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THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

A NOVEL

BY

GUY WETMORE CARRYL

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TO

M. R. B.

IN MEMORY OF THE RESCUE OF A MAN AT SEA

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE FLY ON THE WHEEL	1
II. THE ODDS AGAINST YOUNG NISBET	21
III. A FACE IN THE CROWD	40
IV. AS BETWEEN FRIENDS	60
V. A BRAND FROM THE BURNING	80
VI. McGRATH LAUGHS	98
VII. THE MIRAGE OF POWER	117
VIII. THE GOVERNOR UNMASKS	137
IX. THE NINTH PASSES IN REVIEW	156
X. A QUESTION AND AN ANSWER	177
XI. YOUNG NISBET FINDS HIS TONGUE	196
XII. DIOGENES	215
XIII. THE INSTRUMENT OF FATE	234
XIV. THE VOICE OF ALLEGHENIA	252

THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

I

THE FLY ON THE WHEEL

The offices of the Governor and the Lieutenant-Governor adjoined. Each had its ante-room, in which a private secretary wrote eternally at a roll-top desk, an excessively plain-featured stenographer rattled the keys of his typewriter, and a smug-faced page yawned over a newspaper, or scanned the cards of visitors with the air of an official censor. At intervals, an electric bell whirred once, twice, or three times; and, according to the signal, one of the trio disappeared into the presence of the august personage within.

A door connected the office of the chief executive with that of his lieutenant, but this was rarely opened by either, and then only after a formal tap and permission to enter had been given. It was a matter of general knowledge that the Governor and the Lieutenant-Governor were not in sympathy; but few, even among the intimates of either, were aware how deep, and wide, and hopelessly impassable was the gulf which lay between them. This was due not alone to disparity in age, though twenty-eight years separated the white-haired Governor from his handsome subordinate, who had been nominated to this, his first public office, on his thirtieth birthday; nor was it wholly a difference between the experience of the one and the inexperience of the other. The point of view of the veteran is, naturally, not that of the novice, particularly in politics. That the enthusiasms of Lieutenant-Governor Barclay should have been the disillusionments of Governor Abbott, and his pitfalls his senior's stepping-stones,—this was to be expected. The root of their dissimilarity lay deeper. It was nothing less than mutual distrust which kept the connecting door closed day after day, and clogged the channel of coöperation with the sharp-pointed boulders of antagonism.

The convention which nominated the successful ticket of the preceding year had been a veritable chaos of contending factions. The labor delegates, encouraged by the unexpected strength of their representation, were not content with such nominal plums as had fallen to their share in former conventions. Led by Michael McGrath, an agitator whose native Irish eloquence, made keener and more persuasive by practice in bar-room forensics, brought him naturally to the fore, they threatened, at one stage of the proceedings, to carry all before them. The more conservative faction, its strength sapped by the formation, in its very ranks, of a reform party determined upon the fall of the "machine," was forced to yield ground. The reformers themselves, young men for the most part, distinguished by great ideals but small ability, were too few to impose their individual will upon their opponents, yet sufficiently numerous to make their support necessary to the success of either party. The usual smooth course of the convention, upset by this unlooked-for resistance from two quarters, staggered helplessly, and was on the point of coming to a deadlock. It was Michael McGrath's shrewd perception of the situation which solved the problem. In a brief, impassioned speech he laid the claims of his faction before the delegates, winding up with a stirring picture of the coöperation of labor and reform, now possible, which held the convention in spellbound silence for ten seconds after he had closed, and then set the hall ringing to cheers and vigorously plied hands and feet. For an instant he paused, with his arms folded, and his keen blue eyes sliding over the faces before him, and then played his trump card. At his signal, a banner, hastily prepared, was borne, slowly revolving, down the central aisle, and on this were boldly lettered the words which at the same moment McGrath was thundering from the platform:—

LABOR AND REFORM!

FOR GOVERNOR,
ELIJAH ABBOTT.

FOR LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR,
JOHN HAMILTON BARCLAY.

McGrath had no need to look toward the labor faction for support. He knew what the name of Elijah Abbott meant in that quarter. His shifting glance was fixed upon the seats of the reform delegates, and a little smile twitched at the corners of his mouth, as he saw them rise with a cheer. Barclay was the chief spirit of their movement. They had not expected this recognition. But if, in the enthusiasm of unlooked-for victory, they did not perceive how little, in reality, was their gain,

McGrath was far from being unaware how great was his own. Before the cheering of the now allied forces of labor and reform had fairly died away, he had moved that nominations were in order, and, ten minutes later, while the partisans of the "machine" were still endeavoring to collect their wits, the main business of the convention was an accomplished fact, and Abbott and Barclay were declared the regular Democratic nominees for Governor and Lieutenant-Governor of the state. In six weeks followed their election by a small plurality, and on the first of January the two men moved into their adjoining rooms, in the inexcusably unlovely state capitol, on the main hill of Kenton City, wherein they were, thenceforward, separated, one from the other, by two inches of Georgia pine and a practically infinite diversity of principle and prejudice.

From the first their relationship had been no better than an armed truce. Both were courteous men, the one because such was his policy, the other because he was to this manner born. There was no need for them to discuss their individual creeds. They tacitly accepted the fact that there was not a parallel between the two. From the moment when his election was assured by the returns, Abbott was candidly the man of the Labor—nay, more—of the Socialist party. McGrath and his associates manipulated him as readily as a marionette. The promises and pledges of the campaign were ruthlessly jettisoned. If Governor Abbott did not stand for anarchy, it was only because, for the moment, anarchy was not the demand of his party. Withal, he was dignified and self-possessed, robed in an agreeable suavity which became him at functions and ceremonials, and assured his popularity with those—and they were, as always, in the majority—who did not look below the surface.

Lieutenant-Governor Barclay had not been ten days in office before he realized the futility of resistance to the established order, as represented in his superior. He had accepted his nomination, and welcomed his election, with an almost Quixotic elation in the opportunity thus opened to him. He would accomplish—oh, there was no telling what Lieutenant-Governor Barclay would *not* accomplish!

He was standing at his office window now, staring out disconsolately over the sloping lawns of the capitol grounds, mottled with thin patches of snow, which had contrived to withstand the recent thaw, and he was telling himself, for the thousandth time, the dispiriting fact that, as a force for good or evil in the destiny of his state, he was no more significant than his stenographer's Remington or his secretary's roll-top desk. With all his ideals, with all those pledges which are infinitely more vital when made in private to one's conscience than when made in public to one's party, he found himself merely a cog in the state machinery—a cog, too, that, seemingly, might be skipped at any or every time, without in the least degree disturbing the progress of routine. On the few occasions, in the early days of their official relation, when he had ventured to set his will in opposition to that of the Governor, there had not been manifest in the latter's attitude even that spirit of resistance which spurs men to more active and resolute endeavor. Governor Abbott had smiled pleasantly upon him, and then quietly shifted the conversation into other channels, with an air of selecting a topic more suited to his companion's comprehension. Finally, on one occasion, when Barclay had voiced his opinion with an energy which savored of rebuke, the Governor had gone further, and had asked calmly—"And what were you proposing to do about it?" After that Barclay had relinquished the unequal struggle, and resigned himself to the unavoidable conclusion of his impotency.

It is a situation which tries men's souls, this of utter helplessness in the face of plain duty. He could have no hope of making his position clear to the constituency to which he was responsible. Debarred on the one side from taking an active part in the administration of state affairs, and bitterly arraigned on the other on the grounds of inefficiency, laxity, and indifference to duty, the second month of office found John Barclay in a fair way to be ground to powder between the millstones of impuissance and hostile criticism. The men of his party who had, both in private conviction and public statement, based their hopes of political reform upon the frankly avowed platform of his principles, now passed him coldly, with a bare nod, sometimes with none whatever; the labor element jeered joyously at his attitude; the "machine" pointed to him as proof of the fallacy of the reform creed. It is easy to expect great performances from great promises, easier still to outline the duties and condemn the delinquencies of another, and not even Barclay's knowledge of his own good faith was sufficient compensation for the sneers of press and public which fell to his share. As he surveyed the dispiriting prospect from his office window, on that late February afternoon, he was near to resigning his position, and with it all further pretension to political prominence.

In the opinion of those competent to judge, the state of Alleghenia was going to the dogs. A press distinguished alike for the amplitude of its headlines and the pitiable paucity of its principles; a legislature of which practically every member had, not only a price, but such a price as the advertisements describe as being "within the reach of all;" a Governor who avowedly stood ready to sanction the most extreme pretensions of the notoriously corrupt party which had secured him

his election,—here, surely, were good and sufficient reasons for the generously bestowed disapproval of Alleghenia's sister states. In all the *personnel* of her government there was but one man sincerely devoted to her advancement on the lines of integrity and non-partisanship. And that man was Lieutenant-Governor Barclay, whose influence on the trend of affairs was approximately that of the proverbial fly on the hub of the revolving wheel.

The Lieutenant-Governor had turned back to his desk, and was arranging his papers, preparatory to departing for the day, when his ears were greeted by the unusual and unwelcome sound of a rap upon the communicating door. Instinctively he braced himself for an unpleasant encounter before replying. It was his experience that the Governor's room was like to Nazareth of old, in that no good might be expected to issue therefrom. Nevertheless, as Governor Abbott entered, in response to Barclay's "Come!" it was difficult to believe that he was aught but what he appeared to be,—a courteous, conspicuously well-dressed and white-haired gentleman, of sixty or thereabouts, smooth-shaven save for chop side-whiskers of iron gray, with a habit of rubbing his hands, and an inclination from the hips forward which suggested a floor-walker. In brief, the Governor of Alleghenia seemed the type of a man who turns sideways and slips through narrow places, rather than run the risk of barking his elbows by a face-front advance. In reality he was somewhat less pliable than a steel rail.

"You are going?" he asked, seeing how Barclay was employed.

"I was thinking of it," replied the Lieutenant-Governor. "Of course, if there is anything"—

Governor Abbott seated himself on the edge of the desk, holding a lapel of his coat in each hand, and surveyed his subordinate from under his drooping eyelids, with his head cocked on one side.

"I believe you know Peter Rathbawne," he said.

"I do. I am engaged to his elder daughter."

"Ah! That is what I thought."

The Governor looked contemplatively at the ceiling, closing his right eye, and nibbling behind his pursed lips.

"Peter Rathbawne," he said, "is the second most obstinate man in Kenton City, if not in Alleghenia. I'm afraid he thinks he is the *most* obstinate. If so, he does me an injustice. His mills are the largest in the state. I am told that when they are running full strength they employ over four thousand hands."

"Something like that number, I believe," put in Barclay, as the Governor seemed to expect a reply.

"Ah! It is a pity for such an industry as that to be tied up on account of one man's obstinacy."

"I had not heard"—began Barclay; but Governor Abbott continued steadily, disregarding the interruption.

"Yesterday morning Mr. Rathbawne discharged fifteen employees on the ground of incompetency. It is hard to see exactly what Mr. Rathbawne means by 'incompetency.' These men were not newcomers. Some of them had been in the mills for as much as eighteen months. It seems as if he might have discovered the alleged incompetency long ago. It is more or less arbitrary, one might say, this discharging men by wholesale, as it were."

"I suppose," commented Barclay, "that a man may do as he will with his own."

"Ah!" said the Governor, lifting his hands from his lapels with a little gesture of deprecation, but immediately replacing them. "But *can* he? A man in Peter Rathbawne's position has a responsibility to fulfill toward the community. He cannot beggar men for a caprice—because his horse has gone lame, or his breakfast has not agreed with him. He must show reasons—give an accounting. He must be fair."

"Oh, when it comes to fairness," laughed the other, "I assure you, Governor Abbott, you won't find Mr. Rathbawne's equal this side of the Pacific. He's famous for square dealing."

"He *has* been," corrected the Governor. "In the present instance he seems to have fallen below standard. He has declined to reconsider his decision in the case of the discharged men. What's worse, he has flatly refused to see the committee appointed by the Union."

"I'm not surprised at that," said Barclay slowly, fingering a paper-cutter on the desk before him. "Mr. Rathbawne is peculiar in one respect; he supports and considers the Union in every other. But he has always insisted upon his right to discharge the hands at will, and without giving reasons. Incompetency is only a word which is used to cover more serious causes."

"Well, he's wrong," said the Governor, with a heat unusual to him. "He's dead wrong, Mr. Barclay, and he will find it out before he's a day older."

"Do you mean"—

"I mean that if the men in question are not taken back before to-morrow noon, every man, woman, and child in the employ of the Rathbawne Mills will be out on strike. The question is, what is Peter Rathbawne prepared to do?"

The silence that followed was broken only by the tap, tap, tap of the Lieutenant-Governor's paper-cutter on the silver-mounted blotter. Presently he looked up and met the Governor's eye.

"If you want *my* opinion, sir," he answered, "it is that Mr. Rathbawne would fight such a point to a standstill. He's sole owner of the mills, and he's a rich man. He has always treated his employees as if they were his own children. If they turn on him now for something which, from their experience of his character, they must know was fair and justifiable"—

"But *was* it?" interrupted the Governor.

"I don't know the facts, sir, but I know Peter Rathbawne," said Barclay, throwing back his head, "and I can say, with clear conviction, that it *must* have been. If, as you suggest, the hands go out, I think he would close down the mills for a year, and go abroad. He's a man who doesn't argue; he simply acts. I fancy there wouldn't be much opposition left by the time he wanted to reopen."

"Provided always that there were anything left to reopen," suggested the Governor softly.

"The state troops have more than once proved their ability to assure the sanctity of property," answered his subordinate, with a touch of the old pride with which he had assumed office.

"Hum!" said Governor Abbott. "But calling out the militia is a serious matter, Mr. Barclay, to say nothing of the expense entailed. Considering that the difficulty would be due entirely to the obstinacy of one man—er—one might not feel justified"—

He hesitated briefly under the Lieutenant-Governor's keen glance, and then swerved from this line of suggestion.

"What I wanted to say was this: You are a friend of Mr. Rathbawne's,—something more than a friend, indeed. No doubt he has a respect for your opinion, as you have for his. Now, if in the course of a quiet chat—it will have to be to-night—you should point out the situation that threatens him, the distress that a strike will cause, the probable destruction of his property, perhaps he might consent to reinstate the discharged men to-morrow morning."

"It would be a surrender of principle, to which he would never consent," said Barclay firmly. "Of that I am sure. Moreover, sir, I should be speaking against my convictions were I to advise him to adopt such a course."

The Governor's lip wrinkled slightly.

"The Union is prepared to do the right thing by the man who settles this question," he said.

"I hope you don't mean that!" exclaimed Barclay. "You are the first man to make such a suggestion to me. Pardon me, Governor Abbott, but I cannot but think the executive chamber of the capitol of Alleghenia a singular place for it to be mentioned."

The Governor held up his hand.

"You misunderstand me," he said. "One would suppose I had offered you a purse! I mean simply that the popularity of the man who averts this strike will be an assured fact. He would be the idol of the working people, and hardly less esteemed by the element of capital. Moreover, he would be doing a humane and merciful thing. You are the only man who is in a position to approach Rathbawne, and, if you will excuse the suggestion, I think you can hardly afford to throw away the

chance. As it is, you—er—you are not what might be called popular, Mr. Barclay."

This time the silence was broken by a single sharp little click—the latch of the connecting door slipping into place. The Lieutenant-Governor sank slowly into his revolving chair, tipped back, swung round a half circle, and stared out disconsolately over the sloping lawns of the capitol grounds, mottled with thin patches of snow.

II

THE ODDS AGAINST YOUNG NISBET

Young Nisbet leaned forward in his chair.

"And I've been thinking," he added, "that perhaps—that perhaps"—

"That perhaps what?" asked the junior Miss Rathbawne, leaning forward in hers.

"If I don't have tea *instantly*," said her mother, with profound conviction, as she came ponderously through the portières, tugging at her gloves, "I shall expire! How de do, Mr. Nisbet. *Do* sit up straight, Dorothy, my dear."

She sank heavily into a low chair, which brought her within the radius of lamp-light at the tea-table, and was thus revealed as a lady of generous proportions, with a conspicuous absence of features, and no observable lap. In speaking, she displayed a marked partiality for undue emphasis. Sublimely unconscious of the depression induced by her advent, she continued to talk, as she pulled off her gloves, which were a size too small, and came away with reluctance, leaving imprints of the stitching on her pudgy pink hands.

Young Nisbet surveyed her with a kind of mute despair. He was a very average young American, very conventionally in love, and the trifling remnant of self-assertiveness which had triumphed over the crescent humility natural to his condition inevitably evaporated into thin air at the approach of Mrs. Rathbawne; and always, as he was doing now, he turned in his toes excessively when she was present, hitched at his right trouser-leg, where the crease passed over his knee, and looked first at her, and then at the floor, and then at her again, with the purposeless regularity of a mechanical toy.

There was a tremendous and highly significant rattling of cups, saucers, and silver spoons, as Dorothy Rathbawne prepared her mother's tea. All things considered, one found something very admirable about Dorothy at such a time as this. It was not complete submission, still less was it open revolt, but savored of both, and was incomparable as an attitude toward Mrs. Rathbawne. On some occasions it was almost as impossible to get on with Mrs. Rathbawne as it would have been, on others, to get on without her. The which, nowadays, is more or less true of all parents. And children.

"Natalie and your Aunt Helen got out at the florist's," went on the good lady, "but I came straight on, and sent the carriage back for them. I felt that I *couldn't* exist an *instant* longer without my tea. I'm sure I don't see how Natalie *stands* it. She was out all morning in the brougham, too. You had best make enough for three cups, Dorothy—and *do* sit up straight, my dear!—and order Thomas to bring in some more tartines. They are *sure* to be hungry, and they are apt to come in at *any* moment."

"That is a family failing," said Dorothy venomously, from behind the kettle.

"Well, I'm *sure*, my dear," said Mrs. Rathbawne innocently, as she straightened her rings, and picked an imaginary speck out of one of her round, flat nails, "there is no disgrace at all in a healthy appetite. I'm thankful we all have it—though as for your Aunt Helen, *hers* is about like that of a fly."

"Flies have very good appetites—judging from all I've seen, that is," said Dorothy, "so I don't think she is to be commiserated on that account."

"That was only a figure of speech, my dear," replied Mrs. Rathbawne, with engaging placidity. "Mercy! but I'm glad to get home. We've had a positively *exhausting* day with Natalie's shopping, and the *worst* of it is to think what a *lot* more there is to do. A wedding certainly *is* an undertaking, Mr. Nisbet."

"Is it?" answered young Nisbet, perceptibly startled at being thus abruptly included in the conversation.

"Decidedly!" asseverated Mrs. Rathbawne.

"Of course, in the case of an *ordinary* man"—

"Two lumps, mother?"

"*Always* two lumps, Dorothy, my dear. Surely you must know that, by this time! As I was *saying*, Mr. Nisbet, the fact that my elder daughter is to marry Mr. Barclay"—

Dorothy's eyebrows went up resignedly as she bent with affected solicitude over the alcohol lamp, than which none ever burned more blamelessly. There was no stopping Mrs. Rathbawne now!

"One has to keep his position in mind," she was saying. "It isn't like the *usual* marriage, which interests only the families and friends of the persons concerned, you know. It isn't even as if only Kenton City were looking on. *All* Alleghenia will be on the *qui vive*, Mr. Nisbet, *all* the state of Alleghenia. I shouldn't wonder if *some* notice were taken of the event, even at Washington. Marrying a statesman, you see,—a Lieutenant-Governor! Oh, it's *quite* different—*quite*! *Do* sit up straight, Dorothy, my dear!"

She continued to prattle of the momentous marriage impending, until her complacent chatter was interrupted by the entrance of her half-sister, Mrs. Wynyard, and the elder Miss Rathbawne.

The two newcomers were both beautiful, in widely dissimilar ways. Helen Wynyard, Mrs. Rathbawne's junior by nearly a score of years, retained at thirty the transparent brilliancy of complexion which, at eighteen, had made her the most admired *débutante* of her season in San Francisco. Her marriage with Ellery Wynyard had caused a great to-do among the gossips, and, later, had defrauded them pitilessly of their self-promised "I told you so's," by reason of the death of the handsome young rake, before the rose-color of the honeymoon had begun to fade. Beauty, wit, and infallible tact she inherited from her mother, shrewd business ability and a keen insight into men and things from her father, and wealth and a certain attractive audacity of speech from her husband; and five years of widowhood only served to develop and emphasize the promise of her first season. There were numerous feet which aspired to be shod with Ellery Wynyard's discarded shoes, but no one pair, said the world, so much as an inch in advance of the rest.

Mrs. Wynyard was spending the winter with her half-sister, and the Rathbawnes, whom the circumstance of widely distant residence had always kept from coming into close touch with her, were equally at a loss when they wondered how they had formerly contrived to exist without her, and in what manner they should resign themselves to giving her up. She was a woman who came amazingly near to being indispensable.

For the moment, Natalie Rathbawne, in reality the beauty which Dorothy by a fraction fell short of being, suffered by comparison with her sister. She was desperately tired—that was in her smile. But there was something else: a singular preoccupation which was nearly akin to listlessness. That was in the droop of her eyelids, in the eloquently inattentive gesture with which she touched a bowl of Gloire de Dijon roses as she passed, and in her conventionally courteous acknowledgment of young Nisbet's greeting. And, too, as she seated herself beside her sister on the divan, there was perceptible purpose in her avoidance of the lamp-light, her withdrawal into the dark, deep corner. To the conversation which followed she contributed only such brief remarks as were made necessary by those occasionally addressed to her.

The two women brought with them a delicious, indefinite atmosphere of out-of-doors: that commingled smell of cold flowers, and cold flesh, and cold fur, which is to a drawing-room in winter what a whiff of salt air is in summer to a sun-baked hillside; and this proved almost too much for the self-possession, already tottering, of young Nisbet. He had always been accustomed to have the things he desired, had young Nisbet, but these, until now, had been either creature comforts, readily obtainable when one's father is a multi-millionaire, or athletic honors, equally easy of attainment when one measures forty-two around the chest, and can do one's quarter in something under fifty. Again, the Nisbets lived on a ranch, and when one does not know people in New York one spends the Sundays in New Haven, so that neither the terms nor the vacations incidental to his four years at Yale had equipped him, in the sense in which they equipped his fellows, for dealing with society.

Now that he was in Kenton City, representing his father's interests, young Nisbet was painfully self-conscious of multitudinous shortcomings, totally unsuspected hitherto. His speech was apparently hopelessly incrustated with slang, his legs were too long, his ears protruded abominably, his hair was desperately unruly, his freckles and his capacity for blushing were inexhaustible. He was as much at ease in such surroundings as these in which he now found himself as a trout in a sandpile. The great room, with its costly furnishings, the tea-table crowded with silver and fragile porcelain, the kettle purring contentedly above the iridescent flame of the alcohol lamp,—above all, the subtle, indefinable suggestion of femininity which unknowably pervaded his surroundings,—all these enthralled young Nisbet beyond expression, and awed him immeasurably, into the bargain. He was, as usual, very clear in his own mind as to what he wanted, and that was the younger Miss Rathbawne, but, for the first time in his experience, the means at his command did

not seem to be sufficient unto the end. For the younger Miss Rathbawne was, very evidently, not the sort of triumph which is achieved by recourse to an imposingly ample bank-account, nor yet by two months' loyalty to the exigencies of the training-table. And this was February, and he had known her since July, and, altogether, it was highly discouraging. Unwittingly, young Nisbet heaved a sigh so profound and so pitiable that Mrs. Wynyard immediately proffered her sympathy.

"Poor, dear Mr. Nisbet! I never heard a more pathetic sigh. Whatever is the matter?"

"He's sleepy," put in Dorothy. "He always is, after talking with me for a whole hour."

"I was just thinking," protested young Nisbet helplessly.

"Oh!" exclaimed Dorothy, "that's it, is it? Then pray don't discourage him, Aunt Helen. He's really getting into some very good habits, of late."

"Why, *Dorothy!*" said Mrs. Rathbawne, digging her chin reproachfully into her black velvet collar, "how *can* you say such things? Mr. Nisbet will think you have had *no* bringing up at all. And *do* sit up straight, my dear!"

"And if you don't stop nagging, O most conscientious of parents," retorted Dorothy, with her nose in the air, "Mr. Nisbet will think you bring people up by throwing them down!"

"And slang! *Dorothy!*"

"I always think," said Mrs. Wynyard, "that Dorothy should have had a fairy godmother, to promise that every time she uttered a word of slang a pearl should pop out of her mouth. We should have all been wearing triple strings down to our knees within a week after she learned to talk."

"That settles it!" exclaimed Dorothy. "If you are going to side with the enemy, Aunt Helen, there is nothing left for me to do but to beat a retreat. Come on, Mr. Nisbet, there is rest for the weary in the conservatory—that is, unless you want another cup of tea?"

In the conservatory the air was heavy with the moist, sweet smell of earth and moss, and faintly vibrant with the tiny plash of water, dripping from a pile of rocks into the circular central pool, wherein fat gold-fish went idly to and fro, nuzzling floating specks upon the surface. Through the polished green of the surrounding palms and rubber-plants stared gardenias and camelias; below, between maidenhair and sword-ferns, winked the little waxen blossoms of fuchsias and begonias: at intervals poinsettia flared audaciously among its more quietly dressed neighbors; and, in the far corners the golden spheres were swelling to fairly respectable proportions on the branches of dwarf orange-trees.

Dorothy installed herself on a bench, and young Nisbet perched upon the rim of the pool, and stared at vacancy.

"It's corking, in here," he said, after a moment.

"Isn't it, though?" agreed Dorothy, with a nod of approval. "It's my favorite part of the house. You can't imagine how many hours I spend here, sewing, or reading, or fiddling with the fish and all those funny little plants under the palms."

"You bet!" said young Nisbet, with enthusiasm, if not much relevancy. "I've just got a picture of that, you know. Besides, we've spent a good many of those hours together in here, these past few months."

"Oh, not a tenth of them!" exclaimed Dorothy, "and then only the very shortest."

