slender and full, was as beautiful as her face, even in the white cotton frock which she probably had made itself. Julia thought she had never seen a more perfect type of voluptuous young womanhood, and reflected that she should not be long marrying her off in London, even without a dowry.

She smiled happily, and a moment later, elevated to the jetty by the boatman, was enveloped, smothered, overwhelmed by Fanny.

“Oh, Aunt Julia!” cried the girl between her kisses. “Just to think you are here at last! Something is actually happening on this old island. Oh, promise me that you will take me away with you.”

“Yes, yes, indeed,” gasped Julia, her spirits unaccountably dashed. “Of course I will, darling. How beautiful you are!”

“Oh, am I? Much good it has done me so far. I’ve just spoken to a young man for the first time in my life, and he has gray hair.”

“You poor child! Did—did—my mother come down?”

“Not she. The steamer wasn’t expected until seven, and she was asleep. When I saw it coming, I *ran*. She’d never have let me come. I’ve never been outside the estate alone before. Even Aunt Maria hasn’t taken me down to Bath House. There she is with an old gentleman that wears a wig.”

They had reached the end of the long jetty, and Julia kissed her aunt, shook hands with Mr. Pirie, who had eyes for no one but Fanny, and was introduced to a young gray-haired man named Morison.

“*Mo*rison,” she repeated mechanically to herself. “Where have I heard that name?”

But she had no time to think. Mrs. Winstone was talking rapidly. Julia wondered if the tropics had affected her aunt’s nerves. She was twirling her parasol, and her eyes had more intelligence in them than she usually admitted, save when conducting a dilettante Suffrage meeting.

“Really, Julia!” she exclaimed. “It’s too tiresome. But I didn’t expect the Royal Mail for hours yet; came down to see Hannah and Pirie at Bath House, and sent the horses to be shod. They’re not ready, and there’s nothin’ else—everybody drivin’. Do you think you could walk up the mountain in this heat?”

“Of course she can’t!” cried Fanny. “Of course she can’t!”

“I’m sure I could,” began Julia, but once more Fanny enveloped her.

“Oh, no, darling,” she cried entreatingly. “You’d faint in that heat—climbing. It was bad enough coming down. And, oh, I do want another glimpse of Bath House. You’ve no idea how excited I was all the time it was building. It was like an old romance come to life. But much good it has done me. And it has an orchestra!”

Julia laughed outright. Fanny might not possess the priceless gift of tact, but she was enchantingly young. Her exuberant youth, in fact, made everybody else feel superannuated, and her next remark, as she and Julia started for the hotel arm in arm, did not remove the impression.

“How oddly young you look, Aunt Julia,” observed the girl, whose large curious eyes were exploring every detail of Julia’s appearance. “Of course I knew you were much younger than Granny or Aunt Maria, or I shouldn’t have been so keen to have

you come home, but you look almost a girl. I suppose it's because you are quite a little thing and haven't grown either scrawny or fat."

"Really," said her aunt, dryly, "I'm five feet three and a half, and thirty-four is a long way from old age."

"Well, it's not young," said Fanny, who appeared to be of a hopelessly literal turn. "Thirty-four! Why you are only a year younger than mother would have been."

This remark touched a chord which for the moment routed anxious vanity. Julia put her arm about Fanny's waist, no slenderer than her own. "I wish you *were* mine!" she said fondly. "But sister is the next best thing. I can't have you calling me aunt. That is much too remote—I have wanted you for so many years. You must imagine that you are my little sister, and call me Julia. Will you?"

"Yes, if you like. But promise me that you will bring me to Bath House every day. You will want to come yourself, if only to get away from Great House, and you have friends there—a nice old lady named Macmanus—and I saw two or three women with *such* frocks! Did you bring me any frocks from London?"

"Ah—I didn't! But, you see, I not only left in such a hurry, but I had no idea whether you were tall or short. Of course I brought you some presents."

"Oh, did you? What are they?"

"Some pretty silver things for your dressing-table, and a manicure set, and some scarves, and all sorts of fol-de-rols that pretty girls like."

"Well, that's too sweet of you," and Fanny, kissed her again. "But I'd rather have had frocks. What shall I do if you take me to the party at Bath House on Thursday night?—and you must! You must! There's no dressmaker on Nevis that could make a party-gown."

"You shall have any of my evening gowns you want. You are taller, but Collins is quite a genius."

Fanny almost danced. "That will be heavenly. Oh—oh—talk about frocks!"

"What a pretty woman!"

They were both looking at a very smart young woman advancing down the palm avenue. She had a dark vivid little face, and wore a frock of sublimated pink linen, and a soft drooping black hat. She smiled and waved her parasol as she caught Julia's eye.

"Of course you've forgotten me, Mrs. France," she cried gayly.

"This is Mrs. Morison, of New York, Julia," said Mrs. Winstone, who had accelerated her steps. Her voice had lost its drawl.

"Mrs. Morison?" asked Julia, with a premonitory tremor.

"Yes—Emily Tay—but of course you've quite forgotten me. I never forgot you, though—and that terrible old castle you showed me for a solid hour."

Julia had taken her hand mechanically, wondering if Nevis were shaking herself

loose from the sea.

“Of course I do remember you. I liked your independence. But how odd you should be here.”

“Not a bit of it. I’m always after novelty—restless American, you know, and this is the very latest. Besides, my husband had an attack of Wall Street prostration, and this wasn’t too far. But it’s simply enchanting to see you again—I’ve been so proud these last two or three years to be able to say I knew you.”

Fanny cast a glance over her shoulder, then fell back between Mr. Pirie and Mr. Morison.

“I saw Dan in New York,” Dan’s sister rattled on. “It was too funny. He was in a beastly glum temper, until I mentioned your name. Then he cleared up so suddenly that I had my suspicions. Do you remember how dead in love with you he was at the tender age of fifteen, and what a time Cherry had inducing him to go home without you? I’ve just the ghost of an idea he hasn’t got over it. Poor Dan! Of course you’d never look at him.”

“And why not?” asked Julia, in arms.

“Well, you are some person over there, and California is the jumping-off place.”

“I thought it was the most beautiful country in the world.”

“Oh, it’s that, all right. But after London—or New York! I do want Dan to transfer his energies to New York. It’s the only place in America to live.”

“Perhaps he thinks he can do more good in his own state.”

“New York being in no need of a clean-up! However, no doubt you’re right. Dan’s a tremendous gun out there, if he does make himself unpopular. I try to console myself with the thought that he’s making a national reputation, but meanwhile my income doesn’t go up. However, of course you’re not interested in our politics. Dan’ll be delighted to hear that we’ve met again. Here we are. You must be dying for your tea.”

II

THEY crossed the terraces and entered the cool spacious hall of the hotel. Mrs. Macmanus, who was sitting alone, came forward and kissed Julia warmly.

"So delighted you've come down here to liven us up a bit, my dear. Maria has almost deserted us. It was only to-day I heard you were coming. Bath House is in quite a flutter."

"My nerves haven't been worth mentioning since we got Julia's cable," said Mrs. Winstone, who was close on Julia's heels. "I came to Nevis to rest them, and Fanny alone would set them on edge. I don't believe she's slept since she heard Julia was comin'."

Julia, whose agitation had subsided, hastily swallowed a cup of strong tea, left the group abruptly, and put her arm about Fanny. Here, at least, was peace and diversion.

"Come and talk to me, darling," she said. "I've a thousand things to say to you."

Fanny, who was alone with Mr. Pirie at the moment, went willingly, and they sat down on one of the sofas at the end of the long hall.

"Now let me really look at you. Yes, you look like Fawcett. Do you remember your father?"

"How could I? I was only three when he died."

"And now you are eighteen! I cannot take it in. I believe I have always thought of you as a baby."

"Oh, do you think Granny'll let me go back with you? She hates the world and despises men—as if they were all alike! But at least—Oh, please *swear*, dear Aunt—Julia—that you will help me to play a bit while you're here. You can't fancy how dull I am. I want to come to Bath House every day, and dance every night. You can tell Granny that Mrs. Morison is an old friend of yours, and has come to Nevis to see you. Of course Granny'll let me go anywhere with you."

"Poor mother!"

"Oh, she's had her own way all her life; just what I'd like to have. Please pity *me*, Julia. Why, I might marry if I ever had a chance to see a man nearer than through a field-glass. The war-ships that I've seen come and go in this roadstead! And the St. Kitts girls dancing on them! But I! I might as well be one of those Dutch women in the crater of St. Batts, making drawn-work from one year's end to the other."

"Poor child! You may be sure I'll do all I can. But—ah—" Julia felt quite the aunt for a moment. "Don't be in such a hurry to marry."

"But I am in a hurry to marry. That's the only road out of Nevis. And what girl isn't in a hurry to marry? If Granny wouldn't give her consent, well—I'd just love to elope."

Julia laughed. “If you are as romantic as that, I must manage that you see a good bit of the world before you enter the somewhat prosaic state of matrimony —”

“I am romantic—rather! I think of nothing else but love—love—love. I’ve made up a lover out of all the novels I’ve read—and I’ll have one, no fear! But I must have a chance to see him first. So please give it to me.”

“Where have you found novels to read? Mother long since wrote me to send you none.”

“Oh, I know. And Aunt Maria keeps hers locked up. But I run the estate, you know, and I have to go over to St. Kitts every now and again, body-guarded by two old servants, of course, and I’ve made friends with some girls over there, and they’ve lent me a few. And I always manage to pass an hour in the public library, and look at the picture papers. Granny takes in nothing but the *Weekly Times*. Sometimes, when we are driving, she lets me get out and read the cablegrams tacked up on the court-house door! Oh, what a place to live in!”

“And yet I could wish that I had never left Nevis. I almost wish I need never leave it again.”

“Oh, you’ll get over that in about a week. Aunt Maria yawns all the time. If it weren’t for her complexion and her waist line, she’d be packing now. What does she want? She’s always spying on me.”

Mrs. Winstone descended upon them precipitately. There was a pleasurable excitement in her mien, and once more Julia wondered if she, like many others, had found the tropics bad for the nerves.

“Fanny. Mr. Pirie wants to talk to you, calls you a blushing peach, volcanic product: you’ve quite rejuvenated him. I want to ask Julia about our great cause in London.”

“I’ll not talk to any old men. Mr. Morison’s quite nice. What a bore he’s married. I could have cried when I heard it, although I never could fall in love with a man with gray hair.” And she deliberately walked over to the young man lounging in a chair and staring at her.

“A bit forward, our Fanny,” said Julia, with a sigh. “But she has all her father’s love of life.”

“And all her grandmother’s of havin’ her own way. Not that it’s worth analyzin’. Analyzin’s so fatiguin’. She’s young, pretty, healthy, starves for life, and exists on a volcano! I’d feel sorry for her if I wasn’t sure she could take care of herself. What’s your impression of her?”

“She’s a beauty. A rather obvious type, perhaps, but still—How’s my mother?”

“Quite all right. She’ll bury us all, and then merely desiccate—or fly off on a broomstick.”

“Was—is—do you think she wants to see me?”

“Don’t ask me. She won’t talk about you. But—but—” Mrs. Winstone shot a

cunning glance out of her now absent and ingenuous orbs. “Do tell me, Julia,—I’m expirin’ with curiosity—what brought you here? You hadn’t the least notion of comin’ when I saw you last. Has Mr. Tay —”

“I don’t care to talk about Mr. Tay.”

“Of course it’s none of my business, but please! I’ve been quite excited ever since I came down to-day—it’s astonishin’ what will interest one on a desert island! —But Pirie and Hannah have known all about it ever since Mrs. Morison came. It seems she—ah!—well, came down here on purpose to see you, persuaded her husband he was ill —”

“What an idea!”

“Quite so!”

“But after all, not so unnatural. I may as well tell you, Aunt Maria—there is no occasion for mystery—I am—that is, in a way—engaged to Mr. Tay. But it’s all in the air, at present. It is impossible to marry him without an American divorce, and it is not necessary to explain to you how out of the question that will be for some time to come. But—I was feeling rather done, and the truce with the Government gave me the opportunity I have so longed for—to come to Nevis once more, to see my mother.”

“Oh, that is it! Nevis is good for the nerves; or would be without Fanny, and one or two other distractions. Now, I’ve quite an excitin’ duty to perform, and time’s up. Mr. Tay is here!”

“What?” Julia once more had the sensation that Nevis had left her moorings. She caught the back of the sofa for support. “What are you talking about? Mr. Tay is in California.”

“Not he. He’s been here, stalkin’ round this island, or cruisin’ round in a motor boat he’s hired, for the last five days. I saw him through the field-glass, but didn’t know what brought him until to-day.”

“But what—what—has he come for? Oh, how could he!”

“He’ll tell you that, never fear! The others, includin’ Mrs. Morison, were all for a surprise, but I thought it my duty to tell you. That is the reason I wanted you to go straight home—surprises are so fatiguin’—but there may be time yet. He’s off somewhere in his boat, and the steamer was ahead of time —”

Julia sprang to her feet. “I’ll go this minute. I can walk. You stay with Fanny—poor little thing —”

And then she sat down. Tay was running up the steps of the terrace.

Mrs. Winstone rose and retreated gracefully. Julia’s heart had leaped, but she was very angry. She had made her own plans too long. This was to have been an interval of rest. As Tay walked rapidly down the long hall she was not too agitated to observe that although his keen eyes were alight and eager, and his mouth smiling, there was less confidence in his bearing than usual; she also observed that white

linen became him remarkably.

