

# Cherry Square

GRACE. S.  
RICHMOND



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# CHERRY SQUARE

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"The Brown Study," "A Court of Inquiry,"  
"Foursquare," "With Juliet in England," "Red  
Pepper Burns," "Round the Corner in Gay Street,"  
"Rufus," "Under the Country Sky," etc.

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**Consider whether it is  
better to change and  
be living than to be  
unchanged and dead.**

STUART SHERMAN

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## Cherry Square

lies in the centre of Cherry Hills, a small town a certain number of miles outside of a Great city. Even if it were considerably nearer, it could in no sense be called a suburb. It is entirely unrelated to the city; it governs itself; it thinks well of itself; it is itself and no other.

Brook Street runs on the north side of the Square; rather, it parades dignifiedly across the space. Cherry Hills' best houses are upon Brook Street; the Gildersleeves, the Broughtons, the Abbotts, the Harmons live in them. The old Cherry House, at the corner of the Square, has the deepest lawn, the largest trees—in a town abounding in large trees—the most significant air of having been built while the town was young and of having watched the other houses spring up about it. But it has acquired of late years a less desirable air of having been lived in by no real life; of having no contacts with the other houses; of being aloof, withdrawn into a still impressive but lonely old age.

Quite suddenly everything was changed.

A young Irishman, whistling blithely, set about mowing the lawns, trimming the hedges, grubbing the weeds out of the paths and driveways; and then presently, when everything was in readiness, life came again into Cherry House—rushed into it. Young life, bursting to be gay; maturer life, eager to solve its problems. The old place took on a new aspect, quite aside from the material changes made by hands. It seemed itself to live again, to be proud and glad to be once more sheltering under its broad roof a new brood.

If an empty old house could speak, an intent listener might hear a wistful voice sighing:—"Oh, if I could just be lived in again!" And if after a year—two years—of emptiness, its doors should be opened once more and its bare rooms be filled, one again listening carefully might hear still another sigh—a contented, repleted sigh:—"I am lived in again. What more—what more can an old house ask?"

So it was with Cherry House, on Cherry Square, in Cherry Hills, in June of a year not long ago.

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# Cherry Square

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# I

When Josephine Jenney came by, Mrs. Norah O'Grady on hands and knees was fiercely scrubbing the square front-porch floor of the old Cherry House which stood on the Brook Street side of Cherry Square, in the small town of Cherry Hills. Now the old Cherry House, though there were reaches of lawn and garden beside and behind it, stood so close to the street that a bare two yards of distance separated the white picket fence from the iron-railed steps. Therefore, Jo Jenney, passing by, was so near to Mrs. O'Grady's back that she could see the tight muscles stand out on the red, capable arm which wielded the scrubbing brush. Mopping a long unused front-porch floor wasn't good enough for Norah O'Grady; it had to be scoured as though it were an ancient buried monument just retrieved from the drifting sands of Egypt.

"Good morning, Mrs. O'Grady. So somebody really is going to live in this delightful-looking old house again. I'm so glad."

One swift glance over her shoulder confirmed Mrs. O'Grady's impression that it was Miss Jenney who was speaking. Norah particularly liked this young teacher in the village school, who had been in the place only a year, but who in that short time had done wonders with the intelligence of bullet-headed Patsy O'Grady, the pride of his mother's heart. So though Norah didn't stop working for an instant she answered Jo less brusquely than she had answered much the same question—only they called it "the old Cherry House"—from some nine women and five men who had previously passed by. To most of these she had vouchsafed not much more than a nod, refusing to be drawn into conversation. The town would know all about it soon enough. Let them wait. It wasn't often she had the chance to withhold so much interesting information.

"I'm glad meself, Miss Jenney. It's too long the place has been like a tomb. Now we'll see some life about it."

"Who's coming, Mrs. O'Grady—if you don't mind telling?"

"I do mind tellin'," said Mrs. O'Grady frankly, with a last vigorous swish of her scrubbing brush. "Because I was told not to tell—just yet. But if ye can think of a good r'ason why I should be tellin' ye an' denyin' the rest, maybe I'll give ye a hint. It's more than human nature can stand to tell no one at all. Annyhow, they'll soon be here. An' the town guessin' everybody except the right ones—and the right ones the very ones that should be here."

"Do you mean—some of the Cherry family?"

Mrs. O'Grady nodded. "I mean that. It's old Miss Cherry's niece, that married the city minister ten years ago, an' she used to come here when she was a girl. Now she's comin' back, with her children, while her husband goes travellin' on his vacation. He's tired out, she says, what with his big city parish, an' he's goin' over the water with a party of men, while she comes here for the summer. An' it's my notion that she's glad to get away from bein' a minister's wife for a few short months."

Jo Jenney laughed appreciatively. "Now, how do you come to think that?" she questioned. "Because of course she didn't say so."

"Anny minister's wife," said Norah O'Grady, "is bound to be tired of bein' it. If he needs a vacation she needs two o' thim. I've been in two ministers' houses in my time, an' I know. An' I don't suppose bein' in a big city, an' havin' her husband preachin' to ten hundred people instead of one hundred, makes it anny easier. There's just that manny more women to criticize her."

She glanced down the street. A group of women were approaching with eyes upon the colloquy between herself and Miss Jenney. She rose from her knees.

"Go on, dear," she said under her breath, "or I'll be in trouble. Slip round to the back gate down the garden, and I'll let ye in when the storm's passed by."

In the twinkling of an eye she had vanished into the house, and the heavy green door with its brass knocker had swung uncompromisingly shut behind her. Jo proceeded on her way, walking rapidly. The women whom she met gave her curious nods, and one turned as if to speak, but Jo's momentum carried her safely by. Round the corner and down the lane she reached the narrow green gate at the foot of the garden, and two minutes later Mrs. O'Grady's strong hands, red and rough with work, wrested the long-unused gate open. At the same moment, at the front of the house, two women tried in vain to open the locked front gate.

"Well, whoever's coming," one of them said, "I hope they put an end to this foolish business of keeping the place barred like a prison."

"Maybe Eldora Cherry left it in her will that it should be. And Norah O'Grady would just enjoy doing it, anyway. Isn't she a character?"

"She certainly is. The other day. . . ."

Anecdotes of Mrs. O'Grady's well-known and tantalizing reticences followed, taking the minds of the group from the annoyance of having been unable to corner her. Meanwhile, inside the house, Jo Jenney watched Norah polish brass sconces. Polishing was among the best things Norah did. The violent effort seemed to ease her unceasing urge for work.

"Are you going to stay after Mrs. Chase comes?" Jo asked.

"To be sure, I'm that. I'm to come every day for the laundry work an' the cl'anin! There'll be plenty of both, with three little children. Mrs. Chase come up here an' engaged me, one evenin', when the town had gone to bed an' missed it. Drove up in her big car, with a girl an' a man with her—cousins of hers. Come in my house an' had a fine visit with me, who used to know her. She's the swate person, an' always was. Said she'd bring a cook, an' a nurse for the baby, an' would I find some girl up here to be second maid for her, to do the rooms an' wait on table, an' that. An' my oldest boy Jimmy's to kape the outdoors tidy for her, an' look after her car an' the ridin' horses she'll be gettin'."

"Have you found the second maid?"

"I have not. I wrote her she'd have to bring one. The kind of girl she'd want, around here, won't work in other folks' houses. I don't know what she wants of so many, but I think she's used to havin' plinty to wait on her, in her father's house. There ain't many ministers' wives have four. But that's neither here nor there. What Sally Cherry wanted she always had—till she married the minister—an' then she had more yet. But she had to pay for it. They was both of them of rich families—but I'm talkin' too much, Miss Jenney. I been kapin' my mouth so tight shut these days, I have to blither and blather when I get the chanct."

She was off with her brasses, to set them up. Jo Jenney stood still, her fine dark brows drawing together with the intensity of a sudden idea, a sudden purpose. When Norah came back Jo's mind was made up. It was an eager mind, few things daunted it.

"See here, Mrs. O'Grady, why couldn't I take the place of that second maid?"

Norah O'Grady stopped stock still, staring at the face of the young woman before her. It was an interesting face, it indeed possessed actual beauty of a spirited sort, but it was notable rather for a certain sturdy look of will which might be counted on to carry away obstacles. To Norah's mind there certainly was a large obstacle looming in the path of such a proposal as this.

"My heart!" she ejaculated. "Do I be hearin' right? An' you a teacher! But you're jokin'—that I know."

She turned away, but Jo's voice pursued her.

"It's vacation," she pointed out. "And I do mean it, Mrs. O'Grady. Why not? I've been wishing for something new to do this summer. I'm anxious to stay in this locality, for certain reasons. So why shouldn't I do this? I saw Mrs. Chase once—in the church where her husband preaches. I could hardly listen to him for looking at her, though I thought he was wonderful—everybody does. But I thought she was more so. I'd like very much to be in her home for a summer."

Mrs. O'Grady was still staring, the current of her work stopped in mid-stream. "Are you thinkin' she'll make a companion of you, maybe, because of your bein' a teacher?" she inquired, with a touch of kindly irony. "Because she won't—not even her that's the real quality an' so ain't the uppish sort at all. But—they don't. Them as works for 'em they kapes in their places. They're used to that—they don't think to do no other way, and we can't be blamin' 'em."

"I shouldn't expect her to make a companion of me," insisted Josephine Jenney, rather sternly. "Of course I understand, Mrs. O'Grady. And I shouldn't tell her that I'm a teacher. I shouldn't be a teacher while I'm her second maid, should I? And I do want to do something interesting—and I think this would be interesting. Will you recommend me?"

"What'll my Patsy say, that you've taught all he knows, an' more too?"

"Why, Mrs. O'Grady!" Jo was laughing now, with a gleam in her eyes. "If I've taught Patsy anything, it's that we are all free and equal in this country."

"Free an' equal, is it?" Norah O'Grady seemed about to launch into a fiery tirade on the searing irony of this well-worn term, but something in Jo's look halted her. "An' you're serious, Miss Jenney?" she insisted.

"Perfectly serious. And since you've written Mrs. Chase that you can't find anybody—— When did the letter go?"

"Last night."

"Will you catch it with a telegram? '*Have found satisfactory maid on your own terms.*' I'll send it, if you like, and pay for it, of course."

When Norah O'Grady had caught her breath, practical details rushed to her mind. She had resumed her work—scrubbing out a pantry—but her thoughts ran free. "Ye'll have to wear what she calls a unyform."

"I know. Black dresses and white aprons. Very attractive."

"And a cap."

For the fraction of a second Jo's assent halted. Then she said undauntedly: "Of course. Most becoming."

"So you don't mind wearin' a unyform? An' a cap?" questioned Norah again, with a sharp look.

"Your Rose wears them."

"Ah, but there's a difference. A trained nurse has her own position. A servant has no position at all."

"I mean to have one," said Jo Jenney lightly. "I mean to be such an unusual servant—such a fascinating servant—that ——"

"They'll be takin' ye into the family," finished the Irishwoman scornfully. "Well, since there's nothin' I can say can hinder ye, I may as well give ye my blessin'! An' it's needin' it ye'll be, even though ye work for Mrs. Shyler Wendell Chase. That's the name on the card she give me, with her address. An' it's lucky I'm carryin' it around in me pocket. Handy for thim as sends her tillygrams hirin' thimselves out to her."

She fished in the pocket of her red petticoat, brought out a much rumpled calling card, and handed it somewhat pridefully to Jo.

"*Mrs. Schuyler Wendell Chase*," read the name, and Jo smiled as she scanned it. Many times she had read it, in the columns of the Sunday edition of the great city daily, which she always bought at the village news-stand for the myriad marvellous contacts it gave her, if only by the printed page.

"I'm going now, to send the message and buy my uniforms," she said.

"I think—I know—Mrs. Chase said she furnishes thim herself," Norah called after her.

Jo shook her head. "I shall furnish one myself, to begin with," she said, "so I can be sure I look the way I want to when she sees me."

Her hand was on the door-latch, but Mrs. Norah O'Grady had the last word, as always. "Ye may as well have that satisfaction for once. After that, ye'll look the way *she* wants you to," she said sternly.

But when Jo Jenney had gone, Norah smiled contentedly to herself. "There's plinty work before her," she said. "But I like to see thim a bit darin'. It ain't too interestin' a world, at that."

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*Bought a new note-book, the old one not having a blank page left. Must keep notes of this new experience. Invaluable sometime, perhaps. Notes will be staccato ones—shall not have time to draw them out into linked sweetness. But mustn't miss setting down enough to record impressions of J. J. as servant! Boasted to Mrs. O'Grady I could be a fascinating one. Large order!*

*Put on my uniform just now, and surveyed myself in my two-by-one mirror. Well—really! I almost faltered. To be sure, it's rather becoming. If it could be of black taffeta, with very short skirt, sheer silk stockings, and a tiny lace cap with long streamers, musical comedy style, I'd actually enjoy it. But in dark-blue linen, even though it fits well,*



*with immaculate linen collar and cuffs, and a cap which is almost knowing, I do feel rather odd—and ridiculously demure. But I'm in for it, and I'm not retreating.*

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## II

"Schuyler! What a send-off! It looks like the stateroom of a popular débutante."

Dr. Schuyler Wendell Chase drew his wife Sally inside the door and closed it. "Never mind what it looks like," he said. "I'll soon have most of it distributed in the steerage. The thing that comes over me just now is that you're not going with me."

He set three baskets of flowers, five hampers of fruit, and a package of books and magazines out of the way, so that he and Sally could sit down. He hadn't taken the trouble to scan the accompanying cards; he knew well enough which of his parishioners were likely to have demonstrated their regret at parting and their good wishes for the voyage in this marked way. That largest basket with the biggest bow of ribbon was sure to be from Miss Adler, and the hint of a frown between his handsome eyebrows suggested her clergyman's distaste. To the credit of Doctor Chase he didn't much enjoy the conspicuous worship of women, but there seemed no way to avoid it wholly. At forty-two he was still so young, so good-looking, and withal so unquestionably able, that his popularity was a thing which followed as the dust the chariot.

"Just throw a kiss at the places we've been together," commanded Sally, "as you pass by. And when you come to Nice \_\_\_\_\_"

"When I come to Nice," promised Schuyler Chase, "I'll write you such a letter as you've never had yet. Sally, I wouldn't go without you, if——"

"If I didn't make you. Yes, I know that. Well, I am making you because you need to get away, not only from the church and its Miss Adlers and Mrs. Brabants and the other devotees, but from me, myself."

He smiled. "I know you think so, and probably you're right. You usually are. The converse of that statement must be equally true—or more so. And you're a trump about it. But I'll be so eager to get back to you I'll probably jump off the ship and swim in when we come up the bay."

"I'll swim out to meet you, Schuy," she promised him.

Except for a long minute which they spent in each other's arms, that was all the real leave-taking they could indulge in. Almost at once the stateroom was besieged by the bearers of more flowers, more fruit, more sheaves of magazines. A great bundle of letters and telegrams was brought to Doctor Chase. A group of people came down to see the quarters of the three clergymen who were to occupy the commodious stateroom together. The other two clergymen summoned Schuyler Chase back to the deck to receive the hails and farewells of a large delegation of men from his church—much larger than those from their own churches, though they were well known, too. Altogether——

"It's enough to spoil him," said one friend to another, watching the scene. He was not a devotee—his head was too level.

The other nodded. He also had a level head. "He carries it very well, but he's only human, and I sometimes think he shows the strain of trying not to seem spoiled. If it weren't for that sensible, charming wife of his—— Look at her now. Flattery'll never turn her head, and she won't let it turn his. It would be a fool who could look her in the eye and say, 'See how popular I am.' She'd laugh at him. I presume she laughs at Chase just often enough to keep his brain cool."

Sally Chase, looking fresh and fit in her street clothes, was standing by her husband in the midst of the group which surrounded him.

"What shall we do without him so many months!" sighed one large woman, elegantly turned out and obviously sentimental. Mrs. Schuyler Chase showed her a smiling face.

"Extremely well, I know, Mrs. Brabant," she said. "And think how he needs to do without us for a time."

"My dear! . . . But I know he must be fearfully tired. I've thought he's looked so worn these last few weeks. His face is more beautiful than ever, through his weariness. More saint-like—I could have wept to look at him last Sunday, when he said good-bye to us. I felt at first I couldn't come down to see him off, and then I thought—we must be with him to the last—make him feel he's taking us with him."

"Heaven forbid!" thought Sally Chase. Mrs. Brabant was one of her pet aversions, anyway; and just now she seemed rather more absurd than usual. "My idea is to have him feel he *isn't* taking us with him." Schuyler Chase's wife couldn't resist sounding this note again. "Every man, particularly every minister, needs to get away from the thought of his parish for a while. Never mind"—she was aware of Mrs. Brabant's growing indignation—"he'll be as delighted to come back

as he is to go."

"You ought to be going with him, Mrs. Chase," put in another woman, a tall, thin person with a pointed nose, who had been listening with unmixed pleasure to Mrs. Brabant's little discomfiture at the hands of the minister's wife. "Of course you would be, if it weren't for the dear children."

"I'm sure I shouldn't, really, Mrs. Crosby," declared Sally. "I believe so thoroughly in sending husbands off on vacations, as well as ministers."

They were used to their minister's wife, and knew her to be kind as well as frank. She was the happy possessor of so much personal charm that she seldom really offended. They watched her now, with peculiar interest mixed with envy. It must be very wonderful, thought these admiring ones, to be the wife of such a husband; no wonder she could be gay. Though how she could be gay to-day was difficult to see. Wasn't she losing—him?

After all, and in spite of the too zealous ones, it was a pleasant scene. Tall Schuyler Chase, slender and elegant in clothes unclerical, his heavy chestnut hair smooth and gleaming under the May sunlight, his beautifully cut lips parting over a flash of white teeth as he sent to one and another his quick-witted replies and retorts, was a figure to command attention. Only his wife was likely to note the slight twitch in the upper lip, the tiny involuntary jerk of the comely head, which to her betrayed her husband's tension. He was always taut under any publicity—how well she knew that! And he was tired from the long strain of the year's work—tired and thin, and of late nearly sleepless. It was time he got away.

Preaching to such audiences as he commanded meant that he went into his pulpit strung to the highest pitch. Though his pulpit manner was so poised and natural that he seemed to be absolutely at his ease, Sally knew it to be the result of the sternest self-control. And when he chose to exercise that peculiar attraction of his, which fairly compelled many of his hearers to his point of view by its own all but hypnotic power, he did it always at a cost. There was such prodigal expense of nerve and sinew that afterward—an hour afterward—when she saw him at home, he was limp and pallid, and the touch of his hand was coldly damp. All the spring he had been showing what seemed to her a more than normal exhaustion after each public appearance. Yes, it was time he got away, even from her, upon whom he depended for help in restoring his balance when it had been upset in a way no member of his great congregations even dreamed of. His physician, Dr. Richard Fiske, to whom he now and then applied, when his occasional spells of insomnia became too frequent, understood this clearly.

Yes, Sally was glad to see him go, though when the moment of parting came she felt the wrench poignantly, as she had known she would. People crowding round left her the chance only for the brief clasp and kiss permitted to good taste even in shipboard farewells, but she felt that Schuyler hated leaving her, and that was all she needed to be sure of. Their eyes clung for a moment as they drew apart, and Schuyler murmured: "God keep you, dear." She nodded, smiling her most splendid smile. Then she was rushed off the ship by a friendly pillar of the church who especially admired Mrs. Schuyler Chase, and who took her in charge with a distinct thrill of pleasure in his mature breast. From the pier she waved back at Schuyler until his face was lost in the dimming blue of distance, then turned with Mr. Pierpont and hurried back to her car, into which he put her in his most gallant manner.

"Yes, I suppose the country is the best place for you and the children," he said, leaning in at the window of her motor, his striking iron-gray head bare in the May sunshine. "But we shall miss you from the Manse. Where did you say you were going? Cherry Hills? Cherry trees there, or some long-established family, to give it the name?"

"My mother's family, Mr. Pierpont. My aunt—Mother's sister—left the old place to me; I used to visit there with the greatest joy when I was a girl."

"You still look like one, Mrs. Chase." His admiring gaze rested upon Sally's fair colouring and the exquisite texture of her skin. "You'll merely be the oldest of your children as they romp about the country. I hope you have saddle horses there?"

"I shall find some. I mean to spend much time with the children, as you suggest. Life in the Manse doesn't leave me many hours for them, and they're growing so fast."

"Forget all the organizations and the complications of the city parish," he advised. "They're harder on the minister's family than most people guess. You've been an ideal wife for your genius of a husband—you've earned a vacation, too. See that you take it, if you want us who are devoted to you both to be satisfied."

Sally's eyes responded to this pleasant little speech, and she gave back the friendly pressure of the hand offered her—that of a magnate in worldly affairs who found much time to give to the church as well.

"When you come motoring through Cherry Hills with Mrs. Pierpont this summer, be sure to look us up. Or are you going abroad?"

"My wife and daughters probably will, as usual. Not I—I can't get my rest that way. I'll be glad to hunt up Cherry Hills and pay you a call. The name sounds enticing."

"It's really quite lovely there. We'll expect you."

She looked after his erect, massive figure as he turned away, hat still in his hand, and thought gleefully how good it was going to be to escape for a time from all these familiar contacts, full of kindness though they were. Not to have to be thoughtful of consequences over every smallest word or deed; not to have to consider each step she took, to give her time when she had none to spare, her smiles when she felt like frowning, her advice when she knew she needed it more than those who came to confide in her. She would be off for the country as fast as she could finish the packing and go! She had not meant to leave till to-morrow—she would speed things up and get away to-night. Plenty of time—the ship had sailed at ten in the morning. With Schuyler gone the dignified dark walls of the Manse would be gloomy enough; she would forsake them before the sun set.

It took all her executive ability to accomplish this plan—and she was famous for that in the parish, and could rush a group of women through a business meeting with as little loss of time as is possible when there are several divergent opinions and the will to speak them. She telephoned Norah O'Grady first of all, and though she got back a somewhat flurried: "I'll be doin' the best I can, Mrs. Chase, an' I'll be ready someways," she turned away with a sense of being already almost at her goal.

"Just have the beds made, and some sandwiches and milk," she had directed, and had smiled to realize that she was already comfortably letting down in her requirements. The Manse had to be ready for visitors at any moment of the day, almost of the night; at Cherry House she meant to be as vagabond as a fastidious preference for order would permit.

And she was taking nobody with her except the children and the servants. . . . Blessed, glorious vacation!

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*Made dash to see Julian. Told him of coming adventure. He went straight up into the air.*

*"No! My Lord, no! Jo, you can't—shan't! I won't have it!"*

*"Yes, you will, dear. It's exactly the thing. I'm wildly excited about it. I'll write you all sorts of funny letters—you'll love getting them."*

*"I'll hate them! I tell you I won't have it! Stop it—stop the thing! Oh, Jo!—--"*

*Got him quieted and fairly reasonable at last. Left him with his head in his hands—tragic Julian! . . . But he'll see how wise a plan it is, presently. No other would keep me in Cherry Hills, where I need to be.*

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### III

"Jimmy, run tell Miss Jenney to come over quick as she can be makin' it. The family'll be here this night, an' there's two days' work to do in less than wan. Hurry, Jimmy!"

Jo came flying. "What first, Mrs. O'Grady?"

"The upstairs rooms. Hang up the curtains—praises be they're fresh from me hands. Make up all the beds—there's the sheets an' blankets an' pillys in this big box that come yesterday. Tuck 'em in tight an' smooth——"

"I know. I will."

"Two thin blankets on each bed, an' a silk puff (she calls 'em) on the foot of each wan to match the room. Towels in the bathroom. Ivery room lookin' like it was new-bornn. The big room at the back'll be Mrs. Chase's—she wint over the house with me an' showed me ivery wan—an' me knowin' 'em all like a book, what with washin' an' clanin' for Miss Eldora Cherry for twinty years. The west room with the two beds for Master Bob—mind you be sayin' Master Bob, Miss Jenney."

"And you might as well begin calling me Josephine, Mrs. O'Grady."

"Howiver'll I be doin' that! Faith, thin—Josyphine—listen to this—the east room for Miss Barbara an' the one nixt the bathroom for the nurse an' baby. There's a crib Mrs. Chase sint up, an' you'll find pink baby blankets for it. I'll be in the kitchen if ye nade me. I've got to get every pot an' pan scoured for that cook—an' I hope she's a swate, r'asonable person, for I mind there'll be plenty of company. Mrs. Chase told me she wasn't havin' no company, but I know her. Flies folls the sugar, an' she can't kape folks away from her. If her two cousins, the Sturgises, don't be showin' us the light o' their countenances before the wake is gone, my name ain't Norah O'Grady."

She vanished down the back stairs, still talking.

Jo fell to work. There was nothing she liked to do in the way of housework better than the making of beds. It was a long time since she had had in her hands such material with which to make beds as these sheets and blankets which came out of the big packing case. In the large, airy rooms, with all windows open, she shook out the paired sheets of exquisitely fine linen, all hemstitched by hand, each top sheet with a monogram—S. C. C. The blankets were soft and light, of summer weight, with pale coloured borders bound with silk. As Jo tucked in her sheets, drawing them smooth and firm, she was enjoying to the full her own expertness and its results. Also—she was living over again certain past days. As she left each room she looked about it happily, delighting in its old-fashioned charm.

And soon the silent old house would be teeming with life; children's voices would resound through it; and the beautiful person in the pew Jo had once watched throughout a church service because she was the wife of the splendid person in the pulpit, would be here to become a friend—for this Jo expected her to do. She knew very well that though she was taking the place of a servant, it was easily in her power to make herself known and liked by Mrs. Schuyler Chase otherwise than as a servant.

Downstairs she helped Norah lay the table in the pleasant dining room, whose windows looked out upon the rear lawn and garden, where Norah's Jimmy was frantically weeding and trimming in the last-minute endeavour to have everything about the place look tended. The lunch-cloths and napkins and silver for the table had come out of the packing case, but the china was old blue-and-white Canton from the shelves in the corner cupboards.

"I don't know much about san'wiches," Norah said doubtfully, pushing her hair out of her eyes with her forearm, as she eyed the loaves of bread and the pots and jars of filling material hastily ordered from the grocery, all of which had been deposited upon the scrubbed kitchen table.

"I do—I'll make them, if you like," offered Jo. She could guess what Norah's sandwiches would be if she attempted them—big hearty slabs fit for a labourer's fist. "I love to make them—nice, thin little things, several different kinds."

"Do thim, now, with my blessin'."

There were innumerable matters to see to—ice for the ice-box; fresh milk from a dairy farm a mile out; wood for the fireplaces—"She'll have 'em all goin' when it's cool," Norah was sure. Flowers for the table—"She wouldn't think she could ate without flowers." Jo ran out to pick pink and yellow and orange tulips from the straggling borders of the old garden. She arranged them not only upon the dining table but in the square parlour and upon the bureau in Mrs. Chase's room. She would have lingered over this task but Norah spurred her on.

"They'll be here anny minute now. Best get on the uniform," she commanded. "She'll like ye better if she sees ye lookin' the way she's used to."

When Jo appeared Norah looked her over.

"Dark blue, not black," she commented. "Sure it looks nice, if she'll let ye wear it. An' the apron's nice, an' the cap is that becomin'! Ye look like a servant—*an' ye don't!* Are ye sure ye know the ways of sp'akin'? They're very partic'lar about that, I know."

"I think I can manage it," said Josephine Jenney, a gay sparkle in her eyes. "And I'm glad you think I look nice, Norah, for I'm really—now that it comes to it—just a little scared."

Norah eyed her alarmedly.

"Sure, and I was feared maybe ye'd be regrettin' your rashness," said she. "Yersilf a t'acher an' all—an' then comin' down to bein' what they call a maid, in a unyform."

"But I don't regret it. You see, I want so much to be with the sort of people these are. And I don't mind waiting on them. I should mind waiting on—well—the Gildersleeves—or the Broughtons."

Norah understood. "Ye would mind. I'll not scrub their floors. They think themselves the upper crust—an' they're not. They treat their help like the dust ben'ayth them. They're nobody at all, an' ye'll see how they'll bend their backs bowin' to Mrs. Shyler Chase, because they know she's somebody. They was that way to old Miss Cherry—an' she takin' no notice of thim, though she was that polite to thim you'd have thought she liked thim. But I know she didn't. Who could? They'd not notice me when they met me on the street. Miss Cherry'd turn aside to spake to me—an' if the Gildersleeves was lookin' on she'd turn 'way round to do it. She—— The saints an' all!"

The telephone, recently installed according to orders, was ringing.

"That's thim. Run, Miss Jenney! They're on their way."

Jo ran, calling back, "I'm Josephine—don't forget that!" And then answering demurely—"This is Cherry House."

A voice which by contrast with Norah O'Grady's strident tones sounded peculiarly pleasant to Jo's ears, replied: "This is Mrs. Chase. We are expecting to reach Cherry Hills in half an hour. Can you tell me if Mrs. O'Grady has the house ready for us?"

"Yes, Mrs. Chase. Everything is ready."

"There'll be eight of us, so I hope there are plenty of sandwiches. Please tell Mrs. O'Grady to make some coffee. We're bringing fruit. I should like to have small fires in all the fireplaces. I think that's all, and you may expect us by seven."

"Yes, Mrs. Chase."

"Ye sound like ye look," was Norah's comment. "I'm thinkin' ye'll do. Coffee, is it? An' eight people. There's hersilf an' three children—an' the nurse—an' the cook. That's six. An' she drives herself. Who's the other two? I told ye there'd be company!"

In less than the half hour the car came in—a big, shining car, full of people and luggage, with Sally Chase's capable gauntleted hand at the wheel. It was closely followed by another—a high-powered roadster driven by a bare-headed, fair-haired young man whose face was deeply tanned. With him was a girl. But Jo had no eyes just then for anybody but Mrs. Chase—her mistress! She was tingling from head to foot with the strange sensation of being actually in the employ of this lovely young woman, in the capacity of a servant. Had she done wisely? Somehow the aspect of the whole party slightly daunted her, it looked so disturbingly sophisticated even in its careless travelling clothes. And the middle-aged woman on the back seat, who must be the cook, seemed, with her solemn face and austere black, decidedly formidable as the fellow-servant she was to be. Could Josephine Jenney really bring herself to play her part as it must be played?

"Run and help with the stuff!" Norah O'Grady had commanded under her breath, and Jo obeyed. Mrs. Chase, sliding out from the driver's seat, gave her a quick, comprehensive glance.

"Are you Josephine? How nice that you could be here from the first minute! Please take those bags and that hamper. This is Mrs. Lawson, our cook, and Mary, the children's nurse—Josephine. And these are Bob and Barbara and little Schuyler. Is he fast asleep, Mary? That's great. We'll pop him into his crib and he may'nt wake till morning. Oh, and there's Mrs. O'Grady!"

There followed a busy half hour. Sally Chase, herself, reminded her new maid of a child in spite of her competent way of setting the machinery of the house running. Between agreeably given orders to her force she could be heard here and there exclaiming over the various details of the house itself, the briskly burning fires, the view from the windows, the rows of pink and white peonies budding in the garden. The young man and the girl who had leisurely followed the party into the house could also be heard laughing at her; and later, when Sally and her cousins—for so they proved to be—were consuming sandwiches with young Bob and Barbara, and Jo was serving coffee to the elders and milk to the children, the chaffing was still going on.

Jo understood perfectly that demureness in a maid is the first requisite, so she went about with downcast eyes and a composed face. But she was able to note that the man cousin was a gay, attractive youth, full of spirits, and that the girl was quite his opposite, being a languid creature, either by temperament or selection, with smooth dark hair which lay in perfect waves above her white brow, and who seemed to frown more than she smiled. Nobody except Mrs. Chase gave the quiet maid a look, except once when five-year-old Barbara dropped half an oozy chicken sandwich upon the floor, and Jo hastened to pick it up and to wipe with a fresh napkin the stain from the child's dress. Then little Barbara stared up into her face and said, smiling at her: "You look like Miss Burnett."

At which everybody smiled also, and the young man, with a quick look at Jo, said with a chuckle—"That's a compliment for somebody."

"Miss Burnett is one of Barbara's favourite friends," explained Mrs. Chase, at which Jo herself smiled, but knew better than to make reply. As a matter of fact, she had been saying to herself ever since she had seen these people come in that she must never for a moment forget her position. It would take very careful remembering not to be betrayed into speaking as she would not be expected to speak, or showing in some unexpected way that she was more accustomed to giving directions than to receiving them.

The children were sent away to bed the moment they finished eating, but the others lingered in the dining room, both the guests smoking over their coffee, while Mrs. Chase sat making lists of things to be ordered. Jo, waiting in the butler's pantry close by, as Norah had told her to do, could hear the talk.

"You'll be buried alive, Sally, in this dead little spot," prophesied Bradley Sturgis.

"I came here to be buried alive," retorted Sally Chase. "I was on the point of being buried dead in the city parish, there was so much to do. Here, without a responsibility outside of my family, I shall become more and more alive. So I shall be able to resurrect myself with no trouble at all when Schuyler comes home in October."

And she returned to her lists.

It was at this point that her other cousin, Adelaide Sturgis, began to speak. She had said practically nothing since she had come in at the door; had nibbled two of the delicate sandwiches, had drunk thirstily two cups of coffee, and had smoked three slim cigarettes from her own chaste case.

"Sally," said Adelaide, in the low slow voice which seemed to be an acquired art, since few normal young women are able so to control their desire to give expression to their thoughts, "will you let me stay here with you? I've been upstairs and picked out the room I want. Nobody seems to be going to use it."

Sally looked up, startled. "You stay, 'Laide? Why? Why should you want to?"

Bradley threw back his fair head and laughed consumedly. "There you have it in a nutshell," he said. "The eager guest, the reluctant hostess. Of course she doesn't want you, 'Laide."

"But—my dear," went on Sally, "this is no place for you. As Brad has said, it's the sleepest little town imaginable. Unless, of course, you had somebody coming out to see you all the time, and—frankly——"

"I shouldn't have much of anybody," promised Miss Sturgis. "I'm tired to death of people. I want to stay quietly in the country and get back my complexion. I'll not bother you—if you won't object to having my breakfasts sent up."

She sat looking at her cousin, her eyes half closed between her heavy lashes, her long, thin form yielding pliantly to the high-backed dining chair in which she sat, her slender knees crossed, one foot swinging lightly. Sally sat looking back at her. Bradley, still grinning, watched them both.

"Don't take her, Sal, if you don't want to," he advised. "She says she won't have anybody coming out to see her. She can't keep 'em away and she's too lazy to try. You don't want a yawning, stretching pussy cat like her always on your hearth. You want a nice friendly barking dog like me, to gambol about the lawns and keep you jolly. Let me stay. You need a

man in the house."

"I'll have neither of you. I came here to be as lonely as I like—and I like to be very lonely."

Sally was smiling, but her tone showed she meant it. Once more she returned to her lists. Then she got up and came out into the pantry where Jo waited. She stood still and looked at Jo, as if she found something about her to challenge the attention. Jo found her heart quickening a beat, so much depended upon having Mrs. Chase like her. In a moment more she actually had the assurance that she had made a favourable impression in this strange new rôle.

"I think you are going to be very nice to have about, Josephine," said Mrs. Chase in her charmingly straightforward way. "One can always tell very quickly, you know, whether one is going to like other people. If you have half as pleasant an impression of us, I know we shall get on beautifully."

"Thank you, Mrs. Chase," said Jo, and gave back the friendly smile. There was nothing patronizing about Sally Chase, or Jo would have felt it instantly, being keyed high at this critical hour. And the fact that the new maid let her reply go at that, and didn't add, as the ordinary housemaid would—"I'm sure I hope to please you, ma'am," made her new mistress feel certain of being pleased. But she was becoming even more certain that Josephine wasn't just the ordinary servant.

"I think you've never done this before, my dear," Mrs. Schuyler Chase said to herself, with conviction. "Such a beautiful, high-bred face, such a delightful voice and intonation. . . . However, as a maid for whom Norah O'Grady vouches, I must accept you and be thankful."

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*Family arrived—first plunge over.*

*Mrs. Chase very nice—a dear—as I knew she would be. Children ducks.*

*Cousin Adelaide very pale, mascara-y, and lip-sticky. Long legs, too thin; body too sinuous; speech too languid. Typical struggler after latest effect. She gave Josephine the maid but one look—very narrow-eyed, indolent look. Received it with shock-absorber working well. Don't mind her in the least—at present.*

*Cousin Bradley precisely the "Brother to Adelaide" required by drama. Description enough!*

*Made no errors in service or manners, though went about feeling both numb and dumb—if that can be with rapid pulse.*

*Cook in kitchen will be greatest trial, easy to foresee. Very much queen in her realm, with a not-too-good temper. Mrs. Chase did her best to put us on good terms with each other. Had to swallow hard when first addressed by Cook—Mrs. Lawton—after Mrs. Chase had left kitchen. "Now, get busy, Josyphine. You don't move any too quick. Why'd you leave your last place, if I may ask?"*

*Of course I longed to tell her she mightn't ask. But that way lies madness, so I answered that my family all went away to another country. (The dear God knows they did—a far country.)*

*"And didn't think enough of you to take you with 'em?"*

*I shook my head. Parrying Mrs. Lawton's thrusts will take all my skill at fencing.*

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## IV

"What they doing now? Couldn't you sit by the window and tell me, Lucy? Seems 'sif you keep looking out 'sif you saw something interesting, but you don't say a word. I can *hear* 'em down there."

Miss Clarinda Hunt's voice was both tremulous and eager. It was hard to lie in bed and see Lucinda for ever running to peer out between the half-closed blinds of the second-story bedroom at the lawn and garden which lay between the Hunts' home and the old Cherry place. It was so long since there had been anything to see except the still windows behind which had sat Miss Eldora Cherry, lingering out her existence. And now, apparently, there was everything to see, and Lucinda always seeing it, and failing to report more than half of it.

"There isn't so much to see," replied Lucinda, gazing, however, as if she couldn't take her eyes off what she did see. "And nothing to hear, except the children shouting, and you can hear that yourself. Sally Chase is having tea out there under the big beech—Miss Jenney's just brought it out. I declare, I'd never have thought—Miss Jenney—and she acts just like a servant, too—as if she'd never seen a schoolhouse. How she can do it! They call her Josephine."

But she and Clarinda had been over all that, over and over it, since they had first heard the astounding news. Clarinda was impatient for other details. Her little pale face was turned toward Lucy at the window, her faded blue eyes fixed upon her sister's sharp profile—sharp yet rather attractive still. Lucinda was only forty to Clarinda's fifty-five.

"Sally Chase isn't having tea all by herself, is she?" the invalid asked eagerly, in her high-keyed voice. "Who else is there?"

"I don't know—except her cousin, that Sturgis girl, lying back in her chair, same as she always is. There's a man with his back to us—I can't make out who he is. Might be Harry Liscomb, only I never saw Harry wear white clothes. But he's just about Harry's size. There—there comes somebody in the gate—two women. If I wasn't so far away I could tell who 'tis. All dressed up—— Oh, it's the Gildersleeves, sure's you're born. Mis' Gildersleeve and Alice. I hadn't seen them clothes before, I didn't recognize 'em. I didn't see their car stop, but there 'tis, outside the gate—and they living just six doors away! And making an afternoon call, just as formal!"

"Pity sakes!" exclaimed Clarinda. "As if 'twouldn't be more neighbourly to just step over, so near an' all. What have they got on, Lucy?"

"Mis' Gildersleeve's got on a sort of ashes-of-roses sort of colour—silk, it looks from here. And a hat to match. And gloves. Alice's wearing white, and a wide straw hat with a ribbon flopping down one side. Alice's carrying her gloves. I shouldn't think she'd even have 'em with her, such a hot day. Sally Cherry isn't dressed up any more'n usual—just sort of straight, plain things, kind of a light tan shade. Adelaide's wearing the same sort of things, only she's got a scarf. They never *do* seem much dressed up. I s'pose they think, being out o' the city, they don't have to dress up. But the Gildersleeves—they certainly do look as if they were going to a party."

"Maybe they were invited," Clarinda suggested. "Oh, dear, I wish I could see 'em."

"Well, I wish you could," agreed Lucinda. "I don't think they were invited, though as near as I can tell from here there's cups enough."

"Did you say Miss Jenney was there?" Clarinda now asked.

"She's handing the tea."

"Did you see if the Gildersleeves spoke to her?"

"I've been watching for that," Lucinda reported, with evident relish. "An' I couldn't make out that they did."

"Two of the Gildersleeve children were in her room at school last year," Clarinda remembered. "Do you suppose they didn't recognize her, in that cap an' all?"

"Recognize her—nothing!" Lucinda spoke sharply. "Could anybody mistake Josephine Jenney? She's far and away prettier than Alice Gildersleeve, who thinks herself a beauty. They don't intend to speak to her, being in the place of hired help now."

"She was hired when she was in the school," murmured Clarinda.

"Well, you know it's different now. When she put on that cap an' apron she must have known people like the

Gildersleeves would cut her right off their list. I don't understand yet how she come to do it."

But Clarinda cared more for reports of what was taking place upon the lawn than for going over again the extraordinary unknown motives of Josephine Jenney. At this moment she received an excited bulletin.

"My goodness, who's that driving up? He's getting out an' coming in. I never saw *him* before!"

"What's he look like?"

"Looks like he was Governor of the State. Tall, an' straightbacked, an' awful good-looking light clothes. Little bit of gray over his ears, but he doesn't appear old. He's coming across the grass with his hat in his hand. Sally Cherry's going to meet him—she's got both her hands out. . . . They're laughing and seeming terribly pleased. Even that lazy cousin of hers is getting up—must be somebody important, or she'd never stir herself. When it's young men, she don't move to greet 'em. Oh, Mis' Gildersleeve and Alice are pruning and primping to meet him—I can see 'em. Now they're all setting down again, and the Governor or whoever he may be is sitting right by Sally. He could have set down by Mis' Gildersleeve or Alice—they made room enough on that high-backed bench they're setting on. He just grabbed a chair and pulled it right around by Sally. . . . Now Miss Jenney's handing *him* tea, and bread and butter. I wonder what she thinks of all this. . . . Seems funny, Sally's husband going off on that long voyage, and her receiving so much comp'ny. That man isn't her brother or her cousin, I'll venture."

"I can hear 'em laughing," commented Clarinda wistfully. "Anyhow, I can hear the man—and I guess that sort of shrill one is Alice Gildersleeve."

"Yes, she's trying to join in. Trust Alice Gildersleeve for joining in when any man comes round. I notice she never gets one to stay by her very long."

"Maybe she laughs too shrill," suggested the invalid. Clarinda was gazing sympathetically at Lucinda. She hadn't so much minded not being married herself, but there was a sore place in her heart because the younger sister had had no chance. She considered Lucinda still attractive, and though her tongue was a trifle sharp in comments like this upon Alice Gildersleeve, Clarinda could hardly wonder. Alice was the village's most conspicuous young person, because the Gildersleeves had the most money. She was not quite what used to be known as the small-town "belle," because she hadn't enough good looks for that; but whatever she did was noted, and when she drove her small coupé up to the village shops and went in with her little air of importance, the clerks hastened to do her bidding. To please or not to please the Gildersleeves, individually or as a family, was, whether it knew it or not, one of Cherry Hills' chief concerns.

"Now what are they doing?" Clarinda asked again, when she had waited during what seemed to her a long interval of Lucinda's silence, while her sister continued to watch with avid gaze the proceedings upon the lawn below.

"Oh, nothing in particular, nothing you can describe," Lucinda answered, with an impatient sigh which meant that it was tiresome always to have to tell everything to the invalid. Nevertheless, she meant to do it, and really understood, as fully as it is possible for the well to understand the ill, how much the most trivial incident means in a life as empty of interest as a blank wall. "They're just setting and talking, and the tall man sticks by Sally, and the other one tries to be polite to everybody, and Alice Gildersleeve keeps watching the tall man—and I don't think he knows anybody's there except Sally Chase. I declare, I don't see how Sally keeps looking so much like a girl. She must be all of thirty-two or three. It's that light hair of hers, I suppose. And I guess more'n likely she paints—so much colour couldn't be natural."

"Paints! A minister's wife!" Clarinda's tone was horrified. "Oh, no, Lucy—she couldn't! Why, they wouldn't have her in the church!"

"City churches are different," averred Lucinda wisely. "They have all kinds of doings we wouldn't countenance here. I guess a church that lets its young people dance—has a place for 'em to dance *in*—wouldn't think so much of its minister's wife painting her face. Maybe she don't—I can tell when I go to see her. I'm going to go to-morrow. If she's going to have tea parties right under our windows, it's time she knew we're neighbours."

"We'll seem just a couple of old women to her," sighed Clarinda. "But I do think—and our living next door to Miss Eldora Cherry all the days of her life. . . ."

But Lucinda wasn't listening. Her gaze was fixed upon the amazing thing which was happening upon the lawn. Sally Chase and the tall man who looked like the Governor of the State had risen and were walking slowly across the lawn, not toward the gate, outside which his expensive motor with its liveried chauffeur stood waiting, but toward the house. A moment afterward the pair disappeared through the French window which opened upon the rear porch, leaving, as

Lucinda Hunt's shocked eyes noted, the other guests alone by the tea table. To be sure, Adelaide Sturgis, Sally's cousin, was still there to do the honours. But—should a hostess leave her guests for a moment, unless upon an errand to provide more food and drink? And Jo Jenney was at hand for that.

