WARNING HILL

JOHN P. MARQUAND

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By

JOHN P. MARQUAND

TORONTO
McCLELLAND AND STEWART
1930

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TO
C. S. M.

WARNING HILL

I

It was a morning in early June a good many years ago when Tommy lay in the long grass by the shore of the Michael place, looking at the sky. There were vines twisting in uneven spirals up the dilapidated pillars of a near-by summer house. Michael's Harbor was sparkling in the sun, and the houses of the town across the mouth of Welcome River looked as white as new. The elms above them were like the trees on deep blue china plates. In the distance to the left, nearer to the ocean, the cliffs and lawns and houses on Warning Hill were very plain to see, larger houses even in those days than the houses of the town; even in those days like the palaces in books.

Surely there was no great reason why Tommy should have remembered this one from all those other mornings when the sky was clear and the sunlight seemed dancing on the wind; of all those other ribbons of mornings which have a way of sinking far into the haze of a beginning. He was only seven years old at the time, yet he remembered, perhaps because there is an intuition which warns even a little boy when all his world is near to change. Tommy was making up poetry as children sometimes will, extemporaneously, unconsciously, to please himself and no one else in the world. His yellow head moved back and forth as he intoned it. His eyes were gray and wide.

> Then I will get a boat with a big sail, a big sail
> And I will sail it and sail it fast
> And the wind will blow it until it goes rush and splash
> Where the waves are on the rocks—

It was here that a shadow fell across Tommy's face and made him silent. Now of course Tommy was horribly embarrassed, for no one had ever found him so before, playing make-believe and speaking into the empty air. His father was standing above him; an immense and towering figure he seemed in those days, and powerful in his godlike strength. His father was dressed in his black-and-white checked suit. His mouth was hidden in the bush of his mustache. He was carrying his walking stick, which was immensely large and heavy, which he poked into the grass as Tommy sat up, waiting for him to speak. Always there was something sad in that memory, such as bides in all illusions, especially in those of the days which one loves best. Why is it that the father myth is always first to go? Of course, Alfred Michael had none of those qualities so hopefully bestowed upon him by a lonely little

boy. Alfred Michael was at best a slender man whose shoulders were stooped and whose eyes were wistful.

Yes, Tommy was horribly embarrassed. He wriggled like a puppy in the grass, but for a while his father said nothing. For a while his father did not even watch him, but at length he spoke, and not as a grown-up might speak at all.

"Go on, Tom," he said. "Don't let me stop you."

Tommy could only wriggle in the grass, and Alfred Michael was silent again, but at length he sighed.

"Poor boy," he said, "you'll bear the burden, too."

"I'm not poor," said Tommy, "and I'm not carrying anything."

"No?" said Alfred Michael, "Well . . . you'll see what I mean some day. The world isn't made for people out of the ordinary running. It's a devilish hard world."

Tommy looked proudly up. His father's checked suit was worn perhaps, but extraordinarily fine. His brown cravat was worn perhaps, but beautifully tied. No wonder the men were glad to have him speak to them at the post office. Not one, not a soul of them, had a tie or a suit like that, or carried a stick to walk.

"In fact," Alfred Michael leaned upon his stick, "every experiment I make only tends to confirm my opinion of the world's extreme hardness."

There was no one else in town who could talk like that. Tommy had heard Elmer, the hired man, say as much.

"Daddy?" said Tommy.

"Yes, my boy," said Alfred Michael.

"You're out of the ordinary, aren't you?"

"Yes, my boy," said Alfred Michael; "there you have the trouble."

"And, Daddy," said Tommy, "you're smarter than anybody else in town, if you want to be, aren't you?"

"Don't use the word 'smart,' " said Alfred Michael.

"Well . . . cleverer then, aren't you?"

"Yes." His father sighed again. "That's the trouble. Now don't ask me why. Little boys mustn't always be inquisitive."

“Well, then,” said Tommy, “I want to be out of the ordinary, too.”

For a moment it seemed to Tommy that his father’s face had the strangest expression, just as though he had been hurt, though of course nothing had hurt him.

“I shouldn’t wonder,” he said, “if you get over that in time. Well, well. . . .”

A step of that decrepit summer house was near. Alfred Michael seated himself upon it. Tommy could see more easily his father’s gold mounted stickpin, and his heavy gold watch chain.

“Tommy?” said Alfred Michael. And again Tommy was aware of the strangest illusion. He could almost think, absurd though it seemed, that his father was lonely.

“Tommy, do you play here always?”

“When mother doesn’t want me,” said Tommy. “And Aunt Sarah doesn’t make me pick up sticks.”

“I used to play here, too,” his father said. “Time flies, but principles are fixed. Tommy, when you play here alone”—his father had the funniest look—“do you ever make believe there is some one playing with you?”

It was an embarrassing question. Tommy’s intuition, if nothing else, told him it was not a thing one talked about, for of course there was some one. When the wind came off the harbor fresh and salt, the long grasses of the uncut lawn would billow gently, exactly as though some one was running on them with a step too light to crush a single blade down to the earth, and there would be a rustling in the unkempt clumps of shrubbery, laid out once in some forgotten plan, precisely as though another little boy were playing in their depths. He was a part of the light and wind, that other little boy, and impalpable as both.

But he was real enough for Tommy, for you can make such things real if you try. Tommy even had a name for him and a good name too, though he did not know it till later. Spurius was what Tommy called that other boy, because Spurius was his right-hand man, as he had been to Horatius in the “Lays of Ancient Rome.”

“Tom,” said Alfred Michael, “you do make believe there is some one. I’ll be willing to bet you do.”

His father was looking at him, waiting for an answer. Yet he could say nothing. Try as he might, there was nothing, of course, to say.

“Well . . . I used to play with some one, too.” Now it was most extraordinary. When his father spoke, he did not seem like a grown-up in the least. “Lord knows I wish I still could. I’d almost like to try. I wonder if he’s anywhere around. Suppose you call him? Shall I?”

Alfred Michael was smiling beneath his bushy brown mustache, for Tommy could see his lips curl up and tremble at the corners.

“Maro!” called Alfred Michael, “Hi, Maro . . . are you there?”

Often and often Tommy remembered that fleeting bit of time, in strange undreamed-of hours . . . the sun that seemed to be dancing on the wind across the unkempt grass, and dancing through the vines of that sagging summer house and making patterns like letters on the floor, and his father sitting on the step, with his walking stick across his knees, listening as though it was not a game at all.

“There,” his father said, “he’s hiding. He’s always hiding now. Maro, confound you, don’t you hear me?”

“His name isn’t Maro,” said Tommy; “it’s Spurius.”

“Is it now?” said Alfred Michael. “Well, that’s a better name . . . spurious as the wild ass’s skin, but he used to be called Maro in my day. I studied Virgil young.” With a sigh Alfred Michael pulled himself up from the summer house steps and stared across the river mouth to the houses of Michael’s Harbor.

“Oh, well,” he said, “there must be shadows of lots of boys playing on this shore. Play with ’em while you can, Tom—but would you rather play right now or walk with me to town?”

Surely he must have known the question was absurd. There was no one like Tommy’s father, as strong, or as perfect in his wisdom. Tommy was up in a moment, trotting by Alfred Michael’s side. Through the long weeds of an ancient gravel walk they went, through the ruins of what once had been a rose garden, where a few flowers, choked and pallid, were still combatting its perennial neglect, past what had once been the carriage house, with its yawning door and broken windows, to the Michael house itself. Immense and square and gray it always seemed to Tommy, perhaps because he still was small. Yet even later, when he could remember better, and life seemed like yesterday and not another life, the weathered cupola and the Doric columns by the porch would give that same impression of gloomy strength.

Alfred Michael closed the front door behind them. It made a rumbling noise along the hall, which echoed back from silences, shadowy even in the

early morning.

"Estelle!" called Alfred Michael. That was Tommy's mother's name. "Tom, where is your mother?"

"She's dusting the books," said Tommy.

"Oh!" said Alfred Michael; "in with the books, eh?" He walked down the hall with Tommy close behind him, raised his hand to the glass knob to the room where the books were kept, and seemed to hesitate before he turned it, as though he had forgotten something and wanted to go back.

"Estelle?" he said. "Oh, there you are."

The book room was upside down. On the worn pine floor were books in crooked heaps, which swept upward and covered the two armchairs by the fireplace in crumbling leather waves. His father's table in the center of the room, generally covered with stray sheets of paper, had been invaded and almost obliterated by these books.

And there was his mother. Tommy remembered her best in times like that. She would always be in a gingham dress as she was that morning, with her head wrapped in a towel, struggling through an eternity of dust, surrounded forever by a chaos which would never be reduced. His mother was on her knees with a duster in her hand. Her mouth was a stubborn line, combatting the weariness of her eyes, offsetting the whiteness of her face, which looked like a face of wax. She was dusting off the tops of the books and was slapping their leaves together. The sun was coming through an open window, and showers of dust particles leaped into the path of the sunlight, and danced like little living things until they dropped away.

His father, as he stood by the open door, had the queerest look, as though something had hurt him again, though of course the idea was silly.

"Good Lord!" he said. "Good Lord, Estelle!"

Tommy's mother looked up, but she did not smile.

"Won't you go out, Alfred?" she said, "you and Tommy both go out."

"Yes," said Alfred Michael, "yes, of course we're going, dear."

"Then don't just stand there," said his mother. "Alfred . . . *please!*"

"Of course not," said Alfred Michael; "we're going, dear. You won't lose my papers on the table?"

“I guess the world wouldn’t end if I did,” said Tommy’s mother. “It wouldn’t if I burned all the papers in the house!”

“We’re going, dear,” said Alfred Michael; “I just came in to ask if I might take Tommy out with me.”

“Where?” Tommy’s mother looked up from the books, very quickly, Tommy thought.

“To my office, dear,” said Alfred Michael. “I want to read my mail, and Tommy likes to go.”

Tommy’s mother sighed. She was looking very, very tired.

“Tommy,” she said, “let me see your hands.”

“They’re clean, Mother,” Tommy said.

“Take him up and wash them, Alfred,” his mother said. “Wash them clean, so he won’t smear the towel.”

“Come, Tom,” said Alfred Michael. They came to the stairs leading to a landing where a tall clock was ticking. “Come, Tom,” his father said, “I’ll help you up.”

He lifted Tommy right into the air. They were up the stairs in no time, and in the dark back hall.

It was the first bathroom ever known in Michael’s Harbor, but even when Tommy was little, that was long ago. It was lighted by a window of orange and violet glass. The zinc-lined bathtub shone vaguely. Peeping over the edge of the wash basin Tommy could see that purple and yellow flowers were glazed upon its surface.

“Daddy,” said Tommy, “Daddy?”

“Yes,” said Alfred Michael.

“Daddy, when you come in here, it’s funny sometimes, isn’t it?”

Alfred Michael made a strange noise, not exactly like a laugh.

“Nearly everything’s funny, Tom,” he said, “depending on how you look at it.”

“No,” said Tommy, “I don’t mean funny that way. I mean it makes me think.”

“Think what, Tom?”

Tommy stared up at Alfred Michael, and his eyes were very round.

“Sad things,” Tommy said.

“The deuce!” said Alfred Michael. “You’ve selected a queer place to be sad in.”

“The deuce,” said Tommy when they reached the hall.

“Here now,” said his father, “only fathers speak like that. They have their reasons sometimes.”

“But Aunt Sarah’s calling us,” said Tommy. “She heard us through the door.”

Aunt Sarah had that propensity. Aunt Sarah was forever stopping you when you had something else to do, and of course you had to go when Aunt Sarah called, because she was very old.

Aunt Sarah was in her room. There was a large dark bed in it and a dark wardrobe and a bureau. Aunt Sarah was sitting in a chair of the same dark wood, which had a bunch of grapes carved high upon its back. A sewing table was in front of her and her stick was propped against it.

“Hey?” said Aunt Sarah. There were funny little lines that ran right down to Aunt Sarah’s lips when she spoke. “What was the boy saying in the bathroom?”

Though Aunt Sarah was deaf, sometimes she exhibited prodigies of hearing.

“He was saying,” Alfred Michael raised his voice, “that it made him think.”

“Yes,” said Aunt Sarah, “my hearing hasn’t wholly gone, though you may pretend it has. Well . . . what does it make him think?”

“Sad things.”

“Hey?” Aunt Sarah cupped her hands behind her ear, and Tommy’s father moved closer to her chair.

“Sad things.”

“Hey?” said Aunt Sarah. “Mad things?”

“Confound it!” Alfred Michael drew in his breath. “No, Aunt Sarah, *sad* things!”

“Ho-ho!” said Aunt Sarah. “Sad things, does he? Well, I should admire to know, all in all, why he shouldn’t be sad.”

"We're going now," said Alfred Michael. "Come, Tom."

"Have you ever done anything not to make him sad?" said Aunt Sarah. "Where's Estelle?"

"Dusting the books," said Alfred Michael.

"Hooks?" said Aunt Sarah. "What hooks, I want to know?"

"Books, Aunt Sarah! I said books."

"Well, what if you did?" said Aunt Sarah. "You needn't take on so about it, Alfred. Not that it makes any difference to me what she does. She comes of working people. She must be used to work."

Alfred Michael's face grew red again, very red, and for a second he did not answer.

"I wonder," he said at length, "exactly how you think it helps things to say that. Can't you ever be fair to her? Can't you ever?"

Aunt Sarah seemed very much pleased. She hummed softly and gave the strings of her lace cap a little tug.

"Ho-ho!" said Aunt Sarah. "All I can say is that if I had married . . . and I had my chances, though I suppose you won't believe it . . . *my* husband wouldn't have been ashamed to have me meet people."

"You don't understand, Aunt Sarah," Alfred Michael moved toward the door as he spoke. "No one wants to know us now."

Aunt Sarah sat up straighter in her chair, and looked as though she did not understand.

"Not want to know us?" she said. "Alfred, are you crazy?"

It all was very strange to Tommy. For no reason he could see, his father began to laugh.