“I think this quite abominable of you,” she said coldly, as he dropped into the chair before her. She withheld her hand.

“So does my father. But please don’t be angry with me. I really couldn’t help it when I heard —”

“How did you hear? Dark, of course. What treachery!”

“Treachery to me if he hadn’t!”

“How you men stand by one another,” said Julia, bitterly. “Especially when it is to defeat a woman.”

“Well,” said Tay, laughing, more at his ease in the presence of futile feminine wrath, “it may be our most contemptible trait, but we shall be driven to practise it more and more, I fancy.”

“I refuse to joke, and I am going home at once.”

She rose.

“Sit down,” said Tay, peremptorily. “If you don’t, I shall kiss you in the presence of Bath House. They can’t hear what we say, but you may be sure they are all watching us.”

Julia hesitated, then sat down. “What—what made you do this? I never should have believed it of you. I came here for rest—for—for strength.”

“Strength? Great Scott! You need less, not more.”

“Oh—I— You’ll never know what I’ve gone through! I shan’t give you the letters I wrote you —”

“Now, Julia, be rational. I simply couldn’t resist coming, that’s all. I cut out business, politics, everything, the moment there was a prospect of seeing you again —and on an enchanted island! The rest can wait, but I, well, I couldn’t! This past month has seemed like a wasted lifetime. I thought I was resigned. I resisted engaging a passage back to England by wireless. I might have got through those six months in California by doing the work of six men; but I could see no reason why I shouldn’t spend at least the interval between steamers with you here. There will be no harm done—much good, for it will make the separation shorter.”

“Dan,” said Julia, sitting upright, “there is something behind all this. What have you really come here for? After all it’s not like you. In the first place you have imperative duties in California, and then—you know, you *know*, that I need all my strength.”

He hesitated. Should he tell her? But there are certain facts that sound ugly when put into bald English, whatever the excuse; and he doubted if he ever could tell her that he had come to Nevis to wait for a cablegram announcing the death of her husband. Not now, at all events!

“My dear child!” he said earnestly, and before his hesitation became noticeable. “Is not love excuse enough for anything? Haven’t men sacrificed duty, done

everything that was rash and foolish, for love, since the beginning of time? The prospect of two or three weeks with you on a tropic island was too much for my limited powers of endurance. I suddenly wanted you more than anything on earth. This is a wonderful place—I never knew I had so much romance in me—let us forget the coming separation and be young and happy.”

Julia leaned back and looked down. “I should have told you more about my mother,” she said, infusing her tones with ice to keep them from vibrating with delight at the vision he had evoked. “Made you realize just what she is. You will never be able to cross her threshold. She would think that you came to see Fanny. Or if she guessed that you loved me, a married woman,—why! she’s quite capable of locking me up on bread and water.”

“Gorgeous! We’ll have a real old-fashioned romance. You will climb out of the window —”

“She’d nail the jalousies.”

“There are no jalousies I can’t unnail—”

“Oh, you’d never get past the gates. She’d post blacks with guns at every corner of the stone wall about the grounds. You don’t know her. She doesn’t belong to this century. She’s never brooked opposition to her will since she was born.”

“Those crude forthright persons are just the ones that can always be outwitted. She needn’t know I’m here. I’ll not go to the house. You can meet me in a hundred enchanting nooks—down among the palms on the beach, in the ruins of one of those old estates, in a jungle I’ve discovered, with a creek, and all sorts of tropical trees that give more shade than these feather dusters they call royal palms —”

“I won’t leave my mother’s house!”

“Do you mean that?”

“Yes.”

“Julia, you have the longest and the blackest eyelashes I ever saw, and you have never given me such an opportunity to admire them. But on the whole I prefer your eyes. Look at me.”

Julia raised her eyes, and Tay held his breath. They were full of tears. “Oh, please go, Dan,” she whispered. “I suffered death after you left before. I can’t, can’t go through all that again. I couldn’t stay here after you left. I never wanted to see you again until I could marry you. I know now why you have come to Nevis. You think that here, where I spent my youth, where it is difficult to remember England and Suffrage, I will weaken—that I will go with you to that horrid place and get a divorce. It was very clever of you, and I might! Oh, I might! You have been too strong for me from first to last. But I don’t want to! I want to finish my duty, as I planned. Please, please go. There is a German steamer in the roadstead. Take it and wait on one of the Danish islands for the American steamer —”

“Julia, there is only one thing on earth I won’t do for you, and that is to leave you now. And believe me, I had no such subtle far-seeing policy in coming here.

My purpose was far simpler. I'd marry you up in Fig Tree Church to-morrow if you were free, but if—as I can't, I'll be content with this brief romance. Now promise that you will meet me to-morrow over in that jungle —"

"I won't! I won't!"

"Then, by God, I'll manage things myself—if I have to murder niggers and break in —"

"Julia! Julia!" cried Fanny's excited voice. "The horses are shod. Aunt Maria wants to go."

She was running down the hall. As Tay rose she stopped short and stared, her heavy lids lifting.

Julia rose hurriedly. "Fanny, this is Mr. Tay, an American friend of mine. My niece, Fanny Edis."

"An American?" cried Fanny. "Another! Well, Nevis *is* waking up. Are you thinking of buying an estate and planting?" she asked eagerly. "You don't look as if you had rheumatism."

Tay played a bold hand, knowing that young girls like romance even at second hand. "I came to Nevis to see Mrs. France," he said deliberately. "We are engaged to be married, and she tells me it will be difficult to see her in her mother's house. Suppose you lend me a helping hand." And he held out his with a charming smile.

Fanny scowled, and for the moment looked more formidable than handsome; then, with the adaptability of youth, was suddenly afire at the prospect of a vicarious romance.

"How perfectly glorious!" she cried. "Oh, I'll help you, Mr. Tay. Granny'll never let you in. But I'll hide you in the shrubberies. I'll throw you a rope over the wall, made of ancestral sheets —"

"Fanny!" said Julia, severely. "We're not characters in an old-fashioned novel."

"Don't I wish we were! That's all I could be. Oh, Mr. Tay, don't give up."

"Fanny! Do you forget that my husband is alive?"

"Oh, what's a lunatic? Mr. Tay just said you were engaged, and anybody can get a divorce. They've been talking about it on the terrace."

"Ah!" Julia made an attempt at lightness. "You are not so inhospitable to these times, after all."

"I'd swallow them whole. But lots of kings and queens were divorced ages ago. When you're in love I don't fancy the century makes any difference."

"Good! It all comes back to that, Miss Edis!"

"When there's nothing else to be considered. Come, Fanny." She held out her hand to Tay. "Good-by. I hope you will take that German steamer —"

"Aunt Julia! Where is your West Indian hospitality?"

"It must wait. Will you go?"

“I shall not. Permit me to see you to your carriage.”

“I’d—I’d rather you stayed here. Anyhow, it’s good-by.”

“Good afternoon,” said Tay, shaking her hand heartily.

“Good-by.”

“Good afternoon.”

Julia turned her back and walked up the hall, her head very high, and hoping she could control the longing to run back.

“You won’t give up, Mr. Tay?” asked Fanny, eagerly.

“Never, Miss Edis.”

“Oh, something is happening on this old island! And what fun it’ll be to get ahead of Granny. I’ll help you. Good-by.” She ran after her aunt, but cast a rapid backward glance over her shoulder. English dukes and European princes had been the heroes of her romantic imaginings, Americans standing, in her limited knowledge of the outside world, for all that was plebeian and strictly commercial. But she liked the looks of this one. By some freak of fate he was a gentleman. And she was to be a character in a live romance!

III

THE terraces, mercifully, possibly tactfully, were deserted. Julia greeted warmly the old man who had served for so many years as butler and coachman, then announced curtly that she had a headache, and kept her eyes closed as the lean old horses crawled through Charles Town and up the mountain. She was still very angry with Tay, but, on the whole, more so with herself. Why hadn't she rushed into his arms and been happy for a few moments? And what did she really intend to do? She had not the least idea. He had an amazing faculty for getting his own way. He would manage to see her, and what would be the outcome? Was there anything he would stop at? It were more than human not to feel a thrill of excitement.

Her anger passed, and she wondered if she should not steal out and meet him that very night. Why not? Why not? Hadn't she her right to live? She forgave Tay promptly for this last and most reckless proof of his love for her. Lightly as he had dismissed the fact, she knew that he had made heavy sacrifices in turning his back on California at this critical moment. His party might declare him a traitor and cast him out. He deserved his reward. All the romance in her nature leaped into sudden and vivid life. To her Nevis was the most beautiful spot on earth. To live a few intense weeks—what a memory —

But she opened her eyes as if under the impact of a cold shower. The carriage had entered the grounds about the house. Here, in these beautiful wild spaces of tropic tree and shrub and flaming color, France had once followed her about, striving to kiss her. Here he had kissed her the day he had been forced to leave her for the ship, immediately after the marriage ceremony. His menacing shadow seemed to detach itself as on that awful night in the plantation of White Lodge. Her life with him rose and overwhelmed her. She sat up with a gasp. No romance on Nevis for her!

"Are you thinkin' of the meetin' with your mother?" asked Mrs. Winstone. "Fanny and I'll leave the field clear. She's probably in the living-room."

Julia descended slowly, and glanced through the window before entering. Mrs. Edis was sewing by the lamp on the table; the tropic night had descended with a rush. She was a little more bowed than formerly, perhaps a trifle pallid. But her hair was still almost black. Time might have forgotten and passed her by.

As Julia opened the door, she lifted her deep piercing eyes, seized her stick, and rose to her feet. Her hand trembled, but not her voice.

"I am glad to see you, Julia," she said, in her grand manner. "But the steamer must have been ahead of time."

She presented her gnarled cheek to be kissed, but Julia, who had suffered many emotions that day, burst into tears and flung herself into her mother's arms.

"Oh, do say you are glad to see me. I am so miserable, so worried. Oh, please do!"

Mrs. Edis patted her head, but her voice remained dry.

“You have been long coming, but you must know how glad I am to see you once more before I die. Your trouble must be grave indeed! You have been in trouble before.”

Mrs. Edis’s tones would have dried any fountain. They also expressed suspicion. Julia took out her pocket-handkerchief.

“Forgive me. It isn’t worth speaking of. I am only tired. Of course we are all, we women, in a sea of difficulties —”

“Not a word of that, if you please.” Mrs. Edis sat down; the glistening heavy brows that Captain Dundas had once compared to lizards, met over her flashing eyes. “You must make up your mind not to mention that disgusting subject while you are in my house. If that is your trouble, you will have every opportunity to forget it!”

“I came to forget everything but you and Nevis and Fanny. Now give me another kiss, and I’ll go and make myself presentable. I don’t want you to find me too much changed.”

“Maria told me that you had changed very little, and I thought you looked quite pretty before you reddened your eyes. Run along and I will order dinner.”

At the table Mrs. Edis betrayed a little of the joy she felt at the return of her prodigal, by talking far more than her wont. She told Julia the gossip of the islands, mostly mortuary, as all the old women of her own generation had died; but although she anathematized Bath House and the idle rheumatics it would bring to Nevis, she permitted herself to express hope regarding the future of the islands. She went to her room immediately after the meal finished, but it was long before Julia could enjoy the seclusion of her own. Fanny, who barely opened her mouth before her grandmother, burst into speech the moment that august presence was withdrawn, and Julia for quite three hours was obliged to answer her questions regarding the great world of London, when not sympathizing with the dynamic maiden’s hatred of life on Nevis.

“Good heaven!” she thought. “That I ever could have imagined a girl of eighteen interesting!”

She locked herself in her own room at last, but not to sleep. Her homecoming had proved a bitter disappointment. Fanny she might have forgiven, for all girls were more or less alike, wrapped up in themselves, happy in the delusion of their supreme importance. But her mother! She had always remembered her as the most wonderful of her sex, a tower of strength, no matter how hard, a superwoman isolated on a rock in the Caribbean Sea. What was she, after all, but an obstinate old woman? Was she to find strength in no one but herself? Well, why not? Hadn’t it been her cherished ideal to stand alone?

But what, in heaven’s name, was she to do with Tay?

The rooms opened upon a corridor, but her window was only a few feet above

the large garden in front of the house. She unlatched the jalousie and sprang to the ground. Here she could decide his fate without sentiment, for here was the shadow of France. But the shadow had departed and ignored her summons. The renaissance of old impressions is fleeting. It rarely comes twice, and never at command. And Nevis and all things on it were changed! Only one of the old servants, Denny, was alive. She had visited the outbuildings before dinner, eager for familiar faces. The girls of her youth were fat old women. There were many of them, and the pic'nies swarmed as of yore. The court, no doubt, was still full of color by day, but everything was orderly and clean; there were few of the old evidences of congenital laziness. Fanny, for all her romantic notions, was an admirable overseer—and a tyrant. Since this duty had been thrust upon her by her inexorable grandparent, she would use it as an outlet for her energies; and Julia suspected that she found a decided gratification in ruling her subjects with an iron hand.