"What's the matter? What's happened?" cried old Clarinda from her bed.

"Sally Chase and that tall man have gone into the house and left the rest," was Lucinda's testimony to an atrocity.

"For pity's sake!" breathed Clarinda.

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Inside the cool square parlour, with its white-and-gold-striped walls, its old square piano, its rectangular gilt mirror above the chimney-piece reflecting the gay colours of a bowlful of garden flowers, and its quaintly formal furnishings relieved by a more modern touch here and there of Sally's placing, she and the "tall man" faced each other. Out of sight of the rest the social mask of light-hearted convention dropped from them both, and they regarded each other as people do when they know there is no need for masks.

"I want to know if you're really going to rest here," demanded Dr. Richard Fiske. "Or am I going to find you always dispensing tea and being nice to such total losses as those people out there? Can't you drop that sense of obligation to be all things to all women, and be nobody but yourself? I swear, Sally, you need it. With Schuyler gone you ought to get it, and the Cherry Hillites let to go to the deuce."

"Of course I'm benighted enough to feel like that," admitted Sally. "And it would be wonderful to get away from everything except the green fields. But, Rich—how exactly am I to do it? You know I can't, entirely."

"I wish to heaven I could snatch you out of it," declared Doctor Fiske violently. "You ought to have gone farther away—though if you had I couldn't have looked after you as I intend to now. Well, just promise me you'll do your best not to be a minister's wife to this place. Leave that to the present incumbents of that office—drab women, no doubt, who are better used to it than you."

"I'm used to it."

"Too used to it. It'll make you drab some day. No, it won't—I retract that. Nothing ever could. But it'll wear you down. Schuyler himself is wearing you down——"

"Rich!"

"I'm your old friend, and his, and your physician besides. Nobody admires Schuy more than I, but just the same he's taking it out of you, and this summer's got to put it back."

"It will. But I'll not let you say that about Schuyler. I miss him," said Sally Chase, looking her old friend in his cool gray eyes and noting there the somewhat hard expression which was apt to come into them now and then when he was dealing with facts he did not like. "I miss him dreadfully."

"You don't need to be so emphatic about it, my dear. I don't doubt you do. Schuyler's a habit—like dope. He's got you—you can't get away from him. It's up to me to get you far enough away from him this summer to give you a chance to recover."

"Why, Richard!" Sally's head had come up proudly, her eyes were fiery. "Do you realize the kind of thing you're saying?"

"Mighty well, little Sally, whom I've known all your life. I'll admit it sounds radical, but it's none the less true and it's got to be faced. Schuyler Chase, without in the least realizing it—I'll give him that credit—is living on your flesh and blood. And worse—on your spirit, that fiercely loyal spirit of yours that lets him do it. He'd be nothing without you, whether he knows it or not, and I think he does."

Sally walked away from the tall man with the touch of gray in his brown hair and the commanding air which makes people listen, whether they will or no. She looked out of the window and saw her guests upon the lawn. The Gildersleeves were looking fixedly and injuredly toward the house. She turned back to Doctor Fiske.

"I must go back to them—I told you I could stay in here only a minute. But before I go I must say this, Rich: I'll have to forgive you—doctors think they have the right to say anything. But—when I married Schuyler I went into the Service

with him, and if I can be of service through him, or he through me, it's to be done. What does it matter how much he gets from me—or I from him—so that together we accomplish something?"

"Then you admit——"

"I admit nothing—except that you are very impertinent—and very kind—and that I'm going to send you off now. Trust me to be as selfish this summer as I can manage without being too disagreeable. The saddle horses are coming to-morrow, and I intend to gallop away from all cares at least twice a day."

She held out her hand. He took it and kept it, eyeing her closely. "There are two little lines between your very lovely eyes," he said, "that I never saw before. Gallop away in the morning and come back at night. If I could I'd meet you at the farthest point, and we'd gallop together. As it is, I shall come up as often as I can get away to see for myself how you are obeying orders."

"Don't come too often. Cherry Hills will note and condemn without a hearing, you know. No, don't say it, Rich! Good-bye, I'm going back to the total losses and be a total loss with them."

"You couldn't be that in a thousand years."

They parted at the point where the flat stones, sunk deep in the grass, led down to the white gate, and Doctor Fiske saw himself off while Sally returned to the group by the tea table.

"I'm afraid we must be going," said Mrs. Gildersleeve, rising as stiffly as one who knows herself to be the First Lady of the Town may. "I'm glad to have seen something of you, Mrs. Chase. It's a pleasure to have you and your children here, and I hope we may make you one of us—and Miss Sturgis, too."

"Thank you, Mrs. Gildersleeve." Adelaide's rising was the thing of lazy grace she knew how to make it. She stood surveying the departing pair before her as if they were something new and amusing in her experience, the hint of a smile touching her lips. Adelaide's silences always made people like Mrs. Gildersleeve uncomfortable, in spite of the superior social poise the elder woman might be supposed to have acquired. It was Sally who had to play the gracious hostess with more warmth than she felt, to offset Adelaide's effect of insolence. She sent the Gildersleeves away charmed with her, critical of her, and almost unendurably curious about her. What more could one short call have achieved?

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*Enjoy atmosphere of this house—when one or two of its inmates happen to be out of it! Everywhere signs of Mrs. Chase and her personality and tastes. Without her it would simply be quaint, stiff old place, in spite of fine antiques which furnish it, stately portraits on walls, pairs of tall flowered vases on the mantelpiece which would bring terrific price at any decorator's. In each room some sign of her, usually in dash of colour for which she is responsible. Flame silk pillows on black horsehair davenport; orange scarf on big mahogany table in library; blue taffeta hangings in her own room; gay chintzes in other bedrooms. My little room under eaves, which I like best of all, really, has gay quilt on bed matched by runner of Chinese embroidery on bureau which give me a fresh thrill of pleasure every time I come in. Those embellishments appeared the next morning after the family arrived. Just wondering if they would have been put there if—well—if Mrs. Lawton's younger sister had been maid! But why should I flatter myself? Very likely I'm just neat, quiet young person, in Mrs. Chase's eyes, who merely deserves pleasant room. Brought a few books with me, favourites I can't live without. Why should I?*

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## V

How to be a "fascinating servant!" That was the task Josephine Jenney had set herself. Many times since she had made that extraordinary declaration to Norah O'Grady had it occurred to her that the phrase was ill chosen. It was all but a contradiction in terms. An efficient servant, a loyal servant, even an attractive servant, it was conceivable that one might become, but a fascinating servant—such a person was never heard of. As a matter of fact, who would be likely to want a fascinating servant? Let the mistress of the place exercise the fascinations, if any were to be let loose; but let her maids remain demure though capable if they wished to be retained in her good graces.

Association with Mrs. Lawson, the cook, was likely to keep her assistants subdued. A stickler for conservatism was Mrs. Lawson. Not only was her cookery of the most appetizing, but her ideas as to the manner of its service in the dining room, and of every detail of that service, were unalterable.

"Serve to the left, take away to the right," Mrs. Lawson laid down the laws. "Never let the place be lacking a plate. Never pile up the dishes in front of the person when you're going to change courses." And so on. "Never do this, always do that, and never, never make the least noise about it, or fumble anything." Mrs. Lawson endlessly elaborated her instructions.

Jo went about these duties with an odd expression in her amused eyes, a queer little twist in the corner of her lips. If she had been closely noted she might have been seen now and then to lay a fork or place a finger bowl and then give it a little wave of salutation. "How are you, old friend? Sure you go there, are you? Always did, didn't you? Take care you don't run away!"

Outside of these matters, however, Mrs. Lawson was most reticent and tight-lipped, and of this Jo was exceedingly glad. The thing she had feared was that she would be expected by Mrs. Chase's other servants to discuss her with them, and this she would never do. Mary, the young nurse, had shown a tendency to indulge in household gossip, but since she was younger than Jo it had been easy to show her that this was not in Jo's own code. It was Norah O'Grady who most tempted the former teacher of her Patsy to break her resolution in this respect.

"Faith, ye're gettin' on like a house afire with yer worrk," Norah announced one day, when she and Jo had to themselves the big airy back kitchen where the ironing was done. "I can see they think ye're the cat's whiskers in the place where ye are. But how about bein' the fri'nd of the family ye set out to be? Have they asked ye in to set by the fire on the cool avenin's yet, at all?"

If Jo Jenney had not been really fond of Norah O'Grady and had not understood that behind this challengingly ironic inquiry was actual solicitude that she attain her wish, she might have answered stingingly. As it was she subdued that inclination, and only said quietly, with a little lift of the head: "I'm enjoying being in this house. It's quite as interesting as I thought it would be."

Norah stared at her, then nodded her head. "The time'll come," she said. "Ye can't keep a good man down, nor a girl like you. Ye have the look of thimselves, I'll say that—an' why not? It's not in your own place you are, an' some day somethin'll happen that'll show it to thim. I'll be glad when that happens."

Now Jo could smile at her, and did, so that the warm Irish heart could expand still more generously. "Maybe I can make it happen mesilf," said Norah to herself—but knew better than to say it to Jo.

On the second Sunday of the Chases' stay Sally came downstairs with a definite intention as regarded Josephine. The first Sunday Mrs. Chase had let go comfortably by with the feeling that for once in many months she might forget that there was such a thing as a church service, with hymns and prayers and responses and a sermon to be loyally listened to. It had seemed a luxury not to feel responsible—actually responsible—for the way the service went, but to be able to roam off as she had done that first Sunday into the lanes and fields which could be reached by five minutes' walk from Cherry Square. She had said a little prayer of thankfulness out there under the blue sky, and had persuaded herself that on this vacation from responsibility she would spend her Sundays as she pleased.

But on this second Sunday, at her first waking, she had somehow been assailed by the wish to go to church. Old habit asserting itself, she supposed, but there it was. She wanted to see what a church service would be like in the old white church with the needle-like spire on the south side of Cherry Square. She wanted to say a prayer for Schuyler between the walls of a sanctuary, though she didn't know just why. She supposed it must be because her thoughts of Schuyler were so closely tied up with sanctuaries. And she had suddenly remembered her new maid, Josephine. Curiously enough, she

often found herself thinking of Josephine, even when the two were not in the same room. That spirited-looking young woman might have some Protestant church affiliation. Mrs. Lawson and Mary were Catholics, and the town held no Catholic church; but to Josephine it might be her employer had an obligation.

A minute's conversation demonstrated the fact.

"Thank you, Mrs. Chase, I should like to go to church very much," assented Jo. "I wasn't sure you could spare me."

"I always arrange to spare anybody under my roof who cares to go to church," Sally said. "You and Mrs. Lawson may have alternate Sundays at church time, though she won't go here. Suppose you go to-day. Which church do you prefer?"

Jo told her. It was the white church to which Sally herself meant to go. Mrs. Schuyler Chase, accustomed to being democratic as well as Christian, even in a city church which was as aristocratic in its tendencies as a wealthy membership could keep it, instantly invited Jo to go with her. Rather, she invited Jo to take her new mistress with her.

"I'm practically a stranger in the town, it's so long since I used to come here," Sally said, smiling the adorable smile which few people could resist. "So it will be nice to have you take me. Are you a member of that church?"

Jo said she wasn't, but that she had a seat there with a nice old man who had been a member all his life. Upon which Sally felt a certain conviction of hers deepening, and as it was a conviction which interested her very much she was glad that she had asked these questions of her maid. Though Josephine had not yet become to her mistress a "fascinating servant," she was certainly an extremely interesting servant, and challenging to the imagination. The idea of going to church in her company was far from being repellent. Democratic though Sally was, she realized that she wouldn't, from the standpoint of congeniality, have cared to be accompanied by either Mrs. Lawson, Mary Beales, or Norah O'Grady. Therefore there was no question but that Josephine Jenney had already made upon her a distinct impression of superiority not only to the others, and by a notable distance, but to all people whom Sally had ever known in such a capacity.

When at her call Jo joined her, Sally looked at her companion with an almost startled recognition of the test which is always made by the leaving off of the levelling effect of the uniform. Mary Beales, in uniform, was a satisfactory nursemaid; out of it upon a holiday she looked her origin. Cheap materials, gay colours, and an evident effort to be "stylish" turned Mary into a commonplaceness from which it wasn't conceivable that anything could rescue her—not even the example of her perfectly turned-out mistress. Mary had often said that Mrs. Chase could look much "grander" on the street than she did if she'd "just not dress so awful quiet. But I s'pose," reflected Mary pityingly, "she thinks she has to, 'count of *him!*"

But Josephine Jenney, as she followed Mrs. Schuyler Chase out of the front entrance of Cherry House—for the first time—might easily have been "one of the family." Certainly, that was what Lucinda Hunt, peering from her upper window, thought her, until the pair came nearer. Then, electrifiedly, she informed Clarinda (who became almost breathless at the news) that the girl she hadn't recognized, and who was dressed almost exactly as Sally Chase was dressed, was Josephine Jenney herself, and that the two were evidently on their way to church. "Miss Jenney always did have a sort of nice look about her," declared Lucinda, "sort of close and smooth and set-well. But I never noticed she looked the way those city folks look—as if they come out of a bandbox—till I saw her just now. Seeing her in a uniform got me thinking of her as hired help. But she certainly don't look it now. Must be Sally intends to make of her, knowing she's been a teacher and all—if she does know it. Maybe she don't. I should think it would upset the other help, though."

Be this as it might—which was what Sally herself foresaw, and didn't now care, because her first glance at Jo had actually charmed her—the two proceeded on their way, talking pleasantly as two friends might. With the temporary dropping of the uniform Jo had known she might, to a certain degree, also drop temporarily the over-repressed manner of the servant, and speak when she wasn't spoken to. She possessed a particularly attractive voice, well modulated, and capable of fine shades of inflection. She was conscious of using this voice with good effect, and she knew well that it alone, with her pure speech, was sure to be noticed by Mrs. Chase with more interest under the present conditions than when Josephine the housemaid was merely using the housemaid's vocabulary. This proved to be the case, and she knew that she was being drawn out by a practised conversationalist, who was making discoveries with every word spoken. "She's going to like me in a new way to-day," exulted Jo, and played her part with all the art of which she was past-mistress. It was her first notable opportunity, and she meant to make the most of it—yet not too much, either, lest she overplay the entertaining game. For it was a game—a perfectly legitimate game, since her purposes were wholly honourable—and she meant to win.

The zealous young usher who wanted to conduct Mrs. Schuyler Chase to the front pew in the centre of the church where

prominent guests were always placed, was much disappointed when she signified that she would sit with Miss Jenney. The pew of Jo's "nice old man" was also well toward the front, but upon one side. Therefore those upon that side of the church had an advantageous chance to observe the entry. The entire town knew by now that the school teacher of the past year was in Mrs. Chase's domestic employ, therefore they had not expected to see the two together, and much craning of necks and nudging of elbows followed their appearance.

Strangely enough, the approval of this comradeship was not universal. The Gildersleeves and the Broughtons and the Abbotts were distinctly upset, though their eyes told them that Josephine Jenney unquestionably looked the part of companion to Sally Cherry Chase. But the Endicotts and the Langs and the Holts were delighted with this proof of the sense and sweetness of the departed Miss Eldora Cherry's niece, and liked her from that moment as they hadn't expected to like her. As Tom Lang said afterward: "If Miss Jenney needed it and had the spunk to earn her vacation money that way, why shouldn't she? She's not a bit the less of a lady, and I think a good sight more of Mrs. Chase for taking that position."

The matter was discussed at almost as many dinner tables as there were families in the little church that Sunday. But with all that, there is small reason to be concerned. Dinner-table discussions may help to mould public opinion, but public opinion cannot altogether mould lives, and in this instance it assuredly did not.

Familiar visions of quite other scenes were filling Sally's imagination and her thoughts as she sat in the unfamiliar pew, and looked toward the bare pulpit with the row of village singers behind it, and saw the minister ascend to take his place, having come down the aisle from the back of the church, like his congregation. For a measurable space of time she really saw nothing of this at all, because she was seeing something very different—the accustomed surroundings of every Sunday morning for six of the ten years of her married life. While the man behind the walnut desk in this village church read the Scriptures and offered prayer, and while the choir sang the simple anthem which was within the range of its limited capabilities, Sally was, virtually, in her own seat in the great dignified edifice which was Schuyler's pride.

"The most beautiful church interior in the city," he had often called it. "Every line of it, every effect of colouring and lighting, is churchly and beautiful. I see it in my dreams when I'm getting ready to speak in it. The thought of it helps me to put myself in the mood. Perhaps I'm too dependent on environment, but I sometimes think I could never have spoken, like Saint Paul, in the market-place. Or even, like some of our modern preachers, in whatever audience-room or theatre is put at their disposal. I'm too imaginative, perhaps—but I can see and feel God here. In more sordid places He seems too far away."

Sally had sometimes disputed this point of view, even while she in a measure sympathized with it. She appreciated it to-day, however, more than she ever had before. This little village church, while outwardly attractive in its fine old-time austerity of line and spotless whiteness—it had been very recently painted as it happened—was peculiarly barren of beauty within. Indeed, most of its appointments were distinctly ugly, even to the bare windows of ordinary glass, through which the sunlight streamed mercilessly, revealing every inferiority of detail. "Schuyler could never preach here," she thought, and felt an almost homesick hungering for the perfect appointments of the place she knew so well; for the sound of the great organ played by a master's hand; for the sight of her husband's slender figure in his gown entering through the narrow arched doorway from his study. His was a figure always watched for by many other eyes than hers, the effect of that entry was somehow so quietly dramatic.

Yet how could one accuse Schuyler of being dramatic, she argued—as she had argued many times before with herself, almost guiltily—when no move of his, no look, no tone of voice, was ever other than perfectly suited to the occasion? Was it that very perfection which sometimes seemed unreal? She wondered. Anyhow, carefully studied his pulpit work was—must be, from his point of view, to be effective. She found herself longing to see him, that entry of his, his face; to hear his voice with its melodious yet often intensely forceful inflections. After all, there was nobody like Schuyler Chase—nobody; he was truly wonderful in his way. And in the midst of this longing she suddenly became aware, as she had not yet been, of this so different personality before her in the small country pulpit.

It was a sturdy figure which stood before the village congregation, one whose outlines in the well-fitting, non-clerical clothes conveyed a distinct suggestion of tight muscles beneath. The face was that of a man in the middle thirties, with good features which though spare had a look of vigorous health; with a peculiarly direct glance of deep-set blue eyes below crisp sandy hair cut short that it might not curl; with a voice whose pleasant incisiveness had an unmistakable Scottish accent. He said "pairfect" as none but a Scotsman says it. At the moment when Sally Chase became really aware of him he had one hand plunged deep in his trousers pocket. What a mannerism, and how amused if not shocked Schuyler would have been by it!

But the man was saying something which challenged her attention. It seemed that he had but recently come to this small parish as a supply for the summer, that he didn't know the people yet, and that he was feeling for a common ground on which to meet them. In spite of the unconventionality of his manner, and a certain occasional harshness in his voice, she almost at once became attracted to him. Perhaps his voice seemed now and then harsh to her because it was so different from Schuyler's beautiful resonances. At any rate, he seemed to be able to hold everybody's close attention. The little crowded house was listening in absolute stillness.

"You know," he was saying, when Sally began to give him hearing, "a preacher is under a terrible handicap. What is the first thing you want in him? I think you'll say sincerity. Yes, of course, you'll say that, because if he isn't sincere first of all, you don't want him at all. There's enough hypocrisy in the world, and you want your preacher to be free of it—free as anybody can be. But, see here. See what you expect of him. He's got to know a lot more about certain things than you do, and yet to cover it up so you won't think he's proud of himself. Then, no matter how he's feeling, whether he happens to have a toothache or a heartache, he's got to cover those up, too, and be interested in your toothache or your heartache. Don't you suppose it's sometimes a bit deeficult to be sincere about that? He's only human—and his tooth *aches*! Then—he has to go to a funeral and act as if he were sorry—and to act that he has to *be* sorry. And he has to go to a wedding and act as if he were glad—and *be* glad, too. To put it in a nutshell, he has to play at pairfection when he isn't pairfect. Has to be a model for the community when he knows he isn't one. Has to keep from offending anybody—if he can.

"Now I suppose I'm shocking you. I may be fooling myself in thinking that my first wish is to be honest with you, but I do think that's what I want. A minister has to make up his mind that he'll be his own kind of minister, and that he can't be any other kind. He wants to live and work among people as one of them—and it's the only way he can work. If you'll let me live my life here these few months as one of you, no less and no more, just as my friend John Craigie has, and if you'll give me a fair hearing when I'm in the pulpit, and fight me outside of it if you think I've said the wrong thing, we'll get along together. I don't see any other way that we can."

Well! Sally didn't know whether she liked this sort of thing or not, it was so extraordinarily different from anything she had ever heard from the pulpit. The man talked, with that hand in his pocket, as if he were making a business man's address, or demonstrating an article for sale, or putting over—wasn't that the phrase they used?—a new idea for popularizing education of the masses. It was so informal that it was undignified. And yet—they were listening. They would be likely to listen to anything this man had to say.

His hand had come out of his pocket. His shoulders straightened, he was speaking in a different tone, lower, a little less informal.

"Because, I believe, with all there is of me, that we're here such a little while, and there's so much to do, that we can't afford to fuss much about how we do it. I expect there's a lot for me to do in this village, during this summer, and I want to do it. There's a carpenter's shop somewhere in this village, and I expect to go there often, because a carpenter's shop is one of the places that makes me feel able to do my own sort of work better. I think of that Carpenter's Son who learned to use the hammer and the saw, the plane and the straightedge—and I need all those in my work, as He did in His. The hammer—and the saw—and the plane—and the straightedge! Think how we all need them in our work! Let's learn to use them together, and then—'*From whom the whole body, fitly joined together. . . .*'"

A minute or two later Sally found herself standing, sharing the hymn-book with Jo, singing a hymn which was one of Schuyler's favourites. Something within her was deeply stirred by the familiar words:

*"We thank Thee, Lord, Thy paths of service lead  
To blazoned heights and down the slopes of need:  
They reach Thy Throne, encompass land and sea,  
And he who journeys in them walks with Thee."*

The voice of Josephine, her maid, beside her thrilled her, it was so lovely a contralto. Though it was kept subdued Sally recognized its quality, and understood what it would be if it were allowed to emerge from a suitable repression. Was this a mere housemaid who held the other corner of her book? Even the well-shaped thumb, with its softly rosy polish of the nail, betrayed the fastidious habits of its owner. As Sally's eyes met Josephine's, as the two came out into the aisle, Sally smiled at her as at a friend, because she couldn't help it.

She shook hands with the preacher at the door, as everybody did. His manner was as straightforward as his sermon had been. His smile was delightful. The impression he had given in the pulpit of vigour and force of character was deepened



by this direct contact with him. People crowded to meet him.

Sally's hand was shaken by many other people. Mrs. Tom Lang whispered in her ear:

"Miss Jenney's the nicest girl, as well as the prettiest. And we think she's the smartest teacher we've ever had in town."

"I'm sure of it," agreed Sally Chase, without turning a hair at the information thus conveyed. "I'm very glad to have her with me."

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*The Rapid Rise of the Aspiring! To church this morning with Mrs. Chase. Unexpected happening—yet expected ultimately, if not quite so soon. Uniform shuffled off, demurest country church garb sleekly donned. Enjoyed not quite concealable satisfaction in mistress's eye, when it viewed fleetingly but comprehendingly maid's appearance not in white muslin with blue sash and flowered hat, but in clothes chaste and well cut, like her own—if costing somewhat less.*

*Conversation on way very nice. Recognized mistress's charming effort to adapt herself to supposed rather limited mental furnishing of companion, rapidly giving way to pleased appreciation of possible ability to talk in terms of those who have lived outside of Cherry Square. Maid proceeded cautiously, refraining from quoting Shakespeare or Strindberg, DeQuincey or Dostoyevski. Longed to play a high card or two, but forced self to be content with little ones. What snobs we are, to be so eager to acquaint others with our erudition!*

*Gordon Mackay preached vigorous, unusual sermon. Fear I was less occupied with sermon, however, than with preacher. Effect of him somewhat like having airplane fly low over one's head—thrilling but making one momentarily want to dodge and duck. Power, purpose, persistence—these make a stout humming from his wings. When the plane takes a slant upward and away, one breathes freer. If he should invite one to be his passenger, Lord only knows whether one would be more fascinated or fearful.*

*Departing congregation much interested in Mrs. Schuyler Chase in society of ex-teacher. Heard suppressed whisperings; caught glances, mostly friendly, a few askance. Gildersleeves unconscious of J. J.'s presence; Broughtons pursuing middle course of half-nod. Thoroughly enjoyed it all.*

*Home again, uniform on, knives and forks laid. Reverberations of airplane dying away in distance, overcome by hummings of mosquitoes close at hand. Mrs. Lawton quite insufferable. . . . What does it matter?*

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## VI

"Good-morning, Josephine. Mrs. Chase in?"

"She's out riding with Master Bob, Doctor Fiske. She'll be back soon, I think. . . . She's coming now."

Richard Fiske turned upon the old stone doorstep to see two figures on horseback cantering up the driveway—a driveway no longer overgrown with weeds but trimly neat. At even a short distance it looked as if two boys were arriving, one sturdily slender, the other small and lithe. Sally Chase and her eight-year-old son were a jolly-looking pair as they came along, both faces flushed through the summer tan which was beginning to show as a result of three full weeks of daily rides over the hills.

Seeing the familiar tall form waiting at an unusual hour of the day, Sally reined up instead of going on to the old barn. Doctor Fiske came to meet her, laying hand upon her horse's nose, which sniffed at him expectantly.

"The top of the morning to you, Rich!" Sally hailed him gayly. Then quickly: "What's the matter?"

"Do you read me so easily as that? Nothing alarming, I hope—yet urgent."

She slipped off her horse, slapping the shining brown flanks lightly as she called: "Jimmy! Look after Prince, will you?" Then she said: "Tell me quickly, Rich. Is it anything about Schuyler?"

"Yes. He's had a touch of fever in London, and it's been complicated by the necessity for an operation. Caldwell cabled me you'd better come, just as an ordinary precaution." Howard Caldwell was one of the clergymen who accompanied Schuyler Chase on his trip abroad.

"Let me see the cable." Sally's voice was steady, but her hand shook a little as she took the yellow paper. Doctor Fiske had known it would be useless to deny her. "Just as an ordinary precaution" does not often go over the Trans-Atlantic cables.

The message read:

DR. RICHARD FISKE  
NEW YORK

CHASE FEVER OPERATION SEND WIFE IMMEDIATELY.

CALDWELL

"Now you know all that I do," the doctor said gently, as Sally studied the meagre words with a startled frown. "But realizing Schuyler's run-down, over-strung condition when he left, I think it's safe to deduce that Caldwell and Bronson merely want the moral effect of your presence, and that the case isn't necessarily in danger. It may easily be that Schuyler himself——"

"He hasn't sent for me," said Sally firmly, and lifted her head in the proud gesture her friend and physician knew so well. She would never admit what he was practically sure of, that Schuyler in any crisis would demand her presence, at no matter what cost. "Of course I'll go—by the first boat." She pulled off her riding gloves as if that were the first in a sequence of hasty preparations.

"I knew you would. So I've got passage for you on the *Aquitania* for Southampton. It sails this afternoon at three."

"But how in the world did you——"

"Happen to know several officials, and when I put the case up to them they cut a lot of red tape. A last-minute cancellation was a great piece of luck, too, for it gives you pretty fair quarters, though not what I'd have liked for you."

"Did that cable come just this morning?"

"Yesterday noon," said Richard Fiske, looking her straight in the eyes. "I held it till I could arrange this passage—had to have that much time. No need to tell you till you could start. You see, I know you! And when I got the passage, I cabled back."

Her gratitude to him was in her face and in her low-spoken words, "Bless you, Rich—indeed you do. I should have been tortured till I knew I could go. Now, I've only to plan how to leave the children."

She put her hand to her head for an instant, thrusting it through the shining masses of her fair hair. Her worried glance turned to young Bob, striding up the driveway; then shifted to a distant group at the foot of the garden, where Barbara played in a sand pile while the nursemaid Mary sat crocheting beside little Schuyler, tumbling about upon a blanket on the grass.

"That's easy. Leave them with Josephine. I'd give her a certificate of fitness at sight. She's no housemaid, she's a real person, and I've no possible idea how you came to get her in a uniform."

Sally was leading the way into the house. In the square parlour she stood turning the possibilities over in her mind. "I ought to have some older woman—perhaps a trained nurse. Couldn't you get me one?"

"Nonsense. The youngsters are all healthy and hearty as advertisements for a breakfast food. Josephine knows them and they like her—I've watched them running after her. She's perfectly competent, or I don't know brains and sense when I see them. And I promise you I'll run out at least twice a week, and be on call at any time. Leave the children to Josephine and me, Sally, and don't have a care."

"She *is* competent, I'm sure," Sally agreed. "But—that would be to put her in charge of the whole house. She couldn't do it any other way. I don't know how Mrs. Lawson and Mary——"

"Let 'em blow up if they're jealous. I'll bet Josephine can handle 'em." Doctor Fiske looked as if for the moment he had forgotten the possible tragedy taking place on the other side of the Atlantic for the more than probable comedy about to be enacted on this one. "And I'll back her in any domestic emergency. I can put the fear of man into any servant alive. Trust us, Sally dear—and go pack your bag. You must have lunch and then we'll be off. I'll go and order it for you."

"No, thank you. I must tell them all myself. Josephine first—if you're really perfectly sure——"

"Dead sure. I'd pick that girl out of a thousand volunteers to help me run an emergency hospital after an earthquake, without a particle of training. Why, Sally, where are your eyes?"

"Oh, I've observed her. I do think she will do—and much better than any friend I could summon or who would come that I can think of."

Sally disappeared, and Dr. Richard Fiske stood looking at the door which had closed behind her, thinking thoughts in which he had, more or less unwisely, indulged himself many times before. She was so strong, and so sweet, so ready to sacrifice herself, she deserved somebody to stand by her on her own ground, not a step below her, pulling on her. He knew he was unfair to Schuyler, and yet—well—he felt he wasn't altogether unfair. It would take a good deal to convince him of that.

In the kitchen Mrs. Chase was stating her case. "I shall have to put Josephine in charge of everything here, Mrs. Lawson, because my friends are all out of town, my family live too far away, and I don't know of anybody to call on. Doctor Fiske thinks her perfectly competent. Of course you will manage the kitchen as usual—I can depend on you for that? But since somebody must be responsible for everything in the house, and especially for the children, I'm appointing Miss Jenney. I'm going to ask you and Mary to call her that. I understand," she added quickly, "that you will find that a little difficult at first, but it's the only way I can arrange in such a hurry."

Mrs. Lawson said something unintelligible, turning her back as she bent over the oven, and Sally realized forebodingly that trouble would be brewing from the moment that the door closed behind her. But there was no time to apply more oil upon the waters than could be done in this hasty interview. Mrs. Lawson had not been long in her employ, and could not be relied upon as an old and loyal family servant. Well, Richard Fiske was right, there was nothing to do but to trust Josephine Jenney.

"Remember, please, Mrs. Lawson," Sally said, with the pleasant dignity which was peculiarly hers in dealing with domestic affairs, "that I am very anxious about my husband, and that I want to go away without any worries as to the way things will be done here in my absence. Whatever difficulties come up, please make the best of them till I am back; then we will settle everything properly. May I rely on you?"

The woman turned at this appeal, and answered humanly enough that she was sorry about Doctor Chase, and would try to get along without Mrs. Chase. "But I'm free to say I think you're making a mistake to put a waitress in charge of things she knows nothing about," she relieved her injured feelings by saying.

"Miss Jenney is a school teacher." Sally decided promptly to reveal the whole situation. "She only took this position as vacation work. Perhaps knowing that will make a difference, Mrs. Lawson. You will see that she can easily learn how to

take charge of a home. . . . That's all, I think. I'll say good-bye to you all when I've packed and had the coffee you're to make for me."

She ran upstairs, to find that Jo had brought out her travelling clothes, her bags, and had laid everything else in readiness of which she could think. In Sally's eyes she already looked like a friend.

"Oh, Josephine—thank you! And please stay while I dress, for I'll have no other time to talk things over. Do you know I'm leaving everything in charge of you? I suppose Doctor Fiske told you, or you wouldn't have thought to do all this for me."

"Yes, Mrs. Chase, Doctor Fiske told me just why you were going, and that there was nobody except me to trust with the children and the house. Please let me promise you that I'll take every care of them. I do know children pretty thoroughly, and I know your wishes about their food and sleep and the rest of it. You're not to be anxious about us."

Sally looked into Josephine Jenney's steady, beautiful eyes under their level dark brows, noted afresh the cool, charming poise of her manner, and recognized the sure signs of one who could safely be placed in authority because she was wholly fit to use it. Sally drew a deep breath of relief, and her confidence was made fast.

"Thank you—that does help so much," she said. "And now, I've told Mrs. Lawson you're to be called Miss Jenney, and you must enforce that. If you are actually mistress in my absence you must be mistress in name, too."

"Yes, I suppose so. It will undoubtedly be—the cause of interesting developments in the kitchen," Jo answered, so precisely as one of Sally's friends might have said it that even in this hour of anxiety both young women smiled amusedly, as visions of domestic furies over questions of precedence came into their minds. Then Sally sobered again as she laid practical details before her assistant, which ended with: "Please take off the uniform before I go, Josephine, so the others may see I wanted you to do it. I'm going to call you Josephine, still, you see, but as a friend now—and my strong right arm."

So when, an hour later, Sally Chase, in travelling clothes, her luggage already in Doctor Fiske's car, stood up from the long embraces she had given Bob and Barbara—a kiss on the cheek of the sleeping baby being all she had ventured—she was able to put the beloved three into the hands of one who looked, as she had looked on that Sunday a week ago, so like "one of the family," that Sally's heart was suddenly more at ease about them than she could have believed possible.

As she took her place in the car, and Doctor Fiske ran around to its other side, in a hurry to get her off and end the emotional strain, an unexpected arrival halted him. There was the sound of a quick step on the driveway, and the next instant a ruggedly attractive face looked in upon Sally; thick, sandy hair with a touch of curl in it gleamed in the sun; and a quiet voice with a strong Scottish accent said rapidly:

"I'll not delay you a minute, Mrs. Chase. I just got word you were off to meet your husband. I'm Gordon Mackay, and I'm used to trying to be of sairvice. I want to keep an eye on your household, if you're willing. I'd like to come over and play with the bairns, and if I'm needed in any way Miss Jenney can call on me. Will you let me take care of any deeficulties that may come up, for you?"

How in the world did the man know it all, even to Jo Jenney's new position? Let those who live in small towns tell. But Sally didn't bother to wonder about that, in this hurried moment. All she knew or cared for was that this was the Scottish preacher she had so liked, and that still another "strong right arm" was at her disposal. The man looked as if he could indeed move mountains of "deeficulties" at need.

"That's too kind of you, Mr. Mackay," she said warmly. "Of course I shall be delighted to know you are at hand. This"—with a gesture of introduction—"is our friend and physician, Dr. Richard Fiske, of New York. He, too, is to be on guard, but you will be nearer by, so I feel doubly reinforced."

Doctor Fiske gave this new volunteer in Sally's service short shrift, though he shook hands politely and said: "That's very good of you, Mr. Mackay." But the next instant he added: "Sorry, but we must be off," and had the car moving. A man of violent jealousies was Richard Fiske, especially where Sally Chase was concerned.

But he was again to be halted. He hadn't spirited Sally a hundred yards down Brook Street when he met another car, the low, high-powered roadster driven by Bradley Sturgis, with Adelaide beside him. Fiske muttered something unintelligible, and reluctantly set foot upon brake at Sally's cry: "Oh, we'll have to stop and explain to them!"

"You can have just two minutes for it," he growled. "Let Josephine explain."

"No, I must, since they're here."

She told them in two sentences; Sally had been well trained in brevity of statement by the demands of the city church. She got the reaction she expected—and didn't want.

"Why, we'll stay, Sally, old dear," exclaimed Bradley, and Adelaide nodded. They would like nothing better, Sally knew. They wouldn't bother their heads much with the responsibilities of the children's care, but they had been eager all along to make Cherry House the centre of their social activity. Cherry Hills was an easy run for the motors of their friends, Sally's cook was excellent. What a heaven-sent opportunity for the gayest of country parties! Sally could see this thought in Bradley's sparkling eyes, in Adelaide's roused smile of assent.

There was no time to argue with them, and it would be small use to forbid them. Such a course would make an open breach, anyway, and Sally wasn't willing to do that. One point, however, must be made incontestable.

"I've put Miss Jenney in charge of the house and the children—of everything," she said, very clearly. "Miss Jenney is"—she forestalled the question—"the maid you know as Josephine. She's very competent—she's a teacher really, and has the social position of any others in a village like this. All orders to the other servants are to go through her. Of course it will be very nice to have you two there, only, please, Adelaide, be considerate of Miss Jenney. It's a difficult position to put her in at a moment's notice."

"Let 'Laide——" began Bradley.

But Sally shook her head. "Miss Jenney is in charge, with Doctor Fiske's approval. You're not to change anything about that, my dears. Now, good-bye!"

"Love to old Schuyler!" shouted Bradley, and Adelaide's voice echoed this belated sentiment. Then Doctor Fiske had once more irritably laid hand upon gear-shift, and this time he would not have stopped the car for any hold-ups on earth. As a matter of fact, what with all the plan-making, he would have to drive as fast as the law allowed to bring Sally to her ship.

But he did it, saw her aboard, and had two minutes with her before he had to leave her. She looked to him very young and very concerned as she stood with him near the gangway. He was fully aware of the anxious tension of the voyage before her—five days before she would set foot upon land, and a hot and crowded railway journey from Southampton to London.

"I've cabled Caldwell you're coming, and he'll wireless you if he needs to. No doubt he'll meet you at Southampton. Try not to let your imagination run away with you between shore and shore. Lots of worried wives have crossed the ocean, to find everything all right when they landed."

"I know." She smiled at him bravely, and he understood that she would keep herself well in hand—for Schuyler's sake. He bit his lip at that thought. Everything with her was for Schuyler's sake, he knew.

"Good-bye, my dear—and may the God you're so devoted to keep you," he murmured, as the call came: "All ashore that's going ashore!" He pressed her hand in his so tight it hurt her cruelly for moments after, looked closely into her uplifted eyes, added under his breath: "You're the dearest thing on earth!" and ran down the gangway. He waved his hat at her as long as he could see her uplifted arm, then made his way half blindly back to his car.

"The thing it's damned hard to keep myself remembering," he said sternly to himself, "is that I'm the friend of them both." At least, it must be conceded, Dr. Richard Fiske was honest with himself.

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*Here I am, elevated in the twinkling of an eye to the position of housekeeper, with Mrs. Lawson, hands on hips, staring up at me, amazed and affronted! Mary shares her resentment, I know, though she doesn't dare show it to me. Norah grins, bless her heart!—and stands by, ready to throw herself into any breach that opens. Did my best to ascend to the new plane in an unprovocative manner, with no "airs," and with no assumption of aggravating authority. But who can come up from the ranks and suddenly acquire shoulder straps and a belt without exciting the ire and envy of those who remain below to fall under his discipline?*

*Norah gives me sage advice.*

*"Don't be kapin' the gloves on all the time you're handlin' the woman. Show her a glimpse of yer bare hand. She's a bully, that; she'll shake her fist in yer face if she dares."*

*"When she does, Norah, it will be time enough to take off the gloves."*

*"I know well enough ye'll never descend to a fight with her, but I want her to know ye've got a good reliable muscle in that pretty round arm."*

*So I have, thanks to past experience. And I really think Mrs. Lawson sometimes sees the swelling of it under my sleeve!*

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## VII

"Miss Jenney, I'd like to give notice."

Miss Jenney faced Mrs. Lawson with the serenity of one who has anticipated a coming crisis and prepared for it.

"Very well, Mrs. Lawson. But for what reason?"

"Plenty of reasons. I can't take orders from two people. Miss Sturgis tells what she wants done, day and night. The work's too much, with her having extra people here all the time. If I may say it, Miss Jenney, you can't run this house—you ain't used to handling people like her, who's bound to have their own way. Next you know she'll have you out of the house yourself."

Jo looked steadily at the woman, who, she knew, was delighting in making this insolent speech, now that she thought she had nothing to lose by it.

"You realize that you are breaking your promise to Mrs. Chase?"

"I didn't make her any promise. She laid down the law and I didn't say different, yes or no. . . . I can't stand things as they are, and I'm going."

"Can you arrange," said Jo coolly, "to leave this evening? Jimmy can take you and your trunk to the seven-o'clock train."

Mrs. Lawson stared. "Just as you like," she answered after a minute. "I s'posed you'd want a week's notice."

"Not at all. It's much better to end an unsatisfactory relation as quickly as possible, don't you think?"

Mrs. Lawson had not thought so, nor had intended to end the relation at all. She had expected to be coaxed and bribed to stay. What should they do without her, she would like to know that?

Jo knew what they should do without her.

Ten minutes after this brief interview Jo slipped away down the lane to Norah O'Grady's little brown cottage.

"We're ready for you, Mrs. O'Grady," she announced, with a smile. "The storm has broken, the lightning's struck, and no damage done. The air's clear again—it was hardly disturbed. Can you come to-night, after the seven o'clock's gone?"

"Sure, an' I can," Norah agreed. "I've been packed an' ready since ye let me know the clouds was gatherin'. I'm glad ye'r rid of her, the tomb-faced old thing. I never did see how Mrs. Chase come to get her, who likes things cheerful round her."

"It won't be easy, you know. Miss Sturgis does have many callers, and likes always to have them served with something very nice before they go."

Norah nodded. "We'll get along with that. I can make the things tasty—it'll be you that'll have to show me how to have 'em look pretty. I never c'ud get a sprig o' parsley to look like anything but a pine tree. I can't make pitaties lie in a fancy hedge round a beefsteak, the way I've seen that woman do. But the pitaties'll taste as good as hers, that I know."

"That's all that's necessary," Jo assured her. "And it will be such a comfort to see your nice jolly face in the kitchen, I'll be glad enough to come out and make the 'fancy hedges,' when it's really important. Mostly, it won't be."

"Tell me, before I do be seein' for myself," begged Norah, "as one friend to another, if I may be so bold. How do ye get along with the cousin, r'ally?"

"Very well indeed," Jo asserted. "People don't need to think alike, you know, Mrs. O'Grady, in order to live with each other. Shall Jimmy bring your things on his way back from taking Mrs. Lawson to the train?"

"She's quality, all right," thought the Irishwoman approvingly. "She won't talk to me about thim, though she knows I know she's havin' the divil of a time with that Miss Adelaide, that won't lift her finger to help hersilf. Faith, if I can make things 'asier for Miss Jenney I'm glad to go, an' her with all the responsibility."

All the responsibility was indeed something for Jo to shoulder. She herself thought it would be a far simpler matter with Mrs. Lawson gone, even though Norah knew few of the finer devices of accomplished cookery. Adelaide's breakfast trays, taken up by Mary at ten or eleven o'clock in the morning; her demands for special dishes at luncheon, because of the languid appetite induced by the late breakfast; her afternoon tea service; her orders for trays of rich-filled sandwiches and icy beverages at any hour of the evening, and for any number of people—all these were items which

were likely to make even the generous Norah rebel. But she would take care of them, for the sake of Miss Jenney. Jo was just beginning to understand how devoted to her Norah was. She would be an ally worth having.

On the second evening of Norah's incumbency Jo sent her off duty early after dinner, for the day had been a trying one. Adelaide had found Norah's style of sending in her undeniably well-cooked dishes quite unbearable, and had fretfully said so.

"Who ever saw a mixture like that?" she complained. "There's everything on earth in it. I detest carrots and onions anywhere, and they're all *through* this!"

"It may not look pretty," declared her brother Bradley, eating of the despised dish with gusto, "but it's the best tasting stuff I ever tried. Me for more, please, Miss Jenney."

"This is one of Mrs. O'Grady's specialties," Jo said good-humouredly, "and it's so good for the children I told her to make it to-day. I thought you'd quite enjoy it, too."

"Please don't model your meals for us on the children's health," Adelaide murmured. "I wish very much to gain weight while I'm here, and I can't do it on this sort of unappetizing diet."

Jo said nothing, because she couldn't say what she wanted to, and anything less scathing wouldn't be satisfying. All day Adelaide had been peculiarly trying, almost as if she had made a point of it on arising in the morning. As she left the table she said distinctly and with an air of command, but without looking at Jo:

"We're expecting a dozen or so people up to-night. About eleven I shall want plenty of particularly delicious sandwiches, and a big bowl of punch."

Jo didn't answer. She knew these things must be provided, but she didn't intend to keep Norah and Mary up to do it. After they had gone to bed she herself prepared both sandwiches and punch—the latter a mixture of fruit juices and ice, which she knew would be given its special ingredient and appeal by the Sturgises themselves. Their friends arrived with the fall of dusk, and the lights from the windows fell upon gay frocks and white flannels, and there was the sound of lively voices, and now and then the twang of a guitar.

Dashing into the kitchen with a message from Adelaide for the cook, Bradley Sturgis came upon Jo Jenney working alone at the task set for Norah, her bare arms rosy in the lamplight, for the old house had never been equipped with a modern lighting system. Oil lamps in the kitchen and candles elsewhere had delighted Sally Chase, and she had laid in large stores of long dipped candles in all shades, for lavish use about the house.