"It isn't your fault if I'm sane. I'll be up again for tea."

Of course his father was very brave. Tommy's heart was warm. Standing right in Aunt Sarah's room, his father had spoken back to her and had looked her in the eye.

"That proves it," said Aunt Sarah. "There's a curse upon the house."

Alfred Michael was at the door, and gently propelled Tommy through it, but as Tommy went, he had a final glimpse of Aunt Sarah, seemingly cheered by the interview, reaching for her sewing.

“Yes,” said Aunt Sarah, “there’s a curse upon the house. Alfred, haven’t you forgotten something? Come back and kiss me, Alfred.”

Once outside Aunt Sarah’s door, it almost seemed to Tommy that his father had forgotten him.

“Confound the women!” Something must have been hurting his father from the way he spoke. “I wish there was a man. Lord! I wish there was a man.”

“Daddy,” said Tommy, “there’s me.”

Suddenly Alfred Michael was on his knees beside him, holding him very tight.

“God bless my soul! Of course there is,” he said.

II

Now why Tommy felt it he could not tell, but he knew it was a time of change. There was a restiveness in the very air about him, and the noises of the trees. It set him to thinking of strange things, of sad things. As they walked past the granite posts of the drive, past which the white macadam road went by to town, his father drew his pipe from his pocket, a grimy curved pipe carved in the shape of a Negro's head. He drew a deep breath, and puffed a heavy cloud of his tobacco smoke which went racing into nothing.

"Ah," he said, "upon my word, look at all the carriages. They must be coming from the city train. Now there's a fine turn-out for you, though personally I wouldn't check the horses quite so high."

It always seemed to Tommy that the road past their house led to an unknown land. Even as early as that, Michael's Harbor was becoming fashionable, not the town itself, but points beyond.

"Look out, Tom!" Tommy's father drew him to the side of the road as he spoke. "By Jove! those horses are drunk on oats!"

A carriage was coming towards them, a marvellous carriage. It was a four-in-hand, though Tommy did not know its name till later. It stood high up from the road. Its body was yellow with red panelling upon it, and the spokes of the wheels made a shining blur. Four bay horses were drawing it, and the harness upon their shining coats shimmered and glittered with silver mountings. Out of the white dust cloud eddying about them they lifted their forefeet as though they heard music. On the seat in front a small gentleman in a mouse-gray suit was driving. The reins he had gathered in a hand which seemed too small to grasp them all, and he was reaching forward to flick the nigh leader with his whip. Yet all the while, despite the rattling of the wheels and the pounding of the hoofs, he had an air of not being interested. You would have thought that he might have done a dozen things besides drive those four horses. Beside him sat a lady dressed in clouds of white, with a filmy veil tied about her hat and streaming cloudily. On the seat behind these sat another lady in black with a child on either side of her. One was a boy of Tommy's age in a blue sailor suit with red anchors sewn upon the sleeves. The other, near enough for Tommy to see more plainly, was a little girl. Behind them were two men, stiff as soldiers, in high shining boots and perfectly brushed silk hats.

“Oh, Daddy!” cried Tommy. “Look!” His father was already looking. His father had lifted his Derby hat. The gentleman in gray nodded jerkily, and gave his whip another flick. Then Tommy saw the little girl watching him. Her hair was down her back like Alice’s in Wonderland. She had a tiny hat with ruffles on it. Suddenly she leaned forward, touching the lady on the seat before her.

“Mamma,” Tommy heard her above the slapping hoof beats and the rattling of the wheels. “Look, Mamma, is he a common little boy!”

The lady in black snatched quickly at her hand.

“Marianne!” she said. “Why, Marianne!”

Then they were gone. The horses, the carriage, everything was only a cloud of dust.

“Daddy,” said Tommy, “what did she mean, calling me a common little boy?”

His father had evidently heard, for he stared after the carriage very strangely.

“The young lady was mistaken, Tom,” he said, “very much mistaken, but she probably meant the old order is changing. Well, so it is.”

There was something in the way he spoke that made Tommy look at him quickly. “You know them?” said Tommy. “You know them, don’t you, Daddy?”

“Yes,” said Alfred Michael, “yes, of course.”

“I guess everybody doesn’t know them. Do you even know their name?”

“Yes.” His father seemed to be thinking of something else. “Their name’s Jellett—and it isn’t such a fine name, either.”

“Daddy, where do they live? Daddy, aren’t you listening?” Tommy’s mind still was full of the glory of that carriage.

“Don’t be a toady, Tom,” his father said. “They live on Warning Hill.”

Tommy turned and looked, as he had often looked before. Before you reached the ocean from Michael’s Harbor, there jutted out a rocky piece of land, guarding the harbor mouth like a sheltering arm. Tommy could see it, looming in the distance, soft in the haze of that summer morning, mysterious and high with houses upon it, like the palaces in books. It was strange how

great distances seemed then. Warning Hill was as far away as the rainbow's end.

"Daddy," said Tommy, "every one who lives there is rich, aren't they—very rich?"

"Yes," said Alfred Michael.

"Richer than we are?"

"Yes—"

They crossed the bridge of Welcome River, where you could see the tide playing with the eel grass beneath, and then they were in the town, upon its brick sidewalk. Here and there a horse was tied at a hitching post, stamping and whisking his tail to keep away the flies. Some men were on the steps by the post office, waiting for the mail. Tommy's father knew them all, and spoke to them, every one.

"Hello, Jim! Hello, Moses! Good morning, Leon." They liked to have him speak to them. You could see they liked it, every one.

"Mornin', Alfred!" they said. "Mornin', Alfred!" And one of them, a very old and shrivelled man with a short white beard that was golden-brown near his mouth, used an expression which Tommy had never heard.

"Mornin', Squire!" he said.

A thin man with a brown face walked slowly down the post office steps.

"Going to take the boy gunning in the fall?" he asked. Tommy's father laughed.

"If he held a gun," he said, "you know it would kick him into the water."

"He could watch you, though," the thin man said, "and that'd teach him something. Now I want to know . . . what's that coming down the street?"

Every one had turned. All along the main street of Michael's Harbor every one was staring. The horses at the hitching posts were pulling backward, snorting in sudden fright at an unfamiliar noise. Down the street of Michael's Harbor a buggy was moving without a horse at all. Its driver was seated stiffly upon its single seat, staring over the dashboard into an empty road. He was holding a rod in his hand, not unlike the tiller of a sailboat. Beneath him, some hidden mechanism was panting mysteriously and exploding.

Tommy's father turned with the rest, though not so quickly. "Mark it well, gentlemen," he said, "there's the period which marks the ending of an epoch." He gave his walking stick a little swirl. "The quiet days are over."

His father's office was in the building of the Summer County Bank. It was a brown wooden building with shingles set in a wavy pattern along the front. A door to the side led up a steep flight of wooden stairs to a hall lighted by ground-glass windows in doors set along it. Upon one door a name was printed. T. JEFFERSON MICHAEL. It was his grandfather's old office. It was very dusty inside. Even the panes of the window, looking out upon the street, were thick with dust. Near the window was a desk of dark wood, of the same wood as the furniture in Aunt Sarah's room at home, and there were two chairs, one before the desk, which you could turn around like a piano stool, and another of yellow wood with a leather cushion on the seat.

Tommy perched himself upon the yellow wooden chair. His father sat down before the desk.

"There's no mail," he said; "no mail, after all."

"Daddy," said Tommy. (In those days he thought of the strangest things.) "Daddy, did there used to be a time when things weren't so old?"

You could see his father did not understand. He looked at Tommy and fumbled with his watch chain.

"What things, Tom?"

"All sorts of things," said Tommy. "Our house and everything."

His father nodded. "Yes," said he, "there was a time, but why?"

"I was just wondering," said Tommy, and then he saw that his father was no longer looking at him as though he were a little boy.

"Are there any things that don't look old when they get old?"

"That don't look old when they get old?" his father repeated. But he was not making fun. "Yes, but not the kind that you can touch and see. Those all grow devilishly shabby."

Of course Tommy did not exactly understand, but there were so many things he did not.

"I'll tell you some things that stay bright. Would you like to have me tell you?"

Oh, there was no one as fine as his father. Surely no one else could speak as well as he, for it seemed to Tommy that his words were like the wind playing in the Michael's Harbor elms, and they lingered like that wind in Tommy's memory. And all the events of that day grouped themselves around them like a pattern.

"A good name's one of them. We've got a good name. A Michael has always lived in Michael's Harbor and no one has had much fault to find with any of them. They may have been foolish, but they've never been unkind. That's something, more than you may think, until you've lived much longer."

All the while his father was speaking, Tommy's mind moved on. He seemed to be back on the road again and there were rumbling wheels and slapping hoofs.

"Lord help me!" his father was laughing softly. "I never thought I'd be a sanctimonious prig. It's your fault, Tom. It's the way all fathers are. But there's another thing I've noticed doesn't tarnish, just one more and the sermon will be over."

Just then there was a knock on the door. It was opened before the knock was finished by a flushed and genial gentleman in a blue serge suit. Tommy knew who he was, because he had been often lately at their house. It was Mr. Cooper, the president of the bank downstairs.

"Excuse me, Alfred," said Mr. Cooper, "I didn't know you had a business caller."

Alfred Michael rose from his swivel chair. As he stood before Mr. Cooper he seemed to Tommy as different from Mr. Cooper as—as what? Tommy never exactly knew.

"You're sure I'm not interrupting?" Mr. Cooper said again.

"I was preaching," said Alfred Michael, "but it can wait."

For some reason, Mr. Cooper thought this was very funny. "Preaching!" he cried. "Don't you believe a word he says, Tommy. You ask him about the scrapes his daddy used to pull him out of, and I'll bet he wishes he had a daddy still."

"For heaven's sake, Joe!" Tommy's father shrugged his shoulders. "Can't we avoid the ant and the grasshopper motif? Do you want to see me about something, or what is it?"

Mr. Cooper did not seem as pleasant as before. “There’s a telegram, Alf,” he said. “It came early, and they left it at the bank. When they told me you’d come in, I thought I’d bring it myself.”

Alfred Michael took the envelope without opening it.

“Very kind of you, Joe!” he said. “Especially when it would have been so easy to send some one else.”

“Oh, it’s no trouble, Alf,” said Cooper. “I’ve always liked to do little things, always have.”

“Get to the point, Joe,” said Tommy’s father suddenly, “and say you came to see what’s in the telegram.”

Of course it was all grown-up talk which Tommy could only understand in snatches. Yet he could feel that something was happening. His father was holding the envelope, turning it softly, but Mr. Cooper’s fingers moved in curious jerks.

“Considering everything,” Mr. Cooper’s voice had grown thick, “you’ve got a nerve to speak to me like that. You may be smarter than I am, but what good has it done you, I want to know? Gad, if you’d only had to work when you were young, you might be something now instead of—of—”

“Instead of what?” said Alfred Michael.

“Instead of a common gambler, if you want to know.”

Alfred Michael took a penknife from his pocket and slit open the envelope in his hand.

“All right,” he said, “it doesn’t make me angry. I’m under no illusions about myself, under none at all.”

Alfred Michael pulled the telegram delicately from the envelope, stepped closer to the window and leaned his elbow on the dark top of the desk. Tommy always remembered one thing. His father read the telegram carefully and folded it again. Then he looked out of the window for a moment at the elms across the street. Then he handed the telegram to Mr. Cooper just as though it was an amusing letter.

“Winter’s come,” said Alfred Michael. “The grasshopper has finished dancing. Look it over, Joe. The whole list has dropped twenty points, and they sell me out to-morrow.”

Mr. Cooper stared for a second, first at Tommy’s father, and then at the paper. “Alf!” he said. “My God, Alf!”

Alfred Michael looked straight at him and his eyes were no longer weary. His face had lines upon it too, crinkly little lines about the eyes.

"Alf, what are you going to do now? Don't you understand?"

"Do?" Tommy's father asked as he played gently with his watch chain.

Mr. Cooper drew a handkerchief from his coat pocket and mopped his forehead.

"You don't know how this hurts me," he began.

"Thanks," answered Alfred Michael. "I'm not asking you for anything."

"I know you're not. Of course not, Alf."

"You didn't," said Alfred Michael, "but you know it now."

For a while when they were alone, Tommy's father stood very still and stared out of the window. When Tommy spoke, he gave a start, though Tommy did not speak loudly. Tommy looked at him round-eyed, with his hands upon the arms of that yellow wooden chair. Something had happened, Tommy knew, though of course he could not tell what.

"Daddy?"

Alfred Michael coughed and gave a tug at his cravat. There still were those wrinkles about his eyes, deeper than they had ever been before.

"Daddy, what's that other thing?"

"Eh?" said Alfred Michael. "What's that?"

"The other thing—the one that doesn't tarnish?"

"God bless my soul!" said Alfred Michael. The wrinkles around his eyes were not so deep. "I'd forgotten about that." He sat himself down again in his swivel chair, pulling carefully at the creases in his trousers.

"How you take a licking is the other thing," he said. "Do you follow me, Tom? It isn't like a chair or a house, because it's an idea, but the paint never comes off you altogether, if you take your licking like a gentleman. Remember that. Try to, will you, Tom?"

Of course Tommy remembered, for it all seemed so very strange. Even when everything shimmered in a white remorseless light, Tommy remembered still—his father leaning forward in his swivel chair by the dark old desk in that dusty office.

“Tom,” Alfred Michael hesitated and drew a deep breath as though he was very tired, though of course he was not tired at all, “that boy—Spurius—that make-believe boy? Was he Spurius Lartius? Do you know the poem?”

Of course Tommy knew it, every one of the rolling verses, that sounded like the waves on the beach by the summer house when the tide was running high.

“Say it, can you, Tom?”

Tommy was glad to say it. Although of course there was no one else in the room, you might almost have thought there was, when he began the lines. You might almost have thought, if you set your mind on it, that some one else was speaking who had come from a long way off.

Then out spake Spurius Lartius,
A Rumnian proud was he:
“Lo, I will stand at thy right hand,
And keep the bridge with thee:”

“Daddy?” Tommy paused and stared. “What’s the matter, Daddy?”