The white cloud on Nevis had slipped down the mountain, enveloping it in a fine white mist. The garden was full of enchanting shapes, of heavy intoxicating odors. Where was Tay? Why had he not come to shake her jalousie? She longed to find him hiding under one of the heavy trees. But he was probably asleep at Bath House; and his temporary quiescence inspired her reason with gratitude. For the first time she feared him. He had come to Nevis for no such indefinite object as an episodical romance. He meant to take her with him when he left, possibly to forge the strongest of all bonds in the earlier phases of love. This thought made her angry once more, roused the subtle antagonism of sex. If it came to an actual contest of strength, here was her chance to prove to him what the years and much else had made of her.

She went to bed, and her thoughts turned contritely to Fanny. Was she really disappointed in this girl who seemed to be the embodiment of soulless, unimaginative, brutal youth? Or might not she still find her so interesting as a study, and companion, that the old fond image would be undeplored? The last, no doubt. She had been just as soulless, and her true imagination as unawakened. She went to sleep determined to love Fanny whatever befell.

IV

She slept until late in the day, Mrs. Edis having given orders that she should not be disturbed. Otherwise the routine of Great House was not altered. Fanny took her daily ride over the estate. Mrs. Edis sat in her chair in the living-room, making a feint of sewing, in reality listening for Julia's footfalls. So she had sat listening for sixteen years.

But it was a lagging, almost elderly step that she finally heard approaching along the terrace at the back of the house. A moment later Mrs. Winstone entered, flushed, damp, but with her eyes full of malicious amusement.

"Really, Jane," she drawled, "the tropics were never made for walkin'. I believe I'll keep my new waist line —"

"Not a bad idea to keep what little Nature is still willing to give you." Mrs. Edis's voice was as sarcastic as her eyes. "I hope there was no bad news in your note?"

"Note?" Mrs. Winstone turned her back and began to rearrange the flowers on the bookcase.

"Do you fancy the least event could happen in this house without my knowledge?"

"Really, it was so unimportant I had forgotten it. Merely an invitation to Bath House. That reminds me—" She adopted her airiest tones. "Have I spoken to you of Mrs. Morison? Charmin' little woman stoppin' at Bath House. I met her drivin' just now, and impulsively asked her to come to tea to-day, and bring the others. How naughty of me. I should have consulted you first."

"Your friends are welcome to tea. I am not a pauper."

"But such a hermit! It is too kind of you to take *me* in. I don't fancy botherin' you with my friends."

"How is it you were not carried away by impulse before?"

"I came to Nevis to see you and to rest. I see enough of Hannah and Pirie in London. But now that Mrs. Morison has come to Bath House, and her brother, Daniel Tay —"

Mrs. Edis lifted her head as if she scented powder. "A man? Is he married?"

Mrs. Winstone smiled significantly. "Oh, dear me, no!"

"How old is he?"

"About thirty."

"I'll have no young man in this house."

"Oh, he wouldn't look at Fanny. Hates girls. He's a very dear, a very particular friend of mine."

Mrs. Edis laid her work on the table, dropped her spectacles to the end of her

nose, and surveyed the smart figure with the developing waist line. “And what are you doing with very dear and particular friends of that sex at your time of life?”

“Dear Jane!” said Mrs. Winstone, with asperity, and transferring her attention to the early Victorian tidies. “Please remember that if you live out of the world I live in it. Oh, la! la! Come over to London and see the procession of hansoms in Bond Street containin’ smart gray-haired women and nice boys. The gray hairs are generally payin’ for the hansoms, and more. I never had a gray hair, and my rich American friend always pays for the hansoms, and more. Why shouldn’t I have a youngish beau if I can get one? But really, I didn’t think he’d follow me here!”

“Disgusting!” announced Mrs. Edis, who looked as if she had just entered a room in the Paris salon devoted to the nude. “In my time —”

“Ah, dear Jane, that time is forever gone. You couldn’t get a bonnet in all Bond Street to suit your years. Hannah Macmanus, who poses as an old woman, has to have hers made at a little shop in Bloomsbury.”

“I can well believe it! I could see what London was coming to sixty years ago. Enamelled old women —”

“Oh, la! la! Prehistoric! Filthy habit! To-day we keep our skins clean.”

“Do sit down. You are flouncing about like a sylph of twenty. I hope you have not permitted yourself to become seriously interested in this young man.”

Mrs. Winstone dropped into a chair on the other side of the table and looked across the work-basket with airy self-consciousness.

“Why not?”

“You are an old fool, and he must be a young one.”

“Not a bit of it. Level-headed business man. Rich and strenuous.”

“Strenuous?”

“New word. American. Means a short life for yourself and a merry one for your heirs.”

“Be good enough to confine yourself to English. Are you going to marry this youth and make a laughing-stock of yourself and your family?”

“Marry? Oh, how tiresome of you to be so serious. I’d managed him so well! I never thought he would follow me here when I need a rest. But he’s romantic —”

“Romantic? He must be if he’s in love with you. Really, Maria, I never even look at you that I don’t feel like giving thanks I have been permitted to spend my life on Nevis.”

Mrs. Winstone fetched a little sigh. “But you don’t mind my askin’ these people to tea?”

“It is a long time since a stranger has crossed my threshold. Still, they are welcome. This is your birthplace as well as mine.”

“How sweet of you! I’ll go and smarten up a bit.” As she was leaving the room

she turned, knit her brows, and said hesitatingly, “Better not tell Julia they’re comin’. She left London because she was sick of people, and has really come for a rest. She might run away, and Mrs. Morison is dyin’ to meet her. Americans are quite mad about celebrities.”

“Oh, very well,” said Mrs. Edis, impatiently.

She sewed for half an hour longer. Suddenly her eyes flashed and she lifted her head. But when Julia came in she said formally: —

“Good morning. Do you always sleep until noon?”

“Rather not! But I didn’t go to sleep till nearly dawn, I was so excited. I shall get up every morning at five and take that old walk round the cone. How often I have thought of it.”

“You have been long coming to take it.”

Julia seated herself on the arm of her mother’s chair, and took the work out of her hand. “Now,” she said, “let’s have it out. You are angry with me for staying away for sixteen years, among other things, and I have been very angry with you. But all my childish resentment was over long ago. It is time you forgave me. If I stayed away, it was because you never asked me to come. Since the day the duke married, you have written me nothing but formal notes, except when you were angry with me for some new cause. You have hurt me more than I can have hurt you, and I have resented your injustice. But let us bury it all. If you knew how glad I am to be here again, to see you look just the same! If you would only be your old self, I could feel your little girl once more. The past—much of it—seems like a dream —”

Mrs. Edis threw back her head. Her heavy nostrils dilated. She looked like an old war-horse. She raised her stick and brought it down on the hard floor with a resounding thump. “Yes!” she said harshly. “Let us have it out. Let me tell you that I have sat here for ten of those years waiting to acknowledge that I have been tortured by remorse. I could not bring myself to write it. But I never thought you would stay away so long— You!—and I an old old woman!”

Julia had moved away uneasily at this outburst. “Oh, don’t!—never mind—it was a natural enough mistake on your part. Let us never speak of it again. I should have come long ago—but time passes so quickly—I don’t think I realized—and then I thought you had given all your love to Fanny —”

“Fanny?” with indescribable scorn.

“Oh, I see now you don’t care for her—”

“Let me finish. I am a hard old woman. Demonstrations are not for me. Nor is my pride dead. That will survive life itself. But I will tell you that I have never ceased to love you—I think I have never loved any one else. Your first petulant childish letters—I didn’t choose to believe. But later, when I began to hear those vague terrible rumors— My God! Well, you had the world, and youth, and diversions—but I have sat here and thought, and thought, and longed for death —”

“Oh, please! It has all been for the best. I needed a hard school. You know what a child I was. If life had been too kind to me, I should have developed slowly, if at all. I might have nothing but a cauliflower in my brain to-day. Now, you would be proud of me if you would only let me explain this great work to you, make you see what it means —”

“Not an allusion to that! You, who were born to be a duchess. Ah! Let me confess that it is not remorse alone that has made me a desolate old woman all these years. My old belief survived the marriage of the duke, even the birth of his heir—at least, I clung to it. But when your husband went hopelessly insane— Oh, my old belief! It had been companion, friend, consolation—as satisfying as only a science can be. When my faith in that was destroyed —”

“Ah! If you would only let me tell you something! I met far wiser men in the East than old M’sieu. They placed a very different interpretation on my horoscope —”

“What?”

“Why, can’t you see—what I have become in England—what I may still become— Oh, far, far more!”

Mrs. Edis snorted in her wrath and disgust as she rose to her feet and thumped the floor with her stick. “Gammon! Do you expect me to believe that that is what the world has come to? Fighting and scratching policemen, going to gaol, speaking on a public platform! Has that become the substitute for a great English lady?”

“Oh, let us say no more about it. I recognize it is hopeless. If you still believe that a woman’s highest destiny is to be an English duchess— Do sit down. There is so much else to talk about.”

Mrs. Edis resumed her seat, but still frowning. She had quite forgotten her remorse.

“I want to talk about poor little Fanny—”

“*Poor* little Fanny?”

“Who has the best memory in the world? Who was the belle of the West Indies in her day? I have an idea that Fanny looks exactly as you did at her age. And she is not too unlike you in other things —”

“Arrant nonsense. What are you driving at?”

“I mean that youth has its rights, and you are depriving Fanny of hers.”

“I have replanted the entire estate and built a mill. Fanny will be rich one day. I can’t abide the minx, but I know my duty to my son’s child, and the last of my race.”

“So that is to be Fanny’s fate? A little West Indian planter! When she dreams of nothing but love and marriage —”

“She knows naught of such things.”

“Oh, doesn’t she? And what of instincts, especially when a girl is beautiful and

fairly bursting with vitality?”

“She can consume her vitality in hard work. Youth and beauty soon pass. Hers will go before they have given any man the chance to ruin her life. In her lies my opportunity for atonement —”

“Fanny will marry. That is her obvious destiny. What is more, she will marry the first man that asks her, unless she has the diversion of society and many admirers. Bath House is open again. Many young men will come —”

“Fanny will see none of them!”

“Oh, won’t she? Youth has a magnet all its own. They’ll be prowling round the place, sitting on the wall like tomcats!”

“Is that a sample of the new school of conversation?”

“No, but it expresses a fact. Now, do be sweet and reasonable and let Fanny go to the party at Bath House on Thursday night —”

“Not another word. Fanny goes to no parties, neither at Bath House nor elsewhere. Have you quite forgotten me, that you fancy you can change my mind when it is made up? There is the luncheon gong. Will you give me your arm?”

V

"WELL," said Fanny, "I saw you having a talk with Granny in here this morning. I suppose she has promised I shall go to London and live like other girls. That would be so like her,—such a sweet creature —"

"Sh—sh—"

"Oh, why not say what you think? I'd like to hear your real opinion of her—after all these years."

"She is my mother; and she was angelic to me this morning."

Fanny stared, then burst into laughter. "Angelic! How I should like to have seen Granny do it. Did you ask her if I could go to the party at Bath House?"

"She is opposed to it," said Julia, evasively, "but I think I can talk her over. One would never expect to get the best of mother in the first round. I must tell you, however, that I shall not go to Bath House myself —"

"Oh, *that* Mr. Tay! Only it *is* romantic, and he *is* handsome, and quite nice. Do tell me, Julia," she asked eagerly, "what is it like to be in love with a real man?"

"Put such thoughts out of your head for the present."

"Did he ever kiss you?"

"Have you looked over my evening gowns? Collins is quite excited at the prospect of fussing with them."

"How heavenly! I'll go this minute! What on earth is the matter with Denny? He looks as if he'd just heard the guns at the fort announcing a hurricane."

The old man almost staggered in. His expression was quite wild.

"Lor's sake, Missy," he gasped. "A visitor! A man!"

Fanny snatched the card.

"Julia!" she cried, more excited than Denny. "It's he! It's Mr. Tay!"

Julia turned her face away and walked with great dignity to the opposite door. "Tell him that he must excuse me," she said over her shoulder.

"He ask for Mis' Winstone, Mis' Julia."

"For whom?"

"He say she ask him for tea."

"She must be quite mad. Well, go and find her." And she hastened to her room, determined to punish Tay for coming, but not so sure she should not waylay him in the garden when he left.

"Denny," said Fanny, "ask him to come in here. And you need not disturb my aunt at present. She is taking her nap."

"Yes, Missy." And Denny went off, shaking his head.

Fanny ran over to a glass and smoothed her hair, put a flower in it, and made an

attempt to stiffen her figure until it looked as if incased in stays. But when Tay entered she immediately became as natural as the young female ever is in the presence of the young and marriageable male. Tay did not look in the best of tempers, but she thought him quite handsome enough to be the hero of a romance.

“Do sit down,” she said hospitably. “Aunt Maria will be in presently. Oh, do tell me how you got in. I mean, what can Aunt Maria have told Granny— Or hasn’t she told her? Perhaps I’d better take you out for a walk. Granny might be too horrid.”

“I fancy Mrs. Winstone has told your grandmother that she asked me for tea,” said Tay, with a slight access of color.

“But what?”

“Oh— Are not you too afraid of this—of your formidable grandmother?”

“Not a bit. I only pretend to be for the sake of peace. But, oh, do tell me how Aunt Maria had the courage to ask you here! I’m simply mad with curiosity. A young man in this house!”

Tay drew a long breath. This was an explanation he had not bargained for, and those immense eyes were disconcertingly young, and very handsome. “Well, you see—this is how it is: I came here, neglected business and a good many other things, to see Julia France, and I have no idea of wasting my time. I don’t like underhand methods. I’d rather fight in the open any time, but with women you almost never can. So let us call this strategy —”

“Yes! Yes!” cried Fanny. “But for heaven’s sake, what is it?”