"Well, what the deuce—— You're not doing this yourself, Miss Jenney!" the young man cried, having the grace to be shocked at the discovery. He had easily accepted the elevation of the housemaid to the position of manager of Cherry House, but he didn't quite consider her the actual hostess, nor had Adelaide for a moment made that concession. When the uniform had been replaced by one of the straight frocks of white or blue linen which Jo wore so successfully, Bradley had been able to see still more clearly than before that she was well worth looking at and talking to. He had done plenty of the looking, but neither Adelaide nor Jo herself had encouraged him in the talking. Now, however, observing the supple figure in the lamplight, and the grace and skill of every motion of the capable, beautiful hands, Bradley promptly forgot his errand and his guests. He sat down upon the edge of the scoured kitchen table, prepared to make the most of this interesting opportunity.

"Where's the lady with the brogue?" he inquired. "Not that I care—I hope she's nowhere around. But you ought not to be doing this."

"Oughtn't I? I think so myself, but I'd rather do it than keep Mrs. O'Grady up so late."

"Late?" Bradley gave his watch-face a careless glance. "A quarter to eleven! I suppose that's considered almost dawn up here. Where I come from the night's so young at midnight it can't stay out alone, it has to have lots of company."

"It seems to be having it up here to-night."

"I say—you don't like making those sandwiches, do you, Miss Jenney?"

The corner of her mouth took on a bit of curve, but it could hardly be called a smile. "Not a bit, Mr. Sturgis."

"Then why do you do it?"

"Not to be too disagreeable."



"Could you be disagreeable?"

"Very."

Bradley considered her. "Now, I wouldn't say disagreeable," he argued. "Interesting, stimulating, intriguing, provoking, even—fascinating. But hardly disagreeable. No, decidedly not."

The word fascinating had a connotation in Jo's mind which made her feel like smiling, but she preserved her dignity. "Would you mind not sitting so close to the mayonnaise?" she suggested.

Bradley seized upon the dish. "Couldn't I help you put it on?"

"No, indeed. If you just won't get it on yourself, that will be all I can ask."

"Well, anyhow, can't I mix the punch?"

"I've no doubt you will—later. At present I prefer to do it. Then I can at least continue to feel innocent when the bowl leaves my hands."

He laughed. "I infer you don't approve the extra touches of charm it's likely to acquire at mine?"

She shook her head. "Not in the proportions you are likely to use."

He eyed her with increasing interest. "I've been wanting to strike a spark from you," he asserted, "and now I'm getting a notion of the way to do it. I believe it would be worth while to give you a real shock, just to see the sparks fly. All right, here goes: Do you know you're about the most gorgeous thing I've seen in a long time? That profile of yours—it's simply exquisite. As for your full face——"

She turned the full face upon him, and the look of amused contempt in it hit him rather hard. He really hadn't supposed she would know how to give him just that look—the sort he fully approved even though it stung. She didn't answer a word, but a slap upon the cheek or a glassful of water in the face from the kind of girl who might be found making sandwiches in some kitchen not her own couldn't have ended his use of such methods of approach more quickly.

"I beg your pardon," he said, laughing with chagrin. "Of course I didn't mean that—though it's true enough as an observation. But you don't like it from me, and I don't blame you. On my word, though, Miss Jenney, the average girl of these days likes compliments, the balder the better. She doesn't resent 'em. As a matter of fact, she misses 'em if she doesn't get 'em. But you're not the average girl—I can see that."

"You will see a number of things you haven't seen before, Mr. Sturgis," she said evenly, "if you stay here. You may take these sandwiches into the dining room now, please. I'll have the punch ready in a minute. Your friends may come and get them there, or the men may take them out to the others. You may leave everything on the table when you're through, only I'll ask you to put out the candles."

"Oh, see here. You'll come out and meet our friends?"

He didn't know how he came to ask it; certainly he knew that if he could actually succeed in getting her to go out with him there would be the devil to pay with Adelaide. But he hadn't reckoned with Jo Jenney.

"There's no reason why I should meet your friends," she said pleasantly, "if you'll excuse me."

"They're an awfully jolly sort," he persisted. "And you'd make a hit, you know. Just as you are. If you could see yourself you'd know that nobody they've got out there can touch you."

"I'm quite sure nobody can," she replied, and this time there was a gleam in her eyes which he didn't know whether to consider mischief or malice. Anyhow, he concluded, she wasn't so easy to play with as he had expected. He went reluctantly back to the group outside, but Jo Jenney remained in his mind, a clear vision. He said to himself, as he glanced appraisingly from one to another of the three girls whom Adelaide had asked to offset the nine men, that there really wasn't one there who could hold a rose-coloured candle to Miss Jenney. They knew how to dress—he'd have to hand that to them. But let somebody dress and make up Jo as they were dressed and made up, and—well—they'd all turn green, his sister Adelaide greenest of all.

His eyes sparkled as he thought about it. Rich, deep yellow—almost orange—that was the colour he'd like to see her in, and a gold band across her marvellous dark hair! And instead, she was wearing a more or less rumpled white linen, with a spot of raspberry juice on the sleeve. He supposed she'd put that on to do this work in, for she'd been wearing a little thin blue frock at dinner, with a lovely line at neck and upper arm. Showed she knew how to dress, after all, at least for

the country, if she could look such a young duchess in a thing Adelaide would sniff at—Adelaide who, at the moment, was sheathed in jade green with a string of—Adelaide called them pearls! Bradley happened to know they weren't.

Jo stood at her unlighted window looking out upon the revellers and thinking not of them but of Mrs. Schuyler Chase. It was time that word was had from her, with news of her husband. She was hoping with all her heart that it would be a good word, and that before long Mrs. Chase would be returning, with or without her husband. Just what Jo's own position would then become she had no idea, but she knew it couldn't be asked of her to put on the uniform again. She was very sure that she would be retained in some capacity, and that the household would resume its normal course—unless the worst should have happened abroad, and that seemed impossible. She vividly remembered her one impression of Schuyler Chase, on that never-to-be-forgotten Sunday when she had heard him preach. He had seemed so vital, so powerful, so much a messenger from Heaven, it couldn't be that the frame which housed such beauty and power could be as mortal as other flesh!

Next morning, while Bradley and Adelaide still slept, Jo took the wide-awake baby Schuyler out to tumble upon the grass under the copper beech in the early coolness, for the day promised to be hot. She noted a change in the aspect of the house next door, whose windows looked out so closely upon the domain of Cherry House. The lower blinds of the front rooms had been thrown back, and not only that, the windows themselves were open. Could it be possible that Miss Lucinda—with whom by now Jo had a nodding acquaintance, supplemented by an occasional greeting when the two found themselves near by in the adjoining gardens—could be cleaning that long-closed parlour, and had forgotten to shut the unscreened windows? Why, the flies would come in, and Miss Lucinda would suffer acutely! Jo was thinking that she ought to hail the fastidious housewife and acquaint her with her error, when a most unwonted sound suddenly came from beyond those open windows—the light run of skilled fingers over piano keys, and then a man's voice, singing.

The piano notes were tinkling ones—as she heard them Jo could visualize the old-fashioned square piano from which they indubitably proceeded. But the voice rose softly then mountingly above them, and hearing that, one could not remember them at all. It was a perfect male voice, a rich tenor, singing something very unusual—or so it seemed. Perhaps it was because the splendid tones proceeded from a place so unlikely to harbour such a voice, the austere habitation of two spinsters withdrawn by circumstances from almost all contact with the world outside, even the tiny world of the small town in which they lived. Jo listened intently. The song ended, the singer strolled to the window, lighting a cigarette, and flung the match away upon the grass, male fashion. The next instant his careless glance fell upon the pair outside, less than twenty feet distant. Jo's eyes were upon him, her gaze transfixed by this apparition. For a handsome young man, clothed in white flannels, smoking a cigarette at the open window of Miss Lucinda Hunt's tomb-like best parlour—it seemed to Jo that it must be tomb-like, though she had never seen it—was an apparition that might hold any gaze until it became a stare.

"Good-morning!" said the stranger lightly, with a smile, as he noted the elder of the two upon the grass.

"Good-morning!" responded Jo, returning the smile, as one must return anything so attractive.

"I suppose you're Mrs. Chase's sister," went on the agreeable voice. "So, as I'm the Misses Hunt's nephew, we're already properly introduced, *comme ça*?"

"Not quite properly, since I'm not Mrs. Chase's sister."

"Her guest, then, I presume. No? It doesn't matter, so that we tell each other what a glorious day this is, before the sun reduces it to servitude. Did you agree with my invocation to it?"

"The day? Yes, indeed—if that was what it was. I couldn't get all the words."

"Couldn't you, indeed?" The young man threw back his head and laughed. "There's a blister for my pride. I thought I possessed an enunciation equal to that of the best auctioneer in Cherry Hills, and could knock down the morning to any chance listener. As a matter of fact, the listener wasn't a chance one, for I spied you before I began, and was singing especially with the idea of making you a customer."

"Dallas Hunt!" exclaimed a sharp voice behind him in the room, its horrified intonation easily reaching Jo's ears. "Don't you know you're letting all the flies in this window?"

"Why, no, I don't know it, Aunt Lucy. I haven't seen a fly," replied her nephew. He reached back an arm and pulled Miss Lucinda Hunt into Jo's view. With his arm about her spare, gingham-clad waist, he added: "I've been telling this charming person outside that I'm your nephew. Will you vouch for it?"

"Do you mean to say you've been speaking to her before you're introduced?" inquired Miss Lucinda, with, however, as Jo could see, less of an air of shock than of apology to Jo herself.

"Not at all. I was speaking to a fellow-worshipper of the dawn. Singing to her, as a matter of fact. And now she merely responds with a criticism of my voice. Just the same, Aunt Lucy, I'd like to know her properly, if only as a propitiation to the goddesses—which you and Aunt Clar are while I stay. Will you present me?"

Miss Lucinda presented him, after an embarrassed fashion. She wasn't used to making introductions while a firm male arm held her from falling off the window sill, cigarette smoke rose bluey from forgetful fingers into her nostrils, and a gay whisper prompted her: "Make it impressive, Aunt Lu! Remember I'm your dearest nephew."

"You're certainly my most impudent one," declared Miss Lucinda, rallying. "Now if you must talk to Miss Jenney, you shut this window and go round outside."

"I feel that I must talk to her," agreed Dallas Hunt. "Therefore, as you suggest, I'll go round outside. Wait for me, Miss Jenney?"

"Of course, Mr. Hunt, since this is the shadiest spot for the baby."

"You see," said Dallas Hunt, arriving upon the lawn to stoop and pat the baby's head, and to look beyond appreciatively at the exquisite texture of the cheek of the baby's attendant, "I'm doing my best to 'look well to *this* Day!'" And he sang a phrase of the song again, softly, effectively, and almost in Jo's ear. . . .

It was at this moment that Adelaide Sturgis, rising late, as usual, looked sleepily out of her windows and saw the group on the lawn. The sleepiness vanished as she stared hard. Who was the handsome man in flannels, sitting so intimately upon the rug with Miss Jenney and the baby? As she looked he threw back his head and laughed with apparently the greatest enjoyment. . . .

Never had this young woman made quicker time in dressing. Her bath was omitted; her face and hair received her only real care. Stockings and shoes fairly jumped into place. A straight silk frock of burnt orange which needed no fastening was slipped over her head. A dash of faint perfume from an atomizer—a gay handkerchief tucked into a breast pocket—Adelaide ran down the stairs. Then, after a little more reconnoitring, she sauntered out upon the lawn, a book in hand, which she read as she went, without noting whither her slow footsteps were taking her. Her course, wandering, finally brought her near the man, the maid, and the baby. She looked up—astonished.

It was practically the first time, Jo reflected, that Miss Sturgis had noticed the baby. Now, she seemed unable to proceed until she had spent some time with him upon the blanket. Mr. Hunt appeared much interested in young women who showed themselves so fond of little children. He carolled a gay song to the baby. And as soon as the song was ended, and Adelaide, who sat upon the blanket with her shoulder turned toward Jo, had begun to express her admiration for Mr. Hunt's remarkable voice, Jo picked up little Schuyler and slipped away with him.

"Don't go—oh, don't go!" called Dallas Hunt after her.

She turned, smiling. "Time for his morning nap," she explained.

"Let's make it a rendezvous—every morning at this hour—we four, eh?"

If a human back could express a contrary vote, Miss Sturgis's back expressed it at that moment. Her voice, pitched low, was yet audible to Jo, departing. It was suggesting that Miss Jenney's time—unfortunately—was not her own.

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## VIII

Through the mist and fog of an English early morning the ship on which Mrs. Schuyler Chase had crossed the Atlantic nosed its way into the Southampton dock. She had had a wireless message from one of Schuyler's companions halfway over—"Doing well," so the worst of her anxiety had been allayed. Yet she was sure there was a crisis of some sort to be faced in her husband's life, and she was eager to be with him.

At the earliest possible point on the pier at which he could join her, the Reverend Howard Caldwell was found, his rubicund face lighted with a reassuring smile.

"All's going well, your husband's improving, Mrs. Chase," were his first words, as he took her in charge. She thanked him and expressed her relief, but asked no questions till they were in the London train. Then she turned to him.

"Please tell me all about it," she said.

"The doctor can do that better than I. But I can give you a general outline of the attack."

This he proceeded to do, showing a grasp of the situation rather beyond that of the average layman. He described the acute illness which had laid his friend Chase low, and then proceeded more cautiously—as Sally instantly felt—to let her know the chief reason why she had been summoned.

"It seemed to us that he needed you to help him through what is really more of a mental and spiritual emergency than a physical, though it's the physical condition which brings on the other. You see"—his tone was very gentle, though straightforward enough—"his eyes are affected."

"Oh!" It was more a breath than an exclamation, but it meant that Sally's imagination had leaped ahead of his information; Schuyler's eyes—his richest possession, after his brilliant mind—were they in danger? It must be so, or the manner of informing her would be less careful. She tried to subdue the sudden racing of her heart, and be as calm as Schuyler's wife needed to be if she were to be worthy the trust reposed in her by Schuyler's friends.

"Go on, please, Mr. Caldwell," she said quietly. "It is a serious affection, then."

"The doctors can't quite tell yet. They say that sometimes such acute conditions subside, with due care, and don't become progressive. But—your husband has somehow learned enough about such cases to understand that on the other hand they are sometimes progressive and—perhaps—incurable."

Now she had it. No wonder Schuyler wanted her, if there were only half a chance of his trouble being as desperate as these last phrases showed her it might be. Poor Schuyler, so intensely sensitive to impressions, so subject to despondency as the almost inevitable sequence to the hours of exaltation which came to him in his church relations. The faintest foreshadowing of a coming limitation to his powers—what must not the thought do to him? Oh, how thankful she was that she had come, that she hadn't had to delay a day in coming! And how the train crawled that was taking her to him!

"He's really quite comfortable," Mr. Caldwell hastened on to say, though now Sally, having heard the worst, hardly listened, her mind was so busy with the image of Schuyler waiting for her to come to him. Only she could know how he needed her. . . . "He's up and partly dressed, sitting in a reclining chair, and his eyes aren't bandaged, he's only wearing very black glasses. But of course his continuing the trip is out of the question. There's only one thing to do, Doctor Burton says, and that's to go home when he is able, and spend the rest of his vacation in absolute quiet. I needn't tell you what a disappointment this is to Kirk Bronson and me. Your husband was the vital spark of our expedition, and it seems almost not worth while to continue it without him."

"Oh, but of course you must go on," Sally said warmly. "No one will be more anxious for that than Schuyler himself. And if I may take him home I shall be so glad."

"If no new symptoms develop," Caldwell thought best to provide. He had taken counsel with Schuyler's physician as to the exact manner in which he should inform his wife, and had been warned that of all things he must avoid being definite. "As a matter of fact," the eminent London specialist had said bluntly to Schuyler's two anxious friends, "such conditions are the devil to deal with, they're so indefinite—for a while, at least. There's no predicting just what's coming till it shows its head. There's always the chance, with such patients as Doctor Chase, that the condition is partially hysterical—meaning that it's the result of overworn nerves rather than due to serious organic lesions. If that is so, he may recover his eyesight. If not, the trouble is very nearly bound to be progressive, with no known remedy. The great thing at present

is to keep him from worrying and brooding and forecasting."

So this was why they had sent for Sally. Schuyler had not definitely asked to have her sent for—she had been right about that—but he had hardly needed to ask, it was so easy for his companions to divine his longing for her. It was an open secret among all his colleagues in the ministry that Mrs. Schuyler Chase was indispensable to her husband's power, and they knew she undoubtedly was equally indispensable to his very life, if that life were threatened.

The journey to London seemed endless to Sally, and the great city having finally been reached, the trip in the cab through the congested streets seemed unbearably slow. But at last they drew up before a dingy but commodious-looking house. Conversation between the two had long since languished and died, for which Sally had been grateful. If Mr. Caldwell had tried to "entertain" her all the way, she couldn't have endured it.

"He's in this nursing home," he said, as Sally looked up at the smoke-stained walls. "It is really quite pleasant inside."

He led her up the stairs, presented the nurse in charge, and suggested that Mrs. Chase be allowed to see her husband by herself. The nurse nodded, went into the room, came out again, and held the door open for Sally.

"He's expecting you," she said. "It will do him a great deal of good to see you—if he doesn't get too tired."

Sally didn't hear her. She went in and closed the door, and stood for an instant looking across at the long figure in its dressing-gown, stretched in the invalid's chair, the blackest of spectacles shielding the eyes, but the mouth smiling bravely as Schuyler stretched out his arms.

"Oh, Sally!"

She came across the space, dropped upon her knees beside him, and held him close, subduing her own emotion sternly as she felt his.

"You mustn't cry, dearest," she said. "I'm here now, and everything's going to be all right." And how she wished she knew that this was a sure prophecy!

Her husband controlled himself, though she knew that in his weakness it took all his will not to break down and be like a child in her warm arms. Schuyler's tears had always been the sign of his dangerous over-emotionalism—she realized that more now than she had ever done before.

"I'm so terribly glad to see you," he murmured. "It's hard not to be a baby about it. Oh, Sally, I wanted you so! But I didn't send for you—you know that."

She nodded. "Mr. Caldwell said you didn't, though you had every right. Anyhow, I'm as glad to be here as you are to have me. Together we'll have you on your feet in no time."

"On my feet, but not—able to see my way around, perhaps." She felt him shudder. "You—know?"

"I know you've had something of a break-down, but I know you're going to get over it. And we're going home just as soon as they'll let us. Out at Cherry Hills you shall have a wiser vacation than a hurried, tiring European trip. And Rich Fiske will be better for you than the most distinguished doctor London can produce. You'll love it at Cherry House, Schuy. The children are getting brown as chestnuts, and so am I."

"You look like a Southern darkey through these confounded glasses. I wish I dared push them up and see my lovely wife as she is."

"No—you'll have to take it for granted I'm as lovely as you think me!" Sally told him gayly. The meeting safely over, she felt her will and power to help him, to lift him out of his depression, actually to make him well, flooding into her being as water fills a dry pool at the lifting of a dam. Her weeks in the country had given her reserves of vitality, and they should all be his. Already she was stimulating his courage, for his smile was brighter than at first, and his pale cheek had taken on a tinge of colour.

When the nurse came to end the interview Schuyler demurred.

"She's better for me than any tonic, Miss Stoughton!" he pleaded.

But Sally rose. "I need to powder my nose and change my frock," she protested. "Even tonics mustn't be taken too freely."

When she had seen the great doctor who had Schuyler's case, and the eminent oculist who had been called in

consultation, all the known facts were before her and she faced them. The one thing to tie to was that nothing was yet sure—there was a good fighting chance that the alarming symptoms might subside. That was enough for a working basis for Sally; she would take her husband home with a brave heart.

It was a fortnight before she was permitted to sail with him. In the meantime she had sent off Howard Caldwell and Kirk Bronson, insisting that they were no longer needed. They left reluctantly, yet with obvious relief which they tried valiantly to disguise. One didn't go on well-earned vacations in Europe to stay nursing a fellow clergyman if a way out of such a duty were provided; and they could hardly be blamed. They took leave of Schuyler with great heartiness, many predictions of swift recovery, and a final duet of "God bless you's!" which left the patient chafing and exhausted.

"They're good fellows—princes," he said wearily to Sally, as their departing cab turned the corner, "and they've done everything on earth for me. I'm no end grateful—but—if they hadn't gone just when they did I know I should have gone myself—to pieces. I'm ashamed to be so weak. But I felt as if they were the traditional bulls in the china-shop—and I were the china, and a mighty breakable sort, at that. Caldwell's preaching voice is based on his speaking voice—either one would drown out a fog-horn in a test."

"They have been wonderfully kind," agreed Sally, "but I did begin to feel much that way myself. Lusty health always finds itself rather difficult to subdue to the needs of convalescence, and I could hear the china shaking on the shelves. Forget them, dear, and remember only their friendliness. We've a minister at Cherry Hills I think you'll like, he's such a contrast to these more conventional clergymen."

"At Cherry Hills? He must be pretty small shot. And I thought you planned to take a justifiable vacation from church-going while you were there, since there'd be nothing worth hearing in such an isolated spot."

There was a touch of jealousy in Schuyler's tone which was startlingly familiar to his wife. He had never much liked to have her listen to and admire other speakers. It was one of his weaknesses of character which she had never been able to understand. And to be jealous at the mere mention of a country preacher! But in the next breath she said to herself that the poor fellow was bound to be envious of all activity just now, and particularly of any form of platform activity.

"Mr. Mackay doesn't seem like a minister, more like an understanding friend," she said lightly. And went on quickly to other topics more congenial to one who was already eating his heart out at the thought of other men's preaching, when he was to be long barred from his own.

They got off comfortably, within the fortnight, with Doctor Burton and Miss Stoughton to see them on board the ship and establish them in the roomiest stateroom obtainable. July though it now was, the voyage began on a gray day, with heavy weather threatening.

"I hope Doctor Chase won't be seasick," the English physician said to Sally, aside. "It would be the worst possible strain on his eyes. At the first hint of it put him to bed and have the ship's surgeon give him bromides."

To Sally's relief, Schuyler was mercifully spared seasickness. But the gray days persisting, one after another, after the brief storm of the second day out, he became depressed to a trying extent by the mere monotony of sea and sky. Lying in his deck chair in a sheltered nook, looking through the black glasses at the seemingly illimitable gray expanse rising and falling like the heavings of some gigantic monster unable to breathe comfortably, Schuyler's nerves got the better of him again, as they had in the bad days before Sally's arrival.

"I hate being in mid-ocean," he said, on the third day out. "I always did. It's like being suspended between heaven and earth, and a million miles either way. I feel as if I should swing there, world without end. It's a damnable sensation."

"It's a nonsensical one," she told him rather sternly. "You're not to let such fancies bother you. In two days we shall be nearing Sandy Hook."

"Sometimes I think I sha'n't."

She studied him closely, his moody air troubling her more than usual. "Come, I'm going to find you some pleasant company," she announced with decision. "That nice foreign-looking man who stops to speak each morning is taking his constitutional. I know he'd like to talk with you a little if we invited him."

"Don't want him," muttered Schuyler, but Sally was off. The man looked like an interesting person to her, and he hadn't been too conversational on his short stops beside their chairs. She called to him and he came alertly, taking the chair beside Schuyler with the air—she recognized it too late—of a surgeon sitting down beside his patient.

"How iss de eyes to-day?" he began.

"No good," said Schuyler shortly. "Thank you," he added.

"Nephritic retinitis?" inquired the other.

Schuyler nearly jumped in his chair, the shock was so severe. But he pulled himself together, while Sally stood repenting her impulse. The man was a doctor, and evidently not one of delicate sensibilities.

"Yes, I believe so," Schuyler answered reluctantly.

The doctor nodded his head. "I dhought so." Then he shook his head—it was a big gray head, and looked as if it held the wisdom of the sciences and the philosophies combined. "Too badt, too badt," he said in his deep voice. If Sally could have pitched him overboard she would joyfully have done so. But the damage was done. Though Schuyler had in some way learned the technical name of his disease, he had not had any heads shaken over him, and the shaking of this big foreigner's head was bound to be to him portentous. The man indeed looked as if he might be a most distinguished personage from a clinic in Vienna.

"His London physicians are quite sure a complete rest will bring him out perfectly," Sally here interposed. But again the learned one made the same gesture of doubt.

"Had you a hemorrhage off de retina?" he inquired, and when Schuyler nodded, his pale cheek turning paler, the leonine head was once more shaken. "It is a qvestion," he said. "You should comblete resst take. But dot iss not all. You should be under de closest observation, unt you should——"

At this point Sally hurriedly called a passing steward. "Thomas, please help Mr. Chase to his stateroom. . . . You will excuse us, sir," she said to the new and now unwelcome acquaintance. "I can tell by my husband's face that he isn't quite up to talking, after all."

The wise man nodded. "Qviet iss best," he said kindly, and stood watching the tall invalid walk slowly away on the arm of the steward, followed by a young wife whose lovely eyes had darted unexplainable lightnings at the foreign doctor as she left. He had no idea what was the matter, unless the patient were subject to attacks of faintness, which was a bad symptom, certainly.

In the stateroom Sally had a case of near-hysteria to deal with. Schuyler's head was plunged into his pillow, his thin shoulders were heaving, the black glasses had been torn off and thrown upon the floor.

"Schuy, dearest!" Sally pleaded beside him. "Don't! You mustn't, Schuy! Get hold of yourself, my brave boy! Don't let a perfect stranger upset you so. Good Doctor Burton knows, not this man, who may know nothing."

"He does know. Everybody knows—even you, who try to keep it from me." And then he was sobbing uncontrollably, and Sally was on the point of summoning the ship's doctor, since the hot tears were so terribly bad for the inflamed retina. Then the invalid drew himself up to a sitting position again, his face in his hands.

"God!—but I'm a coward!" he groaned. "That's almost the worst of it, that I can't face the thing like a man. What's the matter with me, Sally?"

"That's better, dear," she said, as she gently stroked his heavy hair. "You're not going to let go of yourself again. That idiot of a doctor shocked you, with his dismal suggestions. He had no right to be professional with you. Forget him and think how Richard Fiske will cheer you up."

"With lies, I'm afraid." Schuyler got up weakly, walked across to the porthole, and stood looking out at the moving gray waters. "Oh, I'm a poor hero, Sally. But what gets me is the thought of being done—at hardly past forty! My preaching—my work—my name——"

That was it, she knew—his name! How could she expect him not to be frightened at the possibilities before him? Yet she did want him to be heroic about it—he who had so set forth the heroic life from his pulpit. Poor Schuyler! Her heart made every excuse for him—he had been worn out when this thing hit him, he had been away from her, his was a sensitive, emotional temperament which could not stand heavy shocks. An every-day workingman might have stood up under the trial, refused to believe that there was no hope, have been stolid or self-contained. A minister of another type would have been sustained by his faith in God, by prayer, by the "All things work together for good" of his Bible. Where was Schuyler's faith?

He told her. "Everything seems dark to me. Even God—the God I've preached—seems to have forsaken me."

It was at this point that Sally Chase ceased to argue or console. She put him to bed, and gave him the heavy dose of

bromide that would quiet and ultimately send him off to sleep.

It was good, two days later, to see Dr. Richard Fiske's face at the New York pier. And it was a brave-faced Schuyler with whom he shook hands, who stood erect, smiling behind his black glasses. Sally had counted on the expectation that her husband would care too much for Rich's good opinion to show him his fears at the first meeting. Doctor Fiske above all things hated a coward, and the knowledge of this trait had braced many a weak patient to the point of real fortitude.

If Fiske the physician could see for himself how shaken was this patient, how ill of body and mind, Fiske the friend successfully disguised his impressions. He made the trip to Cherry Hills as easy for the invalid as could be managed in a luxurious motor. As in the early evening they drove up to Cherry House, its candles in every room lighted by Jo Jenney when a telephone message told her of the near arrival, Fiske said with a ring of confidence in his voice, worth as much to Sally as to Schuyler: "Here's the place, old man, where you're going to get well!"

And for the moment both could do no other than believe him.

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*Poor Doctor Chase! Can hardly believe this despondent invalid is man who seemed in pulpit a creature above touch of earthly things. Reason told me he wasn't, and he now proves it. Fearfully sorry for him, but almost sorrier for his wife. She stands up like a soldier, and half holds him. Begin to realize she probably always has done it. Very likely she's been part of his genius, all along, though he doesn't know it. Anyhow, he leans against her now like a broken reed. Strain must be terrific for her, for he sleeps little, and I'm sure she never leaves him.*

*Doctor Fiske seems even more solicitous for her than for patient. Can read him, I think, though he doesn't intend anybody shall. Mrs. Chase either doesn't or won't see which of them he's most devoted to. One can't blame him, she's so lovely and so brave. She should have had— Oh, well, life seems seldom to give people what they should have had. And I don't suppose the forceful doctor is a superman, either. He's intensely human, and that's why we all like him. No pose about him. . . . What's the use of anybody's ever posing, anyhow? It's always recognized and derided.*

*Who am I to say that!*

*Oh, Julian!*

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## IX

"My dear Josephine Jenney, I want to have you know exactly how I feel about you, and what I want you to do."

"Yes, Mrs. Chase, I want to know, too."

Sally and Jo faced each other in Jo's own room, which was a pleasant old-fashioned spot under the eaves, its quaintness retained but made comfortable in every way Sally could devise. It was down a step and round a turn in the back hall, remote and quiet. No better place could have been found for a consultation.

It was the morning after the Chases' return. Schuyler was still sleeping, after a broken night in which he hadn't been able to settle down. After a late breakfast Sally's first care had been to seek a conference with Jo; she had had her on her mind.

"It's perfectly evident to me," Sally said, with her disarming smile, "that we've got to have a readjustment. Two things are unthinkable: that I should let you go, or that I should use you as a maid again. You see, I know a good deal about you, now."

"Do you, Mrs. Chase? I should really like to know what you know," Jo answered quizzically.

"I know that you're a lady—in both ways in which we use the term. And that you put on a uniform only so that you might try a bit of adventure, because the little town was very dull, and you must stay in it."

Jo nodded. "So far you do know," she admitted.

"I really don't discern much further, as far as you are concerned, though that's quite enough. As to my side of the matter, I feel that I can't spare you. I'm going to have to devote most of my time to my husband, until he is well. What I really want to do with you is to keep you in charge of things, just as you have been in my absence. Make you housekeeper, virtually, and yet—with a difference. I want, you see," said Sally Chase, as one young woman to another, "to have you one of the family, my dear. Because I like you very much, and it's the only way in which I can really get to know you."

If anything could have confirmed Mrs. Schuyler Chase in her estimate of Josephine Jenney it was the way in which she met this announcement. Surprise, gratitude, delight—none of these were in Jo's face or manner. Instead there was to be seen only a well-bred acceptance of the new situation, combined with a charming look of content.

"It's very nice of you to put it that way, Mrs. Chase," she said. "Thank you. I should like to stay—until September, at least, if I can be of use to you. My plans aren't fully made after that."

"Then that's settled, and I'm very happy about it." And Sally looked it.

It was Adelaide Sturgis who disputed Jo's claim upon Sally's interest. That was to be expected. When Sally, half an hour later, announced quietly to Adelaide that Josephine Jenney was to remain in the capacity of friend as well as housekeeper, Adelaide did not try to restrain her wrath.

"Sally Cherry Chase! Are you crazy?"

"I think not. Perfectly sane. I've seldom known a girl who interested me so much. She's entirely acceptable in every way as a member of the household. More than that, she's a distinct accession."

"She's a mere rustic. She does very well as housekeeper, but if you intend to make her one of us——"

Sally's eyes sparkled. She hoped Adelaide was going on to say that she—Adelaide—would, in that case, pack her expensive bags and go home. But her cousin stopped short of that. She seemed to have taken it for granted that she and her brother, being settled in most comfortably, would remain for an indefinite period. Sally didn't quite want to send her away at once, though she had made up her mind that if Schuyler didn't want the Sturgises, out they should go without ceremony. The question had come up on the way home from the ship; Sally had put it to both Schuyler and Richard Fiske.

"I don't care what they do," Schuyler had murmured, "if they aren't allowed to keep up a racket of jazz when I want to sleep."

"I rather think," Doctor Fiske had said thoughtfully, "having a few people about may be better for Schuy than having the house turned into a hospital. Proceed with things in their normal course, that's my advice. Your cousin Adelaide is pretty attractive in her way; Bradley's a good enough sort. You don't want to be dependent for society on the Cherry Hills people alone—they'd bore Schuy much more than the Sturgises."

"But if you intend to make her one of us," Adelaide now repeated—and paused, with Sally's inquiring gaze upon her. Adelaide well knew that Sally wouldn't hesitate politely to turn her cousins out. So she finished, with an effect of contempt rather than of threat, "You'll discover what an absurd mistake you've made. You can't turn an ugly duckling into a swan by putting her in the pond with the swans."

"An ugly duckling?" Sally's laugh was delicious. "Oh! 'Laide, you'll have to find some other adjective than that for Jo Jenney. Rich Fiske says she has the most unusually fascinating personality he's seen in a long time. As for herself, I admit she isn't your type. She's a very real person, interesting—and, to me, stimulating. She dresses simply, in very good taste—you know that. I should enjoy presenting her as my friend to anybody I know. What more can you ask? As a matter of fact, 'Laide, if you do ask any more you'll have to ask it of somebody besides me, for I'm delighted to have her here. And I know Schuyler will like her, and that's a strong point with me just now."

"Then you're more of an idiot than I thought you," Adelaide said stingingly—and meaningly.

Sally turned on her. It was a look so scornful and withal so secure that her cousin shrugged her slender shoulders.

"Oh, very well. Of course I didn't mean anything whatever. Only—the average woman would take that into consideration, no matter how aloof from the world her husband was supposed to dwell. And—another thing—all this worry you've been through has told on you, my dear. Really, you ought to go to a beauty specialist and have regular treatments for a while. If there's one thing your Jenney has to boast of, it's a gorgeous colour, apparently all her own. If it isn't she's cleverer than I think."

Now Sally laughed again. Adelaide's bag of tricks was such an obvious one—the tricks stuck out through the fabric.

"Don't be anxious about my appearance," she said lightly. "If you and Brad will treat Josephine Jenney with courtesy, there'll be no new lines forming between my eyes."

"Oh—Brad! No need to enlist him. He's ridiculously crazy about her."

"Is he? Good! That simplifies matters very much," retorted Sally serenely, and walked away. It was the only way to end the discussion.

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*These charming people! They couldn't be nicer if I'd been born among them or had belonged to their personal social group all my life. Except Adelaide. How heartily she hates me! Doesn't show it so much when there are no men around except Doctor Chase. But let Dallas Hunt, or Doctor Fiske, or even her brother Bradley appear, and she begins to scheme how to keep them from so much as getting a glimpse of the housekeeper! It's amusing! Doors close, chairs are moved so that they don't command a view of J. J. even passing across the lawn. It's enormously flattering. If I were a potential Helen of Troy I couldn't be more carefully guarded from the view of all but Menelaus. When any of these people are here for luncheon or dinner I should cheerfully stay away from the table, but Mrs. Chase never permits it.*

*"How the cousin loves ye!" Norah O'Grady's eyes and ears have been busy.*

*Nothing in answer from me, of course.*

*"If yer tay tastes odd to ye anny time, don't be drinkin it, Miss Jenney."*

*"Don't be absurd, Mrs. O'Grady."*

*"I'm not bein absurd, I'm jist warnin' ye. If looks c'uld poison, ye'd be a dead woman long before now. I wonder why she don't go away, hatin' so to regard more beauty in another than she can have for hersilf."*

*"Shall we have those iced melons for lunch or keep them for breakfast to-morrow?"*

*Mrs. O'Grady laughs. "Ye'll never give me a chanct to say the r'ally inthrestin' things that's on me tongue. But don't be thinkin' I don't kape thrack of that shlim divil with her fire-red lips an' the shnaky tongue of her."*

*Norah, one must love you, though one doesn't own that you're a soothsayer.*



## X

At the end of a hot July day at Cherry House, the lawn under the great copper beech was an assembly ground for the Chases and their friends. As soon as the sun was down Sally had now for six days been bringing Schuyler out, to lie at ease in a deck chair, with one and another to talk to, or to walk with, when he began to want to stroll about. Though his eyes were no better he was growing perceptibly stronger day by day, and his nerves seemed to be getting under his control. But his appetite was capricious—both for food and for diversion, and one never knew just what would interest or please him.

It was on this sixth evening that Gordon Mackay came to call upon him. The Scottish minister had appeared twice to ask about him, but had himself suggested that he should not bother Doctor Chase with a visit till the invalid had had a chance to become wonted to the place and his own limitations.

"Pastoral calls," Mackay said to Mrs. Chase, standing in the wide lower hall of Cherry House, hat in hand, "aren't always the comfort to the one called on that they're supposed to be. I don't imagine your husband will be eager to make acquaintances just now. But I do want to be of service to him in any way I can. Perhaps I might read aloud to him when he's in the mood. I promise I won't do it in a preacher's voice."

"I'm sure you won't," Sally assured him. She liked this man better each time she saw him, he seemed so free from the mannerisms of some of his profession. If he had once said "My dear Brother," in alluding to Schuyler, that would have been the end of him for Sally! Schuyler would want no "dear-brothering," she well knew. But this straightforward, well-bred Scotsman, with his freedom from platitudinous ways of putting things, would be likely to attract Schuyler. She would have insisted on taking Mackay to him at once, if Schuyler hadn't at the moment been having an examination by Richard Fiske.

To-night, when Mackay had called, Schuyler had been upon the lawn, and the two had met under propitious circumstances.

"I can't see your face any too clearly, Mr. Mackay," Schuyler had said, in the pleasant way he always had with visitors, and which was so much a part of his professional training that he could be depended upon to produce it at call. "But I like the sound of your voice. And I like that dog of yours."

He laid his hand upon the upstretched head of a handsome collie which had followed his master in, and patted it appreciatingly.

"Jock's ready to make friends. He belongs to John Craigie, the man I'm supplying for this summer, but he's adopted me with a nice resignation. I wish I could trot into people's liking the way he does. He just says: 'Here I am—what about it?' And everybody pats him on the head."

It was almost as if, after all, Mackay knew how to use Jock's own methods. In five minutes he and Schuyler were talking away as if they had often met before. Sally observed with high approval, for Schuyler had been restless all day, and she hadn't known what to do for him.

The group under the tree included Jo Jenney, for Sally herself had brought her out and now sat beside her on an old green settle. Bradley perched upon one arm of this—at Jo's end—and Adelaide with Dallas Hunt sat upon the grass. Adelaide wouldn't have been there at all if she could have managed to get Hunt away to regions more remote, but that had proved impossible. Sitting cross-legged directly opposite the settle, though he talked with Adelaide his eyes continually strayed toward Jo. If there was one situation more than another which could annoy Miss Sturgis it was not to be able to hold a man's whole attention because some other girl was exercising a more powerful attraction. She couldn't accuse Jo of making a single effort to do this, as far as could be seen by her own watchful eye, but none the less did Adelaide so accuse her. That very apparent unconsciousness of Dallas Hunt's presence, that thorough preoccupation with Sally, and occasionally, when he forced it, with Bradley, was to Adelaide only the sign of the cleverness of the former housemaid.

"That's her game," she thought. "The sweetest innocence, the most unstudied interest in Sally—not a thought of Dallas! Of course not. She doesn't know he's here!"

She was inwardly antagonized by Jo more than ever as she herself unwillingly noted the texture of the warm white neck and arms in contrast to the dark blue of the dress Jo wore—that artfully simple little dress which seemed to be almost the only one the girl had to wear for dinner, but which had to be recognized by an expert like Adelaide as quite perfect of its sort. She wondered irritably how Jo had acquired it; it had the air of having belonged to somebody who knew how to

dress, and of having been carefully preserved because of its quality. It might have been one of Sally's own, only Adelaide knew it wasn't. It unquestionably set Jo off quite unendurably. If the creature would only dress like the rustic Adelaide had labelled her, it would be easier to ignore her. As it was, there was no ignoring her, there on the old settle beside Sally, her dark head so near Sally's fair one, her gay low laugh answering Sally's. For Bradley she had only now and then a word.

And Dallas! Not even Adelaide's skilful suggestions of other occupations—not even her invitation to him to go into the house and sing for her—what male singer could resist a chance to show off his voice?—could move him from his position on the grass. Though he talked to her, she was perfectly conscious that he was constantly aware of Jo, and what could one do when a man reached that state? Nothing, as she knew from long experience. He must be taken away somehow, and as she beat her brains trying to think of a not too unplausible excuse for demanding a change of base, fate seemed to bring it to her from an unexpected source.

Doctor Fiske had been at Cherry House once that day, but here he was again, his car drawn up outside the gate, his tall figure striding across to the group under the tree. His greetings were brief, his errand was instantly proclaimed.

"I've come to urge everybody to jump into cars and come with me to the greatest summer concert of the season. A friend of mine—Herminie La Salle—is to sing in the open air with the New York Philharmonic at the Stadium. It's just been arranged. She's a wonder—a find. You've simply got to hear her. If we start right now we can get there for her closing numbers, anyhow. . . . Sally, I'm going to take you. The others can go as they will. Schuy, I wish you could go, but I don't advise it—or permit it. But you won't mind——"

"Certainly not."

"Why, Schuy, I wouldn't dream of leaving you——"

"He won't be left, Mrs. Chase." This was Jo Jenney. "Surely you must go."

Adelaide, listening, was exultant. Of course Dallas would take her, and Jo Jenney would be left behind. She stood quietly waiting for the thing to be settled in the only logical way, assured that the vexations were over and that a glorious stretch of hours lay before her. To drive for swift miles in the summer night, to listen to splendid music in that same night, then to return as leisurely as one might feel inclined—and she meant Dallas should feel inclined to make a lingering trip of it—what better could she ask?

But what was this? Dallas Hunt had sprung to his feet and was standing before Sally and Jo. "Do go, Mrs. Chase," he was saying. "I know Doctor Chase means it. And I'd love to take Miss Jenney and Mr. Mackay."

Hunt dearly liked to be unexpected, hence his inclusion of the minister, on the impulse of the moment. Also, he had a swift intuition that he would score with Jo Jenney by doing it.

And now indeed there was not only confusion of angry thoughts in Adelaide's brain, but confusion of tongues among those involved in this hasty arrangement.

"Why, I'm the one to stay with Doctor Chase, thank you, Mr. Hunt," Gordon Mackay said decisively. "The rest of you must start at once. You'll need every minute."

"I don't need anybody to stay," frowned Schuyler Chase. "The servants are in the house—I'm all right."

"I shall stay," declared Sally. "I want you to go, Jo—you must hear Herminie La Salle—I know she's wonderful. And Mr. Mackay must hear her, too."

Bradley tried to play into Adelaide's hand—and into his own still more surely. "Let me take Miss Jenney," he said eagerly, under his breath, to Dallas Hunt, "and 'Laide go with you, Hunt."

"Sorry, but my invitation stands—naturally," murmured Hunt, and laughed softly as Bradley glared at him.

The moment came when Dr. Richard Fiske, accustomed autocratically to straightening out tangles, took the thing in hand. "Listen to me, all you diplomatic and generous ones," he cried. "It actually won't hurt Doctor Chase a particle to put himself to bed, and I do him the justice to understand that he means it when he urges you to go, and doesn't want to be coddled. Come on, Sally—get yourself a light wrap and jump into my car. Miss Jenney, accept Hunt's invitation—you and Mr. Mackay. No, don't shake your head, Mackay. And you, Adelaide and Bradley—beat us to it if you can. I'm off!"

Was the man brainless? To send a brother and sister off together, like this? But he had done it. There was little more resistance, except on the part of Sally Chase and Jo Jenney, both of whom still tried to insist on staying until Schuyler

himself commanded them to depart, and was so really determined about it that they gave way. Mrs. O'Grady was notified that she was to be on guard. Jo ran into the house, pulled a plain little hat down over her eyes, and let Sally Chase give her a light cape with a fur collar. Sally herself threw a silk wrap over her thin frock, and took her place in the doctor's closed car. Adelaide sulkily drew on a sumptuous white coat and followed Bradley to his roadster. The party was under way.

"Of all the outrageous arrangements!" Adelaide said it between her teeth, as Bradley got away first—quite true to form. If there was to be a procession, he would never take anybody's dust.

"Damn it, I agree with you. I wouldn't go, or you, either, if we didn't think there may be a chance for a shift before the evening's over. If I can land you in Dal Hunt's car I promise you I will—if you'll get Jo away from him for me. The minister goes into the discard—if we can dump him there."

In Richard Fiske's companionship Sally was saying still doubtfully: "I'm afraid I'm not going to feel quite comfortable about this, Rich, till we're back again. It seems almost heartless to leave Schuy alone—except for an old Irishwoman."

"Trust her. I put a flea in her ear, and she'll go and talk to him. If Norah O'Grady isn't a better tonic for him than any I can give him, I don't know an Irish wit when I see one. Norah's priceless, in my opinion."

"I doubt if he'll listen."

"Then let him go to bed. I tell you, my dear, you're all making too much fuss over Schuyler. He's doing as well as we can expect, and the best thing in the world for him is the knowledge that we're not afraid to leave him alone—or comparatively alone. Forget the dear fellow for an hour or two, Sally. You need a big thrill, and you're going to get one to-night, if I can produce it."

"Of course I love going," she admitted, with a little sigh of pleasure. Sally was still young enough to enjoy being swept off her feet out of monotony into gayety.