And he had a reason for asking, for Alfred Michael had leaned his elbows on the desk. His face was buried in his hands, and, though he said nothing was the matter, of course there must have been.

III

As Alfred Michael walked home, with Tommy trotting at his side, no one could have guessed that anything was wrong. The sun glanced from his shoes and twinkled from his watch chain. His heels clicked upon the brick walks sharply, and like a period between each click, his stick descended to the ground. He even contrived to hum a tune, as they neared the bridge by Welcome River. Tommy stumbled now and then, because his eyes were not in the direction of his toes. Across the bridge of Welcome River, soft in the haze of the morning, like an arm guarding the harbor mouth, Tommy could see Warning Hill, somehow larger and more beautiful than it had ever been before; and nearer, much nearer, he could see the weathered cupola of his own house, rising solitary above the fields around it.

Before they reached the bridge, however, Alfred Michael paused, still humming that same tune over and over, and turned down a narrow walk toward the river, where the houses were no longer neat. At the end of the path he came to another stop before a battered frame house with a broken chimney. There was a pile of wood beside the house, over which a lank brown-skinned man was bending. Walking past him was a dignified row of dark-colored ducks, led by a drake with a magnificent green head and neck, who exhorted his flock in a monotonous singing whisper. “Whisper, whisper,” went the drake, “whisper, whisper.” Two corpulent water spaniels sprang barking from behind a stack of eelpots.

As the man with the ax looked up, Tommy knew who he was. It was Jim Street who sometimes appeared at the house in the gunning season, clad in high rubber boots.

There had been a cloud about Mr. Street as long as Tommy could recollect. Mr. Street was a carpenter when he chose to work, but Tommy had heard his Aunt Sarah say that Mr. Street never chose. Mr. Street was handsome then, bright-eyed with straight dark hair—too handsome for his own good, or anybody else’s, Aunt Sarah often said; and what that girl had seen in Jim, his Aunt Sarah never could see, nor Tommy’s mother, nor anybody else. She could have married any one. She probably wished she had before she died. She must have seen that you could get nowhere by flying in the face of things. What the face of things meant, Tommy could not tell, but he sometimes could think of her flying on soft whispering wings toward

those banks of clouds that looked like faces now and then, when the sun went down.

"Hi, Alf!" said Jim Street. "You, Spot, you, Spy, lay off that noise before I bust a lath acrost you."

"Come over to the barn, Jim," said Alfred Michael, "I want to talk."

They left Tommy standing near the woodpile. For a minute or two he watched them as they stood by the door of a rickety building, whose opened door revealed lofts filled deep with hay. Mr. Street was so tall that Tommy's father was obliged to look up at him as he talked. Mr. Street was dressed in a pair of black trousers and a blue shirt opened at the neck. Now and then he would raise his hand and scratch his head. From where Tommy stood, he could hear what they were saying in snatches carried on the wind—strange, unrelated strings of words. First it would be like the green-headed drake, who was walking slowly toward the river—whisper, whisper—and then a string of words.

"Whisper, whisper," went Jim Street; "whisper, if you say so, Alf."

"Whisper, whisper," replied his father, flicking at a hay wisp with his stick. "Whisper—and damn the consequences."

He pulled some money from his pocket, for of course he was very rich, and handed it to Mr. Street.

"Put the jot on Jessica's nose," Tommy's father said.

"Whisper," said Mr. Street. "You don't want to—whisper—the whole pile?"

"Daddy," called Tommy, "who is Jessica?"

His father raised a hand to his hat, to which the wind had given an unexpected tilt.

"Go down to the river, Tom," his father said, "and watch the ducks. I'm talking business with Mr. Street, that's not meant for little boys."

"You bet it ain't," Mr. Street said. "Alf, ain't you got no sense? Go and see Jellett. Ain't he still after you to buy that gun shack and the acre? Hell, Alf, see him before he hears you're strapped and shake him down. Go and see Jellett! *Go and see him!*"

"Tom, did you hear me?" his father said. "Nonsense—Joe Cooper's let him know by this time. I'm bottoms up. You don't know the world, Jim, because you're much too near Arcadia."

They were saying something which Tommy could not understand about the man in the carriage, who drove four horses with the silver-trimmed harness. Tommy could still seem to see the way he jerked his head.

"But the boy," said Jim Street. "You gotta give a try, Alf!"

"Whisper," said Tommy's father. "Whisper, whisper."

From the rear of the house the land fell away into tufts of marsh grass, and a leaden expanse of tidal mud, toward which the ducks were moving. Nevertheless, it was pleasant behind the house, because there were so many things to see—a skiff anchored in the mud where the tide had left it, its mast and sail spread on the shore where mats of dead eel grass showed the tidal mark. Farther up the shore lay a pile of wooden decoy ducks, just like children's toys, and not far away were two small canvas-covered boats lying bottom upward. They were sneak floats, used for sculling in among the duck flocks in the autumn. All these, Tommy knew, were the tools of Mr. Street's other trade, for Mr. Street, besides being a carpenter, was a professional gunner in season. He knew the coast in any weather, and knew—it was only much later that Tommy knew how little or how much.

The two spaniels sat on their haunches, looking at Tommy and lolling their tongues, like two old gentlemen who knew the world. Four Canada geese with clipped wings came out of the marsh grass to stare at Tommy and to crane their necks. Tommy watched them. They lowered their necks and bent them, like snakes almost, into the summer breeze.

"Hello, geese," Tommy said; "do you want to fly away?"

In those days it almost seemed that animals understood. The geese eyed Tommy unhappily and craned their necks again. Then Tommy heard steps behind him, and turned to see two other children, a boy and a girl, on the shore beside him. They were very dirty children with smeared faces and muddy bare toes, not at all like that other boy and girl in the high seat with the lady in black between them. Surely those had never gone with bare feet into the mud. Their hair had never been untidy, or their clothes in rags. This girl's hair was black and fell in snarls over her brown face, so that now and then she had to brush it aside quickly with her grubby little hand. The sharpness of her nose and the brightness of her eyes made her look like another wild thing wanting to fly away. The boy had the same thin face, the same dark restless eyes. Indeed, it would have been hard to tell one from the other, except that his hair was clipped short above his ears, evidently made even by a mixing bowl held inverted on his head.

“Who’re you talkin’ to?” inquired the boy.

“The geese,” said Tommy.

“Hey, Mary!” said the boy. “He’s talkin’ to the geese! Gee! He’s *talkin’* to ’em!”

“That’s nothing, Mal.” The voice of the little girl whose name was Mary seemed far away. “I talk to ’em myself—a whole lot some days.”

“Then he’s a sissy,” said the boy named Mal. “Hey—ain’t you a sissy?”

“What’s a sissy?” inquired Tommy. You might have thought the boy named Mal would answer, but instead he scowled.

“Cripes! Don’t you know nothin’? Don’t you never play with kids?”

“Not often,” said Tommy. “I’d like to, though.”

“Well, you’re a sissy all right. Say—do you wanna fight?”

“No,” said Tommy.

“Well, you gotta, anyways. When a new kid meets a new kid, they always gotta fight, ain’t they?”

“Why?” said Tommy. “I don’t see.”

As Tommy spoke there was a sinking feeling deep down in his stomach; he did not want to fight; he never had before.

“Well, you’re gonna see.” Mal edged closer to him and spat on a grimy fist. Then the little girl spoke in that same far-away voice.

“You leave him be, Mal. You’re bigger.”

“You shut up!” said Mal, and moved nearer Tommy. “My pa’s better’n your pa.”

“He’s not!” Tommy’s voice was sharp. He was angry then, and his slim little body began to tremble; he wanted very much to cry. Tommy Michael felt very small and very far from everything he knew. He looked wildly about him, but his father was not in sight. Only the two water spaniels were there, looking at him with their wide brown eyes, and the very place where Tommy stood seemed changed into an unkind world. The wind, which had been so friendly that morning, as it rustled through the bushes of the Michael shore, was harsh upon his face. The sunlight, which not so long ago had made patterns through the trees, was pitilessly bright. And Tommy was all alone out in that sun and wind, without even a make-believe companion

to stand by his right hand, facing something ugly, which he had never known.

Young Mal Street, lean-faced and bright of eye, with his inverted bowl of black hair, twisted his upper lip.

"Say that again, and I'll smash you in the eye. My pa's better'n your pa."

Yes, Tommy was all alone. For the first time he felt the chill of that knowledge that help lay only within himself, a chill which he would often feel again. He wanted to turn and run, but he did not. Instead he felt his lips stiffen. They were thin lips like his mother's. "Whisper, whisper," he could hear the old drake somewhere behind him. "Whisper, whisper."

"He's not," said Tommy. "My father's a—gentleman."

The exact definition of that term Tommy did not know, but he knew it was worthy of respect. None the less it did not help Tommy Michael the day he met Mal Street on the dead eel grass of Welcome River. Tommy Michael's nose was a smear of red. His face was wet with tears and he was sobbing.

"Hi, there!" Jim Street was hastening from the barn, jumping awkwardly but surely over a pile of wood. Alfred Michael was approaching also, swinging his walking stick.

"Didn't I tell you?" It was Mal to whom Jim Street spoke. Mal turned to run for it, but Mr. Street caught the collar of his shirt, and then Mal's shoulder as the collar ripped. "Didn't I tell you next time I caught you fighting, I'd wear your pants right off? Mary break a lath off that hencoop!"

That was like Jim Street, always tearing pieces off of things for other purposes, but Tommy's father was speaking.

"Leave the lath on," he said. "Jim, set down the boy."

"Well, now, what's bitin' you, Alf?" Mr. Street, as one remembers, was never fast in shifting a mental process. There were wrinkles on Alfred Michael's forehead and about the corners of his eyes.

"They've started, haven't they? Tommy wouldn't want it stopped like this, would you, Tom?" He leaned over Tommy. His walking stick trembled beneath his hand. "Would you, Tom?"

Of course Tommy had to say he wouldn't—of course, because his father was asking.

"Alf Michael," said Jim Street, "are you crazy?"

“Tommy,” Alfred Michael did not appear to hear, “what’s the fight about? Tommy, stop that blubbering!”

“I—I’m not!” Even in those days Tommy had his pride.

“Good!” said Alfred Michael. “Speak up then and tell me.”

“He said,” Tommy found it hard to speak, “his father was better than—you.”

“God bless my soul!” said Alfred Michael. “Well, I can’t help you now. Send in your boy, Jim, and I’ll lay you two to one. Now go on and hit him, Tom! Hit him for all you’re worth!”

That was how Tommy took his first licking, with his father standing white-faced, watching.

“Tom,” his father had dropped on his knees beside him, so that their faces were nearly level, and even then Tommy was surprised at the way his father’s hand shook while wiping at his cheek, “Tom—please don’t cry!”

“I—” Tommy choked before he could finish, “I’m not.”

“There,” said Alfred Michael, “there—that’s better, because there’s nothing to be ashamed of. You did the best you could, Tom, and you’ve got to learn. God help you, you’ve *got* to learn, even—”

There was something about Alfred Michael, even when the checked suit became a travesty, which made him somehow bright, and above the world which had brought him low.

“Even if Jessica’s nose holds out better than yours, Tom, and I suppose it won’t.”

Little did Tommy Michael realize that the mills of the gods were grinding in a process all their own, a process which was pitiful and slow. The mills of the gods already had left their trace on Tommy’s tear-smeared cheeks, and somewhere within him was a bitter jagged scar. Never again would Tommy’s eyes be as wide and guileless, quite. Beneath those invisible, inexorable stones, Tommy Michael had been cast, where all illusion and all make-believe must finally turn to dust, and where magic falters to vanish in a breath. And already it was going. The wind of Michael’s Harbor was singing a different tune, and his father too had changed. Never would he be quite as fine again; as marvellous in his wisdom, as glowing in his strength. His father must have known it too, Tommy sometimes thought, because he threw his arm over Tommy’s narrow shoulders, holding him very tightly, as though he knew, just as surely as

anything, that something was leaving both of them, something beautiful which would never again come back.

"Gad!" he said, "I could make a better world without half trying. Give me a drink, Jim, and we'll be starting home."

IV

SEATED in his library room in his house on Warning Hill, Grafton Jellett was aware of no rumbling sound, but none the less the mills were grinding, and he should have known, because he had been through mills enough. Only very much later Tommy heard of that afternoon, but he could guess how it must have been.

"Don't try it on Grubby Jellett," they used to say downtown; "he's been through the mill."

Long ago they had given up trying. Yet one would not have guessed at all, just from looking at Mr. Jellett once. For one thing, he was a small man. His hair was sand-colored and growing thin on top. His face was plump and ruddy and cast in a tranquil mold. No, nothing could look milder than Mr. Jellett, in his leather chair with a book on his knee and a paper cutter in his stubby-fingered hand. Only when he glanced up, interrupted by a tapping on his door, did he show signs. His eyes were a cold, light blue, and nothing, absolutely nothing appeared to be behind them.

"Come in," said Mr. Jellett, and as he spoke he raised his ivory cutter and ran it gently through another page. It was only Hewens, his private secretary.

"Will you see the children, sir?" inquired Hewens. "It's their hour, Miss Meachey says."

"Where is Mrs. Jellett?" Mr. Jellett asked.

"She has a bad headache, sir, and is resting before dinner."

"Oh," said Mr. Jellett, "has she?" And deftly, quietly, he cut another page. "Any telephones or telegrams?"

"Mr. Cooper called again, sir—from the local bank, you know."

"Oh," said Mr. Jellett, "about what?"

"That matter about the Michaels."

"The Michaels? Who are the Michaels? Oh, I remember now." It was not strange that he should have his lapses, for he had so much to remember. "The one who owns the gunning shack and the beach, isn't it?—Cooper's an ass. I'm not an ass. I don't buy from people in holes. Hewens, have them hitch up a trap and go down and see this Cooper. Find out all you can about

these Michaels and let me know, and when it's all over," Mr. Jellett cut another page, "intimate that I'm not in the least interested. Make it very plain."