“We had a conference last night at the hotel.” Tay got up and walked about the room.

“Oh, do go on.”

“Well, briefly, we hatched a plot. Mrs. Winstone was to be induced to tell your grandmother that she and I are engaged —”

“What?”

“Ah—yes.”

“You and Aunt Maria!” She succeeded in taking it in, then went off into shrieks of laughter. Tay swore under his breath, and looked out of the window.

“You and Aunt Maria! I never heard of anything so funny in all my life. Why on earth didn’t you pretend to have fallen in love with me? That would have fooled everybody, and I should have loved to take you out for long walks—and turn you over to Julia!”

“You forget that a man doesn’t care to place a girl in a false position —”

“But Aunt Maria never can have made Granny believe —”

“Why not? Half the women in London have admirers young enough to be their sons, and sometimes they marry them. Your aunt could have one of those brats dangling if she chose. It’s not my rôle, but I can play it at a pinch.” He returned to

his chair. “Do you think I can see Julia to-day?”

“She ran away when she heard you were here.”

“Oh, did she?”

“I don’t think she means to see you. That would be horrid of her. But you come here every day—to see Aunt Maria!—and I’ll manage it. And if you always come when Granny’s asleep, you can talk to me.”

“That would be ample compensation,” said Tay, mechanically. He was feeling very cross, and it was long since callow girlhood had appealed to him. Still, this child was beautiful, and beauty exacts tribute at any age. He told himself that he was a surly brute, and exerted himself to be agreeable.

“You must find this a lonely life,” he observed. “What do you do with yourself? Read novels? Go over to parties on St. Kitts?”

“Novels! Parties! I’ve read about ten, and I’ve never been to a party in my life. You are the first young man I’ve ever talked to.”

“Really?” Tay was mildly interested. “What a life for a young girl. I’ve never seen any one look less like a hermit. What *do* you do with yourself?”

“Oh, Granny put me in charge of the estate a year ago. She’s too old to go out much, and she drilled me until I thought I’d go off my head. But now I rather like it. There’s something to do, anyhow, riding over the estate every morning, keeping the mill overseer from cheating, and getting work out of lazy blacks. I can do that, and in a way it’s like having a little kingdom all your own. I’ve made them all afraid of me.”

“Have you? By George, you are some girl! I thought you were merely out for fun. I’d be put to it to find another girl of your age—and—and—general style—who was running an estate. It seems to be a remarkable family, altogether.”

Fanny saw that she had now really caught his attention, and found him more attractive every moment. The subject of her prosaic duties had never entered her imaginary conversations with young men, but this one was quite different himself from any of her dreams; and she suddenly found reality far more attractive than romance. She was also quick to take a cue, and was about to launch upon a description of plantation life in the West Indies, when Denny came running in, this time looking fairly distracted.

“Lots of visitors, Missy!”

“I should have told you that Mrs. Winstone asked the rest of our party,” said Tay.

Fanny forgot him in her fright, as Mrs. Macmanus, Mr. Pirie, and the Morisons entered. But her instincts asserted themselves, and she went through the ordeal very creditably.

“Why, how do you do?” she said hospitably. “I’m so glad to see you all in our house. Please sit down. Denny, go and tell Mrs. Winstone. Ah—won’t you take off

your hats?”

“No, thank you, dear,” said Mrs. Morison, whose eyes were brimming with mischief. “Mine is so becoming. Besides, a lot of hair would come off, too.”

“I will,” said Mrs. Macmanus, “and thank you for asking me. Reminds me of my youth.” And she removed her bonnet and rolled up the strings. “Even one’s hair is too warm for the tropics. Pirie, you might take off your toupee. I’ve seen you do it twice when you thought no one was looking!”

“Really, Hannah!” Pirie almost exploded. What an assault in the presence of glorious eighteen!

But Fanny was paying no attention to Pirie. She was gazing in rapt admiration at Mrs. Morison’s airy toilette of daffodil yellow, with a large chiffon hat of the same shade, covered with more little soft feathers than she had ever seen before, and a perfectly useless, but all the more enviable, sunshade of chiffon and lace.

Mrs. Morison saw the admiration in the girl’s eyes, and no admiration was thrown away on her. She smiled brilliantly.

“How simply enchanting to see the inside of an old West Indian home,” she exclaimed. “I never had any old-fashioned things in my life. Grandpa emigrated to California in the fifties, and every house he built burned down whenever the city did. So when I came along and pa was making *his* pile, there wasn’t so much as a daguerrotype in the family. We were just upholstered from New York and dressed from Paris. How’s that for family history, Miss Edis?”

“Oh,” said Fanny, through her teeth, “how I should like to live in a country where there were no ancestors. There’s nothing else here.”

Morison was also beaming upon her. “You must come and visit us in New York,” he said. “We’re imitating England and becoming too democratic to talk about ancestors, even when we’ve got ’em, and we usually haven’t.”

“Why, Nolly,” cried Emily, who was Californian when she wanted to be audacious, but valued her New York to its ultimate vanishing drop of azure blood, “you know your mother was a —”

“Pauper. She hooked my father, which is more to the point, and I’m in the race for Millionaire Street, which is the whole point.”

“Oh, you little bleating Wall Street Calf! Such a little one, too, Miss Edis.”

“I might be a bigger one if you spent less. What are we here for, anyhow?” he asked, as Fanny, apprehending a domestic scene, moved away. “Dan can take care of his own affairs, and I feel as if I were on a ship in midocean with the wireless out of order.”

“What man ever could manage his own affairs? It would have been cruel to let Dan come alone, and I know I can help him out. We mustn’t scrap and frighten Mrs. France, or she’ll think the temper is in the Tay family, whereas it’s always your fault —”

But she laughed good-naturedly, extracting the sting, and Morison, who never quite understood her, was mollified and shrugged his shoulders. “Well, I’m going to flirt with that little West Indian girl who doesn’t know the first thing about life and wants to know it all in five minutes. Great fun. Serve you right, too, for bringing me here.”

“Run along,” said his wife, indulgently, and he joined Fanny, who was talking to Tay, and told her that the St. Kitts girls were coming to the party on Thursday night. But Fanny had lost all interest in the married man now that a single one had appeared, and gave him her shoulder with a young girl’s brutality. A moment later, when Mrs. Winstone entered, she deliberately drew Tay into the embrasure of one of the windows. She had curled her lip at her grandaunt’s appearance, but the rest applauded, and Mrs. Winstone was secretly delighted with herself. She had abandoned her usual discretion and got herself up like a woman of thirty. There was rouge on her cheeks, a flower in her youthfully dressed hair, and a pink chiffon scarf floated over her white gown.

“Good! Good!” cried Mrs. Macmanus. “How does it work?”

“Oh, quite all right. Only I was made to feel as if I had escaped from the mummy room in the British Museum and stolen my grandniece’s clothes.”

“Upon my word, Maria,” said Pirie, gallantly, “I didn’t know you could do it. Ten to one Tay does fall in love with you. Why not? Julia’s got a bee in her bonnet. We men don’t like bees as domestic pets. They sting.”

“Curious that even the young men are as old-fashioned as ever, while the women go marching on,” said Mrs. Macmanus, unrolling her knitting. “What will you all do for partners, by and by?”

“Oh, we’ll still marry them,” said Mrs. Morison, patronizingly. “They give us our little romance, and it’s no part of our policy to let the race die out.”

“Hear! Hear!” cried Mrs. Macmanus, looking over her eye-glasses. “So you, too, are a suffragette. You never gave us a hint.”

“I forgot about it down here. But last winter in New York, everybody who was anybody, or wanted to be, went in for it. Two or three of the rich and fashionable women whose names are regular electric signs—designed by the press—great gilt way—took it up, and all the rank outsiders fairly fell over themselves to get into the new Suffrage societies, and shake hands with those Brunhildes come down off their fire-girt perch. Makes me sick. I believe in it because I know it’s coming.”

“Ha! Ha!” cried Pirie. “A good patriot always loves the top.”

“Don’t be cynical, Pirie,” said Mrs. Macmanus, who had not failed to note the longing glances cast in Fanny’s direction. “It can’t be laid to extreme youth in your case.”

“Now, why is a man always called cynical when he tells the truth? No limelight, no martyrs.”

“Oh, what a sophisticated old lot we are,” said Mrs. Macmanus, with a sigh. “I

wish I knew as little as that charming Fanny. She is youth—innocent barbarous youth—personified. Look at her flirting with her aunt's lover. I always said that honor was an acquired virtue."

"Sh—sh—" whispered Mrs. Winstone, and she sprang to her feet.

Mrs. Edis stood in the terrace doorway leaning on her stick. She looked like an allegory of the past, the uncompromising disillusioned past, which has come in contact with none of the bridges that connect with the present. Her keen contemptuous gaze had just lit upon Fanny and Tay, when the company, made aware of her presence, rose precipitately, and were presented by Mrs. Winstone.

"I bid you all welcome to my house," said Mrs. Edis, formally.

Fanny had hastily marshalled Tay into the circle. Mrs. Edis favored him with a piercing look which gave him a sensation of acute discomfort.

"Good lord!" he thought. "Here's an enemy worthy of any man's mettle. What a family!"

Mrs. Winstone almost laughed aloud as she met her sister's glance of disgust. It was long since she had enjoyed herself so thoroughly. To outwit Jane and embroil everybody else was better for the nerves than mere vegetating.

Mrs. Edis turned to Fanny.

"Where is Julia?"

"I don't know, Grandmother."

"Go and find her. She must not appear to want in hospitality."

"Yes, Grandmother."

"Sit down, all of you."

The company did as commanded, Tay in ostentatious proximity to Mrs. Winstone. There was a moment's profound silence, Mrs. Edis, like George Washington, having the rare gift of immersing any company in an ice bath. Mrs. Macmanus would never have dreamed of making conversation unless she had something to say; Pirie and Morison, snubbed by Fanny, were both sulky; Mrs. Winstone was flirting with Tay under the eagle eye of her sister, who poured out the tea. Finally, Mrs. Morison, with the American woman's sense of conversational responsibility, rushed into the breach, after peremptorily motioning to her husband to sit beside her on the little sofa: here was an opportunity for a parade of domestic American bliss.

"Oh, Mrs. Edis!" she cried. "We were just talking when you came in— Aren't you quite too frightfully proud of Mrs. France?"

"Frightfully?"

"Our dreadful slang. I mean—well, aren't you too proud of her for words?"

"And pray why should I be unable to express myself? Julia was always a good child."

“Oh, of course—but it isn’t often that any one is as good as Mrs. France, and so tremendously clever.”

“I am glad to infer that you think well of Julia.” Mrs. Edis, reflecting that society was even more silly than in her own day, wondered how long these people would stay. She observed that the company was looking amused, but before she had time to speculate upon the cause, she forgot the rest of them, in her keen observation of Tay. He was ignoring Mrs. Winstone and frowning at his sister. But in another moment she forgot even him.

“Oh, I don’t count,” cried the desperate Mrs. Morison. “I’m merely trying to make myself agreeable, in return for your gracious hospitality. It’s what the world thinks.”

“The world?”

“Surely, you must feel proud that she’s quite the hope of the party, a flaming torch. If she remains in London, why, she’ll be its only leader—a regular queen.”

“Queen?”

Mrs. Edis set the tea-pot violently down.

“Prime Minister, you know, or something like that,” said Pirie. “Strange things are happening.”

“Are you making game of me?” cried Mrs. Edis, furiously.

“Oh, Pirie never makes game of anybody but himself,” said Mrs. Macmanus, soothingly.

“I beg your pardon, then, but it sounds pure gammon to me.”

“It does to many, dear madam.”

Mrs. Edis was staring straight before her, the company forgotten. “Queen.” That still active brain, never rusty, nor clouded, had leaped back to the night when she and old M’sieu had pored over Julia’s horoscope. “Queen.” The word had almost been written. They had compromised on a mere peerage, as the times no longer permitted the marriage of a sovereign with a subject. But—times change—Julia had unwittingly made her feel like an old crab—moreover, the twentieth century was to witness the birth of a new solar year, the year of Man. Might that be but a generic term? The woman’s movement had been abhorrent to her, shocking every aristocratic instinct, much as she despised men. But she had begun to realize that it was both portentous and imperishable. If Julia was to lead it, if in it lay her child’s only chance to achieve a vast and splendid distinction—well, she was not too old to reconstruct her ideas, bury her inherited ideals, move, herself, with the times.

She became aware that a pall-like silence had descended upon her guests.

“Pardon me,” she said more graciously. “I am an old woman and my mind wanders. What you said startled me. A great future was predicted for my child at birth—and the time came when I made sure that she was to be a duchess —”

“Duchess!” cried Mrs. Morison. “Oh, dear me, a duchess isn’t in it these days

with a great public leader. Think of all the dukedoms that have been bought with brand new American dollars. It's now quite a commonplace position."

"Is this true?"

"True as Suffrage, dear madam," said Mrs. Macmanus. "There are even English duchesses that are nobodies. This is the day of the individual."

Once more Mrs. Edis stared straight before her. "I see! I see!" she muttered.

Tay sprang to his feet and bore down upon his sister.

"For God's sake change the subject," he said, in a tone of concentrated fury. "Can't you see what is going on in that old woman's mind? I wish you had stayed in New York."