"Thanks for confessing it. And I'll confess to something else. I never enjoyed a passing moment more in my life than I did the one in which I saw your cousin Adelaide's face as Dal Hunt asked Josephine Jenney to go with him. And taking the minister along was a master stroke, eh?"

"It was certainly nice for Mr. Mackay. I don't imagine he gets much fun in his life—certainly not in Cherry Hills."

"I like Scotty," said Fiske. "Something about him—he's not cut and dried, neither is he standing on his head to be what good people call 'helpful.' He looks to me like a man who went to a good university and made some sort of mark there—more likely athletics than anthropology. He's just the man for Schuyler, since Schuy seems to take to him."

In Dallas Hunt's low-hung roadster Jo Jenney, tucked in between her two companions, was amused at the turn of events. To be flying through the swift-gathering warm darkness with these two most diverse companions was decidedly entertaining; it was a long time since she had been in any such situation. She felt small and slight between the two well-built figures. The two profiles were interesting ones: Hunt's rather beautiful in its outlines, Mackay's more bluntly cut, yet not without attractiveness.

It was Dallas who talked—a running fire of light observations, full of wit and of more or less wisdom. He told them a good deal about Herminie La Salle—it seemed he knew her well and admired her tremendously. She was very young to have made such a sensation; had had so little training that the critics were doubtful how to appraise her; but all agreed that she had a future before her if nobody spoiled her voice.

"She's absolutely stunning," Dallas said. "You'd take her for a most sophisticated woman of the world, and she's positively a kid. Where she gets that grand manner——! She's tall, perfect figure, magnificent eyes. But the voice! It takes a superb voice to carry in the open air, but hers can do it, though it's not good for it, and I told her so. It's for some charity—children's hospital—and nothing could stop her. She's a generous thing."

The miles were covered, the constantly thickening traffic threaded by Hunt's practised hand upon the wheel, and at last the car drew up within sight of the Stadium.

"Doctor Fiske told me where to meet him, but I'm not going to lose the time that would take. No use, anyway, in this crowd. Fortunately I've a private parking place not far away. I'll let you two out and meet you again in ten minutes just across the street."

They had to keep close watch not to miss him, for the crowds were streaming into the Stadium from all directions. When

he rejoined them there was some distance to go. The concert was half over when finally the three managed to get near enough to the raised platform of the orchestra clearly to discern individual faces in it. They had not once seen the other members of Doctor Fiske's impromptu party, and when Jo had mentioned the fact, Dallas Hunt had laughed. "Did you expect to? What's the use? Impossible to keep seven people together—and who wants the others, anyhow?"

It really didn't seem to matter. Jo could think of nothing except the magnificent music, its effect much more weirdly beautiful than could ever have been achieved indoors. When Herminie La Salle came on to sing they all listened as to a young goddess—which was really, as Dallas had said, the effect she produced. He himself seemed absorbed in her. He sat motionless with folded arms, head uplifted, and eyes intent, until the last note of her final encore had died away and she had refused another. Then he applauded furiously and bent to whisper to Jo:

"I've simply got to see her, after that. I can manage it, but not to take you two. Will you excuse me? I'll meet you right here again. There's only the closing orchestra number now."

Jo assented, and he vanished. She and Gordon Mackay remained together as the concert ended, watching the faces endlessly flowing by. They saw the orchestra pack its instruments and leave the platform to embark in motor cars. Finally they began to wonder what was keeping Dallas Hunt. Several times Jo had thought she caught sight in the distance of one and another of the party which had left Cherry House together, only to lose them in the crowd. Once she had really had a clear glimpse of Doctor Fiske, who disappeared again as if by magic. And at last the great company brought together by the concert had dispersed, and still these two were alone.

"It looks as if we'd lost him," Jo said. "Yet we're exactly where he told us to be. Something he didn't expect must be keeping him."

"Of course something must be, but it's hard to imagine what," Mackay agreed. He didn't seem deeply concerned.

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## XI

"We'll give him five minutes more," said Gordon Mackay, "and then we'll go home on our own. He can't expect us to wait indefinitely. We'll be suspicious characters if we stand about here much longer."

At the end of five minutes he took charge of the situation. "We can get a train to Stamford," he said, "and drive over from there in what we can find. I'm mighty sorry to take you to the station in the subway, after Hunt's coupé, but that's the best I can do."

He didn't tell her he had but a five-dollar bill and a little small change in his pockets, but he didn't need to. Jo Jenney herself had nothing. The little blue dinner frock had no pockets, and she didn't carry about a vanity-bag with a twenty-dollar bill tucked into a corner with which to meet emergencies, as Adelaide Sturgis did.

"It will be fun," said Jo valiantly. "The subway never ceases to be amusing to a country girl."

For a country minister Mackay proved to be an experienced escort. He seemed to know every trick of the subway, even to the final run through devious passages for their train. They made it by a breathless ten seconds, and stood laughing together in the vestibule before they looked into the crowded cars on either side.

"This is an inglorious end to a glorious evening," Mackay reflected, "but it has its points—for me, at least. A dash like that has in it an element of real sport—the do-or-die flavour of a race. If you'd been one stone heavier you couldn't have made it, and we should have been standing forlorn, with an hour to wait for the next train."

"We could have spent the hour talking."

"We could. Shouldn't you have minded that?"

"Not a bit."

"Then I'm sorry we caught the train. . . . I'm afraid I can't get you a seat in either of these cars."

"We're better off out here, anyway. I don't mind standing—if they'll let us stay."

"They'll have to. Not another sardine could be crammed inside. It's worse than the train between Glasgow and Edinburgh on a Bank Holiday."

He had put his arm through hers, for all places to which to cling were already preëmpted, and the train was well under way, swinging around curves at a high speed. He glanced about him at his fellow passengers. Then he gently but determinedly made Jo perform with him a slow evolution which shifted their position so that his own sturdy shoulders came between her and a fat-necked young man with a red face whose gaze was fixed upon her.

"Now—there—what did ye do that fer?" inquired the young man in his ear. His breath was heavy with the fumes of liquor.

Mackay made no reply, but to Jo's eyes his shoulders assumed the aspect of a sheltering rock. She was sure that in physical combat the other wouldn't have a chance with him.

"'Fraid I'd make a hit with the dame, eh?" went on the offensive one, leering.

Somehow or other Mackay conveyed to him that silence would be safer than speech. It was done by a sudden half-turn toward the man, a straight look in his eyes, the gripping of his big arm with muscles like steel. Jo thought for an instant that the intoxicated one would break out into ribaldry, but incredibly he gave the impression of one confronted by something of which he was afraid. If the sturdy Scotsman had shown him a badge inside his coat he could hardly have slunk away faster—so to speak, for in the crush there was nowhere to slink to.

This was the memory which Jo carried with her of the forty-five-minute journey. It was impossible to talk while the train was in motion, the roar in the vestibule was so loud. All that could fill the time was the sense of Mackay's protecting arm in hers; for he didn't withdraw it, and held her safe from being swung heavily against the other occupants of the platform, most of whom were men. The conductor, worming his way through in his passage from car to car, was heard to mutter, in answer to an impatient question as to why there weren't more cars on the train, that this was the worst jam of the season. Somebody else asserted that all the country people within a hundred miles had gone to the city that day to hear the Governor of the State, who had been speaking in a great and popular debate.

"Train's quicker'n auto," another commented. "All them's gone, too—millions of 'em. Nobody's left to do the milkin'." At



which there was loud laughter.

It was good at last to be off the train and in the fresh night air. Now to get home. Cherry Hills was eleven miles away. Mackay found a taxi-driver willing to make the trip for a higher fee than was righteous, but there was no other way.

"We could telephone for somebody to come from there and get us," Jo suggested, having overheard the price mentioned. Mackay shook his head.

"That would double the time it'll take to get there," he said. "We're pretty late, for Cherry Hills' ideas, even now."

So they were. It was nearly one o'clock, so much time had been lost in the futile wait for Dallas Hunt. Jo realized that the sooner they reached home the better, for she knew something of the rigid standards of the little place. The Sturgises and their friends might come and go with more or less impunity, at varying hours of the night, for the town grudgingly accepted their ways as those of their class. But let Gordon Mackay and Josephine Jenney be seen driving in at two in the morning—somebody would be sure to see them—and gossip would flame forth as the word went around.

As their taxi swung out into the open country road a sudden crash of thunder, apparently from a clear sky, startled them. The night had thus far been warm and close, but under the electric lights nobody had thought of an approaching storm. The driver quickened his pace, for it was evident that rain would follow the tempest of wind which swept after the noise of the thunder. It was upon them before they could do more than close the windows, and Mackay ordered the driver to stop until the violence was past. The attack was soon over, and they proceeded, but it was to go carefully, for the road was slippery and strewn with small limbs from the trees which lined it. Therefore it was well past two o'clock when the car rattled into Cherry Square, and by this time a second tempest was threatening, after the fashion of electric summer nights. As the car came by the Manse, Mackay ran in to replenish his flat pocket-book. Then they rushed on to Cherry House.

To their surprise, it was alight with the soft-flaming of candles from top to bottom. Bradley Sturgis's car stood in the driveway, backed by that of Doctor Fiske.

"I'm glad they're all here," said Jo. "They must have been delayed, too."

"They must have just got back," Mackay surmised. "Yet—it seems rather strange the whole house should be lighted. I hope nothing's wrong. Perhaps I'd better come in with you and see—if I may. And I'd rather like to hear Hunt's explanations," he added, somewhat grimly.

They went in together, for the front door was open, and they met Doctor Fiske coming through the hall. He looked so grave that Jo asked quickly: "Has anything happened?"

"I hope not." But his look didn't lighten. "We can't find Doctor Chase in the house."

"Oh!—I oughtn't to have gone!" Jo cried remorsefully, under her breath.

"That's the way we're all feeling, of course. But we can't imagine what he could have done. Mrs. O'Grady says he went to bed at half-past ten, after a talk with her, and that his light was out a few minutes after. Her windows at the back all look toward his in the upright."

"Perhaps he couldn't sleep, and went for a walk," Mackay suggested. "He told me sleeping is deeficult for him just now."

"Always has been. But he wouldn't have been able to go far, and the storm should have driven him back. Anybody on a country road would have seen him coming."

Evidently Richard Fiske was genuinely worried, though his manner changed quickly enough as Sally Chase came out into the hall.

"Two more rescuers arrived," he said cheerfully. "It's just a matter of a little looking. We'll all go in different directions, and we'll soon find him. He may have gone in somewhere out of the storm, and a lighted window'll tell us so."

It was at this juncture that Dallas Hunt came dashing into the house. Evidently he had driven into the dooryard but a moment after Mackay and Jo. As a matter of fact, it wasn't ten minutes since the others of the party had reached the place, and the discovery of Schuyler's absence had but just been made. Hunt noted nobody's face except Jo's as he made straight for her.

"Can you possibly forgive me, Miss Jenney?" he cried. "I can never tell you how sorry I am—or you either, Mr. Mackay." His look swung for an instant to Mackay but returned to Jo as he scanned her sober face. "The whole story will

take an hour. But the honest fact is I couldn't help it, and I feel confoundedly chagrined about it. How did you get home? Did the others come across you?"

"Mr. Mackay brought me home by train," Jo explained. "Never mind, Mr. Hunt—you're excused, entirely. We're thinking of something else now. Doctor Chase isn't here."

"Isn't here!"

He was told quickly of the missing invalid, and eagerly expressed his concern. He would take his car and scour the countryside, he said.

But before anybody could leave the house, the second and severer storm of the night struck with fury. The weather had been aridly dry for a fortnight, with excessive heat; the break, now that it had come, was as if Nature had broken out in blind anger and would give no warning of her blows. There was nothing to do but to wait till the tempest was past.

Sally Chase went upstairs again, and Jo followed her. Adelaide Sturgis had gone to her room, but came to its open door as Sally and Jo passed it.

"You're imagining things, Sally," she said. "What could have happened to Schuy, in a dead little place like this at midnight? It's just as Rich Fiske says: he went for a walk and got caught, and they've put him to bed and he'll come home in the morning."

"I can't believe that explanation!" Sally said, under her breath. "He might have gone for a walk, though I doubt it. But he wouldn't have left us to be anxious about him—he'd have sent some word."

It did look strange, Jo thought. She went to her own room and took off the clothes of the evening, putting on a cotton frock and stout shoes in which she could tramp. Full of remorse that she hadn't insisted on remaining at home, she meant to do her part in the search, no matter where or how far it led.

The moment the storm was over—and it ceased for the second time as it had begun and ceased before, as if some mighty stopcock had been turned on and off—the searchers left the house. Urged to remain behind lest her husband come in and need her care, Sally reluctantly yielded to the harder task of enduring her suspense unoccupied. Even Norah O'Grady was ready with a lantern, her son Jimmy beside her, for she and he, she insisted, knew every nook and byway of the village and country, as the others did not.

"You don't need a lantern—the moon's out again, gorgeously," Bradley Sturgis reported. He was eager for the hunt—it was an excitement to be welcomed. But he asserted that he was sure old Schuyler couldn't be sick—couldn't have met with thugs—not in this rustic neighbourhood—couldn't have done away with himself——

Richard Fiske's hand came heavily upon Bradley's arm as he gave careless voice to these assertions, for Sally was close by, seeing them off. She was very pale, though she kept her head. Doctor Fiske knew she was blaming herself mercilessly for having left her husband behind, alone except for a servant. In her mind, as in Fiske's own, the knowledge of Schuyler's unsteady spiritual balance in this illness, with its threatened hopeless outcome, was reason enough for anxiety. Though of late he had seemed to have himself better in hand, not to be brooding on his prospects unduly, both wife and physician understood that it took little to upset him and bring on an attack of nervous depression. A morbid chapter in a book, a newspaper account of a crime, even—for so susceptible he was—the very approach of a severe electrical storm, such as the two which had passed this night, might have sent his mercurial temperament down to a point of danger to his impulses.

The party set off. Bradley Sturgis went with Jo—she couldn't prevent him. "Think I'm going to let you dash off alone down dark lanes?" he demanded.

"They won't be dark in this moonlight."

"If you should find him, you'd need a man's help," he insisted, and she couldn't deny this. As for village gossip, that wasn't to be thought of, no matter whom they met. No matter how silently the search was made, the whole town would know of it, in some way, by morning.

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## XII

It was Gordon Mackay who found Schuyler Chase. The others scattered to dale and pond, tragedy in the minds of all, even Bradley's, though he denied it. Mackay tried to reconstruct the plan in the mind of a man who came out of the house, unable to sleep on a fine moonlight night. He decided that in his physical weakness Doctor Chase would simply start down the road. In what direction? Very likely it would occur to him that he might meet the returning party from the distant city by walking toward them, so that they might pick him up. If he went into any house, driven by the sudden storm, it would be one on that main highway, and that was the place, Mackay thought, to look for lights. Schuyler's strength might conceivably have failed, he might even be lying unconscious somewhere beside the road. Anyhow, Mackay's instinct was that this was the direction to take, and he followed it.

A quarter mile down the road he saw the lighted windows of a small house, but they didn't make him pause, for these same windows were lighted every night. Mortal illness lay within, as he well knew, for he had been making daily calls at the place since he came to the town, more than a month ago. His sympathies had been strongly aroused, for an aged pair were nearing separation, after sixty years of life together, and the wife who was soon to be left behind was pitifully frail. Even in his quest, the sight of that light, burning in the outer room from which the small bedroom opened, called to him to stop. But his anxiety for Doctor Chase was too keen, and he was striding rapidly by when the door opened and two figures came into view, silhouetted against the light.

One was that of the little old woman—Mackay knew that tiny stooped figure in every line. The other was the one he sought. He knew that figure, too. The tall man was clasping the hand of the little old woman, and saying something to her, very low. Then he was coming down the two steps of the little porch, slowly, his hat still in his hand. As the door closed behind him he stood still for a minute, looking up at the moonlit sky. Then he began to walk, with the step of a weary man, toward the road where Mackay, in the shadow of a great elm, stood watching him.

Was it best to join him, or to let him walk home alone, in comfortable ignorance of the fact that the whole household had been anxious about him? For a minute Mackay considered the latter the wiser course. But Chase was likely to be met by others of the searching party, less discreet; and anyhow, Mackay was eager to know just what it meant that he found Chase coming out of that particular house. Had it been only the chance of the storm that sent him there?

He came up behind the slowly moving figure, with a quiet hail. Chase turned, startled.

"I didn't expect to see you here, Doctor Chase. You see, when Mrs. Chase reached home and found you out, she was afraid you might have been caught in the storm. So I came along down the road, having a notion you'd gone for a walk."

"I see. Yes, I suppose I've roused everybody's fears, if they're back. I thought I'd be home long before they were. I—have rather lost track of the time, I believe."

"One does—in *that* house," Mackay glanced back toward it. "I know the people well, and know what you found there. I lose track of time, too, whenever I go."

Schuyler was silent for a minute, as the two walked along. Then he said in a tone which showed that he had been somewhat shaken by his recent experience: "They wanted you. You see—the old man died while I was there."

It was Mackay's turn to be startled. "He did?" He turned again to look back at the house. "Why, I——"

"You ought to go back."

"I will—but I'm going to walk home with you first. If you've been through *that*, you've a right to be leaning on the arm of a friend. You're not so strong yet as you're going to be. Please!"

He offered his arm, and Schuyler Chase willingly accepted it. Since he had left the small house he was realizing how shaky were both his nerves and his sinews—if he had any sinews, after his illness. It gave him a pang to be leaning on the arm of a young man only a few years his junior, but there was no doubt he needed that sturdy strength.

"I couldn't sleep," he said. "I went around the Square first. Every light was out, though it was only eleven. These little country towns! . . . I came by your house—the Manse my wife had pointed out to me. I met a boy who'd just come away. He asked me if I knew where you were. He said one of your people was dying. Of course, I thought I ought to go, in your place. The boy said the only other minister was away."

"It was my job." Regret was sharp in Gordon Mackay's voice. "I ought to have been on call. But poor old Jonathan Cutler has been at low ebb so often, I'd no possible expectation the tide would really carry him out to-night. I'm mighty

sorry."

"You may be sorry for yourself," said Schuyler Chase. "But you needn't be sorry for me."

The other looked at him keenly in the bright moonlight, which at the moment was undimmed by any passing cloud. Mackay could see the fine profile clearly outlined, could even almost see, could fully guess at, the quiver of the delicately cut lips. He wanted the explanation of that last statement, though he thought he knew what it was.

"I've always felt," Mackay said gently, "that it is one of the greatest preevileges of a minister's life to be allowed to be with people in hours like that. I've never come away from such a place without being sure of that all over again."

"You see," Chase answered after a little, "for some years now I've had an assistant minister in my church. He's done the calling on the bereaved—mostly. Unless"—an odd smile touched his lips—"they were very important people. Then I've gone myself."

All Mackay found to say to this was, in his turn, "I see." And he thought he did see.

"So—I've been spared a good deal of—the sort of thing I've seen to-night—especially among the poor. I think, perhaps, that wasn't wholly a good thing."

Well! The man was honest with himself, Mackay thought. To tell the truth, much as he had admired Doctor Chase—he had heard him preach at various times, and had envied him his amazing ability—the thought of that assistant minister getting most of the real contacts with the lowlier parishioners had bothered him. It was an undoubted fact that the head of a great church like Chase's couldn't possibly do all the work alone, he must have help. Yet—wasn't the result of it that something vital was lost by it? Chase seemed to be owning up to that very thing.

"Anyhow," Chase went on thoughtfully, "though I can't tell you how I dreaded going to that place, with my shaky nerves, I'm glad I went. I hope I was of use to that pathetic little old wife. I don't know about that. But—but she—*she* was of marvellous use to me. I never—never in my life—saw anything like her fortitude. Why, after it was over, she—came to the door with me, and thanked me for coming! And smiled——"

His voice broke. Mackay had a moment of fear that the emotional strain of a scene like that had been too much for the man who had his own heavy troubles to bear. But his next strong impression was that the sight of little old Mrs. Cutler's courage had really been, as Chase had said, to inspire his own.

So Mackay said, in the quiet, warm tone of confidence which is the best support for weakness in another, "I can imagine. Isn't she the greatest little old soldier you ever knew? She's been shouldering her crutch and marching to the music for years, one knows by the look of her. I don't think she'll march much longer, now her old mate is gone, but she'll be game to the end. I'm glad you were with her, to see her and help her through. There's nobody like you, Doctor Chase, to know how to say the right thing. I've heard you do it many times, and I know."

Chase turned to look at him. "You never saw me in a place like that. The pulpit's one place. A little room like that is quite another. I—Mackay—somehow I didn't feel very big in that little room."

"I know." And now Gordon Mackay felt a definite personal liking for this man that he hadn't quite had before. This was the real man speaking, he was sure.

But now the speaking was over. Suddenly Chase felt himself very weak and sick, and leaned heavily on Mackay's steel-strong arm. The younger man wondered for an instant if he oughtn't to leave him and run to the house for a car with which to bring him the few remaining rods. But Chase shook his head and moved slowly on.

"It's—just—nerves," he breathed. "I can—make it."

So they made it, and came to the house. They had also come a little way on that ancient road toward friendship made by the mutual understanding of each other's feeling in a great hour.

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK

*Dream evening, followed by hour or two of nightmare anxiety. All serene this morning.*

*The dream was of old days. Brought on by flying drive in to Stadium, in Dallas Hunt's roadster, with Gordon Mackay*

*making the third, in close quarters. Could shut my eyes and imagine myself tucked in between Julian and Blair Reynor, dashing for almost anywhere that occurred to us. Wind in my face, low voices in my ears, a drift of cigarette smoke, lights, lights, lights—then a tunnel of darkness under trees—a queer sense of happiness—expectancy—recognition of others' similar reactions——*

*Then music—gorgeous—glorious—heart-breaking——. Suspended between earth and sky!*

*Afterwards the funny trip home, coming back to earth with a bounce. Crowds, noise, reek, heat, on the train. Then quiet, coolness, wetness, gales, slippery roads, muddy hills—Cherry Square——*

*Finally the dash off through the fields looking for our patient. Bradley Sturgis at my heels, trying to make most of excitement. Might as well have been a midge humming in my ears. Frightfully anxious lest we find tragedy. Return to house, to find the pale invalid resting, a strange look on his face as of one who has been seeing something he hasn't seen before. Whispered that to Mr. Mackay, who whispered back: "He has." And told me no more. Think, whatever it was, Gordon Mackay must have seen it, too.*

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## XIII

Adelaide Sturgis had made quite sure that there was nobody in the house except herself. Even Norah O'Grady had left her kitchen shining and fragrant, and had run over home to pick some blackberries from her own small garden for the Chases' table. Sally had taken her husband for a long drive. Jo had gone out with Bob; Mary had the other children well away from the house.

Every plan of Adelaide's for the day had fallen through. She had expected to motor into town with a man she knew for dinner and the theatre, but at noon he had telephoned, explaining why he must default. Dallas Hunt had been away all the week. Therefore Adelaide was feeling more than ordinarily down on her luck. And always, at the bottom of her disappointments, was the mental image of Jo Jenney. Whoever else was unhappy, Jo seemed full of the zest of life. And not for any special reason that could be discerned.

Suddenly there had come to Adelaide the desire to go into Jo's room, in her absence, and see if she could discover any secret of her attraction for the various people who were constantly showing how much they wanted to be with her. There must be some reason, some recipe, some formula, hidden there. Girls' rooms were revealing, Adelaide well understood that. She herself would have admitted that her own, at this very moment, looked precisely as if it were hers, and no other's. The old-fashioned bureau top was a more or less disorderly litter of jars, boxes, and bottles, all of them in some way contributing to her toilette. One drawer was partly open, and scarfs of all hues and fabrics had been stuffed therein, so that they overflowed. Heavy, exotic scents hung about the room. A silken garment of bright green with ostrich bands had been thrown carelessly over the foot of the bed. The bed itself was piled with small pillows of lace over green silk—Adelaide affected green as her colour, to match her eyes. An artist had once told her that green eyes were the most beautiful of all, especially when the hair was russet—which was what he called hers. She had kept it more surprisingly russet ever since that hour, by means of aids known to beauty specialists.

Leaving this room of hers on tiptoe, she stole down the hall to the turn at the back, beyond which she knew Jo's room must be. Even though she was sure that the house was empty, she advanced with caution, making no sound. Past one door after another, she finally stood at that of the one which she knew must be Jo's, because of its exquisite order. Nobody else in the house, not even Sally herself, would leave a room so absolutely devoid of things out of place as that. Even the bureau drawers were every one closed tight.

There wasn't much to be seen at first glance. The bureau top held a few simple and inexpensive articles lying in even rows. A dozen books stood between plain book-ends on the small stand beside the bed. Crossing the room Adelaide scanned these, and drew a deep, derisive breath, though it was a surprised breath as well. "Posing!" she said to herself. "A country school teacher!" There was nothing else to be noted. But the closed drawers, the closed door which presumably opened into a clothespress, stimulated her curiosity.

She listened again; not a sound stirred the air, except the little summer outdoor noises which came faintly in at the open window. She cautiously opened the top bureau drawer.

The usual things—and a photograph, and a bundle of letters. She took up the photograph—first noting carefully exactly how it had lain in the drawer. It was by one of the best photographers in New York, and it was of a young man so exceedingly good to look at, that Adelaide stared and stared again.

"Ah, ha, my dear—so you're more of an old hand at it than I thought you were!" she said to herself. "I might have known it, though. There's certainly something queer about you, the way you play your cards. That demureness of yours covers trickiness—and I've got to find out what it's about."

She replaced the photograph, fingered the package of letters longingly, but reflected that if she were suddenly surprised and had to make a quick retreat it would be dangerous to have letters to dispose of. She stood looking longingly at the door of the clothespress. Just why she was tempted to explore what she already knew must be Jo Jenney's slender stock of apparel could hardly be explained. And yet she found it impossible to resist this desire. Therefore, yielding to it, she opened the door.

Slender that stock proved to be indeed: the straight dresses of blues and whites and tans which Jo wore daily, one plain tailored suit of dark blue cloth, two simple hats upon the shelf, several pairs of well-kept shoes upon trees on the floor below. Where was the thin blue frock which Jo so often wore for dinner, and the sight of which always roused Adelaide's curiosity? This she felt she must see. Yes, here it was, behind the suit, and covered with a little flowered muslin protector. Certainly, Jo's ways were of the daintiest with all her possessions, the interloper had to concede.

Adelaide examined the dress. Beautiful material, artful lines, a peculiar feel and faint fragrance about it which recalled other scenes far removed from the country village. Hurriedly she looked at the fine silk inner lining, and discovered the label of a famous Paris dressmaker.

She forgot entirely where she was and the danger of discovery while she stood surveying this tell-tale mark. Then she laughed to herself. "Idiot I am! Of course she bought it at one of those cheap shops where they sell second-hand clothes, and had it cleaned. She's more knowing than I thought her. . . . How I hate that dress! I'd like to—burn it up!"

A quick step sounded in the passage outside. Adelaide flung the dress back upon its hook, the outer covering all disarranged, panic upon her. Of course she was caught, fool that she had been. She stood waiting to be discovered, she hadn't a chance of escape. How on earth had she been so careless as to forget to listen? She had gained nothing and lost much. How should she explain, where there was no explanation? One preposterous excuse leaped into her mind—she would use it, it was better than nothing.

She came out of the clothespress as Jo ran into the room, an eager Jo, flushed with exercise and a touch of sunburn, a gay whistle on her lips. At sight of Adelaide she stopped short.

"You'll excuse me," said Adelaide, with more hauteur than was convincing in one found in so compromising a situation. "I smelled smoke and have been looking everywhere back here, since it didn't seem to come from the front of the house."

A smell of smoke, and not a fire alight in the house! But Jo accepted the explanation with a nod. "Thank you," she said, with a slight lift of the eyebrows, for at the moment the hanger which held the blue frock from Paris slipped to the floor behind Adelaide. The invader turned involuntarily. Further fabrications leaped to her lips.

"Afraid I disturbed something," she said, as she went toward the outer door of the room. "I thought there might be a hot chimney back there."

Then she disappeared, having had no further response from the owner of the room. To Jo there seemed to be nothing to say. She went to the clothespress and picked up the frock and replaced it upon its hanger. It was impossible not to note that the cover of flowered muslin was not disposed in its usual way upon the dress, and that a mere slipping to the floor could hardly have made this difference.

"Now why," she said to herself, "with a dozen frocks to my one, should you care?" And then she thought she knew. Dallas Hunt had spoken admiringly of that dress in Adelaide's presence. "Oh, how little, *little*, you are!" she breathed.

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*Mrs. Chase gave me a day's leave of absence.*

*Back from seeing Julian. Cannot put one word on paper of hour not to be forgotten. Just want to record belief clung to through everything that God is there—somewhere—even as here.*

*But—his face—his eyes—*

*This is a dear spot to come back to, after a day on trains and in taxicabs. The garden is so lovely just now. . . . Gardens—trees—sky—I'd better stop writing till I'm not so tense.*

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## XIV

"Mrs. Chase! You see I couldn't resist stopping. It's good to see you again! And what do you hear from your traveller husband?"

Sally Chase looked amazedly into the frankly admiring eyes of Mr. Sage Pierpont, who had crossed her lawn without her being aware of the fact. Under the big beech she had been reading aloud to Schuyler, who lay stretched in a deck chair, his back to the street. She had thought him almost asleep, but she was instantly aware, as the deep and resonant voice of Mr. Pierpont accosted her, that Schuyler stirred and listened, in full consciousness.

"Mr. Pierpont! I really thought you had forgotten to keep your promise," Sally said, as she gave him her hand, noting the big car which stood outside her gate, empty except for the chauffeur. "Won't you drive in, and stay? You must stay. And is it possible you don't know my husband is here?"

"Here!"

"Schuyler," she turned and spoke to him. He rose out of the deck chair, and she saw him raise his hand to the black spectacles which covered his eyes, as if he had the impulse to remove them. But he did not do so—he had been often warned that he must not expose those eyes to the bright sunlight, and never had there been brighter sunlight than that of this August Sunday morning. He came slowly forward, and the massive, commanding figure of Pierpont, president of the board of trustees of the church which Schuyler served, advanced to meet him. Shocked astonishment was written upon the face of the elder man.

"My dear Doctor Chase! I never was so surprised in my life. Are you—have you—been ill? I had no idea you had returned."

His gaze was fixed on Schuyler's face, on which a painful flush was spreading, momentarily wiping out its pallor. But Sally saw that Schuyler summoned his reserves to meet this emergency—for to him it was evidently that.

"I'd no idea you didn't know I'd returned," Schuyler said. "As a matter of fact, though I hadn't thought about it, I should have supposed everybody knew it. I had a slight illness in London, and my doctors decided that rest back here in the country was better for me than travel abroad."

"Well, well—well, well—that's too bad. That's a shame," said Mr. Pierpont heartily. "I'm mighty sorry to hear it. Here we were thinking of you as enjoying a fine trip; and here you are, an invalid marooned in Cherry Hills."

"I don't call myself an invalid." Schuyler straightened his shoulders, and his voice became stronger. "My wife is determined to pamper me, or I shouldn't be lying about in deck chairs."

"Some trouble with the eyes, too?" persisted the magnate, who had, Sally remembered, an uncomfortable way of getting to the bottom of every situation. That was why, she supposed, he was a magnate. Nothing ever escaped his observation.

"A touch of that. Anyhow, for the present I'm ordered to favour them. And how are you, Mr. Pierpont? I don't need to inquire—I never saw you looking better. How are Mrs. Pierpont and your daughters?"

He had turned the conversation, and he skilfully kept it turned for some time, while Sally listened and made plans in her active mind. Whatever happened, Mr. Sage Pierpont, though he must be made welcome and kept for as much of the day as he would stay, must not be allowed to burrow too far into Schuyler's affairs. She thought rapidly. When her chance came she was ready. The three had seated themselves tentatively, but Sally rose again as she said persuasively:

"Mr. Pierpont, with your permission I'm going to carry you off for an hour before dinner. There's to be a short service in the old church on the Square, and I'd like to have you hear a friend of ours preach. You've listened to plenty of city preachers, but I doubt if, since you were a boy, you've been in a country church, or heard a man like this one. Will you come with me, when I've put a hat on, and arranged for your chauffeur to make himself comfortable on our back porch?"

Mr. Pierpont rose, bowing graciously. "Mrs. Chase, nothing could give me greater pleasure than to accompany you anywhere. And rather than tire your husband I'll take myself off entirely."

"You can't do that," protested Schuyler, smiling his pleasant, strained smile. "We certainly want you for dinner after the service. But I'd like you to hear Mackay. He's a splendid chap and a great friend of ours, as my wife says, though the acquaintance is a new one. I haven't heard him speak yet, but I'm promising myself that pleasure soon."

So Sally took Mr. Pierpont to church, walking with him halfway round the shaded Square, and calling upon him to note



how the people were streaming from all directions toward the white church with the tall spire. Meanwhile, Schuyler, shaken by the encounter, insignificant though it seemed upon the face of it, endeavoured to think out what should be said to the president of his board when the searching questions which would be sure to be asked should be upon him. The mere sight of the man, whose word was all but law in that church because of his immense wealth and power, had made Schuyler realize that which he had thus far almost succeeded in shutting away from recognition. How slight, in spite of all his prestige, was his own hold upon that church if Sage Pierpont should become convinced that the minister thereof was ever so little less fit than the fittest to go on with his work.

An hour later, when the two churchgoers came out into the Square again, the visitor's rubicund face was alight with a new interest.

"By George, Mrs. Chase," he was exclaiming under his breath as they walked along, "I'm glad you made me go. I went, I'll admit, because I couldn't refuse a lady. But I didn't expect to hear a word I hadn't heard a thousand times before. By George, that man's amazing! He stirred me all up from the bottom. And I'm not easily stirred, as your husband can tell you. He's different. He's original. I enjoyed his direct way of putting things. I was absorbed in everything he said and did. How on earth did they ever get him here?"

"I believe he's only here for the summer," Sally explained. She really didn't know much about Gordon Mackay herself. She had more or less taken him for granted as a gift from the gods to Schuyler. In her absorption with her husband she hadn't inquired much into Mackay's history, thankful as she was for his presence. "Vacation work, he calls it. I don't know where he belongs, really. If you like him so much I'll ask him over for dinner. My husband is always delighted to have him. They've spent many hours together."

"I should think they might, though they're as different as two men can be. As you know, Mrs. Chase, I'm an ardent admirer of your husband. Nobody can touch him, to my mind, in his peculiar field. As a pulpit orator he's unsurpassed. I've considered our church most fortunate to have him. And of course this man can't approach him in eloquence. But, by George"—and Mr. Pierpont's "by-Georges" were beginning to have a monotonous and unwelcome sound in Sally's ears—"this chap has a power all his own. I'd like to hear him again, and I intend to. And I don't know why——"

He paused, and his listener found herself waiting rather anxiously, she didn't know why herself. "I don't know why," he began again frankly, as if thinking something out—and then again lapsed into silence. Later Sally learned what he had thought out, but not until toward the close of the dinner which followed immediately upon their return to the house.

During that dinner Sally noted that Mackay took no special trouble to ingratiate himself further into the important guest's notice. That notice was obvious; Mr. Pierpont took no pains to conceal it. He was gracious and friendly with Schuyler, as behooved a man who must be naturally sympathetic with the disappointment of one whom he had sent off upon a holiday and who had returned in uncertain health. But it was to Mackay he turned with the roused interest of a man of discernment who had discovered another of a calibre unexpected in such a place as Cherry Hills. And when dinner was over, and the party had gone back out-of-doors to its comfortable seats under the beech, he began to feel his way with questions. It was at this point that both Sally and Schuyler Chase began to understand that his interest had a motive other than that of a casual encounter.

"I can't quite account for you, Mr. Mackay," he said, leaning back in a big cushioned willow chair which swayed and creaked a little as he settled himself, crossing one well-clad knee over the other, and drawing deeply on the expensive cigar he had taken from his own pocket. Both Schuyler and Mackay had refused the proffer of the mates to this, but Mackay had pulled a pipe from his pocket and filled and lighted it.

"Do you need to, Mr. Pierpont?" Mackay asked, with an intent look.

"Well, men interest me. If a man shows certain abilities, I like to know something about him. I'm a great believer in heredity; I don't think something often comes from nothing. Fathers count—and mothers, of course. I could almost venture the guess, Mr. Mackay, that your father was a man who filled the public eye in some way—was accustomed to public speaking. Am I right?"

Through his dark glasses Schuyler's gaze was fixed on Mackay. The invalid was realizing, quite suddenly, that in all his hours with his new friend the subject of Mackay's birth and training had never been mentioned. Schuyler had in one way or another spoken, time and again, of his own ancestry, his early life, his university—had alluded to many other facts in his experience. But the talk of the two had been mostly about the books they had been reading together, and with these and kindred subjects Schuyler had been satisfied. Had he, he wondered now, said so much about himself, and inquired not at all into the reasons for Mackay's really deep understanding of life and life's problems? Extraordinary, if true. How

self-absorbed he—Schuyler—must have been. Well, he should learn something about this man now.

Mackay nodded, over his pipe, then removed it. "He was—and is—a preacher."

"Anywhere about here?"

"In Edinburgh."

"Edinburgh, Scotland?"

"Yes, Mr. Pierpont."

Mr. Pierpont's searching gaze looked as if he pounced upon this fact. He nodded in his turn.

"Of course I recognized your nationality. No Scotsman loses his burr—if you don't mind my calling it that—I like it, myself. Been in this country long?"

"Three years."

Schuyler Chase sat up a little in his chair, and asked a question. He could hardly wait to ask it. "Is your father Carmichael Mackay?"

A peculiar look, as of one who hears mentioned the name of one who means much to him, flashed into Mackay's face. "He is," he said quietly.

Schuyler leaned back again. Sally saw that this news had for some reason come to him with a shock.

"I wish," Mackay went on quickly, "I were my father's son. But I'm not in the least like him. I have an elder brother who is. He's a great joy to Father. I'm—the leavings."

"I think I must have heard of your father," said Sage Pierpont. "Of course, I know I have."

"You surely have." This was Sally, whose face was quick with interest in these disclosures. "He's the greatest Scottish preacher on the other side of the water. He came over here, some years ago, and gave a course of lectures at some of the most famous universities. Why, Mr. Mackay"—she turned to him, smiling—"how could you have failed to let us know he was your father? You must be enormously proud of him."

"I'm so proud of him," agreed Mackay, "that just to hear him spoken of gives me joy."

Schuyler roused himself. "That's a great heritage, Mackay," he said.

"But I didn't," added the Scotsman, with a peculiar firmness, "come to this country to trade on my father's name. I'd rather try to earn my own."

"You'll do it—you'll do it," prophesied Sage Pierpont, whose plans had been taking shape rapidly since he began these questionings. "And by the way, while we're talking of your earning your own name, I've a suggestion to make. I learned last night that the man who was to supply our pulpit next Sunday has been called to California by his wife's illness, and has cancelled the engagement. When I came up here I meant to inquire of Mrs. Chase whether she could suggest anybody to fill his place. We've some prominent men engaged for next month, but for this one all the big guns have ceased firing and we had to take a stop-gap. I'm not"—he smiled broadly—"inviting you to be a stop-gap, Mr. Mackay—not after what I heard you do this afternoon. But I should like it very much if you'd agree to occupy that pulpit next Sunday. Will you do that?"

It was evident that he felt he was conferring a favour, and so undoubtedly he was, from Schuyler's point of view. To offer that prominent pulpit to Gordon Mackay, of Cherry Hills, even for a Sunday in August, when the depleted regular city congregation would be mostly replaced by strangers from out of town, was to offer an opportunity rather large to one who presumably had had as yet no large opportunities. But if Mackay was impressed he gave no sign of it. Scotsmen must have, Schuyler reflected, his own pulse quickening nervously, remarkable powers of concealing their feelings at critical moments.

Mackay was regarding the magnate as unemotionally as if he had been offering the chance to read aloud a hymn in that same pulpit.

"I hardly see how I could do it, thank you, Mr. Pierpont," he said. "I've agreed to take care of the Cherry Hills church until October. Its minister was an old friend of mine, and he's gone to Canada to be with a sick mother till the end."

This obligation seemed no obstacle to Pierpont, who was accustomed to do away with obstacles when they got in the

way of his will. And his wish to have Mackay accept his invitation was stimulated by its threatened refusal.

"You won't let that stand in the way of such a request, I'm sure. Easy enough to find a country preacher somewhere out of a job, who'd be delighted to supply this really attractive old church here for the one Sunday."

It was at this point that Schuyler became conscious that not only were Sally's eyes upon him, but that her wish to have him speak the words of approval and entreaty the situation demanded was becoming an urgent one. Though for some reason he found this difficult to do, he summoned his sense of fitness and friendliness to his aid, and spoke without further hesitation.

"Please arrange it, Mackay," he said, "if only to please me. Of course it would give me great pleasure to have you fill my pulpit. It would be easy enough to find a man for this church—there are plenty on vacation in summer places near by."

"I've never preached in a pulpit like that," said Mackay frankly. "I might fall down the steps."

They all smiled.

"If you do you'll get up again," insisted Sage Pierpont genially. "And you'll make the incident serve as an illustration. I never expected to hear a bunch of carrots used in a pulpit to point a moral, but I certainly heard one this afternoon. I'll never see a carrot again without remembering that. I never heard a more effective illustration. . . . How about it, Mr. Mackay? You'll do this thing as a favour to Doctor Chase, if not to me, I'm confident?"

"I'll do it if I can find a competent supply. Otherwise I cannot. I'll let you know to-morrow night, in any case," said Mackay. He spoke as coolly as though the man in the chair opposite were at all used to having people "let him know" at their own convenience whether they would do his will. And as both Sage Pierpont and Schuyler Chase looked at Gordon Mackay they felt that somehow he himself was accustomed to being master of situations.

Perhaps, as Pierpont himself might have contended, that came from being the son of Carmichael Mackay of Edinburgh.

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*Insist on ironing little Schuyler's rompers and tiny, fine undies. Norah O'Grady can't help gossiping, as she works alongside.*

*"It's a foine voice Misther Hunt has, intoirely. An' he knows it."*

*"Yes, it's a beautiful voice. How can he help knowing it?"*

*"Shure, he doesn't thry to disguise the fact from himsilf. Cousin Bradley Sturgis, now, what would he give to be able to inthrist ye with a voice like that?"*

*"I've no idea. Not much, I should think."*

*"Now, Misther Mackay—he's diff'rent. He's no useless piece of furniture in anny house. Not that he stays in anny one long enough to take root. He sees iverybody's throubles afar off, an' there he is. Iverybody spakes well of him. An' he's no saint ayther—the saints forbid!"*

*Now I'll admit I was interested. I had to ask the question.*

*"What makes you think that, Mrs. O'Grady?"*

*"I have r'ason to know. Me boy Jimmy was tellin' me. An' I s'pose it's not for me to be tellin' ye, Miss Jenney—but it seems like the worrds won't kape back . . . So it seems at the post office the other night a lot o' fellys was hangin' round after dacint folks had got their mail an' gone . . . An one o' thim—I'm not sayin' who—ye w'uldn't know him if I did say—out with somethin' insultin' about yersilf. . . . Now, ye know, Miss Jenney, it's provokin' to the idle tongues, your comin' here to be a servant in the minister's house—an' you so amazin' beautiful to look at. An' thim fellys is always lookin' for somethin' they can hang an insinyation to . . . Well—whatever it was, Mr. Mackay heard it. He was comin' in to mail a handful o' letters . . . He sticks 'em in the slot, and then he walks up to the felly.*

*"I'll ask you to take back that lie," he says, quiet an' cool, but with fire in the eye o' him—my Jimmy sees it.*

*"I'll take back nothin'," says the felly. 'What the hell is it to the parson?' Ye'll excuse the worrds from me, Miss*

Jenney.

*"An' the nixt thing he knew, he measured his lin'th on the post office floor—the big bully—an' him many pounds heavier than Mr. Mackay, who's no spindlin', himsilf. An' there stood the minister over him till he got up an' came at him . . . an' begorry, says my Jimmy, he knocked him down again . . . An' that was the end. Jimmy says there wasn't one o' thim there that would have dared come betwixt the two o' thim—not with Mr. Mackay lookin' the way he did . . . An' thin he walked out an' left thim—an' not a worrd was said more—an' thim all shlinkin' away, wan by wan."*

*I don't know what I said to Norah—or whether I said anything. She went off herself after a minute, leaving me with this story to think of. . . . Quite a story.*

*I don't seem to mind what was said of me—much.*

*But I can't forget what was done about it.*

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## XV

Once again Josephine Jenney sat beside Mrs. Schuyler Chase in a church pew. This time it was not within the narrow confines of a country church, but under the wide vaulted roof of the stately edifice which had been for five years the home of the Chases' service.

At Schuyler's own insistence, Sally had brought both Jo and Gordon Mackay down with her to hear Mackay preach. Having himself urged his new friend to take the place of the absent supply for this Sunday morning, Schuyler had gone further and declared that he wanted more than one report upon the result. Sally could see that he was very curious to know how Mackay, of whose powers he had thus far only heard from competent witnesses, would be able to comport himself under conditions so different from those to which he had presumably been used.