Hewens raised a hand to his small mustache and looked like the Alice in Wonderland rabbit when he said, "My stars and whiskers!"

"You're not going to ask me how, are you, Hewens?"

Mr. Hewens knew too much for that.

"Good!" Mr. Jellett raised his paper cutter again. "Well, why are you waiting?"

"Will you see the children now?"

"Yes," said Mr. Jellett, "and as you go out, tell Hubbard to bring me my whisky. And send down my man—the new one. What's his name?"

"Street, I think," said Hewens.

"Well," said Mr. Jellett, "aren't you going?"

"Good Lord, sir!" gasped Mr. Hewens. His neck craned above his strangling cut-away collar. "Do you know what you're doing? You're cutting the pages of a perfect first edition of 'Jane Eyre'!"

A faint snowy smile hovered about Mr. Jellett's placid ruddy lips.

"A presentation copy," he said. "Well, what of it, Hewens?"

"What of it?" cried Mr. Hewens. In his excitement he forgot himself so far as to reach out a thin white hand. "An uncut first edition is worth a hundred pounds, sir! Aren't you reducing its value to a mere nothing by cutting it?"

"Yes," said Mr. Jellett, and cut another page. With difficulty Mr. Hewens found his voice.

"But why—" he began, "why, if you know it—?"

Mr. Jellett raised his paper knife languidly, and regarded Hewens for the first time that day as though he were a man.

"Because I damn' well want to! It amuses me," Mr. Jellett answered.

"Amuses you?" echoed Mr. Hewens, and for a moment Mr. Hewens himself was more than a machine.

"That's it," said Mr. Jellett. "It isn't every one who can cut one."

"No," said Hewens, "that's true."

"Then you understand," said Mr. Jellett. The light from the window fell on his sandy hair as he slouched down more comfortably. "I suppose," he added complacently, "you think I'm a damned fool?"

"No," said Mr. Hewens with a candor which surprised him. "I don't know what I think."

"Saying that won't hurt you with me," remarked Mr. Jellett placidly. "But I'm not, no matter what you think—Ho, hum. . . ." He pointed before him with his paper cutter to a wall which was lined with books, an exquisite wall of gold and leather tooling.

"I have two presentation copies of 'Jane Eyre' with their pages uncut, in completely perfect preservation. My agent tells me they're the best extant, and I think he's right, because Mr. Morgan has been making me an offer for one of them. If I cut the pages of one, there'll be only one left. Get back as soon as you can. I'll have some telegrams to send."

Left alone in his room, Mr. Jellett looked thoughtfully at his paper cutter, and cut another page. The parting of the paper made a tranquilizing sound. Mr. Jellett closed his eyes contentedly and rubbed his toes softly in the thick piling of an oriental carpet.

"Ho, hum," said Mr. Jellett, "ho, hum. . . ."

He still could enjoy comfort, and the physical richness of things still had a novelty, though he showed it as little as he showed anything else, beneath that impenetrable cloak which lay over him forever. Against that cloak of dullness, worry, pleasure, anger—everything—glanced off harmlessly into nothing. Dully, placidly, he could sit at his dinner table immune to the chattering of thirty guests, just as he could sit at the end of a directors' table when he got downtown, staring opaquely at nothing, speaking tritely of harmless matters, balancing a fork or a cigar—it did not matter which—in his small plump fingers. It did not matter which, because he held everything in a manner which was peculiarly his own, not tightly. Grafton Jellett had been a carpenter's boy once in a lean and distant past, before he discovered it was better to make others work. And he could still use his hands.

But the comfort, the physical richness of possessions, were still to be enjoyed, but not vulgarly. Comfort and possessions were tangible, that was all, not valuable in themselves, save as showing a result as clearly as the total of a column.

Any one who lived the life of Warning Hill as it was rising to its greatness remembers, of course, what Simon Danforth said about him, when Grafton Jellett was still a seventh wonder, and still a trifle new. One remembers, just as one recalls Simon Danforth's suppers in his gun room with the animals' heads glaring from the walls—just as one recalls how Simon Danforth, even in his sixtieth year, could drink two bottles of champagne and balance a third upon his nose when the market was going right.

"Grubby Jellett isn't vulgar, and he isn't *nouveau riche*, and he isn't stupid either. He's so damnably astute he isn't anything at all."

Those were the days. One can sigh when one recalls them and thinks how the world has changed. Warning Hill may be excellent yet, but surely its tropical luxuriance must be gone, unless it is that the past is always golden and the present always crude. Those were the days when carriages rattled and hoofs pawed the blue gravel drives, and bottles on the sideboard caused no envy, and only simple padlocks guarded cellars full of wine. Those were the days when carelessness and ease joined hands with leisure and made the merry dramas of which Richard Harding Davis wrote. Perhaps Grafton Jellett was thinking even then that those were the days. The battle harness was off his shoulders. He could hear a dozen mowers on his terrace and the scraping of the gardeners' rakes upon his drive, and all these sounds spelled peace.

"Just a little whisky, Hubbard, please," he said, "a finger's quite enough. Where's what's-his-name—Street, Hubbard?"

"Coming directly, sir," Hubbard answered, "here he is now, sir."

"Street," said Mr. Jellett, "you're not any relation to that fellow downtown they arrested for running a gambling machine in the barber shop?"

It was surprising, now and then, the things his mind turned up, extraneous bits of knowledge, always somehow useful.

"Yes, sir," said Street. "He's my brother."

Grafton Jellett glanced up, and for a moment Street ceased to be a piece of furniture. "It doesn't hurt you with me to say that," he said, "especially because you didn't have to. Tell your brother to change his ways, Street—" Mr. Jellett sipped his whisky slowly. "Is your brother acquainted with some village people called—what's the name—? Michael?"

Those were the days when servants were good servants, and not half-trained shirkers with all those false ideas of democracy. Street stood correctly and attentively, lank and saturnine, perhaps, but he did not bat an eye.

"Acquainted," he said; "yes, sir."

"Ho, hum," said Mr. Jellett. "Street, bring me my slippers, please. My feet are very tired."

Mr. Jellett picked up his book again, but he was weary of cutting pages. He laid it on his gold and rosewood Empire writing table, and walked to the window, through which there came that peaceful sound of lawn mowers. The lawn outside was as green and soft as English turf. There was a pool where a stone dolphin reared his head and performed the miracle of emitting a ceaseless stream of water through his nose. There were beds of digitalis in the bud, and the rhododendrons were still in bloom. There were groupings of other flowers shaped like moons and stars, and a hundred shrubs and box trees. Some one had mentioned to Grafton Jellett once Pliny's letter, describing a boxwood walk at his summer villa, where the boxes had been cut in fantastic animal shapes. Grafton Jellett had bought a copy of Pliny's letters, and had read that one very carefully. A special man had come from Paris to trim the Jellett boxes, and even then the snipping of his shears gave an added pleasing sound.

Grafton Jellett, however, looked at none of these sights. Instead, his eyes sought a spot where the lawn sloped steeply to the shore, for the sea seemed to be all about that lawn, giving it the effect of a magic island on a day when a clear sky made the water blue. Just where the lawn reached the shore, about two hundred yards away, was a square of salt marsh and a beach. Just short of that marsh the lawn stopped abruptly, as though at a command, and instead of impeccable turf there was a tiny square of rocky waste, overgrown with juniper and brambles. There was a building on that square, the condition of which was enough to prove that Mr. Jellett did not own it, for it was hardly more than a shack, turning gray from the weather. It was a duck-hunters' shelter, a strange structure enough to be left on Warning Hill. Old Thomas Jefferson Michael had built that shack when Warning Hill was nothing but a rocky pasture land where only cattle watched the Atlantic waves breaking on the rocks.

Grafton Jellett swung open a French window, opening on his lawn. The sea breeze struck him brusquely and ruffled his sandy hair, and made his

gray coat flop as he stood looking out, a small figure growing already slack about the waist.

"Oh, Campbell!" Mr. Jellett called. It was not unpleasant to see the stir out on the lawn. "Campbell!" shouted some one. It was like echoes across Elysian fields. It was not unpleasant to watch Campbell arrive at a shambling run, as a first-rate superintendent should.

"Campbell," said Mr. Jellett, "you were going to plant a line of poplars where the lawn slopes to the shore. Don't bother, Campbell."

As Mr. Jellett closed the window, a tap sounded on the door, and with the tap a gentle scuffling and whispering, reminding him that it was the children's hour. Once again circumstances were obliging him to emulate the kindly Longfellow, and to throw his study open to busy little feet. Unfitted as he knew he was to play the part, Mr. Jellett seemed to anticipate it with pleasure, for he smoothed his coat carefully and expanded his chest.

"Come in," said Mr. Jellett.

They came in side by side, nice children both of them, clipped and brushed as neatly as the box trees on the lawn—Sherwood on the right and Marianne on the left. Many and many would be the times that Sherwood was to blush at the clothing he wore then. Sherwood's round little face was framed in reddish yellow curls, falling to his shoulders, like the Prince's in the Tower, and he was dressed in black velvet. Sherwood kept his eyes on his patent-leather toes, because he was afraid of his father already, and was beginning as early as that to feel bored by his company. It was Marianne who tripped forward as a child should, light on her feet, restless and laughing. Her white dress from Paris was a downy puff of ruffles, which made her curiously unsubstantial. And already Grafton Jellett was disturbed by her, because she was not afraid at all.

"The children have a surprise for you," said Miss Meachey, as she closed the door. "Sherry, dear, can you say the little poem we've learned?"

"No," said Sherwood.

"I can," said Marianne. "I can say lots and lots, can't I, Meachey?"

"*Miss* Meachey," said Mr. Jellett. "Now, Sherwood, will you say your poem if I give you a bright new quarter?"

"No," said Sherwood, "I can get a quarter any time I ask Mamma!"

"I can say it!" said Marianne. "We all got dressed for it. Miss Meachey got all dressed too. You ought to have seen her getting dressed, Papa!"

“Won’t you sit down, Miss Meachey?” asked Mr. Jellett.

“Papa,” said Marianne, “why do you always ask to have Miss Meachey sit beside you?”

Dullness descended upon Grafton Jellett in cloudlike beneficence. “Suppose you children run out on the terrace,” he said. “No, Marianne—the poem can wait. Of course I know you can say it. That’s it . . . run along.”

Miss Meachey was good to look at, standing by the door. Even her plain black dress with its billowing sleeves was restful to the eyes. It gave an added luster to Miss Meachey’s soft dark hair, and a most alluring whiteness to her hands and throat. She stood by the closed door, tall and mysterious like a figure in a painting, which hinted of turret stairs and of silk and gold gleaming in the dark.

“Really, you should be more careful,” Miss Meachey said.

“Careful, eh?” said Grafton Jellett. Miss Meachey smiled, as some one might who was a good deal older.

“You’ve never been a nursery governess,” Miss Meachey said. “You underestimate what children understand.”

Grafton Jellett stood up and thrust his hands into his coat. “Sometimes,” he said, “I get tired of being careful. Why should I be careful? Here, look what I’ve brought you.” He drew a leather case half out of his pocket.

“Put it back!” said Miss Meachey. There was more color in her cheeks. “Please—not now!”

Grafton Jellett smiled frostily with his eyes on Miss Meachey’s face. “A cold proposition,” he said. “You’re a very cold proposition, Meachey.”

“Am I?” said Miss Meachey. “Well, so are you.”

“Oh, the devil!” Mr. Jellett sighed. “At any rate you’re real.”

“Yes,” said Miss Meachey. “And so are you. Most men are—now and then.”

“But not women,” sighed Grafton Jellett, “hardly ever women. You’re the only one I’ve ever seen play her cards like a man. You go after what you want without any sentiment or funny business. Ho, hum . . . Meachey, I wish I’d known you twelve years ago.”

Yes, Miss Meachey was good to look at, standing by the door, so young and at the same time ever so old; she seemed to have lived other lives, and

miraculously to have kept the knowledge. She was glancing at the copy of "Jane Eyre" as it lay upon the writing table, a tale of another nursery governess and another stranger gentleman.

"Do you know what I'd advise?" Miss Meachey said. "I'd advise you to send me packing while you can."

"Thanks," said Mr. Jellett, "for the tip. It goes to prove what I said before—you and I are real, the only ones in—in—" he moved his head slowly about and blinked placidly, "in a whole square mile. And, Meachey, you don't know how refreshing it is when you get where I am, surrounded by clothing dummies and simpering women, and men living on dead men's money, to see some one who's real. You and I know what it means to have our backs to the wall. . . . Ho, hum . . . Oh, I've eaten out of a pail—I've run a donkey engine. Now—that's something to remember. I was hanged if I'd keep on, as everlastingly hanged as you are that you—that you'll—"

"Continue in the nursery?" asked Miss Meachey.

"That's it," Grafton Jellett nodded feelingly. "That's exactly it! Ho, hum . . . I can remember—Does it bore you, Meachey, to hear me talk? But I don't care if it does."

"Of course," said Miss Meachey, "you wouldn't care."

"You know me, don't you, Meachey?" Mr. Jellett nodded placidly, though Miss Meachey did not speak. "Now I can remember the first company I ever formed—on a shoe string, but nobody knew it till I sold out. I can remember how mad that fellow—what was his name?—it's queer how bad I am at names but then names don't mean much—how mad he was when he found he'd given me five times too much. He was the first man I ever made angry."

"But not the last," Miss Meachey said, and Grafton Jellett shook his head.

"Not by a long shot," he answered. "Ho, hum . . . you're a wonder, Meachey; you've got as much of a poker face as I have. Right now I'd write out a check for ten thousand to know what you think of me."

Miss Meachey moved a step from the door, and she laughed very, very softly at some thought of her own.

"It may be worth more," she answered, "not to have you know."

Grafton Jellett smiled, and for a moment his whole face relaxed, so that its placidity seemed to leave it for something else, and the edge of that cloak

of dullness fluttered vanishing into nothing.