"Oh!" said young Nisbet gloomily. His fertile imagination was immediately peopled with the forms and faces of those who had shared the other hours, a score of eligible and attractive young men, his moral, mental, and physical superiors in every conceivable particular, faultlessly arrayed, scintillating with wit, and surpassingly skilled in the way to win a woman. The conservatory was full of them. He saw them in every imaginable posture: feeding the gold-fish, watering the begonias, looking up into Dorothy's eyes as they sat at her feet, looking down at her slender fingers, as she pinned gardenias to their lapels. And these had been granted the long hours, he only the short. Inwardly, young Nisbet groaned; aloud, as was his wont, he said the wrong thing.

"They seemed long enough to me."

"Well!" said Dorothy.

"Oh, hang it all! I didn't mean that. What an oaf I am!"

"Never mind," said Dorothy consolingly. "I know you well enough to understand you, by this time." She smoothed her skirt reflectively. "Let me see," she added, "what were we talking about when we were swamped by the family?"

"I think," answered young Nisbet, with one of his illogical blushes, "that I had just asked you what sort of a man you thought you would like to marry. I remember I was on the point of saying that I thought perhaps you had ideas like—er—like your mother's."

Dorothy raised her eyebrows.

"Like the Mater's?"

"About a man being big and prominent, and all that, you know," floundered young Nisbet. "She always makes such a point of Barclay's being Lieutenant-Governor—I thought you might be for the same kind of thing."

Dorothy looked him over, with a whimsical smile, as he was speaking. There was a deep bronze light in his close-cropped, ruddy hair, and his skin was very smooth and clean. His eyes were appealing, with that unspeakable eloquence of simple honesty which is almost pathetic. Under his blue cloth coat, the great muscles of his shoulders and chest stood out magnificently, rippling the fabric as he stirred, as if eager to throw off their trammels, and be given free play. About him there was a distinct suggestion of sane living and regular exercise. For all his freckles, and his nose that was too little, and his mouth that was too large, "the ugliest of the Nisbet boys"—he had often been called that!—was very emphatically good to look upon.

"A big man?" answered Dorothy. "Yes, I think I should like to marry a big man. I want him very clean, too—*very* clean!—morally, as well as otherwise. And honest as the day is long. And not *too* bright! I don't want to be continually trying to live up to his brain, and continually failing. It is fatal to one's self-respect, that sort of thing. Then, he must be heels over head in love with me—for keeps! And then—oh, he must be a *man*, a man through and through, who wouldn't think anything he didn't dare to say, nor say anything he didn't dare to do! That's what I want, and if I can get it, all the prominence in the world may go hang!"

"That's just about John Barclay, though," said young Nisbet, "with the prominence thrown in."

"Well, I'm not saying I wouldn't have married John Barclay, if I'd had the chance. He comes pretty close to being all I would ask for, in the way of a man. But, unfortunately, there's only one John Barclay, and, like the rest of the world, he looked directly over poor little Me's shoulders, and saw only Natalie. Good gracious! Who could blame him? She's the loveliest little thing in the world! But, at all events, she nabbed him, so all that is left for me to do is to grin and bear the disappointment as best I may. He's very much of a man, John Barclay is!"

"Yes," assented young Nisbet, somewhat mournfully. "I can see that would be the kind of a chap that the dames would stand for everlastingly."

"But, as I said before," continued Dorothy, "it's not because he's Lieutenant-Governor, whatever the Mater may think about it, that I admire him. It's just because he's so big, and earnest, and loyal, and—and"—

"White," said young Nisbet.

"Yes, *isn't* he? That's it—white!"

"I can understand a man like that getting spliced," observed young Nisbet very earnestly. "He has so much to offer a girl. But as for the rest of us"—

"Oh, as to that," broke in Dorothy airily, "John Barclay isn't the only man in the world, by any manner of means! Besides, Natalie having already bagged him, it is plain I shall have to look elsewhere."

There was a long pause, broken only by the splash of the water, which seemed, as the seconds slipped by, to grow amazingly loud. Then young Nisbet raised his eyes, and looked at her, blushing deplorably.

"I wish"—he said, "I wish"—

"Dorothy! *Do* excuse me, Mr. Nisbet, but *really*—dinner at seven, you know, and this child *must* be thinking about dressing. She takes *ages*!"

Mrs. Rathbawne folded her fat hands, and stood waiting, at the conservatory door. Young Nisbet rose.

"Of course!" he said. "I'm always so stupid about these things. Good-by, Miss Rathbawne. I'm off to New York tomorrow on some confounded business, so I probably won't see you for a week or so. Good-by."

"*Would* you mind going out by the hall, Mr. Nisbet?" suggested Mrs. Rathbawne. "Mr. Barclay is in the drawing-room with my elder daughter, and he is so *greatly* occupied with affairs of state that they have *very* little time together. I *hate* to have them interrupted. One can do *so* much harm sometimes, you know, by thoughtlessly interrupting people who are in love with each other. Thank you *so* much; good-by. *Do* try to stand a little straighter, Dorothy, my dear."

III

A FACE IN THE CROWD

At the sound of the Lieutenant-Governor's voice at the front door, Mrs. Rathbawne had beaten a hasty retreat, dragging her immensely edified half-sister in her wake, so that when he stepped through the curtained doorway Barclay found Natalie alone.

"I'm so glad you could come early," she said, from the corner of the divan. "Now we can have a talk before dinner. I seem to see so little of you. I suppose that's the penalty attached to being engaged to the second biggest man in the state. I'm sometimes jealous, Johnny boy, of Alleghenia's place in your affections."

"You're the only person in the world who has no need to be," laughed Barclay. "What is the news?"

"Probably," said Natalie, "the only interesting items are that you are cold and a little cross, and that you want a big chair and a cup of tea and some hot toast."

"Your summary of the situation is so exhaustive," said Barclay, "that there seems to be nothing left for me to say, except that you are the most beautiful girl in the world, and that I think I must stand still a moment and just look at you, before I accept any of the luxuries you suggest."

"I can't imagine how you know that I'm so beautiful. You can't possibly see me in this dark corner. But I see I've made one mistake! You are distinctly *not* cross."

"Why should I be?" asked the Lieutenant-Governor, standing before the table, with his long legs far apart, and rocking from his toes to his heels and back again. "When a man has been walking for half an hour through a gnawing February air, and suddenly, out of all proportion to his deserts, comes full upon a rose in bloom, is that a reason for being cross?"

She was very small, and deliciously delicate, was Natalie Rathbawne, like a little Dresden image, with an arbutus-pink complexion, brown hair, and deep-blue eyes, now clouded thoughtfully, but oftener alight with humor, or dilating and clearing under the impetus of conversation. A doll-like daintiness of tiny pleats and ruffles, fresh bows, and fine stitching pervaded everything she wore, and if her voice inspired the hackneyed comparison of running water, it was of water running under moss, the sound whereof is as different from that of an open brook as is music from discord. To John Barclay's thinking the barely believable fact that this little miracle of beauty—this pocket-Venus, as he was wont to call her—actually belonged to him remained one of the insoluble mysteries of life. He could not, in the thralldom of his present Elysium, be expected to remember, even if he had ever fully realized, that he himself was tall, broad-shouldered, clean-cut, and clean-lived, with the unmistakable stamp of the American gentleman on his linen and his simple, well-fitting clothes, and the evidences of a sane, regular existence in his steady hands and his clear eyes and his firm mouth,—a man of whom any woman might be, and of whom this particular woman was, extravagantly proud. For the first tribute which a lover lays at the feet of his lady is, in ordinary, the stamped-upon and abused summary of his personal attributes, which, in his own mind, he has taken remarkable pains to render as despicable as possible, and which, in hers, her imagination contrives not only to rehabilitate, but to imbue with a preposterously exaggerated splendor.

"I wonder," added the Lieutenant-Governor presently, "whether when gentlemen are invited to tea they are supposed to kiss the hostess on entering."

"If you are in any doubt about it," observed Natalie, with an air of superb indifference, "I advise you to write for advice to the etiquette editor of the 'Kenton City Record.' She is probably sixty-two years old, looks like an English walnut, has never had a proposal in her life, and so knows all about"—

What the lady in question was supposed to know all about was for sufficient reasons never made clear. There are occasions, despite the manuals of polite behavior, when interruption cannot with any approach to justice be regarded as rudeness.

Barclay heaved a long sigh of satisfaction as he took his tea and two thin slices of toast and settled himself in his chair.

"Do you think it possible," he asked, "for a man to be asleep for six weeks, dreaming that he is in another garden of Eden, with an Eve in a French frock, who has no partiality for apples"—

"I *adore* apples!" said the girl.

"And then wake up," he continued, disregarding the interruption, "and find that the dream was only a dream, after all,—that he's only a poor dog of a politician, that the garden is only a dingy office, and the flower-beds full of briars and pitfalls?"

"You've been eating pie for lunch again," said Natalie severely, "and it always makes you morbid. No; I don't think it possible at all. If I did, I should hang on to your coattails like fury and keep you in dreamland, whether you wanted to wake up or not."

"It's all too good to be true! How *dare* you be so beautiful?"

"John"—

"It's gospel truth!"

Barclay paused for a moment, and then went on more seriously.

"You're tired, littlest and most lovely in the world, and troubled about something."

Natalie laughed shortly, with evident effort.

"Why do you say that?" she asked.

"Why not? Don't you suppose I know? Do you think you could say a hundred words without my perceiving that? It almost seems to me that the knowledge that you were unhappy would make its way to me, no matter what distance separated us, and that I should come to you at top-speed to set things right. I've hardly seen your face, and yet I know your dear, deep eyes are troubled; I had barely heard your voice before I felt its weariness."

Natalie bent forward until her face came under the light.

"Yes, I'm tired," she said; "or, rather, I was tired when I first came in. I'm better now, since I've had my tea. But you're right, Johnny boy,—there's something more. I'm troubled, desperately troubled and heartsick. I've been trying to make myself believe that it's all imagination, that I have no reason for feeling as I do; but I'm afraid I can't manage it. John, I thought I saw Spencer Cavendish to-day."

"Spencer Cavendish? Are you sure? I had almost forgotten his existence!—Of course, it's not impossible; but I imagined he had taken root in some South Sea island long ago. That's what he was always expecting to do, you remember. How I have hated that man!"

"You were good friends once."

"Yes, and should be yet, if I had not been the most suspicious mortal that ever breathed, and he the most hot-blooded. There was a reason, you know,—a little reason, but the most important in the world! I was jealous, Natalie, insanely jealous. I could forgive him everything now."

"That hurts me, John. I'm so happy, boy dear, that I want everybody else to be happy as well. Oh, why is it that a girl must always have that one thought on her mind, which is so hard, so hard?—I mean the thought of the good men, the true, brave, loyal men, whom she has cared for, who have been her best friends perhaps, and yet whom she has been forced to hurt bitterly because they asked her for something she was not able to give. A man has so much easier a road! His happiness, when it comes to him, isn't clouded by the thought of those to whom it means the loss of their last remnant of hope. They are there, the disappointed ones, but he doesn't know, he doesn't know! He hasn't on his conscience the memory of hearts cruelly wounded,—wounded even to death. He doesn't in memory see the eagerness in a good friend's eyes die to disillusion, to hopelessness, to bitter, bitter sorrow. He doesn't have to remember how the life died suddenly out of a voice that had been tender and eloquent. He doesn't sicken with the thought that his hand has given a blow so merciless, so unmerited, and yet so inevitable. Worst of all, for the girl, is the after-discovery that her decision has made a difference—a hideous, irreparable difference,—that the man can never be the same again,—that she has wrecked a life with a word! Oh, there ought to be some way! The man ought not to ask unless he is sure of the reply! It's too much responsibility to force upon the girl!"

"So with Spencer Cavendish," she went on after a moment. "In spite of all—in spite of all, John!—I can't forget that he loved me. I think a woman never forgets that."

"Until the man marries another woman!"

"Ah," said Natalie, with a faint smile, "then least of all, John! And besides, Spencer never married. He knew I loved you, long before you did! I felt that it was due to him that he should know; he was my oldest and best friend then, and so I told him! And then he went out of my life—out of his own—into darkness. I can't forget it! I can't forget that I broke up your friendship"—

"Dearest!"

"I did, John! It wasn't my fault, perhaps, nor any one's, for that matter, but I did, just the same. Besides, it wasn't only the question of your friendship. What hurt me most was the wilful wreck of his life. And yet, how could I have known what was going to happen? What could I do when it did happen? He was beyond my reach. He didn't even answer the letter I wrote, asking him to come and see me. I thought, if he cared for me, I could save him. But it was just as he had said,—he must have everything, or he would have nothing at all. And so he went wrong—oh, so terribly, terribly wrong!—he who might have been anything, if it hadn't been for me. I can never forget it—never! I can never forget the pity of it, the tragedy of its awful publicity, the newspapers, the scandal, people's sneers, his mother dying of a broken heart—and *I did it!* Think of it! Think of a man like Spencer Cavendish in the police courts, not once, but a dozen times. Think of what Justice Meyer called him at last, and what was printed in the papers,—'a common drunk!' Oh, John!"

"Natalie, Natalie!" broke in the Lieutenant-Governor. "Why should you think of such things, brood over them, above all, blame them on yourself? How could it possibly have been your fault? how could you possibly have helped it? He was a reckless, hot-headed chap—brilliant, of course, but a slave to his impulses and his nerves. If Lochinvars could act with impunity nowadays, he'd have ridden up to your door on a black horse, killed Thomas, and carried you off across his pommel. As it was, he let himself go, and disgraced himself. I tried to talk to him, just as you did, but he wouldn't have it—called me 'an insolent cub' and—er—worse. I had to give it up. It was all very distressing, I admit, but then, dear, it was all so long ago. He hasn't been in Kenton City for two years and more, and I've no doubt he pulled himself together long since, and is leading a straight life somewhere. He had lots in him, with all his recklessness. A chap like that, with no family hanging about his neck, and with his brains, and only his own living to make, could forge ahead almost anywhere."

"But John, I'm *sure* I saw him to-day, and suppose I should tell you that he was—begging?"

Barclay almost smiled at her earnest, troubled face, as he replaced his cup on the table.

"Begging?" he answered. "I'm afraid I couldn't bring myself to believe you, violet-eyes. Even granting that he has fallen as low as that, which I should think one of the most unlikely things in the world, it would hardly be in Kenton City, would it?—a place where his face is known to a thousand people. Tell me about it. What makes you think you saw him?"

"I was shopping this morning," said Natalie, "all alone; and as I came out of Kendrick's and was just about to get into the brougham, I saw that someone was holding the door open for me. I looked up carelessly, as one naturally would under the circumstances, and, John—I know it was he! At first I thought so, and then I didn't, because he was so changed, so thin and pale, and because he had a beard. So, before I thought what I was doing, I stepped into the brougham, and put my hand on the door to close it. Then I looked up again, and saw his face, peering in at me through the glass, and that time there couldn't be any mistake. It *was!* I was going to speak, but he was gone in a flash. I saw him disappearing in the crowd before the shop—*slinking*, John!—with that dreadfully pathetic air which all beggars have, his shoulders all hunched up, and his head bent, and his hands in his pockets. He was cold, John, I could see that, and, no doubt, hungry! And there I was, in that dreadful little brougham, with my hateful furs, as warm as toast, and I didn't even speak to him. I could have died of shame!"

She buried her face in her hands, bending low over the tea-table. Barclay was leaning forward in his chair, his lips set.

"It's impossible," he murmured, "impossible!"

The girl looked up suddenly, a white spot in the centre of each cheek, where the pressure of her thumbs had left its mark in the tender, pink flesh.

"Improbable—yes!" she said, "but not impossible. Oh, I wish I could believe otherwise, but I'm sure, I'm sure! Oh, John! You are so big, so strong, so powerful now! Think of it—Lieutenant-Governor of Alleghenia! You can do anything. And if he *is* here in Kenton City, homeless, cold, starving, you must find and help him—for me, Johnny boy, for me!"

The Lieutenant-Governor had risen, and was pacing up and down the room, with his brows knit, and his strong, white hands chafing slowly against each other, palm to palm. It seemed impossible, indeed! Spencer Cavendish, the last of one of Alleghenia's proudest families; Spencer Cavendish, the brilliant young society pet and sportsman; Spencer Cavendish, the wit, the *viveur*—a beggar in the street? And yet—

The scandal of Cavendish's sudden and reckless plunge into sodden, open dissipation, two years before, freshly called to Barclay's mind by Natalie's words, had pointed to almost any finale, however debased, however sordid. Barclay mentally invoked the face of his former friend, as he had seen it on the occasion of their last meeting, flushed, swollen-eyed, insolent, the fine patrician mouth hideously contorted and maundering insults, filth, banality.

"And I did it!" the girl was saying. "Don't forget that, John. Unwittingly, ignorantly, helplessly, if you will, I did it, just the same. If I could have loved him, I could have saved him. As it was, I had to send him away, and he has come to—to this! Oh, don't you see? Don't you understand that something more than chance has crossed my path with his, just at this moment of my supremest happiness, and of his utter degradation? My duty is plain. It is to help him, to uplift him, to make a man of him once more—to undo what I have done! I'm responsible—and I'm helpless! What can I do? What can any girl do in such a case? I can't go out into the streets and search for him. I can only turn to you, Johnny boy, and rely upon your aid."

"But, Natalie dearest," said the Lieutenant-Governor slowly, "don't you see that it is impossible, all this? I cannot allow such an affair to come into your pure, sweet life, bringing with it the knowledge of the depths to which men may fall, and the shadow of misery and degradation. I cannot bear that, in even the remotest way, you should blame yourself for that which it was never in your power to prevent or remedy. A man—this man—has no business to cast on you the blight of his own weakness and folly, to establish a relation of cause and effect between your refusal of him and the subsequent transformation of a gentleman into a common drunkard."

"John!"

"Ah, don't think me bitter, dearest! If the man you saw was actually Cavendish, I pity him from the bottom of my heart. But it was his hands which built up the barrier between his life and ours, and it must be his that tear it down. It is intolerable that in his degradation he should come into your life again, and have, even in your imagination, the smallest claim upon you—intolerable! The paths of my love for you and my duty toward you are identical in this respect. There can be no alternative—no quibbling. At least until he has redeemed himself, if redemption is still possible, the thought of him, his presence, his misdoings, must not and shall not contaminate the atmosphere in which you live and move."

Natalie had risen suddenly, her eyes ablaze.

"Ah, John!" she said. "Am I then a toy, a sugar figure, that I must be packed in cotton, and shielded from all knowledge of the evil in the world? Is that what it means to be a woman? Ah, *no!* It is bad enough to be hemmed in by the wretched conventionalities which prevent my doing openly what I conceive to be my duty, without adding to the restrictions that actually exist the imaginary one that I must not even think of the misery, the wretchedness, the sordid vice which abound just across the borders of the comfortable little world in which I live. And see, boy dear!—with all the force of my conviction that things should be otherwise, yet I am reasonable. I don't ask to see Spencer, or to have an active hand in his redemption. I realize that the time for that has passed, and that you are just in saying that he must come to me, not I to him—and come to me another than the man he is to-day. Anything else is impossible: that I see and accept. But the hideous fact remains. A man who loved me once, who offered me all that a man can offer a woman, is walking the streets of Kenton City, cold, hungry, homeless—a beggar! What business is it of yours or mine what his past follies and weaknesses were? His temptations may have been beyond our understanding, but his present plight is not. He is begging—begging at our very doors—a man whom we have called by the name of friend! I can't help him. All I can do, as I said before, is to turn to you, whom I love better than all the world, and ask you to save him, in my stead. Ah, boy, boy!—I've given you all I refused to him, taken at your hands all I put away at his. You can afford to be generous!"

The Lieutenant-Governor came slowly toward her, and, placing his hands upon her shoulders, looked her in the eyes.

"Dearest and Most Beautiful," he said tenderly, "you are right. I hope—I believe—that you were overwrought, fanciful,

that it is not true. But if it is, if Cavendish is begging in our streets, then, so surely as I am Lieutenant-Governor of Alleghenia, I will pull him out of them, and make a man of him, if it takes a month and every police officer and detective in Kenton City to find him. And that not alone for your sake, tenderest-hearted, but for mine. I *can* afford to be generous, God bless your sweet face, I can indeed!"

And he bent over reverently, and kissed her hand.

IV

AS BETWEEN FRIENDS

There were but two guests at the Rathbawnes' dinner-table that night, the Lieutenant-Governor and Colonel Amos Broadcastle, a veteran of the Rebellion, brevetted Major for conspicuous gallantry at Lookout Mountain, and now commanding officer of the Ninth Regiment, N. G. A., the crack militia organization of Kenton City. Colonel Broadcastle had seen his sixty-five, but his broad, square shoulders, his rigid carriage, and his black hair, even now only slightly touched with gray, clipped twenty years from his appearance. His eye was one that was famous throughout the Alleghenia Guard,—an eye accustomed to control, not a single man, or two, or three, but a thousand, moving as one at his command; an eye enforcing obedience immediate, machine-like, and unquestioning.

It had been a momentous day for the Ninth when Amos Broadcastle, retiring from the staff of a former Governor, had accepted, first a majority therein, and then, three months later, its colonelcy. He found ten companies, in no one instance exceeding twenty files front. He found a field and staff vain, incompetent, and jealous; company officers deficient alike in their knowledge of tactics and in their conception of their responsibilities; sergeants, corporals, and lances chosen without any view to fitness, and ignorant and tyrannical in their positions; and finally, the rank and file lazy, untidy, and frankly contemptuous of the school of the soldier. Some one had once said of the Ninth that there was consolation to be found in the mortifying knowledge that the men composing it were there with the unique view of escaping jury duty. The consolation lay in the probability that such infernally bad soldiers would have made jurors quite as infernally bad.

But Broadcastle, a born disciplinarian and a trained tactician, was now in a position to echo, albeit in a different spirit, the arrogance of Louis: "*Nous avons changé tout cela!*" Ten years had sufficed to change the indolent and incompetent Ninth of Alleghenia into a regiment rivaling in prestige the Seventh of New York. The commissioned officers were thrust upon, rather than achieved by, their companies, but, once established in their respective positions, proceeded without exception to justify, by their energy and ability, their selection from the best element of Kenton City. Among the enlisted men the exponents of the old spirit of sloth, indifference, and laxity were weeded out as fast as their terms of service expired, and their places filled from the same sources whence the company officers were drawn. Colonel Broadcastle was a diplomat as well as a disciplinarian. By some unknowable system of suggestion and example it came, little by little, to be regarded in Kenton City as "the thing" to belong to the Ninth. Before the capital was aware of the transformation, every company roster read 103, the field and staff had been reorganized and perfected, and the Ninth Regiment, N. G. A., was what it remained thereafter: a magnificent fighting machine, ably drilled, perfectly equipped, a credit to the state, to the credit of which there stood so little else. The declaration of war with Spain brought it suddenly into prominence by the astonishing readiness with which it went into camp twenty hours after the Adjutant-General of Alleghenia published the President's call for volunteers; and although it never saw active service, it attracted at Chickamauga, and later at Tampa, the admiring attention of the regular army, and was spoken of as the most perfect body among the volunteer forces.

The citizens of Kenton City were not accustomed to discovering things in which they could take pride. The exact contrary was more apt to be the case. When, therefore, they discovered the rehabilitated Ninth, and its redeemer in the person of its commanding officer, they had a deal to say, and said it with unexampled arrogance and satisfaction. Thenceforward, Alleghenia meant much to Colonel Broadcastle, and Colonel Broadcastle considerably more than much to Alleghenia.

Something of all this went through the Lieutenant-Governor's mind during the progress of the dinner. He sat at Mrs. Rathbawne's right, than which nothing in the world could have been more cheerless, unless it was sitting at Mrs. Rathbawne's left. But the good lady's habitual complacency was plainly in abeyance, her customary volubility replaced by a fidgety reserve. The dinner, as a social achievement, was a distinct failure, save in so far as Mrs. Wynyard and Colonel Broadcastle were concerned. Several months before, Mrs. Wynyard had frankly announced that she had designs upon the Colonel. Latterly, Barclay had begun to suspect the Colonel of having designs upon Mrs. Wynyard. Thirty and sixty-five that looked forty-five—a widow and a widower! More wonderful things had happened.

"If I were thirty years younger," Broadcastle was saying even now, as he did full justice to the celery mayonnaise, "I should say we were made for each other."

"Since two single people may be made for each other," laughed Mrs. Wynyard, "I wonder if two married people can't be

unmade for each other. Perhaps that is just what has happened to us!"

"I'll think that over," replied the Colonel with mock gravity. "I don't want to commit myself on so serious a hypothesis, without due reflection."

They were the only ones who were thoroughly at ease. Barclay and Natalie, unstrung by the events of the day, ate little and talked listlessly. Dorothy, victim to an inward excitement which was half happiness and half disappointment, chattered feverishly. Rathbawne was wrapped in his own thoughts, and his wife, innocently unobservant of emotional manifestations in any and every other, but pathetically sensitive to the slightest evidence of mental perturbation in this stern, kind man, between herself and whom existed a devotion dog-like in its silence and intensity, watched his clouded face with an anxiety which she made no effort to conceal. The dinner dragged hopelessly, until she shook herself into a bewildered realization that it was over, folded her napkin scrupulously, dusted a few crumbs from the black-satin slope of her obsolete lap, and, followed by her daughters and Mrs. Wynyard, left the men to their cordials and cigars.

The latter drew their chairs nearer, as the door closed, made little clearings in the wilderness of finger-bowls, silver, and discarded napkins, for the accommodation of their coffee-cups and cordial glasses, and, lighting the long Invincibles which were Rathbawne's sole extravagance, inhaled that first matchless whiff of smoke which makes a whole day of anxiety and vexation seem to have been worth the while.

It is a moment apart and *sui generis*, this, and is rivaled only by that of early morning realization that one is awake—and not obliged to get up. It is apt to pass in silence, for a newly lit cigar is like a newly married wife: a man is deliberately oblivious to all else. The moment, too, is one of readjustment, of hasty mental survey of the chatter that has passed, and of preparation for the essentially dissimilar talk to come. With men of the mental calibre of the three here assembled this opportunity is sacred to some of the gravest and most vital thoughts which they exchange. Peter Rathbawne, in particular, whenever he reviewed the paramount conversations of his life, seemed to find their significance indissolubly fused with the fragrance of Havana cigars and the taste of kümmel or yellow Chartreuse.