"Still," Schuyler had said, thinking it out, "a boy who was brought up to sit under the preaching of a Carmichael Mackay in that great church of his in Edinburgh, must be well enough acquainted with all the requirements as to manner and speech. His father is one of the most ruggedly yet agreeably striking figures in his pulpit I ever saw. As the son says, he's not in the least like his father, yet he's doubtless absorbed from him more than he realizes. Anyhow, I want you to go, and to take Miss Jenney, too—though I'll admit my motives in having her go are a little mixed."

Sally quite understood this last statement. Schuyler was a stickler for the proprieties where she was concerned; if she was to drive Mackay into the city her husband didn't want her to do it alone. She had always been more or less amused by this trait in Schuyler; it was one of his lovable faults, if fault it could be called. And the driving of Mackay into town was made necessary because there was no Sunday morning train which would bring him there in time for the service.

So it had come about that when Gordon Mackay emerged from the church study door into the pulpit on this hot August Sunday morning, two pairs of interested eyes were watching him as were none others—unless they were the eyes of Sage Pierpont, who, looking the picture of impeccably clothed importance, sat at the end of his pew just opposite Sally.

Gordon Mackay in Schuyler Chase's pulpit! To Schuyler's wife it was somewhat as if a rough and shaggy Airedale had taken the place of a sleek greyhound. It wasn't that the Scotsman looked either shaggy or rough—the comparison was not one of externals. But Schuyler, at this moment of entrance, had always given the impression of extreme grace, beauty, and fitness. As he took his seat and covered his eyes with one slender hand he had seemed as one set apart, divinely appointed, to minister in this place. As he lifted his head again it was always to look up and for some time to regard fixedly a great rose window behind and above the congregation. It was as if, like Stephen the Martyr, he "gazed steadfastly toward Heaven." In these first moments he never seemed in the least aware of his congregation. The effect was that of one who communes with that higher Power who is to guide him in the hour to come.

Many women of Schuyler's congregation had said that at these times he seemed like an angel descended from above. They noted the fine lines of his profile, the deep shadowings of his dark eyes; it might be said that they drank him in like devotees lifting a chalice as they worshipped before a shrine. Sally herself had often been conscious during these morning services that her husband seemed no longer to belong to her; to be something more than human. She sometimes had caught herself wondering if she really knew him in all the intimate contacts of every day! If now and then she felt his attitude slightly to suggest a pose, she was used quickly to set such a thought aside. She believed in Schuyler's utmost sincerity of purpose, and she said to herself that, if in this churchly setting he looked like a heavenly visitant, the words which fell from his lips must have added to them that impressiveness which only such an appearance could lend.

But Gordon Mackay, abruptly opening the heavy dark door from the study, and coming into the pulpit with a rapid stride, personified no visiting angel. There was about him no effect of wings. Rather the impression was of a workman arriving at his bench, coming to business about which he meant to lose not a moment. He was not awkward or embarrassed; it was simply as if he had reached the place where he was expected, and he sat down as he might take a chair anywhere. For a moment he, too, covered his face.

But for this man there was no looking toward the rose window, or at any other of the costly and beautiful windows or adornments of the house. As soon as his head was lifted his eyes were studying the people before him. It seemed not to occur to him that they were looking at him. Rather he seemed to be appraising them, trying to discover to what manner of men and women he was shortly to address himself. Both Sally Chase and Josephine Jenney, noting this, felt that it was real, not an attitude, nor the attempt of a shy or unaccustomed speaker to assert himself as unafraid. Knowing Gordon Mackay by now as well as they did, it was impossible to attribute to him any wish to seem other than he was. And if, Sally said to herself, he showed himself as simply at ease in this lofty spot as in the little church at Cherry Square, it

must be because such places were familiar to him. If he had not been used to speaking to such audiences, at least he must be used to speaking to audiences of some sort. To him people were people, and not to be assorted into groups of which he was to be more anxious to please this group than that.

Jo, as keenly alive as Sally to impressions, found from the first even more to interest her than did her companion. For in the quartette of singers who presently rose from behind a wonderful carved screen which hid the organist and his manuals, she saw Dallas Hunt. She had known that he sang in this church, but she had had no notion how his singing would sound to her under these conditions. To Sally, his splendid voice was always acceptable, but she had long ago become used to hearing it, had recognized that he was more or less vain of it, and often felt the incongruity between the matchless words upon his lips in such a service and those she knew must fall from them in his daily life. She had once said to Schuyler that only saints should sing in choirs, and he had responded amusedly: "In that case, my dear, we should have no church music whatsoever!"

If Schuyler Chase could look like an angel in his pulpit, Dallas Hunt could sing like one, a glorious man-angel, soaring to heights where none could follow. Jo thought she had never heard a more marvellous tenor; and it was quite true that Hunt's place in the world of highly paid church singers was at the very top. She forgot everything else while he sang. The greater part of the anthem fell to the tenor this morning; and the long offertory was exclusively a tenor solo. She watched him closely; he was as effective as a singer as was Doctor Chase as a preacher; the two went well together. Often Schuyler had arranged to have a touchingly tender strain of music with appropriate words sung by Hunt to follow instantly upon the last words of his sermon. Frequently such a sequence would bring tears to the eyes of those thrilled by the preacher's climax.

When Gordon Mackay's sermon of to-day ended, however, nothing touchingly tender would have served fitly to follow it. Sage Pierpont, listening exultantly from his front pew, felt more like personally indulging in a long whistle and an explosive "Whew-w!" than like listening to softly reverent strains from the mellow tenor voice or from the muted organ. Trumpet notes might conceivably have burst out challengingly, for the sermon itself had been a challenge. His hand in his pocket, in spite of the hampering gown—Schuyler's own—which Mackay had worn, and which the hand had had to thrust aside to get to the pocket, this man had addressed his congregation as fearlessly and as directly as though he had been talking upon a street corner.

"*And a certain man was there,*" he had quoted, "*by the pool of Bethesda; who had been thirty-and-eight years in his infirmity.*"

He told them of those outside the church who waited to be healed of their infirmities—"and there was no one to carry them down to the pool"—no church member by the pool of Bethesda—nobody there who cared.

And then—"We of the church," he said, "what are we? You know as well as I the kind of infirmity that remains with us for thirty-and-eight years and more. It hangs on—it seems unconquerable—that beastly temper and irritability that increase with the years. That laziness that keeps us from making a vigorous effort. That snobbishness that holds us aloof from others who need us. We know the moods of life—those moods which make us sullen and mulish. . . ."

The biting phrases of arraignment poured out. "Thirty-and-eight years of mal-adjustment to life. Spending ourselves on trifles when we might have been doing something with our ability. Thirty-and-eight years of letting life and conditions and people influence and decide for us, instead of resolutely deciding for ourselves. Thirty-and-eight years of yielding to secret weaknesses, indulging in wasteful pursuits, letting bad and vicious habits fasten upon us. Thirty-and-eight years of crippled existence, a prey to disillusionment and sorrow and cynicism—nursing some grudge or hatred—embittered. . . . Infirm of action—preferring to sit as spectators rather than to get out and play a real part. Thirty-and-eight years—and more of saying 'I can't and I won't.' Why, the infirm man is not far from every one of us—*he is every one of us!*"

Thus Gordon Mackay, supply for the country church at Cherry Hills—but son of Carmichael Mackay of Edinburgh—his hand in his pocket, taking a vigorous step or two or leaning forward over his pulpit. Not thundering at his congregation, but talking to them, as if he had each man alone in his study. Crisp, keen phrases, blunt phrases yet searching, he shot them at the listening people—the closely, silently listening people—as dauntlessly as though it mattered not a whit to him whether they approved him or not, so that he somehow hit the target of their indifference and sloth.

"You've preached in big pulpits before, my son," said Sage Pierpont to himself. "Or if you haven't, you're somehow used to facing audiences. You're no more impressed by the size of this congregation or your surroundings than—why—not so much—as Schuyler Chase is, every Sunday of his life. You're thinking of nothing on earth except getting your ideas over. By George, whether I agree with you or not I like you! You make me feel small as a toad in his hole, but I like you! Keep

your hand in your pocket, even though you twist your gown all out of shape! By George, you'd keep this church filled, if you went on like this—and you could, that I know. A man doesn't fire like that who's got only one cartridge in his belt."

And at the end of the service Sage Pierpont came out of his pew smiling broadly at Mrs. Schuyler Chase across the aisle. He was ready to burst into vehement praise of the speaker of the morning. Then he remembered that perhaps he'd better modify his exultation a little, since it was her husband who was for the time superseded by this other. But though his lips only said: "Very good indeed, Mrs. Chase, wasn't he?" his sparkling eyes spoke for him. She read that he was completely carried away by this new interest, and her heart sank.

She, too, had been appreciative to the last degree of the originality and force of Gordon Mackay. She recognized in him all that Pierpont recognized, perhaps more, because by now she knew him better. But not for a moment as she listened had the image of Schuyler been absent from her mind. She could see him there in the pulpit instead of Mackay, speaking beautifully and persuasively, himself beautiful to look at, his finely modulated voice reaching every hearer. Mackay spoke as man to man in every-day life; Schuyler as man in the presence of a listening God. Which was the way? Both? But somehow she felt that Schuyler had never quite transfixed his audience as Mackay had done. Schuyler had captured their eyes and their ears; Mackay had reached their consciences. And withal—because, if it had been only his conscience which had been reached, Sage Pierpont might never have wanted to hear this man again—he had appealed to the best in them. Though they bowed their heads in abasement they were next to lift them in aspiration. The man who could accomplish both these ends was the man who could lead them.

The drive home was nearly a silent one. Mackay himself was very still, he seemed to want no praise. When Sally had said sincerely: "I'm sure you made a very deep impression, Mr. Mackay," he had merely answered: "They were interesting people to speak to." Both Sally and Jo had the feeling that he wanted to be alone, not because of exhaustion of brain or body but because he was still thinking of his task. So they came back to Cherry House, leaving the preacher of the morning at the Manse.

As they drove in at the gateway Jo said: "I can't thank you enough for taking me, Mrs. Chase. I'm afraid it was a hard morning for you, and I was glad to be with you. I can never forget the Sunday I heard your husband—nor what he said. It gave me something to go by, always."

Sally looked at her and loved her. It was only a most discerning spirit which could have understood so sensitively what she was feeling.

"Thank you, my dear," she answered. "Of course I did miss my husband from his old pulpit. But nobody could have filled his place more acceptably than Mr. Mackay. People listened to him every instant, didn't they?"

"I don't know, I was so occupied with listening to him myself." Jo was looking away from Sally as she spoke. "I never heard anybody just like him—anybody so—direct. Every word seemed to count."

"That quite expresses it. Do you happen to know of that great and famous preacher, Carmichael Mackay of Edinburgh?"

Jo's head came around with a quick movement of assent. "Oh, yes, indeed. I have two of his books. And I heard him speak once, in this country."

"He is Gordon Mackay's father."

"Oh!" Jo was silent for a moment. Then she said: "That accounts for him."

"Have you been trying to account for him, too? He has been so reticent about himself, it only came out the other day, through a question from Mr. Pierpont. But Mr. Mackay insists that he isn't in the least like his father. I never heard Dr. Carmichael Mackay, though I, too, know his books—they are in all clergymen's libraries. My husband has heard him many times in Edinburgh. What do you think about it? Is the son not in the least like his father?"

Jo considered it. "I should say he is very much like his father. Of course Dr. Carmichael Mackay is a much more finished speaker, and he has what is called a distinguished presence in the pulpit. One is sure, when one sees him, that here is a personality. The son isn't like that. He is so reserved, for all his pleasant ways, one wouldn't suspect what he is capable of. But when he leaned down over the desk to-day and said some of the things he said, in that way as if he were talking with me personally, meant to convince me—just me—of what he was saying—I thought suddenly of Dr. Carmichael Mackay. I didn't know why I thought of him. Now—of course—I do."

"That's interesting." Sally was finding Jo interesting, too, as she had many times before. She wanted to continue the conversation, but she saw Schuyler waiting in his deck chair, and knew that he would be impatient for news of the

morning. So she merely added: "You must tell my husband your impressions by and by. Meanwhile, I'll give him mine."

So she went to Schuyler, and knew as she went, and as she saw his face lifted toward her, that he was dreading to hear that which he was eager to hear. Poor Schuyler! Discipline of the sort he was having now had never before come into his successful, untried life. It was for her to help him bear it bravely.

"Well?" he questioned, trying to ask the question lightly.

"Well." She smiled down at him. "Very well. All went smoothly, and I'm sure Mr. Mackay held everybody's attention."

"He didn't seem out of place there?"

"He didn't seem aware of being in a strange place. I suppose having been brought up in a big church makes him feel at home. As you know, he's not at all self-conscious."

"He's self-confident, though, or he couldn't jump from his little pulpit to my large one without a sense of the contrast."

"I suppose self-confidence is necessary to any public speaker. Tremblings of the knees would be fatal."

"Not at all. Most successful speakers do have tremblings of the knees."

She could see—could feel—his jealousy. She could hardly wonder at it though she wanted him to master it. She reminded herself of what the situation must mean to him. Perhaps it was like, after becoming a star football player, having to sit crippled upon the sidelines, watching another man sent out into the field, and wondering whether he himself would ever again be able to get into the fray—the exciting, thrilling fray. And if, in that particular game, the other man made a play or two which brought him suddenly into notice, so that the prestige of the crippled player were threatened—yes—Sally said to herself that she must make every allowance. The best she could hope for, at present, was that Schuyler wouldn't betray his jealousy to Mackay himself.

"Well, tell me more about it," Schuyler demanded. "What was his text? What did he do with it?"

She told him the text, described the sermon, reservedly, with no exhibition of strong enthusiasm. But Schuyler suspected her.

"You're not being frank. That's a hackneyed text—every preacher on earth has stirred the Pool of Bethesda—and borne on about there being nobody to carry the cripple down to the Pool. But you seem to think he did a remarkable thing with it."

"I didn't say so, dear. I think he was original, and interesting. Of course he isn't—he says he isn't—in the least like his father. We weren't expecting to hear a Carmichael Mackay. How could we?"

"Then you don't think he was particularly remarkable?"

This was pressing her hard, and she understood why. It would be a comfort to him, since he was very human and ill and unhappy, to know that Gordon Mackay hadn't made a palpable hit, though he wouldn't mind his having acquitted himself with credit. Sally wasn't a good liar, and pitiful of her husband though she was, she couldn't bear to have him try to force her to give the other man less credit than was his due. A touch of irritation with his lack of generosity made her say quickly:

"I do think he was remarkable. I told you that after I'd heard him here at Cherry Hills. He has the making of a preacher his father will be proud of. Surely you're glad of that?"

"Oh, yes. Certainly I'm glad of that."

He turned away his head, and lay back in his chair as if exhausted with the effort to be glad that another man had filled his place so acceptably. He looked so sad and so sick, with his new and strange limitations of life and action, his uncertain prospects for the future, the difficulty of getting through the long days, that Sally's momentary impatience with him subsided as quickly as it had been aroused. She bent over him, touching his thick dark hair where it swept over the handsome pallid brow.

"Nobody can ever preach as you do, Schuy," she whispered. "I'm a prejudiced witness. I saw you every moment there this morning—and heard you, too. And Jo Jenney told me, just as we reached home, that she should never forget certain words she heard you say in that pulpit—that they gave her something to live by."

He smiled pitifully, and shook his head, though she knew that he drank in these words of praise like a thirsty man long



denied.

"The king is dead," he said. "Long live the king!"

Sally went away, her eyes blinded with sudden tears that Schuyler must not see.

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK

*Well! Thought I'd heard Gordon Mackay preach. Find I hadn't—not the one we heard to-day. Had thought of him thus far as unusual village preacher. Discovered to-day he may easily be rather big gun camouflaged. No man can be so absolutely natural as that before such a congregation if he's new to the job. If he's the son of Carmichael Mackay he's more or less accounted for. Yet I'll wager he's on his own; he isn't aping his distinguished father.*

*Probably the less I put him into this note-book the better.*

*But rather hard to forget a certain Sunday, when a stranger singularly like him sat beside me in a pew in that very church. Queer experience.*

*Better forget it.*

*Can't.*

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## XVI

"Sally, will you tell me how you can stand having that girl around for ever? Do you really consider her a desirable member of the family?"

Sally Chase looked up from the mass of flowers she was arranging on the dining-room table, putting them in bowls and vases to be placed all about the house. It was a favourite task which she would delegate to nobody. Under Jimmy O'Grady's faithful tending Aunt Eldora's old garden almost had renewed its youth, and all the perennials of the season were blossoming gaily, as if they were thankful for the chance.

"Just what, Adelaide, do you mean by that?" Sally inquired.

Her cousin, perched on the further edge of the table, her slim legs crossed and swinging, a cigarette between her very red lips, smiled with one corner of her mouth—a trick she had often practised before her mirror. It had a peculiarly disagreeable effect upon Sally whenever she saw it.

"What do I mean? Precisely what I say, of course. You're spoiling a person who might make a very good servant, or even might have gone on acceptably as housekeeper, if you'd kept her in her place. But you haven't. You've made her one of the family. Nobody who comes here for the first time has the slightest idea she's really a servant in your employ."

"Why should they? She's very much more than that. She's a friend, and we all enjoy having her about. I haven't known a girl in years whom I liked so well."

"She's pulled the wool completely over your eyes, that's all. She plays up to you very cleverly, but I assure you she's much more at home with Norah O'Grady. She hobnobs with her all the time. I overheard Norah call her 'darling.' Could you have any better proof than that that the two are really of the same class? They're your servants, and like all servants they discuss the family behind their backs. I've heard them."

In spite of this triumphant assertion Sally looked undisturbed. She went on arranging her flowers, placing yellows and blues and oranges together in a great blue bowl, making the gay heads stand well apart upon their long stems. She set the bowl upon the old chimney-piece and stood off surveying it.

"All of the same class," she murmured. "And yet all of different classes. How well they go together! The yellows set off the blues. They may even be guilty of calling them 'darling.' I could myself, they're so lovely. If I had a warm Irish heart like Norah's I'm sure I should forget myself and do it."

Adelaide made an impatient movement. "Oh, you and your democratic ideas! I should think, coming of an aristocratic old family like ours, you'd have a trifle more pride. Do you really like the idea of having Norah's pal for your friend?"

"Why, I'm a pal of Norah's myself," insisted Sally airily. "She's perfectly priceless. I enjoy nothing more than a good hobnob with her. I always come away enriched by her observations upon life and people. If Jo enjoys her, too, I can't blame her."

"You're hopeless. But the fact remains that the girl is offensive to me, whatever she is to you. She hardly speaks to me or notices me in any way."

"I should think that would be just what you'd wish. Besides, it's more or less the servant attitude you insist upon, isn't it?"

"It's nothing of the sort. If it were, I should be delighted. Not at all. It's the attitude of a person who feels herself superior—as she evidently does. She sweeps by me like a duchess."

In spite of the fact that she was becoming more and more annoyed with her cousin, Sally broke into laughter. "I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing her do that," she said. "Thus far it has seemed to me you who have the duchess manner—if one must insist that all duchesses carry their heads in the air, which I very much doubt."

"Oh, it's never any use to try to make you admit what you don't want to." Adelaide crushed her half-smoked cigarette upon the edge of the table, and flung it toward the distant fireplace. It fell short and dropped upon the floor. A moment later Jo Jenney came into the room, on her way through, smiled at Sally and her flowers, and passing the fireplace saw the cigarette-stub and picked it up, throwing it behind the logs laid for the next fire. She went on, without glancing at Adelaide, into the next room, closing the door behind her, though it had before been open.

Sally, looking suddenly at Adelaide as the door closed, saw that young woman make a grimace at it, one of intense dislike—the sort of grimace which children call a "face." This was an act to Sally so distasteful that she paused, staring

at her cousin as if even from Adelaide such a childish evidence of hatred were unbelievable. Then she spoke, and all the lightness had gone out of her low tone.

"If you feel that way about any member of the household," she said very quietly, "I don't quite see why you stay."

Adelaide had the grace to look disconcerted for an instant. She had found the temptation to make the grimace quite irresistible, but she hadn't expected to have Sally see her do it. Then she rallied. "That's the effect she has on me," she explained. "I'm not accustomed to feel like that about anybody—or show it. It proves what an antagonism there is between us, that it sets me all on edge. It was perfectly involuntary, that look of mine—she forced it from me."

Sally was silent at this absurdity, making haste with her flowers now, no longer enjoying arranging them, and so stuffing them rapidly into their vases without special design. She wanted to get away from her cousin. Her face was grave.

"I really don't think," Adelaide went on, "that it's kind of you to keep a person here who is so disagreeable to one of your guests. And, besides that, you ought to realize she's a dangerous person to have about. No girl who thrusts herself forward as she does——"

But now Sally completely changed her course. She straightened her slender shoulders, and drew herself up into an attitude which suggested that, by right of birth and breeding and long usage, she was very much the mistress of this establishment. It was not a "duchess" pose, it was that of a spirited young woman who feels that the time has come to assert herself.

"You force me," she said, still in the low tone which testified to her self-control, "to say that I will hear no further criticism of my friend. By every token she is all I think her, and I've become extremely fond of her. I shall not for a moment consider sending her away, so long as I can keep her—which won't be long, at the best, I know. As I said before, if you can't get on with her——"

"I can go, I suppose," Adelaide burst out, in a fury. "I—your cousin—staying with you to keep you company while you're so anxious about your husband, when I might be in any one of half a dozen perfectly gorgeous country places. That's the way you treat me. You let me be insulted by a common girl you pick up out of nowhere! Let me tell you you're mightily fooled by her, and some day you'll know it." Her voice rose angrily, and Sally made an imperious signal which meant a command for lowering it instantly. Neither knew whether Jo was still in the next room, but if she were she could hardly help hearing the loud tones and probably the words themselves.

"I don't care whether she hears or not." Adelaide was becoming hysterical. "It's outrageous, the way you——"

But Sally had walked out of the room, leaving her uncompleted work behind her. She went into the parlour, where she thought Jo might be, and was relieved to find that she had evidently gone upstairs by that route. Whatever happened, she didn't want Jo to guess at this disturbance on her account. The thought of having Jo go away an hour before the time when she herself should decide that her plans for the future demanded it, was quite unbearable. Not in years had Sally so enjoyed having anybody about who was not a member of her immediate family. The personal charm of the girl was so great that her presence in a room invariably made that room seem fuller of interest and colour. One could never be unaware of her, no matter how little she seemed to assert herself. Let her go because Adelaide Sturgis was offended by her, jealous of her?—for Sally realized that jealousy must be at the root of this dislike. It would be bad enough to have to lose her when school began, if, as Sally supposed, Jo intended to continue to teach.

Why, on the other hand, shouldn't Adelaide herself return to her own home, or accept one of those half-dozen invitations of which she had boasted? Sally knew the reason why she wouldn't—it was Dallas Hunt. So long as he continued to make week-end visits in his aunts' home, and spend most of his time with the Chases or upon their grounds, so long would Adelaide continue to extend her visit. It was a singular situation to which it was impossible to put an end without ejecting Adelaide by means resembling force, and this Sally wouldn't do without due cause. If, however, cause should really arise, in the event of Adelaide's making Jo's residence in the house too impossible, Sally knew that the choice between the two would be made without a moment's hesitation.

"Now and then," she said to herself, "though water may not be so thick as blood, it may be clearer, more sparkling, more refreshing. One may drink more deeply of it, and perhaps—love it better."

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## XVII

"Sally, I want you to bring Schuy into town and have him stay a couple of days for observation and some special tests. And I want Doctor Lieber, the Vienna oculist who's in New York just now, to see him. It's a chance to have one of the greatest experts in the world examine those eyes."

Thus Dr. Richard Fiske. When he spoke in this manner, he was to be obeyed. Therefore Sally arranged to drive in with Schuyler the following day. Schuyler, hearing the news, rebelled for a little, then gave in, as he knew he must.

"But what's the use?" he asked despondently.

"Every use, dear."

"The bigger the man, the bigger the chances that he'll condemn me to a hard fate earlier than the rest."

"Nothing of the sort. The bigger the man the bigger the chances that he'll be able to recommend the very latest methods of treatment. Besides, you'll enjoy a bit of change."

"Not that sort. Nobody goes into hospital for diversion."

"You're not going into hospital. Rich has asked us to stay with him, in his delightful apartment. You know it's so near the hospital that it practically belongs to it. So cheer up—we'll have some fun out of it!"

"Fun!" groaned Schuyler. Then he rallied. "I'm a spoil-sport, if there ever was one. Rich's apartment is a place anybody'd enjoy, on account of his Chinese cook. As a matter of fact, I'm a trifle weary of the good Mrs. O'Grady's cookery. She lacks imagination. And there's no use denying that the city market has it all over the country one."

Schuyler always had cared about the food he ate, and Sally had to acknowledge that his fastidious palate was a difficult one to satisfy. She and Jo and Norah had held many a consultation over his trays, in the attempt to devise combinations which would appeal to the invalid. Many a hamper of delicacies had Sally ordered from the city, but Schuyler often complained that the journey it had to make took the edge off its freshness in spite of skilful packings in ice and vacuum containers. Therefore Sally herself breathed a sigh of relief at the thought of having the accomplished Wing See prepare those trays for a few days.

When they drove away on one early morning they left Jo Jenney also looking forward to a brief vacation. Adelaide was away on a week-end visit, and there were only the children to be considered. Jo went about the house with a great sense of freedom as she set the rooms in order, placed bowls of fresh flowers here and there, after Sally's custom, and arranged with Norah to take two days off, returning only at night.

"Sure, if you can spare me, it's glad I'll be to scrub my little cottage from top to bottom. Jimmy's a good lad, an' as careful as he knows, but you can't be expectin' anny man, young or old, to keep things clane as a woman. It's like you, Miss Jenney, to think of givin' me the time."

"Delighted to do it, Mrs. O'Grady. Mary and I can do nicely without you, and you need a bit of rest. Can't you manage to take it, and let the scrubbing go a little longer?"

"Faith, scrubbin' my own floors'll be a rest to me, after fussin' with Dochter Chase's meals. I used to think Miss Eldora was partic'lar, but she was aisy to pl'ase compared with him. Poor man, he cudn't help it, bein' so took up with his own feelin's. An' yoursilf, Miss Jenney—ye'll be none the worse for the time off."

Jo realized this herself. When Norah had gone and the children were out with Mary, she settled down luxuriously with some mending and a book at hand into which to dip now and then. She had chosen the small porch upon the side of the house farthest from the Hunts, instead of going out under the beech. She was often conscious there, as were the Chases, of the watching eyes of Miss Lucinda.

"One can't blame the poor lady," Jo had said once to Sally Chase, when the oversight from the upper windows had become unusually apparent, and Sally had moved her own chair so that she faced in the opposite direction. "Think what it must be to have nothing in one's life except the care of a sick sister. I suppose all that goes on down here is like a little play to her to watch."

"I suppose it is," Sally had agreed, with a quite unusual touch of annoyance in her voice. "But I can't help being selfish enough to wish our one great area of shade and comfort for my husband weren't quite so thoroughly raked by those windows. We should feel less observed on top of a city roof, overlooked by dozens of apartment windows."

"But you wouldn't be." Jo smiled as she thought of past experiences. "So many city people were country people once, I've never quite believed in that old saying that nobody knows anybody else in a great city, or cares what he does. I spent four years of my life in a little city room whose windows were opposite other little rooms, and I knew and cared what the people in them did, and they knew and cared what I did. Oh, very much we all cared—and were curious. Life is interested in life, all about it—it wouldn't be normal if it weren't. And I don't know anybody I pity more than poor Miss Lucinda."

"You're more generous than I," Sally had murmured. "I pity her, too, but I don't want to feel her watching me from behind her blinds."

Jo had understood. In Sally's great trial of suspense, during which she must act always the part of blithe hopefulness, it was hard to have anybody watching the spot where so much time must be spent. To-day Jo herself was more than usually unwilling to be under the curious fire of Miss Luanda's black eyes.

She had brought down from her room the little frock with the Paris mark, to change its hem-line. In spite of its having been so often worn, it was good for a long life yet, for the material was very fine, yet of the sort which never wrinkles but comes out of close packing looking fresh. She set to work upon it, humming a tune, for her spirits were high this morning, perhaps because of her sense of freedom. Suddenly, lifting it into a new position, she was amazed to find part of the fabric above the low waistline falling to pieces in her hands—literally that, as though it were rotten. Exactly in the centre of the front was this place which gave way, leaving a thin web six inches in diameter, precisely where no piecing or patching or arrangement of extra material, if she had had it—she hadn't—could conceal it. Examining the place closely Jo perceived that some destroying liquid must have fallen upon it, for the outside edges showed a faint discoloration.

She sat thinking about it, wondering where and how this mischief had been done. She had worn the frock within the week, and during that wearing there had been no chance for any such accident. She had hung it away afterward in her clothespress with an affectionate pat upon its shoulder as it lay upon the padded hanger, addressing it, as she now remembered: "You little stand-by, what should I do without you? You always make me feel well-dressed, thanks to your origin. And you're as good as ever you were. A fresh flower for your shoulder next time I'm in town, and you'll take on new life."

And now the pretty thing was gone—absolutely finished, and by some mysterious means. Suddenly Jo's thoughts flashed back to the day, now a fortnight gone by, when she had come upon Adelaide emerging from her clothespress, and explaining haughtily that she had smelled smoke—where there could be no smoke. What connection could there possibly be between that event and this discovery? Jo's brows drew together. She had known girls at school amazingly envious of one another's clothes and accessories, but she had never heard of one who would have conceived the idea of ruining the one good frock of a poor girl. No, of course it couldn't be. Adelaide possessed rows of beautiful clothes, and the means of replacing them at the first sign of wear or even of dissatisfaction. And yet—somehow Jo was sure that Adelaide had done this thing. Well——

"So I've found you—hidden away like a chestnut in a burr. Did you think you'd escape all observation, tucked off on this amusing little side porch? And by your leave, may I stay an hour or two? I've lots to talk about."

Dallas Hunt sat down on the edge of the low porch, stretching his long white-flannelled legs before him, and leaning against the slim pillar. The curling blue smoke of his seldom-missing cigarette wreathed above his fair head as he lifted his chin in the characteristic gesture of the perpetual smoker.

"I'm afraid I'm not going to be here long. The mending I brought out to do proves too difficult."

"That adorable dress needing mending? Too bad. I hope that doesn't mean you won't wear it any more. When you appear in it I think you're the most perfect thing I ever saw."

"I shall have to give up perfection then, for it's beyond repair. I'm very sad about it."

"I'm sadder. Yet maybe I'm safer—until you acquire one equal to it."

"I'm afraid I can't do that. This was sent me by a friend who was shopping in Paris. It was my one French frock, and I've been devotedly attached to it. The best I can do is to get a scarf out of it, to remind me of past joys."

"Do you know," said Dallas Hunt, "you strike me as one of the most amazing girls I've ever met? You're supposed to be a country school teacher, helping out the Chases for the summer. I've never met many country school teachers, but—except

possibly in musical comedy where anybody can be anything—I can't conceive one sketched in just your lines."

"No? You don't really need to conceive it, do you, Mr. Hunt? Why bother about explanations for my amazingness?"

"Mysteries are always stimulating to the imagination. You've kept my imagination over-active ever since I met you. When I looked out of Aunt Lucy's parlour window and first saw you on the lawn below, I knew that you were marvellous, though of course I didn't know then that you weren't one of the family. You and the children composed wonderfully, you were a group to take the eye. Blues and oranges and greens, you and they—you see what a colour sense I'm blessed with, and what a memory. And you were the centre of the group. You were simply gorgeous. I can shut my eyes and see you yet."

Jo laughed. "What would men like you do without those three words."

"What three words, please? '*See you yet*'? But of course one can't forget a picture like that, you know."

"No, those other three: '*Marvellous*,' '*wonderful*,' '*gorgeous*.' Don't you think maybe you slightly overwork them?"

"What other words could take their place?"

"I don't know. You need them all, I'll admit. To describe a song, a salad, a siren, or a sunset—even a sandwich."

Dallas laughed. "There comes out the school teacher—which you aren't. I vow you're no school teacher. But you've caught that little touch of caustic criticism from the school teachers—college professors, more likely. Oh, well, if you rule out those words I can find others to describe you. How about '*dazzling*,' '*enchanting*,' '*incomparable*'?"

"All very good words in their proper places. Describing me is no occupation for an able-bodied man on a September morning like this. And since I can't mend my frock I'll have to go and do something else."

"And ship me as you've already sweetly snubbed me? Ah, come—give me an hour, Miss Jenney. I know the Chases are away—you've nothing to do."

"Indeed I have. I've let Norah O'Grady go for the day. It will be the children's lunch hour soon."

"Their nurse can get them their bread and milk—that's all they need for lunch. See here, my dear—Miss Jenney—do you realize that all this summer you've evaded me and avoided me? Never ten minutes have I been able to get alone with you. It's been always 'I must do this' and 'I must do that.' Or, if you didn't actually make a get-away, somebody'd come along—Adelaide Sturgis or her fool of a brother—and break in on me. I'll admit that, being a man, that sort of thing's led me on—if you meant to do that——"

"Of course I didn't." Jo's smile was a trifle scornful.

"Not enough interested in me, eh?" Dallas's handsome brows drew together.

"Not, really—since you bring it on yourself, Mr. Hunt."

"My Lord, you can be crushing! But I don't believe you mean it. I've seen your face—excuse me—when I've been singing."

"I'm fond of music, and you sing magnificently. I'll concede you that."

"Good—so far. But even for the sake of the music, you wouldn't enjoy listening to a singer you detested. Now, would you?"

"Why should I detest you?"

Her voice was cool, assured. He wasn't disturbing her a particle, he could see that. The knowledge of it annoyed him intensely. All these weeks his determination had been growing to capture the attention of this lovely, stimulating person, whatever might come of it. This morning he had been deliberately watching his chance. With the Chases and Adelaide Sturgis out of the way he had meant to make the most of it. Whether he wanted more than to bring her to the familiar worshipful attitude toward him and his art of the young women he knew, he wasn't prepared to think. What he did want was the diversion a man of his type finds in subjugating an unwilling subject, if she happens to be more than ordinarily attractive and he has found her more than ordinarily difficult. Just to melt those coolly beautiful eyes; to see that adorable mouth quiver under the influence of the daring things he so well understood how to say; to feel—well, he really had no idea whether he could get further than that, but by the gods he meant to try!

"I think, possibly," he answered, moving his long form nearer to her knees, as he lounged below her, but refraining from

putting up his hand to take gentle possession of hers, as with any other girl he would have done at this moment, "a girl like you manages to imagine she detests all men—till she suddenly realizes there's at least one she doesn't. When I saw you thrilling to the things I sang for you the other night, the tears in your glorious eyes, I said to myself—"The darling actually thinks it's the song that moves her—and doesn't know it's—the singer." No—don't put up your exquisite chin like that, Jo dear—though it's an infinitely becoming gesture. Just tell me—if that song had been sung by a little—we'll say—cross-eyed, knock-kneed dwarf of a man, do you think there'd have been tears in your eyes?"

But at this point Dallas Hunt was forced to acknowledge that he had met his match. He had known he might strike fire—had meant to do it, for the pleasure of seeing it burn. But the thing he had struck was different from anything he had expected, for it was the gayest laugh he had ever heard from Jo's lips, and he had heard many a laugh from those lips during the long summer.

"Oh, Dallas Hunt," she said, as she rose to her feet and stood, sturdily slender, above him—for he forgot to spring to his own feet in his fascination with that soft outbreak of laughter, "you haven't the least idea, have you, how absurd a man like you makes himself with his eternal angling for the admiration of women? All summer I've longed to tell you just how you look to me, but I didn't quite have the chance. Now I have it. And I'm going to say that I'm just so weary of your spreadings of the net that I'm going to make you so angry you'll draw it in and wind it up, so far as I'm concerned. I love music and I love good times, and summer moonlight and all the rest of the things that normal girls love. But I dislike beyond words the game men like you are everlastingly playing of making love to every girl who comes along. And I won't play it. So now you know."

He was on his feet now, and his face had actually turned a little pale. The two faced each other on the small porch, Jo's eyes defiant, Dallas's blazing. But not with anger. Never had he been so stung into action—the action he hadn't really dreamed of taking.

"But I'm not playing any game," he said, with sudden passion. "I'm madly in love with you—I want you to marry me. There!—that ought to prove my sincerity. My God—if you could see yourself this minute, you little beauty, you wouldn't wonder you take me off my feet——"

She turned abruptly away, but she looked back over her shoulder as she opened the door which led into the side hall. "Oh, no, you're not in love with me," she said. "You simply want for the moment—what you can't have. I'm sorry to have been so rude to you, but it seemed to be the only way to end it. Women are sometimes accused of enjoying wearing scalps at their belts, but when men seem to have that ambition they become—— But I'll spare you my ideas about that. Please excuse me. I'm going in."

"Go, you little devil!" Dallas Hunt swore a round oath under his breath as the door closed softly behind her. For an intolerable moment he played with the idea that he would open that door, dash after her, and take her in his arms. Then, somehow, he found he couldn't. It was impossible to doubt that she meant what she said, and if she did the wound to his vanity wasn't to be healed by giving her the chance to tear it further open. That he had brought upon himself this unpleasant crisis didn't help matters at all. This actually enchanting person, he realized, was now as definitely beyond his reach, even for purposes of every-day diversion, as if she had built a wall between them. It was a new experience for Dallas Hunt.

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*Grow angrier and angrier, looking at spoiled frock. With difficulty restrain myself from going to A. and handing her one of a brace of pistols. "Stand up, you coward, and shoot me in the open!" Shake my fist at her door as I go by, in fashion most gamin-like. Think she knows I suspect her, she has become so insufferable. Long to leave frock on her bed—to put it on and go in to see her, saying nothing, just confronting her. Never had small thing infuriate me so much. Loved that dress like a friend and a brother. But since can't absolutely prove the creature did the deed, can take no chances. She would deny it, anyhow. And then what?*

*Finished off D. H. Time it was done. Clever and charming, but too cocksure and cynical. Doesn't want J. J. anyway, only thinks so on extreme provocation. What an absurd pair we should make!*

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## XVIII

The card of Mr. Sage Pierpont and his insistence with the young woman behind the desk in the ante-room got him into the private office of Dr. Richard Fiske, neurologist, not a minute sooner than he would have reached it had he been one of the humblest of the waiting patients.

"These specialists," he grumbled to himself, "certainly do hedge themselves about with devices to make you feel they're mighty important."

He had explained that he was not a patient, and only wanted ten minutes' talk with Doctor Fiske. No, none of Doctor Fiske's associates would do. His own time was valuable, here he glanced suggestively toward his card which the secretary had laid upon the desk after one fleeting look at it. Possibly if she sent it into the doctor at once he would permit the caller to see him without delay. She had smiled and shaken her head.

So he had been fuming for some three quarters of an hour when he was finally taken through devious rooms and corridors to the sacred door. He himself was accustomed to make it quite as difficult as did any specialist for people to reach him in his inner office, but the boot was on the other foot now and it pinched. The mood in which he made his entrance, therefore, was not of the most complaisant.

Doctor Fiske, behind his own office desk, was by no means the Richard Fiske whom Pierpont knew without. He hadn't remembered that Fiske had such a piercing eye, that the line of his mouth was so narrow and tight-set, that his chin stood out so aggressively. Mr. Pierpont felt like a patient under a microscope, himself, as he met that gaze. But he shook off this feeling and proceeded to business. The atmosphere of the office at the moment seemed to be precisely like that of his own—"State your case and be quick about it." So he stated it, though not so concisely as he could have wished. Those observant eyes bothered him amazingly.

"Conditions have arisen," he began. "That is to say—I felt I, as the President of the Board of Trustees of our church, needed to know—well—to come to the point at once——"

Doctor Fiske didn't say "Please do," but he looked it.

"I feel that I ought to know the—exact condition of—our beloved minister, Doctor Chase. I—I was unaware until a few days ago that he had returned from the trip on which the church sent him. He looked to me like—yes, Doctor Fiske—like a sick man. And this trouble with his eyes—I want to know how serious that is. Mrs. Chase told me he was your patient—that is—that you were one of his physicians. I suppose there's an oculist in charge of his eyes—and half a dozen other men looking after his—er—his various members. That's the way you doctors do things these days—parcel a man up among you——"

He stopped. This trying to be facetious, to ease the situation and get his embarrassment in hand, wasn't working very well. Doctor Fiske wasn't smiling, he was simply waiting for Mr. Pierpont to get that case started. The magnate plunged on:

"Of course, it goes without saying that the church will give Doctor Chase as long a leave of absence as necessary to get him in shape. But the question is how long is that leave going to be? He doesn't look to me like a man who'll be ready to go into his pulpit by the first of October—that's only a few weeks away. In engaging a supply beyond that date it's important to know if it's to be for a long period. The quality of the supply——"

But at this point the doctor spoke.

"I suppose, Mr. Pierpont," he said, "your first concern is with Doctor Chase himself, as your good friend and minister. You are anxious about him."

Was the tone ironic? Mr. Pierpont couldn't tell.

"Oh, certainly, certainly. I was terribly shocked at seeing him. I haven't been able to get him out of my mind. The church and I, personally, are devoted to Doctor Chase. Perhaps I shouldn't have mentioned the business reason for needing your opinion. Of course, the personal one comes first. I want to know, as his friend, how serious the case is."

Richard Fiske was silent for a long minute, removing his fixed gaze at last from his interlocutor, and looking off toward a framed etching on the wall, his lips tightening—if that could be. When he spoke, however, his eyes returned to Pierpont.



"No medical man," he said, "is willing to give a definite prognosis in a case like that of Doctor Chase. So much is dependent upon external conditions. Particularly, with his type, upon his peace of mind, freedom from worry, and so on. There is no question that in his work he had been under a severe nervous strain for some time. That sort of genius in the pulpit always is."

He did a little explaining—not much. What he did say wasn't entirely intelligible to the man before him. But it brought the thing to the point where Pierpont felt himself permitted to ask again:

"Do you expect him to be able to take up his work the first of October?"

"No."

"You can't say that he'll be well under a long period?"

"I can predict nothing definitely, as I told you."

When Sage Pierpont could not get information that he wanted at the first or second trial he was accustomed to make the third—or fourth. He had set out to discover what Dr. Richard Fiske thought of Schuyler Chase. Therefore he persisted, losing sight again for the moment of the fact that he ought to impress the doctor with his friendship for the minister.

"I take it your unwillingness to predict means that you don't feel hopeful about his recovery?"

"You have no right to infer that. You ask me to make a definite statement as to the length of time his recovery may take, and I answer that I am unable to do so. Any physician will say the same, at the present stage of his illness."

Pierpont grasped at this.

"Then you admit that he's seriously ill?"

A steely gleam came into Doctor Fiske's eyes. "You seem very anxious to make that out, Mr. Pierpont."

The caller realized suddenly that Fiske was not only Chase's physician but his friend as well. He changed his tactics again quickly.

"I'm alarmed about him, Doctor. I can't help fearing the worst for his future—and necessarily for ours. I want to give him every consideration in our arrangements. You must see that it's important for me to have some idea whether he'll be able ultimately to serve us again."

"That, as I've said, I can't tell you."

"I am distressed," said Mr. Pierpont, rising, because Doctor Fiske had made a slight movement which suggested that he himself was about to rise, and his interviewer did not intend to let himself be dismissed. "Distressed at the mere possibility that my friend Chase may have a long siege before him. But I know he will be anxious to have the church well supplied during his leave of absence. I shall attend to that. Perhaps we had better grant him an indefinite leave, which may be prolonged to a full year if need be. Would that be your advice?"

Now Doctor Fiske smiled, but Mr. Pierpont didn't quite enjoy the smile. "That's up to the church, I should say," he replied. "It depends entirely upon how much you value Doctor Chase's services."

"I have told you how much we value them. Thank you very much, Doctor Fiske. I won't take up any more of your time—or mine."

Mr. Pierpont departed, boiling. Why in the world, he wondered, should he and this doctor have struck sparks in this way? What had he said or failed to say that had put the specialist on the defensive? He would have been astonished if he had known that Richard Fiske had been able to read him as an open book—the man who in business matters was so astute that a sphinx could hardly have been more difficult to reckon with.

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*Had long talk with the Cherry Hills substitute preacher to-day. Was walking over to North Cherry Hills on errand and for the walk, when he dashed out of a parishioner's house on the outskirts and joined up with me. It seemed he also had errand in N. C. H. so seemed not displeased to have company. I also was able to brook interruption of own*

*thoughts, which had been very low.*

*Talked of everything on earth—nothing in heaven—which seems strange, being with preacher. Forgot that important fact, he seemed so jolly and boyish, also so quick on trigger. Compared notes on books, mankind, sports, village gossip, dogs, and Norah O'Grady. Seems he loves Norah, even as I.*

*"So you're Scotch," says she to him.*

*"So you're Irish," says he to her.*

*"An' none the worse for that, Misther Mackay."*

*"Much the better for that, Mrs. O'Grady."*

*"Me the better for bein' Irish?"*

*"Of course. You wouldn't want to be Scotch, would you?"*

*"I'm not so sure."—With her head on one side, surveying him. "If I could be Scotch like Misther Mackay, I wudn't moind. But if I had to be Scotch like some I've known, I'd jine up with the divil instid."*

*"How do you know he isn't Scotch, Mrs. O'Grady?"*

*"Because he don't know how to play the bag-pipes—an' don't want to know. Niver a note o' thim that c'ud intice annybody to sin."*

*Got into North Cherry Hills without noticing it, the Scotsman and I. It's not much to notice, being mostly a general store, a house or two, and a deserted blacksmith's shop. We went swinging on through, and had gone at least a half mile beyond it when G. M. looked back.*

*"Did you say you had an errand in North Cherry Hills, Miss Jenney?"*

*I stopped in my tracks. "I did. How much further is it?"*

*"A couple of continents and a pair of oceans, the way we're going. Shall we keep on? I don't mind being late getting there by that route, if you don't."*

*We stood laughing at each other, though I'll admit I felt rather foolish. Then we turned back. What use explanations?*

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## XIX

That afternoon Fiske saw Sally. He had given Schuyler a particularly careful examination, had conducted him back to his deck chair, and before his patient could begin to ask questions had managed to get away into the house for a necessary word with his wife.