"Meachey," his voice was nearly gentle with the laughter in it, "do you honestly think that you can shake me down?"

Yes, those were the days when men were men. Those were the days worth looking back upon. Perhaps Grafton Jellett knew it even then, because in that brief space he was very much himself and confidential almost.

"So many people have tried to, Meachey," he added, "and haven't done it yet. No, sir—not a continental one."

"I must be going," said Miss Meachey quickly. "Some one's coming down the hall."

And she was out the French windows to the terrace before a word could be said to stop her. If Grafton Jellett sighed when he saw her go, surely he had a reason. The sight of her was a song to his spirit. Her eyes and her laughter were laden with challenge, like the challenge of distant places, peaceful in eternal summer seas, with blue lagoons beyond the barrier reef, and not a footstep in the sands.

Hubbard was standing in the open door. It was marvellous how Meachey could have told that he was coming, because his step was almost noiseless.

"A gentleman to see you, sir. A Mr. Michael."

"Who?" Dully, heavily, Mr. Jellett looked up from his leather chair.

"A Mr. Michael, sir."

"Oh, yes," said Grafton Jellett. "Show him in."

V

Of course Tommy never heard of it till later, when everything had changed. It was so much later when all came together piece by piece that it was hard to bring it back. But even then he could see Grafton Jellett rising from his chair and laying aside his book, the edges fluttering on that mantle of his dullness.

"Ah," he said, "I had an idea you might drop in."

Alfred Michael glanced about the room and sighed contentedly. It must have pleased him, for he too loved soft carpets and soft chairs. His lips curled beneath his mustache. His eyes met Grafton Jellett's and neither looked away.

"Did you?" he inquired. "I had an idea you might have that idea."

"Cooper," said Mr. Jellett, "looks after me pretty well."

"He would," Alfred Michael answered.

"Sit down, Michael," Grafton Jellett was almost friendly. When he told of it afterwards, he admitted he had not meant to ask Alfred Michael to sit down. It was just a moment's whim, a slight indulgence. Perhaps the sight of the ridiculous checked suit and the frayed cravat with its antiquated pin and the whole effort of patched and broken grandeur to look new may have amused him—giving possession a new and pleasant taste.

"Sit down, Michael," said Grafton Jellett. "A little whisky—no? It's not bad whisky, a special distiller's selection . . . Ho, hum! . . . I'm just amusing myself cutting a first edition—'Jane Eyre'—a presentation copy."

"Ah?" said Alfred Michael. "Are you?"

He lowered himself into one of the leather chairs and glanced at the book which Mr. Jellett held toward him. To look at Alfred Michael no one could have told that his world was on the verge of ruin. He looked at the book with a genuine interest. Grafton Jellett looked at him placidly, as one who had seen many men like Alfred Michael. Tommy could imagine he must have looked opaque and very dull.

"An expensive habit, perhaps," remarked Mr. Jellett, "this cutting a first edition. Expensive—but amusing."

Alfred Michael smiled again. "Why expensive?" he inquired.

“I see,” said Grafton Jellett, “that you don’t know the amenities of book collecting. There’s a peculiar premium on uncut books.”

“Yes, I know that.” Alfred Michael looked puzzled. He leaned forward and his forehead wrinkled delicately. “But I don’t understand you. Why expensive?”

“Eh?” said Grafton Jellett. “Why expensive?”

He spoke with his old dullness, but he looked at Alfred Michael carefully, and no longer with amusement. “You’ve got something up your sleeve. What is it?”

There he sat in strong silence. He was competing with something which he could not grasp for the moment. He drew back his head in cold caution, though his glance did not falter. For some reason utterly beyond the limits of logic, Alfred Michael had exploded into laughter. It must have been a strange sight—Alfred Michael without a cent in the world, leaning back and laughing at Grafton Jellett in his private room on Warning Hill.

“Why, you poor devil!” gasped Alfred Michael.

“Eh?” said Mr. Jellett. His face had become pinkish. His sandy eyebrows drew together. “What in thunder are you driving at?”

“Excuse me,” said Alfred Michael; “here you are getting pleasure out of cutting rare editions and you haven’t been cutting them at all.”

“What the devil?” Grafton Jellett was actually losing his grip. “How do you mean I haven’t been cutting this book?”

“It’s simply because we’re all so technical,” Alfred Michael smiled indulgently. “I hope you won’t be annoyed at missing a technicality. In the parlance of the book collector, Mr. Jellett, you’re not cutting that book. You’re merely *opening* it.”

“Eh?” said Grafton Jellett. At least he was far from dull. He raised a hand to stroke his spare sandy hair. “*Opening it?*”

Alfred Michael nodded. “Idiotic way of putting it—isn’t it? Don’t think I blame you for being confused. ‘Opening’ is what they call cutting the leaves of a book. ‘Cutting’ is something else again.”

“Eh?” said Mr. Jellett. “Something else again?”

“Cutting,” replied Alfred Michael, “refers to the binder’s habit of cutting down the margins when he gives the books new covers. That is what an ‘uncut’ means in the catalogues. The paper has its original edge, rough and

unfinished. The actual act of opening the leaves has a very small influence on sales. You understand me now?"

"Yes," said Grafton Jellett. Suddenly he doubled up his fist and slammed it into the palm of his hand. "Yes, I see. It simply means—why, damn that fellow Hewens! Damn those catalogues! Why—damn those dealers too! I'll bet they've been all laughing up their sleeves."

"They must have," agreed Alfred Michael.

Grafton Jellett drew in his breath. "Damn their little tricks," he said. "I suppose," his eyes were once again opaque and dull, "that you didn't come here primarily to discourse on first editions. Well—what is it?"

"I'm sorry I didn't come to the point before," Alfred Michael said. "I had no idea you'd be put out."

"Don't flatter yourself," said Grafton Jellett, "that you've put me out. What is it?"

"I don't," said Alfred Michael, "very much."

("He had a contempt for me," was what Grafton Jellett said afterwards. "Confound it, you might have thought I was a squealer, from the way he looked at me. He just sat and twirled that antique gold watch chain. Confound it—you might have thought he was doing me a favor.")

"The fact is," said Alfred Michael, "I've come to take your offer."

"What offer?" Grafton Jellett asked.

"The only one," said Alfred Michael, "that I'm aware you ever made me, but I don't blame you for not remembering. Six months ago we had a conversation about my shooting box down there." He turned and waved his hand over Mr. Jellett's lawn. "Down there by the shore. You pointed out at the time that it was an eye-sore which interfered with your view, and I replied that I saw no reason for giving it up. I pointed out that I had explained the matter to Mr. Cooper when you had sent him to interview me. At the end of my explanation, sir," Alfred Michael kept his eyes on Grafton Jellett as he spoke, "you offered me five thousand flat for a title free and clear, a sum considerably over that land's value, as you pointed out. I refused that sum, and when I refused it, I told you one thing more by way of explanation for a step which you considered, I am afraid, in the nature of a personal affront. I imagine, Mr. Jellett, that you're used to getting what you want."

"Oh," said Mr. Jellett, "do you?"

("Now it made me mad," said Grafton Jellett, when he told of it. "He sat there as if he was a prosecutor's lawyer and I could see a patch in his elbow. It—it was everything about him made me mad.")

"I told you," said Alfred Michael, "that I was fond of my land, that I had a partiality for it, perhaps hard for you to realize, because we've owned it for a long time. We have not come from the city. We owned it when this was actually country. And you told me in reply that you would get it eventually."

"Well," said Grafton Jellett, "so I will." He gazed absently at Alfred Michael and twiddled his thumbs in little circles—one around the other.

"It seems so," Alfred Michael answered, "because you can have it now. I'll take your offer of five thousand."

"Oh," said Mr. Jellett densely, "you will?"

"It just happens—" began Alfred Michael. "Yes, I will."

Grafton Jellett gazed at Alfred Michael for a minute with pursed lips and dull, vacant eyes.

"You won't get it," said Grafton Jellett. "I've reconsidered and withdrawn the offer."

There was a moment's silence. Grafton Jellett twiddled his thumbs and looked at Alfred placidly. Alfred Michael stared hard at the toe of his shiny boot.

"I'm sorry," he said slowly. "It just so happened at this particular juncture that I could make use of the sum you mentioned."

"Cleaned up in the stock market, eh?" inquired Grafton Jellett.

"I supposed you knew," Alfred Michael said. "How much will you buy for?"

"Thanks," Grafton Jellett twiddled his thumbs again, "but I don't buy on a falling market."

For a second or so Alfred Michael looked almost ill. "You mean," he spoke with difficulty, mastered by some emotion, "you're going to wait till the bottom falls out of the market?"

"Yes, that's it," said Grafton Jellett.

"And you won't make an offer till then?"

"No, why should I?" said Grafton Jellett.

"No reason," said Alfred Michael. "You're absolutely right in principle." He drew his feet back preparatory to rising. "Well—I'm sorry you won't buy."

Mr. Jellett's lips relaxed. "The trouble with you fellows," he said, "and I've seen a lot like you since I started my own broker's office, is you expect extra consideration. Why should you get it? You go into a game when everybody's warned you you're bound to lose. You go in with professionals and then, when you get cleaned out, you seem to expect some credit for being amateur. Now Michael, I know men's faces, and I've watched your face. You're dead flat broke. You may know more than I do about old editions, but not about business, because you're an amateur. You come in and laugh because I don't know the difference between cutting and opening a book, and yet you don't expect me to laugh when you've made a damn' sight worse blunder in a piece of trading. Now why should I help you out of your hole? I'm not saying I won't, but exactly why on earth should I?"

"My dear sir," Alfred Michael was on his feet, worried and solicitous, "what unfortunate remark of mine could have made you suspect I was asking or anticipating anything from you? I beg you—please believe I should never dream of such a thing. I may be an amateur, as you say, but I've followed the races and I know exactly what to expect, which is nothing. As you so clearly opined, I am all through—but I said I was sorry about that bit of land, because I feel this is positively the last time I shall offer it to you—your last chance, sir, of having it—and shall we say—of opening its pages?"

"You'll be back," Grafton Jellett said.

"No," answered Alfred Michael, "I shan't. I've reconsidered and withdrawn the offer."

Grafton Jellett leaned back in his chair comfortably.

"If you're going to try anything in the nature of a contest, you'll be sorry, Michael. I told you I'd get that beach, and I mean it."

"No," said Alfred Michael, "you're going to be mistaken for once. You won't get it. Well, good afternoon."

"Good afternoon," said Grafton Jellett. "You'll be back."

Hubbard was there when Alfred Michael went out, and Hubbard remembered him, too—a queer, shapely, smallish gentleman, who took his hat and cane and nodded. He remembered because that gentleman said a peculiar thing when he went out, which sometimes made Hubbard creepy

when he took his port in the pantry of an evening. It was just before they came to the door. The gentleman had been whistling to himself, when suddenly he stopped whistling and looked at a picture. He stopped short and peered at it and then put his stick behind his back.

"Ha!" he said, "a Turner! Better ones in the National Gallery—eh?"

"Yes, indeed, sir!" Hubbard answered.

"Ulysses—do you remember him sailing into the soft light? No one else will ever get the feeling or the color."

He was shabby, but only a gentleman would have spoken so naturally to one of the help.

"You must return again, sir, to admire it when the light is better," Hubbard said.

"Again?" the gentleman looked at him. "Do you believe in ghosts?"

"I can't say as I do, sir," answered Hubbard, "though of course I have been in service in the old country in houses reputed to have them. Now at Lord Errol's in Cumberland the kitchen maid, I recall, used continually to be disturbed by a gentleman in shorts, sir, with a noose about his neck, but hardly real, I think, sir. No, sir, as a churchman, I don't believe in them."

"No?" The gentleman gave his stick a twirl. "Then I can't suppose you ever will see me back, but—you might tell the kitchen maids not to be disturbed."

VI

The thing about it all that hurt Tommy most in all the years to come was the certain knowledge that every one in all of Michael's Harbor knew everything, though he was the last to hear. He could imagine the whispers and the shrugging of shoulders, for of course no one could understand and a futility over all of it could not help but breed contempt. They knew his father for a weak man, and perhaps they all were right, but Tommy loved him still.

In the hall of the Michael house there hung a wretchedly executed portrait of a man past middle age, which seemed to Tommy to explain everything much better than any words. It was the picture of his grandfather, Thomas Jefferson Michael, ruddy faced, with gray eyes frowning from under heavy brows and with the white mutton-chop whiskers of this traditionally benevolent old gentleman. Poorly done as that portrait was, those whiskers were something of a travesty, because it was a hard old face, despite its hearty ruddiness. The eyes and mouth were hard. The nose was pointed and straight. No wonder Thomas J. Michael made money at the law. Relentless patience and courage were all translated to the canvas even by the inept hand of that forgotten artist, those and a self-importance which set better with the whiskers. Though that energetic old gentleman had vanished a decade and more before, wafted to glory on the wings of apoplexy, the spirit of his self-importance seemed still hovering restlessly to crop up sadly before one's eyes. The summer house by the shore, and the coach house and all the jig-saw scrolls upon the eaves spoke of Thomas Michael's efforts. The very frame of the portrait was like him, immense and golden and as heavy with balanced and disproportioned decorations as the Fourth of July orations he once delivered by the soldiers' monument upon the green.

There were many moanings at the bar when that bold figure which had so long adorned it passed away. There were echoes which Tommy heard, that demonstrated a spirit beyond a country lawyer's scope, capable of traveling beyond the Summer County Courthouse and the Summer County Bank, if a thick neck and heavy dinners had not sent it to still rarer distances. There were stories. He was vital and incisive enough to be the hero of local stories, told in the heavy aroma of cigar smoke when hotel chairs are reared up on their hind legs and tired old feet are propped upon the front of veranda railings and the ashes trickled like glaciers down the vest to mingle with the pins of fraternal orders.

There was the sort of man that Thomas Michael was, and Tommy knew the type—a successful small-town gentleman, who headed the directors of the local bank and was counsel for the trolley company. Now why should he have had a son like Alfred? It must have been a penalty ordained by a tempering Providence.