His eyes dwelt thoughtfully upon his companions during the pause which followed. First, on Broadcastle. He could depend upon him as he could depend upon no other man on earth. They had fought side by side in many a tight place in the black days of '62, and in many another, full as tight, since then, on battlefields commercial and political. It is doubtful whether so much as a single word of admiration or affection had ever passed between them. It is equally doubtful whether anything could have been more entirely superfluous than such a voicing of self-evident sentiments.

John Barclay, too! Peter Rathbawne, with what had been natural shrewdness at the outset now sharpened almost to clairvoyance by his years of dealing with a multiplicity of men and things, understood the Lieutenant-Governor absolutely, and admired him with all the force of his rugged nature. And Rathbawne was not given to admiring people. His business experience had not fostered the spirit of hero-worship. He had seen too much for that. But in the two men before him he recognized qualities so unusual, and in many ways so similar, that he was proud to count them friends.

For the moment, however, as he took stock of them, he was measuring them by a new standard, more rigid, more severe than he had hitherto had reason to apply. It is one thing to trust a man implicitly, and another thing entirely to try to tell him so. For silence is most golden in the specification of friendship, and when employed in the particularizing of intimate emotion the silver of speech is apt to turn to veriest tinsel.

Yet the occasion was one which demanded speech. Moreover, and in direct opposition to his inclinations and the precedents he had established, he was forced not only to give practical expression to his feeling for Broadcastle and Barclay, but, what humiliated as well as annoyed him, to confess himself incapable of dealing with a question which confronted him. It was the first time within his recollection when he had mistrusted his own judgment.

But Peter Rathbawne was not the man to procrastinate, and presently he began to speak, in a low but curiously intense voice, from which the others instinctively took their cue. He was a short man, inclined to stoutness, but with the clear, sharp eye and the underhang of jaw which tell of right principle and indomitable perseverance. It was a question whether in calling him the second most obstinate man in Alleghenia, Governor Abbott had given him the full measure of his due.

"Gentlemen," he said, with the somewhat stilted formality which was part of his manner, "I will say to you what I wouldn't say to others,—I'm in a hole, and I want your advice. I'll be as brief as possible, and I'll come right to the point. For thirty years I've been building up the Rathbawne Mills, giving them every hour of my thought, every particle of my strength, every atom of my ability. I've seen them grow from a little shanty on the outskirts of Kenton City to a collection

of buildings covering four solid squares, filled with modern machinery, and employing four thousand, two hundred and odd hands. I've been a business man, I've been a rigid man, but I've been a fair man, too. No one can say that I ever clipped wages, even when I had to run the mills at a loss, as I've had to do more than once. I gave my people an eight-hour day long before the law of Alleghenia jammed it down the throats of other mill-owners. I swallowed the Union, though it was a bitter mouthful. There has never been a just complaint from one of my employees that wasn't attended to in short order, if it was in my power to do so. There's many an old fossil on my pay-rolls to-day who isn't worth his salt, but he stays there, and will continue to stay there, because he did his best when he could, and it's not his fault that he's dead wood now. I've given in, over and over again, in one way or another, sometimes against my convictions, and oftener against my will. But one thing I've stuck to, and that's my right to discharge a hand when I see fit, without dictation from the Union or anybody else. In the past, this has been comparatively easy sailing. One man, now and again, isn't a ripple on the surface of four thousand employees. Besides, there was always a good reason. The others saw that, and there was never a finger raised. They believed in me, through and through, and it has been my pride to know that they did, and that they had good cause to. But now it's different. There has been a band of young good-for-nothings in Shop 22, who were full, chock-a-block, of socialism, and equality, and workingmen's rights, and God knows what-not! They've talked enough poisonous gas to the other hands to blow up a state. They distributed pamphlets, and made speeches, and organized clubs, and fomented discord, till I got sick and tired of it. There wasn't one square day's work in the whole fifteen of them put together. So, when I'd stood them as long as I could—which was at ten o'clock yesterday morning—I discharged them all in a bunch, and if there'd been a steep place handy, I'd have expected to see them all run violently down it into the sea—like the other swine, in Scripture. For if ever there was a band of devils made incarnate, it was that same fifteen who were sowing anarchy broadcast through the Rathbawne Mills!

"Now—what? Lo and behold, they are all henchmen and disciples of Michael McGrath, whom we in Kenton City know to our cost, and regular and loyal members—save the mark!—of his Union. Well, gentlemen, I've got that Union about my ears like a nest of hornets, with McGrath at the head, and unless those fifteen men are reinstated by noon to-morrow, my four thousand hands will be out on strike, and the Rathbawne Mills will be tied up as tight as a drum!"

"Fight 'em!" said Colonel Broadcastle curtly, as the other paused.

"That's what I meant to do—but where am I going to come out? If I thought, for instance, that I was going to have your regiment to back me up, Broadcastle, or even the Kenton City police, why, well and good! But *am* I? No, sir! *No*, sir! Not with Elijah Abbott in the Governor's chair, I'm not! You know that as well as I. Why, Broadcastle, I'd rather see McGrath himself at the capitol than that smooth-spoken skunk!"

He paused to relight his cigar, and then continued.

"The Rathbawne Mills are like the fruit of my own body to me. I love them! I love every stone and brick of them, that I've put in place, as it were, with my own hands. I've often thought that if they should burn down it would come close to killing me. And yet I could watch them go with a lighter heart, God knows, than that with which I foresee the misery that's coming to these people of mine, who are going to starve at the bidding of a band of black-legs, and that not even because they think their cause a just one, but simply because they can't help themselves. It isn't only that ruin's staring me in the face, though there's that possibility in the situation, too, but that privation, bitter misery, and despair are lying in wait for them. God!—what an iniquity!"

"But I *can't* give in, Broadcastle—I *can't* give in, John Barclay! It means the sacrifice of a principle I've held out for, and that I know is right. What's more, it isn't as if I were yielding one point. It would only be the beginning. If I give in now, I might as well turn over the mills to McGrath at once, and let him run them according to his own blackguardly will. You know how such things go. Give them an inch"—

"And they raise a hell!" put in Colonel Broadcastle.

"Exactly! It's commercial suicide. And yet, if I *don't* yield, I'm precipitating disorder, and bloodshed, and the untold suffering of four thousand souls. What am I to do?"

"Fight 'em!" said Colonel Broadcastle, with a sharp nod of his head.

Rathbawne turned from him to the Lieutenant-Governor, and to the latter, knowing the man he had been, there was something indescribably heart-rending in the sudden, irresolute trembling of his half-raised hands, the slow shake of his head, and the pathos of his raised eyebrows and drooping lips.

"John," he said, "I'm an old man, and you're a young one, but I'm a plain citizen, and you're the Lieutenant-Governor of Alleghenia. You know how things stand. Now, I've given you my girl, and after that it's not much to put myself into your hands as well. I'm getting on. My strength isn't what it was. I'm not as fit to stand such a struggle as this is bound to be, as I was thirty years ago. I look strong, but, in reality, I'm not. My doctor has warned me, more than once. A sudden shock—you know what these medical chaps say about sudden shocks! I've laughed at him, of course, and yet—I know there is truth in it. I've been up against hard propositions, but never one as hard as this. I've had big responsibilities, but never a responsibility that I felt as I feel this one. If I hold out, I know what people and the newspapers will say,—how they'll blackguard me,—but I'm not afraid of that. I'm not even thinking of it. No, and I'm not thinking of what the strain may mean to me. Every man's turn is sure to come—why not one way as well as another? But what I *am* thinking of is the result upon the lives of these people whom I've made, as surely as if I were another Creator. And McGrath's another Beelzebub! There's a fight on between us for the salvation of a little world of four thousand souls! But I'm not God! I can't act with the conviction of omniscience. I've been the most independent of men. I've made my own fortune with my own brains. I've done as I saw fit, and the results have seemed to indicate that I've been oftener right than wrong. But now, I'm at a loss. It's not the men I'm thinking of so much. They ought to be able to make their own way, as I've made mine. It's the women and children dependent upon them—the women and children who have no voice in the matter, and yet who are bound to suffer most by a strike. I've got to think for them. I've reached a crisis—a cross-ways—and I've got to choose which course to take—and I can't! All my experience counts for nothing. I've never—you probably know it—asked for advice before. But now I must have the unprejudiced, the outside point of view. I've always thought there was a clear, unmistakable boundary between right and wrong, but now there's some right in the wrong, and a big sight more of wrong in the right! I've heard Broadcastle's opinion, and I want yours. If you agree, I'll go by what you say. As I said before, John, in this matter I'm the individual—you're the state. I'll go by what you say. What shall I do?"

Peter Rathbawne's words had wrought tremendously upon the Lieutenant-Governor. He answered slowly, looking down, and with a perceptible tremor in his voice.

"Mr. Rathbawne, you and the Colonel know how high-sounding my title is, and how little, in reality, it means. There is no need to go into details. I'm Lieutenant-Governor of Alleghenia, yes!—and as helpless in the cause of right as a new-born baby! If I could by any means, in any manner, support the advice I gave you, I would give it willingly."

"John!" said Peter Rathbawne, "I don't mean that. I've put the case wrongly. Give me your counsel, not as Lieutenant-Governor, but as my friend, and the man who loves my daughter!"

The Lieutenant-Governor raised his eyes from the finger-tips with which, as the other was speaking, he had been plucking at the cloth.

"Fight them, Mr. Rathbawne," he said, "and may God help you—because I can't!"

A BRAND FROM THE BURNING

More heartsick than he cared to confess, even to himself, the Lieutenant-Governor left the Rathbawnes' earlier than his wont, despite the fact that his host and Colonel Broadcastle were still engaged in discussing the impending situation, and that Natalie, with a batch of new music, was waiting for him at the piano. He pleaded an unusually busy day and his consequent fatigue as an excuse, and so, at half after nine, found himself about to light a second cigar, on the steps of the Rathbawne residence, and shivering a little in the night air, which stung the inside of his nostrils and set his eyes watering. Raw as the day had been, it had turned colder now, but the night was superbly clear. The sky seemed to have drawn nearer to the earth, and the stars twinkled so sharply and clearly against its deep blue-black that they resembled in form their conventionally five-pointed counterfeits of silver paper. A brisk wind whirled a few dried leaves in whispering eddies across the smooth asphaltum of the driveway, but beyond this and the peevish sputtering of the arc-light on the opposite corner there was no sound. It was the kind of night which, with its crystal clearness and its steely intensity, stirs the normal pulse to keen exhilaration: yet never had John Barclay felt more hopelessly dispirited, more utterly at a loss to see the way before him. That anxiety, distress, possibly actual disaster should be impending over this house where lay his heart, his happiness, and his hope, was sufficiently disturbing in itself. That he should not be able, despite his position, to raise a hand to avert the calamity was worse. But that the battle was to be a battle for the right, and yet, as it seemed, foredoomed from the start to end in disaster, since no aid could be expected from the strong arm of the law to which the partisans of principle turn naturally for support: this was worst of all. For out of dangerous surroundings he felt himself able to snatch away the littlest and most lovely woman in the world. She, at least, should not suffer. And out of this nightmare of powerless prominence, of impotent position, he himself could retire into private life, and be no less a man than he had been before. But from the reproach of corruption which had fallen upon her, and the impending slur of anarchy, who was to rescue Alleghenia? The Lieutenant-Governor set his lips and drove his nails into his palms, as he stood in the shadow of the Rathbawnes' doorway, looking up at the sky of the February night. He was not a religious man—as the term goes—but in that moment he said a better prayer for the welfare of his state than had ever lain upon the lips of any priest in Kenton City!

He was about to strike his match when an instinct rather than an actual perception of movement arrested his hand. Bradbury Avenue, upon which stood the Rathbawne house, was situated in one of the quieter residence districts which prided itself on the turfed spaces between its dwellings, pretentious enough for the most part, and the double rows of trees which lined its thoroughfares. It was one of these trees which, at the moment, attracted Barclay's attention. It lay in a direct line between himself and the arc-light on the corner, and its trunk, in some miraculous manner, had abruptly developed an elbow, and then an arm. The Lieutenant-Governor was still staring at this phenomenon when it was as abruptly explained by the sudden emergence from shadow of a man, who had apparently been standing on the side of the tree nearest to the house. He was crossing the avenue obliquely when something about his bearing caused the Lieutenant-Governor to lean forward and follow him intently with his eyes. It was all there, as Natalie had said—the lifted shoulders, the bent head, the unmistakable, pathetic air of the beggar. Then, as he neared the light, he gave a short upward strain to his neck and chin, the impatient movement of a man whose collar annoys him. The trick was too familiar to have been forgotten. The next moment Barclay's heels were pounding on the asphaltum behind him, and then Barclay's hand fell upon his shoulder and whirled him round.

In the oddly intense radiance of the arc-light above, which cut sharply across the surface of forehead, cheek, and chin, and left heavy shadows like those in a roughly blocked-out carving, under brow, nose, and lower lip, the two men faced each other briefly, in silence. Then the Lieutenant-Governor voiced the other's name, hardly above a whisper.

"Spencer Cavendish!"

And the other, echoing the tone, if not the words, replied:—

"Bar-clay!"

A square away, the lights of a hansom winked into the avenue, and the hoof-beats of the horse clonked on the pavement, unaccompanied by any sound from the smoothly trundling, rubber-tired wheels. Barclay stepped to the kerb, and hailed the driver with his stick. The cab drew in, stopped, and threw the divisions of its apron wide, like two black hands extended in cordial welcome.

The Lieutenant-Governor turned to his companion.

"Get in," he said. "I want to have a talk with you."

The drive of a mile and more from Bradbury Avenue to Barclay's quarters in the new bachelor apartment-house "Rockingham" was accomplished without the exchange of a word. Once, he felt his companion shiver, and dragging a rug from under them, he spread it across their knees. That was the only movement on the part of either. They sat, side by side, looking straight before them over the horse's bobbing crupper, until the hansom pulled up sharply before the broad and brilliantly illuminated entrance of the "Rockingham." As they passed in, Cavendish had a passing impression of tiled floors, columns of green marble, and attendants in tightly fitting green uniforms with brass buttons. Then an elevator whirled them up to the eighth floor, deposited them in a square hallway, and vanished again, with the little page in charge wrinkling his nose and biting the thumb of his cotton glove.

"Wot's the Loot'nt-Guvnor up to now, Sawed-Off?" inquired the doorkeeper genially, as the elevator returned to the ground floor.

"Ide'no!" replied the little page with equal affability. "Goin' in fer pol'tics, I gues. Jeest! Wot a slob it wuz—wot?"

The Lieutenant-Governor unlocked the door of his apartment, touched an electric button which flooded the little hall and the drawing-room beyond with light, and, entering the latter, went directly to a closet in the wall. Unlocking this, he took out a jar of biscuits and a decanter, and setting them upon the table, turned once more to his companion.

"Put away a couple of those biscuits and a glass of sherry," he said, "and then we'll talk."

"I'm past biscuits," said the other, almost sullenly.

"I'll see to that," replied Barclay. "They are only by way of a starter."

He passed into the hall as he spoke, and presently Cavendish heard the click of a telephone receiver slipping from its crotch, and Barclay's voice speaking, to some one below, of a steak, vegetables, salad, and coffee. He stepped to the table, devoured two or three of the biscuits ravenously, poured himself a glass of sherry, sipped, and then swallowed it, and flung himself down upon a wide divan.

"Have you a cigarette?" he asked, as Barclay reëntered. "I haven't smoked in three days. That's worse than mere hunger, you know."

"I believe you!"

Barclay pushed a silver box across the table, and seating himself opposite, touched a match to the cigar which he had been about to light at the Rathbawnes' door, and which he still held between his lips.

"Help yourself," he added. "Your supper will be up presently. Meanwhile, shall I fire away, or will you?"

Cavendish let the first smoke from his cigarette curl slowly up his cheek before replying. In the full light now first resting upon it, his face showed as that of a man approximately Barclay's age, but pinched by want, and deeply lined by dissipation. His under lids were puffy and discolored, and a dozen heavy creases ran, fan-like, from the corners of his eyes. Hair already turning white and an unkempt mustache and beard completed the picture. His clothes were faded and frayed, no linen was visible, and his boots were cracked and soggy. There was nothing about him to suggest the former estate of gentleman save his hands, which, while thin and tremulous, were clean and well-kept, in singular contrast to the slovenliness of his attire.

"Age before respectability," he said in reply to Barclay's question, with a shrug. "I'll go first. It will save your asking questions. We parted in anger, Barclay."

"Let that pass," put in the Lieutenant-Governor, briefly. "Two years wipe out all scores as petty as was the cause of our quarrel."

"Well, then," continued Cavendish more easily, "when I left Kenton City, it was with the best intention in the world of making a fresh start in some place where my story wasn't known. I went to New York. I had a little money, but only a very little, and not the most remote idea of how difficult it is for a man to make his way in a place where he is unknown,

particularly if he has no credentials and is too proud to ask for any from his old associates. Moreover, I'd been drinking hard for six months and there was no such thing as clipping it short all at once. I had an idea of tapering off, and perhaps, if I had found a job, I might have done so. As it was I climbed up one step and fell down two, and that went on indefinitely. It wasn't as if I'd had a distinct aim or anything in my life which made it seem worth living. I didn't half care. I'd set my heart on something which I couldn't get, and—well, never mind that. It is all as long ago as the Flood! I got work now and again, tried reporting, and teaching, and copying. But each time it was a grade lower, and I stuck to nothing but the whiskey—except when I had a little more money than usual, and then it was absinthe."

He touched his eyes, and then raised his hand to the level of his chin, with the fingers held wide apart and rigid, and watched it tremble for an instant in silence.

"I haven't seen a mirror in weeks," he went on, "but I know the signs are all there. That's the story. I could string it out for an hour, but it would all be in the same key. I've simply been going down, down, down. I'm what the old judge called me—do you remember it came out in the 'Record?'—I'm a common drunk, Barclay. And I don't care! I've been on the point of putting an end to it many a time—but I always held out for another drink! Now, even my pride's gone. It stuck to me longer than anything else, but it's taken itself off at last. I've been feeling lately that I'm pretty near the end, and I wanted to see Kenton City again before it came. That's the reason I walked all the way from Pittsburg, and I've been begging on the streets since I got in. I thought nobody would recognize me."

"But *I* did," said Barclay.

"Yes, and—and"—

"Yes, and *she* did! She saw you this morning, but before she took in fully that it was you, you were gone in the crowd. She was half heart-broken over it, and made me promise to look you up. I was going to do so, when I tumbled against you by chance to-night. You were watching the house?"

"Yes, for the last time. I saw she had recognized me and that Kenton City was no place for me. So I was off again to-night. Is she"—

"She is well, and, I am glad to say, happy. We are to be married in the autumn."

A smile hovered for an instant on Cavendish's lips.

"God bless her!" he said slowly. "I'm glad of it. But don't let's talk of that. She's as far above me as the stars!"

"And as far above me, too, for that matter!" answered Barclay. "Here's your supper. While you're eating, I'll take my turn at the talk."

A bell-boy arranged the tray on the table, removed the covers, and in a moment the two men were again alone. With a deep sigh of satisfaction Cavendish drew a chair to the table and set to work on the steaming dishes before him.

"Jupiter!" he said, with the first mouthful poised on his fork, "you don't know what this means, Barclay, and you can thank God you don't. I won't attempt to thank you. Go on, and tell me about yourself."

"I've no intention of doing that just at present," replied the Lieutenant-Governor, settling himself more comfortably in his chair. "I want to talk about you. Don't be afraid. I'm not going to preach! But I *am* going to say that while I understand a good deal of what you've said, the last part is pure rot! You're a bit of a wreck, of course, but it isn't your pride or your self-respect or whatever you choose to call it, that's gone. It's only your nerve. Now you've had your experience, and you're back where you belong, and you've friends who like you, and who can help you, and who will. I'm in a position to do so myself, and I don't expect you to make any bones about accepting my assistance, and whatever money you need for the moment. It will be a loan, of course, to be repaid when you're on your feet again. We'll have you there in no time. When you've made way with the grub, you can bunk down on that divan for the night, and in the morning I'll tog you out in one of my outfits, and you can set about getting back on *terra firma*. You'll have to shake the drink, that goes without saying."

Cavendish straightened himself suddenly, laid down his knife and fork, and laughed shortly.

"It sounds well," he said bitterly, "but you don't understand, Barclay. It's too late! I don't care, and if I did, I couldn't

shake the drink to save my immortal soul. I'm steady enough for the time being, because I'm hungry and because I'm being fed. But I've tried the other game too often. I know what it means. I wouldn't promise you to quit, because I don't want to lie to you, and that's all it would be. When the craving comes back, I'll go down before it like a row of tenpins. No, Barclay, it won't do."

"Nonsense, man! Do you want to tell me you're as weak as that?"

"Every bit!" said Cavendish, attacking the steak again.

"Well, I don't believe it, that's all. In the morning you'll be a different man. I'll give you a bromide when you're ready for bed. You're shaky, as it is, but that's all a matter of nerves. Now we'll drop the subject, and talk of other things."

It was midnight when they separated. Barclay brought out sheets and blankets for the divan, produced pajamas for his guest, put the bath at his disposal, and mixed a strong dose of bromide for him to take upon retiring.

Half an hour later, when he reentered the drawing-room to see whether Cavendish was in need of anything further, he found him standing by the table in his pajamas, trembling, wide-eyed, and very pale.

"What is it?" he asked. "Are you ill?"

"No," answered Cavendish, striving in vain to control the trembling of his lips, "only damnably nervous. Could you—could you give me a drop of brandy, Barclay?"

"Certainly not!" said the Lieutenant-Governor. "Pull yourself together, man! There's your bromide. Take that. It's better than a thousand brandies."

Cavendish turned, lifted the glass, spilling a little as he did so, and swallowed the sedative at a gulp. Then he stretched himself upon the divan and drew the covers close up about his chin. Presently, from the bedroom, Barclay heard him breathing deeply and regularly, and turning on his side, fell into a heavy, dreamless sleep.

He awoke with a start, as the dawn was showing gray through the chinks of his window curtains, with a vague, uneasy sense of something wrong, and lay listening, every nerve strained taut. From the adjoining room came the sound of Cavendish's breathing, but now it was more raucous, more like groan following groan. The Lieutenant-Governor strove in vain to put off the foreboding which lay heavy upon him, until, finally, unable to resist the impulse, he rose, slid his feet into his slippers, and going noiselessly into the drawing-room, stepped to the windows and put the curtains softly aside. What first met his eye as he turned was the door of his little wine-closet in the wall. It was standing wide open, and about the lock the wood was hacked and hewed away in great splinters. On a chair near by lay a rough knife with the blade open and a sliver of wood yet sticking to the point. Then he looked toward the divan. Cavendish was lying face down upon it, outside the blankets, with his head lolling sharply over the edge. His left arm was extended full length toward the ground, where his fingers just touched a bottle of French absinthe, overturned upon its side, and uncorked, with the thick, gummy liquid spread from its mouth in a circular pool on the waxed floor.

VI

McGRATH LAUGHS

The clock on the huge central tower of the Capitol marked nine, as the Lieutenant-Governor passed rapidly through the lofty entrance hall toward the corridor leading to his office and that of Governor Abbott. Already his promptness was proverbial, and there were those in the great, grim building who looked forward to the moment of his arrival, each morning, with a kind of eagerness. These were the simpler folk of the official world with which circumstance housed him for eight hours daily,—bootblacks, elevator-boys, porters, doormen. For to the big, clean, wholesome personality which appeals irresistibly to these humbler people, Barclay added an astonishing memory for faces, and for the names and circumstances connected with them. It was a gift which counted as an unspeakably important factor in the establishment and maintenance of unusually cordial relations with all those with whom he came in contact. No one brought within the radius of his personal magnetism long resisted it. It was only those who judged him from a distance, as did the press and the rank and file of his party, or those who deliberately misinterpreted him, as did his political enemies, who permitted themselves anything short of enthusiasm for John Barclay. And this faculty for attracting admiration and commanding respect, this infallible kindness and this inherent dignity, were never made manifest to so great advantage as in his attitude toward his inferiors. These adored him. He accumulated, bit by bit, a remarkable store of intimate information relating to them, and employed it in his intercourse with them, with a tact and a frank sincerity of interest which never failed of their effect. The response thus elicited was strongest of the minor pleasures in his life. He was aware—none better—of the shrewdness native to those who have no claim upon one's recognition, their appreciation of notice that is unfeignedly interested, their sensitiveness to open indifference, their resentment of the simulated consideration which is mere impertinence; and he was conscious of a little inward thrill of satisfaction at the difference of attitude in the employees at the Capitol as toward Governor Abbott and himself. Where the former's suavity elicited only formal respect, manifestly obligatory, his own whole-heartedness lined his way with smiles and kindly greetings. His official existence, beset with annoyance, mortification, and disappointment, was, as he often reflected, made tolerable only by this friendliness which he, almost unconsciously, inspired. Dogs, children, and his subordinates—the three most intuitively critical classes of beings—were all his friends. The pathway to and from the daily routine, which he was coming to regard as moral martyrdom, was a pathway illumined with sunlight and strewn with flowers!

As the Lieutenant-Governor passed through his ante-room, with a wink at the boy, a nod to the stenographer, and a word of greeting to his private secretary, and entered his office, he was surprised to find the communicating door open, and to hear the sound of a vaguely familiar voice in the Governor's room beyond. In an effort to place the speaker, he hesitated briefly before advancing to a point which would bring him within range of the Governor's eye. Almost immediately, the memory of the convention rushed over him, and he recognized the voice as that of Michael McGrath.

"And it won't be a strike like other strikes," he was saying, "not so long as I'm running it, that is. It's going to mean business from the word go! There's been too much shilly-shallying in the strikes I've known anything about, too much talk, and too much wasting of Union funds. You know what I mean. It isn't enough to tie up a mill, and then hang around on street-corners for two months, waiting for the other side to give in. The only place to hit a man like Rathbawne is in his pocket, and by that I don't mean simply cutting off his income, but chopping into his capital as well. He's got to understand"—

The Lieutenant-Governor walked over to his desk, laid his hat and stick on a chair, and, before removing his overcoat, began turning over the pile of letters which awaited his attention. As he did so, Governor Abbott's voice broke in suavely upon the other's.