"I kept getting in deeper and deeper," said Mrs. Morison, apologetically, but enjoying herself, nevertheless. "That old woman would rattle anybody. Here comes your Julia."

Julia had hidden when she heard Fanny's voice, but on second thoughts had concluded not to arouse her mother's suspicions. She had therefore hastily put herself into a soft white house frock with a floating green scarf, and looked little older than Fanny.

She barely glanced at Tay, but smiled brightly at the other guests. "Good afternoon, everybody. How delightful to see the old house so gay. A very strong cup, please, mother."

"Oh, not so awfully gay," cried Mrs. Morison. "We've been talking Suffrage."

"No more of that at present," said Mrs. Edis, peremptorily. "Fanny, stop trying to engage Mr. Tay's attention. He came to Nevis to see your grandaunt. Go and talk to Mrs. Macmanus. Young girls should always strive to make themselves agreeable to elderly ladies."

Fanny obeyed sulkily, and the company, now put completely at its ease, fell upon the tea and cakes, which Mrs. Edis finally remembered to order Denny to pass. Tay bent over Mrs. Winstone and shot a glance at Julia. She was consumed with silent laughter. His eyes grew imploring, but he moved them with a sudden sense of discomfort. Mrs. Edis looked as if about to launch her cane at him.

Mrs. Macmanus, fearing they would all break into hysterical laughter, addressed herself to Mrs. Edis. "We have been admiring your wonderful old house. Would it be asking too much to let us see more of it?"

"And the delicious grounds," cried Mrs. Morison, determined to acquit herself and give Dan his opportunity to talk to Julia. "I've never seen anything like those terraces rising up the mountain."

Mrs. Edis rose. "Give me your arm, Julia. I shall be happy to show our guests the house, and then you may take them up to the cone."

"I'll not go," said Tay to Mrs. Winstone. "I shall stay here. Please get Julia away from them and send her back."

“Very well,” said Mrs. Winstone, good-naturedly. “Possess your soul in patience!”

“I’ve a small stock left!”

VI

ALONE, a moment later, Tay was contemplating a short excursion into the garden with the solace of a cigarette, when he heard light rapid footsteps on the terrace flags. He turned eagerly. But it was Fanny who came running in. Her face was flushed with triumph, and her eyes sparkled under their heavy lids.

"I gave Granny the slip," she exclaimed. "Let's stay here and make Julia jealous."

"But your grandmother will be unmerciful—"

"Oh, she never knows whether I'm round or not."

"You make me feel that you lead a most unnatural life."

"You may just better believe I do—dodging Granny, and watching cane grow. Oh, do make me feel like a girl in a book. You had just begun to tell me about that wonderful San Francisco when Granny had to come in. Tell me more. It will be something to dream of even if I never can see it."

Tay resigned himself and sat down.

"Oh, you'll see it, all right. You will visit us."

"But suppose Julia won't become an American and divorce that lunatic of hers."

"But she shall, and you must help me. Will you?"

"If you will swear to take me away and find me a husband as perfectly fascinating as yourself."

"Good lord!" Tay almost blushed. Then he looked at her suspiciously. Was the little devil as innocent as she pretended, or was this merely the instinct of the born coquette, crudely expressing itself? "Oh, you'll meet a hundred far better worth your while than I am."

"I don't believe it," announced Fanny, who had never removed her eyes from his face. ("What's an aunt?" she was thinking, "especially when she's old enough to be your mother?") "And have they all got as much money?" she added aloud.

This certainly was ingenuousness! "Oh, I'm a pauper compared with several I could name. Any one of them will succumb at once."

"Julia says she will take me back to London and ask a friend of hers, Lady Dark, to give me a gay season, but San Francisco sounds even more fascinating. Haven't you any titles in America?"

"Oh, titles without number. Especially honorables. Every ex-official, if he's bagged a big enough office, expects 'honorable' on his letters for the rest of his life. And once a judge always a judge. State senators are addressed as if they were old Romans, and the militia turns out even more life titles than the bench."

But the American humor was beyond Fanny. She pouted. "Tell me something really interesting. Tell me about a whole day of life in San Francisco. Tell me

everything you think and feel and do.”

“Great Scott!”

“Oh,” cried Fanny, throwing herself halfway across the little table. “If you only knew how I want to know—everything! everything!”

“Oh, you’ll learn fast enough. Nevis will never hold you. But I’ll help you out, by George! It would be some fun to turn you loose and watch you make things hum.”

“How perfectly heavenly to hear some one talking about poor little me! Tell me more about myself.”

Tay laughed indulgently. “You *are* a baby!”

“Don’t laugh at me. Oh—I’m not a bit like Julia. I’d have killed that husband of hers long before she shut him up. Queer how different people in the same family can be. They all seem to think that Julia’s not much changed—although she’s really quite old now. But it would have made a devil out of me.”

“I believe you!” And he added unwillingly, “How interesting you will be when you are a few years older.”

“Not if I stay on Nevis.”

“Oh, don’t let that worry you.”

She brought her face so close to his that he fancied he felt a light shock of electricity. “Swear it!” she whispered eagerly. “You look as if you could do anything you wanted to do. I haven’t felt a bit encouraged by Julia’s promises, but if *you* promise me —”

Tay stood up and put his hands in his pockets. “It’s a go,” he said. “Trust me to turn you loose among our squabs the first chance I get —”

“Fanny, dear, will you show Mr. and Mrs. Morison the orchards? They are waiting for you.”

Julia’s tones had never been so sweet, her large gray eyes so cool; but as Fanny, with a sharp, “Oh, very well, *Aunt* Julia,” went forth on a leaden foot, both voice and expression changed.

“You were flirting with Fanny!”

“So I was,” said Tay, coolly. “That girl’s spoiling for a flirtation. Well, I’ll gratify her if you leave me to my own devices on this beastly island.”

“You’d never do such a thing! Destroy that child’s peace of mind —”

“Peace of mind nothing. That’s not the sort that gets hurt. If she belonged to a lower walk of life, she’d be on the— Well, our Fillmore precinct can show you dozens, walking the streets of an evening looking for trouble. ‘Juicy peaches,’ as Pirie calls them, just waiting to be plucked. Accident is about all that protects the Fannys. Few men are in the seducing business when it comes to their own class.”

“Dan!” cried Julia, aghast. “You must be in a frightful temper to say such things

to me about my own niece.”

“She’s practically my niece. And I am in a frightful temper. Never expect to be in a worse. Little good even this ruse has done me. Your mother’s eyes could see through a stone wall.”

Women find few of man’s moods so attractive, before matrimony, as his anger. It rouses their inherited instinct to placate, to submit. Julia went to the terrace door and looked up and down. Her mother was sitting in an arbor with Mrs. Macmanus and Pirie. She was also leaning back in her chair, resigned, if not interested.

Julia went up to Tay and put her hand on his arm. “Don’t—please!—be angry with me,” she whispered. “If you knew what a tumult I’ve been in—finding you here—wanting to see you more than anything on earth—but not knowing *what* to do!”

Tay melted instantly, and took her in his arms and kissed her. “It’s all simple enough. I’ll take the next American steamer if you insist upon it, but that doesn’t come for eight days yet. Meanwhile I must see you. I don’t like the tropics. They get on my nerves. Nothing doing, and the air shot with a curious lazy electricity. And I’m by no means satisfied with myself. I should be in California this minute. Love plays the devil with a man!”

“But you would stay a month if I wanted you to!” said Julia, triumphantly.

“Six months, let everything go hang!” he said savagely. “You’ve got me, all right. But to waste my time—even for eight—nine days longer! That’s a horse of another color. Am I to see you every day or not?”

“Oh, yes! Yes!” murmured Julia. “I have given up the struggle. The way you got in—it was too funny! I saw at once that I might as well give up first as last. You will always have your way. Besides, I want to. I’ll meet you every day, three times a day. I couldn’t help myself if I would.”

“Thank heaven. And don’t try being too strong again. It’s not the strong women that men die for, Julia.”

He lifted his head with the uneasy sense of being watched. “Damn it!” he thought. “Is that old witch—” But he could see nothing.

“Julia,” he said, lowering his voice, “I shall not come to this house again. Meet me to-night—no, to-morrow morning—early—at nine o’clock—over in that jungle.”

“I will! I will! Only promise never to be angry with me again.”

“That will depend entirely upon yourself. If you go back on your word—”

“As if I would! We’ll have long wonderful days together— Oh, dear, they are coming.”

She broke away from him and smoothed her hair.

“It’s not so late,” said Tay, hurriedly, “only six. Couldn’t you come for a spin in my motor boat? I’ll walk back, and wait for you at the bend of the road.”

“I’ll try. If I don’t, it will be because I can’t get away from mother. But I’ll be in the jungle to-morrow at nine.”

The guests entered with Mrs. Winstone.

“Southern California isn’t in it, Dan,” said his sister, mischievously. “Such orange and lime groves. You must come again. Still, *I* could hardly tear myself away from this room —”

A door opened and Fanny burst in. She looked on the verge of hysterics. “Oh, what do you think?” she cried. “What *do* you think? Granny says I can go to the party on Thursday night, and that I may go to Bath House every day and see you, Mrs. Morison! She likes you so much. The skies must be going to fall. You have bewitched her.”

“You are talking nonsense,” said Mrs. Winstone.

“Ask Granny. She was almost sweet. But who cares what’s come over her? You will teach me to dance, won’t you, Mr. Tay? I could learn in five minutes.”

“Charmed. Congratulate you—and ourselves. Is the carriage ready?”

“Oh, it is! I’ll go out with our guests. Don’t you bother, Julia. Aunt Maria, you must be tired out. Oh, what a funny, funny day! I’ll never sleep again.”

“Really, I do feel as if we had all gone mad,” said Mrs. Winstone, when the good-bys had been said, and she and Julia were alone. “Jane must be quite off her head. There’s a cruiser comin’ in to-morrow. Fanny’ll be engaged to-morrow night. Perhaps, after all, Jane jumped at the chance of gettin’ rid of her.”

“Oh, I was sure she would relent. And she could see to-day what company means to a young girl.”

She ran away to her room to change her frock, for she had no intention of incurring Tay’s wrath again. But as she was about to open her door she saw Denny coming down the corridor waving two cablegrams.

“Oh, dear!” she thought. “Is this a summons? Well, thank heaven I can’t get away for a fortnight yet.”

She took the cablegrams, half resolved, as she closed her door, not to open them until her return. But of course she did nothing of the sort, and read them promptly.

The first was from Ishbel:—

“All serene. Stay as long as you like.”

The second was from the duke:—

“Harold died this morning.”

“And he knows,” thought Julia, with instant conviction. “That is what brought him here.”

VII

FORCED to the wall, Julia's mind always became cool and practical. Tay inspired her with a new fear. If he had come to Nevis to await her husband's death, he intended to marry her and take her away with him. It was one more proof that he possessed that form of genius which makes certain men the quick partner of circumstance and insures their mastery of life. In his own phraseology, he never missed a trick. No doubt he would take out a special license to-morrow.

But she had no intention of being rushed into marriage. The most formidable barrier had been razed; her desertion of the women might bring reprobation on herself, but not ridicule on the cause; nevertheless, confronted with the necessity of an immediate decision, she realized acutely that four years of devotion to a great impersonal ideal had inspired her with a love for it of which she had barely been conscious at the time. The idea of deserting this cause she had made her own, or, at the most, giving it a divided homage in a distant land, renewed that love with such a jealous intensity that for the moment she hated Tay as the chief exponent of that ruthless male force which had bred the revolt of Woman. His dash to Nevis was a declaration of war, but a war which should bring defeat to her not to him. She buckled on her own armor at the thought. It was possible that he would win, but not without her full connivance. Nor should she see him again until she had made up her mind with no assistance of his.

She had instantly abandoned the intention to meet him at present, and sat down to compose a note to send him on the morrow. Many sheets went into the waste-paper basket before this note was written to her satisfaction. It was impossible to refer openly to her husband's death, nor, for the matter of that, was it necessary. Angry as she was, she never for a moment forgot that his instant sympathy, his instinctive comprehension of her, was the deepest of their bonds. A word would be sufficient. He would understand, and wait.

"You must give me three or four days, possibly a week, to think it all out," she wrote finally. "*You* think and strike like lightning, but my mind is made on another plan. For me, all great crises must be approached with deliberation, if only because nature made me the most impulsive of women. I have learned to weigh, having a profound distrust for those instincts upon which women pride themselves. But you always understand. I could not love you if you did not. When I write next, my mind will have been made up once for all."

But unfortunately Tay was not in a position to understand. He had received no second cablegram from Dark, for Dark knew nothing of France's death. The duke, by no means anxious to remind the world that another member of the house of France had gone insane, made no announcement in the London newspapers, and it was not until several days later that Ishbel heard the news from Bridgit.

"That's over, thank heaven!" said Mrs. Maundrell. "And I'm going to take the

bull by the horns and send Nigel to Nevis when he returns next week. Happily, Mr. Tay is safe in California. What is the matter?”

“I was thinking how wonderful it would be if Nigel and Julia really should marry, after all,” said Ishbel, without a blush. “But I must run, dear. I’ve a dinner to-night.” And she hastened to the cable office and sent a message to Tay; and another to Julia, warning her of the threatened invasion.

But this was not until three days later, and meanwhile Tay received Julia’s note. Nor was Denny the messenger.