Tommy could see it clearly, as time allowed him to look back. Of course, old Thomas could never have known what Tommy's father meant. He had no sympathy, surely, for the curse of facility that lost itself. He had no friendliness for failure. He gave no help. He only watched with contempt, tinged with his own self-pity, a phenomenon which he could not understand. They must have had words, for no one with Thomas Michael's face would have stopped with thoughts; and it must have been rather terrible when those two got down to words. Tommy could fancy the old parlor ringing with words until the heavy laces before the windows shook and Thomas Michael's face went purple. He could imagine his father's adroit irony clashing with the fire of an old man's invectives, though all the while poor Alfred must have known that Thomas was dead right. He was useless—damned useless; not fit to carry a corkscrew in his keyring, by God, or to have a bank account. What under the blue heaven had Thomas done to be cursed with the burden of a shirker? What in the devil's name was the use in reading books, if it didn't get you anywhere? What in the devil was he going to do—nothing, and watch the lilies grow? Did he think he was a rich man's son? He'd find out some day he wasn't so blank-blanked rich.

Yes, by God, he would! He'd find out some day when it was too late, that you couldn't get something for nothing. What was the use in heaping advantages on a blank-blank rotten apple? What good had college done? Hadn't it cost five thousand dollars to get Alfred home again? And could he settle down and work in the city? Not by a blank sight, he couldn't. How the blazes could a man get on messing around in bucket shops? What was he going to do? He was getting too blanked old for nonsense and what *was* he going to do? What had he done up to date, unless by some pertinacity of error, to fall in love with a girl no one ever heard of. He hoped by blazes *she'd* make him dance. He hoped—

Aunt Sarah told Tommy often enough those scenes. She'd sat through them in the parlor. She'd even said a word now and again, when Alfred had walked out and slammed the door.

"It's your fault, Tom," she told him once, when Alfred slammed the door. "Haven't you got sense to see he isn't like you?"

“Why isn’t he like me?” roared Tom Michael. “Isn’t he my son?”

“It’s your fault, I tell you,” said Aunt Sarah. “Have you ever let him do anything he wants? You know you haven’t, Tom.”

“Why the blazes should I?” roared Tom Michael. “Don’t I know best?”

“Well, well, well,” Aunt Sarah said. “Break his spirit if you want to. You’ll have him thinking he isn’t worth anything and then he’ll never be.”

“You’re wrong,” said Tom, biting off the end of a cigar. “When he knows he isn’t worth a continental, he’ll brace up and get to work—and I’m the man to make him know.”

And they both were right. Alfred Michael knew he was not worth a continental and he never was . . . and Tommy knew it too. Try as he might not to know, he knew it. Yet there was strength somewhere behind that failure, Tommy also knew. There was a magnificence, as vague and intangible as phosphorescent light, gleaming resplendent in that shadowy man, which often made Tommy’s eyes grow dim, because Tommy loved him.

The sun was setting over Michael’s Harbor, and the sky was a deep fine red. Tommy could remember the exact color, because ever after he was troubled and distressed when such a redness in the sky heralded other dusks. The wind was sinking with the sun, leaving in its wake that evening silence across which sounds could travel much more clearly than at any other time. Though the bridge over Welcome River was half a mile away, Tommy could hear the occasional clatter of hoofs and wheels, and across the river, snatches of laughter and the shouting of children in the streets, gentle always, half stifled by the distance.

Tommy was standing by the gate posts of the Michael drive, looking toward the elms as well as he could, which was not very well, for his right eye was puffed so that he could hardly see. Nevertheless, he could notice how dark the leaves were growing, approaching in the darkness the shadows on the lawn, and soon he knew that everything in the world outside—the house, the trees, the bushes, would be nothing but one vast shadow until morning came. He did not notice Mr. Street approach until he was close beside him, which was not strange, because Mr. Street walked gently in spite of his great height.

“Tommy,” he said, “is your daddy home?”

Tommy shook his head.

"Where'd he go?"

"He went for a walk," said Tommy, "up toward Warning Hill. I'm waiting for him now."

"Hah!" said Mr. Street. "Why're you waiting—a little shaver like you? Isn't your daddy often out nights?"

"I don't know why," said Tommy, "but I'm waiting."

"Well, put this in your mouth," said Mr. Street, and gave Tommy a little paper bag with red and green stripes on it. Inside was a piece of yellow candy on a stick. "It's an all-day sucker," Mr. Street explained. "You got it coming to you."

"Thank you very much," said Tommy.

"You ain't got much to thank me for," said Mr. Street. "At that, you ain't, but next time you see Mal he won't do what he done to you again."

"You tell Mal," said Tommy, "I'm going to lick him some day."

"Huh," said Mr. Street, "who told you so?"

"My—my father did."

"Your daddy's a good man," said Mr. Street, "but he's awful optimistic. Huh—here he's coming now."

Sure enough, Alfred Michael was walking down the road, staring at the red sky, and the last of the sun was on him; it gave him a reddish-golden glow and his walking stick was like a bar of gold. But when he reached the gate and the sun was off him, it seemed to Tommy that his father must have been walking a long time.

"Ah," he said, "break the news, Jim."

"Alf," said Mr. Street, and cleared his throat, "she faded out, Alf."

"The deuce you say!" said Alfred Michael.

Jim Street coughed. "Seen Jellett?"

"Yes," said Tommy's father. "Jellett faded, too—balked right at the barrier. Why, Tom—you here too? How's your eye?"

"It's all right," said Tommy. "I don't mind it now."

Mr. Street nodded gravely. “He’s a sport,” he said, “just like his daddy—a dead game sport.”

Tommy always remembered how pleased his father was. It seemed to Tommy that he had never looked as happy or as proud.

“That’s something,” he said. “That’s something, isn’t it?” and he dropped his hand on Tommy’s shoulder.

Mr. Street coughed and cleared his throat. “Alf,” he said, “I’ve known you since we were kids, and you only have to look in the mirror to see a dead game sport.”

Later, Tommy knew that Mr. Street’s recommendations were of as doubtful value as Mr. Street was himself. But it only made the pathos stronger. He looked up at his father proudly.

“There’re some things that stay bright, Tom,” he said. “Don’t be forgetting that.”

“Daddy,” said Tommy, “here’s Mother.”

His mother was hurrying down the driveway, slender in her gingham dress, and, though her mouth was half open, it still seemed to be a thin straight line. Though her face was still like a flower of wax, her cheeks were redder, and her eyes were very bright.

“Get off of this place,” she said to Mr. Street and caught her breath. “Get off—you coward!”

There was something dreadful in her anger. Even Tommy knew that. It was the first time he had ever seen anger rise in a woman, beyond all reason and restraint. It was frightful, that change from a bent and narrow figure with a duster in her hands, into sublimated fury.

“Now, Ma’am—now, Ma’am—” began Mr. Street.

“Get off this place.” The voice of Estelle Michael was shriller. “How dare you come here, you gutter scum, after what you did to my boy? Tommy, fetch the riding crop. It’s over the mirror in the hall!”

“But, Ma’am—” began Mr. Street, holding out his hands.

“Estelle!” Tommy’s father spoke sharply. “I told you it was my fault; I told you I’d take the blame!”

“You!” Tommy’s mother whirled on him with a half-raised hand. “Of course, you’ll take the blame. Did you ever do anything else? Can’t you

stand up and be a man for once? If you can't, I can! Tommy, did you hear me?"

"Before God, Ma'am—" Mr. Street's face was white. "Get your riding switch if you've a mind to—"

"Jim," said Tommy's father, "you'd better go away."

"Yes," said Estelle Michael, "he'd better go—and you too, for all the good you are. What have you done to help us? Must I always be the one?"

"I've tried, Estelle." Tommy looked up startled, because his father's voice was so very queer. "I swear I've tried, Estelle. Won't you remember that?"

But his mother did not answer. She had turned and was running towards the house, with her hands before her face.

"Daddy," said Tommy, "Daddy, what's the matter?"

For surely something was the matter. Tommy knew it, even when Alfred Michael took his hand, because he said the strangest thing.

"Your mother's tired, Tommy, but you mustn't blame her for anything she says. I hope that you'll be like her, if—you don't grow too hard."

Tommy looked up at the elm trees, and it seemed to him that he had never seen the leaves so dark, and the sky, too, was growing darker, because the red was leaving it now that the sun was down.

VII

His mother did not come down to supper. It was the first time that Tommy had known an evening meal go by without her sitting at the foot of the table in the golden oak dining room that old Thomas Michael had built. There was no one to correct his manners. Aunt Sarah usually supped upstairs on her dark wood sewing table. Tommy was not sorry. It was a great deal pleasanter to be alone with his father, waited on by Nora, the Irish maid, just as though Tommy also was a man. The conversation, too, was pleasanter, for it did not deal with the price of things, or bills, or bits of village gossip, and there were no complaints about dirty hands or the natural drooping of the spinal column above a plate. Instead, his father talked to him exactly as though he were a man.

"Tommy, how's your eye?"

"It doesn't hurt. Daddy?"

"Yes?"

"It wasn't Mr. Street's fault."

"No, of course it wasn't."

"Daddy, aren't you hungry?"

"No."

"Why aren't you hungry?"

"Because there are times when people aren't. You'll know. Eat your eggs, Tommy."

"I'm not hungry either. Daddy—why was the sky so red?"

"Eat your eggs," said Alfred Michael. "Don't you see? I want you to grow up to be a man."

"The sky was awfully red," said Tommy, "redder than the coals in the fireplace."

"Yes," said Alfred Michael. His face gave a curious twitch. "Tommy?"

"Yes, Daddy."

Alfred Michael had risen from the table, and Tommy saw that he had not touched a bit of food, and he was doing a most astounding thing. He was

snapping his watch chain from his vest, and more curious than that, there was no watch upon it.

"Daddy, where's your watch?"

"Gone," said Alfred Michael, "but the chain isn't. The chain is for you. Take it and put it away, and don't tell any one about it till to-morrow morning."

"You mean," said Tommy, "it will be a surprise?"

"Yes," replied his father gravely, "probably. I want you to keep it safe until you are able to wear it. It's a good gold chain. Perhaps when you look at it sometimes, you'll remember what I'm going to tell you now."

Alfred Michael coughed, looked at Tommy and coughed again, and suddenly seized a tumbler from the table and drank the water in it very fast.

"Confound it!" he said. "I've never done this sort of thing before. I—I'm hanged if I know exactly what to say—!"

He paused and laughed, and though Tommy could see nothing to laugh at, he remembered that something had really amused his father, transiently but genuinely, none the less.

"Promise me not to cry, will you, Tom? No matter what happens, give up crying. You've got to be a man."

"Yes," said Tommy. "Daddy, why don't you want the chain?"

"I'm tired of it," Alfred Michael said. "You'll probably get tired of it too, but don't get as tired as I am. Don't be a coward like me."

It was shocking to hear his father say such a thing. Tommy felt something rise within him—loyalty or love, he never knew just what—which made his face grow red, and made him want to cry.

"Huh," said Tommy. "You're not afraid of anything, I guess."

Though Alfred Michael helped himself again to water, something was wrong with his voice.

"Cowards aren't always afraid," his father said. "Sometimes they're tired. You'll see some day what I mean, but that isn't the point. The point is that you've got to be a man."

"I will be," said Tommy, "just like you."

"No, you won't," his father spoke very quickly. "Listen, Tom. Put that chain in your pocket and listen, like a good boy. You've got to be a man who gets on in the world, who can understand it and—not struggle like a poor spoiled child. You'll see what I mean some day. You'll have to put away the long, long thoughts and be like most men who've never had them. Be a hard man, Tom, but a good one. Do you see what I mean? And be an educated man. I want you to go to college, and you'll find that the hardest thing of all. Nothing shows life in a worse light than knowledge, but you'll be better if you're strong enough to stand it, and you'll be strong enough. You'll have to be. I'm not so sure that everything doesn't depend on necessity. I wonder, if anything had ever seemed halfway necessary to me, I suppose I might—but never mind—"

"Daddy," said Tommy, "what's necessity?"

"God bless me!" cried Alfred Michael. "That's exactly what you're going to find out. Tom, you don't look badly with that eye. I guess that's all."

"All of what?" said Tommy, because he could not understand.

"All of everything," said Alfred Michael. "There isn't much to everything and that's all," and Alfred Michael slapped him on the back hard, as if he were a man. "You know," he looked Tommy in the eye and smiled very cheerfully. "I'm not so sure it all isn't going to be the best thing for you. I tried like every other idiot of a parent to build you an umbrella and to put packing around you. I'm not so sorry now I didn't. Don't ask me why. You'll see what I mean. You're going to go in and lick 'em, Tom. Remember I told you so. Remember I never said you couldn't. Remember some things stay bright, Tom, no matter how the rest of them weather. And now there's a good job over. Go up to Aunt Sarah for your reading. You're late already. And now shake hands. I'm proud to have met you, sir. Good night."

"Daddy," said Tommy, "won't you come up later and hear me say my prayers?"

His father's shoulders gave the queerest sort of jerk, exactly as though a door had slammed unexpectedly behind him, and yet the whole house was very quiet.

"Now there's an idea," said Tommy's father. "I'll do my very best to be somewhere around, Tom. Good night."