"I deprecate any resort to violence," he said. "You must proceed with discretion if you expect the state to maintain an attitude of neutrality. Otherwise, the police or the militia"—

"Oh, to hell with the police and the militia!" broke in McGrath impatiently. "What's the use"—

"There is the Lieutenant-Governor now," interrupted the other. "Perhaps he has some news for us. Mr. Barclay, will you kindly step in here for a moment?"

McGrath was standing on the opposite side of the Governor's table as Barclay entered the room. He acknowledged the latter's curt nod with an ironical bow, slipped his hands into the pockets of his checked trousers, and stood waiting, with

his square head thrust forward, for what was to follow.

"Mr. McGrath has called," continued the Governor, "to explain the attitude of the Union in the impending strike at the Rathbawne Mills. I've been telling him of our conversation of yesterday afternoon, and that, as you were to see Mr. Rathbawne last night, you would probably have something to tell us in regard to his position. Were you able to persuade him to a more reasonable view of the situation?"

"I have nothing to add, sir, to what I said yesterday," replied Barclay. "I told you then that I had no intention of endeavoring to influence Mr. Rathbawne's judgment."

"He spoke to you about it?"

"Yes."

"And asked your advice?"

"He did."

"And you replied?"

The Lieutenant-Governor flushed.

"I beg to suggest, sir," he answered, "that this is hardly the time for me to commit myself as to that. I conceive it to be a matter of official privacy. Mr. McGrath"—

"You have my authority to speak, Mr. Barclay," said the Governor. "Indeed, I desire it. Since one side knows your views, there is no reason why the other should not be informed as well. Mr. McGrath is the president of the Union. It is best that he should know the attitude of the state authorities in this controversy."

"I am not in a position to question your wishes, sir. You should know best."

"One cannot pretend to be infallible, Mr. Barclay," answered the Governor, rubbing his hands. "One can only do what seems to be right and proper under the circumstances. By our conversation of yesterday, I in a measure put the negotiations with Mr. Rathbawne into your hands."

"It is a task I did not seek, sir. Pardon me if I say that it is also one which I should hardly have accepted, had I been aware that in speaking as you did you were actually asking me to assume it. Mr. Rathbawne is my friend, and, moreover, my personal convictions"—

The Governor held up his hand.

"There can be no question of friendship or of personal conviction, Mr. Barclay, in the case of a duty imposed upon a state official. I realize that what you—or I, for that matter—must do in the performance of our obligations, is oftentimes disagreeable, oftentimes at variance with our wishes. But that is unavoidable."

Barclay moved uneasily. The intrusion of this pedantry, so conspicuously insincere, with its implied rebuke, chafed him unspeakably, in view of the presence of McGrath. The Governor had adopted the tone, half authoritative, half reproachful, of a teacher reproofing a refractory child.

"My time, as you must know, is inadequate to the demands made upon it. I am forced, on occasions, to turn more or less important matters over to others. To whom more naturally than to you, Mr. Barclay?"

"May I suggest, sir, that there can be no profit in prolonging this discussion? I appreciate the position perfectly, and I am quite prepared to state what I know of Mr. Rathbawne's attitude toward the demands of the Union."

"Ah," said the Governor, "that is as it should be, and as satisfactory as possible. Let me remind you, Mr. Barclay, that it was not I, but yourself, who introduced this digression."

He turned to the president of the Union.

"You will understand from what I have said, Mr. McGrath," he added, "both to the Lieutenant-Governor and to you, that

in the matter of the proposed strike, he is, to all intents and purposes, acting in my stead. He was in a position to approach Mr. Rathbawne, and I was not. Now, Mr. Barclay, if you please"—

The Lieutenant-Governor straightened himself instinctively, as, for the first time, he addressed himself to the agitator.

"Mr. McGrath," he said, "my confidence in Mr. Rathbawne's fairness and integrity would have led me to approve any course which he might have seen fit to take. As you have already heard me say, I had absolutely no intention of endeavoring to influence his judgment. Greatly to my surprise, Mr. Rathbawne himself consulted me in the matter, without any suggestion on my part, and asked for my advice."

"That's fortunate," put in McGrath, "very fortunate. You've been able to sidetrack a lot of trouble."

Barclay's eyes hardened at the hypocrisy of the sneer.

"I have pleasure in informing you," he continued, "that, in reply, I advised him to fight the Union in the present dispute to the utmost of his means and ability. I should have counseled him further to hold out until he had spent his last cent and shed his last drop of blood, except that, knowing him as I do, I conceived such a recommendation to be wholly superfluous. Mr. Rathbawne has his character and his record behind him. There is about as much chance of his yielding you an inch of ground as if he were standing with his back against the Capitol!"

McGrath shrugged his shoulders.

"It's a damned funny way you have of not influencing people's judgment," he said.

"I mis-stated my attitude in saying that," retorted the Lieutenant-Governor coolly. "I should have said, what, after all, is self-evident, that I had no intention of trying to influence Mr. Rathbawne in favor of the Union, at least so long as it is acting under your dictation. Its present character is well known—almost as well known as yours, in fact—and I believe its position in this matter to be entirely untenable, unjustifiable, and iniquitous. I may add that if it is, indeed, Governor Abbott's resolve that I am to deal, in his stead, with the question of your proposed strike, you may confidently rely upon having to put the entire state force of Alleghenia out of business before you can even so much as begin to bully Peter Rathbawne into submission!"

"If that's your opinion of the Union," said McGrath sullenly, "it might be interesting to hear your opinion of me."

"You are perfectly welcome to it," replied the Lieutenant-Governor easily. "I consider you an unmitigated blackguard!"

Governor Abbott tipped back his chair and looked at McGrath.

"That's pretty plain talk," he said. "You see how it is, Mr. McGrath. You'll have to go ahead on your own responsibility, and you mustn't be surprised if the State steps in at the first evidence of disorder."

McGrath rose, flicked some specks of dust from his waistcoat, and walked toward the door without a word. On the threshold he turned, looked from the Governor to the Lieutenant-Governor, and back again, and laughed. Then he went out, closing the door softly behind him.

At the Rathbawne Mills it was usual for a huge whistle to give one long blast at noon as a signal for the lunch hour. On that day, however, following McGrath's instructions, the single blast was replaced by five short ones in rapid succession, and three minutes later the employees were pouring through half a dozen gates into the streets surrounding the mills, in laughing, chattering, excited streams.

A majority of the men went directly to a hall in the neighborhood where McGrath had called a mass-meeting for half-past twelve. A minority of them crowded into the saloons of the vicinity, where they pounded on the bars, and filled the close, smoke-grayed air with heated discussion. Several of the discharged hands were in evidence, each surrounded by an attentive group, and expounding more or less inflammatory views. The women gathered in gossiping throngs on the sidewalks, laughing, and pulling each other about by the arms. The boys played ball and leap-frog in the streets, shouting, and whistling through their fingers. In brief, the great strike was on, but, for the time being, it was masquerading in the guise of a public holiday.

At one o'clock the whistle blew again, and a thousand voices whooped a derisive accompaniment, but no one of the throng in the streets made a move toward the mills. Half an hour later, watchmen swung to and bolted the gates, and,

issuing presently from a small side entrance, in company, were received with cheers, handshakes, and slaps upon the back. Then the crowd gradually thinned,—many going to the already well-filled hall where McGrath was delivering an address, and others to their homes,—and a silence descended upon the neighborhood, broken only by the voices of the men about the saloon doorways.

At two, Peter Rathbawne, attended by his private secretary, came out of the side entrance and walked slowly away in the direction of his home. He held his head high, and his eyes straight to the front, and paid no attention to the respectful greetings of those of the strikers who saluted him, touching their hats. There were many among them whose hearts sank at this attitude in a man who had made it his boast that he knew every hand in his mills by sight, and who, in the past, had had a nod or a friendly word for each and all of them. For the first time a premonition settled upon them of what this strike, which had been welcomed principally for novelty's sake, might mean. It was the first the Rathbawne Mills had ever known. Some of those who saw the face of Peter Rathbawne that afternoon were already hoping that it might be the last.

The Lieutenant-Governor returned to his apartment for lunch. Cavendish was still sleeping as he had left him, with a stalwart negro porter, summoned from the Capitol by telephone early that morning, watching in a chair. Under Barclay's orders, a carpenter had already removed the splintered door of the wine-closet, and an upholsterer had replaced it by a slender brass rod from which swung a velvet curtain. With his own hands the Lieutenant-Governor had taken away the fallen bottle, mopped up the pool of absinthe, and put the room to rights. Now he dismissed the negro, took from his pocket a little box of strychnine tablets, obtained from his physician on his way from the Capitol, and, after a brief survey of his surroundings to see that all was in order, went over to the divan and shook the sleeping man by the shoulders.

"Come, lazy-bones!" he said, with a laugh. "You've slept over twelve hours. That will do—even for a nervous wreck."

Cavendish opened his swollen eyes slowly, looked at him, and then closed them again with a murmured "Oh, God!" which was like a groan.

To this the Lieutenant-Governor paid no heed. Passing into the bathroom, he turned on the cold water in the tub, poured a half glass of vichy from a syphon, and then returned, carrying the tumbler in his hand. Cavendish had raised himself on one elbow, and was looking stupidly about the room.

"Here you are," said Barclay cheerfully. "Stow this pill, and here's vichy to wash it down. Your bath's running. By the time you've had it, there'll be some clothes ready for you."

Cavendish gulped down the tablet, and sat upright.

"Last night"—he faltered.

For the first time in his life, the Lieutenant-Governor called him by his first name.

"Last night, Spencer," he said, looking him fairly in the eye, "belongs to the past, and is taboo. I won't hear a word about it. This is to-day. Get up, and we'll set about putting wrong right. You're a man again. Don't forget that. And I'm your friend. Don't forget that, either."

His hand rested for an instant on the other's shoulder with a firm pressure, and then he passed into his bedroom and shut the door.

They had lunch together in the dining-room of the "Rockingham," and then went up again to Barclay's rooms. At the door, Cavendish came to a halt.

"I can't stand this," he said.

"You'll have to," replied the Lieutenant-Governor, "so shut up!"

"You've made a change," said Cavendish obstinately, pointing to the curtained cupboard.

Barclay's eyes did not follow the gesture.

"So have you!" he answered. "Now, look here. There are twenty dollars in the waistcoat of that suit, and a letter to

Payson of the 'Kenton City Sentinel.' Go down and see him this afternoon, and I think he'll give you a job at reporting, which will fix you up for the present. In another pocket you'll find a box, with three tablets like the one you had before lunch. Take one of them every two hours. In still another pocket there's a key to these rooms. I'm going to be busy till about ten o'clock, so you'll have to shift for yourself. Make yourself at home, and if you're awake I'll see you when I come in."

Taking him suddenly by the shoulders, he twisted him about, facing the chimney piece, on which stood a photograph of Natalie Rathbawne, smiling out of a silver frame.

"I'll leave you to talk it out with her," he added simply.

In the hall, as he passed out, he caught a reflection of Cavendish in a mirror. His hands were resting on the mantel-edge, and he was leaning forward with his haggard face close to the photograph. Barclay looked at his watch.

"Two o'clock," he said to himself, "and all's well!"

VII

THE MIRAGE OF POWER

Barclay was conscious of a feeling of exhilaration such as he had not known for many weeks, as he swung into Bradbury Avenue late that afternoon on his way to the Rathbawne residence. The duties of the day had been inordinately petty and vexatious, but he had dispatched them one and all with something approaching enthusiasm,—a touch of the old Quixotic energy with which he had taken office. The morning conversation in Governor Abbott's room had braced and toned him. He forgot its inauspicious opening, and even his distress at the attempt to force him into the position of mediator between Peter Rathbawne and the Union, in the solid satisfaction of having been able to speak his mind to McGrath, and call that worthy a blackguard to his face. He was a man who despised a quarrel, but, for its own sake, loved a square, hard fight.

Back, however, of this somewhat inadequate excuse for cheerfulness lay the Governor's assurance that in the matter of the strike his lieutenant was to have free rein. It was the first time since the beginning of their official association that Elijah Abbott had placed an actual responsibility in Barclay's hands. A corner-stone laying, a banquet here and there, the opening of a trolley line, or a library, or a sewer,—these were the major calls upon the Lieutenant-Governor's time. The main current of routine was a hopeless monotony of official correspondence, investigations, statistics, reading and reporting on the interminable and flatulent maunderings of the Legislature,—duties heart-breaking in their desperate tedium and maddening inutility.

But at last here was responsibility, actual and deeply significant, calling for the exercise of tact, courage, and immutable firmness. The particular task was not one which he would have coveted, and yet he welcomed it. Anything,—anything to assuage in him that sense of ineptitude, of being ignored, a titled nonentity!

With this vast lightening of spirit came, not only gratitude, but a sense of lenity toward Governor Abbott. He encouraged himself to believe that the note between them had been one of misunderstanding merely. It might not be too late, after all! Gradually, he began to form a mental picture of a growing sympathy and affiliation between them, large with possibilities of improvement for Alleghenia. As he turned into the Rathbawnes' gateway, he could have laughed aloud for very lightness of heart. His optimism was not even impaired by running, in the hall, full against Mrs. Rathbawne.

"*Good gracious!* Lieutenant-Governor, is that you?"

Repeated and earnest endeavor on Barclay's part had never dissuaded her from this form of address.

"What *is* the use of *having* such a title, if one can't *call* you by it?" she would say, when he remonstrated. "Do *you* suppose that, if Natalie were engaged to a *prince*, I should be going around, calling him Tom, Dick, or Harry, instead of 'Your Royal *Highness*'? You ought to be *proud* of your title. *I* am!"

"But, Mrs. Rathbawne"—

"Now, *please* not, Lieutenant-Governor, *please* not! I like it best that way."

The north wind was attentive and amenable to the voice of persuasion, in comparison with Josephine Rathbawne.

"Of *course* you know the *strike* is on!" she continued now, without waiting for an assurance from Barclay that he was indeed none other than himself. "Isn't it *awful*? I expect to hear the roar of the mob at *any* moment! Come into the drawing-room. Natalie *was* there, only *half* an hour ago."

And she swept through the doorway, Barclay following.

"Natalie," she began, "here's the Lieu—why, *Dorothy!* I took you for Natalie. And—er—oh! Why, Mr.—er—how de do? I didn't see you at first. Oh, *do* turn on the switch, my dear. The place is as black as pitch."

The electric light, flooding the room, revealed young Nisbet, one vast, consuming blush, and Dorothy, with a dangerous light in her eyes, and her lips tightly compressed. It was plain that Mrs. Rathbawne had fallen foul of Dan Cupid's machinery once more!

"Why, Mr. *Nisbet!* I thought you were in New York."

"I had a telegram this morning, calling the date off," said young Nisbet in pitiable confusion; "that is, I didn't have to go, you know. So I just fell in here to explain. I thought some of you might spot me on the street, and after I'd said"—

He began to flounder hopelessly, and cast a glance of mute appeal at Dorothy. That facile young lady marched directly into the breach.

"If you and John are looking for Natalie," she said, "you'll find her in the library with Dad. How do you do, John?"

"Pretty well, I thank you, Flibbertigibbet. It is really your husband whom I came to see, Mrs. Rathbawne. I've a little business with him, so, for the moment, I'll have to give Natalie the cold shoulder."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Rathbawne, lifting her fat hands. "Of *course*, Lieutenant-Governor! I understand *perfectly*. Business before pleasure, *always*. Go right in, won't you, and send Natalie here to me. *I'll* stay here. Aren't we going to have tea, Dorothy? Oh, *do* try to sit up straight, my dear!"

Natalie and her father were bending low over a great portfolio, their heads close together in the yellow glow of the table-lamp, which was the only light in the room. Rathbawne looked up with a grim smile, as the Lieutenant-Governor entered.

"Pottering over my autographs, again, you see," he remarked. "I've been neglecting them shamefully, of late—eh, Natalie? Didn't have the time. It looks just now as if I wouldn't have to complain again of lack of leisure for quite a while!"

"It was that I dropped in to see you about," said Barclay, striving, with only partial success, to keep the exultation out of his voice. "You may not be in for so much leisure as you imagine, Mr. Rathbawne. You may not get much of a holiday, after all."

Without for an instant losing the Lieutenant-Governor's eye, Rathbawne reached out and touched his daughter on the arm.

"Oh, Dad!" she said reproachfully.

"There's no need for her to go, sir," added Barclay, "unless you wish it. I bring only good news."

Acquiescing, Rathbawne drew Natalie close to him, passing one arm across her shoulders, so that his gnarled hand rested firmly on the delicate fabric of her sleeve. Between these two there had always lain a sympathy, an affection, a mutuality of comprehension, more like the relation of husband and wife than that of child and parent.

"Nothing but good news?" answered Rathbawne. "Go on. What is it?"

"News not so much of actual happenings as of potentialities," said the Lieutenant-Governor. "Last night I had to say to you that in the cause of right I was as powerless to aid you as a baby. To-night, I have come to tell you that I am in a position to see justice done, and that I will."

In detail, his voice ringing with enthusiasm and confidence, he described the interview of that morning, his statement of Rathbawne's position, his passage at arms with McGrath, finally, the Governor's announcement that the strike was to be supervised by his lieutenant in his stead.

"I had almost lost hope," he concluded. "I thought my opportunity would never come, and here it is, after all—the chance to act! And, somehow, I feel that it is only the beginning—that, as he gets to understand me better"—

Rathbawne suddenly left his daughter's side, and in three steps was directly before the Lieutenant-Governor. As he interrupted him, his fingers closed upon the lapels of the other's coat, and he punctuated his words with little tugs at these, his knuckles coming together with tiny muffled thuds. He spoke with a gravity that was vibrant with suppressed anger and slow with sincere regret.

"My boy," he said, "it's not a gracious thing to do to spoil an enthusiasm like yours, but don't deceive yourself. Elijah Abbott as a trickster is alone in his class. You were never more powerless to act for the right than you are at this moment."

"But I have his assurance"—

"Oh, *his* assurance! It isn't worth the ash off your cigar. What, give you a chance to interfere with the will of the Union which made him, and owns him, body and soul? Never in God's world! Listen to me. I spent an hour in his office this very afternoon, discussing the strike—and *he never so much as mentioned your name!*"

The Lieutenant-Governor winced as if the words had been the touch of a lancet. Then he closed his eyes.

"And I was in the next room," he said, almost as if to himself,—"*planning—my—control—of the situation! Good God!*"

"I went directly to him," continued Rathbawne, "because I knew that it would be purely and simply a waste of time to parley with the lesser officials who are either helpless or frankly his tools. I knew, too, that no satisfactory result would come of appealing to him, but I wanted to give him the chance. All I asked of him was an assurance that the mills would have proper police protection, and that, if necessary, the militia would be called out in support of order. The outcome was exactly what I expected. Governor Abbott rubbed his hands, and smiled, and said: 'All in good time, Mr. Rathbawne, all in good time. When the conditions seem to warrant it, we can discuss these measures.' That means that they are free to blow the mills to kingdom come, before a finger will be raised by the authorities to prevent them. And what's more, they'll do it! Do you think I don't know McGrath?"

As he had intended it should, this speech had given the other a chance to recover himself. The Lieutenant-Governor's habitual poise was already restored, and his voice, as he answered, was quite steady, but eloquent of his desperate discouragement and weariness.

"I hope it's not as bad as all that, Mr. Rathbawne. It's not necessary to tell you, that for me there can never again be such a thing as trusting the word of Governor Abbott; but, at the same time, I can hardly bring myself to believe that he would openly countenance the practical existence of anarchy in the capital city of Alleghenia."

"Well, I can, then!" declared Rathbawne. "I can believe anything of him! Mark my words, John, he's as sleek a scoundrel as you'll find outside of the State's Prison. He cares less for Alleghenia and her capital city than you do for one of the hairs on his rascally head. I tell you, the Union has bought him, body and soul, and unless a miracle comes down from heaven, I'm a beaten man!"

Barclay bit his lips without replying. In his heart of hearts, he knew that Peter Rathbawne's words were true.

"He'll be impeached, sooner or later," continued the old man, "if there's a speck of decency left in the Legislature—which I doubt. But long before that, John, long before that, I'll be down and out. I would to God you were Governor of Alleghenia, my boy. You're the only ray of hope I can see for her."

The Lieutenant-Governor fell back a step, and covered his face with his hands. For a full minute there was absolute silence. Rathbawne had returned to the table, and, with his fore-arms across the back of a chair, and one foot on the lower cross-bar, was staring vacantly at his autographs, his hands moulding and remoulding each other into an infinity of forms. Natalie was at the window, her face in the crevice between the curtains. The same impulse had prompted both father and daughter. There are some things which it is better not to watch.

They turned at the sound of his voice, to find him with his head flung back, his hands clenched at his sides, his right foot planted firmly in advance of his left, his whole bearing one of passionate earnestness. And, though he was seemingly addressing Rathbawne, there was that in his voice and in his words which was meant for every ear in the state!

"Governor of Alleghenia!" he said, "I would to God I were! Sometimes I almost—yes, sometimes I wholly despair. I love this state, Mr. Rathbawne, as I love nothing else on earth—not even my girl there, not even Natalie. You two are the only ones in the world who can understand what it means when I say that. It has always been so, ever since I was big enough to know what Alleghenia meant, and more than ever since I have come to understand her shame, and her vital peril, and her dire need. I've never tried to explain the feeling; I've never found any one who seemed to share it with me. I hear other men talk of national patriotism, and the flag, and all that, and I understand it, and honor them for it. But—while it may be only a fancy of mine—for me Kenton City comes even before Washington, and even before these United States of America the sovereign state of Alleghenia! I would have her courts incorruptibility itself, her government the perfect commingling of equity and mercy; her press the vehicle of verity, intelligence, and watchfulness; her public servants the faithful exponents of loyalty and diligence; her people, one and all, whatever is best in our interpretation of the word American—and then, something more!—Alleghenians!—citizens, not only of the Republic, but of the state which I would have shine brightest in the field of stars, and be quoted, from Maine to California, and from Florida to

Washington, as the synonym for law and order, truth, integrity, and justice. You know how far the dream is from the reality. We are held up to ridicule and contempt as law-breakers, time-servers, and bribe-takers—and we deserve it! I can't see help on any hand. I don't believe our people, as a class, are actually vicious and corrupt—only callous and indifferent, accustomed so long to the spectacle of political chicanery and depravity that they have lost their ability to appreciate its significance. But, so far as results are concerned, it all amounts to the same thing. Once, I hoped I should be able to do something. But now—I'm a nonentity, Mr. Rathbawne, as you know, and not only that, but a man who has taken a false step, from which he can never recover. I'm dead, politically speaking—as dead as Benjamin Butler!"

He paused, drawing a deep breath.

"We were speaking of your interview," he added, more evenly. "What was the result?"

"Nothing, beyond what I've told you," answered Rathbawne, shaking his head. "All I can do is to keep my mouth shut, await developments, and trust in a Providence which it takes a good bit of obstinacy to believe hasn't deserted the state of Alleghenia for good and all. It isn't for my own sake alone, John, that I pray the Union will give in before my people begin to think of violence. You remember '94 in Chicago? Well, we don't want anything like that in Kenton City. It would be the last straw! Alleghenia has a big enough burden of disgrace to carry, as it is."

A servant entered, even as he was speaking, to summon him to the telephone, and with an exclamation of impatience he left the room. Immediately, Natalie stepped from her post at the window, and came toward Barclay with outstretched hands.

"Oh, Johnny boy," she said, "I'm *so* sorry. How you've been hurt, dear, and disappointed, and cruelly wronged!"

The Lieutenant-Governor's hands clenched again at the sound of sorrow in her voice, and he strove in vain to control the tremor of his lip. Tenderly he put his arms about her.

"I'm sorry, too, little girl—sorry you were here to see me make a fool of myself and then squeal when I got hurt as I deserved. I shouldn't have done that. But I was so proud—so grateful—I thought I was going to be able"—

"Johnny—Johnny!"

They held to each other rigidly for an instant, her face against his sleeve, in an agony which no tears came to soothe.

"There!" said Barclay presently. "I'm better already. It does one good to blow off steam, now and again."

His tone lightened perceptibly.

"And look here," he added, "what's most important, after all, is that I have news for you, and ought to be delivering it."

As yet, they did not dare to meet each other's eyes, but Natalie took the cue.

"You can spare yourself the trouble, my lord," she retorted, sweeping him a curtsy. "I can guess what it is, without your aid. You've found him!"

"How did you know?"

"I didn't. But you will remember that I asked you to find him. The inference is as plain as a pikestaff."

"Arrogance! But you're right. I have. He has been at my rooms since last night. He was frightfully shaky, and utterly despondent, but he's taking something to settle his nerves, and I've no doubt a week or so of good food and straight living will bring him around into something like his old form."

"Boy dear! And you're taking care of him?"

"Oh, just directing the cure, that's all! I'll tell you more when I can report definite progress. Do you suppose there is a single secluded corner in all this mansion which has not already been preëmpted by Dorothy and Nisbet?"

He slipped his arm about her again, and together they went out, across the wide hall, toward the drawing-room. Rathbawne was standing at the telephone under the stairway, but, as they approached him, he replaced the receiver, and stepped forth under the light of the chandelier. They both halted, shocked into speechlessness by the look on his face. The

past ten minutes seemed to have added a decade to his age. His cheeks were white and drawn, and with his hands he groped before him, as if he had been stricken blind. As he came close to them, he lifted his head, and peered first at his daughter, and then at Barclay, seeming barely to recognize them.

"Dad! What *is* it?" said the girl, in a voice just above a whisper.

Rathbawne raised his hand, and pushed back the hair from his forehead.