"Things are coming to a point," he said without preliminaries, as he sat down beside her on a high-backed couch in the cool parlour, "where Schuy must be told definitely that his getting back into the pulpit is a matter of a long time—if——"

He paused, for Sally had changed colour. She had felt it was coming, but thus far Fiske hadn't stated it in so many words, and she had been unwilling to ask him. He saw her gather herself to hear what he might be going to tell her.

"If he ever does get there?" she said steadily.

"If he ever does. The case is grave, Sally, as to its ultimate outcome—there's no use blinking it. I hate like the devil to tell you that, and I've put it off, hoping against hope he might show an improvement I didn't expect. But as a matter of fact he doesn't seem so well to me on this visit as he did three days ago. Can you give me an idea whether anything's happened to make him more than ordinarily unhappy or worried?"

She was silent, seeming to consider it. Her pride made it difficult for her to tell Richard Fiske what she feared. But his corresponding silence as he waited forced her presently to give him an answer, for it made her feel its necessity. One doesn't withhold from one's physician any information, however distasteful to be spoken, which may have a bearing upon the case.

"I think," she said slowly, "it was very hard for Schuy to have Mr. Mackay preach in his pulpit last Sunday morning. Of course there's no real reason why, since there must be a supply in his absence, it shouldn't as well have been Mr. Mackay as anybody. But I suppose it was because Mr. Mackay is a younger man who hasn't had any such opportunity before—at least we suppose he hasn't. It *is* hard, you know, Rich, for a man to see himself superseded. Even ministers are human."

"Of course it's hard. And ministers have a right to be human. But why should he feel himself superseded by a man who preaches for him only one Sunday?"

His eyes were searching her face. No use to try to conceal anything from him.

"Somehow or other," she said, "he divined that Mr. Pierpont was especially interested in Mr. Mackay. Mr. Pierpont really leaped at him. He heard him here on Sunday afternoon of last week with me, and instantly went to work to arrange to have him fill the pulpit last Sunday. It was precisely as he leaped at Schuy himself, five years ago. He heard him once, was wild about him, brought a committee to hear him again, and raised heaven and earth to secure him. Mr. Pierpont is that sort of man, you know. He is used to making quick decisions. He is enormously attracted or intensely repelled on first sight, and relies absolutely on his own instinct and judgment. I suppose Schuy feels that now Mr. Pierpont knows that he is invalided, he will lose interest in him, and be eager to fill his place. Of course he'll do it decently—give Schuyler a leave of absence, and take all the proper steps. But it's the beginning of the end of his devotion to Schuyler Chase, and Schuyler knows it. And so do I. And I fear for its effect on him. You are right—he isn't so well as he was before Sunday."

"Do you think," questioned Fiske, watching her, "this man Mackay can conceivably be of the size to take Schuy's place? I haven't heard him, haven't seen much of him, and so can't judge of his fibre. He's an interesting-looking chap, but he doesn't strike me as quite the figure to fill the imagination to the degree of calling him to that great church. A country parson!"

"But he isn't. In the first place, he's the son of Carmichael Mackay of Edinburgh."

"That doesn't mean a thing to me."

"It's as if," said Sally, trying to make it clear, "a young doctor were introduced to you as the son of one of the biggest medical men on the other side of the water. You'd feel he had the great advantage of his heritage to begin with. Knowing Gordon Mackay is the son of a great Scottish preacher helps to explain why he isn't usual in any way. He is very reticent about himself, but having heard him now several times I know perfectly that he has had a lot of training. And when the chance comes to fill a big place he'll be fitted for it."

"I see. And I'm afraid you're right about Pierpont's being interested in him. You may as well know that the old boy's been

in my office, trying to extract from me a definite opinion as to Schuy's recovery. He didn't get much, for I was on my guard, but he betrayed himself."

"Did he speak of Mr. Mackay?"

"Not a word. And he professed himself Schuyler's devoted friend. But everybody knows Sage Pierpont. Whatever he wants he gets, and I knew he wanted something. You've shown me what it's likely to be."

Sally was silent again. Her face was averted, and Fiske knew she was fighting hard to keep her composure in this crisis. He laid his hand on hers, and his voice was very gentle.

"I don't need to tell you how sorry I am to bring all this upon you, at one blow," he said. "But both of us need to be in full possession of the facts, for Schuy's sake. We don't want him upset and unhappy over anything we can prevent. We'd like to have him so single-minded and generous that he'd take the prospect of being supplanted as the Angel Gabriel might. But that really can't be expected of a human being with natural ambitions and desires. And at that, I'm not sure Gabriel himself would enjoy being hurled over the heavenly battlements by some celestial being with more powerful wings. Maybe my imagery is a trifle loose, but my ideas are right enough."

Sally gave him a faint but grateful smile. Then she said: "You say—'anything we can prevent.' We can't prevent Mr. Pierpont's being interested in Gordon Mackay. We shouldn't want to prevent it. There's nothing we can do except try to help Schuyler through a trying time."

"A word in Mackay's ear——"

But at this, sparks leaped into Sally's lovely eyes. "Don't dream of saying one word to Mr. Mackay!" she cried, under her breath. "He has every right to have this chance come to him, if it is coming. Not even for Schuy's sake would I try to prevent it. No, he must bear it like a man—and he will. He will, Rich. I know him better than you do."

A slight sound behind them caused both to turn. A tall figure stood wavering in the doorway. Black glasses made a pale face look paler and lips seem nearly colourless as they asked a sharp question:

"What is it I'm to bear like a man?"

Sally's wits worked faster than Fiske's, and she resisted the impulse to spring to her feet and run to her husband's side. Instead, she only said, in a matter-of-fact way: "Rich has just been telling me that he can't let you get back into the pulpit by October. He thinks you'll go to pieces over such news, but I say you'll bear that disappointment like a man. I really don't think you yourself expected to be back by then, did you, Schuy?"

Schuyler dropped his long length into a chair, setting his lips. "You were saying more than that."

"Yes," said Richard Fiske promptly. "I was saying that the Angel Gabriel wouldn't enjoy having to take care of himself instead of floating about the skies on missions to the benighted. But that you'd have to do it, and not bother your head over having other angels filling in the gaps."

They couldn't pull the wool over his eyes. He had heard too much. He had seen them go into the house, had stolen in after them, and understanding that they were talking about his case had been unable to resist listening just outside the door. Now, his heart beating heavily, he had revealed himself, because he literally had no strength either of body or of will to go back to his deck chair on the lawn and cover his dismay.

Now Sally did spring up, for she saw that he needed her. She brought him a glass of port and a tiny sandwich. As he lifted the little glass he looked at her.

"It feels like a last Communion," he muttered.

She dropped upon her knees beside him, and when he had drunk she took away the glass. "Schuy," she said, with a certain sweet sternness he was accustomed to in her when she felt that his emotionalism had led him too far, "don't you dare say a thing like that again! We're going to face this waiting for your recovery together. And we're not going to mind who fills your place."

Schuyler looked at her. His lips were trembling, but his voice rang with the quality of a sudden hysteria. "I can stand having anybody take my place except Gordon Mackay!" he cried. "If he does it I'll go mad. I warn you—I'll go mad!"

"No, you won't, dear." Her voice was steady, though she was frightened at his amazing loss of self-control before Richard Fiske, in whose presence he had always kept the proud front of a man whom the doctor could respect as well as

admire.

At this point Fiske got up and came over to his patient. "He's all in, Sally," he said quietly. "Don't try to argue with him. I'm going to put him to bed."

An hour afterward, when Schuyler was asleep, under the influence of the sedative the doctor had administered, Fiske said to Sally: "He overheard all we said, I'm positive of it. The blow's fallen, and it's not strange it knocked him down. I could curse the stupidity that made me bring you away to talk about him where he could suspect it and follow us and listen. But what's done is done. The thing is now to let Mackay know——"

But again Sally confronted him with her determined opposition. "I'll not have one thing done to prevent Mr. Mackay's taking that place if it's offered him," she declared. "Schuy's part of me, and I haven't fallen so far as that. Neither will he, when he's over the first shock. Promise me on your honour, Rich, you won't say one word to Gordon Mackay about this. Promise!"

"It might save Schuy a terrific strain, feeling as he does about it."

"I can't help it. Afterward, the strain would be greater, realizing he'd been so weak. We've no right, no possible right, if this big thing is on its way to Mr. Mackay, to take one step to prevent it. Oh, *no*, Rich!"

Her eyes held him. He looked deeply into them, searching them, his heart expanding with his devotion to her and his pride in her.

"Lord, but you're game!" he said. "And, of course, you're absolutely right."

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*What a crisis! Can think of nothing except wild words overheard. How can he be so selfish? Yet—how human to feel like that! Like high-mettled race-horse, strained to limit, all blood and foam at mouth, being passed by cooler, stronger rival with endurance in every line.*

*If G. M. knew! Should he know?*

*He ought to have it—he's the better man. Unquestionably the better man. And he's won it, by all his years of work in places S. C. would never have looked at, would have passed by with his silken robes raised. Oh, I'm unjust, perhaps—I don't know.*

*I only know I want this man to have it, if it's coming to him. Of course it is. Men like Mr. Sage Pierpont get what they want, and after hearing what he said after that sermon, it's easy enough to see whom he has his eye upon.*

*Yet—poor Schuyler Chase, half blind—perhaps half dying——*

*Shall I tell tales? Or shall I not? Please tell me, God of men like the Mackays! God of the Chases, too. And—God of Julian—and me?*

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Gordon Mackay, deep in thought, striding along a road which led out from Cherry Square into the open country, rounded a turn through a shaded stretch and came upon Jo Jenney. Just over a fence in a pasture, a pail on her arm, she was picking blueberries. Her hair gleamed in the sun, her face was deeply flushed, she looked the picture of an extraordinarily pretty country girl.

"Well!" Mackay came to a standstill, then leaped a ditch, reached the fence and stood leaning folded arms upon it. Then he chanted gravely:

"I am a keeper o' the law  
In some sma' points, although not a'.  
Some people tell me, gin I fa'  
Ae way or ither,  
The breaking of ae point, tho' sma',  
Breaks a' thegither."

She looked up, laughing. "I've broken them all then, Mr. Robert Burns. I've no idea whose pasture this is."

"Don't you want some help?"

"I'll be delighted. Mrs. Chase expressed a wish for some blueberries, and I thought I knew where they grew. But I've found so few I can hardly fill this small pail."

He vaulted the fence and reached her side. He looked into the pail, and shook his head. "Hardly fill it! It isn't a quarter full. And I don't see a blueberry on these bushes. It's too late for them, anyhow. Must Mrs. Chase have the unattainable?"

"She must, because it's for her husband. He's so ill, and whatever he fancies she tries to get."

"Ill? Is he worse? I've been so busy this last week with one call and another, I haven't seen him for several days."

"Yes, he seems much worse. He seems very unhappy—very deeply depressed—much more so than before. I'm afraid something's happened to make him so, for it came on quite suddenly."

Mackay looked sober. He made no further motion to discover berries which didn't exist, but stood regarding Jo as if he were considering something. Then he spoke abruptly.

"Miss Jenney, how deep are you in the counsels of the family? Can you help me understand Doctor Chase, so I may help him?"

Jo stopped examining barren bushes. She stood before him, staring across the pasture toward distant hills.

"I wish I could," she said. "My mind is full of plans to be of use to both of them, but it's difficult to discover ways. I'm sure Mrs. Chase is very anxious about her husband, and I have an idea that you——" She broke off, and Mackay waited for her to speak. Then, as he watched her beautiful brows knit, as if with perplexity, he said:

"Don't hesitate to tell me what that idea is. Evidently you do hesitate. Be sure I'm very eager to do whatever I can do, as you are. If you know anything I ought to know, please tell me."

"I do—and yet I'm not sure I should be the one to tell you."

"That makes it certain that you should. Who else will?"

"Nobody."

"Then go ahead. I think of you as a most direct person, but you're being indirect now. Out with it, please."

"Suppose what I told you influenced you to a course you oughtn't to take?"

He smiled. "You'll have to let me be the judge of that. I promise you I won't take any course I oughtn't to take. I'm the possessor of a good reliable Scottish conscience."

Jo made up her mind. That mind once made up, she was, as Mackay had said, a direct person.

"A few days ago," she began, "I came downstairs at an unfortunate moment, and overheard something I wasn't meant to

overhear. I should never tell it to you or to anybody if it didn't seem necessary. I can't help thinking, since Doctor Chase's condition seems so serious, that you ought to know what I heard him say about you. Because just after he had said it, Doctor Fiske carried him upstairs and put him in bed, and he's been there most of the time since."

Mackay looked both astonished and concerned. "What was it?"

"It was this: '*I can stand having anybody take my place except Gordon Mackay. If he does it I'll go mad. I warn you—I'll go mad!*'"

Mackay stared at her in amazement. "Take his place," he repeated. "What place?"

"Why," said Jo Jenney straightforwardly, "I suppose of course he meant his place in the church. His pulpit. You had just preached in it."

And now Mackay laughed, with evident relief. "His pulpit! Why, by all that's absurd, you're crazy yourself, Miss Jenney. Because I supplied his pulpit one Sunday in an emergency—and a summer Sunday, it was, when city churches take what they can get—why, that's no reason why it should enter anybody's head that I should ever do it again."

But Jo continued to look searchingly at him. "I couldn't help," she said, "since I was with Mrs. Chase and you, overhearing Mr. Pierpont ask you if you wouldn't take the other two Sundays in August."

"If you heard that," countered Mackay, "you also heard me say that I was tied up to the Cherry Hills church, and wouldn't leave it again."

"Yes, I did," admitted Jo. "But I saw Mr. Pierpont's face when you said it. And I heard him say—'*All right—but I'm coming up to see you.*' And I knew that meant he was very much interested in you. He could hardly help being interested," she added. "One could have heard a pin drop in that church every minute you were preaching. People even forgot to fan themselves, though it was terribly hot."

But Mackay made no sign of having heard this testimony to his effectiveness. His one idea seemed to be to get at what Schuyler Chase could have meant by saying that which Jo had overheard. "I can't conceive," he mused, "how the poor fellow could have got such a notion into his head. That church is devoted to him, proud of him—it will wait for him indefinitely, as it should. There's nobody like him."

"There hasn't been," Jo said simply. "But he's ill—very ill. And his eyes—I think he sees less clearly every day. It's pitiful to see him try to disguise it, but Mrs. Chase realizes it, and so do I."

Mackay was silent. His face had grown very grave. He shoved his hands into his pockets and began to pace slowly about among the blueberry bushes, while Jo, sitting on a stump, let her eyes follow him because it was so evident that he was thinking of nothing except Schuyler Chase's extremity. He looked like a man who has heard bad news of one of his best friends, and as if he were trying to discover something he could do about it. His ruggedly fine-featured Scottish face had never seemed to Jo more attractive. When he finally paused before her, she was more or less prepared for his question, it seemed so logically the result of his cogitations.

"What can I do for him? How can I get this ridiculous but upsetting idea out of his head as soon as possible? I can't go and say: 'See here, this is nonsense,' because I'm not supposed to know he ever said such a thing. But I must do it, somehow. He's in no shape to fight fancies, no matter how preposterous they may be."

"Why not go and see him, as you do so often, and see how things develop?" Jo proposed. "You haven't been in since that Sunday you preached. Not going in of itself may have made him think——"

"You're right." Mackay's face lightened. "I've been kept away by all sorts of things—people dying, committee meetings, and so on. But he can't know that. And he does know how simple men aspire to stupendous things, and imagines I've got this absurd bee in my bonnet. I'll go to-day. I'll go now. Come—you can't get any more blueberries out of this arid pasture. Let's go along, and I'll make the call instantly."

His will to be about the business bore her along. He helped her over the fence and set out at a great pace down the road, as if he had but one purpose in the world—to get to a man in a ditch and pull him out of it. He even forgot to offer to carry Jo's lightly burdened pail—which was evidence enough of his abstraction of mind, for he was peculiarly scrupulous in such small matters. Sally Chase had averred that he must have been brought up in his youth in a most mannerly Scottish household—which happened to be true.

At the gate of Cherry House he noticed the omission, said: "Sorry I was so careless. Was it too heavy?"—with a smile;

but then made straight across the lawn to Schuyler's chair, which stood in its usual place under the beech.

When he went away, only ten minutes later, it was because he had been received so coldly, and been shown so clearly that his call was unwelcome, that he was more puzzled than before. Sally had not been present, and Chase had been excused in a way by his own evident weakness and unfitness for conversation. But he had not before failed, no matter how unwell he had been, to be courteous and appreciative. More than that, he had shown an increasingly cordial pleasure in Mackay's visits. He had even sent for him, now and then, as if there were no one at hand more acceptable or congenial. Therefore, this frigid manner of to-day, this unsmiling face, showed to his new friend plainly enough that something serious indeed had come between the two men. Mackay walked homeward with a sense of deep unhappiness over a situation which he felt to be mostly conjured out of the air or the imagination, so unreal it seemed as far as any actual cause for it could be discovered.

At his own door, however, he found some light upon it. Before that door stood the shining motor with its liveried chauffeur which he had seen before and recognized, and as he came up a high-coloured face appeared at the car window. A broad smile broke over that face as Sage Pierpont promptly got out of the car, his hand extended.

"I am relieved to find you, Mr. Mackay," the elder man announced. "May I come in again? I waited for you half an hour in your comfortable study, where I found my way myself. No doors locked in Cherry Square, eh?"

"People from the outside world seldom want anything to be found in Cherry Square, Mr. Pierpont," replied Mackay. "We don't need to keep our doors locked."

"Don't they? Then I'm an exception to that rule. I want something to be found in Cherry Square, and want it very much."

He proceeded to elaborate this statement, which evidently struck him as a happy way of putting it. He sat overflowing the small Manse's biggest shabby chair, smoking one of his own heavy cigars, and talking blandly and confidently. He spoke of the two church services at which he had heard Mackay preach, and expressed his regret that Mackay hadn't seen his way clear to take the city church pulpit those two remaining Sundays in August. He said that he had found but a poor stick with which to fill them. If Mr. Mackay could even yet arrange to come, the poor stick could be thrown out at a moment's notice. When at this suggestion Mackay had shaken his head in a most decided negative, Pierpont had leaned back, smiling with satisfaction, and had told him that he admired in him that quality of saying a thing and sticking to it, even when it was against his own interest. Pierpont supposed, he said, that that was "the Scotch of it."

Mackay was silent. He was beginning to have more than an inkling of where these preliminaries were leading. After all, the idea in poor Schuyler Chase's head hadn't been so preposterous after all. If ever a man with a purpose and a will to carry it out sat before another, that man was sitting now before Gordon Mackay.

And now Pierpont was saying in the kindest tone in the world that he was deeply affected by the knowledge that Doctor Chase was so seriously ill. Mackay hardly listened while Pierpont said all the obviously appropriate things he was due to say in the circumstances. And then, when they had been properly said, the real business of the call was brought to the fore.

"Mr. Mackay, I frankly admit that I am enormously interested in you. As one who occupies a certain responsible position in the church it is my duty to be interested in men who could conceivably fill the great place which is in due time so sadly to be vacant. Not in a long while have I listened to a man who seemed to me so full of promise as yourself. I am not alone in my opinion. Though many of the chief men of our church are away upon vacation, several whose opinion I value highly are in town. They heard you speak and they feel as I do. Mr. Mackay, as I understand it, your duty to this little church in Cherry Hills expires by the first of October?"

Mackay nodded. He was clear enough now as to what was coming. It was not the first time he had listened to a chairman of committee approaching him upon such a subject. The son of Carmichael Mackay was not so unknown as he had seemed to be.

"Of course, while the slightest chance remains of Doctor Chase's recovery, we can only engage a supply. But he can be what is called in our church parlance a 'stated supply,' which means that he is virtually the church's minister. I have a very sure instinct, Mr. Mackay, in such matters, as in my own world of business. I am very confident that if you would come to us for but two months, say October and November, while our members are returning from their country places and from travel abroad, the engagement would result in your being asked to become this stated supply during the period of waiting for Doctor Chase's recovery. My predictions need go no further than that—they wouldn't be seemly. But to a man of your still youthful years I can't imagine a greater compliment than such an invitation. And I can't imagine your



rejecting it."

He sat back in his chair, satisfied with his own slightly bombastic stating of the case, and confident that he must have made a deep impression. He had done so. With all Mackay's unreadiness to think well of himself, with all his honest conviction that he was, as he had said to Sally Chase, "by no means his father's son," he knew that Sage Pierpont was not mistaken in his judgment, and that Gordon Mackay could fill this place. He could do the work, if not as Schuyler Chase had done it, yet in his own fashion, and men would not be disappointed in him. "As a strong man rejoiceth to run a race," so Mackay felt his pulses throbbing, and his blood tingling, at the thought of such a future. If he had not yet satisfied that distinguished and exacting father of his, Mackay of Edinburgh, now was coming into view the chance to do it. Mackay of Edinburgh would be proud of Mackay of New York, there was no doubt about it!

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*I slew him with my own hand. I had to do it.*

*He took it like the man he is—like the man I've known he was, all along. Refused even to accept the idea that the thing might come to him, though he must know it may. Rushed back to do his best to repair the damage to the invalid's endurance of his fate.*

*Well—I've known Gordon Mackay—a little. I'm the richer for that. A good many walks and talks and chance meetings, in all. Every one has counted. The summer's over—everything will soon be changed.*

*I've only one thing to think of—one person—Julian.*

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## XXI

"Can you tell me, please, whether Miss Josephine Jenney is to be found at this house? It's the home of Mrs. Schuyler Chase, isn't it?"

Adelaide Sturgis, just returning from mailing a letter in the small post office across Cherry Square, stood still beside the large motor from whose open rear window a deep and pleasantly inflected woman's voice had accosted her. A strong, decidedly fine face under a plain hat looked out upon her, the attentive eyes of a person accustomed to the world scanned her.

"Yes, certainly. Miss Jenney is Mrs. Schuyler Chase's housekeeper," Adelaide responded with a clear emphasis on the last word. Just why she had felt an instant impulse to impart this particularized information to one who merely asked the whereabouts of the person in question, Adelaide couldn't have told.

"Thank you, so I understand," said the middle-aged lady in the car. "Do you happen to know whether she is in?"

"Probably she is. I imagine her duties would keep her in at this hour. Won't you come in?"

"I shall be glad to, thank you."

The chauffeur was out and had the door open before the words were quite said, standing stiff and straight beside it. Adelaide noted his livery—it was extremely correct in all details. The lady, descending with quick movements, showed an active though slightly stout figure, exceedingly well dressed after a fashion as plain as that of her hat. It was easy to see that here was someone of position and authority; she had the indefinable air which betrays such facts.

With a charming manner—the one she could use when she felt it called for—Adelaide led the visitor into the house. For a fleeting moment she had considered taking her through the hall into the dining room, as a place suitable to a housekeeper receiving calls. But she realized instantly that it would be unwise to indulge herself in this effort further to label Jo as the upper servant Sally Chase didn't consider her. If Sally had been out of the house, it might have been done. But she wasn't—she was coming into the hall from a side door at this very moment, on her arm a basket of flowers which she had lately picked. At sight of the visitor she dropped the basket upon an old settle which stood beside the door, and came forward.

"This lady is inquiring for your housekeeper, Sally," Adelaide explained, reluctantly resigning the situation with this final repetition of the word she so enjoyed using. If only she could have been left to manage things herself, she might have succeeded in making them as difficult for Jo as she would have liked to do. Still, she reflected, the visitor seemed to be informed as to Jo's status in the household. Perhaps she wanted to engage her in the same capacity.

Of course, as at sight of Sally her cousin had known would happen, the whole atmosphere of the arrival of this stranger was changed. Mrs. Chase received Miss Jenney's caller in her own informal, friendly way. The lady introduced herself as Miss Rutherford. Sally took her into the old parlour. She said that she would call Miss Jenney, adding that Miss Jenney was not only her housekeeper for the summer but her friend as well, saying it in the warm tone which vouches for the stability of a proclaimed friendship. Adelaide, lingering out of sight in the hall, heard the fragment of conversation which followed.

"You've been fortunate to have her in your home in any capacity, Mrs. Chase," Miss Rutherford observed. "She is a very remarkable girl, as I well know, after four years of contact with her."

"We have all felt that she is remarkable," Sally answered. "We've become deeply attached to her. Indeed, we're dreading the day which takes her away from us, since of course it must come."

"It will come rather soon, I must warn you, if I have my way," said Miss Rutherford, with a quick smile which showed beautiful teeth. Her face seemed to Sally probably to be habitually grave, but this smile redeemed the impression of a slight austerity of character. "Since you are her friend, I may say to you that her college is still very much interested in Miss Jenney."

"Oh—I think you must be Dr. Mary Rutherford, the president of that college!" Sally exclaimed. It was a quite famous name, and unquestionably it fitted the person before her.

The visitor nodded. "With many last details to look after, in spite of a busy summer on both sides of the Atlantic. . . . I had some difficulty in finding Miss Jenney's present address; she had omitted to send it to us. I'm very glad not to have lost more time in discovering her."

Sally recognized, from past experience with college officials in business matters, the polite urgency of the phrase, and went to summon Jo without further delay. She found her conferring with Norah in the kitchen, looking fresh and efficient in a crisp green linen which was Sally's favourite in Jo's slender wardrobe for morning use. If she had known Dr. Mary Rutherford was coming, her dark hair couldn't have been more smoothly ordered—it was one of Jo's charms that she was never to be discovered looking mussed and ill-kempt, as Adelaide so often was—when there were no young men about. Sally thought sometimes that this personal nicety of Jo's might have been one of Adelaide's special reasons for antagonism; Adelaide wanted to look like that, but wouldn't take the trouble, and hated one who was willing to pay the price for the result.

"My dear, a friend of yours is waiting in the parlour to see you." Sally enjoyed announcing it, though she was experiencing a certain sinking of the heart at the thought of having soon to part with this prize of hers. "Let this go—you mustn't keep her waiting. She's no less a person than Dr. Mary Rutherford."

The look of startled joy which flashed over Jo's face told Sally still more plainly than Doctor Rutherford had already intimated the relation between the two.

"Doctor Mary! Oh, how did she know where to find me?" Jo followed Sally out of the kitchen as one who goes to meet a long-absent friend.

Sally turned with a searching look. "Do you mind her finding you here, Jo?" she asked, for somehow she felt she had to know.

"Oh, not a bit—not the least bit. Why should I? I'm proud of it. And I want her to know you, Mrs. Chase. Won't you come back with me?"

"I should be delighted to see more of Doctor Rutherford, but are you sure you want me at this interview? It's a business interview, Jo—she told me a little about it, and I'm thinking it may be going to take you away from us."

"Oh, no—that can't be!" But Jo had caught at Sally's hand as Sally held it out, and drew her with her.

Adelaide had vanished from the hall as the two passed, but a coat-closet door stood slightly ajar, and Sally, with a wicked impulse following a sure divination, pushed the door sharply shut as she went by. The next instant she remembered that this door had no knob upon the inside, and told herself to be sure not to forget to release the prisoner. Her lovely face was all sparkling with inner mirth as she and Jo reached the parlour door. It really was fun, now and then, to spike one of those mean little guns of her cousin's, which seemed to be always trained on Jo. And she knew that worse than the humiliation of the imprisonment to Adelaide—though that was sure to sting—would be the loss of the chance to overhear a conversation not meant for her ears. How well Sally remembered that as a little girl "Addie" had always been spying upon the other children. Was she never to grow up?

Doctor Rutherford was unquestionably Josephine Jenney's friend. She proved it to Sally beyond doubt by the two outstretched hands she gave the girl, and by the look of hearty pleasure on her own strong, interesting face as she held Jo off to study her.

"My dear, you're quite as nice as I remembered you. I can see that you're probably still better worth our interest and confidence. Whatever you've been doing since you left us, it's matured you."

"I've been teaching in the Cherry Hills School all the year, Doctor Rutherford. And I took the place of the second maid for the summer with Mrs. Chase."

"The housework as a sociological experiment?" questioned Doctor Rutherford gravely.

"Not at all. To earn the money, and as a means of being among people I liked. It was only chance which made me housekeeper here."

"Chance—and ability," amended Sally Chase. "And, presently, we found we must make our housekeeper our personal friend."

"On the principle that you can't keep a good man down?" Again the visitor's smile flashed understanding. "Well, if Josephine Jenney could be kept down by such details of experience, I shouldn't be here to-day to offer her what I am offering. . . . Will you come back to us, my dear, in Miss Elizabeth Sinclair's place—assistant to Professor Huston? You know Miss Sinclair has married quite suddenly! I know of nobody fitter for the work, or I should be engaging her."

"Doctor Rutherford! Surely, I'm not fit at all!"

"No? The data in my note-book and upon the college records would testify to the contrary. Higher honours have seldom been taken than you have won. Besides those—which, after all, count less heavily than do some other considerations—you established yourself as a noteworthy type of student. Your teachers don't forget you. I won't tell you quite all the points in your favour, except that when this position was suddenly made empty, almost my first thought was of you."

"But, Doctor Rutherford, all the teaching experience I've had since my graduation has been this one year at Cherry Hills. It's a—really almost—a country school. To go back to my old college, I'm afraid I should have much more experience."

The keen gray eyes of the woman of affairs were studying Josephine; Sally, looking on, said to herself that to have this woman select one for a vacant place under her own authority was to have a new degree conferred. There was in her manner and words all the quiet assurance of a person who understands precisely what she is doing, and is not accustomed to make errors of judgment.

"In spite of that lack of experience, Miss Jenney, I should like very much to try you in this position. The time is short—you will need to make your decision within a week. I understand that you haven't renewed your contract with this school."

"No, Doctor Rutherford." Jo didn't explain that, and the visitor's lips were touched by a slight smile.

"I took pains to inquire about that before I came to see you. The head of the School Board expressed his regret that they probably couldn't keep you. He said things of you which interested me very much, and confirmed my suspicion that whatever you attempt you put through. I infer that you haven't made plans for the coming year."

"I haven't." Josephine flushed. "There have been reasons why I couldn't make plans till fall."

"I hope you can make them now, however. I shall send you at once an official invitation from the college to take this position. Meanwhile"—the visitor rose—"I want you to keep up a terrible thinking, my dear—the sort of clear thinking which results in action. I hope it will be the action I want. I wish I could stay to talk things over with you more fully. But I have to be back in New York"—she looked at her watch—"in just about the time it will take Peters to get there without flagrantly breaking the speed laws."

She took leave of them without delay, only pausing as she went by a desk bookcase which stood beside the parlour door to point at it and say enthusiastically: "That's a Thomas Shearer, I should judge, and a very fine example. I envy you it, Mrs. Chase. There aren't many of them to be found. We all have to have our hobbies, and old furniture is mine. . . . Good-bye. Josephine Jenney, don't fail me, if you can help it. Remember I want you very much!"

Her rare, flashing smile which, each time one saw it, lighted her face anew with attractiveness, was the last impression they had of her. Then they heard her command: "Back to New York, Peters, and don't forget that deceiving turn at the foot of this street—we've no time to lose." The shining dark car fairly sprang away, and was out of sight before it seemed more than to have left the door.

"Josephine, my congratulations! Such an honour! Of course you will go?"

But Jo was very sober. There was no light of excitement in her face, rather the look of one who studies a difficult problem.

"I don't know, Mrs. Chase."

Sally considered. "Of course," she said, with some hesitation, "you know nothing could make us happier than to keep you with us as long as we may. We shall stay here—possibly—until early winter. I can't imagine getting on without you, here or back in New York. But of course, neither my husband nor I would venture to urge you against such an opportunity as this. I just wanted you to know."

Jo looked at her, and for the first time in her contact with this girl, Sally saw a hint of tears in her eyes. But Jo smiled through them.

"I appreciate that more than I can tell you, Mrs. Chase. Being with you these months has been almost the nicest thing that ever happened to me."

"Really?"

"Really. My life—for some time—hasn't been exactly—easy. This has been—a little breathing space. But what I shall do next isn't clear. As Doctor Rutherford said, I shall have to keep up 'a terrible thinking' about it."

"Jo, run away to-day somewhere to do that thinking, dear. We can get on nicely without you—for a day."

"Oh, may I?"

"Indeed you may. Some things can't be thought out except in solitude."

As they went through the hall together, Sally turned and set the door of the coat closet very slightly ajar.

An hour later, Jo Jenney, sitting on the bank of a stream under tall pines, her hands clasped about her knees, began to try to look further into the future than she had ever dared to look before.

It was two days after this that Adelaide took her departure from Cherry House. Whether the episode of the coat closet hastened the day, Sally didn't know, and didn't attempt to discover. Adelaide was very distant in her manner as she made her farewells, after her huge pile of luggage had been bestowed in the Chases' car by Jimmy O'Grady, who was to drive her into town. But she had a parting shot to fire, which she reserved till the last possible moment.

"I'm not at all sure you'll be interested," she said, quite as though she were not much interested herself. "I'm going to marry Chester Graham—if you happen to know who he is. Probably you don't, since you go out so little except as a minister's wife."

"Of course I'm interested," Sally assured her. "I'm afraid I don't know Mr. Graham, but I certainly do wish you all possible happiness."

"Other people know him—he's the son of the George Parkhurst Grahams who are so very prominent socially—and financially, as well."

Sally thought rapidly, and succeeded in bringing up a faint memory of a fair-haired, rather stout young man who was—why, he must be much, much younger than Adelaide—a mere boy. The name of Graham was undoubtedly well known in the world of business; as to its eminence socially, she wasn't so sure.

"Yes, I think I know who they are," she said, as cordially as possible. "Have they more than one son?"

"Only one, fortunately. He will inherit quite a fortune some day. Meanwhile—he's very charming and very desirable, even though he doesn't happen to have made himself a niche in your memory."

"That's very nice, 'Laide. I hope you'll bring him to see us soon."

"Oh, possibly." Adelaide certainly was carrying it off in her most affectedly languid style, which had always much amused the Chases. "I must be off. You might say good-bye for me to Josephine Jenney—I've been too busy to look her up. I suppose I mustn't leave a tip for her? She probably wouldn't mind—but you would."

Sally didn't answer that. What need? She saw Adelaide into the car, gave Jimmy his directions, and said in her pleasantest voice: "Good-bye, Adelaide. Be sure to let Jimmy take you for all your errands before you send him back." And was conscious of a feeling of intense relief when the car swung round the corner and out of sight. Also she thought she knew, if ever in her life, why the fishwives of history have been reported as breaking now and then into billingsgate!

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*What next! And what to do!*

*Dr. Mary Rutherford, the same splendid, wise, energizing person. Her visit, the short contact with her, like a call to arms. I want to go—I want to stay—I want——*

*I dare not put down what I want. It isn't mine—it can't be mine——*

*Julian. . . .*

*I look at his picture so often—I need to look at it often—to have the sight of it tell me what to do. What a face! A wonderful face. It might have been the face of. . . .*

*Josephine Jenney—you'll do what you must do. There's just one thing clear—Julian.*

---

"Mrs. Chase, would your husband care to see me?"

Gordon Mackay stood in the doorway, hat in hand. Sally Chase looked at him in surprise. Usually he came straight over the lawn to the place where Schuyler was almost invariably to be found. Why, she wondered, should he have become so formal that he must needs inquire as to his welcome?

"Why, of course, Mr. Mackay," she answered cordially. "He's always so glad to see you. He's out in his deck chair, under the beech."

"I thought, possibly, I'd tired or bored him of late. I don't want to do that, yet I have something I'd like to tell him this morning, if I thought him up to a bit of talk."

"He hasn't been quite so well this last fortnight, but I'm sure——" Sally paused. Her eyes were full of trouble. She looked up into the steady eyes which were studying her. Nothing but utter frankness was fair to this man, she felt. So she said slowly: "He does seem to avoid company just now, Mr. Mackay. I think he's very unhappy and discouraged. Possibly the sight of a man like you, so full of life and strength, makes him feel all the weaker and sadder. You must remember what a change for him this illness has made. His life has been so full and rich——"

She couldn't venture to go on, for she had been through a trying scene with Schuyler which had left her shaken. He had had an almost sleepless night, and in the early morning had called her to him to lie crying brokenly in her arms. It had been with the greatest difficulty that she had persuaded him to get out of doors, but she had persisted, because anything seemed better for him than lying in bed where the very walls seemed to stand for the shutting in of his life.

"I know," said Mackay, very gently. "And I have a story to tell him which may divert him for a time from his heavy thoughts. May I go and try to tell it?"

"Indeed, yes. And—if he doesn't seem as friendly and welcoming as you'd wish, be sure it's because he's ill. He has liked you better than almost any man he's known for a long time, Mr. Mackay. If you know that, you won't mind what's really only seeming, will you?"

"Surely not, Mrs. Chase."

She looked after him as he crossed the lawn toward the figure which lay so limply in the deck chair that it seemed hardly alive, and her own heart contracted at sight of the contrast between the two men.



"When I was a sixteen-year-old boy, in Edinburgh," said Gordon Mackay, starting his story as one who starts to pull against the tide, "I began to be interested in the life that went on across the city from my father's home. We lived in Great King Street. If you know Edinburgh, and I'm sure you do, you know that between Great King Street and the Canongate there's a great gulf fixed. I used to go through the streets that led to my father's church, on Sunday morning—those great, stately, quiet streets. The 'odour of sanctity' of a Scottish Sunday pervades the very air. As I went I'd be thinking of what I knew was happening across the city on the other side of Princes Street, beyond the Mound. Then in the afternoon I'd steal away and go over there, fascinated by almost the worst slums to be found on the other side of the Atlantic. I don't know whether making an exhaustive study of those slums was good for a boy of sixteen. I think now I must have gone protected by a sort of armour put upon me on those Sunday mornings while I listened to my father."

Schuyler Chase was motionless in his chair. His head was turned away, the thin line of his half profile presenting itself touchingly to Mackay as he talked. Chase had barely spoken when he came, had let his hand lie lifelessly in Mackay's for an instant and then withdrawn it, and had made a weak apology.

"You'll excuse me, Mackay, if I'm not responsive this morning. I had a bad night."

"I'm sorry. And I'd go away at once, Doctor Chase, if I hadn't something I want very much to tell you. I'll tell it briefly, but I think it might interest you a little, and I want your opinion about it."

So he had proceeded with his tale, without even the sick man's permission, hurrying it, putting in only the high lights—anything, any way, to get it to him, the knowledge that he so strangely needed to have, to make him able to bear his great

trial. If, in a way, it was incomprehensible to the man who was telling the story that what Gordon Mackay did or refused to do could make such an immense difference to Schuyler Chase, the fact that it was so, and that in his hands lay the power to relieve a pressure of torment in another human soul, was quite enough. He had come to do this errand after what might never be told of struggle of his own. That was past, and he had now only to bring the trophy he had won and lay it at this man's feet.

"You've heard my father, Doctor Chase. You know how he can preach. I suppose he's a bigger man in these days than he was then, eighteen years ago. But he had a certain freshness of touch, then, that perhaps his later work may lack. It was a way of getting under men's skins that he can never surpass, no matter how he keeps on developing in power. It seems to me that now he appeals more to older men with more mature understandings. In those days it was the young men who heard him most gladly—he had a tremendous influence upon them. He had it upon me—I worshipped him. As I say, when I stole over to the Canongate and Cowgate on a Sunday afternoon it was as if I went panoplied in my father's armour—the vileness there couldn't get a chance at me. He would have been distressed beyond words if he had known of those visits. He did know of them later and was distressed even then that he hadn't realized what his boy was doing and prevented it. I had no mother, you see; and my father was always deep in the affairs of the great church. Its demands were very heavy."

Chase stirred a little in his chair. He was listening. Men did listen to Gordon Mackay.

"I kept on making those visits all through my years in the University. And by and by, I began to gather little groups together, over in the Canongate, and preach to them—on the streets. I did it in a boyish way, I suppose, but I was carrying to those rough fellows some of my father's most striking presentations of the truth, and that must have been why I got a hearing. After a time I came to feel that though I should never make a great preacher in a great church, like Carmichael Mackay, I could do a work among the common people."

Mackay paused. Perhaps in all his life he had never—nor would ever—set himself a harder task than this one. To tell a simple tale of renouncement, and make it sound like no renouncement but the voluntary selection of the less attractive thing, was labour which cost a price in his own blood.

"I won't make a long story of it. But it will explain to you now why I've decided that I'll go presently to a church in the New York slums which sadly needs me. It's dying for want of a leader. It had one once, a most notable one. Its doors were thronged. This man died, and since then there's been nobody who seemed to know how to carry on. I've the experience of all those years in the Canongate—I seem the logical man for the place. Of course my mind is full of ideas for it—of how I can make the dingy old church thronged again. What I want you to tell me is—is it a worthy ambition?"

At last Schuyler Chase was looking at him. He had turned his head and his deeply shadowed eyes were fixed on Mackay. He was breathing more rapidly, it was evident, less shallowly, than when his visitor had come. He was slow to speak, but when the words did come they were not in the lifeless tone in which he had spoken earlier.

"Of course it's a worthy ambition," he said. "Immensely worthy. And as you say, you've had a remarkable training. Do you really want to do this thing?"

"I want——" said Gordon Mackay, and then he stopped. His eyes lifted to the depths of the great branches of the copper beech above him. He set his teeth hard. Then he got to his feet, shoved his hands into his pockets, took a stride or two about his chair, and finally spoke in a matter-of-fact tone which utterly deceived the man who was listening as if life hung on the words: "Somehow the phrase has been used so much, in solemn tones full of unction, that I hate to use it. And yet I do believe I can say honestly that at least *I want to want*—to do the will of God. Just now, this seems to be His will. I've got to do it, haven't I? Whether I want to or not? Anyhow, I've made up my mind. When I leave Cherry Hills I'm going to this church that asks me. It's settled. I didn't need your counsel, but I did need your approval, really."

He smiled as he looked down at Schuyler Chase. A touch of colour had come into the thin cheeks, a faint smile answered his. He had done his task, and here was that which he must accept as his reward. It was Schuyler's hand extended, his voice saying in a tone which to Mackay's ears spoke an almost life-giving relief from devastating tension: "You have that, Mackay. It's a great thing to do, no doubt of it. And some day, when you've accomplished that, you'll have the sort of pulpit the son of your father should have."

Somehow Mackay got away before the unconscious and unmeant irony of those last words could make him cry out, humanly and brutally, undoing all he had sacrificed himself to do: "But it's in my hands, that pulpit. And I'm throwing it away—*for you!*"

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK

*Saw a strange thing to-night. Late—after midnight—couldn't sleep. Stole out alone. Cherry Square dark except for pale moonlight—village frugally extinguishes street lights when moon is scheduled. Every house dark. Effect curious, as of deep slumber extending even to windows of houses. Passed church—spire ghostly against sky. Passed Manse. When beyond shrubbery saw lower side window lighted. Went slowly—lingered—figure walking up and down, head bent, pipe in mouth, hands in pockets. Stopped, gazing shamelessly.*

*No one about anywhere. Square dead as Mars. Stole close to window. Looked in. . . . Fled away. . . . One doesn't stare at pain—struggle—grief. . .*

*The pipe was out.*

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## XXIII

Josephine Jenney, a letter in her hand, came out of the Cherry Hills post office. On the walk outside she met Gordon Mackay. The evening mail had just come in, and all Cherry Hills was accustomed to go personally to get this last mail of the day. In the small town this meeting of the clans was almost a social function. At least it provided an opportunity for the members of the small community to meet and greet one another, at the same time observing closely what sort of mail the others had received.

Jo's letter was a large square one, with an engraved address in one corner of the envelope. Though it had been expected, the reception of it had notably quickened her pulses.

Mackay stopped her. "Miss Jenney, have you time to spare for a little walk? Out toward the old bridge, if you like that way?"

"I think so, Mr. Mackay."

"Just a minute, then, please, till I run in."

She turned toward the west—it was the shortest way out from the village into the open country. She walked along slowly until Mackay came rapidly up behind her and fell into step. His hand was full of letters, which he was stowing in his pockets.

"I want so much to have a little talk with you. I was just going to the house to ask if you'd take this walk. It's such a pairfect evening as one doesn't often get except in early September."

"It's a wonderful evening. And I meant to walk out into the country anyway, to open this letter."

She held it up, and he could see the engraved address, which was that of a well-known woman's college.

"It looks momentous," he commented, "with that sign and seal. It was your college, wasn't it?"

"Yes. I suppose one never does see the old name without a sense of possession, does one?"

"I believe not. That's why one goes, isn't it? To be followed forever after with memories of the beginnings of a richer life. I hope my being along won't delay the opening of the sort of letter you take out into the country to read?"

"Oh, no. As a matter of fact, I wanted to tell you about it. I have a decision to make, and it must be made to-night, so the morning mail can take the answer. I'd very much like your advice."