His father turned away and strode across the hall to the room where the books were, and closed the door; and as Tommy stood there, looking after

him, he felt very lonely. Everything seemed to have gone, leaving him in a strange and barren place. Tommy was old enough to know it was absurd. He was in his own house. The lamp was burning in the center of the dining table. As long as he had known anything he had known the walls of yellow oak and the built-in sideboard of yellow oak with two candlesticks upon it. There was the same slightly musty smell which he had always known. Outside the dining room was the hall. He had always known the hall, dark, to be sure, but a friendly dark till then. Now the hall seemed an enormous passage filled with veiled shapes leading into loneliness as vast as cloudy mountains in the sky. The lamp from the dining room cut a rectangle of light out of the darkness, which only made the hall the blacker. As Tommy walked into the light, instinctively he trod upon his toes, for fear of a shadowy something which was everywhere. There was not a sound except for the ticking of the clock far up the stairs, coming through the darkness like the whispering of the green-necked ducks upon the Welcome River shore. His foot met the worn strip of carpet which ran from the front door to the back. Beneath it a board creaked horribly, and then again there was silence except for the ticking of the clock, and he was all alone, a very little boy, all alone except for something still and black always just behind him, which had never been in that hall before. Only later did Tommy know what that black silence was, that walked always just behind him. It was fear. It was gripping at Tommy Michael, sending his heart leaping to his throat, giving him a desire to shriek and robbing him of the power. Tommy Michael could not walk toward the stairs. If he did, he knew that blackness would fall and crush him, as surely as a wave of green salt water.

Beneath the door of the room where the books were was a crack of light. Tommy ran to it as fast as he possibly could, not daring to look behind. His fingers fumbled with the latch and then the door was open and Tommy was safe in the light.

“Daddy!” he said, “Daddy!”

All along the wall in the dim light were the books of Thomas Michael. A lamp on his father’s writing table was turned very low. His father was by the fireplace with a felt hat pulled over his eyes. A cupboard door by the mantelpiece was open, and his father held a shotgun in his hand.

“Daddy!” said Tommy. “Daddy!”

His father stood motionless. Then he made a queer coughing sound, deep in his throat.

“What is it, Tom?” he said. “Why haven’t you gone upstairs?”

“Because something made me afraid,” said Tommy.

“What made you afraid?” And curiously enough, his father seemed afraid too, and stared toward the half-open door.

“Something,” Tommy caught his breath, “something in the hall.”

Alfred Michael dropped the barrel of his gun into the crook of his left arm, his heavy duck gun, which carried ten-gauge shells, and strode gingerly to the door.

“Nonsense,” he said, “there’s nothing. Go upstairs, Tom, and I’ll wait right here till you get to the top. Remember, I’ll be right here—and don’t be afraid.”

“Daddy,” said Tommy, “where are you going?”

“Out,” said Alfred Michael.

“But, Daddy,” said Tommy, “why have you got your duck gun?”

“For company,” his father said. “Hurry, Tom, and go upstairs. Don’t keep Aunt Sarah waiting—and Tom—”

A change in his voice made Tommy turn. His father was standing there, nursing his gun in the crook of his arm. “Good night, Tom,” Alfred Michael said.

As Tommy climbed the dusky stairs, he heard his father step down the hallway, and heard the boards creak smartly beneath his tread. A creaking noise and a gust of air—the front door was open.

“All right, Tom?” His father’s voice was hushed into a whisper.

“All right,” said Tommy, and then a rumbling slam told him that the front door was closed, and once again Tommy was all alone in a strange place, but not really alone.

Even in Aunt Sarah’s room something was just behind him. Tommy knew it. He did not dare to look around, and Aunt Sarah glanced at him over the top of her spectacles.

“What ails you?” said Aunt Sarah. “Are you frightened of the dark?”

Never in the world would Tommy have told her that he was afraid, for he knew that Aunt Sarah would never have forgotten it. For weeks she would have sharpened her wits on a boy afraid of the dark.

“Ho,” said Aunt Sarah, “hand me down the Bible. What’s the psalm we’re at?”

“The Ninetieth Psalm,” said Tommy, “but Aunt Sarah—”

It had been Aunt Sarah’s idea that Tommy should read the Bible to her every night. Every night Tommy climbed the stairs, despite his contrary inclinations, like one of the Athenian boys in the book his father sometimes read to him, who was sent to entertain the Minoan Bull upon the Isle of Crete. Every night it was his duty to seat himself on a small stiff chair directly opposite Aunt Sarah’s dark one with the grapes upon it, with a heavy leather Bible perched upon his knees, and then to read in a voice sufficiently loud and clear, passages which she selected during the day. At the same time it was his duty to sit up straight, to hold his head at a proper angle and not to allow his gaze to wander from the page or to sniffle. It was remarkable how acute Aunt Sarah’s hearing was for noises of the small, annoying kind. During this hour also it was his duty to listen to Aunt Sarah, while she retailed certain reminiscences of her youth such as a ride by coach to New York, where she attended a song recital, and of dancing parties at a defunct academy for ladies. But above all, it was his duty to listen to the exploits of her brothers and his grandfather, Thomas Michael, strangely uninteresting exploits they always seemed to Tommy, dealing principally with early morning risings and cold plunges and abstinence from the excessive use of sweets.

“The Ninetieth Psalm?” said Aunt Sarah. “Well, hand me the Book, since you can’t read. Your grandfather got a blackened eye once, I recollect. Mother put a piece of meat on it. Ho-ho . . . well, the Ninetieth Psalm—Why do you wriggle and look over your shoulder?”

“Aunt Sarah,” said Tommy, “Daddy’s gone out.”

“Hey?” said Aunt Sarah.

“Daddy’s gone out,” said Tommy, “and he took his gun with him.”

“His what?”

Aunt Sarah stopped turning the pages, and Tommy knew from the way she looked that she had heard him the first time.

“His gun,” said Tommy.

Aunt Sarah gave a smart tug to her shawl. “That’s like him, I declare,” said she, “always playing about with weapons. Like as not he’ll shoot himself. What are you wriggling for?”

Aunt Sarah began to read; she was a tireless and accurate reader. Her voice never faltered, and those solemn words passed through Tommy's thoughts, stilling them by their somber magic.

" 'Thou turnest man to destruction,' " Aunt Sarah read, " 'And sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.' "

Aunt Sarah paused and adjusted her glasses.

"Ho, ho," she remarked, "I don't know why that's so consoling. Well—well, they'll read it over me, I have no doubt. Tommy, what makes you jump so? Can't you ever sit still?"

"Aunt Sarah," said Tommy, "I heard a gun."

"And why should you jump," said Aunt Sarah, "when you hear a gun, I should admire to know? It's your father wasting time shooting bottles—always wasting time. . . . 'Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep; in the morning they are like grass which groweth up—' "

Dimly Tommy heard the words. They were like solemn music in an enormous vaulted place. Aunt Sarah was nothing but a faint shadow. Her voice was like a stranger's voice, speaking from a vast distance, and awful in the certainty of knowledge. As he thought of it afterwards, he knew he could not have been afraid any longer. He was a little boy in a dream, so immense that fear itself was gone.

"Aunt Sarah!" cried Tommy. She could have had no difficulty hearing him, for his voice had risen almost to a scream. "There's something coming up the stairs!"

"Nonsense!" said Aunt Sarah, " '. . . For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told.' "

But Tommy was right. There was some one on the stairs. There were hasty stumbling footsteps.

"Mrs. Michael!" Tommy knew the voice as that of Elmer, the hired man. "Mrs. Michael, Ma'am!"

Aunt Sarah walked to her door surprisingly fast.

"Mrs. Michael's in her room," she said. "What is it?"

Elmer was in the doorway. His face was white as paper; his hands were shaking like his voice.

“Speak up!” said Aunt Sarah sharply. “What is it? Have you lost your tongue?”

“It’s Mr. Michael, Ma’am!” began Elmer. “Oh, Lord, Ma’am—Mr. Michael’s killed himself.”

For just a moment in the dull silence that followed, Tommy did not think. He seemed to have heard only vaguely what Elmer said, and his eyes were on his Great-aunt Sarah, a grim old woman in a black dress with her hand cupped behind her ear, a dead old tree, he thought long afterwards, which stood unbending before a gale.

“Killed himself?” Aunt Sarah repeated. “Killed himself, you said?”

“Oh, Lord, Ma’am,” Elmer’s voice broke, “I was down to the stables, Ma’am, and I heard a shot out back by the shore, and I ran there, because it didn’t seem right shooting, and there he was, his head all—”

“That will do,” Aunt Sarah said. She swayed slightly and her shoulders shook as though at last the wind had struck her. “It was an accident, of course. Mr. Michael stumbled and fell. Do you understand me? Stumbled and fell. Now make for town and get the doctor.”

“It won’t do no good, Ma’am,” said Elmer. “His head—Jim Street helped me lift him up—”

Aunt Sarah’s voice checked him as surely as a hand across his mouth.

“Run for the doctor,” she said. “It was an accident—remember to say that.”

It was a night of faces. That was what always stayed fast in Tommy’s memory, faces lighted by something strange to Tommy Michael, partly of wonder, partly of awe and fear. Jim Street’s was the next face. It appeared at Aunt Sarah’s door a second after Elmer’s had left. Mr. Street was crying as a boy might cry, except without a sound.

“He’s right,” said Jim Street. “It’s no good to get the doc, Miss Michael. I was waiting by the gate to have a word with him and—you better set down, Ma’am.”

Aunt Sarah sat down and folded her hands on her lap.

“It was an accident,” she repeated. “Of course it was an accident.”

“No, Ma’am.” Jim Street shook his head. “Alf killed himself; there wasn’t nothing else to do. He lost his pile, and you know Alf. He was a dead game sport.”

“Hey?” said Aunt Sarah. “A what?”

“A dead game sport, Ma’am, and it wasn’t as though it mightn’t have been all right. It was Jellett did it as sure as if he’d drawn a bead—damn his soul, he—”

Jim Street’s voice checked in a sob. Aunt Sarah leaned forward, and looked at him above her glasses. Her lower lip was trembling.

“Don’t be a fool, Jim Street,” said Aunt Sarah. “It was an accident. Alfred couldn’t—of course it was an accident.”

“I tell you it wasn’t, Ma’am.” Poor Jim Street didn’t have the sense to make things right. “I know what I know. I got a brother working up there—up there on the Hill. Jellett asked him to fetch him a pair of shoes. My brother was just down at the house telling me, Ma’am, and when he came to Jellett’s room with the shoes, the door was open a crack and Alf and Jellett was talkin’, Ma’am. You don’t mind my callin’ him Alf, because we played when we were kids—and Alf was sayin’ he would sell him—the gunning shanty, Ma’am.”

“Hey?” said Aunt Sarah. “Sell him what?”

“The gunning shanty, Ma’am, that Mr. Michael built over by the beach. My brother couldn’t help but hear, and Jellett wouldn’t buy now, because he said he could get it cheaper later, because he knew Alf was—had lost money, Ma’am. Damn him for a bloodsucker! He might have bought it just as well, and Alf, he told him he wouldn’t get it ever. Oh, yes, Ma’am, Alf knew what he was doing when he stepped outside. Alf—was a dead game sport.”

Aunt Sarah’s face was yellow in the lamplight. “He wouldn’t buy the gunning shanty?” she said.—“It’s lucky I own the house, or he’d have tried to sell it too.—He wouldn’t buy the gunning shanty when he’s been after us to sell it all year?”

“No,” Jim Street’s voice broke. “And Alf he had to have the money, Ma’am. He told me so this mornin’ himself. And when he didn’t, he—”

“It was an accident,” said Aunt Sarah. “Of course it was an accident.”

“Of course it was an accident,” said Jim Street. “Yes, Ma’am, I understand.”

Aunt Sarah reached for her stick that was by the table.

“But just the same,” she said, “I’ll tell Jellett what I think of him. Give me your hand, Jim Street, I’m getting old. I’m getting dreadfully old.”

And then Tommy found his voice, because he was afraid again, terribly afraid.

“Daddy isn’t dead?” he cried. “Daddy isn’t dead?”

And then their eyes were on him. He felt their glances as something tangible and heavy as a blow.

“Yes,” Aunt Sarah said. “Come here and hold my hand.”

“Did—” Tommy’s voice was hushed. It often seemed to him strange that he should have caught the significance as early as that of Jim Street’s words. “Did that man—who drove the horses—”

His words trailed into stillness, and no one answered. The fear which Tommy had felt was leaving him in anger against that shining carriage and the man who held the reins.

“When I grow up—” he began.

“Be quiet, Tom,” Aunt Sarah said. “Come here and hold my hand.”

“Just the same,” said Tommy Michael, “when I get big—”

“You’ll have to be bigger’n me,” Jim Street replied, “before you can tackle folks on Warning Hill.”

And then there was another face. His mother was in the door and her face too was white. She did not seem surprised to see Jim Street; she did not seem surprised at anything.

“What is it?” she asked. Her voice was not more than a whisper. “Is Alfred—?”

But she knew what they meant without their saying a single word. Her lips went very tight together. Neither of them cried—his mother nor Aunt Sarah.

“Where is he?” Her voice was still nothing but a whisper.

“Down by the shore, Ma’am,” Jim Street said.

“And you left him?” Her voice was louder. “You left him all alone?”

“I was going back, Ma’am,” said Jim Street. “I’m goin’ to stand by.”

Estelle Michael turned toward the door, her lips still tight. “We’ve got to bring him here,” she said. “He can’t stay out there alone.”

“We will,” said Jim Street, “just as soon as Elmer’s back with the doctor. It’ll take two, Ma’am.”

“Of course it will take two,” the sharpness was back in his mother’s voice. “There’s you and me, isn’t there? And Tommy, get the lantern in the kitchen. Tell Nora she’s to light it.”

“You ain’t going to take Tom?” cried Jim Street. “It ain’t right, Ma’am, to take—”

“He’ll have harder things to do,” his mother said. “Tommy, you’re not afraid?”

“No,” said Tommy, but his heart was deathly cold.

And Jim Street looked at him as though he was a man and not a boy.

“Alf would like it,” he said. “He’s like his daddy, Ma’am. A dead game sport, and I guess that goes for everybody here.” Jim Street coughed and looked embarrassed. “Maybe, Ma’am, you might let me take Tom home to-night. He might feel better and—nothing’s going to hurt him there.”

But Tommy scarcely heard him. He was thinking still of the shining carriage and of that man who held the reins. Some intuition which balances the helplessness of little children must have made him know that there was danger in that carriage, as deadly as the danger of Pharaoh’s chariots. Though no one told him, he could tell that it had smitten his father down and that he too might fall beneath its wheels.