"A message—from Payson—of the 'Sentinel,'" he mumbled. "It seems there's a fire—a fire on Charles Street—near the mills—one of my buildings—a shop—a shop. Some one in the crowd—threw a torch in at the window—there is a great crowd—a throng of strikers—watching—cheering the flames—hissing the firemen. They've begun early—and this is only the beginning! My people—my people"——

He stumbled forward, and would have fallen, but that his daughter caught him. To his dying day Barclay remembered how, as he sprang to aid her, her hands gleamed, white and slender, against the black of Peter Rathbawne's coat.

The hush that followed was broken presently by the sound of the old man's choking sobs, and the low, soothing tones of Natalie, murmuring against his ear. From the drawing-room came indeterminate scraps of Mrs. Wynyard's gay chatter, as she regaled Mrs. Rathbawne with the gossip gleaned in a round of calls. She herself was partly visible, drawing off her gloves before the fire. From the music-room beyond issued the chords of Dorothy's none-too-sure accompaniment, and young Nisbet's superb, full tenor:—

"Ah, love, could you and I with fate conspire
To grasp the sorry scheme of things entire"——

But, in the Lieutenant-Governor's imagination, another sound mingled with and dominated these,—the voice of Michael McGrath, as he had heard it that morning, through the open door of Governor Abbott's room:—

"It won't be a strike like other strikes, not so long as I'm running it, that is. It's going to mean business from the word go!"

VIII

THE GOVERNOR UNMASKS

One spotted peach will contaminate an entire basket, one drop of ink cloud a full glass of clear water. It was so in the case of the strikers at the Rathbawne Mills. Their unwonted idleness, the long succession of empty hours, already, among the more improvident, the preliminary pressure of privation's teeth,—all these made them easy prey for the sophistries of men like McGrath and his associates. At first they simply laughed at the arraignments of Peter Rathbawne as a plutocrat, a slave-master, and an oppressor of the poor, knowing better in their hearts. But the memory of past kindness is too apt to be the most fleeting of human impressions. On the one side the gates of the Rathbawne Mills remained obstinately closed, and, though Rathbawne himself manifested no intention of resorting to the intolerable importation of "scab" labor, he persisted in his refusal to treat with the Union so long as the discharge of the fifteen men remained a subject proposed for debate. On the other hand, the denunciations of McGrath and the other Union orators were constant, unavoidable, and sufficiently plausible to produce an impression, and linger in the mind. And, meanwhile, to and fro among the strikers, stalked, arm in arm, the spectres of idleness and starvation, the one smirking openly, the other, as yet, half-veiled. Altogether it was fertile ground.

After the burning of Mr. Rathbawne's shop, on the first night of the strike, ensued a week of comparative quiet. The outrage had been flagrant, the source, if not the very author, of it was known, and the police did—nothing. For three days the press of Kenton City blazed with indignation, excepting only the "Record," which openly favored the strikers, and then all the papers alike suddenly ceased to refer to the incident at all. For, while McGrath was not in favor of wasting the funds of the Union, he was as well aware as the next man that a dollar, as well as a stitch, in time, saves nine.

Herein lay the cardinal peril of Alleghenia. As John Barclay had said, it was not that her people, as a class, were corrupt or criminal, but merely that they viewed with easy tolerance evidences of laxity and lawlessness which would have set the citizens of another state by the ears, and filled the newspaper columns and the public forums with indignation and protest. In this respect, the papers of Kenton City were the most flagrant offenders. Even the most reputable, the "Sentinel," could be silenced at practically any moment by those cognizant of the method, and in a position to command the price, of manipulation. As a whited sepulchre it was a conspicuous success, being irreproachably scholarly, dignified, and didactic in tone, and wholly destitute of principle.

Michael McGrath, demagogue though he was, knew his public as the physician knows the pulse he feels. It was a feature of the strike at the Rathbawne Mills that no attempt was made to justify the cause of the strikers in the eye of the disinterested public of Kenton City. McGrath himself was fully alive to the slenderness of his pretext, and alive, as well, to the strength of Peter Rathbawne's case, if it should come to a discussion of the rights and wrongs involved, wherein his business probity and his justice to, and consideration for, his employees, would furnish arguments well-nigh unanswerable. He contented himself, therefore, with standing upon a simple declaration of the will of the Union, which was, in effect, his own; and, strong in his reliance, if not upon the support, at least upon the non-interference of the state authorities, devoted his attention to holding the press in check, by methods long since found effectual, and confidently left the public to think and act as it saw fit.

There could have been no more contemptuous comment upon the moral and intellectual status of the community than this insolent assumption of its indifference to the commonest principles of justice, but for a time his confidence had the appearance of being amply justified. The strike went its way, characterized by an infinity of petty outrages and a constant and consistent vilification of Peter Rathbawne, while—with the exception of that first and promptly quashed protest on the part of the press—no voice was raised in opposition.

Reduced to its lowest terms, the struggle was one between Rathbawne and McGrath, and that, not as representatives the one of a great industrial, the other of a great socialistic organization, but as individuals. The source of the stream which had thus reached its rapids, and was plunging on toward its annihilating cataract, lay far back in the early days of Rathbawne's commercial career. McGrath was a man who practiced neither the vice of forgetfulness nor the virtue of forgiveness. As plain as the event of a yesterday lay upon his memory his contemptuous dismissal from Rathbawne's employ, charged in particular with a petty speculation, and in general with the indisputable fact of being a bad influence in the mills. His case had been in many ways identical with that of the men whose cause he was now, for reasons of his own, espousing.

But Peter Rathbawne, then less shrewd in estimating men than now, had reckoned without due credit to the vindictiveness and pertinacity of the man before him. McGrath—brutally handsome in those days, idle, insolent, and independent—later had developed qualities of which at the time there was little evidence. He had smiled and shrugged his shoulders—a habit which had grown upon him—as Rathbawne gave his verdict, and had instinctively resisted the temptation to threaten revenge. For that inspiration he had been devoutly grateful ever since. It had enabled him to work in silence and unseen, like a mole, toward the goal at which he aimed. He was a poker player, was Michael McGrath, of the class which pulls victory out of defeat by the aid of its own personality and a low pair. The calm indifference with which he had received his dismissal from the employ of Peter Rathbawne seemed to him, on reflection, to have been the unconscious forerunner of the elaborate *nonchalance* with which he now viewed the unexpected filling of a broken straight. It was certain that the other player had not guessed the strength of his cards.

He had never forgiven, never forgotten. It had taken a quarter-century of unremitting effort, of indomitable perseverance, of calculated ingenuity, to secure to him the position which he now felt to be assured—that of being able to cope with the man who had been his adversary, and so overwhelmingly his superior. The fight was on at last,—a fight in which the odds were not only equal, but, if anything, in favor of the former mill-hand, thus become one of the most powerful men in Alleghenia; a fight to be fought to the bitter finish, with an almost certain triumph as his reward.

Added to these motives was another,—newer, it is true, but none the less potent,—his hatred for the Lieutenant-Governor. He had been able to laugh within a half-minute after the words "unmitigated blackguard" had smitten his ears; but they had rankled for all that. It was not so much the insult, as the knowledge that it was justified. He was remarkably candid with himself, was Michael McGrath.

Hence the unparalleled venom of the strike at the Rathbawne Mills. McGrath's dual sense of wounded vanity prescribed a course of surpassing vindictiveness. His personal resentment, reinforced by consummate appreciation of the adversaries with whom he had to deal, dictated a safe road to revenge, which enabled him to fling wide the floodgates of his long-stored animosity, secure in his knowledge of having the upper hand. Disorder, calumny, outrage, even open anarchy—he could venture upon them unafraid. A corrupt Governor, whom he had created, stood behind him, smiling tolerantly. An indifferent community would let him have his will. Only he must proceed by degrees, and be ready at any moment to take one backward step for the sake of being able presently thereafter to take two in advance.

Here precisely lay the weak point in his plan of campaign. With the fatuity incidental on occasions to even the shrewdest minds, he had not counted upon independence in the host which he believed slave to him, in thought and word and deed. He rated himself the dictator, the prompter without whose suggestion no one of all the players in this gigantic tragedy could speak his line. As a matter of fact, like all leaders of his class, he could drive his followers forward at will, while totally unable to hold them back. He was wholly master so long as he used the spur. The peril lay in the fancied efficacy of the curb. In short, he was discovering already that he had unwittingly created a monster beside which Frankenstein's was the veriest doll.

Thus, shortly, the strain began to tell upon the four thousand unemployed sets of nerves around the Rathbawne Mills. Meetings became more frequent and more turbulent; drinking and disorder were observably on the increase; and at the end of another four weeks one of the gates of the mills was beaten down, and several hundred men and boys paraded around shop after shop, breaking windows and singing ribald songs. It was not a very serious demonstration in itself. Its ominous feature lay in the fact that the police made no attempt to check it. There was something else about it, to the thinking of McGrath. It was not so much that events were moving too fast, but that they were moving without intelligent control.

Two nights later, another building belonging to Peter Rathbawne, and situated only a half-block from the mills, was burned in the same manner as the first, watched by an enormous crowd of strikers, who applauded each fresh burst of flame, as if the fire had been a circus or a play. Still there was no move on the part of the police.

Then it was that the business men of Kenton City sat up in their office chairs and began to think. This was an eventuality entirely outside the calculations of McGrath. But the pachydermatous inertia of the citizens of Alleghenia had yet its vulnerable spot, where the weapon might enter. Vaguely these men had known that the state was rotten, but the fact had never been brought to their attention in a manner so poignantly suggestive before. Unwittingly McGrath had aroused the suspicion that it was not the purse of Peter Rathbawne alone which was in danger. If it was possible for disorder to go to such extremes in the very streets of Kenton City without fear of interference or rebuke, then no man's property was safe. That thought was the Achilles' heel of the community. So it was that a Citizens' Committee, composed of presidents of

two insurance companies, directors from five banks, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and the Board of Trade, and, finally, Colonel Amos Broadcastle, was appointed to wait upon the Mayor. That gentleman, as was entirely to be expected, referred them to the Governor, and to the Governor they went.

Barclay was present at the interview. For his own reasons Governor Abbott had kept his immediate subordinate well to the fore in all matters pertaining to the strike since the latter's rebuke to McGrath,—in all matters, that is to say, not involving the exercise of actual authority. Of that, indeed, the Lieutenant-Governor had had no hope after the conversation in Peter Rathbawne's library. He met the representatives of the press, conducted the correspondence with mill-owners and other negatively interested parties, and at the Governor's request made what was palpably a farcical inspection of the entire state militia—to judge of their readiness for strike service!—a task which consumed a fortnight in constant travel, and visits to armories all alike in insufficient equipment and utter slovenliness. The Ninth Regiment alone remained, and this command was to parade for inspection by the Governor himself that very evening. The coincidence flashed through Barclay's mind as the Citizens' Committee entered, with Broadcastle, in his capacity as spokesman, at its head.

The dignity and air of command habitual to the Colonel of the Ninth were doubly apparent as he advanced toward the Governor's table. Both Barclay and Abbott rose to receive him, but the latter reseated himself, as soon as Broadcastle had introduced his fellow-members of the Committee. He listened to what followed with an air of thoughtfulness, tinged with a faint and exasperating suggestion of amusement. At a neighboring table, his official stenographer took down every word which fell.

Colonel Broadcastle was not accustomed to mince matters, when the occasion demanded brevity and conciseness. Now, he stepped to within a few feet of the Governor's table, and stood rigidly confronting him, with his hands clasped before him on the head of his stick, in the position of parade-rest.

"Governor Abbott," he said, in his curt, dry voice, "these gentlemen and myself form a Committee appointed by a meeting of the business men of Kenton City, to protest against the state of affairs now existing in connection with the strike at the Rathbawne Mills. It is only generous to presume that other matters have diverted your attention from an appreciation of these conditions. The situation is without parallel in the annals of Alleghenia. Disorder is rampant, and destruction of property is freely indulged in by the strikers without any apparent fear of molestation. Despite the fact that there is a large police-force, it makes no effort to check these operations. The sole reply of Chief Pendle to the protests of those interested in the promotion of law and order has been that he will not suffer any outside interference in the control of his department—the which, in view of his responsibility to the public, can only be regarded as sheer and intolerable insolence! An appeal to Mayor Goadby has elicited the response that the whole matter lies in the Governor's hands."

The Colonel paused. The Governor, leaning back in his chair, and fingering a pencil, smiled slightly and nodded his head.

"I suppose that is so," he said. "Continue, continue, Colonel Broadcastle."

"It is the sense of the law-abiding element of Kenton City," went on the Colonel, flushing at the condescension of his tone, "that the limit of endurance has been reached. If, willfully or otherwise, the police do not act, my regiment is prepared to act as substitute. I have already placed it at the service of the Adjutant-General. His reply, like the Mayor's, was to refer me to you for orders. I am here to receive them, sir."

"Your offer is appreciated," said the Governor suavely. "We of Kenton City have reason to be proud of the Ninth, Colonel Broadcastle. I congratulate myself upon my privilege of reviewing it, to-night. And we have reason to be proud, as well, of the intelligence which has made such an organization possible. Your disinterested devotion"—

Broadcastle flung up his chin.

"I am not here to receive compliments, sir!" he said abruptly.

"Nor I to bestow them," answered the Governor, unruffled. "As commander-in-chief of the state forces, I believe it is not outside my province to render deserved commendation to a subordinate."

"Oh, do not let us juggle with words, Governor Abbott! It is precisely as commander-in-chief of the state forces that the

time has come for you to act; it is precisely as your subordinate that I am here to receive your orders. Assume the responsibility which confronts you, issue the commands proper to the emergency, and you will have no more tireless executor of them than I. My regiment can be on duty at the Rathbawne Mills inside of six hours"—

"But, my good Colonel Broadcastle," broke in the Governor, "the state has no need of your regiment for the moment! Calling upon the militia is no light matter, sir. You talk about my ordering out the Ninth as you would advise me to ring for a messenger-boy!"

"The welfare of the municipality, if not that of the commonwealth," replied Colonel Broadcastle firmly, "demands that an immediate stop be put to this lawlessness. We are dealing with extremities, sir!"

The Governor swung forward, and placed his elbows on the table.

"You will permit me to be the best judge of what the welfare of the commonwealth may be," he retorted. "Whatever lawlessness exists—and I think you have grossly exaggerated its extent, Colonel Broadcastle—is due to the selfish obstinacy of one man. In my opinion, Mr. Rathbawne is entirely in the wrong. He had fair warning, which he did not choose to heed. If his property suffers at the hands of the strikers, he has only himself to blame."

"It is not a question of Mr. Rathbawne, or of any other individual," said Broadcastle, "but of the integrity of the state of Alleghenia!"

"The integrity of the state of Alleghenia," answered the Governor dryly, "has been intrusted, by the vote of her citizens, to me, as chief executive."

"An action," exclaimed the Colonel, "which I venture to predict they will shortly have reason most bitterly to regret!"

Governor Abbott rose abruptly to his feet.

"This interview is at an end, Colonel Broadcastle," he said, bringing his fist down upon the table with a thud. "I take exception to your remarks, from first to last. I consider myself fully competent to deal with the situation, and you may depend, sir, I shall do so at my own time, and in my own way. If Mr. Peter Rathbawne supposes that he can defy reason and justice at will, and that the state authorities are prepared to support him, he is grossly and fatally mistaken. Gentlemen, I have the honor to bid you good-day!"

For a quarter-minute, the two men stood facing each other, without speaking. It was observable that the eyes of neither flinched. Then—

"It is my earnest hope, Elijah Abbott," said the Colonel slowly, "to see you impeached by a righteously indignant community, and committed for a term of years to the State's Prison at Mowberly, for rank malfeasance in office!"

The Governor shrugged his shoulders.

"Your record and your position protect you, Colonel Broadcastle," he said, with something of his usual suavity. "Will you have the goodness to retire?"

As the Citizens' Committee left the room the Lieutenant-Governor turned on his heel, passed into his office, and closed the door.

For a long time he sat motionless at his desk, with his temples in his hands, staring at a frame upon the opposite wall, which contained the emblazoned arms of Alleghenia. These were a hand holding even balances, upon a circular shield, supported by the nude figures of two young men, representing Art and Labor. Above, upon a scroll, were the words, "*Justitia. Lex. Integritas.*"

It was not only bad heraldry, but indifferently appropriate symbolism.

IX

THE NINTH PASSES IN REVIEW

The huge armory of the Ninth, transformed, by the same system which had metamorphosed the *personnel* of the regiment itself, from a gaunt, barn-like structure, ill-fitted to its purpose in all but size, to the most cheerful, as well as the most completely equipped, of Alleghenian arsenals, was blazing with light and echoing to the sound of many voices. A steady stream of people poured in at the heavy doors, now standing wide, but significant, with their great timbers, elaborate locks and bolts, and precautionary peep-holes, of the possibility of an attitude less hospitable. Threading their way at a rapid pace through the more sluggish main current of the crowd, the members of the regiment, in an infinite variety of civilian attire,—from tweeds and knickerbockers to top-hats and evening-dress,—sought their respective company-rooms, vanished therein, and, presently, reappeared in uniform. It was as if behind those ten doors which lined the upper corridor there were as many moulds, identical in form, where-into this perplexing diversity of raw material was plunged on entering, to be drawn forth again in a constant reduplication of militiamen.

As the hour for the review drew near, the proportion of these to the throng with which they mingled, perceptibly increasing, seemed, little by little, to leaven the whole lump. The dress-uniform of the Ninth was everywhere, the black shakos and epaulettes, white pompons, cross-belts and gloves, and multiplicity of brass buttons, lending the immense assemblage a singular spirit and vivacity.

On the floor of the drill-room the people spread in all directions, fan-like, from the main doorway, the multitudinous footfalls mounting murmuringly into the spaces of the lofty roof, where forty arc-lights hung, dizzily suspended, pallid in the thin haze of dust swung upwards from the hurrying feet of the thousands below.

"Precisely like an army of ants—and every one of them with an uncle or two, and a round dozen of nephews and nieces!" said Mrs. Wynyard.

She and the Rathbawne girls were looking down upon the drill-floor from the balcony of the Colonel's room. Broadcastle and the Lieutenant-Governor were deep in conversation inside, having seized the delay in the arrival of Governor Abbott as an opportunity for a few words in private.

"How funny they are, scuttling along, all of them!" said Dorothy. "And how immensely pleased the favored ones are, who have a soldier to show them the way. I see a distinct difference in their walk from that of the others, don't you, Natalie? They seem to be saying '*We were invited*—and by this splendid creature at our side!' See how they strut! And look at the soldierless ones, how timidly they go—just as if they had found their tickets in the street, or had crept in through the basement windows. 'Please, kind Mr. Soldier-man, let us stay and see the show. We'll be *awfully* good!'"

"How preposterous you are, Dorothy!" answered Mrs. Wynyard. "Look! The people are taking to the sides of the room already, and the companies are forming. What astonishing method and precision there is to it all! Do you suppose each man has a little circle marked on the floor, to show just where he is to stand?"

"I haven't the most remote doubt of it," said Natalie, with a smile,— "and his name neatly lettered inside it with gilt paint!"

The long, enclosed racks at the ends of the drill-room were open now, and the electric light winked upon the barrels of the Springfields, as busy, white-gloved hands plied the polishing cloths along them. The enormous drill-floor, cleared as if by magic from the disorderly weed-growth which had encumbered it, began to make manifest its proper crop—long lines of gray and white, like sprouting sage, at first but a dot here and there, to indicate the direction, then a scattering, then distinct clumps, finally a thick, serried row. In the distance, a bugle sounded, followed by a long ruffle of drums, and Colonel Broadcastle stepped quickly to the window of the balcony.

"There's the Governor," he said. "Will you come in? I'll send my orderly to show you to your seats."

At the same moment, the door from the corridor opened, and the orderly entered, his hand at his shako.

"Sir, the Governor has arrived."

Then, as the trio on the balcony stepped in through the window, he turned suddenly and superlatively scarlet. As has

been said, young Nisbet was accustomed to getting what he wanted. In this instance what he had wanted happened to be that the Adjutant should choose him from the guard detail as Colonel's orderly. To be thus chosen was to be admittedly the most immaculate of thirty men, all more immaculate than a thousand immaculate others. The thing was not easy of achievement, but Dorothy Rathbawne was to be present at the review, and so—there was no second way about it—it simply had to be done. Young Nisbet's way of doing it was an absolutely new uniform and gold-plated buttons and accoutrements. Extravagance? Vanity? Perhaps! But at the present moment, he was wearing one cross-belt where his thousand and odd comrades were wearing two. There was no answer to such an argument as that.

Colonel Broadcastle had reserved seats for the party on the temporary reviewing stand, and, five minutes after they had taken their places, the bugles sang again, a curt order—"shun! 'shun!"—ran in varying intonations from company to company, and the slack gray ranks before them stiffened into absolute rigidity. Then from the broad hallway beyond came a tremendous burst of sound, and, to the strains of the famous old march of the Ninth, the regimental band swung into view, followed by Governor Abbott and Colonel Broadcastle and the former's staff.

To the Lieutenant-Governor, but newly returned from his wearisome round of the state armories, much of what followed was so stale as to be no more than a constantly increasing strain upon nerves already overtaxed. He deliberately allowed his attention to wander, until he felt rather than actually perceived the steady tramp-tramp of the men, swinging, fours right, into column, the occasional "hep! hep!" of an officious file-closer, the endless succession of fours winking past him, like the palings of a gray fence seen from the window of a train, the intervals narrowed by short-step, widening again at the "Forward—*march!*" the blare of the band, lessening as it approached the further end of the building, then suddenly bursting into its former volume at the right-about. He endured it all listlessly. It was tediously familiar, stamped upon his brain by repetition after repetition.

Moreover, he was completely fagged, and unutterably oppressed by his burden of discouragement. The old wounds, in part healed by his recent absence from the immediate vicinity of his constant discomfiture, had been re-opened and set bleeding afresh by Governor Abbott's treatment of the Citizens' Committee. Whatever lingering hope had remained in his mind of peace with honor for the troubled capital of Alleghenia, seemed to have been effectually dispelled by that interview. The most enduring charity, the most fatuous credulity, the blindest partisanship—even these could not have preserved a last spark of confidence in Elijah Abbott. Still less was Barclay's indeterminate hope of the ultimate triumph of right able to stand against such crushing evidence of its instability. It was no longer a question of suspicions, of precedents, of deductions from the significance of a host of former misdoings. Out of his own mouth was the Governor convicted. "At my own time, and in my own way," he had said. It was a phrase, nothing more, and could be boiled down until its whole purport was contained in one word—Never!

"Fours *left—March!* Companee—*halt!*"

The entire regiment, as one man, swung from column of fours into battalion front, halted, and then—cr-r-rick! boooo-m-m-m!—came to order arms. The sides of the room were lined with a solid rampart of white and gray and gold. Barclay was aware of the First Sergeants, scurrying from their positions to report, of their voices, and those of the Majors and the Adjutant, and, finally the Colonel:—

"Take your post, sir!"

But his thoughts were anywhere and everywhere else. What a farce it all was, this life which he was leading, this mental and moral martyrdom to an impossible hope, this eternal and heart-sickening ordeal of hope deferred, this waiting, waiting, waiting, for something which never would and never could happen! Rotten, rotten to the core, this state for which he would have given his heart's blood, and not only rotten, but not caring a whit for her rottenness—glorying rather, in her own degradation. The chief executive had flung back into their very faces the appeal to his conscience of the most influential men in Kenton City; the police, even now seated about their station stoves, were sniggling at the predicament of the public which paid them for its protection against precisely the kind of thing which they openly tolerated and encouraged; yes, and even the militia, the guarantee of law and order, Broadcastle's own command, were decked out in tinsel and pipeclay, strutting to music in a palpable bid for applause and admiration. And yonder—the tide of anarchy was slowly but surely rising about the Rathbawne Mills, presaging riot, bloodshed, God alone knew what!—but one thing, inevitably,—the absolute downfall of dignity and rout of decency in Alleghenia!

Suddenly, his old intrepid spirit of resolution reasserted itself, but doubtfully, like the flame of a lamp flaring once out of dimness before it dies forever. Was it for this that he had devoted the best thought of his youth and his earlier manhood to

plans for the betterment of his state? Should he now, at this, the hour of her supremest political and moral peril, desert her as irredeemable, and join the ranks of those who sneered at her, and pointed mocking fingers at her shame and nakedness?

"Your loquacity faintly suggests that of a mummy," said Natalie, at his side.

"I was alone with my thoughts," answered the Lieutenant-Governor, turning to her with an attempt at a smile, "and pretty black ones they were, at that!"

"Alleghenia again?"

"Alleghenia again—and always. This business is becoming an obsession with me. I haven't had a chance to tell you, and I can't very well explain now. I'll have to leave it till I see you to-morrow. But something happened to-day which drove another nail—and one of the last!—into the coffin of my faith. There's not a gleam of hope anywhere."

"Don't you see hope in all this?" asked Natalie, with a little, indicative gesture toward the scene before them.

"Somehow, it is impressing me tremendously to-night—more than ever before. I seem to understand better what it means, what it stands for."

"It's a stale enough story with me," said Barclay. "Remember, I've been doing just about nothing but watch this kind of thing for the past two weeks. After all, what does it amount to but a thousand possibilities parading like peacocks?"

"How unlike you, that speech! It amounts to a vast deal more than that, Johnny boy,—oh, infinitely more! I don't speak of the other regiments you have seen. This is different. Well, what *does* it amount to? Who and what are these thousand peacocks of yours? Aren't they the very flower of Kenton City, the youngest and best blood in our veins, gathered by one good man's will into an organization of sterling loyalty, with one great aim in view, and that the support and protection and preservation of all that is best in Alleghenia? The very fact that such a body of men exists among us is in the nature of a guarantee, it seems to me, that we shall come out all right in the end. Have you noticed their faces?—many of them so absurdly boyish, all of them so honest, and manly, and—and—*American*, John! They are the personifications of your ideal of that afternoon in the library—Americans, and something more—Alleghenians! And, to prove it, they are freely giving a portion of their time and their strength, in order that there may be at least one thing in Kenton City which is without fear and without reproach. I wonder—I wonder, John, whether it isn't the old story, after all: whether you haven't been wandering all over the world, like the prince in the fairy-book, looking for the magic talisman that is to save the state you love, while, all the time, it has been lying at your very door? Oh, this means something—I'm too stupid to interpret it as you could—but I know it's there, and that it would help you and encourage you. Let me try. Look there! A single purpose animates them all—the maintenance of the standard which Colonel Broadcastle set for them, and the record they have made for themselves."