The old servant had orders to take it to the hotel at seven o’clock in the morning, and, if Tay had gone out (and even visitors rise early in the tropics) to go to the jungle at nine. As Denny never hurried himself, it was after seven when he started on his errand. Fanny was mounting her horse for her daily ride over the estate when he passed her. She saw the note, held respectfully in his hand, swooped down upon it, and tucked it in her belt.

“You have too much to do to go on errands,” she said severely. “I will give this note to Mr. Tay. Where shall I find him?”

Denny repeated his instructions, adding dubiously, “But you never go off the estate alone, Missy.”

“I shall this morning, and see that you do not mention it. If you do, you shall have no tobacco for a week.”

Fanny attended to her duties mechanically until a few minutes before nine, then turned her horse in the direction of the jungle. She felt no curiosity in regard to the contents of the note, but knew that it must have been written to break an appointment. She hummed an old African tune and felt that she held the apple of life in her hand. No scruples disturbed her. Julia was thirty-four, quite old enough, as she had frankly observed, to be her mother, certainly old enough to have done with love, far too old to interfere with the preeminent rights of youth. Nor had she the faintest misgivings as to her power to take any man from any woman. Was she not eighteen? Was she not a beauty? Did not every man’s eye fight a torch as it met hers? The arrogance of girlhood was never more consummately realized than in Fanny Edis on that glorious tropic morning as she rode to appropriate her aunt’s lover; and although her intelligence was too undeveloped to reason, she subtly felt that nature was always the ally of such fresh healthy young vehicles for the race as she. Nor was she as innocent as Julia had been at her age. No governess had ever been able to keep at her heels, and she had seen much of life among the blacks.

She saw Tay walking restlessly up and down before a grove of banana trees, and waved to him gayly, taking no notice of his apprehensive frown.

“Here is a letter from Julia,” she said as she rode up. “I suspect she can’t come. Granny told her last night that she wanted the whole history of that Suffrage movement this morning.”

Tay barely heard her. He read with a sensation of amazement the brief too

carefully written message, which informed him that he was to waste a week more of his precious time on this island. He had no key to the riddle, and was astonished at this manifestation of caprice in a woman who had always seemed to him to possess just enough of that charming feminine quality; none of the stupid excess which made so many women unreasonable. Moreover, she had deliberately broken her word. Anger succeeded amazement, and if there had been a steamer leaving Nevis, he would have taken it and flung the consequences in her face. But here he was a captive for quite another week. He had no intention of betraying his chagrin to this sharp-eyed girl, however, and he merely put the note in his pocket and thanked her for bringing it.

But the eyes he met were not sharp. They were fixed on him in a large appeal.

“Mr. Tay,” Fanny said, with charming hesitation, “I know that Julia wouldn’t meet you this morning, and from something she said last night I know that she does not intend to leave the estate for several days. She made Aunt Maria promise to take me to the party at Bath House on Thursday. She said she was too tired, but I am sure she is avoiding you. It is too horrid of her, when you have come all this distance. But I don’t fancy any one can unmake Aunt Julia’s mind. So—so—I have a plan to propose.”

She blushed and looked handsomer than ever, and as she was a born horsewoman, this was very handsome indeed. Her lids drooped, and she drew a long breath, almost of ecstasy. “Oh, Mr. Tay!” she whispered imploringly. “Make believe that I am Aunt Julia—*young* again—while you are here! Then I should have an imitation love affair, at least, and it would be something always to remember. Will you?”

Tay stared at her; but balked, angry, helpless, his temper lashed with the memory of cablegrams he had received that morning both from his irate father and the Lincoln-Roosevelt League, he felt more than inclined to accept this young coquette’s proposal, not only to punish Julia, but to pass the time. Moreover, Julia had thrown her at his head. He never doubted that she had given Fanny the note; and he wondered at the fatuity of woman. Still, he hesitated.

Fanny pouted.

“You are afraid I will fall in love with you,” she said audaciously.

“More likely it would be the other way,” he replied with automatic gallantry.

“Well—why not?”

“My dear Miss Edis, there is no more harrowing experience than being in love with two women at once.”

“As if such a thing could be!”

“Common enough outside of books.”

“Well— You might love me on Nevis and keep Julia for London. That is where she belongs.”

Again Tay stared at her. She had the heady magnetism of youth. She was a part of the gorgeous tropic scene. He reflected that if he had met Fanny first, and on Nevis, he certainly should have flirted with her. He did not take girls very seriously, having been trained by the cool flirtatious young heads of his own race. That Fanny was in love with him never entered his mind. Little did he guess the pickle he was mixing for himself when he finally raised that brown little hand to his lips.

“By all means let us have our comedy,” he said. “I am game if you are.”

Fanny gave a nervous laugh that might have warned him if anger and disappointment had not made him reckless. She slid from her horse and tied it to a tree.

“Now take me out in your motor-boat,” she said with a charming air of authority. “That will be a real adventure.”

VIII

JULIA, grateful for any distraction after another sleepless night, went to her mother's room to relate the history of Woman's Suffrage from its incipiency in the United States of America down to the present moment, when the English women, having been driven to adopt the methods of men, were confident of victory for the first time.

Mrs. Edis, who rose late in these days, was propped up in bed, wearing the expression of one who is about to enter a hospital and have the operation performed which may give her a new lease of life.

"If I must hear this tiresome story, I must," she said. "Tell it me in as few words as possible, but leave out no detail which will make me understand it fully. I read your horoscope again last night. Your destiny is too plainly writ to admit of any doubt. And it was made three times. I am an old woman to sever my mind from the ideals of a lifetime, but those frivolous people opened my eyes yesterday. Moreover, you can never be Duchess Kingsborough. You are not likely to have another opportunity to marry, for no child of mine would disgrace herself in the divorce courts." Her sharp eyes never left Julia's face. "Nor could you obtain a divorce in England. Ring the bell. I wish another cup of tea. Then you may convert me."

Julia had made up her mind not to tell her family of France's death until she had reached her final decision, and felt reasonably certain that Mrs. Winstone would not hear of it at Bath House. Tay would understand her desire for secrecy, nor would he be eager to admit that he had come to Nevis to await the man's death. Even Mrs. Morison, she felt sure, had not been taken into his confidence. That lively little lady had prattled a good deal yesterday, while Julia was showing her the gardens, and it was evident that she had leaped to the natural conclusion that her brother was determined to persuade Julia to have her marriage annulled in the United States without further delay.

Mrs. Edis having fortified herself with a cup of strong tea, Julia spent the next three hours telling her story. When she had finished, her mother did not speak for a few moments, then nodded her head emphatically.

"I see! I see!" she said. "I shall never approve of those unladylike demonstrations, but I admit that results have justified them. Your destiny is clear to me now. You have only begun. I, in my limited knowledge, read that you were to be the greatest lady in England. Substitute the greatest woman in England and all is clear."

"It might be in America," said Julia, hesitatingly, but not turning her eyes away. "They—they—have talked more than once of sending me there."

"Nonsense!" Mrs. Edis reached for her stick that she might thump the floor. "America! A nation of savages —"

"Good heavens, mother! America—the United States—is one of the great

countries of the earth, a world power. Must I give you its history, too?”

“God forbid. It does not exist as far as I am concerned. Great Britain is practically the earth. No other country is worthy of your horoscope. And you must not stay here too long. Don’t fancy that men will hasten to give you power. Not they! Men! How I should like to see them humbled to the dust before I go. No, your time here must be short, and I want you to promise to give it all to me.”

“Oh, I came to see you.”

“I shall claim you. Who is this Mr. Tay? Is he really in love with Maria?” There was the ghost of a smile on her grim mouth, and her bright little eyes explored the serene depths before her.

“Oh, Aunt Maria always has an infant-in-waiting. I doubt if she is ever serious.”

“But who is he? Of course he has no family, as he is an American, but is he respectable? Has he any fortune?”

“He is quite respectable, and I believe he is well off. His sister, Mrs. Bode, is an old friend of Aunt Maria’s. She is received everywhere in London.”

“Ah? So! Maria had better marry him. But I’ll not have him, nor any of those people, here again. I have never needed society, and now!” Her harsh dry face lit up. “My old science is restored to me. It will companion me for the rest of my days. You need never fear that I am lonely. A great science is all things to the mind that loves it. You will visit me as often as you can. I need nothing further. When Fanny marries—and I now hope she will find a husband at Bath House; I long to be rid of her sulky discontented face—my lawyer will engage a suitable overseer. Now go and send that lazy black-and-tan mustee to come and dress me.”

Fanny came in late for lunch. She looked flushed and triumphant, and her manner was subtly insulting. But nobody noticed her, nor that she left the house as soon as the meal finished. Mrs. Edis talked of the new central factory to be built on St. Kitts, and the significance of the projected Government House for Nevis. Mrs. Winstone yawned, and Julia was absorbed in her own thoughts. She longed to be alone, but she had barely reached the shelter of her room when Denny knocked and handed her a letter. She closed the door in his face, and her hand shook. But the address was not in Tay’s handwriting, and she opened the letter with a sensation of bitter ennui. It proved to be a circular communication from the ladies of St. Kitts, begging her to speak to them at her convenience on the subject of the Militant movement in England. It was couched in formal terms, but enthusiasm exuded, and the word great, personally applied, occurred no less than four times.

“Great!” thought Julia. “We that the world calls great know just how great we are. Every man his own valet!”

Her impulse was to refuse, but on second thought she concluded to accept the invitation, and for the morrow. Here was her opportunity to discover if the great cause had taken irrevocable possession of her. She had recited its history mechanically to her mother, but that, no doubt, was owing to her mental and

physical fatigue. She would sleep to-night, and to-morrow, if she could feel the old thrill when talking to a rapt audience, play upon them, sway them, rise to the heights of magnetic eloquence which had made her famous, convert the cynical, then, surely, her old enthusiasm would return. If not —

Denny had told her that the messenger awaited an answer. She went to the living-room and read the letter to her mother.

“If you don’t mind my leaving you for one day —”

Mrs. Edis interrupted her. There was a slight flush on her face. “By all means, accept,” she said. “And I, too, will go. It will be my only opportunity to hear you, to witness one of your triumphs. Have you all those newspaper articles about yourself that I have heard of?”

“I am afraid not. I kept a scrap-book for a year, but we soon get over that.”

“Can you obtain them?”

“Oh, yes, it would be possible.”

“I wish them, and everything else that is written about you from this time forth.”

“Very well, you shall have them.”

“Write your acceptance. To-morrow I shall go to St. Kitts for the first time in sixteen years. And for the first time in forty years I shall see that island bend the knee to an Edis.”

IX

THE next evening Julia sat in her room divided between consternation and secret joy. The women of St. Kitts had given her a reception such as had never been offered to another woman in the history of the island. A military band had played a welcome as her boat approached the jetty, a committee of representative women had met her, and all Basse Terre, black as well as white, had turned out to escort her to the house of Mrs. Ridgley, the first lady of St. Kitts, where a select few had been invited to greet her at luncheon. The meeting itself had taken place in the ball-room of Government House, and been attended by every man and woman that could obtain entrance, irrespective of sympathies. All were eager to be instructed, but far more eager to see and hear the famous Julia France, to be able to talk about it for the rest of their lives.

Julia had talked to them for two hours. She instructed them to the full, and she related many of her personal experiences in and out of Holloway gaol. Never had she spoken more brilliantly, been more amusing and witty, and never before had she spoken with an unremitting sense of effort. Her speech had come from the head alone. It had felt like a wound-up mechanical toy. The personal passion with which she had infused her speeches and won her great following never stirred. It had retreated to her depths, and taken her magnetism with it. She entertained her audience and she converted no one. She concentrated her mind with a determination almost vicious, but more than once it slipped its anchor, and she failed utterly to reduce the brains below her into one relaxing helpless whole for the planting of her suggestions.

She alone, however, realized her failure. St. Kitts was delighted with the entertainment, to say nothing of the profound satisfaction of listening to the woman who had been introduced to the world in this very ball-room, and then gone forth to make their islands famous: St. Kitts and Nevis had more than once been pictured in the weekly press of England while Julia's comet was playing about the heavens. As for Mrs. Edis she swelled with pride and treated the ladies of St. Kitts, who showed her almost as much honor as they did her daughter, with a haughty urbanity that made them feel humble and insignificant.

When the lecture was over, there was an informal reception, during which Julia had never been more gracious and talkative, while wishing them all at the bottom of the Caribbean Sea. Then the wife of the Administrator had invited them into the dining-room for an elaborate tea; and it was six o'clock before release was sounded, and Julia found herself in the boat once more, listening to the congratulations and the rapt prophecies of her mother.

At dinner Fanny had stared with open mouth at her grandmother's almost excited account of the day's events, but she had finally turned to Julia with a laugh.

"Really, my famous aunt," she said, "there can be no doubt as to what you were

born for. It must be quite wonderful to have a career. Shan't you change your mind and speak at Bath House?"

"No," said Mrs. Edis, sharply. "Julia will devote the rest of her visit to me. It is quite enough to have two members of the family gadding at Bath House."

"Upon my word," said Mrs. Winstone, languidly, "I didn't come to Nevis to chaperon a young girl. Chaperonin's not my line. I think Julia had better take Fanny to the party to-morrow night."

"Oh, no, Aunt Maria! Julia—Julia needs a good long rest."

Fanny stared apprehensively at her young aunt, but was immediately reassured.