"Don't open it," he said, as her finger was about to slit the flap, "till we get to the old bridge. I, too, have something to decide. Perhaps one decision will help the other."

So talking of other things they paced along, a half mile out and down the road, past the last of the houses, till they reached that which everybody in Cherry Hills called "The Old Bridge." It was the remains of one of those covered bridges of bygone days, whose wooden floors and walls once echoed to the clatter of horses' hoofs and the turning of hard-rimmed wheels. It had been long ago abandoned except by a few farmers near by, and the highway curved about it at some distance. But the old bridge itself stood in a most picturesque spot, and at its farther end it opened upon a finer and more far-reaching view than the new road could command.

Passing through the bridge, the two came out into the full glory of the September sunset, which had been hidden for the most part by the trees along the road of the approach. They stood still to look at it, and Mackay involuntarily took off his hat. They were silent for several minutes, while the sight was at its greatest sublimity. Then as the light dimmed slowly into an even more beautiful afterglow, Mackay said slowly:

"Somehow I'm glad we saw that together. Heavens like those always make me think of those lines of Francis Thompson. I imagine you know them:

""Not where the wheeling systems darken  
And our benumbed conceiving soars.  
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,  
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.  
The angels keep their ancient places,—  
Turn but a stone and start a wing!

'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces  
That miss the many splendoured thing."

"Yes, I know them by heart." Jo's eyes were still fixed upon the skies, where rose and amber, purple and emerald, were melting into deepest blue and indigo as the coming twilight submerged the intenser colour as if a dusky veil were being drawn slowly over it.

"Shall we sit on this old log? Or will you?—for I think I'll have to walk about. One can do some things better on one's feet—like making after-dinner speeches—or—standing up against the wall to be shot at."

She looked at him suddenly, to find his eyes fixed upon her. Through the gathering dusk they seemed to be burning, as a glimpse of flame wins through smoke. She turned away from them; something in her breast seemed to leap and fall again. She sat down on the log and clasped her hands about her knees, waiting for she couldn't imagine what.

"I suppose that sounds like an effort to be dramatic. Life *is* dramatic, now and then, isn't it? Somehow I never felt it more so."

"A sky like that does give one a sense of drama," she agreed. "But one has to come back to earth and just be thankful for the moment that has passed."

"Yes. I see you won't let me quote any more *vairse* to you!" He was smiling in the dusk, and his tone became more matter of fact. "I've kept you waiting to open that letter till its too dark for you to see it. I'll make a bit of a fire for you to read by."

"I really suppose I know what's in it. But it's the sort of thing one must be sure of before talking about it."

In two minutes he had the fire. Half a dozen dry sticks, an envelope from his pocket beneath them, and the touch of a match to it, and the small flames flared. Jo opened her letter and scanned it quickly.

"Yes," she said, "it's what Doctor Rutherford said she'd send me—the official notification of a position she offered me when she came to see me a few days ago."

"Doctor Rutherford? President of your college?"

"Yes. And I know I ought to be very proud and happy about it. It's quite a wonderful thing to come to me. She was looking for somebody to fill the place, at almost the last minute, of the assistant to Professor Huston, the head of the history department. Miss Sinclair has married very suddenly. Doctor Rutherford somehow thought of me—I shall never understand just why."

"Are you going to take the position?"

"I don't know, I can't work it out."

"What a masquerade!" he said, in a strange, puzzled tone. "You come here to teach in a country school. You become a maid in a household for the summer, and are promoted to be housekeeper, and so to be friend. And now—a college wants you. . . . Miss Jenney, you stimulate a Scotsman's imagination. He has one, you know, in spite of the traditions of his stoicism."

"I don't doubt it. And I didn't mean to masquerade, exactly." She was stirring the bright embers at her feet into a final glow. Mackay laid another handful of twigs upon them, and again a little blaze illumined both faces. "One rôle led to another. But if I have, for reasons—so have you, Mr. Mackay?"

"No, I'm nothing more than I seem. During the two years I've been in this country I've been looking about for the work I should do—keeping busy at odd jobs like this one in Cherry Hills meantime. Now I think I've found my work. That's what I want to tell you about. But now—you've found yours. . . . There was a time when I thought your work and mine might coincide."

"My work—coincide with yours! Mr. Mackay, what, possibly, can you mean?"

He went off scouting about, found and piled enough small wood to keep the little bonfire going for a considerable time. By now it was nearly dark, for darkness comes on fast on a moonless night in September. In the ruddy flickering light he finally stood still, looking down at Jo, who had watched his movements as if unable to detach herself from them.

"Do you want the whole story? Anyhow, I want to tell it to you."

"Then I want to hear it, of course."

"There were two reasons why I came to Cherry Hills this summer. The first was because it seemed my duty lay here, so I should have come anyway. But the second reason was because—you were here."

She stared up at him in amazement.

"No," he said, smiling a little, "you don't believe that. I admit it probably sounds to you incredible. But it's true. Do you happen to remember going to Doctor Chase's church one day last May?"

She nodded. "I shall never forget that."

"Do you possibly recall that two strangers were shown into the pew after you, and sat next you?"

She considered. "I think so. There always are strangers next one in that church."

"I was one of them. I sat beside you through that hour. When I came into the pew you turned and glanced at me—and I saw your face. When the service was over we were all kept in that pew for some time by a group of people who stopped just outside to greet one another. One doesn't elbow people in church to get by. While we waited you were watching Mrs. Schuyler Chase, at our right. This gave me an excellent chance to watch you. Just as we all moved to go on, a young woman spoke to you from the aisle, and you went along up it, talking with her. You were both speaking in becomingly low tones, but it was easy for me to overhear because I was shamelessly listening."

Jo was looking into the fire now with eyes which seemed to be saying to it: "What can this be that I am hearing? A strange tale!"

Mackay went on, in the same even tones with which he had begun the strange tale.

"The young woman asked you what you were doing in the coming summer. You said that you were going to stay in Cherry Hills, where you had been teaching the past year. She urged you to come somewhere with her, but you shook your head. No, you said, there was a reason why you must remain there during the summer, though you weren't sure of what would happen the coming fall. In this way, you see, I heard your voice, though subdued. It needed only the voice to confirm the impression of the face. I had one or two more chances to get a direct look at you before you finally parted with your acquaintance—I was pretty sure that she was a college classmate, from a phrase or two she used that I've forgotten now. I don't even remember her face. But I went away with yours painted on my memory. Every line of it. I even know that you had on a little black hat with a feather-shaped thing on it made of black ribbon. When you turned once or twice rather quickly while we were still in the pew, I had to duck to avoid getting the end of it in my eye. The church was crowded, the pew was full. I was very near you."

She laughed outright—and glad of a chance to laugh, for the story seemed to be becoming one with grave issues, and she wanted it to go slowly. "I don't wonder you remember that hat," she admitted. "Many people got my pseudo-feather in their eyes before I finally put it away."

"It was a most becoming hat. I don't know much about them, but I particularly liked that one. I suppose it was because of the face below it. Anyhow, when before the week was out I had the urgent request to preach at Cherry Hills for the summer, while my friend Craigie went to stay with his dying mother, I accepted it. I hadn't intended to spend the summer in the country. The year had been a full one, I knew I needed the two months of comparative rest. Anyhow, I could hardly refuse. And it wasn't till the third Sunday that you came to church."

Jo was smiling a little into the fire. She could never forget that Sunday when she had first heard Gordon Mackay speak.

"After that you came every Sunday, and I ventured to think you began to care to hear the preacher. It was—very difficult—not to make my sermons with one person in mind. You see, you had always the look of listening with your mind as well as with your ears. Any speaker recognizes that look—it stimulates him. But at least I succeeded, I think, in making no sign of caring whether or not you were there. It was, I assure you, an achievement—that!"

"You succeeded," Jo admitted, without looking up. "I mean—succeeded in making no sign."

"I wonder now at my own self-restraint. I've wondered at it all along. Because from the hour I saw you in that church. I've been—potentially—yours."

He said it so quietly, yet with a so unconsciously thrilling deep intonation on that last word, that his hearer turned her head away sharply to hide her face from him in the betraying firelight. For he had dropped upon one knee before the fire, to mend it, and his eyes were again upon her.

"Perhaps you'll wonder how I could feel like that, and try so hard to make no sign. It was because my real future was so unknown before me. I wanted to have something definite to offer you, and everything was particularly indefinite. I had—so far—disappointed my father in his hopes for me. I had reached the point where it seemed to me I couldn't do that any longer. He had a place for me in Edinburgh, and all summer he has been writing me about it, urging it upon me. He will retire before many years, now, and his plan was that if I came back and took this pulpit which wants me—a smaller but still an influential church—the next step would be to succeed him in his church. But I couldn't go back. My three years in America, while they haven't changed my Scottish blood—I don't think even many times three years could ever quite do that to a Scotsman—have convinced me that I want to stay here. It *is* the land of opportunity, no doubt of that. And the opportunity came. . . . At almost the same moment that it came to me—it was gone. And with it went my hope to have something fit for me to offer you, when I did speak. Yet—I can't forbear to tell you about it."

Now Jo turned, her own eyes fiery. "Have you been offered Doctor Chase's pulpit?"

"Virtually. Mr. Pierpont made it very clear that it would be offered, if I would become the supply."

"And you've refused it?"

"I have. Of course I had to refuse it, knowing what I did."

"So it was I who took your chance away from you."

"Yes, it was you! Why not? You wouldn't have had me take it, even for you."

She turned away her head again, and kept it turned in a strange silence. He watched her for a minute, then rose to his feet and strode away into the darkness which was all the blacker for the little oasis of firelight. He was gone for several minutes, and when he came back she was looking straight at him. She too rose and stood leaning against a tree trunk, her hands behind her.

"I took your chance away from you," she repeated. "And such a chance! Why, you could have kept that church filled to overflowing, just as Schuyler Chase filled it. And for a better reason. Because—you have—oh, so much more in you than he ever had!"

"I hope to make a smaller church overflow," he said steadily. "I'm to begin work down there, in the slums, the first of October. Maybe, some day, the slums will begin to recede from it."

"Is that work you want to do? The other was—what you wanted, wasn't it?"

"Of course—it was. But I'm going to want to do this."

"You gave that up for a man you never knew till this summer?"

"I had several times heard him preach—in that way I knew him."

"And it was I who did this to you," she said, for the third time, as if she couldn't get away from the thought.

"You did. I hope you don't regret it."

"Don't you?"

The two pairs of eyes looked steadfastly into each other for a minute, as if they searched for the absolute truth. Then Mackay spoke:

"With one side of me I regret it very much. For perhaps twenty-four hours I was so desperately disappointed I had a terrific fight with myself to give it up. Then, of course, I saw that I couldn't conceivably step up into that position over another man's body and do any kind of worthy work. After that it was easy. When a door closes and locks in your face you only demean yourself by beating upon that door. You look for another door, that's all. And the one that's opening before me leads to a task that challenges my best effort. What really can a man ask more than that?"

"You'll give it your best effort—I know that much about you."

"You really don't know much about me, do you?" A smile touched his grave mouth.

"I think I know—everything about you," said Jo Jenney, her clear gaze again upon the fire.

"Do you? I hope you do. Because then you understand how I feel about this, and how hard it is to tell you that I think you'd better accept this offer from your college. I can see that's just the place for you. The slums are not the place for you. But—I want you to know this. When I've served my term there and feel I've earned the right to look for another sort

of place, I shall come to you and tell you again what I've told you now—if you're still free."

"I may not be free."

His voice was very low as he asked quickly:

"Then it must be that you aren't free now?"

"I'm not, Mr. Mackay."

He was staring at her with a look of sudden and unbearable pain in his eyes, as if she had struck him a blow. She looked at him and saw it, and her own look melted. Her face flamed, she threw back her head and said with a proud gesture:

"I'm not free, because—oh, there's nothing to do but to tell you!"

"Yes, tell me," he said with a smothered breath. "I might have known——"

"I have," said Jo Jenney, low but very clearly, and still with her head up, "a brother in prison."

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## XXIV

Whatever she might have expected from him at this announcement, it was not that he should come at a stride across the space between them and take her hand into his warm grasp. He led her back to the log from which she had risen, and sat down beside her. His silence couldn't be misunderstood. It was not the silence of alienation—not even that of shock.

She fixed her gaze now upon the little fire, and told him the short, tragic story.

"My father and mother are both dead. When I was a child my father was what might be called a rich man. I was brought up in—perhaps I should say—luxury. It lasted till I was sixteen. My brother Julian and I were the only children—he was two years older than I. Suddenly my father lost all his property. It was a great bank failure—he was the president of the bank. My father was—absolutely honourable. He sacrificed everything he had in trying to avert the failure. He died not long afterward, and my mother lived only a year after that. . . . When Julian and I were left alone we had a little to live on—our own private property by gift from an uncle; Father had kept that safe for us. But Julian had been used to having every wish granted. He'd been away at school, living very expensively. He was taken into the office of an old friend of our father's. He was tempted to get some money—somehow—anyhow. He—raised some checks. I was at college, earning my way. For a long time I never guessed. Then—he was found out and—sent to prison."

Mackay's eyes during this recital had been fixed, like Jo's, upon the fire. He hadn't once looked at her. His hands were clasped about his knee, he had the look and the attitude of one not startled but gravely considering. As Jo paused, a little sound of sorry comprehension was all that came from him.

Jo's voice remained steady as, after a minute, she went on. She might almost have been telling the tale of somebody remote from her own life, except that her very self-control told its own tale to the ears that listened.

"His term ends—shortened for good behaviour—this fall. I don't yet know the exact time. We hoped it might end sometime this summer, but that couldn't be. I came to Cherry Hills last year because I could be rather near him. And because I thought that when he—came out—it might be easier for him to come to me here and stay quietly for a while till he got hold of himself. The school here is holding my position open till the last moment. You see, it's been so hard to decide what to do for Julian. He's always been very high-strung—excitable. The whole thing has been very terrible to him, realizing what the disgrace would have meant to Father, if he had lived. I think Julian has suffered—in full—for all he did. So now, you see why it's hard for me to decide about this offer from Doctor Rutherford. It seems as if I mustn't lose a chance like that, and yet I can't give up my plan of being with Julian when he's free. I want to keep him with me a whole year, if I can—I think he needs it. He's not the sort to be left to himself until he's sure of himself."

"You wouldn't keep him idle?"

"No—oh, no. But I think I could get him an outdoor job with some of the farmers about here whose children I know. They're mostly market gardeners, and the work isn't too heavy. Mrs. Chase thinks she and Doctor Chase will stay here through the winter, and she wants me to stay on with them, if I don't go to my college. So there's that alternative. The whole thing is, Mr. Mackay, to do what is best for my brother, isn't it?"

"Yes, I think it is. I can see the problem you have. Do you think your brother would like that sort of work?"

The question cut to the core of Jo's perplexities. She answered him honestly: "No. He likes absorbing interest, excitement, thrills. He won't be contented, I'm afraid. Yet it's the only plan I can think of that will keep him near me for a while, and I'm sure I should do that. If you knew him as I do you'd know why I feel that so deeply."

"I see. . . . Well, I wonder if I couldn't help. Suppose you should let Julian come and live with me, in my bachelor quarters in the city. I could make all kinds of use of him in my work. And there'd be plenty of interest, and very likely a good deal of excitement, not without thrills, first and last."

She turned quickly, her face showing how he had touched her. "Oh, Mr. Mackay—what an amazingly kind offer! But—how could I let you——"

"What am I going to this place for? Not to be of use in every way I can find?"

"Yes—I know you are. Oh, to have Julian with a man like you—what could be better for him? If he would do it! But he would—he's written more than once that he'd let me plan for him—he couldn't do it for himself. If he once saw you——"

"Shall we go to see him together?"

Suddenly it undermined her. She had carried the load so long alone, this unexpected offer of comradeship was like a hand stretched out to her to guide her through the dark. His way of putting it, though matter-of-fact enough, carried with it an assurance of his having been turned from her not a whit by this revelation. If he had been her friend before, he was twice her friend now—there was all that in his tone. Tears were not common with Jo Jenney, she was accustomed to keep a stern grip upon any tendency to self-pity. But now her eyes filled—she put up her handkerchief and dashed the springing hot drops away, smiling as she did so, and saying in a gallant effort at her own gay way:

"Faith, as Norah O'Grady says, ye'll be havin' me upset intoirely. I think it must be the relief of sharing my troubles with somebody."

"I want nothing so much as to share your troubles. This seems to me the logical way to do it. I'll look after Julian, and you'll accept Doctor Rutherford's offer. Meanwhile"—he was silent for a minute, then went on in that matter-of-fact tone of his which Jo was beginning to understand covered something which was by no means matter-of-fact—"we shall keep in close touch. You'll agree to that? Letters, very regularly—you will want to hear all about your brother, you know." She could guess at his smile in the faint light. "And visits, when he and I can manage them. And, on my part, the insistent purpose to bring our lives together—yours and mine. You needn't answer that—I don't want you to take my hope away from me. Just leave me my purpose to work for that. It isn't so much a purpose as—a constraint. I—can do no other, for the thing that's in my hairt."

She stood up, and he rose with her. "We must go," she said. Then added, gently, "You are—a very wonderful friend, Mr. Mackay."

"You accept my friendship, then?"

"Indeed I do. I can't think what I should do without it."

He put out the remains of the fire with half a dozen blows of a thick stick, and stamped the embers into blackness with his foot. Then he and Jo walked away down the road toward the village—but not as they had come. Nothing beyond friendship had actually been offered, nothing received. Yet the stars were bright in the heavens that night.

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK

*The world has turned over!*

*I have it—I have it—whether I ever have it or not!*

*I can bear anything now—do anything—endure anything. Life hasn't cheated me.*

*I can wait—I can work—*

*But I can't write about it.*

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"You mustn't go alone, Bob."

"Oh—Daddy! Just up the road a ways? Mother can't go now, an' Wendy's all saddled. She's just 'bout crazy to have me ride her. It rained all yesterday, you know."

With his sturdy little legs wide apart, Bob faced his father on the hearth rug. The day was cool after yesterday's storm; Schuyler, with the constant chill in his heart, felt chill in all his limbs. He sat hugging the fire, a bowed, tense figure. His small son looked straight as a young oak sapling beside him.

"Up to the cross roads, then—no farther." It was easier for the self-absorbed father to yield than to contest, and he had lost spirit for commands. Bob never was permitted to ride alone; that was Sally's rule. At eight years of age he couldn't be trusted not to forget her cautions and to strike away from the main road into root-treacherous by-paths through the woods, dangerous for Wendy's feet. Trailing Indians was his favourite game; she often played it with him. The woods were a well-nigh irresistible lure.

"Oh, thanks, Daddy!" A tempestuous hug from stout little arms rewarded Schuyler, and then Bob dashed away.

It was less than an hour afterward that a farm wagon brought him back. A big gash on his forehead bleeding profusely showed where his head had struck; he was unconscious. It was Jo Jenney who had seen the wagon rumble in, one man driving and leading Wendy, whose left flank, shoulder, and legs were covered with mud; the other man holding the limp form in his arms. She had run out, and had received Bob and was bringing him in when Sally saw them from an upper window.

Between them they had him in bed before Schuyler sensed that something had happened. Not to let Schuyler know was always Sally's first thought when anything even momentarily frightening had overtaken one of the children. So many things were always happening to children. Like most mothers, she had learned to take bumps and bruises with comparative calmness, even though the doctor had to be sent for to sew up a bad cut or set a "green-stick" fracture. Usually, just as one became really alarmed about them, they sat up and demanded playthings or food.

But this time it was impossible not to be anxious over Bob. Though before the doctor came Sally had controlled the flow of blood with two big pledgets of cotton on either side the gash, the child's continued unconsciousness was not to be viewed lightly. It was not the first time the doughty young Indian warrior had been stunned by a fall or a blow, but always before he had come around quickly. Now he lay as one dead. Jo, with fingers on his pulse, could assure Sally, who held the cotton, that his heart was beating, though she realized that the thready, rapid, irregular pulsations meant severe shock. She had run for hot-water bottles, calling to Norah to get hold of Doctor Morse, the village physician.

"I'm sure he'll be all right, Mrs. Chase," Jo said steadily, noting Sally's pallor under the strain of waiting. The finding of the busy village doctor wasn't always easy, and they had both administered all the first-aid they knew. "My school children were always getting hurt last year. They always came out all right, no matter how serious it seemed for a bit."

"I know." Sally nodded. "Please push that hot-water bag nearer his feet. Are they still cold?"

"They're a little warmer." Jo knew that statement was safe.

It was at this moment that Schuyler looked in at the door of Bob's room. He had noticed from the window Jim O'Grady busily rubbing off Wendy's muddy side. If he had heard the sound of voices he hadn't been roused by them or by the rumble of the wagon. Farm wagons were always driving in, bringing fresh vegetables or milk and eggs. When Bob had been brought in everybody in the house had refrained from outcries, so instinctive and habitual had become the intent to shield the invalid from anything startling or exciting. But the sight of Wendy had recalled Bob to his father's thoughts, and the reluctant permission given by his languid will against his judgment and Sally's rules. He had risen uneasily from his chair, gone out into the hall, and encountering a frightened Mary who had been listening at the foot of the stairs, had demanded with sudden premonition of disaster: "Where's Master Bob, Mary?"

"He's upstairs, Doctor Chase," Mary had murmured. He noted that her eyes were red. He went hurriedly up the stairs, pulling himself by the banisters at a pace that left his unaccustomed lungs breathless. In this state he arrived at the door of Bob's room.

"My God!—What's the matter!"

Both women looked up reassuringly, but he saw that Sally was deadly pale, that Jo's face was strained in spite of her



faint smile. And that little Bob—why, how still the small figure lay under the heaped blankets! Schuyler dragged himself to the foot of the bed, and saw the ashen face, almost as colourless as Sally's cotton rolls above it. With a groan he sank upon the bed, his own face drained of blood, even as theirs.

"We think he's all right," Jo whispered, as she saw how the sight of the shock to Bob's father had unnerved Sally, whose hands were trembling as she pressed the cotton close. "We expect the doctor every minute."

"Please go back downstairs, dear," Sally now urged under her breath, alarmed for her husband's own condition at this crisis.

He shook his head. "God, no!"

They waited for a seemingly interminable half hour, and then the chug of Doctor Morse's old car was heard, and Norah's eager voice—"This way—come right up, Doctor. An' them eatin' their hearts out with fear for the little dear."

The doctor was self-contained, like all doctors, but they couldn't be sure that he wasn't alarmed for his patient. His first act was to turn up Bob's eyelids, comparing the dilated pupils one with the other. After examining the gash, feeling the pulse, and listening to heart and breathing, he again looked at the eyes, as though from their appearance he derived whatever anxiety he felt.

"We'll sew up the cut," he said at last brusquely, and turned to his battered old instrument-bag.

"Doctor, what——" It was all Schuyler's lips could do to form so much of the inevitable question.

"Can't tell yet. Children stand a lot of bumping. Just got to keep him quiet and warm—and wait."

And wait. That was what it soon resolved itself into. The jagged cut was sewed up expertly—the country doctor can do that sort of thing quite as well as his city brother. A hypodermic went into Bob's circulation, after which his pulse steadied a little and grew a trifle stronger. But the unconsciousness continued. It was hard to watch and be unafraid.

After two hours of it Schuyler stumbled downstairs to the telephone and called up Richard Fiske. When he arrived the situation hadn't changed. Doctor Morse had gone to another critical case, promising to return soon. Sally and Schuyler sat on opposite sides of the bed. Jo had gone downstairs to brace Mary, who insisted on crying, and whose effect on small Barbara was to make her tearful, too.

Fiske looked the situation over, examining Bob with thoroughness, while his parents watched. Then he beckoned them outside the door across the hall into Sally's room.

"Now see here," he said, in his quiet, calming way, "you're both scared to death, and that's perfectly natural. The youngster's had a bad blow, but Miss Jenney told me downstairs that Morse found no evidence of depression of the skull. Morse is all right—he's a good fellow, and clever. The concussion would put Bob to sleep, probably, for quite a while. I think he'll rally and wake up in good shape. Meanwhile, you've got to keep your heads and be patient, though I know every ten minutes will seem a day. I'll stay up here, if you like."

If they liked! It was the greatest comfort to have him, and they needed him, for little Bob didn't wake that day, nor the next—nor even the next. Richard Fiske and James Morse grew more and more anxious over the long delay, though they assured each other and the parents that they could find no reason not to expect the child to open his eyes at any minute. He just didn't, and the strain increased with every hour.

"But Schuyler's wonderful!" Sally said to Richard in one of the infrequent minutes they had together. She herself had acquired a rigid self-command; she seemed to be going on automatically, and he had no doubt she would continue in the same controlled way till the issue was clear, one way or the other.

"He is rather wonderful," Fiske admitted, though privately he thought Sally more so, after a man's way of thinking. "I shouldn't have expected him to show up so well, in his condition. He would have every right to go to pieces, weak as he is."

"I'm frightened for the strain on him, but it's no use trying to get him away."

"Not a bit of use. What father worth the name, sick or well, would go away? It won't hurt him as much as staying outside would, especially if——"

That last phrase had slipped unawares from his lips. It was the first admission he had made that there might be any "if" about the case. It sent Sally flying back into the room she had left but five minutes before to see if any slightest change

had taken place. Fiske followed her, cursing his momentary lapse.

"His colour seems a little better," he said. Then his eyes went to Schuyler. Lips set, profile like a beautiful, attenuated cameo, the father sat with gaze fixed on his son's face. There could be no doubt that Schuyler, in this intense absorption in another life, had at last forgotten to be anxious about his own.

It was at midnight that night that Bob, suddenly and without distinguishable preliminary signs, opened his long-lashed brown eyes and fixed them upon his father's face. Sally was close beside her husband, her hand in his, but it was Schuyler who received that first conscious look. Except for the bandages about his head, and the only slightly wasted lines of his usually round face, it was precisely as if Bob had wakened from a night's sleep.

"Hullo, Daddy," said a small but natural voice.

Sally's head went down upon Schuyler's shoulder—she couldn't have spoken without a sob to save her life. But somehow Schuyler managed it. On the other side of the bed Richard Fiske, himself trying to overcome the constriction in his throat, acknowledged to himself that Bob's father could still play up at such a moment as a father should.

"Hullo, Bob, old man," returned Schuyler Chase, and smiled into the child's eyes. His thin hands were clenched convulsively, but his voice was only slightly unsteady.

Fiske got them out of the room then, as fast as possible, for he foresaw the inevitable reaction. He called in Jo Jenney, who had been close at hand through every hour, and with her watched the small patient drop away into sleep, relaxed and babyish in his posture, hand tucked under cheek, his breathing normal.

"Lord, but that was a pull," he whispered, wiping the moisture from his forehead and then drying his wet eyes. Jo nodded, fighting back hot tears of joy, then letting them have their way.

The thoughts of both the watchers were inevitably with the two in the next room. It was easy to visualize them clasped tight in each other's arms, shivering and crying and smiling with the almost intolerable emotion of the relief, the little boyish greeting after the long suspense still sounding in their happy ears. Richard Fiske set his teeth as his imagination ran riot. A hundred times during these three days and nights of endurance had he longed intolerably to take Sally into his own arms and bid her lean on him, who was strong to support her as a man should be, not weak with invalidism and self-pity. All he could do was to take her cold hand in his warm ones and hold it close while he bade her be of good courage. And now—there was the incontestable and increasing knowledge to face that after all Schuyler himself had behaved like a man, and more and more so with each passing hour of waiting. It had been an amazing thing to watch, really. It had also been a beautiful and touching thing—to Jo, especially, who had no gnawing jealousy to fight.

In the early morning Gordon Mackay was at the door to ask about Bob. He had come and gone almost with every hour since he had heard of the struggle for life which was on at Cherry House, anxious not only for the child but for the father and mother. When now he saw Jo's radiant face a look of strong relief broke over his own.

"You don't need to tell me——"

"Oh, but I want to tell you! He's absolutely himself. Weak, of course, but jolly little Bob all over. Doctor Fiske says a few days in bed, with careful feeding, will make a well boy of him. They're so happy it's a joy just to see them."

"Of course it is. Thank God!—I'd like to see Doctor Chase happy."

"You shall. I'll call him. We can't get him to rest, and Doctor Fiske says we may as well let him work out of the excitement in his own way."

"I've no doubt he's right." He followed her into the old parlour, and stayed her as she would have gone.

"Wait just a minute, please. I like to see you happy, too. It's been a hard time for you, but I know the help you must have been to them. You've no idea how I've wanted to be of use. There seemed to be only one thing I could do—I've done that, with the rest of you."

"I know you have."

They stood smiling at each other, as do they who have watched a grim thing approach, and hover, and then mercifully recede. Or, as they who have seen the waves break over a sinking ship, and then have beheld a lifeboat swing back over the swirling waters and bring those in danger safely to shore. One needs not even to know the names of the ones in peril to rejoice over the deliverance. And when one does know and love those others to whom the rescue is a matter of life and death, the rejoicing is almost as if the agony of suspense had been one's own.

Gordon Mackay took Jo's hand in both his, stood looking at its firm flesh for a moment, then drew it up to press it against his heart. Knowing that an act of this sort doesn't come from a man of his type unless under the pressure of extreme feeling, Jo understood that he was very deeply moved—and she also knew that she herself, in spite of his affection for Bob, was the centre of that reaction to the whole affair. She had been through a trying experience, her face undoubtedly showed the strain of it, his thought was of her because he cared for her most.

"Love and pain," he said. "How inevitably they go together in this world. Yet—who would do without the one for fear of the other?"

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*What a pattern these days have woven! Light and dark, white and scarlet—silver and gold!*

*Blessed little Bob is safe. Lovely Sally Chase can smile again without making me want to cry to look at her. Schuyler Chase—why, Schuyler Chase is strong! And I'm so glad.*

*Norah O'Grady says, beaming: "The prayers I've said for the blissid child—I've nearly worn me beads out, shlippin' thim through me fingers! Don't tell me Mary Mother o' God didn't hear."*

*"I'm not telling you that, dear Mrs. O'Grady. Someone heard—Someone listened. God knows Who."*

*Gordon Mackay—how many prayers did you say—not on beads—on your sturdy knees?*

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## XXVI

"Miss Jenney, will you tell me something I very much want to know?"

"I will if I can, Doctor Chase, of course."

"I think you must know, and you may be the only person who does. Will you sit down, please?"

Jo took the chair on the other side of the fireplace, wondering what knowledge could be in her possession which Doctor Chase wished to obtain from her. His tone was cheerful, his manner that of a man who has a definite object in view, and who is intent upon it with no time to lose. She had not seen him in such fashion since he had come to Cherry Square. And yet she knew—or was very sure—that his eyesight had been failing more rapidly since Bob's accident, as an inevitable result of the tremendous strain upon the father's body, mind, and spirit. Though the little boy was now sitting up in bed among his playthings, even Sally, in her perfect health, still showed the effects of the shock. Schuyler must necessarily have suffered them more devastatingly than she.

"I want to know—if you can tell me, Miss Jenney—whether, in spite of Gordon Mackay's refusal to put himself in line for my—former—pulpit, he would have liked to fill it."

The question, put so unevasively, without preamble or explanation, took Jo unawares. She stared at the questioner for an instant, secure in the confidence that the impaired eyesight, still further obscured by the dark glasses Schuyler always wore, could not keep vigil upon her face. Before she could decide how to reply, or what Mackay himself would wish her to say, Schuyler went on. She realized as he spoke that he did not want to be treated as an invalid or as one who must be considered. He meant to know what she might be able to tell him. This was what, in few words, he made her understand.

"The answer to that is vital to me, Miss Jenney. I want you to let no fears for its effect upon me hold you back from the truth. If you know how Mackay feels, or has felt about it, I beg you to tell me. And don't delay, please. I don't"—he smiled slightly—"seem to bear waiting well."

"Then," Jo plunged in, seeing no other course, "I have reason to know, Doctor Chase, that Mr. Mackay refused the chance to be heard by your congregation with a view to the future, because he felt that he would be doing you an injury."

"That was his only reason for refusing?"

"I think so."

"And you believe that it was a great disappointment to him?"

"Yes. It could hardly help being so."

"Did he tell you he was disappointed?" The questions came fast, and with a wire edge on the tone of them.

She considered for an instant, and determined that since he had demanded frankness, she must give it, both for his own sake and for Mackay's.

"He was forced to admit it, because I was sure of it, and pressed him. You see, Doctor Chase, it was I who had made him realize that it was going to be very hard for you to see him—him especially—take your place. And after he had refused it, I was afraid I oughtn't to have told him what would influence him—as it must—since it meant so much to his future."

"*You* made him realize that it was going to be hard for me to see him take my place? Will you tell me, Miss Jenney, how you could have inferred that?"

It was a close corner, if his pride was to be spared. She saw, nevertheless, that at least a degree of honesty was her only course. He meant to have the truth, for some reason which she couldn't yet guess.

She hesitated. His quick tone compelled her.

"Tell me that, please. Don't cover up anything, if you wish to be kind."

"Doctor Chase"—her eyes were very pitying, if he could have seen them, and her tone was very gentle—"you had a moment of break-down—only a moment—but in that I happened to be coming down the stairs and heard you. Please believe that I could understand, with all my mind and heart, the naturalness of that instant's feeling. I knew you would

overcome it. I know you have overcome it. But for the sake of your health, I felt I must act upon my knowledge of your feeling."

A silence fell, while Schuyler Chase sheltered his face with one slender hand, and Jo sat waiting anxiously for the outcome of this revelation. Had she done him a greater harm than would have come to him if she hadn't tried to spare him in the first place? Would his humiliation at hearing that his weakness had been recognized do him physical and spiritual injury? And yet, somehow, she couldn't help feeling that he had reached a point where he no longer wanted to be spared the truth about himself. She felt in him a change—a decided change—since he had first come groping and alarmed to the door of Bob's room. They had all felt it. He had been stronger in that crisis, shown more self-control, more consideration for them all, than they could have expected of him in his frail state. Even now, before he said a word in answer to her last confession, she had a conviction that he was grappling with himself and meant to win.

Finally he looked up—if it could be called looking—from half-blind, barricaded eyes. At least, she could see the lift of his chin, the determined setting of his lips.

"It seems I owe you much, Miss Jenney," he said. "And I owe Gordon Mackay much more. I think perhaps your intervention saved my reason in an hour when I was on the verge of becoming unbalanced. But—that time is past, I hope. I can see things more clearly, since—the experience we've just been through. Nothing else matters much, since Bob is safe. Certainly not any old ambitions of mine."

She saw his delicately cut lips quiver for an instant, then settle again into lines of firmness.

"But we must somehow undo what you and Mackay have done," he said.

She was startled. "Undo it, Doctor Chase? But you can't. Mr. Mackay's mind is made up. He's a Scotsman—you can't unmake it."

Now he actually smiled a little. "You have a great opinion of the granite will of the Scot, I see. But if he has done one thing for me, at such a personal sacrifice, he'll do another. If I can make him see that I now want a certain thing as much as he had reason before to think I didn't want it, he'll come round, won't he?"

She shook her head. "I don't believe it."

"Don't you? Well, it's my will now that's to be tried out. And since you conspired with him for my good, you must now conspire with me for his."

"I'm becoming afraid of conspiracies. How can any of us know what is best for another? Don't you think, Doctor Chase, that it would be wise to leave this as it's been settled? I'm sure Mr. Mackay is anxious to do this work he's laid out for himself. He will put his heart into it. In time something bigger and better suited to his abilities will come to him—it does to such men. Meanwhile——"

"Meanwhile—I've robbed him of a chance, and his refusal of it hasn't made me richer. It's made me poorer—infinately poorer. I must give it back to him, if I can. Don't you see that? It's the one thing I do see, and I mean to do it. I vowed that, when my little boy lay there so long. Something happened to me then—I can't try to tell you what it was."

"I'm sure of that, Doctor Chase." Jo's tone held a thrill of genuine appreciation in it, such as he had never heard from her before. "But—I don't quite see how you can feel you robbed him, when you couldn't possibly know how he felt about it."

"Couldn't I?" He let a long minute intervene, as if he were trying to decide something of moment. Then, with a deep sigh, as if he were making the ultimate sacrifice of that which had been supremely his, his pride, he said quietly but firmly: "As a matter of fact, Miss Jenney, I knew at the time as well as you did that he must want that pulpit, and want it strongly. When he told me so gallantly of other plans and his interest in them, he didn't deceive me for an instant. But I made myself accept that as the truth, and take the poor relief it gave me. It did, I admit, for the time being, save me from going to pieces. But I felt the shame of it, once I'd recovered from that hysteria—that's what it has to be called, I know. It's what Doctor Fiske calls it, and rightly. And when my little boy—— Oh, everything looks different, doesn't it, when a life one loves is at stake! The cloak of pride and ambition falls away from one, and leaves him naked and shivering, begging God for that life at any price. I don't think I bargained with Him then—that wouldn't have been good enough. But I did promise Him something—and I'm going to keep it."

After the silence that followed upon these strangely humble words, it was Schuyler who broke it. Jo Jenney, looking at him, so worn and weak in his illness and in the prospect of all that faced him, could find no control of her voice. She could only get up and come over to him and lay her warm hand on his thin shoulder. She remembered vividly that it was

the shoulder which had so impressively worn the silken robes of his profession in that pulpit of which he had been speaking, a shoulder covered now by the padded silk robe of a different significance. He looked up, and his tone was less grave.

"I didn't mean all that for heroics, you know."

"I know you didn't." Jo had to find her voice, so she managed it.

"I'm afraid I've been guilty of heroics in the past. It's my one fear now that I shall dramatize this situation, with myself as the chief actor—it would be like me. I had to be taken off the stage, to put an end to my acting, I'm afraid. Consciously or unconsciously all preachers in big places do it. It's more or less legitimate if they're to achieve their ends. But I think I saw myself more vividly than most. I was less real—more in love with my part before people. . . . You see, having begun to make confession I can't stop. It's a relief, in a way—though I didn't expect, when I began, to bother you with so much of it."

Now Jo saw a genuine smile break upon his face—his fine teeth were very white, and the smile was lovely. Her pitiful heart warmed still more to him; here, she felt, was the real man who had been behind the self-arraigned actor all the time. And the part he was playing now was a real one and worth the playing.

"You haven't bothered me. You've made me like and trust you as never before, Doctor Chase. And whatever you want to do, that will ease your mind, I'll try to help in, if I can. I don't think you can change Mr. Mackay's decision—I'm not sure that I want you to. But at least you can do what will give you comfort."

"And him honour. That's what I want. He deserves it. He did what not one man in a thousand would have done, because not one man in a thousand but would have felt himself perfectly justified in taking what was to be offered to somebody, in any case. Why not to him? And with the deposed man showing unreasonable and despicable jealousy——" He broke off, shaking his head. "Acting again," he said, with a whimsical little groan. "Putting on the hair shirt, for your benefit. Oh, I've learned something about myself at last, you see."

He got up slowly, and Jo stood beside him on the hearth rug.

"And I've learned something about you, myself," she said. "But I'm not going to tell you what it is, after all these warnings!"

"No, don't tell me. I should somehow wrest it into a compliment, to wrap myself in."

"Ah, but you should be wrapped. And I'm going to tell you. I have seen brave men, Doctor Chase . . . But none braver than you."

She went away before he could answer. She didn't want to see him even try to refuse the balm of those true words.

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*We've had a day together—a whole day!*

*He came for me in a car—a nice little roadster. We drove and drove—heaven only knows where. Don't think I saw anything on either side of the road. We had luncheon at a little inn up in the hills. Dinner in another—can't even remember how they looked. He said it was a day in which to get acquainted—rock-bottom acquainted. No love-making—no suggestion of it. No talk of the future. Just—the most real and satisfying companionship I've ever known or imagined, in my most perfect thoughts. All day it lasted. The whole drive home, in the evening, was in silence. I can never forget it.*

*Oh, yes—funny things happened. We blew out a tire, and had to wait forever to get it mended, since we hadn't a spare. This annoyed my Scotsman very much—he even muttered a word or two he shouldn't—which made him seem nice and human. He left his hat behind at the second inn, and neither of us noticed it till we were miles away. I lost a little fox fur piece out of the car, and we didn't find it, though we put up notices in the post offices in the nearest little towns, and a notice in two newspapers. Altogether, I fear our heads were in the clouds, in spite of there being, as I've said, nothing sentimental in word or deed during the whole day.*

*But there was—something—indescribable—exquisite—poignant—that needed no words. We were—together. It was*

*as if we had always been together, till a certain time long ago—and had now just got back to each other. We're going to separate again, very soon—but—oh, nothing can ever separate us, after to-day, if we never meet again.*

*. . . After all—I can't quite stay on that plane! . . . Before we go, each to our work—I must have something to live on. So must you. I haven't a particle of doubt—you want it, too!*



## XXVII

"You don't think it will hurt him, Rich?"

Sally asked the question concernedly, as she always did when there was doubt in her mind as to any move of Schuyler's. Not that her husband had made many moves, or wanted to, in these last months. But now strangely he was bent on what seemed to her a great effort, though she knew little of the details of his plans.

"Hurt him—to go in to a small dinner at Sage Pierpont's? I'm delighted that he wants to go. What if it should tire him, Sally dear? Better to suffer a little set-back than live the drab life he lives now, without a break in the monotony. Let him go."

"He will go, anyway. I've sent in for his dress clothes and he's been trying on his dinner coat. It's—oh, frightfully loose over the back and shoulders. I didn't know how much weight he'd lost till I saw that. And there's no time to have it altered."

"What of it? The pleasure of being among people again, if only for an evening, will fill him out to fit it."

"Rich!" Sally bit her lip. "I want you to admit that Schuy's forgotten himself of late. He's not self-centred now—not as he was, nor as you think him all the time. He spends hours with Bob and Barbara. And now he's deep in some plan with Mr. Pierpont that he won't tell even me about, except the merest outlines. He says he wants me to get the full value of the surprise of it. And yet with it all, Rich—oh, it doesn't mean improvement—not physical improvement. If I could only think that! But his poor eyes——"

"I know. But, Sally, you should be thankful for anything that takes him out of himself for a time. That's why I say give him his head, even though he tires himself out and has to pay for it. He's like—well—he's like a soldier who's going up to the front soon, and has a week's leave beforehand. Let him make the most of it—it will give him something to think about when he's in the trenches—waiting."

"Oh, Rich—a simile like that——"

"It's a true one, my dear—why hesitate to use it? And you must remember that some fighting men come back from the trenches."

She turned away, and he looked pityingly after her. He knew she fully understood how hopeless was Schuyler's case, as far as human knowledge could foresee. And he knew also that nothing could be of the comfort to her in days to come as would the memories of her husband's having advanced bravely to meet his fate. Fiske did admit—he had to, as she had begged him to—that since the shock of Bob's accident Schuyler had seemed to come to himself, to be trying as he hadn't tried before to be master of himself.

Fiske really was deeply curious to know what it was that Schuyler had been planning with Sage Pierpont, in the several conferences the two had had together. Pierpont's first visit, made at Schuyler's request, had by chance coincided with one of Fiske's own. He had seen the important man go into Schuyler's presence with an impassive face, his manner polite but none too warm. He had seen him come out smiling, and if not quite rubbing his hands with satisfaction, at least showing plainly that he was immensely pleased over something. When the dinner invitation had come to Dr. Richard Fiske from Mr. Sage Pierpont a few days later, it had stated that the small affair was given in honour of Dr. Schuyler Chase. Impossible not to wonder a little over that. Schuyler had sent for his chief trustee to suggest a dinner in his own honour? Unthinkable, even to one who had long thought cynically of the ways of public men to get themselves advertised. No, something of more significance than that was on foot. Fiske determined that he would permit no professional engagement, of whatever importance, to detain him from that dinner.

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"Jo, you look simply lovely. I've never seen you in white before—such artful white, my dear!"

"Do you like it, Mrs. Chase? I'm so glad. I knew I must have one or two such frocks to use for college dinners and dances—the faculty do dance, you know, if anybody's good enough to take them out! So I bought this in the twinkling of an eye, yesterday, as I came through town. And it's so nice to christen it on my very last evening with you, and at this dinner for Doctor Chase."



"Don't mention it's being your last evening, Josephine Jenney." Sally Chase shook her head with a gesture of keen regret. "What we are to do without you——"

"But we're going to be very gay to-night, aren't we? And here's Doctor Chase, looking like a *beau cavalier*! It's such fun for us all to be so festive, after having lived in fustian, so to speak, all summer."

Both young women turned to meet the tall, slim, black-clad figure which had come into the room. Schuyler's shoulders, in the dinner coat, were straighter than usual; his head was up, a smile was on his lips. Except for the black glasses he looked to Sally more like his old self than she had seen him for many months. She knew the excitement sustained him, lent a hint of colour to his pale face, so that he didn't seem the invalid he was. A wave of inconsistent hope—the sudden feeling that a miracle might happen and he might recover after all, if not his eyesight at least his general health—surged into her loyal heart. Anyhow, let her take this evening as a gift of the gods—no, as a gift of the God. Not "let us eat, drink, and be merry for to-morrow we die," as she had been feeling it. "For to-morrow we live" was a better countersign. She would keep it in her heart, and be as gay as Jo had said.

"Yes—away with fustian for to-night!" Schuyler agreed. "If I'd known how getting into a dress-shirt would inspire me with a desire for going out to dinner I'd have worn one under my dressing gown all summer. Where's Mackay? He ought to be here. Sally, you look like an angel in that peach-blow gown. Miss Jenney, hasn't my wife the most beautiful neck and shoulders you ever saw?"