Colonel Broadcastle's voice was sweeping the armory, as he put the regiment through the manual of arms.

"One has only to hear one of them—Mr. Nisbet, for example—say 'the Ninth' to find the hope of which you are in search. These men say it as others say 'God' or 'my mother'—as you yourself, Johnny boy, say 'Alleghenia.'"

"Charge—*bay'n'ts!*"

With a single click, a thousand rifles fell into position, a thousand left feet smote the floor in unison, and the light rippled and twinkled along a solid line of flashing steel.

"There! A single voice,—a single, mighty response! Don't you see the wonderful suggestiveness of it? Don't you feel the presence of the enormous reserve force which lies behind all this? Oh, believe me, John, this is a weapon too mighty to lie unused, and too intelligent to be misused, if the worst come to the worst. After all, as no one knows better than yourself, it's not your own advancement you're looking for, it's that of the state. Well, there may be other agencies, perhaps entirely independent of you or of your influence, but none the less invaluable. For example, you are close upon despair—and yet, before your fears come true, the forces of wrong will have to fight their way, step by step, through this rampart of American manhood!"

Barclay touched her hand lightly, as she ceased speaking. In the midst of the thousands about them, they were alone as they had never been before.

"Thank you," he said simply. "Thank you, littlest and wisest in the world!"

The regiment was in motion again, skirting the room in column of fours, preparatory to the march-past: but now the Lieutenant-Governor surveyed it from a new, and a dual point-of-view,—as a thousand individuals, that is, each a potential factor for immeasurable good in the coming rehabilitation of the state; and, then, as a vast fighting-machine perfect in every detail, resistless and awe-inspiring in its very integrity. He noted the faces as they passed—stern, intelligent faces, young, for the most part, and curiously refined, intent upon correct performance of the present duty, and touched, almost without exception, with an enthusiasm born of the martial music and the rhythmic tramp of advancing feet. He saw the quick, reciprocal glance of the pivot and flank men, as the fours, in perfect alignment, swept round into company-front; the long, easy compression and give of the compact lines, acquiring correct adjustment; the rigid tenure of chests and shoulders; the firm fling of slender gray legs, as regularly intervalled as the teeth of a giant comb. Company by company, the regiment fell into the cadence of full-step. Midway, the standards of the Republic and Alleghenia rippled side by side. And so, with blare of brass and sharp staccato of snare-drums, with sheen of rifles and accoutrements, with flash of slender swords, raised in salute,—above all and always, with that magnificent unanimity, that mighty pulse of the thunderous advance, the Ninth swept past its Governor and its Colonel in review.

And then, in an instant, as it seemed, the vast square was formed again, a sharp command rang out, the rifles snapped to a present-arms, the standards dipped, and the strains of the "Star-Spangled Banner" mounted triumphantly to the great girders of the lofty roof. The multitude of spectators rose at the sound, and the Lieutenant-Governor rose with them, his heart aglow with new inspiration, new hope, and new resolve. The band was almost speaking the words of the anthem on the dust-grayed air:—

"Oh! say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave?"

To the accompaniment of a myriad clapping hands, the Lieutenant-Governor resumed his seat, shaken by a novel, tremendous emotion. Yes! a thousand times yes! The star-spangled banner, symbol of loftiest ideals and purest purposes, mute memorial and reminder of devotion incalculable and sacrifice without bound, guarantee of liberty and brotherhood, mercy, equality, and justice—yet waved! And, part and indissoluble portion of its inspiring memories and illustrious destinies, the star of Alleghenia yet blazed upon its azure field! He had been living in a world of unrealities, in a valley of shadow, grayed by portents of failure and despair. His eyes had been narrowed to see the pitfalls which lined his path, to the stumbling-blocks, the briers, the indescribable sordidness of his personal position and his immediate surroundings. Now, he looked up and horizonward. The thunder-clouds of official depravity and duplicity which darkened the way of his endeavor—were they able, after all, to blot out the memory of the clear, high sky above?

As this thought came to him, it was almost as if, in actuality, a brooding heaven had been rent asunder, revealing the steel-blue of the infinite ether permeated with the supreme radiance of noon; and at the incursion of this illuminating element the host of his discouragements dwindled and disappeared, like noisome little prowlers of the night, scuttling to cover at the abrupt break of a tropical day. For a moment, he strove to realize whence the light had come, and in what consisted this sovereign ally, hitherto uncalculated, of his optimism. As he tracked his thought, it led him undeviatingly back to its direct inspiration, the words of Natalie Rathbawne.

"Before your fears come true"—she had said.

Before his fears came true—well, what? The revelation leaped at him full and fair now, and every nerve sang like a taut wire in answer to its touch. Before his fears came true, this wretched little world of petty chicanery and official corruption which surrounded and sickened him would be wiped out of existence. Abbott—McGrath—their machinations and their misdeeds—their lies and their ambitions—their power and their pride,—they were newts that fouled a pool, gnats in the sunshine, cinders on the snow. Towering above them, ready, at an instant's notice, to crush them out of being, was the rock of ages, the righteous spirit of Alleghenia, integral and indestructible, illumined by the ancient, undimmed, and eternal sense of rectitude inherent in the American people!

Not by his agency, perhaps—perhaps not even in his day,—nevertheless and infallibly, the right was bound to conquer in the end. The clear eyes and the firm mouths of the men of the Ninth spoke it, their rifles, their broad shoulders, and their precision confirmed and guaranteed it, and back of these stood the great, taciturn figure of the People, a smile upon its calm and silent lips. When those lips should speak, as speak they would, their words would be the annihilation of Elijah

Abbott and of all his kind!

Meanwhile—the bitterness—the disappointments—the humiliations—ah, in a moment, how they had grown shrunken, and wizened, and old! For out of the radiance of revelation, as Christ of old spoke to His disciples, so now the spirit of Alleghenia spoke to her Lieutenant-Governor.

"What is that to thee? Follow thou Me!"

Like a woman, the spirit of her cried unto him, and, like a man, the spirit of John Barclay answered.

X

A QUESTION AND AN ANSWER

Much to Barclay's satisfaction, Cavendish had obtained his appointment as a city reporter on the staff of the "Sentinel." Even the first week of the new life thus entered upon had produced a vast change in his manner and appearance. Though the Lieutenant-Governor had seen him but once, when he came to repay the loan made him—in itself, of all signs of restoration to a normal attitude, the most significant—he found that his complexion had cleared and softened, and his eye perceptibly brightened. He was clean-shaven once more, and his dress, while of strict simplicity, was yet suggestive of the old days when he had been called the most fastidious man in Kenton City. He held himself straighter, too, with his shoulders thrown back and his head up; and Barclay had noted, with quiet gratification, that there was not a tremor about the hands which unfolded and smoothed the bills he had come to return. One evidence alone remained of the desperate ordeal through which he had passed. His voice, formerly firm and vibrant with a spirit that was half gayety, half arrogance, was now indescribably modulated, and touched with a melancholy which was not that of servility, still less of shame. Rather, it was an unspeakably appealing regret, a monotonous listlessness, a suggestion of hopeless surrender to something tragic and inevitable. Barclay was puzzled by it. It seemed illogical, and evaded him, like a melody with a dimly familiar *motif* which he was unable to place or even fully recall. It haunted him singularly, when Cavendish had left, and afterwards, in his leisure moments, came back to him, striving, as he fancied, to make itself understood. Intimately candid as their recent relation had been, here was something unexplained, which he could not come at, and which was yet eloquent of vitality, of the need of comprehension.

Since that time, three weeks before, the two men had not met. For this there were several reasons. Barclay knew from a brief note that Cavendish had taken a small room in a boarding-house, not far from the "Rockingham," and that the pressure of his work for the "Sentinel" set him afoot so early, and sent him home at night so brain and body weary, that he had neither the strength nor the inclination for other things. Added to this, had been the Lieutenant-Governor's absorption in his own duties, and, in particular, his absence from Kenton City, on his round of inspection of the state militia. But, just before the dinner hour, on the evening following that of the review, Cavendish called, as Barclay was in the act of dressing.

"I had a suspicion I'd catch you just about this time," he said, dragging a chair to the door of the bedroom, where he could watch the Lieutenant-Governor struggling with a refractory white tie. "I'm getting on famously, and I wanted you to know it."

"That's right!" said Barclay, scowling into the mirror. "But then, I knew you would. Your pessimism didn't produce much effect on me. I've heard men talk like that before. And, of course, when a chap gets into the condition you were in, back there, there's no such thing as making him believe he can ever pull out. You talked like an ass, that first night, Spencer."

"And acted like a blackguard! I suppose you will allow me to refer to that now?"

"Now less than ever, my good sir. As I've told you already, all that belongs to the past. You're yourself again. What's the use of dwelling on a time gone by, when you were in reality somebody else—or, rather, nobody at all? When are you going to call at the Rathbawnes'? The old man is pretty ill, I'm afraid, but I think the rest would like to see you again. They were speaking of you only the other day—that is, one of them was!"

"Not till this strike trouble is over, at all events; they have all they can attend to at present, without being bothered by reformed drunkards. And perhaps I sha'n't call at all. I haven't decided yet what would be best."

Then, before Barclay had time to speak, he added:—

"By the way, I'm to take up the strike to-morrow, for the 'Sentinel.'"

"Are you?" exclaimed the Lieutenant-Governor, in a tone of the liveliest interest. "That's good news. It must be about the most important assignment they could give you, just now. Well, I wonder if you are destined to be the only conscientious reporter in Kenton City, or whether you will simply be like all the rest. Are you going to have the courage of your convictions—which I think I can surmise, though you haven't as yet confided them to me—or are you going to wear the slave-chains of your fellows, and distort, and misrepresent, and truckle and kow-tow to the policy of the most venal press in America?"

"*On fait ce qu'on peut*," said Cavendish, with a shrug. "Orders are orders, John. If the orders of the editor don't go, the orders on the cashier don't come. That's about all there is to it. It would be rather futile to attempt the Don Quixote act, if only for the reason that one would never get into print. One can't do more than follow instructions. The reporter's best policy is his paper's best honesty."

"Honesty?" repeated the Lieutenant-Governor. "Where does the honesty come in? Of course I understand your position. In a way, it is identical with mine—subservience to a principle that you despise, acquiescence in methods that you know to be utterly false and wrong! How sick I am of it all! It's the old experience, all over again, which I used to have as a child with the Tom Smith paper crackers. You are fascinated by the tinsel, and the colored paper, and the gaudy label. You think that when you've dissected one, and pulled it all to pieces, you'll find a bugle and a gold crown inside—because that's what it says on the box. But, the first thing you know, you'll find yourself blowing on a tin whistle and wearing a fool's cap of green paper! Lord! how the press of Kenton City needs a *man*—a man with the courage and the power to show up the scoundrels who are responsible for all this—McGrath and his associates, I mean. I'm sick and tired of reporters whose rascality is self-evident, of editors who are bought and sold like chattels, of a state of affairs, in general, so infamous as to surpass expression! You have my sympathy, Spencer—the sympathy of a fellow-victim. To be a reporter on a newspaper which dictates dishonesty; to be the lieutenant of a Governor who enjoins duplicity—it's all just about one and the same thing!"

"It's curious," commented Cavendish, "that it wasn't until about a week after—after that night, that I knew you were Lieutenant-Governor. Then, your name happened to be mentioned in the office, and somebody asked me if I knew you."

"Whereupon," said Barclay, conquering the tie at last, and turning from the mirror, "you had the inexpressible privilege of saying that you knew me intimately."

"Whereupon," repeated Cavendish, in that so singular tone which had lain heavy upon the other's memory, "I had the inexpressible privilege of saying that I used to know you, but that we had quarreled, and were now—strangers."

"Why?" demanded the Lieutenant-Governor, wheeling abruptly upon him. "What possessed you to say such a silly thing as that?"

Cavendish leaned forward in his chair, with his elbows on his knees, and his forehead against his interlaced fingers, staring at the floor.

"I'm glad, in a way, to have you ask that question," he said slowly. "We are wary of mock heroics, or even real heroics, men like you and me. And yet there are things which must be explained, things not easy to explain, because they come so close at times to melodrama. I've always had a horror of emotional situations; and, from what I know of you, I'm sure you have, as well. I'd avoid this explanation, if I could—indeed, I've deliberately avoided it, thus far. Yet if I were a Romanist in the presence of my priest, I think I should feel more at liberty to evade confession than I do now. For both our sakes, I'll try to be as brief, as simple, as lucid, as I can. And I'll trust you to understand, as well as may be. Don't think there's any pose, any aim at effect, in what I'm going to say. You've asked me a question, and I'm going to answer it, that's all! I don't think, in my present frame of mind, I could bear to have you entertain the suspicion that the answer was affected or lacking in candor. *Allons!* Already I'm growing too verbose!"

He looked up with a wan smile.

"Let's get down to facts. You ask me why I told my questioner that we no longer knew each other. Well, then, let's have at it! It was because, John Barclay, there is likely—no, there is sure—to come a time when you won't care to acknowledge me as your friend. Oh, wait!" he added, as the Lieutenant-Governor held up his hand in protest. "Hear me out. You say I talked like an ass, that first night. Perhaps. But the fact remains that I've been a drunkard—and that I'm bound to be one again! I've been fighting against temptation for several weeks. It hasn't been very strong, for some reason, and so I've managed to ground it so far. But you remember the chap with whom old Hercules wrestled? Every time he touched earth his strength was multiplied. Well, that's the way with drink. I can throw the temptation for a while, but every time I do so it rises, stronger many-fold. Sooner or later, I'm forced to give in. I know it, as I know I'm sitting here. I'm doing my best now, because, in the future, when the wrong that for a time you've righted goes wrong again, I want you to remember that I made the effort—for you—and for her—for the Fairy Princess. The end is as plain as day! It was born in me, this. I think I've never told you that my father died of it, but that's the truth. And the next time I drop, it will be for good and all. I shall never make another effort to conquer the inevitable. If I can't do it now, with the hope of

redemption thus made plain, with a new start, and a fresh chance, and—thanks to you, John—the past wiped off the slate and a new sum set to solve, with the incentive of your friendship and confidence, and the interest, so undeserved, of the Fairy Princess, into the bargain,—if I can't do it now, I say, why surely I can never do it. John, you can't know what I've been through. You, who've never had the temptation, can't conceive of what it means. It's a living actuality, this lust for drink. When your nerves go wrong, even at the end of a day, or a week, or a year, during which you've kept straight, when you're tired, discouraged, and, above all, *alone!*—then it comes at you like a live thing,—speaks—grips your arm—drags you wherever it wills! I've laughed at it, scoffed at it, in its absence, tried to make myself believe it a fragment of an otherwise forgotten dream, many and many and many a time. *But it always came back!* Oh, John Barclay, you others will never understand! A man has to have been through it, in order to know, and that not once, but, as I have, a hundred times."

"I can well believe it to be a tremendous temptation," said the Lieutenant-Governor gravely.

"Temptation? It's more than that! A temptation gives you *some* chance, doesn't it? You may yield to it, but, at least, you've had your fighting-chance. Well, in that sense, this is no temptation, though I've been using the word myself to describe it. Why, John, it's madness, sheer insanity. You probably remember that I never used to touch alcohol at all. I promised my poor mother to let it alone until I reached my majority. Of course, I didn't realize about the dear old man; he died when I was too young for that. But her one great fear, and naturally, was that the curse had descended to me—just as it had! Well, I stuck to my promise till I was twenty-one, and kept along in the same way for some time afterwards, just because there didn't seem to be any particularly good reason for taking up something which I had managed to get along very well without, all my life. Then came that time, you know—three years ago—and out of mere recklessness, bravado, God knows what, I began to drink. John, I was a doomed man from the first swallow! That demon had been hiding inside me, without sound or movement or other hint of his presence, for twenty-eight years—just waiting his chance! You know the rest. The fight has been going on ever since, and the thing has beaten every time. I've resisted. I've struggled. I've even prayed. It's all useless."

He pointed significantly to the curtain which hung where the door of the wine-closet had been.

"As I did that night," he continued, "I shall do again, and still again, until the end. It's insanity, nothing more or less. It lurks at the back of my brain—always—always—and then, suddenly, when I am least expecting it, it comes forward with a rush, and I might as well try to check the north wind or the incoming tide. I feel it tingling in my fingers, scorching my throat, tearing at my reason. I swear I won't give in, and, in the very act of so swearing, I get up and go out to meet it. I could break down iron doors to get at the drink when it calls to me. And, though I seem to be going straight enough now, the moment is coming when it *will* call and when I shall obey! Then you won't want to think you've ever known me, John Barclay, still less to remember that the name of the Fairy Princess has passed between us. And, in the midst of my damnation, it will be a drop of cold water on my tongue to know that I've left you a loophole through which to escape the acknowledgment of these last few weeks. So far, no one but the 'Rockingham' people, and Payson, and—and the Fairy Princess—know that we've been together recently. The 'Rockingham' people don't even know my name. Payson won't speak. And *she* certainly won't. So far, so good. Further, I've come to say good-by. Hereafter, we mustn't see each other"—

"Stop—stop!" broke in the Lieutenant-Governor. "What is all this rot you're talking? Chuck it, will you? Look here! If you go back on me—which is bad—and on your Fairy Princess—which is worse—and on yourself—which is the worst of all"—

"Yes, yes," answered Cavendish, "that's all true. But I'm not talking about *if* I go back, I'm talking about *when* I go back! As I said when I began, there's no use trying to explain this thing to a man who doesn't understand it, and no man *can* understand it except through his own experience. In this respect, if in no other, you and I talk different languages, belong on different planets. Could I expect you to comprehend with me that first give of self-control which lets the demon loose, and the meaning of the sight or smell of drink at that exact moment when the will is weakest—the first glass, hastily swallowed, as a brute, long thirsty, gulps down the water it has craved—the second and third, taken more slowly—and then, that slackening of every nerve, that jettisoning of all the moral cargo, that sudden love and appreciation of the sensuous side of life? Don't you see? It's another world, that, which you simply can't understand, unless you travel to it by the road by which I have come—which God forbid!"

"In all this," said Barclay, "I can see no reason why our present friendship should not continue, and should not be known."

"Simply this," answered Cavendish: "I'm—nothing! You're the Lieutenant-Governor,—who is spoken of, if you care to know it, in the office of the 'Sentinel' as the only honest official in the state of Alleghenia. You mustn't tie up to me, nor I to you. I've told you what my end is going to be. You don't believe it, perhaps, but it's none the less true. And yours—do you know that the law-abiding element looks up to you as a kind of Messiah? Do you know that you are the dawn of honor and integrity which lies behind the present black cloud of lawlessness? I tell you, John, the promise of your future is such as might nerve a beaten Napoleon to renewed endeavor. In your hands lies the salvation of the state."

"I wish I could think so," said the Lieutenant-Governor. "God knows I'd willingly cut one of them off, if I thought its loss could benefit the commonwealth. But, as I've had occasion to say to others, in the present emergency I'm as helpless as a babe unborn. You see how things are going—one might as well appeal, so far as any hope of success is concerned, to McGrath himself as to Governor Abbott. There's no getting around it, Spencer. It's a declaration of anarchy pure and simple, and with the official seal of Alleghenia at the bottom of the document. Iniquitous wrong is being done, not only to Mr. Rathbawne in refusing him the protection of the law to which he is entitled, but to the cause of the strikers themselves, if they can justly be said to have a cause. Nothing ever was or ever will be gained for the benefit of the many by the violence of the few. It can only end in one way: by the interposition of the federal troops. You know what happened at Chicago. It will be the same thing here; and before it is over we shall see people shot down like rats in the streets of Kenton City."

"I hope it won't come to that," said Cavendish; "but even so, all's well that ends well. Provided that order is finally restored"—

"But what credit is it," broke in Barclay, "to the state of Alleghenia to have her law-breakers suppressed by the national government? Don't you see that it would be only a final proof that she is too incompetent or too indifferent to do it herself? From the point of view of the state's good name, I doubt which is worst, her present attitude or the interference of federal force."

"Will it come to the latter in any event?"

"Undoubtedly. They've already tried to prevent the delivery of Mr. Rathbawne's mail, both at the mills and at his house. You know what that means, don't you? One carrier interfered with in the performance of his duty is sufficient excuse for mobilizing a brigade."

"But the Governor"—

Barclay came forward, laid his hand on Cavendish's shoulder, and looked down at him, slowly nodding his head.

"The Governor of Alleghenia is a dyed-in-the-wool scoundrel, my good sir," he said. "It is his manifest duty to enforce the law rigidly and at once, and if the police of Kenton City cannot or will not assist him, to summon the militia to his aid. In that way only can the honor of Alleghenia be saved. And that is what Elijah Abbott will never do. There is anarchy open and flagrant in the streets of Kenton City—there is anarchy silent and sneering in the Governor's chair. God save the state!"

XI

YOUNG NISBET FINDS HIS TONGUE

"I have promised to marry Colonel Broadcastle," announced Mrs. Wynyard when the silence had lasted twenty minutes.

Dorothy flung round from the window against which she had been mercilessly pressing her pretty nose.

"Why, Aunt Helen!" she exclaimed. "You really are the most startlingly abrupt person I ever knew. Are you in earnest? What under the sun possessed you to do that?"

"I think it must have been Colonel Broadcastle," answered Mrs. Wynyard, with an air of reflection. "It was last night when he was showing us over the armory, after the review. He not only asked me, but appeared to have quite set his heart upon my giving him an affirmative answer. And he had been so extremely civil, Dorothy, about our seats and all that, that I thought it would seem rather ungracious to refuse the first favor he had ever asked of me. So I said yes."

"Aunt Helen, Aunt Helen! One of these fine days you will be the death of me. Did any one *ever* hear of such a reason for accepting a man?"

"I couldn't think of a better one for refusing him," said Mrs. Wynyard serenely. "So there you are!"

"Talk about logic!" said Dorothy. She came across the room, and seated herself beside her aunt. "I never heard anything so exciting in my life!" she added. "Do you really mean it? Are you really going to marry him?"

"That is the arrangement, as I understand it," replied Mrs. Wynyard. "Of course, I haven't his promise in writing, but I think I can trust him. I once looked him up in your father's business guide, and he had three A's after his name. I'm sure I don't know what they can stand for, if it's not Acquaintance, Appeal, and Acceptance. I don't really see what else I could have done. It seems to have all been arranged without consulting me at all. One can't very well set one's self up in opposition to a business guide, you know."

"But he's old enough to be your father, Aunt Helen!"

"That's precisely the reason why there wouldn't have been any sense in my promising to be a sister to him. You see, I was quite helpless in the matter from start to finish."

"And it was only last night that you called me preposterous!" laughed Dorothy. "Really, Aunt Helen, people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. I think you are the most absurd creature in the world. Do you love him?"

"I can even go so far as to say that I think I do," said Mrs. Wynyard, without a break in her gravity. "I have all the symptoms,—palpitation of the heart, a morbid craving for Shelley and chocolate caramels, a tendency to wake up singing, and a failing for flattening my nose against the window-pane for twenty minutes at a stretch without saying a word to my poor old aunt, on the mere chance that he may be coming down the avenue."

The blush which Dorothy paid as tribute to this subtle innuendo came near to rivaling one of young Nisbet's celebrated performances in the same line.

"You're making fun of me," she said reproachfully.

"I, my dear?—not the least in the world. It's all as true as the gospel according to St. Valentine. I've told you first because we're not only aunt and niece, but the very best friends possible besides, and I knew you would like to hear the news before any one else. Colonel Broadcastle is by all odds the finest man I know,—I won't even except John Barclay, much as I admire him. He has paid me a very great honor. I respect him tremendously; I trust him absolutely. These alone are good reasons; but there's a better one,—so much better that nothing else really has any bearing on the subject. Can you guess?"

"Yes," said Dorothy softly, "you just love him. Isn't that it?"

"Exactly. It's a curious thing, this love. There may be every reason why one should marry a man, his own wish included, and yet one doesn't. There may be no reason at all, so far as outsiders can see, and yet one does! I've known a woman to

throw over one suitor who had everything in his favor—money, character, position—and accept another who had none of these advantages—because she liked the way he parted his hair! That's the way it goes. It's the most illogical thing in the world, if we except the stock market and other women's gowns. And then, when it's all arranged, his friends wonder what she could have seen in him, and her friends what he could have seen in her! But I'm wandering from the subject. Seriously, Dorothy dear, I love him very sincerely, and I have been more happy than I can say ever since I found out that it wasn't going to be one of those one-sided love-affairs which assure the incomes of the poets and the lawyers. And now,—confidence for confidence, Dorothy!"

"Aunt Helen! I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, Dorothy! 'I don't know what you mean' is one of those phrases like 'Not at home' and 'Yours very sincerely,' which are white lies on the face of them. I don't want to force your confidence. We all have what our friends recognize as our private affairs, with the accent—worse luck!—on the *pry*! But this is very different. I'm very fond of you, as you know, and my interest is far from being vulgar curiosity. Of a woman's five cardinal failings—inquisitiveness, extravagance, vanity, vacillation, and loquacity—I'm guiltless of all except the last and most innocent. But don't we all need to talk at times? Don't we all long for a trustworthy *confidante*? Aren't our little secrets often like precious liquors?—if we don't make use of them, share them with our friends, they either ferment and sour, or else lose all their sweetness and significance by slow evaporation."

"You would draw confidence from a stone," said Dorothy, with a little smile, "but what have I to tell you?"

"How should I know? Perhaps nothing—as yet; perhaps everything. Take your time about it, dear. I'm not trying to get you to commit yourself. I only want you to know that I'm ready to share your secret when it's ready to be shared, and to help and counsel you in any way I can. I know the main great fact already. Because, you see, Dorothy, one may conceal an infinite amount, even from one's nearest and dearest, when they don't understand—and they are so *apt* not to understand, one's nearest and dearest! And the financier may hide his schemes from his partners, or the general his plan of campaign from his fellow-officers, or the politician his ambitions from his most ardent supporters—but I doubt, my dear, if a woman in love was ever able to hide very much from another woman in the same lamentable condition!