"I shall not go to Bath House at present. And you, Aunt Maria, you have your two old cronies, and bridge. Mrs. Morison will look out for Fanny —"

"All very well, but—ah—I shouldn't advise you to stay away too long. Mr.—ah—the Morisons are getting impatient—say they'll leave by the next steamer, if you don't give them the benefit of your society. That, it appears, is what they came for."

Julia saw Fanny frown at Mrs. Winstone, but could only interpret her aunt's words as a warning that Tay was showing signs of impatience; by no means unwelcome news. She answered lightly: —

"I didn't ask them to come. They must take the consequences."

Mrs. Winstone shrugged her shoulders. "I take very little interest in other people's affairs, as you know. And advice was always thrown away on you."

Mrs. Edis's dry sarcastic tones interposed before Fanny could speak. And Fanny's breath was short, and her chair might have been sown with tacks.

"Really, Maria, you must grudge every moment spent away from Bath House and that young fool of yours. I wonder you can still talk of coming to your old home to rest."

"Quite so!" Mrs. Winstone, recalled, fluttered her eyelashes, and glanced into an old concave mirror. "He grows more devoted every minute. One couldn't imagine he had ever had a thought for another woman."

"Good for you, Aunt Maria," cried Julia, gayly, and escaped to her room.

Here she promptly forgot the conversation and sat down to face her own problem once more. Was her love for the great impersonal cause, which had commanded all the forces of her nature, extinct? Or was her appalling coldness but the natural result of her present state of mind—and the agitating nearness of the man? Surely, if she broke with him definitely, returned to England, submerged herself in work, became a part once more of the crowding incidents, triumphs, disappointments, problems, of a cause that could never write finis, all her old passionate interest would return.

But if they no longer needed her? She had inferred from Ishbel's cablegram that the Government was about to surrender. But it was hard to believe that Mr. Asquith, in any circumstances, would become a convert to a revolution he abhorred and

sincerely disbelieved in; and as for Lloyd-George, the cleverest man in England, it was far more likely that he was playing for a long respite, hoping to relegate the women quietly out of the public eye, to take the fight and courage out of them by degrees, while pretending sympathy, promising his personal assistance, advising them to abstain from demonstrations which forbade the Government to capitulate in a manner inconsistent with its dignity. Of course he would succeed for a brief interval only, for if he was clever and subtle, the women were as clever—and alert; but—well—on the other hand, did she care? From Nevis England looked like an old page of written history, shut up between calfskin. Moreover, the cause was bound to sweep on to victory with its own momentum—why should she —

Her subtle brain, unleashed, marched straight ahead, and in step with her desires. How were women to improve the world, if they progressed to that point of superiority and self-completion, of unity in the ego, where they could no longer marry and produce a worthy race to complete their work? Even to-day many a high-minded woman went through life unwedded rather than degrade herself in marriage with a man whom she was forced to admit her inferior in all but the common attraction of sex. But she had no such excuse. And if her power to devote herself to this cause, impersonally and wholly, had vanished, with her interest in it, now that her mind was recentred; if she must, did she return to England, resent her sacrifice, possibly with hatred, of what use her lip service? If the experience of to-day were prophetic, she could give to the work but a hypocritical shell, while her aching soul was on the other side of the globe. On the other hand, with Tay, even in an alien land, there was no question that she might be of service for the rest of her life.

And what of the immorality of loving a man irrevocably and not living with him? Morality was still of higher account than politics. And children? The inadequacy of Fanny, who almost repelled her, had renewed her intense longing for children of her own. And if she so desired these children, the children of one man out of all the millions of men on earth, did not this mean that they were clamoring for their right to live? What right hers to deny them, that being, after all, the first reason for which she had received life herself?

But at this point she went to bed.

“What is the use?” she thought. “I’m going to marry him, and that is the end of it. I’ll not give the matter another thought from this time forth.”

And for the first time since her arrival on Nevis she slept soundly.

X

She awoke at dawn, and rose at once, remembering that she had not had a walk since leaving the ship. No wonder these three long days of bodily inactivity and mental turmoil had played havoc with her nerves. She would walk for hours and then return and write to Tay, telling him that she would marry him on the day the next American steamer arrived, but begging him to make no attempt to see her until then. It was her duty to devote the few intervening days to her mother, as well as to prepare her by degrees for the staggering information that she intended to marry an American and desert her country. But if she could convince the old lady that the planets had reckoned with the United States of America, she should, if not reconcile her to a son-in-law of a race she despised, at least leave her with unbroken faith in a science full of compensations.

She went out to the kitchen and brewed herself a cup of coffee, then started for a brisk walk round the island. The night's refreshing sleep, the strong drink, the awakening tropic morning, the peace of mind that follows a momentous and final decision, made her feel as if dancing on ether, almost as happy as if Tay were beside her. The sea was as blue as liquid sapphire, save near the shore, where it was as green as the beryl stone. The cloud that descends the slopes of Nevis at nightfall had rolled itself upward and floated lightly above the cone. In the distance were the outlines of other islands; and everywhere the royal palms with their long bladelike leaves rattling in the rising trade-wind that gives lightness to Nevis air on the hottest day, the bright green cane fields, the heavy dark groves of banana trees, the lime and shaddock orchards. Even the ruins of the deserted old estates, splendid masses of masonry in their day, a day of coaches, and knee-breeches, and gay brocades, had a new and more pictorial lease of life, for brilliant foliage burst from every crevice.

The negroes began to sing in the cane fields, women in bright cotton frocks, with brighter handkerchiefs about their heads, came from their huts along the shore and cooked in the open, boats danced on the water. She walked halfway round the island and was hungry once more. A little black boy, tempted by a bit of silver, "skinned" up the slim shaft of a tree and threw down a young cocoanut. She refreshed herself with its "wine" and then started along the stretch of road that passed Bath House, half hoping to meet Tay. In a moment she heard the sound of galloping hoofs, eight at least, and averse from meeting any one else, hid behind a clump of low palms.

The horses stopped abruptly, then struck the road more lightly as if their riders had dismounted. She parted the palm leaves and looked out. A man and a maid appeared round a bend of the road, each leading a horse. The girl took the man's arm with a little gesture of confidence and looked up into his face, speaking rapidly. The man looked down at her, smiling, admiring, indulgent. The girl's face was flaming with nothing short of adoration. They were Fanny Edis and Daniel Tay.

Julia, feeling as if she had received a blow in the pit of the stomach, sank limply

to the ground and stared out over the dazzling sea. Monserrat quivered in its haze, and she wondered if it were in the throes of an earthquake. It usually was. She remembered that Mont Pelée, after untold years of “death,” had suddenly blown the lake from her summit and suffocated thirty-five thousand people in four minutes. Would that Nevis would awake, pour out her boiling lava, and extinguish her wretched mortals. Julia beat her brow with one of those instinctive gestures too natural for the modern stage; for perfect naturalism borders upon farce.

Tay—Fanny. She took it in finally. He had fallen in love with Fanny, the young, beautiful, glowing girl—What was it old Pirie had called her—“volcanic product”? No doubt she was far more beautiful and fascinating than any girl Tay had ever met, —and quite different from American girls. Julia recalled many of them; they had always seemed to her rather light; clever and charming, but scantily sexed. No wonder Tay had succumbed to this gorgeous tropic flower. Fanny might be selfish, soulless, brutal, but what man ever looked behind a beauty like that? She was the siren born, and men have gone down before sirens since the daughters of Eve came to rule the earth and laugh to scorn the god in man.

Julia felt quite sixty. No doubt Tay had realized that she was all of thirty-four the moment he had seen her beside Fanny. Men were always fools about the mere youth in woman. Hadn’t she noticed that years ago, before she had spent a week in London? No wonder Nature made women brutal and wholly selfish during its brief possession. Tay had loved her, oh, no doubt of that, but with his mind, with that greater half of his being which he had shown her that day in the Bavarian wood; but men are primal always and spiritual incidentally, when they are men at all; and her hold had been a flimsy silken string that had snapped the moment he met this radiant mate, unspoiled, untouched, awaiting him on a tropical island. He had loved her, but he was madly in love with Fanny, and that, after all, was the great passion mortals lived to experience, if only because the poets had taught them to expect it. And she—she must despise where she had almost worshipped. How did women survive the death of illusions? Material death was something to pray for.

But Julia’s brain, stunned for the first time in its active life, soon recovered its energies. She suddenly realized that she did not feel sixty, no, not by any means. She felt very young and very angry. A moment more and she sprang to her feet with a cry of fury. She fancied she heard her flame-colored locks crackle. Her slim fine hands worked. They looked like steel instruments of torture one may see among old relics of the Inquisition. What right had this raw silly girl to take her man from her? Tay was hers and she should have him. She should hold him to his word, marry him, make him forget this passing infatuation. He would not be long discovering that she had far more to give him than any callow girl. If not! Once more her fingers opened and shut. Well for Fanny that she was once more on her horse with a strong arm beside her. Julia’s fingers were ready for the slender stem upholding that triumphant arrogant head. Fanny! Why, Fanny was a fool. She would make Tay the most miserable of men, understand not the least of his ambitions, leave him, no doubt, for

another the moment her passion had cooled. He had insinuated that she was a born wanton, although he appeared to have forgotten this virtuous impression.

Her next impulse was to run after Fanny, denounce her as a thief, a pirate, force her to see the dishonor of her conduct. But this impulse soon passed, for never would she, Julia France, make a fool of herself, no, not if they laughed in her face. But what, in heaven's name, *should* she do?

She peered out. The road was clear. She darted across it, and up into a cane field. The negroes were far away by the mill. She threw herself down in the dense green silence and wept a torrent. After all, what could she do? She could only recognize that she had lost Tay, the one man in the world for her; she, who had made herself so much more than mere woman, and to a girl who was her inferior in everything but beauty.

She wept stormily for her lost lover, for love, for herself. Then, once more, she despised him. Why should she regret a man who had proved himself weak and contemptible? Why indeed? Ask womankind. She did. The more convinced she grew that she had lost him, the more she wanted him. She abhorred him, she loathed him, she had never despised any mortal so utterly, and she loved him several thousand times more than ever.

She sat up and dried her eyes viciously. Why was she making a fright of herself? She had always laughed at women that cried and spoiled their eyes. He was not yet married to Fanny. Why should she not pretend to release him, then subtly reënter the lists and win him again? How could any girl survive in a close contest with a woman still young and beautiful, and with experience and knowledge of men? But she stirred uneasily. She had seen the automatic triumphs of girls more than once. Nature was always on their side.

She fell back on the ground with a sensation of despair. "Oh, what shall I do?" she thought in terror. "Have I come to this? How shall I live?"

But she sat up again in a few moments and deliberately composed herself, ordering her powerful will to rise and perform its office. She must return to the house before her mother sent servants in search of her, and her eyes must not be red. Nor her hair look as if she had tried to tear it out by the roots. She took down the braids, smoothed them with her hands, pinned them up, and pushed the short locks under her hat.

Her mother. She had risen to her feet, but stood staring out over the waving cane. Why had she given Fanny this sudden liberty, and not three hours after announcing her decision, with all the force of her obstinate old will, that Fanny should never marry, never be permitted even to meet, a young man? And why had she insisted that Julia remain at her side throughout her entire visit? Never was there a less sentimental woman. And the conversation at the dinner-table last night? It sprang vividly from her memory. She saw Fanny's face, flushed, arrogant, anxious, her aunt's faint satiric smile, heard her covert words of warning.

What a blind fool she had been.

“So,” she thought grimly. “We are all the victims of a plot, and one quite worthy of my mother. I have been managed as easily as if I had but a teaspoonful of brains in my head. And so has he. Idiots! Idiots!” And she hated everybody on earth.

She walked rapidly home, slipped into the house unobserved, bathed her eyes, until the outer signs of the most tempestuous hour of her life were obliterated, powdered the black rings under her eyes, and made a satisfactory appearance at the lunch table. Neither Mrs. Winstone nor Fanny was present. Mrs. Edis talked of naught but Suffrage.

“Great heaven!” thought Julia. “That I should live to hate the word!”

XI

AFTER luncheon, she told her mother that the sun had given her a headache, and that it was likely she should be obliged to go to bed for the rest of the day; she had no intention of appearing at dinner. Her own room seemed the one bearable spot on earth, and she was grateful that it was far from the other bedrooms, at the opposite end of the long house.

She locked her door, and ordered her brain on duty. This was no time for throes—she had the rest of her life to mourn and rage in; now was the time to act in a fashion that should be worthy of her, of all she had tried to make of herself, of those three years in India, of the succeeding four when she had risen so high above the mere female. She must face with dignity, both in public and in private, whatever ordeal still awaited her; that she owed to herself; and the best of all good friends is pride. Nor should she condescend to fight or scheme for a love that had turned from her, even for a moment. If it had turned once, it would turn again. She had always despised men that could be "managed," and could imagine no happiness with a man who must inspire her with recurring contempt.

If she loved Tay, it was her part to make him happy, not to force him into a marriage with herself when he loved another woman. Of course he would insist upon keeping his engagement with her, for he was honorable, and, no doubt, as miserable at this moment as herself. But it had never entered her plans to balk and torment the man to whom she had given her love, and she could force his freedom upon him, persuade him that her cause had conquered. As for Fanny, what right had she to assume that she would make him unhappy? Were not all girls brutes? The most selfish and heartless of them often made the best of wives when they got the man they wanted. No doubt all that Fanny needed to become a good woman was a baby. The vision of Fanny, a placid domestic cow, fat at thirty, gave her comfort.