"Oh, hush!" But Sally smiled as Schuyler came over to her and stooped to kiss her. She could feel his eyes straining through the black glasses to see clearly the beauty which the charming dinner gown exquisitely set off.

"She has. You're a picturesque pair, and I'm proud to be in your company to-night. And here's Mr. Mackay—that's his knock, of course."

Gordon Mackay came in, and here was a mild sensation for these people, who had been living the life of recluses for so long. In his London-cut dinner coat, his black tie knotted evenly beneath his aggressively Scotch chin, Mackay was extraordinarily good-looking. At sight of his friends he made them a formal bow, and stood still to survey them, even as they were surveying him.

"All in our best plaidies, eh?" was his comment. "Hoots, an' ye're a braw sight. . . . I hope you had an easier time dressing than I did. I must have been putting on weight since I came to America—I could hardly get into these things. And I'd forgotten how to tie this sort of tie. Is it right, Mrs. Chase?"

"Quite right, and you're very nice. We all flatter ourselves that we're dressed up, and we've undoubtedly somewhere to go. I don't know when I've been so keen about a party. Do let's be off."

"Off we are. Here's your wrap, Mrs. Chase—Doctor Chase wants to put it on you himself. Yes, thanks, this is mine, Mr. Mackay." Jo held out her arms for the soft loose coat which she was making do duty for the evening. Over the top of it she met his smile and his intent look. There was something very exhilarating about having this evening together. After all the walks and talks in the country out of doors, much as both liked and preferred such settings for their growing acquaintance, it was a new and stimulating experience to be wearing sophisticated evening dress in each other's company and to be going to view each other in the candle flame of the rich man's table. Jo's dusky beauty had never seemed so to gleam, Mackay's rugged comeliness so to assert itself, the bearing of both so unobtrusively to proclaim that here was to be found no new social situation for either. Sally, glancing from one to the other, said to herself that they were a really splendid pair, and that whatever other guests they were to meet that evening, none would be likely more to challenge the interest of all. With the exception of Schuyler himself—for she must except him. She foresaw that he would be not only the guest of honour in fact, he would be the figure which should appeal to the imagination of all who knew his history. There would be none there who didn't know it, she was confident.

The swift drive to the city, slowing gradually as they came into the more crowded streets, was soon over. The car was at the door of the imposing apartment house in the exclusive district in which the Sage Pierponts could feel themselves only appropriately housed. The party was in the private lift, was being shown out of it by an attentive servant, was presently being welcomed by Pierpont in his most expansive manner. Clearly, from the first, he was taking tremendous satisfaction in making a great occasion of it. By his side stood his wife, a tiny figure, gorgeously dressed and pleasantly smiling, but quite overshadowed by her husband.

"Here we are—here we are! Delighted to see you! Mrs. Chase, may I say you're looking marvellous to-night? That colour is my favourite. . . . Miss Jenney—my eyes are positively blinded—youth and beauty always have that effect upon

them, but never more devastatingly than this evening. . . . Doctor Chase, this is an extraordinary pleasure—and I hope with all my heart we sha'n't tire you too much—we sha'n't permit ourselves to do so. . . . Mr. Mackay"—his sharp eyes dwelt with unconcealed gratification upon the punctiliousness of this especial guest's attire, which somehow he hadn't quite ventured to expect—"we consider ourselves fortunate to have you with us—indeed we do."

He proceeded to present the other occupants of the room, such as required presenting, to this group who accompanied the guest of honour. There were six of the most prominent men in Schuyler's church—if it could still be called his, as it technically could. Their wives were there—a daughter or two, some younger men who had deeply admired Schuyler in his hey-day—twenty-four in all.

When it was possible Pierpont took Schuyler aside. "Just in," he whispered. "I've sent a trusty messenger, since it was out of the question for me to be in two places at once. May not be here at the beginning, but, I'm positive, in time for your purpose. Don't be anxious, will you?—it would be so bad for you."

Schuyler winced at this last phrase, but he put aside as negligible this second untactful if not intentional stab at his own incapacities. His will was set on the thing he had to accomplish. Literally to him for the time being nothing else mattered.

Presently they went out to dinner. It was such a dinner as the Pierponts of this world order, thoroughly enjoying their power to offer to their guests nothing but the choicest and most costly of food, served upon a table whose appointments and decorations are of themselves a display of wealth. Schuyler and Sally Chase had often before dined here, but they noted to-night a lavishness of entertainment which suggested that Pierpont was attempting to outdo himself.

Schuyler found himself glancing appraisingly at Gordon Mackay. "Will this dazzle him—unsettle him? I hope so—for his own good. Yet—somehow I wonder why I once thought it so important to be in this rich man's good graces!"

The thought steadied him. He felt, for the first time in the years he had known him, independent of Pierpont. Though he was conspiring with him, at the same time he was nearer to despising him. He realized that this was no mood for a conspirator, and shrugged his thin shoulders, smiling whimsically to himself. There could be no questioning of his own purpose, of that he was sure. If ever he had been whole-heartedly attempting to do the big and generous thing, it was now. And if he knew his new self, he was not "dramatizing the situation," as he had confessed to Jo Jenney he had feared he might do, more than was necessary to carry his point. Certainly, as through the fog of his own vision he had viewed himself in his own mirror, while dressing that night, he had looked to himself a sorry figure. Could he dominate the scene, as once he could have been sure of doing? If he could, he understood that it would be partly through that very sorriness.

The dinner proceeded. It was noted by the guests that at Pierpont's right there remained an empty chair, and it remained empty while elaborate courses came and went. No explanation was given of the failure of this belated guest to arrive. But Schuyler Chase often glanced toward that chair—it seemed to him to denote a great and disturbing gap in his plans and their possible handicap if it were not soon filled.

"We're not going to permit the ladies to leave us yet," declared the host, smiling broadly as the table was finally cleared of all but its decorations. "I've set my heart on a little speechmaking, and I've appointed myself a sort of impromptu toastmaster—if a thing can be impromptu which has been thought of beforehand. First of all, I'm going to propose a toast to our beloved friend and minister, Dr. Schuyler Chase, whom we are wishing to honour to-night."

He went on speaking for some time, holding his glass suspended in the air—a priceless little glass filled with a wine which his guests understood was priceless also, as such wines are rated. His praise of Doctor Chase was extreme and so nearly fulsome that its subject felt himself for once thankful to be behind the dark glasses which were a screen for his eyes, and wishing ardently that the glasses might temporarily be enlarged to cover his whole face. What had happened to him, he wondered, that such words—he had heard their like many times before in his public career—could now seem to him so empty and so untrue? What had he been before, that he could have enjoyed such panegyrics—for unquestionably he had enjoyed them, and had with modest deprecation of manner accepted them. Now he sat waiting impatiently for their end, longing to be upon his feet ignoring that introductory speech and proceeding eagerly to his task. And at last it ended, with a terrific flourish of rhetoric, and the company was rising to its feet.

Sally, rising to hers, looked across the table at her husband and saw such an expression upon his face as she never had seen there before at such a moment. She, too, had hated the too adulatory speech—from the man who had been obviously not reluctant to see the subject of it down and out. But to see that Schuyler hated it—who had never before shown, even in this veiled way which perhaps only she could read, distaste for any praise of himself or his works—her heart beat not only pitifully but triumphantly as she watched him. What would he say in answer to it? She was suddenly as sure as she

could be that he would be equal to disowning it in a way so gracious yet so skilful that he would actually deserve all that and more as he never had before!

It was at this moment, just as the toast was drunk and the guests took their seats again, that two figures appeared in the wide doorway of the room. Pierpont, who had been watching that doorway even through his own speechmaking, rose again and hurried toward them. One was that of his butler, the other that of the belated guest who was now being ushered in, according to the master's orders: "At any minute, no matter what's going on—only the quicker the better, Downs."

Gordon Mackay, his gaze shifting from Schuyler whom he was expecting to rise and reply, and who instead was sitting still and eagerly trying to watch the arrival, turned his own glance toward the advancing figure. Staring amazedly at it, he started up in his seat. Then he pushed his chair aside, and was off down the long room after his host. The guests turned of one accord to see what was the interruption which could delay the guest of honour in replying to a toast to himself. They beheld Mackay greeting and being greeted by an imposing-looking man with a rugged, weather-reddened face, heavy iron-gray hair, and a strong Scottish accent, wearing the gray tweeds in which he had travelled.

"Father!"

"Gordie, lad, it's a peety I should distairb ye and your friends at your feasting. But a faither will not be waiting outside when his son's within, eh? . . . Mr. Pierpont, we ask your pairdon—and know it's granted."

"Granted? I should say so, Doctor Mackay—when we've cabled for you to be here to-night, and have only been waiting for you—the few of us who knew. For the rest—including your son—it's a delightful surprise. Ladies and gentlemen"—Pierpont could do nothing on this occasion without a flourish—"allow me the honour and pleasure of presenting to you Dr. Carmichael Mackay of Edinburgh."

They greeted him with a friendly round of applause, genuinely interested in this distinguished stranger, who included them all in his bow of acknowledgment. He sat down in the empty place, waved aside all offer of food with the statement that he had been eating his way across the Atlantic, and could take no more. His steel-blue eyes seemed to see everything. A personality indeed was Doctor Mackay. For a little there might have been nobody else in the room to look at, so attractively dominant was the mere presence of this more than middle-aged Scotsman. Everybody faced toward him, intent upon him.

Gordon Mackay's place was opposite that of his father. Those who before had thought him self-contained, now saw that he had much ado to contain himself with joy. As for the elder man, though he paid courteous attention to every word said to him, and played his part with due heed to propriety, it was evident that there was no one really present for him except his son.

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## XXVIII

"It was a peety to distairb the proceedings at this point," said Dr. Carmichael Mackay again to his host. "I remember as I came in ye were all risen to a toast. Should that toast not be responded to?"

"You're right, Doctor Mackay, it should. I was only waiting till we'd calmed down a bit after the excitement and pleasure of your arrival. We had just been toasting Dr. Schuyler Chase, the minister of our—I may say—great church. He has been ill, but by the grace of his physician is allowed to be present to-night, that we may do him honour. I'm delighted that you came in time to hear this master of pulpit oratory respond to my all-too-inadequate words of praise of him. . . . Doctor Chase, will you consider the interruption only an added and fortunate introduction to your reply?"

Schuyler rose from his place at one end of the enormously wide table, beside his hostess. Carmichael Mackay, at the opposite end, fixed upon him the gaze of those piercing steel-blue eyes. Gordon Mackay, forced to give at least a seeming attention, though his thoughts were still upon this astonishing physical nearness of the man dearest to him in the world, looked with a sudden rush of pity upon the slender figure holding itself so unwontedly erect. He had hardly seen Schuyler without his stoop since his illness began. As for Sally Chase, her heart seemed to her to be about to suffocate her. What a difficult, dangerous place it was, she thought, for her poor invalid! If he could only come through the ordeal without injury!

"He's all right," murmured the voice of Richard Fiske in her ear. "Haven't seen him look so competent in months. We're going to hear something."

If Schuyler had needed one more reaction to warn him against an attempt to do this thing in any but the simplest and most direct way, it would have been that from the obnoxious phrase of Sage Pierpont's—"master of pulpit oratory." As if to confound such a characterization of his ability as a public speaker, he began and proceeded in a quiet manner so unassuming and so free of all apparent effort to produce an effect that it of itself did produce an effect—that of extreme surprise upon these people who had been accustomed to his presence in the pulpit. At the first it might have given all but a discerning few the notion that they were listening to a man broken not only in body but in spirit. But as he went on with clear brevity from phase to phase of his subject, it was impossible not to feel that here was one who, for the hour at least, was in a new way rising above anything that he had done in the past. For, unquestionably, the thing which Schuyler Chase was doing was attempting to efface himself and to put forward the qualifications of another for the place which he was about to leave vacant. He was doing it, equally unquestionably, with all the power that was in him to make that other see that here lay his duty, and that Schuyler himself wanted to see him do it. And in the end, he came to addressing Gordon Mackay himself, as man to man, as if there were no others present.

"This is a star-chamber session, Mr. Mackay," he said. "We are all sworn to secrecy—or will be. You shall supply this pulpit for the coming months, and there will be no intimation that the church will call you. But those of us who have heard you preach (and I am one—you didn't know that, did you?) know that you will inevitably be called. This people will recognize the right man when it sees him, and it will offer him this pulpit.

"Yes, I heard you preach, Mackay. Last Sunday, after the service had reached sermon-time, I came into the ante-room of the church in Cherry Square, and shamelessly listened through the door which I set ajar by a crack. Not even my wife—who knows everything about me—knows this. As I listened I became convinced that all I had heard from others about you was true. To put it in a plain phrase—you can preach, Gordon Mackay, son of your father!

"I know that for the present you have set your will upon a special work, in a much humbler place. I honour that plan of yours, and your intention to carry it out. I know that the Scotsman has a fearful reputation for never changing when he has set his will and his purpose upon a thing. I can only hope that when, though he has set his will and his purpose upon that thing, he can be believed not yet to have set his heart, that heart can be moved to change his plan, as the rudder the ship. I said to a Scotsman once: 'The men of your nationality are popularly conceived to be like the granite of Scotland's hills—hard and unyielding. I've often wondered what there might be underneath the granite of the Scotsman's will.' He answered; 'The fires of his heart.' Mackay—to change the metaphor—I'm counting on the fires burning in your heart to light the fire of your influence as it will burn in the pulpit of this church—a flame which rising from such a hill cannot be hid."

Then quickly, as if he feared that "oratory"—though he was speaking so restrainedly—would after all creep into his method, he turned to the elder Scotsman. "Doctor Mackay," he said, "can you tell your son that you would like to see him in this place? I'm counting on that, you know. I think he must care very much to do what you would want him to do."

Across the table Gordon Mackay's eyes met his father's. In those of the younger man showed the others knew not what of deep feeling, which no Scottish blood could wholly conceal. In those of the elder, though they were glowing brightly, could be discovered a sterner control. His lips throughout Schuyler's speech had been tightly compressed; his firm chin, of which his son's was a replica, seemed to thrust itself farther and farther forward. "Scotch granite," he looked, and yet no man or woman there could doubt but that the fires were burning underneath.

At this putting of the question directly to himself he was silent for a long minute. Then, half rising, he said, with extreme simplicity: "It is a matter which no one but my son can decide. He knows perfectly that I wish to see him do his duty, wherever it may lead him. More than that I canna' say to influence him." And he sat down again.

Schuyler said: "I rest my case, Mackay," smiled at him, and took his seat. A hush followed during which it seemed that no one adequately breathed—unless it was Doctor Mackay, whose unconscious deep respirations could be recognized by those nearest him. Then slowly the younger Mackay rose. He looked for an instant at Jo Jenney, who sat beside his father. Then he turned to Schuyler Chase, to whom he spoke. But again and again, as he made his reply to Schuyler's appeal, his eyes returned to rest upon that rugged Scottish face, as if, no matter what courtesy demanded, or who else was listening, it was to Carmichael Mackay that he spoke.

"I can only tell you something that happened to me last night," he said. He seemed to forget or ignore what might naturally be expected to introduce whatever he was to say—appreciation of Doctor Chase's speech, acknowledgment of the honour done him—all those polite and well-nigh useless preliminaries which pave the way for the real words to come. Instead, he plunged into the answer to the grave question which had been put to him.

"I had a classmate in the Edinburgh schools, James Macpherson. He was a wonderful lad, and we were great friends. Even in his youth, Jamie had a burning and consuming passion to be of sairvice. When he was graduated from the University, he went almost at once as a missionary to South Africa. I had letters from him off and on for years. When the Great War came on he was back on leave in Edinburgh, and we managed to get into the same regiment. We both came through somehow, though he was left with a wound which made trouble for him later. But he would go back to his post. In hospital he'd told me, hour after hour, stories of his work. His hairt was in it, as never man's hairt that I have seen.

"A year ago he became so ill he could hardly keep on, but he would stay where he was. He spent his time trying to find somebody who would carry on there, if only for a while, till a certain crisis he felt was coming should be past. I didn't know of this. I hadn't heard from him for a long while, until just yesterday when I had a long letter from his wife. From that I learned that previous letters telling me of his condition had miscarried. I had changed my address more than once during the year—the letters hadn't been forwarded. Janet Macpherson had brought Jamie back to Scotland to die. . . . But he hadn't been able to give it up that he should find another man to take his place at his South African station. He was praying with every breath that before he went he should have the joy of knowing that somebody would carry on there. It was only a two-year term he was begging for. At the end of two years a man he knew was planning to go, but couldn't be released from his present task earlier. 'Only for two years,' begged Jamie Macpherson of me. 'Won't you give that much of your life? Gordie, won't you pick up the torch I have to drop, while it's still blazing?'"

Mackay looked down at his plate for an instant. The room was so still that more than those nearest Doctor Mackay could hear the intake of the father's breath.

"That letter had been two months finding me. Meanwhile, I'd agreed to go to a church in this city—in the slums. . . . You know"—here a little smile touched his lips as his eyes again met his father's piercing gaze—"I was always wanting to be in the slums. Last night while I was going over and over the contents of that letter, someone called me on the telephone to say that in the early morning that old church where I was to go had burned down. Rebuilding it couldn't be thought of. . . . Such coincidences in a man's life don't happen. . . . Last night at midnight I sent a cable to Edinburgh to tell Jamie Macpherson I would go to South Africa for the two years. This noon I had the answer from his wife. '*Cable reached Jamie hour before passing.*'"

He sat down, and his lowered eyes refused to meet those of the silent, moved people about him who were watching him. A strong colour glowed in his face, and—as if it were a reflection—in that of Jo Jenney, opposite him. Her eyes were twin lights, brilliant, dazzling.

Nobody stirred—not even Sage Pierpont. Down Schuyler Chase's thin cheek a tear was rolling. Sally was choking back the impulse to cry out to Gordon Mackay: "You're splendid!" Dr. Richard Fiske sat steadily regarding the younger Scotsman, as if here was something new to his experience. Then Carmichael Mackay got to his feet.

"I have been ambeetious for my son," he said. "I cam' across just now, a fortnight in advance of an engagement I had

made to lecture in this country, to add my influence to the effort Doctor Chase was intending to make to-night to persuade Gordon to accept this opportunity to serve a great church. Doctor Chase is right—the Scots are stubborn. When we set our wills we canna' change them easily. But he is also right—I admeet it—that when our hearts become aflame they take charge of our affairs. Gordon's heart has taken charge of his for the sake of Jamie Macpherson, whom I also knew and loved. . . . I can only say that I am proud of this, my son."

As he sat down Gordon's eyes lifted to his, and a look of the deepest understanding passed between them. From that moment the son was like a new man; his face was ablaze with some strange joy.

Sage Pierpont drew a mighty breath. "Well," he said, "it looks as if the thing was settled. I'm terribly sorry—my heart was set on this thing, as Doctor Chase's was—since—" he floundered a little—"since he felt he absolutely couldn't go on himself. But I guess all we can do is to wish Mr. Mackay luck, if he's set on taking all the toughest jobs that come along. If Dr. Carmichael Mackay backs his son like that—well—two Scotch wills—not to mention their hearts. . . ."

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When Gordon Mackay met Schuyler Chase, sometime during the next ten minutes, the guests having risen and general conversation having taken the place of strained silence, he drew him to one side.

"Doctor Chase," he said, "I can never thank you. But not for what you tried to do—for something quite different. I know, to come to the place where you are to-night, you have—you'll let me say it?—'fought with beasts at Ephesus,' as any man in such conditions must. The sight of what the victory in that fight has made you, is what I am so grateful to you for. It's the thing another man can't forget—the memory of it stays with him, as my memory of Jamie Macpherson's bravery stays with me. It's the greatest thing one man can do for another—to give him the sight of a splendid courage like that."

"I don't deserve that, Gordon," said Schuyler Chase, after a minute of silence.

"You do deserve it. I'd fight any man who said you didn't."

The two clasped hands. It was the clasp of men who respect and love each other—and see in each other something deeply to admire.

It was half an hour before Mackay could get a word with Jo Jenney. Meanwhile, he could guess by her face the confusion of her thoughts. The dramatic crisis past—which had taken her out of herself with pride in him—her own problem had come uppermost. Well enough he knew what she must be thinking. It was that he couldn't be quite all things to all men, and that one man must be left out of his plans—one who sorely needed him. He was anxious to reassure her.

"You know," he said, when after careful manœuvring he had got her to himself for a moment, a little apart from the others, in a draped window seat, "this makes no manner of difference in my looking after Julian. I managed to see him to-day. He's wild with excitement over going to South Africa with me. It will be the best possible thing for him, to be cut off for two years from all the old contacts with life as it's lived in this city. In the slums I could have found work for him; in South Africa the work is waiting for him. Hard, interesting work, such as he needs."

"Oh!" She found it difficult to assimilate all in an instant this amazing plan. Then, as she searched his face, she saw in it his confidence that it was a better plan for Julian than they could have made without this intervention of fate—of Providence.

"He'll be my right-hand man; he'll be with me constantly. He'll grow strong physically and mentally—and I believe spiritually—with the demands we shall make upon his manhood."

"It's a rough life— isn't it?"

"He needs a rough life, doesn't he? We shall be able to put enough fineness into it to keep it from hurting him. Why, it will *make* him, Josephine! If you could have seen his face——"

She looked away. "You see—it's impossible for me to keep from thinking of him as my little brother. I want—I know I'm not logical—to shield him from temptation for a while, at least."

"You can't shield him from temptation—and you don't want to. You want to make him strong to meet it. There's only one way to do that—give him a safeguard against it by building up his moral fibre. I thoroughly believe this new experience will do that."

"If it does—it will be because he's with you." She looked at him as one might at a deliverer from trouble.

"Being with me will help, I know. He seems to like me. He said to-day, 'I shouldn't dare to go alone, I feel like something weak just coming out of a shell. But to go with you—it'll be like having an older brother along.' Surely you'll feel that way about it too, Josephine?"

"Yes." She nodded slowly. "Yes, I can trust him with you. It's just that it's hard to get used, all in a minute, to such a great change in plan. For the moment, while you were speaking, an hour ago, telling us about Jamie Macpherson, I forgot everything—even Julian—in my thought of that dying man, and in my pride in you. I was proud of you, Gordon Mackay—and proud that you were my friend. It was a tremendous challenge, and you met it. I should have known you would."

He was silent. Then, as Sage Pierpont, espying him across the room, called genially: "Come, Mackay, we want you back here to settle a point of dispute," he said to Jo, who moved forward with him: "This bit of talk can't end here. When we're back at Cherry House I'm going to arrange it somehow so that we can have an hour together, no matter how late it is. They'll all go fairly early, on Doctor Chase's account. But with you leaving in the morning, I must see you for an hour, whether either of us gets any sleep or not. Are you willing? Because even if you aren't——"

He smiled, with many things behind the smile. She looked up, with a sudden lift of the chin.

"If you didn't insist on that talk, I should," she said. "Why, you're going to South Africa, Gordon Mackay! That's—a million miles away!"

She heard his voice in her ear: "Oh, no, it isn't. I can be nearer you there than here—if——"

"This is what we're discussing, Mackay," boomed the voice of Sage Pierpont. "Just how far is it to the South African post you're going to?"

"The distance covered by a flash of light in the millionth part of a second," answered Gordon Mackay under his breath for only Jo to hear. Then aloud he said, "Have you a map at hand, Mr. Pierpont?"



## XXIX

It was long past midnight in Cherry Square. Returning from the Pierpont dinner and bringing Dr. Carmichael Mackay with them, the group of people had found it hard to separate. They had indeed not separated until they had sat for an hour before the fire at Cherry House, the blaze built by Gordon Mackay in a hurry. His father had been the logical centre of everybody's interest, and Doctor Mackay had seemed to feel himself peculiarly at home among these people, who were all so much of his own sort, strangers though they were.

But at last Sally had insisted on taking Schuyler away to bed, eager though he was to stay and seeming strangely supported against undue fatigue. A room had been offered Doctor Mackay, which he had been constrained to accept.

"I've just one sleeping place over at my quarters," his son had admitted reluctantly. "Father might roll off it—it isn't quite so wide as he is, I'm afraid. But I'll expect him over to breakfast. Nobody else can give him his oatmeal porridge as I can; and I know what he wants with it."

So now the house was quiet. But candle light still burned in the room downstairs where Jo Jenney and Gordon Mackay were to take leave of each other—for two years. In the morning Jo was to leave for her college. There would be little sleep for her, but somehow she didn't care if there were none at all.

Sally Chase smiled back at them as she left them. Mackay had asked her permission to stay another hour, though by the time the last footstep had gone up the stairs the hands of the old clock pointed to half after one in the morning. She shook hands with him at the foot of that staircase; he felt in every look and word of hers how deeply grateful she was to him.

He came back into the parlour and softly closed the door. Then he stood still with his back against it, looking over at Jo. She sat upon an old-fashioned footstool beside the fire, and the light played over her face and hair, and touched the shimmering whiteness of her dress and the ivory whiteness of her shoulders into a ruddiness like that of the summer dawn.

"Sit still, please," he said, as she would have risen. "I want to see you like that. I want to look at you like that till I've burned the picture of you into my brain. I want to take it with me to South Africa."

"South Africa!" She repeated it with a note of wonder. "I can't believe you are going to South Africa—to be gone two years. You know—the thing I really think is—that you will never come back—to stay. Men like you don't stop doing a thing like that."

"Sometimes they do. In this case, as I told you all, there's another chap who has promised and made all his plans to go, after two years. He can't get loose now from the job he's doing. No, I don't think it's a life-work that's waiting for me there. I'm not a Jamie Macpherson—I'm not pretending to be. It's no heroic flinging myself upon the altar I've done. I'm just a sort of relief guard for the time being, to ease Jamie's passage out of this world. But I'll admit I'm keen for the experience—in one way. In another—it takes all my will to go away from you."

"You said"—Jo lifted what was now a glowing face to him—"under your breath you said—brave words about being nearer me there than here. I find it hard to believe them."

"Being nearer you there than here—*if!* I think that's what I said." He came across the floor to stand before her. "*If*—you give me what I want to take with me. Otherwise—well—a million miles is a short distance compared with the distance between us then, if I have to go without that."

"Even if you had my promise to—think about what might be when you came back?"

"Oh, Jo!" There was a big armchair close beside the footstool, and he sat down upon it, leaning forward so that he was very near her, his head bent over hers. If he had had her in his arms then, she couldn't have more surely felt his presence. "Jo, don't put me off. The time is flying. Let me have your promise that you'll marry me when I come back. And then let me have—you, Lassie!—I can't go without both."

She looked into his eyes. "I'm not trying to put you off. I just—do you know what you said about being potentially mine from the beginning? Well—Gordon Mackay—I never meant to own it, but—I'm going to give you this to take with you to South Africa. When you told me about seeing me in the church—Doctor Chase's church—that first Sunday, I didn't let you know that I saw you then at all. But I did. I was conscious of you every instant as you sat there beside me. And when Alice Ingram asked me in the aisle, going out, where I was living, I turned my head so that the answer might come over my shoulder to you. There—what do you think of that perfectly shameless confession?"



"Jo! Listen to me. Answer me! You've refused to marry other men? I know that. I know that pairfectly well."

"Yes. One or two—or three."

"Do you know why you did it?"

"Sure of it!"

"Tell me why. There's only one answer, but I want to hear it."

"I didn't know why at the time," said Jo Jenney, with all manners of lights in her face—enchanting lights to the man who watched her. "Except that they didn't please me. But of course the reason was——"

He said it after all, because he couldn't wait for her to say it.

"—you were waiting for me."

"Yes—Gordon Mackay—you persistent Scotsman."

"Pairsistent, am I? Well, I've heard a lot to-night about that granite will of my countrymen. But I've also heard it acknowledged that the fires burn underneath. Jo, those fires—those pure fires—are flaming to-night. . . ."

That they were flaming she had convincing evidence during the silence which followed on these suddenly breathless words. It would seem that the fires must have been long kept under rigid control, or they could hardly have broken forth so ardently. Yet they did not burn her, instead they warmed and fed her. If she had been cold and hungry, she had not realized how cold and hungry, until she knew the deep joy of feeling another, who had been cold and hungry, too, warmed at her fires, and fed of her abundance.

"Oh, how I shall need that Scotch will I'm supposed to have," he said at last, with his lips against hers, "when after I've tasted of such joy as this I'm denied it again—for two years."

"Would you rather not have had it, then? It's too late to take it back." She breathed it on a sigh.

"Thank God for that! No—if I never had it again, I'd thank God for this hour on my knees."

"So would I. I do."

"We'll do it together. Dearest"—he came down on his knees before her—"let's say our prayers together to-night—and pray Him that after I come back we may say them together all the nights of our lives."

Perhaps it was a wordless prayer. A passionate happiness has few words to speak. Certainly none could have been heard in the silent room, in which the soft crackling of the fire seemed only to intensify the stillness. Gordon Mackay's face was pressed against Jo's breast, his arms were about her, her head was bent on his. His eyes were shut, the eyelids tight together; her eyes were open that she might see—at such close range—the heavy locks so near to her lips.

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FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK

*"Ah, God, what wonderful loves are born of chastity!"*

—Joubert.

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In Schuyler Chase's room another pair kept vigil. The old tension—and one quite new—would permit no sleep for him till nearly dawn. Sally kept him company in his sleeplessness, as she had done so many times in her married life.

"Sally, I failed. . . . But it was meant that I should fail. . . . Anyhow, I can rest now, can't I—from that consuming fear of not having played the man with Gordon Mackay? Or—can't I rest from that? I can't really wipe out my cowardliness by any effort to undo the wrong I did."

"Schuy, you have wiped it out, if it was cowardliness. I think it could better be called illness."

"But if I'd let fate—and Sage Pierpont—have their way, Mackay would have been on the road to be minister of that church. I can't undo it that he isn't."

"Dear, your mind is going round in circles, as it does when you're overtired. It was meant that you should fail to-night, because of Jamie Macpherson. . . . Schuy, I could *see* Jamie Macpherson, waiting for that cable, couldn't you?"

"Oh, Lord, yes! As clearly as if I'd been there, poor fellow. How a man must care about his work and the carrying on, when he can use every ounce of his spent strength to secure a successor. That's what I'd have done from the beginning of this thing, if I'd been a Jamie Macpherson."

The September moonlight was streaming in at the widely opened windows; Sally could see her husband's face almost as clearly as in the candlelight lately extinguished. He lay with one arm under his head, its beautiful profile outlined against the pillow. His eyes were closed. It was the one time of the twenty-four-hour day, that with the disfiguring black glasses gone, he looked to Sally like the Schuyler of old. Her heart contracted with the thought that never again would those eyes look up toward the sun in its splendour of midday—there was to be only dim light for him henceforth—dimmer and dimmer. . . .

She shook herself away from morbidity. Hope that the disease might be arrested was not absolutely gone from her. Richard Fiske had never said positively that there could not by some miracle of science be left to Schuyler some remnant at least of his eyesight, so that the world would not go entirely black for him. Neither had Fiske said that life itself would cease. Until he did say these things Sally would keep on believing, and hoping—and praying. Meanwhile, it was for her always to be her husband's right hand, his eyes, his virtual life. Only she knew what she now meant to him—a thousand times more than when even in his strength he had depended upon her far more than he had recognized. Now, in his weakness, he did somewhat apprehend the truth.

He turned his head toward her, upon his pillow. "Sally, dear—I don't mean to be forever asking you to brace me. I've done a fearful lot of that in the past—and right up to the present. I vow I'm going to try to stand on my own feet, as long as I've feet to stand on. It's come to me rather suddenly, and as if it were quite new, that the thing the doctors say—and the athletes and the rest of the people who talk so much about the psychology of life and health—is true. That we've got to exercise—constantly exercise—our powers to keep them at all. I've been letting myself slip. When I was speaking at that dinner to-night, trying to do the thing simply and without fuss and feathers, I was thinking, too, that if I could only do my work in the pulpit over again, I'd do it differently. I'd care less to be popular and admired, and more to be of real service."

"You have been of real service, Schuy. You could never have held that place if you hadn't. You've been of wonderful service."

He shook his head. "Not as I might have been if I'd been a Jamie Macpherson or a Gordon Mackay. They're the real thing. I——"

She recognized, in spite of this new humility, this honest effort at self-appraisal, the old longing to be reassured, the old eager desire to be commended. But as she looked at him, so frail upon his pillow, she understood him almost as never before. Understood that sainthood is not to be attained upon this earth, even by those who preach of it. That even a distant and occasional approach to perfection is all that can be hoped for of human beings. That the great thing is the caring—the will—the unceasing effort—to be of use, to play a worthy part. There was no question in her mind that such caring was Schuyler's, to a degree intensely augmented by his new realization of his own weaknesses. To her, therefore, he was a better and a bigger man than ever before. And he was a dearer man—no doubt of that.

She put both arms about him, drawing him close. He laid his face against the firm sweet flesh as a child clings to his

mother's breast, and pressed his lips to it. "I'm the real thing in one way, Sally," he murmured. "I've always loved you, but I love you now as I never did before. God only knows what I should do without you."

"You *are* the real thing, dear," she whispered. "And never so real as now."

There was on his lips—and in his heart—a question, which had often been there before. He forebore to ask it. It had to do with Richard Fiske. Not for a moment had Schuyler imagined that Sally his wife had a thought for Richard other than as a dear friend. But he had long ago divined that Fiske was deeply in love with Sally. Schuyler thought he knew beyond a doubt that this man was honourable, that he would never try to win her while she was bound. But afterward, in the time that was coming—Schuyler knew it was coming sooner or later, when she should be left alone—then he was sure Fiske would try. At this moment the thought came to him with a shock, as though he had never entertained it before. He wanted to cry out: "Promise me, Sally! Promise me! You'll be mine always—in life—in death. Nobody else, ever—*ever*."

Instead, he pressed his face deeper, shutting his lips tight against her breast. At least he could make that sacrifice for her. Never to say it—never to bind her by exacted promise, no matter how willingly given. At least he could do this, to prove to himself that he was a man. She had given him her life—her mind, her heart, her partnership with him in every act of his. He owed her everything. At least he could partially pay that debt by leaving her free.

He lifted his face. "Do you love me?" he whispered.

"Schuy! You *know*, dearest!"

Yes, he knew. He could be content with that. His future and hers were in God's hands. Let Him do with them as He would. Schuyler was too weary now—suddenly—to care greatly. He let his tired head sink back into its lovely resting place, and presently went quietly to sleep.

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Still another vigil was kept that night, and this perhaps lasted latest of all. In Richard Fiske's apartment in the city thirty miles away the lights did not go out until nearly dawn. Pacing up and down, his pipe now burning strongly, now going out, to be after an unnoticed interval impatiently relit again, Fiske had it out with himself, as he had had it out fifty times before.

Two faces were before him. That of Schuyler Chase, pale, ill, exalted by the effort of sacrifice, earning his physician's esteem in spite of Fiske's knowledge of past weakness. That of Sally Chase, never more beautiful in its unconscious expression of love and loyalty, never half so adorable in its touchingly worn look. These two images were before this man's eyes as he walked the floor, wrestling with himself. For any other woman than this, he told himself, he could not have done it. Could not have held himself steady with the one stern command which had served him so long, and which must serve him to the end:

"I'm the friend of them *both*."

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(FROM JOSEPHINE JENNEY'S NOTE-BOOK)

*Back at the old college. Installed in position much too big for me, but mean to break my neck trying to fill it. Doctor Rutherford and all the rest who know me gave me welcome so warmly friendly, I'm glad ten times over I came. Have inherited Miss Sinclair's own delightful rooms, next Professor Huston's. Have always admired both women so thoroughly, can hardly believe I'm just where I am.*

*Daily hurried letters from both Gordon and Julian. Both deep in preparations for sailing Wednesday—can't get up here. Can hardly bear not to see them off. Work here very heavy for novice—must stay at it.*

*Never mind.*

*Do mind!*

*Can't bear it. . . . Even colleges have hearts. . . . I'll prove it.*

*Will work like a dog afterwards, to pay up.*



"Doctor Rutherford?"

"Yes, Miss Jenney?"

The college president looked up pleasantly from behind her ordered desk. She presented to this new member of her faculty not only the face of a woman of affairs but that of a good friend. Doctor Rutherford was never too busy to be seen by any one who really needed her.

"I want to ask a tremendous favour."

"Ask it. I can see it's tremendous."

"It's the middle of the week. I'm deep in my class work. And yet I want so much to rush down to New York and see two men sail for South Africa this afternoon, I don't know how not to ask you to let me go. One of these men is my brother, who has been—you know his story—very lately released. The other is the man I'm going to marry in two years—you know that, too. I thought I could let them go without seeing them again, but—Doctor Rutherford——"

"I see, my dear. You haven't the stolid composure of an Indian chief or the iron will of an Italian dictator. Why should we expect it of you? You are a woman and you love these two men. Take the first train down, Miss Jenney. Of course you will explain to the Dean and to Professor Huston. Miss Dayton will see that your classes are looked after."

"I've told them already I was going to ask you. They—— It's a very bad time to spare me."

"Nevertheless you are to be spared."

"Oh, thank you, Dr. Rutherford!"

It's not often done to college presidents. It had to be done to this one, this time. Jo glanced about her—the office was momentarily empty, even of the president's secretary, who had gone to the next room to consult with somebody. Jo came forward, stooped, and laid the breath of a kiss on Doctor Rutherford's broad white forehead. Then she was gone. Behind the closing door the president put her hand to her brow. She understood that only a very intense feeling could have prompted this unusual act from one of her faculty. She smiled—and there was a touch of wistfulness in the smile. To have fifteen hundred pseudo-daughters can't quite be equal to having one real one.

This was how it came about that, a few hours later, at the shore end of a gangway, Jo stood with either hand held fast in those of her "two men." They were really three now, for Dr. Carmichael Mackay was there, too. She looked into the face of her brother Julian—the face of a handsome boy still, though there were lines upon it and shadows under the eyes, which told of hard experience. He was full of excitement. How well she remembered that he was always excited over something. Never young man needed guiding more than he. And he was to be with Gordon Mackay for two critical years. How thankful she was for that!

"Jo, you wonderful girl! There never was a sister like you!"

"Jule! . . . I didn't expect to come. But I had to."

"I should say you did. We tried to plan to get up to see you and surprise you, but we couldn't make it. I thought I couldn't sail without another look at you. I say, Jo—do you know you're a young beauty?"

"Nonsense. I'm just your sister, and you like to look at me."

"You bet I do. And, Jo—I'm crazy over going to Africa—with your Gordon Mackay. He's a peach, Jo, if I do say it to his face. After these three days with him he feels to me like an older brother. Scotty, I call him—he doesn't seem to mind."

Jo looked at "her Gordon Mackay." No doubt that he was hers! His answering look told her that. Never had he seemed to her such a rock of steadfastness as he did at this parting moment. And wonderfully good to look at—she hadn't quite known how good till she saw his face in contrast to her brother's more comely but far less interesting features, if one cared for virility in man's looks rather than for boyish charm.

"Scotty! That's rather nice. I think I'd like to call you that, too," she said.

"Call me what you will, so that you call me it on paper with every South African mail. I'm looking forward to those letters, Jo—I can't tell you how."

"If you're looking forward to them as I am to yours, they'll jump out of the mail bags at each other, as they pass in the Atlantic."

But Julian couldn't let his sister talk to her future husband till he had had a word alone with her. He drew her to one side, with an apologetic glance at the older men.

"Jo, you won't think, seeing me off my head like this over going—that I've forgotten—any of it? My God, Jo—as if I could ever forget!"

"No, dear. I understand."

"If you knew what it is to be free——"

"Yes, Jule—I think I almost do know. I haven't been exactly free—while you——"

"No—I know—bless you! But—you can't possibly feel what being out of that hell means. I don't know how I ever——"

"Don't talk about it, dear. Try to forget. It's a new life for you now. Oh, I'm so happy that you're going with Gordon."

"He's a prince. If you knew what he's done for me already——"

"I can guess."

"I'm glad you're going to marry him. He's a wonder."

There was not much time. The signal for going on board was given, Jo had a train to catch back. She did not mean to take more hours away from her post than were needed barely to accomplish her wish. Gordon said his farewells to his father, holding the strong hand hard and looking steadfastly into the eyes which looked steadfastly back.

"I'm satisfied, laddie. And pleased—well pleased. Don't forget that."

"I'll not forget, Father. I couldn't. It means too much to me."

Gordon came to Jo. His gaze dwelt upon her as Julian kissed her and clung to her like the emotional boy he still was, in spite of his twenty-five years. When he let her go to Mackay there was little time left.

"Josephine," Gordon's hand held hers tightly, his eyes were deep in hers, "in those letters I want every thought, every feeling, *everything of you*."

"You shall have everything, Gordon."

"I'll give you back the same."

"Yes—I know."

He put his hand into an inner breast pocket and drew out something. He put this into Jo's hand and closed her fingers over it tightly.

"It's an old ring I've had since I was a boy—my father's before me. The stone's a cairngorm—there's nothing more essentially Scottish that I could give you. There's our clan insignia inside. Have it made small enough to wear—will you?—and wear it for me? To me it means more than the platinum and diamonds I can't afford to give you—yet."

"It will mean more to me—ever so much more." She peeped at it, and saw its richness and odd beauty; she shut it tight into her palm again. She was glad—so glad—to have it!

"I love you! . . . God keep you safe for me."

It was even harder than she had thought to let them go. It was hard for Carmichael Mackay as well, as she could see by the look on his rugged face—an over-stern look lest he betray his sense of loss.

"Gordie, lad—God keep ye. I'll not forget—you'll not forget——"

"Never, Father. When I come back I'll stop for a real visit with you, in the old places."

It was the father who had his last word, but it was Jo who had his last look. Then Doctor Mackay marched with her down the long dusky spaces of the pier, and put her into her taxicab.

"This I'll say to you, my dear, as I said to him—I'm pleased—well pleased—with Gordie's choice. And he'll be a good husband to you. Like the rest of us he's far from pairfect, he has a good bit of stubbornness in him—ye'll find that out. But

truth and honour are in him—that I know."

"I know, too, Doctor Mackay. . . . I wish you were coming with me."

He shook his head. "From here it's just an easy walk to my quarters. I'm used to my walk every day, to keep my brain clear. I like to go along your American streets and see—what I see. And I'm best alone just now. And so are you. . . . There are times when speech is—deeficult."

Making her way through the crowd in the great spaces of the Grand Central Terminal, she was suddenly clutched by an eager hand. Looking round she saw the smiling ruddy countenance of Norah O'Grady. All in her best—an amusing best to some eyes, but to Jo the garb of a good friend and therefore charming in its efforts to express fitness for travelling. Norah's rush of greeting was heart warming.

"I had to stop ye, Miss Jenney. If ye could know the impty place ye left at Cherry House! I came down to help Mrs. Chase pack her things at the place they lived here in the city, and it's God's kindness that I happened on ye here. Faith, but ye're lookin' wonderful."

"So are you, Mrs. O'Grady. I'm so glad to see you again—I've missed you all so much. I wish I had time to stop and talk an hour with you—I'd love it. My train leaves in six minutes—I came down to see Mr. Mackay and my brother off for South Africa."

"The saints be with thim! I've heard all about that you're goin' to marry Mr. Mackay whin he comes back. Himsilf's the foinest man I ever knew—but none too good for ye, Miss Jenney. My heart! but things have changed since ye told me ye was goin' to be a fascinatin' servant."

The affectionate mirth in the twinkling Irish eyes brought response to Jo's own. "That was a fearful boast, wasn't it?"

"But ye did it. I didn't think ye could, not even such a young lady as ye. Not when ye was onct in a unyform."

"Fate did it—and you, Mrs. O'Grady."

"Fate—an' yer lovely face—an' yer beautiful manners—an' the way ye carried yer head. The uniform c'uldn't stay on such as Miss Jenney."

"You're a sweet flatterer, Mrs. O'Grady. . . . Tell me, how is Doctor Chase?"

"The same—an' not the same. He plays with the children now. Before he used not to see thim, he was thinkin' of his own troubles so intintly. They're good for him—the little dears. An' Mrs. Chase is the angel she always was."

"And always will be. Oh, I wish I didn't have to go, I want so much to hear everything about them. Please give my love to Doctor and Mrs. Chase and the blessed children."

"I'll do that. I told her one day about Miss Jenney's sayin' she meant to be a fascinatin' servant—I wanted to cheer her, she was lookin' so tired an' a bit down-hearted. She laughed that pretty laugh o' hers, an' says she: 'That's just the word for her, Mrs. O'Grady. Next time I see her I'll tell her so. We're all servants, in a way—of somebody,' says she! 'But we're not all fascinatin' ones.' 'It's right ye are,' says I. 'Bein' that's not so aisy.'"

"Mrs. O'Grady, I want to tell you a secret—and then I must run." Jo held tight the plump hand in its cotton glove, and smiled into the loyal blue eyes. She bent to whisper it in the ear under the bright red hair: "*You're one yourself.* . . . Good-bye—and good luck!"

She had to make a dash through the gate and down the long platform, the last of several almost belated passengers. But it had been worth stopping to see and hear Norah O'Grady again. As she sat with a crowd of memories rushing through her mind, in the train bearing her back to her work, she was thinking that a life which brought such contacts as those with the Chases and the Mackays wouldn't after all be quite complete without those with the O'Gradys of this interesting world.

**THE END**

[The end of *Cherry Square* by Grace S. Richmond]