"If it were not," she added, taking Dorothy's hand in hers, "for the great happiness which has come into my life, do you think that I should have been able to divine that other great happiness which seems to be hovering over yours? I am the physician afflicted with the disease which it becomes his duty to study and to cure. Only, it's not a disease, Dorothy, but a great, a beautiful revelation. I should have compared myself, instead, to the prophet who is enabled to interpret the dreams of others because they are identical with his own. There's my little speech. And when you are prepared to answer it, you'll find me ready."

As she was speaking the last words, the butler flung back the curtains at the doorway of the drawing-room.

"Mr. Nisbet," he announced imperturbably.

Dorothy looked at her aunt, and then, with her frank laugh:—

"If there *is* an answer," she said, "that's it!"

As young Nisbet entered, Mrs. Wynyard was the first to greet him.

"So," she observed, looking him over approvingly, "you've beaten your swords into walking-sticks, and your spears into top-hats, as my friend Isaiah so aptly observes! That's very commendable, but I almost think I like you better in your war-paint. Do you know, a Colonel's orderly is the spickest-and-spanest object upon which I've ever laid, or hope to lay, my eyes?"

"He just naturally has to be," said young Nisbet, with a grin. Somehow, he was always more at his ease with Mrs. Wynyard than with other women. "You see," he added, "if it wasn't that way, he wouldn't be it."

Which was as near as he had ever come to making an epigram.

"Well, I shall leave you to the tender mercies of Dorothy," said Mrs. Wynyard. "I've promised to take a walk with you—what is it you call him—instead of commanding officer, you know?"

"K. O.," said young Nisbet.

"Yes, that's it. How deplorably you militiamen spell! Well, at all events, I'm going to walk with your K. O., and it's time I was getting ready. Good-by."

"Good-by, Mrs. Wynyard."

"Day-day!" said Dorothy, from the divan.

"She's a crack-a-jack!" exclaimed young Nisbet, after she had gone.

"Mercy!" said Dorothy. "I never knew you to be so enthusiastic over any one before. If you have any intention of falling in love with Aunt Helen, I feel it to be my duty, as a friend and well-wisher, to warn you in advance that there isn't the most remote show in the world for you."

"Oh, it's not that!" protested young Nisbet with that stupendous earnestness which made people want to hug him. "Why, Mrs. Wynyard would have me talked to a standstill in two or seven minutes! Imagine me trying to make love to a dame like that! She'd lose me so quick you couldn't see me for the dust. Besides"—

"Besides what?" asked Dorothy with an elaborate air of unconcern, as he hesitated.

Young Nisbet was quite crimson now, and twitched at the creases in his trousers where they passed over his knees, and turned in his toes excessively.

"There's somebody else in the running!" he blurted out desperately.

There! It was out—a part of it, at least—not at all, to be sure, in anything even remotely resembling one of the thousand manners he had proposed to himself as effective, during long hours of wakefulness, when there was nothing in the world but his crowding thoughts and the ticking of his clock—but still, out! The ice was broken. It was impossible that she should not understand. The rest would be easier.

Alas for young Nisbet! He was, as he himself acknowledged, not "up on women!"

"Somebody else?" repeated Dorothy. "How ever did you find that out? She only told *me* about it twenty minutes ago."

Alas, alas, for young Nisbet! He had thought his feet upon the beach at last, whereas they had but touched a sand-bar in passing over. The under-tow of embarrassment was worse than ever now, and threatened to drag him down.

"Oh, I don't mean Mrs. Wynyard. I wasn't talking of her—that is, I was, at first—but afterwards—anyhow, I'm not talking of her now! When I say there's somebody else, I mean—I mean"—

"I am going out for a moment, Dorothy—just over to the *doctor's*. *How de do*, Mr. Nisbet? *Wretched* weather, *isn't* it? Natalie's with your father, my dear, and *I'll* be back *almost* immediately. Er—*ahem!*"

Mrs. Rathbawne went through a kind of rudimentary calisthenic exercise, which consisted of squaring her shoulders and drawing in her chin. It was accompanied by a meaning glance at her daughter, and was designed as an inconspicuous substitute for the frank injunction to "sit up straight, my dear," upon which Dorothy had finally placed a ban.

"And *won't* you feed the gold-fish, my dear?" she added. "I've been *so* occupied, and the poor things haven't had a *crumb* for three days. I've just told Thomas to take a plate of bread in at *once*. I'm sure Mr. *Nisbet* won't mind: get him to *help* you. Er—*ahem!* And I'll be back in about fifteen minutes, or so."

For a time there was silence in the big, warm conservatory. Young Nisbet had taken the dish from Dorothy's hands, and, after seating himself on the low marble parapet surrounding the pool, devoted his energies to feeding the gold-fish. He was thinking that it was all to be done over again, and that it was harder than ever, if such a thing were possible, to do. What was there about those few words which seemed to choke him? For the moment, he took refuge in a commonplace question.

"Is it one of your duties to feed these persons?"

Dorothy laughed shortly, like a little chord of music.

"No—it's the Mater's peculiar privilege," she answered. "She adores the stupid little beasts. Don't give them such large pieces, Mr. Nisbet. She feeds them regularly herself,—or did, until Dad began to require so much of her time. But lately, the house has been so upset, and she has been doing such a lot of going out, and coming in"—

"Yes," put in young Nisbet dryly, "I've noticed the coming in part."

"So Natalie has been doing it for her," went on Dorothy, more rapidly. "I suppose Natalie herself hasn't had the time, these last three days. They *are* hungry, aren't they? *Don't give them such large pieces, Mr. Nisbet!* Don't you see the poor things have only button-holes for mouths?"

There was another long pause, before either spoke again.

"What defeats me about your mother," said young Nisbet slowly, "is the way she manages to come in just at the wrong moment. At interruption, she's the most star performer I've ever run up against. You don't mind my saying that, do you? I'm not throwing any asparagus. I wouldn't be disrespectful about her for the world. But really, for chopping into a conversation, she's a dazzler!"

"She *is* a little inopportune at times," admitted Dorothy.

"Inopportune? Yes,—she's all of that. When she marches in, I feel exactly as if the boat had gybed, and the boom come over and knocked me into thirty fathoms of water. Lord!"

"Why, how ridiculous!" said Dorothy. "There's nothing about the Mater to be afraid of. She's the dearest, most innocent old thing in the world! She just blunders along like that, and nobody is less aware of her mistakes than she is. And, after all, why shouldn't she interrupt us, so long as we're not saying anything in particular? And if we *were* saying—anything in particular, we could always pick up the conversation where we dropped it."

"That's just what I find it so hard to do!" confessed young Nisbet. "I'm a stupid sort of lout, you know, Miss Rathbawne. I've never had half a chance to practice talking to dames, and where other lads fuss like experts, I just can't make good. I fozzle every stroke. I'm an ass—that's all!"

"You're nothing of the sort!" said Dorothy indignantly. "You're an extremely attractive young man!"

"As good as the average in some ways, perhaps. But—how can I explain what I mean?—there always comes a day when a chap wants to be more, wants to be the best ever, in every way! That's the proposition I'm up against now. I seem to be just a bundle of misfits, and—and—oh, shucks! my line of talk is all crooked, and I can't tell you what the trouble is, but"—

"Your liver's out of kilter," interpolated Dorothy.

"No, sir!" protested young Nisbet. "Nothing is ever out of kilter inside me! If I'm nothing else, I'm blue-ribbon boy on the health question. No, it's something I want, and that I'm pretty sure I can't get."

"I know perfectly well what it is," said Dorothy, "and you haven't even asked for it!"

Young Nisbet looked up suddenly.

"Do you mean?"—he stammered, "do you mean?"—

Outside, the front door slammed, and Mrs. Rathbawne's voice became audible, inquiring Dorothy's whereabouts of the butler. The girl laughed.

"There's the Mater back again," she said. "Oh, Mr. *Nisbet!*"

For young Nisbet had dropped dish and bread-crumbs into the pool with a great splash, electrifying the gold-fish into unheard-of activity, and had risen, at the same moment, to his feet. He stood before her, his honest face blazing, his hands outstretched.

"I love you!" he said. "Will you marry me?"

And whether or not he received an audible reply to this question he never knew,—only she was in his arms, and gold-

fish might feast or starve, for all he cared about them. The wide doors of perfect bliss swung open before him, and young Nisbet passed within.

He was gazing ruefully into the water, as Mrs. Rathbawne entered. For the first time in his experience, her presence did not embarrass him.

"I've dropped a dish into your pool, Mrs. Rathbawne," he said, "and scared the gold-fish into blue connoption fits. Look how they are scurrying around. I hope I haven't done them any harm."

"Oh, no," answered Mrs. Rathbawne placidly. "They are getting *so* fat that I should *think* a little exercise, *now* and again, would be *good* for them. We *might* drop a dish into the pool every week or so, Dorothy, just to stir them up."

"It might go for a while," said young Nisbet, "but any old football player like myself, Mrs. Rathbawne, will tell you that you can't work the same trick more than just a certain number of times."

"Interruption, for example!" added Dorothy, and laughed across at him, deliciously, with her eyes.

XII

UDIOGENES

It was during the tenth week of the strike at the Rathbawne Mills that the "Kenton City Record" made its long-remembered attack upon Lieutenant-Governor Barclay. The arraignment was one unparalleled for venom, even in the columns of that most notoriously scurrilous journal in the state, and, withal, there was about it a devilish ingenuity, a distortion of facts so slight as to defy refutation, and so plausible as to carry conviction. It was the last blow in the long series of discouragements which Barclay had suffered since his inauguration, and for the moment he was completely unmanned. He was at no loss, however, to trace the source from which the ingeniously perverted facts had been obtained. Not even McGrath, with his intimate knowledge of all that went forward at the capitol, could have supplied information so detailed. The hand of Elijah Abbott was traceable in every line of the attack. Their conversation, on the afternoon when he had first spoken to Barclay of the impending strike, was reproduced almost word for word, as well as that on the occasion when McGrath had been present, and therefrom the "Record" went on to deduce that not even Peter Rathbawne, with all his obstinacy, all his blindness to the welfare of his employees, was responsible for their present destitution in the same sense as was the Lieutenant-Governor, who might have avoided the strike by a conciliatory word, and who, instead, had advised Mr. Rathbawne to fight the working-people until the last cent of their money should be exhausted and the last drop of their blood should be shed.

"Incompetency," said the article in part, "is what we long since learned to expect from John Hamilton Barclay. Gross neglect of public duty, flagrant callousness to responsibility, contemptuous indifference to the interests of the citizens whose votes placed him where he is,—all these have been part and parcel of his attitude since the unfortunate moment of his election. But even in him we had not looked for the incredible spectacle of a public official deliberately precipitating the incalculable distress which has followed in the wake of the strike at the Rathbawne Mills. Overburdened with the cares of office, in a single instance the Governor of Alleghenia turned over a question of vital significance to the lieutenant from whom he had every reason to expect compliance and support. Even so, he was careful to point out a line of action by which the impending calamity might readily have been avoided. And what was the result? Not only in total disregard of plain duty, but in direct disobedience of the orders of his superior, the Lieutenant-Governor of Alleghenia threw his influence into the scale to outweigh law and order, and brought about the deplorable destitution now facing the families of four thousand martyrs to principle. When men are driven to desperation, when women turn to shame in order to maintain life, when children are heard crying in our streets for bread, to whom shall we point as the author of it all? To Peter Rathbawne, a poor, doddering old man, barely responsible now, if rumor is to be believed, for what he does? No! To John Hamilton Barclay, Lieutenant-Governor of Alleghenia!"

This, and much more in the same strain, while passed over as sensational bombast by the better element, did not fail of its effect upon the strikers. A mass-meeting, held that morning, denounced Barclay in a set of resolutions, as a traitor to his office and as the avowed enemy of labor, and demanded his impeachment on the ground of neglect of duty. During the day, half a score of threatening letters came to his office. But what hurt him most, though he almost smiled at his own sensitiveness, was that the doormen and porters at the Capitol greeted his morning nod with a stare, and even the little office-boy, bending low over his table in the ante-room, did not look up for the customary wink. For his mother was a trimmer at the Rathbawne Mills.

Once in his office, the Lieutenant-Governor found it impossible to concentrate his mind upon the work before him. Sentence after sentence, the words of his arraignment marched through his mind, as he sat with his elbows on the desk and his chin in his doubled fists. A single reading seemed to have stamped them indelibly and forever upon his memory. Baffled by conflicting reflections he began, for the first time, to doubt whether his had been the course of conscience, or merely that of pride and perversity. Was not the "Record" right, perhaps, after all? If it was true that the strike was driving men to crime and women to the streets—and if it was not, as yet, true, it soon must be—who, indeed, was to blame if not he himself, who had said "Fight them!" when he might have kept peace by a word?

Suddenly, the Lieutenant-Governor rose, and, crossing the room to where the arms of Alleghenia hung upon the wall, took down the frame, laid it, face up, upon the table, and, bending down, studied it intently. The beautifully executed nude figures of Art and Labor stared steadfastly back at him, their muscular hands grasping the circular shield, strength and endurance in every line of their necks, shoulders, and thighs, purity and purpose in their blue eyes and square-cut jaws. He was as motionless as they for full five minutes. Presently his finger moved slowly across the frame, and he

said, quite softly:

"Justitia—Lex—Integritas."

Then he looked up, straight before him, out of the open window, where an encircling wistaria was dotted with minute sprouts of green, and up at the clear, wide sky.

"I'm right!" he said aloud. "I'm right!"

At five that afternoon, Spencer Cavendish set out upon the most unpleasant assignment which had ever fallen to his lot. When Payson had told him that he was to procure an interview with Peter Rathbawne for the "Sentinel," with a special eye to the mill-owner's failing health, as reported in the morning's "Record," he had shrunk back instinctively from a task so distasteful, and was on the point of refusing. But two considerations checked this impulse. If the thing were to be done at all, he thought, surely it had better be the work of one friendly to the Rathbawnes and with their interests at heart than that of a bungling outsider, with it in his power to hurt them beyond expression. The argument was plausible, but behind its logic, at the back of Cavendish's brain, there lay another reason, without which the first had been insufficient to persuade him. He wanted to see Natalie again—to meet her under the shield of some compatible excuse, so that he should not seem to have sought her of his own will. He was thirsty for a word from her, thirsty with the pitiable thirst of the shipwrecked sailor who knows a swallow of salt water will but increase his torture, and who craves it, none the less. Long since, he had forfeited his right to her friendship—no sophistry could blind him to that. Moreover the ocean of degradation not only lay behind him; it lay in front as well. It was as he had told Barclay. He stood upon an island, not the mainland, of redemption, and another plunge was inevitable.

What he expected to gain by a word with Natalie Rathbawne, Cavendish himself could hardly have told. At most, he was conscious of a faint hope that in some turn or twist of the conversation he might have a chance of thanking her, of telling her that he rejoiced in her happiness, and of bidding her good-by. For paramount in his mind lay the thought of his approaching downfall, inevitable, utter, and final. He did not attempt to deceive himself. He knew what was coming. It had come before.

When Cavendish had sent in his card, a servant showed him through the library into the conservatory, where Peter Rathbawne was seated in a deep rattan chair watching his daughter, who stood at his side tossing bread-crumbs to the gold-fish in the circular central pool. They both turned at the sound of his footsteps, and Natalie held out her hand.

"So you've come at last!" she said. "I should think it was quite time. Dad, you remember Mr. Cavendish, don't you?"

"Yes," answered her father. "Oh, yes!"

Rathbawne's voice was without life, his face almost wholly void of expression. Though he glanced at Cavendish, it was with the blank stare of a delirious person whose attention is unconsciously caught by an unusual noise rather than with any evidence of direct interest, and he took no further part in the conversation, nor even seemed to realize that his companions were speaking. When he had answered his daughter's question and looked at Cavendish, he leaned back in his chair, and wearily closed his eyes.

"He is very much changed since you saw him," said the girl in a lower tone, turning again to the pool, "and it's all come about in the past six weeks. The strike has had a most curious, a most pathetic effect upon him. Even the doctor is at a loss to account for it. I think that I am, perhaps, the only one who really understands. He has always been so proud of his mills and of his people, so loyal to them, so like a father to them, one and all, that to have them turn against him like this, and, what is worse, get to drinking and rioting, has almost broken his heart. The doctor says only one thing can save him, and that is to see the mills going again and the people happy and prosperous, as they were before. And who knows when that will be? For, feeble and broken as he is, he will never give in to the Union. Of that I'm sure."

"I'm very sorry," said Cavendish softly. One look at Rathbawne had been enough to show him that the interview for which he had been sent was an impossibility. One look at Natalie sufficed to banish from his mind every thought save that of her pitiful pallor and the pathetic quiver of her lips.

"I had no idea it was as bad as this," he continued. "Can't anything be done? You are far from being in good shape yourself, Miss Rathbawne."

"Tired and dispirited, that's all," she answered, trying to smile. "And I fear nothing can be done as long as our fate lies in Governor Abbott's hands. There's no use in harping on that, though. You know as well as I what we have to expect from him. Did you see the attack on Mr. Barclay this morning?"

"An infamous libel!" exclaimed Cavendish hotly.

Miss Rathbawne crumbled the bread between her fingers, and resumed her feeding of the gold-fish.

"You must know that I am the last person in the world to need that assurance," she said slowly. "It is only another thread in all the hideous tissue of injustice and iniquity which has been wrapped about us like a pall. What a shame, is it not, that such a man as he should be powerless to do the work I think God intended for him? And what a shame that Alleghenia, needing his clear head and his strong arm and his loyal heart as she does in this hour of emergency, should only be sneering at him as a coward and a cad!"

"I cannot believe," answered Cavendish, "that the venom of the 'Record' is to be taken as the sentiment of the state. There must be many—there must be a majority of Alleghenians who know, as we know, that no better man breathes than John Barclay."

"Thank you," said the girl.

In the open spaces of water between the lily-pads the fat indolent gold-fish mouthed at the crumbs, stirring the silence with little sucking sounds, and sending tiny ripples widening on all sides. One alone, dingy yellow in color, moped apart from his fellows, and took no interest in the banquet.

"That one's a cynic," said Miss Rathbawne presently. "My subtlest cajoleries never win him from that attitude of sneering contempt. The others get all the tid-bits, and he doesn't seem to care. He isn't even ornamental—he's in a class by himself. I call him Diogenes, and I'm thinking of buying him a tub all for himself, where he can sulk in solitary grandeur to his heart's content."

"Perhaps not altogether in a class by himself," said Cavendish. "There are others, you know, who make no use of their opportunities, and who can never hope to be anything but ugly and useless, while their fellows are getting all the good things of life, and enjoying them, and giving pleasure of one kind or another into the bargain."

Something in his tone caused Natalie to look at him suddenly.

"I'm not enough of a pessimist," she answered firmly, "to believe that true in anything beyond appearances. We are all apt, no matter how conceited we may be, to underestimate at times the extent of our own usefulness—or, rather, we are unconscious of the direction in which it is most productive. If what you say is so, then all that is lacking is the opportunity, and that is sure to come. We may squander many opportunities, and, hardly less probably, actually turn to account in a way we do not perceive many which we seem to ourselves to squander. In any event, others will come. A woman once said to me that the good in her was not cultivated nor exercised with a view to *individual immortality*. That seemed to me to mean so much that I've built up quite a little creed on it. It's the principle, isn't it, upon which the whole scheme of the world hinges? A million leaves fall and decay to enrich the soil wherefrom two million more may spring. An infinity of little shell-fish die, and the ages grind their shells to powder to make the sands and the chalk cliffs. Countless raindrops sacrifice their identity to maintain that of one great river. And why should it not be so with us? If only we can contribute in the smallest degree to the uplifting of our kind, to the advancement of the race, to the maintenance of what we know to be right, what possible difference can it make whether, in the effort to be of such service, we live or succumb? We were put here, it seems to me, very much as separate notes are put into one great harmony. Each note is struck at the proper time, serves its purpose, and goes into nothingness. Each plays its part, however small. We can't all be included in the wonderful final chords. Our place may seem trivial to us, and yet in some sense we may be sure we are all contributors to the unity and perfection of the whole. That ought to be enough. No one note achieves individual immortality, but each does something to assure the immortality of the composition of which it forms a part. If we don't believe that, if we are not content to have it so, how is it possible to believe in any divine purpose, any scheme of justice at all? Look at the indescribable waste of life on all sides of us. If only in the case of humanity, people are dying by hundreds every minute, unheeded, unlamented, unrecorded. Human life is such a little

thing!—as little as the life of the leaf or the raindrop. And yet in the death of these last we are able to perceive the working of a vast system which must be the outcome of a direct purpose, and whereby the best interest of each species is furthered. And so, the human race. Why should it be less than lesser things? One man dies in order that two may live. A confederacy—as in the case of our own Rebellion—perishes in order that a nation may endure. Everywhere, in short, the individual sacrifices his individual existence in order that it may contribute to and fertilize the growth of his species. So far as I am concerned, I am perfectly content to have it so. I should ask nothing better, when my own time comes, than the assurance that, in one way or another, my death had a significance,—that it was for a person or a principle, and not merely a natural phenomenon. I may not be able to believe that; but there is one belief possible to all of us,—I mean that, if not in death, then assuredly in life, we have been of service to our race and time. We are often told that the indispensable thing does not exist. I think the same may be said of the useless one. I don't believe even the humblest of God's creatures goes out of life without having been at one time or another an influence for good. I even have hopes of Diogenes. Some day there will be a scrap of refuse or an ugly little bug which mars the symmetry of the pool, and Diogenes will eat it,—and perhaps die of indigestion as a martyr to principle!"

The silence which followed her words was broken by a hoarse sob from Mr. Rathbawne, and, turning, they saw that his head had fallen back against the chair, with his eyes, wide and staring, fixed upon the glass roof, and his breath coming in short, thick gasps from between his parted lips. In an instant Natalie was on her knees by his side, with her arms about him.

"Don't be frightened," she said, looking up at Cavendish with a brave little smile. "It's his heart. He has had these attacks frequently of late. Will you get me the whiskey decanter and a glass? You'll find them in the dining-room—on the sideboard—to the left."

Decanter in hand, Cavendish stood watching her, as she tenderly poured a little of the raw spirit between her father's lips. The effect was almost instantaneous. Rathbawne choked, swallowed the restorative, and presently raised his head and looked at her, patting her hand tremulously with his own. They were so absorbed in each other that neither noted a sudden, strange transformation in Cavendish's expression. From the wide-mouthed decanter in his hand, the faint acrid odor of Peter Rathbawne's fine old Scotch whiskey crept upward, stung his nostrils, and, of a sudden, set him all a-quiver, like a startled animal. The smell was almost that of pure alcohol, and set his mouth watering, and drove his breath out in a little shuddering gasp that was like a revulsion from some sickening medicine, just swallowed. But he knew it, none the less, for something which belonged to and was part of him. For weeks he had avoided it. Now it assailed him like that foe of Hercules, of whom he had spoken to Barclay, whose strength was multiplied a hundred-fold for every time his opponent trod him under foot.

As he told the Lieutenant-Governor, at the moment when least he expected it, the demon touched his arm. For a minute he fought desperately against the suggestion, with his eyes closed, and his teeth cutting into his inner lip. He clung madly to the thought of the presence in which he was, conscious that the girl's words had uplifted him immeasurably, given him a clearer insight into the essential significance of life than he had ever known. It was useless—useless—useless! There was nothing left in the world but the smell of the liquor that he loathed and that he loved!

"If you were to leave us alone"—

At the suggestion, Cavendish bowed and went slowly back toward the dining-room. Once out of sight of the others, he paused, glanced back over his shoulder, and then, abruptly, supporting himself with one hand against the side-post of the doorway, raised the decanter in the other to his lips, and drank.

XIII

THE INSTRUMENT OF FATE

The day had been deliciously warm and still, one of those eloquent heralds of spring that are touched with a peculiar beauty rivaling her own. As Cavendish came out of the Rathbawne residence, Bradbury Avenue was splashed with huge blotches of dazzling yellow, where the light of the westwardly sun poured between the houses and was spilled upon the smooth pavement. The man choked slightly at the after-taste of the raw whiskey he had just swallowed, but almost immediately he smiled.

"I knew it would come," he said to himself as he turned out into the avenue, "and here it is. I'm not surprised. I'm glad, God help me—I'm *glad!*"

His mouth was watering, and he felt, as it were, every inch of the stimulant's progress through his veins, warming him with its familiar glow. When he had left the conservatory, he had been trembling pitifully. Now he was calm, and as steady as if his nerves had been cords of steel. Responsibility, resolution, remorse—they had fallen from him like so many discarded garments. He was sharply alive to the pleasure of the moment, keenly appreciative of the sunlight, the soft air, the laughter of the children romping in the streets. Of a singular languor which had been wont to come over him toward the close of each busy day of the past six weeks there was now no hint. He walked rapidly, with his shoulders thrown back, and his chin well elevated, but his course was not in the direction of his home, nor yet in that of the "Sentinel" office. Instinctively, he had turned toward that part of the city where were the large restaurants, the playhouses, and the more pretentious saloons.

At a corner, he wheeled abruptly into one of these last, and, seating himself at a small table, called for an absinthe. The place was already lighted, and each glass in the pyramids behind the bar twinkled with a tiny brilliant reflection of the nearest incandescent globes. The air was faintly redolent of lemon and the mingled odors of many liquors. To Cavendish it was all very familiar, and all very pleasant. Again he told himself that he was glad, glad that the restraint he had been exercising was at an end. He was free, he thought, free to accomplish his own inevitable damnation. He had no patience for the tedious operation of dripping the water into his absinthe over a lump of sugar, but ordered gum, and stirring the two rapidly together, filled the glass to the brim from a little pitcher at his side. Then he drank, slowly but steadily, barely touching the glass to the table between his sips.