When a woman has made up her mind to be noble, she generally succeeds, for a time, at least; she admires herself in the rôle, and self-admiration giveth much consolation. But the duration of this attitude varies in different people. Nobility as a fixed attitude of mind is possible only to the stupid; it can find no vested place in the subtle active intellect. Julia remained noble and sacrificing—even unpacking her Koran and reading it diligently—until precisely eight o'clock. At that hour she heard the rustle of skirts in the corridor, then Fanny's excited voice as she knocked on her door

"Oh, Julia! Julia! Look at me! I'm dressed for the party at Bath House. Please let me in!"

Julia ground her teeth. Her eyes emitted steel sparks. Once more her strong fingers opened and shut.

"Run along, dear," she managed to articulate. "I have such a headache I can't see. I know you will be the belle."

“Oh, I know I shall!” Julia saw that triumphant face above her best gown. “Even Granny says I look beautiful and I can see it for myself. I’m wild with excitement—and so happy!”

This was the last straw, but it braced instead of breaking. Julia rose with the fixed smile of one who is walking to the scaffold, dignified to the last, and opened the door. There stood Fanny, looking more beautiful than any girl she had ever seen. Her hair was dressed high for the first time, and in it was a string of her grandmother’s pearls and a flaming hibiscus. The floating white gown was caught at her breast with another flower, and her neck and arms and the soft rise of her bust were as white as the cloud on Nevis. Her heavy eyes were glittering with excitement, and her cheeks and lips made the tropic flowers look old and wilted.

“I have never seen a girl as beautiful as you are,” said Julia, deliberately, “and you will certainly make all the pretty girls from St. Kitts turn green with envy. I don’t believe there is another West Indian girl with color. Of course you will be the belle, and of many more balls. What luck that a British cruiser is here.”

Fanny smiled, and a slight sarcastic inflection, not unlike her grandmother’s, sharpened her rich contralto voice. “Well, if *you* find me beautiful, Julia, I must be. And I owe it all to you. Thank you again for this lovely frock. Good night. I’ll tell you lots of things in the morning.” And she lifted her head with a movement that would have been fatuous if she had been a few years older, and almost smirked in her proud satisfaction with herself and her looks, as she sailed off for conquest.

Julia flung the Koran across the room, herself face downward on the sofa, and wondered how on earth she was to stand it. “If it only were over and they were married and gone,” she thought. “Or if only the Royal Mail were due to-morrow instead of eleven days hence, and I could go! Or if I could go out and kill somebody, or get drunk like a man! Passive endurance! That is all the hell that any religion need promise us.”

She lay for three hours without moving, then heard the clatter of a horse’s hoofs. A moment later Denny knocked and handed her a cablegram. She opened it without interest. It was from Ishbel, and informed her that Nigel might take the next steamer for Nevis. Julia broke into hysterical laughter.

“Is my tragedy becoming a farce?” she thought. “But not if I can help it!”

She answered the cablegram at once, that the messenger might take it.

“Tell Nigel am leaving immediately.”

Then she returned to her sofa, too indolent to go to bed, and this time exhaustion gave her sleep.

XII

She was awakened by the rattling of her jalousie, and lifted her head, wondering if a storm were rising.

"Julia! Julia!" called an imperative voice.

She sprang to her feet and held her breath, not believing herself awake.

"Julia!" This time the voice was savage. "If you don't come out, I'll break in. What I've got to say won't keep."

Julia unfastened the jalousie. Tay stood there in his evening clothes, and without a hat. His face was distraught.

"Dan!" gasped Julia.

He put his hands about her waist and lifted her down. "Now," he said, "take me to some place where we can talk, and as far from the house and the gates as possible. They'll be coming home presently."

She walked swiftly down a path, turned to the right, and pushing aside the heavy growth from an older path, long out of use, led the way to the ruins of a bath-house in a corner of the garden. It was surrounded by heavy palms, but its paneless windows admitted the full moon's light. Julia sat limply down on the circular seat before the empty pool. Through the open doorway she could see and hear the sea. The moonlight was dazzling, Nevis having forgotten to shake out her night-robes. Her bewildered mind took note of details while Tay walked back a few steps to make sure they had not been followed.

He came in and stood before her.

"There's the devil to pay!" he exclaimed. "Did you get a cable last Monday?"

"Yes. Didn't you?"

"I did not, or I shouldn't be wanting to shoot myself. Dark promised to cable the moment it happened, and only to-night, half an hour ago, I got a cable from Lady Dark telling me that France died last Monday, and that she had only just heard it. Confound Dark! Talk about the wrath of God. It's chain lightning compared to an Englishman."

"No doubt the duke suppressed the notice. It would be like him."

"It was Dark's business to find out. I should have employed a detective. When a thing's to do, do it. Well, here's the result! I've got myself into the devil of a mess —"

"You've been making love to Fanny."

"I have—or rather—not been making love from my point of view—only she doesn't see it in that light. I've been flirting like the deuce. When I got your note that morning, I took it for pure caprice. It seemed to me totally without excuse. You had promised faithfully to meet me every day. I had not a suspicion of the truth.

Moreover, I had just received cables from California that stirred me up. They couldn't understand my desertion at such a moment, and no wonder. To be told that I had come here for nothing—to be coolly asked to wait a week—to know that I had to stay whether I would or not—well, I felt as if hell had been let loose inside of me. Fanny brought the note —"

"Fanny!" Julia sprang to her feet. "Fanny? I didn't give it to her."

"She brought it all the same, and she looked something more than ripe for a flirtation, and beautiful —"

"You have fallen in love with her! I saw you this morning."

"Oh, you did? Well, you didn't see much. I am not in love with her, but—well, it's got to be said—she's in love with me, or thinks she is. I was treated to high tragedy an hour since in the garden of Bath House. I never for a moment thought she would take the thing seriously—have seen too many summer flirtations—American girls know exactly what that sort of thing means—but this girl might have Nevis inside of her. She wanted to elope with me to-night—threatens to drown herself —"

"Great heaven! What have you done?"

"I feel like Don Juan, of course, only as it happens I haven't made downright love to her. I was on the edge of it once or twice, she's so infernally pretty, but, well, hang it all, I'm in love with you to the limit, all the more so that you're not dead easy game. If I hadn't been, I'd have made love to her fast enough. But I flirted as hard as I know how, and she took that for love-making, thought I held back because I felt bound to you, and—well—it was the hateful things she said about you to-night that put me in a rage and made me hustle her back into the ball-room and into the arms of one of her other admirers. I had gone as far as I intended, and made up my mind, not two minutes before I got Lady Dark's cable, to go to one of the other islands and wait for the steamer. When I got that cable, of course I understood. Now are you properly repentant? Why in thunder didn't you tell me in your note —"

"Of course, I thought you knew—"

"Never take anything for granted where there are big things at stake. But what are we to do? I'm going to marry you to-morrow evening at seven o'clock over in Fig Tree Church, but what is to be done with Fanny? She's all fixed for tragedy, and there's no knowing just what a girl of that sort might do. I don't care to begin our life with a horror. You must take her in hand to-morrow morning and talk her into reason. I gave her to understand that I didn't love her, but a man has to say a thing of that sort so decently that a girl never believes him—particularly a girl like Fanny, who has a sublime confidence in herself I've never seen equalled. What's to be done? What's to be done?"

"Are you quite sure that you love me, that you haven't really wavered —"

"Oh, lord! I'm more mad about you than ever."

"Would you have married Fanny if you had met her first?"

“There’s no woman on earth I should ever have wanted to marry but you. Do you fancy a man thinks of marriage with every girl he puts in his time with? I’ve had a dozen flirtations—as hard and a good deal longer than this; and neither of us the worse, I may add. I’m no heart-breaker. Our girls know the game too well.”

“If I thought you were merely bent upon being honorable —”

“Julia, if I didn’t love you, I’d tell you so. Do you suppose I’m the man to jump into matrimony blindfolded? I’ve seen too many of my friends marry—and divorce four years later. I’m no candidate for the divorce court. What I want is a wife I can love and work with for the rest of my life. That wife is you, or will be this time tomorrow night. So cut all that out and set your wits to work.”

Julia moved her eager eyes from his face and looked out over the sea. She did not speak for several moments, and Tay saw her face set and grow whiter, her eyes shine until they looked like polished steel.

“Leave Fanny to me,” she said finally. “I’ll dispose of her. She will give no further trouble.”

Tay stirred uneasily. “Oh—you don’t mean—That is hardly fair —”

“*Fair?*” asked Julia, with unmitigated scorn.

“Couldn’t you give her a good womanly talking-to?”

“And what good do you suppose that would do? Did you ever hear of love being talked out of any woman?”

“I know—but you are clever enough without that—and after all it *isn’t* fair. It’s a violent assault on personality —”

Julia whirled about and confronted him with blazing eyes.

“*Fair? Fair?*” she cried. “And do you suppose I’d think twice about what is fair with that treacherous little fool? Do you suppose I would let any scruple weigh a feather with me when the happiness of my whole life is at stake? If you didn’t love me, you could go and I’d not condescend to lift a finger; but you do, you do, and nothing shall stand between us; *nothing*, I tell you! If I could have caught her alone this morning, I’d have twisted her neck and held her under the water until she was dead. And yet you imagine I’d stop at hypnotizing her? For the matter of that it will be treating her far better than she deserves, for she will practically have forgotten you when I am finished with her. She deserves to be left here in sackcloth—oh, she’s not the sort that kills herself, she’s far too selfish and vain—but she’s noisy and stubborn and the sort that calf-love makes ungovernable. She’d turn the island upside down and run to my mother with the story that you had compromised her—there’s nothing she wouldn’t tell her. My mother is a very old woman. The excitement might make her so ill that I should be detained here for months. And I won’t! I won’t! I’ll leave this island with you!”

Tay brought his hands down on her shoulders and gripped them. “By God, Julia!” he said hoarsely, “you are the woman for me. Together we’ll conquer the earth.”

“Oh, you’ll find me useful to you in many ways you barely suspect now. I can do more than hypnotize! But I don’t wish you to misunderstand me. What I do to Fanny will be nothing more than the reputable scientific psychotherapeutists do every day to their patients. I shall give her an immediate suggestion that her will shall not be weakened, that she shall no longer be under my control after coming out of the hypnotic trance. And as I said before, she will benefit equally with ourselves. We don’t practise black magic, we initiates; not that we are above it, but because we don’t dare. It rebounds like an arrow and strikes our greater powers dead. I never have harmed any one and I never shall, but that leaves an enormous field for action.”

“Good. And she’d not think of going to Bath House before to-morrow night. She heard me accept an invitation to lunch on board the cruiser. By the way, you might plant in that ill-regulated head the suggestion that she be less anxious to fall in love. There are men of all sorts —”

“That would be unfair, if you like! Our impulses are our birthright. To alter personality would be unjust, almost criminal, for the impulses that make a fool or worse of us in certain circumstances may be necessary for our happiness. Fanny must work out her own destiny. I shall settle my income from France’s estate on her, and induce Aunt Maria to take charge of her as far as England. There Ishbel will introduce her —”

“That’s right!” interrupted Tay, viciously. “Turn her loose on Dark. Serve him right.”

“Dark is the best-managed man in England. Fanny’ll not get a chance at him. And she’ll have a husband before the season is over.”

“Good. But are you dead sure you can do it? You failed with me, you know.”

“Because I hated to do it, and because—well, you are you. But Fanny! To-morrow she’ll be sleepy and stupid from the excitement of to-night, and she will eat an enormous lunch, as she always does. She is curious about India. I’ll interest her in that subject at the table and then invite her to my room, and interest her more. She’s never heard of hypnosis. I’ll offer to put her to sleep. She’ll consent, not only because she’s worn out, and yet too excited and disturbed for sleep, but because I choose that she shall. I’ll tell her to fix her eyes on mine, and the moment she does that she’s lost. In just three minutes she’ll be a lump of wax. Now, are you satisfied? Why, if I had the least misgiving, I’d summon Hadji Sadrä.”

Tay laughed. “Oh, Julia! Julia! You’re all right. Now listen to me. To-morrow I shall take out a special license —”

“I’d rather you waited until just before we sail. My mother —”

“Don’t expect me to show any concern for your mother. She’s at the bottom of all this trouble. She set Fanny on me. I had already begun to suspect it before your aunt let it out—I have had more than one scene to-night!—I feel sure she saw us together the day I called at the house; at all events she got on to the facts. I didn’t

suspect this earlier because I hadn't really believed that she had kept Fanny so close—girls are always working on a man's sympathies. Otherwise I shouldn't have fallen for it. Now, to continue. I shall marry you to-morrow. You will meet me at Fig Tree Church at seven o'clock. Hardly any one is abroad at that hour. You can keep it from your mother until we are about to sail, if you choose. That is all one to me. But I'll take no more chances. Now give me your hands and say that nothing on God's earth shall prevent you from coming to Fig Tree Church to-morrow evening at seven o'clock."

Julia gave him her hands. "I'll be there," she said. "I, too, shall take no more chances."

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Transcriber's Notes:

The list of other works by the author has been moved from the front of the book to the end. Spelling and hyphenation have been left as in the original. A few obvious typesetting errors have been corrected without note.

[The end of *Julia France and Her Times* by Gertrude Franklin Horn Atherton]