Presently, he was conscious of a slight numbness at his wrists, a barely perceptible tingling in his knees and knuckles. His heart was fluttering, and his temples pulsed pleurably. He glanced toward the glittering pyramids of glasses, and for a fraction of time they seemed to shift in unison a foot to the right, returning immediately to their original position with a jerk. Then he rose, and went toward the door, catching sight of his face in a mirror as he passed. It was very pale, and he crinkled his nose at it derisively, and then smiled at the whimsical oddity of his reflected expression. On the threshold he paused, looking toward the west, blazing with the red and saffron of the departed sun.

"Oof!" he said, with a downward tug at his waistcoat. "It comes quickly. That's what it is to be out of practice."

He dined alone in a corner of an unfrequented restaurant, eating little, but drinking steadily, absinthe at first, then whiskey, four half-goblets of it, barely diluted with water. Then he found himself once more in the streets, now brilliantly lighted, going on and on without purpose, save when the blazing colored glass of a saloon swerved him from his path. He knew that he was walking steadily, avoiding obstacles as if by instinct, stepping from and on to kerbs without any actual perception of them. Faces swam past him, staring. Men, particularly those at the bars he leaned against, were talking loudly, but, as it seemed to him, brilliantly. He often smiled involuntarily, and sometimes spoke to one of them, drank with him, and presently was alone again, walking on and on. Occasionally a white-faced clock bulged at him out of the night; and then he noticed that time was galloping. It was close upon one when he found himself in a quarter which his recent employment had made familiar—the neighborhood of the Rathbawne Mills.

Here, suddenly, his mind emerged from a mist, and every detail of his surroundings stood out sharp and clear-cut. The street was insufficiently illuminated, but the light of a full moon cut across the buildings on one side, half way between roof and sidewalk. Cavendish perceived, with a kind of dull surprise, that the pavements were thronged, and that almost every window framed a figure or two. A hoarse murmur pulsed in the air, and his quickened ear was greeted on every side by foul jests and grumbled oaths, broken now and again by drunken imprecations, scuffles, or the shrill invective of

women invisible in the throng. Once a girl touched his arm, and he found her face close to his, thin, haggard, and imploring. He shook her off, and turned unsteadily into the doorway of a saloon; stumbling, as he did so, over a little boy crying on the step.

Inside, the air was reeking with rank smoke and the fumes of stale beer. The floor was strewn with sawdust, streaked and circled by shuffling feet; the mirror backing the bar was covered with soiled gauze dotted with tawdry roses, and an indescribable dinginess seemed to have laid its sordid fingers on all the fittings.

The room was crowded, nevertheless—crowded not only with the men themselves, but, to the stifling point, with their voices and their gestures and the spirit of their unrest and discontent. Cavendish, leaning against the end of the bar, looked wearily down the line of flushed faces and backward at the disputing groups which rocked and swayed, as the men argued and swore, grasping the lapels of each others' coats, and spilling the liquor from their glasses as they gesticulated. He was wholly sober now. It was the stage of dissipation which experience had taught him to dread the most—the emergence from dulled sensibility into a nervous tension upon which stimulant had no apparent effect. He was trembling again, too, and his face, as he saw it in the mirror through the clouding gauze, was as that of a stranger, a stranger of whom he was afraid. He swallowed the whiskey he had ordered, and, supporting himself by the bar, swung back and gave his attention to what the men about him were saying. It did not need his sharpened perception to appreciate the fact that he was in the thick of the worst element of the Rathbawne strikers, or that the situation was a crisis. What little restraint had characterized the earlier stages of the strike was now, most evidently, at an end. Starvation was no longer a mere possibility, or violence a mere threat. The men raved like wild creatures against Rathbawne and John Barclay, recounting maudlinly the destitution of their families, and, anon, flaming forth into cries for vengeance. How long the babel lasted Cavendish could not have said. Long since, the doors had been closed, and the lights half lowered, in mock deference to a supposedly vigilant police, when suddenly a hush fell upon the assemblage. A side door had opened, and Michael McGrath stood in the midst of his followers, with his arms folded and a thin smile upon his lips. There was not a whisper as he began to speak. The men leaned toward him breathlessly, their mouths open, their eyes starting glassily out of their sodden faces.

"And how long is *this* going to go on?" demanded their leader, with a sneer. "Talk—talk—talk! That's always the way, and nothing done, after all. Well, there's been about enough of it, and that's flat. You've been living on the Union, and I suppose you think you can go on living on it till hell freezes over. Now listen to me. When the strike began we had plenty of funds, and more came to us from the Central Federation. The funds are gone, d' you hear, and the Federation is asking what we mean to do. There is six hundred and odd dollars in the treasury. No need to tell you how far that much will go, is there? Not one day! And with all your talk, you've everything your own way, if only you knew it—a police that doesn't dare lift a finger against you, and a Governor that won't budge an inch till I give the word! Well, to-morrow I give the word, understand me? To-morrow I throw you over, and you can get out of this the best way you can. I'm sick of your talk. I'm sick of your doing nothing. Your daughters are on the streets, your wives and your children are starving, and *you*—by God! *you* are boozing in a bar till daylight, and *talking*! So that's enough. To-morrow, the strike's at an end. To-morrow, the Governor comes down on you like ten thousand of brick! And I'm the man that gives the word! Unless"—

He paused and cast a keen glance at the faces which surrounded him. His last words had been greeted by a low growl.

"Unless," he continued, "you know your business, and make a move that's worth the name."

The hush of attention seemed to deepen into the leaden silence of expectancy.

"There are two men who must be put out of the way," said McGrath slowly, "and that before another midnight. I don't care how it's done, but done it must be, for the sake of example. It's easy enough to manage it, as things are. There'll be a howl, but we have the authorities fixed. And those two men must go!"

In the tense silence which followed, a man's voice whispered two words hoarsely:—

"Mr. Rathbawne!"

"Ay, *Mr.* Rathbawne!" echoed McGrath, flashing into that passionate manner of his which carried all before it. "*Mr.* Rathbawne, who's starving you! *Mr.* Rathbawne, who's making your sons drunkards! *Mr.* Rathbawne, who's debauching your daughters! *Mr.* Rathbawne, who's killing your wives by inches! *Mr.* Rathbawne, and *Mr.* John Hamilton Barclay, Lieutenant-Governor of Alleghenia!"

For a moment it seemed as if he would be swept off his feet by a torrent of enthusiasm. The men crowded about him, slapping him upon the shoulders, shouting their approval, reaching for his hand. One brandished a revolver under his nose, with a shrill cry of "This'll do it, Mac! This'll do it, by God!" The rest had turned to each other, embracing frantically, and repeating his words in a kind of frenzy.

Presently McGrath raised his hand, and, as silence was restored at the signal, turned to the bar-tender with his thin smile.

"Set 'em up, Dick," he said composedly. "It's on me, this time, and we'll drink to better days."

In the confusion Cavendish made his way to the side-door, and passing through it into the street, hesitated, dazzled by a brilliant light. It was broad day.

As the Lieutenant-Governor entered his ante-room that morning his eyes contracted suddenly, and he stopped, with his hand upon the knob of the door. There could be no mistaking the look in the face of the man who sat facing him, gripping desperately at the arms of his chair. Cavendish was as white as chalk, with the hunted look of despair which lay so vividly on Barclay's remembrance of the night when they had met on Bradbury Avenue. He rose as the Lieutenant-Governor appeared and drew himself up with an effort at steadiness, conscious that the others present were observing him narrowly. But Barclay's hesitation was as brief as it had been involuntary. With a bare glance at his subordinates, he came forward cordially to take Cavendish's hand, and then, opening the door of his private office, motioned him to enter first.

"Glad to see you," he said steadily, as their hands met.

Once inside, the manner of both men changed as abruptly as it had been assumed. The Lieutenant-Governor went slowly toward his desk, with his head bent, and Cavendish, throwing himself into the nearest chair, and, with no attempt at concealment, drew a flask from his pocket and drank a long draught. He looked up to find that the Lieutenant-Governor had wheeled at the desk, and was standing with his eyes fixed upon him.

"Wait a minute," said Cavendish, as Barclay seemed about to speak. "We won't discuss this, for the moment, if you please."

He held up the flask with a shrug.

"In fact we needn't discuss it at all," he continued. "I've simply gone to hell, that's all there is about it. I knew I would. I told you so long ago. I didn't come here to make excuses—or to receive rebukes, John Barclay. I've a means here of settling the problem which can give cards and spades to all your projects of reform." And he tapped his pocket, where the cloth bulged slightly, with a smile. The Lieutenant-Governor made no attempt to interrupt him.

"What I did come to say," went on Cavendish, more steadily, "is that your life and Mr. Rathbawne's are in danger. You're to be put out of the way, both of you, before twelve to-night. McGrath's determined on it, and there's no lack of men to carry out his orders. The strikers are desperate. I overheard their talk, while—well, while I was getting drunk! *What's that?*"

He stopped, with his hand to his ear. Some one was tapping at the communicating door.

"Put up that flask!" said Barclay under his breath, adding aloud, as Cavendish obeyed:

"Come in!"

The door swung open softly, and Governor Abbott, smiling and rubbing his hands, appeared upon the threshold.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Barclay," he said. "I did not know you were engaged. We have the pleasure of another visit from the Citizens' Committee, and, by a singularly opportune coincidence, Mr. McGrath has called at the same time. Can you spare us a few moments of your time?"

With a bow, and a glance at Cavendish, Barclay followed his superior silently from the room.

In the Governor's office he found a dozen men, all standing. McGrath, with his back to the others, was examining with an elaborate air of interest a map of Alleghenia which hung upon the wall. Colonel Broadcastle and his fellow-members of the Citizens' Committee, stood close to, and facing, the Governor's desk. The air was electric with suggestion of a crisis about to come.

When the Governor began to speak, it was in his habitually suave voice, yet he was visibly nervous.

"Colonel Broadcastle has been good enough to observe," he said, "that if I do not call out the militia within three hours, to protect the interests of Mr. Peter Rathbawne, his committee will appeal for aid to the federal government. Now—er—now, in my place, and in such a situation, Mr. Barclay—er—what would you do?"

The Lieutenant-Governor's nerve, strained beyond endurance by the events of the past twenty-four hours, snapped like a dry twig at the contemptuous hypocrisy of the other's tone.

"*Do!*" he thundered—"*do?* Why, as God is my witness, Elijah Abbott, if I were in your place I would do what any honest man would do! I would do what my oath demanded of me! I would clap that man McGrath into jail for iniquitous inciting to riot, and place Colonel Broadcastle, at the head of his regiment, in charge of the city to restore order and the reign of law, and to redeem Alleghenia from the disgrace that is overwhelming her. *Do?* Before God, the Republic, and the state, Governor Abbott, I would do my duty as a man!"

"*Then do it!*"

The words, spoken from the threshold of Barclay's office, rent the silence like a thunderclap, and before those present had time to turn, there came the sound of a pistol-shot, and Governor Abbott, wheeling slowly on his heels, crashed headforemost through the plate-glass window behind him, and lay, limp and motionless, across the sill.

"Then do it, by God, *Governor Barclay!*" repeated Cavendish, and flung his revolver into the centre of the room.

The apartment was already filled with those attracted from the corridors and adjacent offices by the sound of the shot. Several seized Cavendish, who stood without movement, smiling. Barclay, Colonel Broadcastle, and the other members of the committee lifted the Governor's body from the position in which it had fallen, and laid it upon a couch. After a brief examination, the Colonel looked up into Barclay's eyes.

"He's dead, sir," he said. "The assassin was right. You are Governor of Alleghenia."

For an instant, Barclay returned his glance with one of earnest inquiry.

"Even in the face of this tragedy," added Colonel Broadcastle in a low voice, "I trust you will not forget the exigencies of the situation. It is for you to act, sir."

Barclay suddenly raised himself to his full height, and faced the silent gathering.

"Gentlemen," he said firmly, "the Governor is dead. For the moment, at least, I act in his stead. Kenton City is under martial law. Those who have the assassin in charge will see that he is immediately turned over to the chief of police. Mr. McGrath, you will consider yourself under arrest. Colonel Broadcastle, you will immediately assemble your regiment at its armory, issue three days' rations, and twenty rounds of ball cartridge, and hold yourself and your command in readiness for riot duty, subject to my orders."

Then he faced Cavendish.

"There's a message I'd like to have delivered, to the Fairy Princess," said the latter, still smiling. "It is that Diogenes has eaten the ugly little bug."

XIV

THE VOICE OF ALLEGHENIA

As Barclay had foreseen, the adoption of stringent measures was all that was needed to break the back-bone of the strike at the Rathbawne Mills. The presence of the Ninth Regiment, under command of that noted disciplinarian, Colonel Broadcastle, and terribly in earnest, as was evinced by the ball cartridges gleaming in their belts, was sufficient to discourage any further attempts at disorder; the sudden shift of base of the newspapers which had formerly supported the rioters, and now, taking their cue from the policy of the new Governor, counseled immediate surrender; above all, the trial, conviction, and sentence of their moving spirit, McGrath, to a term of years for inciting to riot—all were irresistible factors in the Union's capitulation. Two weeks after the death of Governor Abbott, the Rathbawne Mills were running once more, and Peter Rathbawne himself, though whiter of hair and but a shadow of his old self, was, nevertheless, on the high road to recovery.

The trial and conviction of Spencer Cavendish were accomplished with unexampled celerity. He would admit of no defense, although the lawyer appointed for him by the court was strenuous for a plea of insanity, based upon the singular remark which he had made upon the announcement of Elijah Abbott's death, and which was construed by those who heard it as ample proof of irresponsibility. Called upon in court to give his defense, Cavendish stated in a loud, clear voice that he was strictly accountable for his act, that he was in full possession of his senses at the time, and that he had killed the Governor in the firm conviction that he was a menace to the safety of the community, and that the latter's sole salvation lay in his removal, and the succession of the Lieutenant-Governor to the position of chief executive.

"I desire," he concluded, with the same odd smile that he had worn at the moment of the Governor's death, "nothing but the full penalty of the law."

The next day Spencer Cavendish was sentenced to be executed on the thirtieth of the following month at the State's Prison at Mowberly.

Then followed the most remarkable manifestation of popular sentiment ever known in Alleghenia. As Barclay had once said of them, the citizens of his long degraded state were less vicious than callous, and their callousness was effectively cured by the dramatic event which had removed a corrupt official from the head of the state government, and put in his place a man whose first acts were proofs positive of strength, integrity, and singleness of purpose. The revulsion of feeling was overwhelming. Even the press which had sneered at and cried down John Barclay was forced to the other extreme. Relieved from the burden of lawlessness which had lain on Kenton City for close upon three months, the citizens went over in a body to the support of their new Governor. He was cheered on his every appearance in public as assiduously as he had been ignored before, and, responding with the whole force of his sensitive nature to this longed-for and unexpected popularity, he devoted himself more and more earnestly, day by day, to the welfare of the state which was his idol.

But following in the wake of this revulsion of feeling in favor of Barclay came one, hardly less complete, in favor of Spencer Cavendish. While strictly speaking there could be no condoning his act, it was none the less evident to even the most rigid adherents of law that by it he had conferred an indisputable benefit upon the state of Alleghenia, and his open statement of his reasons at the time of his trial militated for rather than against him. So it was that a public petition was framed and circulated, asking, at the hands of Governor Barclay, the commutation of the death sentence to one of life imprisonment. Little by little the list of signatures grew, until, a week before the date fixed for Cavendish's execution, they were numbered by tens of thousands. Then the petition, rolled into a cylinder, was presented to the Governor by a committee, and left for his consideration.

To Barclay the intervening time had passed with almost incredible rapidity. His days, filled as they were to overflowing with numberless and complex duties, were yet the pleasantest he had ever known. At last, he was what he had dreamed of being—an active factor, the most active of all factors, in the advancement of his state. Redeemed, as if by a miracle, from the disgrace which had laid her low, Alleghenia arose, in his eyes, like a phoenix, throwing off the ashes of her reproach, and blazing, with new wings of burnished beauty, in the sunlight of hope and peace.

Barclay had retained his old office, not caring to make use of a room so permeated with associations of recent tragedy as was that which had formerly been Governor Abbott's. Now, with the windows open and the soft May air stirring the

papers on his desk, he sat, looking vacantly across the room, with the huge petition spread out before him. His attention, long absorbed by the problem in hand, was diverted by a tap on the ante-room door, and, in answer to his call, Natalie Rathbawne stood before him, smiling out of the exquisite daintiness of a fresh spring frock.

"You've forgotten!" she said immediately, at sight of his knit brows.

"Forgotten what?" inquired the Governor inadvisedly.

The girl's little foot stamped almost noiselessly upon the thick carpet.

"Upon my word!" she exclaimed, "if there's one thing worse than being engaged to the Lieutenant-Governor, it's being engaged to the Governor himself! Forgotten, of course, that we are to lunch together, and look at wall-papers afterwards! Do you know, John Barclay, I don't believe you mean to marry me, after all? We'll be just approaching the altar, when"—

She was interrupted in characteristic fashion, and disengaged herself, with a great air of indignation, from Barclay's arms.

"If you want to take lunch in the company of a rag carpet," she said severely, "that's the very best way to go about it. Get your hat."

There was a little pause as Barclay filed some papers in his private safe, and then one startled word from the girl.

"John!"

Wheeling abruptly, he saw her standing at the desk, with her hand on the petition, and her eyes, wide and wonderstruck, searching his face.

"Dearest!" he said impulsively, "I wish you hadn't."

But Natalie only laughed joyfully.

"But I'm glad, Johnny boy," she answered, "glad—glad—glad! What a wonderful thing it is to be Governor, boy dear! I don't think I ever really understood before. Think of it! To have the power of life and death—to be able to right the wrongs of justice with a single stroke of the pen. Oh, John! Sign it now—before we go. I shall be so much happier."

The Governor made no reply. He stood, with his head bent, smoothing his hat with the fingers of his right hand. Gradually the expression of eager expectation on her face changed to one of anxiety.

"John," she said in a half whisper, "you *are* going to sign it, aren't you, boy dear?"

"I'm not sure," faltered the Governor. "I'm not quite sure, dearest. It is the hardest problem I've ever had given me to solve. I can understand now the meaning of something your father said to me just before the strike,—that, for the first time in his life, he didn't know what to do, because right seemed to be hopelessly entangled with wrong, and wrong with right. When a man does evil in order that good may come, one tries to find an excuse for him, tries to palliate his offense in any reasonable way. That is human instinct. That is what accounts for the petition there, with the signatures of many of the most conscientious men in Alleghenia attached. They have managed to find the excuse, or they think they have, which, so far as their personal convictions are concerned, amounts to about the same thing. And I've been saying to myself that when public opinion points out a course as justifiable it can hardly be possible for a single individual to say that it is not. And yet the wrong is there, isn't it? No matter how confused a question may seem to us, there must absolutely, when we come to think of it, be some one great elemental principle upon which it not only can, but must, be decided—some boundary line between justice and injustice which we may be too blind to see, but which exists, and calls for observance, none the less. Right is right, wrong is wrong. No confusion between the two can possibly exist except in appearance. Strive to elude truth as we will, it remains eternal truth, and cannot be evaded in the end. And where it seems to be beyond us, all we can do is to strive to find the silken thread which will surely lead us out of the labyrinth into the searching light of day. It is that clue which I have been groping for. What is it? How am I to know it when I see it? What am I to do? At first I thought the case was clear—what he said, you know—about Diogenes—it seemed so odd—every one thought so—it might be construed as—as insanity"—

"Oh, *no*, John! Why, *we* know what that meant! No—no! The best part of it all was his sanity, his wonderful courage, his

braving of almost certain death for what he believed—and knew, John—*knew* to be right and best. Think what he did for Alleghenia, Johnny boy. He has been almost as great an instrument in her salvation as you. Think what he has done for all of us—for you, in giving you this opportunity—for me—for Dad! John, how *can* you hesitate?"

The Governor shook his head.

"Dearest," he said, "you're on the wrong track, just as I have been, a dozen times since the petition came. Don't you suppose I've thought of all that? Its significance, not only to me, but, as you say, to the state, is so tremendous that, at the first glance, it seems to be an unanswerable argument. But—don't you see?—no sophistry, no contemplation of the results achieved, can ever make it justifiable for a man to arrogate to himself the power of taking human life, which is the prerogative of God and the law alone. The peculiar circumstances of Cavendish's crime plead eloquently, almost irresistibly, for his pardon. He has saved the state—yes! But the case is one in a million, and it is not an individual case alone which hangs upon my decision,—it is the establishment of a precedent, the maintenance of a principle."

"But, John," broke in Natalie eagerly, "what you've just said— isn't that the clue for which you have been groping? He saved the state! I've heard you talk of Alleghenia too often, of what you hoped for her, and what you despaired of ever bringing to pass, not to know what those four words must mean to you. Think of it! *He saved the state!* Without any possibility of selfish object he did this extraordinary thing—made it possible for Alleghenia to win back the honor and respect she had so nearly lost forever! He killed the man who had no thought of her purity and dignity, who used the power the people had given him for the furtherance of his own selfish and wicked ends, who made her justice a mockery, who played with her law as if"—

"Stop!" exclaimed the Governor. "Stop—I must think. Wait a moment. I must think—I must think!"

After a minute he began to speak again, this time in a lower tone, a tone which suggested self-communion rather than direct address to the girl before him.

"Yes, that's it. Wait now,—let me be sure! He killed the man who had no thought of Alleghenia's purity, who used his power to serve his own ends, who made her justice"—he was speaking very slowly, dwelling on each word as it left his lips—"her *justice* a mockery, who played with her law—her law—her *Law*"—

He paused once more, his brows knit, his firm hand slowly stroking his chin. Then, of a sudden, he drew a deep breath, flung back his shoulders, and looked at her. His eyes were blazing, his voice touched with a new meaning, an eloquence deep, firm, conclusive.

"Natalie," he said, "come here."

"You've struck the keynote," he added, when they stood face to face, a foot or two apart. "It isn't what you thought, or what you meant, but it is the keynote, just the same. The Law!"

He wheeled slowly, and stepped forward, until he was directly before the emblazoned arms of Alleghenia which hung upon his wall.

"*Justitia—Lex—Integritas!*" he said. "Many a time, when the way seemed darkest, I've read those words over to myself, and found hope in them. Events changed, crises came and went, portents loomed thick, despair seemed omnipotent, failure and disgrace inevitable—but the motto of Alleghenia remained the same. Steadfast, purposeful, and commanding, it has endured through the trivial changes of political significance which have been as impotent to sully the actuality of her fair fame as are sun-spots to dim the radiance of the sun. It is only natural, perhaps, that the discouragements which were but transient should have seemed to me to be vital, damning, irremediable. Just as the Israelites of old turned from the promises of God to worship Baal, so have I turned from the assurance given me by these arms of Alleghenia, to prostrate myself before false idols of doubt and despair. I should have remembered how they called me, in the first instance, from a life of idleness and ease, to fight my way through the desert of difficulty, toward the promised land of honor. I should have remembered how in my darkest hours they went before me as a pillar of fire, how in the famine of my soul these words were the manna of encouragement, how in my thirst they struck clear water from the rock of adverse circumstance. But the Israelites came back to their true God at last; so I, little girl, to my true ideal. The Law!—you said the word—the Law is the clue, the keynote, the boundary between right and wrong!"

She was at his side, and he slipped one arm around her, and held her close to him as with his finger he traced again the

motto of Alleghenia.

"Do you know what this means?" he asked. "*Justitia*,—to be just to all men, without fear or favor, lenient to our enemies, rigid and unyielding, if need be, to our friends; putting aside personal considerations, striving so far as in us lies to be impartial, merciful in the face of prejudice, relentless in that of conviction—fair! *Lex*,—to abide by the law, in spirit only if our inmost conviction warrants that course, but in letter absolutely where there is the smallest hint of doubt; secure in the knowledge that, however fallible it be, it is the best that man has yet been able to do in imitation of the immutable decrees of God. *Integritas*,—to be true to the oaths we have sworn, faithful to the promises we have made, loyal to the office intrusted to us by the people, to whom and for whom we are responsible. Dearest, I am no mere man. Were I that, were I to consult my will alone, and it lay, as now it lies, in my power to accomplish, Spencer Cavendish should go free to-day. I know what he has done; I appreciate his sacrifice; I see that by a single act he has accomplished what the rest of us were powerless to cure; I admire his courage; I condone his crime; I could forget all his weaknesses for the sake of this one great evidence of his strength. And yet—listen to me, dearest!—in what he strove to do he has failed utterly, if in removing a corrupt official who made a mockery of Alleghenia's law he has not replaced him by one who with all the force of his conscience and all the power of his influence will see that law administered. And whatever we may say of his crime, whatever its causes, whatever its wonderful results, it was and is a crime. 'Thou shalt not kill!' God has said it; Alleghenia by the voice of her law has ratified it. And not even the fact that Cavendish has made possible all my fondest and worthiest hopes, the fact that he has rescued from suffering all I hold most dear"—

Barclay suddenly covered his face with his free hand, as he had covered it on that afternoon in Peter Rathbawne's library, weeks before; then he looked up again, his lips trembling.

"Dearest," he said, "I am Governor of Alleghenia, and as such owe an allegiance, an obedience, which personal prejudice cannot impugn. On the day when you spoke to me of meeting Cavendish you pointed out the course of a gentleman and a friend. On the night of the Ninth's review you taught me the creed of an American and an Alleghenian. To-day—unconsciously perhaps, but none the less surely—you have made clear the duty of a public servant. God bless you, my life, my heart, my conscience! May I be worthy of you and of the commonwealth I serve. Where I doubted before, now I am sure. It is hard—God only knows how hard—but listen to Alleghenia's bidding! *Justitia, Lex, Integritas*,—equity, the code, and good faith, in the sight of God and man, heaven and earth, the American people and the commonwealth of Alleghenia. God save the state!"

"John," whispered the girl brokenly,— "John, you're right. God save the state!"

Slowly, tenderly, the Governor of Alleghenia led her back to the table, and taking up a pen, with a firm hand wrote five words, heavily underscored, at the head of the Cavendish petition. And these were:—

"Disapproved.

John Hamilton Barclay,

Governor."

Then, turning to the girl who loved him, he took her in his arms.

[The end of *The Lieutenant-Governor* by Guy Wetmore Carryl]