VIII

That was how he came to know the Streets, and the dooryard by the river, and to be friends with Mal and Mary. They were kind to him that night. Even Mal was kind, and Mr. Street was right; nothing ever hurt him there; nothing ever hurt him until he went to Warning Hill, and seven years went by before he did that.

Across the harbor, Warning Hill stood mysterious and splendid. But Tommy Michael never got there until he was fourteen. Mary was the one who helped him go, for Tommy got to Warning Hill in Mal Street's skiff, the yellow one which Jim Street used sometimes for eels, with a spritsail on her covered with blue patches. Though a long time had passed, Tommy always knew he would get there some day—a long time, for is there ever a longer gap than that strangely misty lapse between seven and fourteen?

So much happened in that time, and yet where it went, Tommy could never tell. It always seemed to him that all in that one day the chill world first smote him, and when it happened all that had gone before was vague and blurred, a jumble of old voices and old visions that sank into the silence of the Michael house, and in the wrinkles of his mother's face, until it all became impossible and unconvincing, like Aunt Sarah's stories of a greatness that was past. He never knew until that day how little they had told him. Indeed, he never knew until that day that he had a sense of pride that would make him as drunk as wine.

"Remember, Tommy," his mother used to say, when he was little and came home tired from school, "you're just as good as any of them." Years later he could shut his eyes and see her still, thin and very white with the gloss gone from her hair and the spring gone from her step, but with her lips held tightly together.

"Eh, what's that?" Aunt Sarah would say, and would put down her knitting. Aunt Sarah had grown very old, but she was always knitting.

It was a Saturday afternoon. During the week it was always pleasant to think that Cooper did not need an errand boy at the National Bank of a Saturday afternoon. Tommy had on his school suit, which he wore to work in the summer, corduroy trousers, darned black stockings, and high black shoes, still solid, because he lifted up his toes when walking, as his mother had told him, except when he was thinking. He had a way of thinking, still.

The sun was very bright that afternoon, in a clear warm summer sky, and the ripples of Michael's Harbor sparkled in the sun. The Michael's Harbor elms were whispering in the breeze, exactly as though some one might be hiding in their branches; and from the edge of Welcome River where Tommy stood, he could see across the harbor. The houses of Warning Hill were there, aloof and mysterious as they had always been, yet soft among a green that the distance made to verge on purple, with a golden light upon them from the sun, so that Warning Hill was like a promised land, closed and secret, as Tommy stared across the water.

At the water's edge, not five yards from where Tommy stood, Mal Street was working at his skiff, whistling between his teeth, as he stepped the mast and spread the sail. Mal's hands already were strong, like Jim Street's hands. Mal was bigger than Tommy Michael. He could swim farther than any boy at school, up by the dam near Munsey's Bridge. His shoulders were heavy and long; his wrists jutted far out from his ragged shirt cuffs.

"Nix," said Mal, "you can keep on askin' till your face gets blue. I'll go 'round the edge, but I won't land. Shucks—we'd only get thrown off, and anyway, I'm as good's they are and better maybe. When you come right down to it, I wouldn't wonder if you was better too."

"Then why're you afraid to go?" Tommy asked. "We'll only just step ashore and look around."

"You shut your trap!" said Mal. "Afraid, huh? I guess I can lick any kid up there as easy as I can you. Shucks—they only make me tired. If you was ever to the golf club caddyin', you'd be tired of 'em too. You shut your trap."

Tommy shut it. He was a mild boy, slim and pale, and not like the other boys at the Michael's Harbor school, but now and then, when Mal spoke, Tommy had the strangest thoughts.

"Yes," said Mal, "if you saw all those dudes who think they're smart, you'd want to keep away, all right. They walk around in white pants like underdrawers. They make me sick."

Tommy had seen them. By that time it was hard to miss them, if you lived in Michael's Harbor. He could stand by the gate posts any day at home, and watch the carriages go past, and now there were automobiles, lots of them, with shining brass and clouds of dust behind.

"Lend me the boat, then," said Tommy. "I can sail her alone."

Mal looked up and scowled, because of course he could not understand.

“What the blazes are you always wantin’ to go there for?” he demanded. “You’re just a village kid, ain’t you, the same as the rest of us kids? You’ll only get put off.”

“Don’t you ever get thinking about it?” asked Tommy. “Sometimes I sit by the road and get to wondering, sort of—just sort of wondering—”

Mal’s voice rose in high derision. “Shucks! You and Mary are always thinking, and it don’t get you anywheres!”

As Mal spoke, a mincing quality in his words made Tommy aware that Mary had joined them. She had come down the shaky back steps of the Street house, timidly, one step at a time. She went bare-footed in the summer still; and the wind kept blowing her tangled hair about her face, and her voice had that far-away note that he remembered long ago. Tommy often remembered, in other days, how things looked when Mary came down those steps. He could feel the wind from the water, soft and cool, and hear its murmur, strangely distant. He could see those shaky steps which the improvident Jim Street never mended, descending to the dead eel grass on the shore, and a little girl upon them, barelegged, with the wind playing lightly at her faded blue-checked dress, a slender little girl, who seemed always to be listening, a frail little girl on the shore of Welcome River, with a face that was sharp and sensitive, and singularly unlike the faces of other girls in school. Often and often Tommy knew that her mind was somewhere else. You could easily get yourself to think that her mind was flying too, right into the face of things where her mother’s once had flown—beyond the eel grass, and beyond the acrid scent of Jim Street’s corncob pipe. For Tommy and Mary were the ones who were always thinking.

For no reason that he could tell, his throat would grow stiff sometimes as he remembered. Who knows? He might have never journeyed to strange lands if it had not been for her, and if the ripples of the harbor had not sparkled in the sun.

“Why shouldn’t he think,” said Mary, “if he’s got a mind to think? Maybe he’s got more to think about than you.”

“You shut your trap!” said Mal.

Mary looked past him dreamily and pushed her hair from her shadowy brown face. “I guess I can talk, if I’ve a mind to!” She walked farther down the steps and dug her toes into the dusty sand. “What was it he was saying?”

“He wants to take my boat,” said Mal, “over to Warning Hill. Ain’t he always wanting something?”

Across the stretch of shining water the houses were like palaces in a book. You could see their roofs and chimneys. The sail of the boat was flapping. The sheet rope slapped against the stern.

"He's pretending, like I pretend," said Mary. "You don't know. He wants to make out he's sailing to a foreign land. You let him take the boat."

Mal scowled and spat with the dexterity so carefully cultivated by the Michael's Harbor boys. "I'll let him take it—like ducks I will!"

Her hair was always blowing across her eyes. She pushed it back again. What Mary said next she had never learned over the dishes in the sink. She looked at Tommy soberly, for she seldom smiled.

"You ought to do what you've a mind to, Tom. You take his boat."

"Like ducks, he will!" said Mal.

"Tom!" called Mary so suddenly that Tommy jumped, and as fiercely as Mal himself might, "Tom, you take that boat. Get in and shove her off. I'll hold him, Tom. I want to see you go. You tell me what it looks like, Tommy, when you get back home."

There was no time to wonder, but later Tommy knew that they both must have been fired by the same bright wish. For no reason, unless you should do what you want to do, Mary wrapped her arms around Mal's middle. There, perhaps, was the way of the world—a turn, and who knows what? Though Tommy was small, with pipestem arms, though he was perfectly sure that Mal could bruise his body, it made no difference. When Mary called to him, his spirit was not afraid. Tommy forgot his shoes were on, though they were the only pair he owned. He sprang into the mud of Welcome River and pushed off the yellow skiff.

Mal had learned a lot of words from the barber shop and from the older boys who hung about the station platform. They burst from him like a pack of exploding firecrackers. It did not take Mal more than fifteen seconds to wrench himself away and spring into the water, but Tommy had seized the sheet rope. A gust of breeze took the sail, and the skiff slid from the shore. Tommy glanced back, afraid, he remembered always, and yet not wholly so. There was the shore of Welcome River as he had always known it, with the ramshackle boathouses and buildings along its edge, just as he had always known them. Yet it seemed to Tommy they were different. He was Ulysses leaving the Cyclops' shore. His crew, in the galley benches, were churning the water of a wine-dark sea. Like the Cyclops, Mal had taken to throwing rocks. One of them whizzed close to Tommy's ear.

“You come back!” shrieked Mal. “I’ll be laying for you! I’ll knock your slats in when you come back!”

Tommy knew Mal was the boy to do it, but in the strange elation which had seized him, Tommy thought nothing of consequences. Mary was standing on the shore, while Mal sought vainly for another stone. The wind was blowing at her dress, and Mary had raised her arm. Her voice came out to him over the breeze, very shrill and high.

“Good-by, Tom! And don’t you be afraid of ’em at Warning Hill!”

And Mary was like Calypso on the shore, as he had read of her in a broken-backed old Odyssey at home. Did Mary Street really know, he sometimes wondered, that he was going on a longer journey?

Tommy Michael trimmed the sail, as the skiff slid from the river to the harbor. Long ago Jim Street, who seemed to have any amount of time, had taught him how to sail a boat. The little waves went slap against the bottom of the skiff. The fresh wind struck him, nearly as moist and cool as spray. As he pushed down the centerboard and plugged it fast, the water made a mysterious sound, like a hundred small soft voices. One of the harbor gulls swooped by him, all gray above and white as a cloud below. A foreign land, all new to him, was dead upon his bow.

Yes, Warning Hill was new to Tommy then. You could not get to it by land any longer, unless you had business there. The road which led to it across the salt marshes had been closed by a gate several years before. If you came too near, a short, red-faced man would emerge from a small house by the gate, dressed in short trousers and gaiters.

“Get out!” he would say. “This ain’t for the likes of you!”

Oh, those were the days when gentlemen were gentlemen. You should have seen him touch his cap when the carriages rolled by! On the whole, however, he must have had a harassed time, because the village boys were always at him, as though they had been called to a holy war. To see the gates shutting you out from Warning Hill was enough to raise your ire, and it puzzled Michael’s Harbor, where old people lived who could remember when Warning Hill was nothing but a wind-swept pasture with a heap of rocks on its highest point, piled there by the Dutch, the story went, for a beacon fire on a stormy night. Those days when Tommy was a boy were so remote in manners if not in time, that people still were puzzled by the vagaries of invaders from the city who took the morning train. Before the Harbor was a suburb there were no barriers of class. Inside the barrier itself

were people who disliked it. One recalls that Mr. Simeon Danforth said, as he stood watching the masons build the posts out of field stones.

"Damme! If we aren't getting soft!" he said. "We're building a Roman wall around our children, but you wait till the Picts come down on us and the Danes strike us from the water."

Mr. Danforth might have said a great deal more, for Mr. Danforth knew. The wall and the gates of Warning Hill epitomized a phase of life itself. In the village and on the hill that age-old struggle ran. Every one was building barriers, struggling, pushing to keep their children safe, in some vain hope that walls would make them better.

Time and again the Picts had come to Warning Hill. There were always boys with spirit enough to break away and to attempt to right the world. Tommy had been there once himself. They had sallied upon the gate like Crusaders skirmishing before the Holy City, six of them, barelegged and muddy, with Mal Street in the lead. Mal Street had been great that day, inspiring every one with his cool courage.

"Hold steady till you see the whites of his eyes!" Mal told them, and he had hit the man in gaiters square on the nose with a rotten apple before they broke for cover.

The waves were striking on the bottom of the skiff—slap-slap—as Tommy held his course to Warning Hill. Now and then a gust of wind would take the skiff with a sudden force, and would make the water sing as water must have sang since the beginning of all time.

"Lay aft there!" Tommy called. "And ease the sheets!"

It was not hard to play the game. You could easily think that there was some one also aboard; his footsteps sounded in the slapping of the water. Tommy could see his own house, over astern to port, gaunt and gray with the elms about it. He could see a smashed window in the cupola and broken shutters, and clothes hanging to dry by the old carriage house, and the bushes near the choked old garden by the beach. His house and everything he knew was slipping too far astern for help. The yellow skiff was very near to Warning Hill.

The houses on the hill had grown very large, all of them like castles. On a stretch of green above him was one of brown rough stones that was larger than the others. Its gray slate roof was a mass of pointed towers. There were balconies in front of its windows, and the lawn came down from it in great

long steps. Tommy looked hastily at the shore line. Everywhere before him were the rocks and rough water.

"Look forward!" called Tommy Michael. It was pleasant to feel that some one else was there.

"Ready about!" called Tommy. "Stand by to beach her!"

Though Tommy was pretending, he could manage a small boat. It was pleasant having things both make-believe and real, because you could slip from one to the other as you pleased. Tommy had seen a place to land where the rocks had dropped away to leave a little strip of sandy beach with a stretch of marsh grass behind it. A minute later Mal Street's skiff nosed into the sand with a flapping sail, and Tommy was shoving in the anchor. Tommy was very careful to make no unnecessary noise. He was sharing the feelings of greater men than he. Balboa would have understood, and old De Soto and Champlain, that Tommy was a brother to them all, as he walked through the marsh grass of a country, where fiddler crabs scuttled to their holes before his step.

Tommy walked forward a little way and stopped, but no one was in sight. There was only the lapping of the harbor waves. Now that he was off the water, the sun was very warm.

"Stand by the ship," said Tommy. "I'm going on ahead."

Nothing answered. Only the waves were splashing on the shore. Before him was a small building, whose door sagged half open, and whose windows were gaping like sightless eyes. Its empty stillness startled him, and a curious something besides, as if something was there, though nothing was there at all. The house, the beach and the marsh made a solitary lonely country, because a row of poplars cut it off from the mainland, like a wall.

"Stand by the ship!" said Tommy. "I'm going through those trees!"

Of all the sights that Tommy Michael was to see, he could never recall one finer than the one which met his eyes.

IX

Tommy was standing upon a lawn. It was magnificently green without a single weed upon it, with every blade of grass exact in height. A freshness of growing things was in the breeze, the scent of flowers and green. It seemed to him that soft hands were touching his face and his rumpled hair as he drew in his breath. He forgot that he was a slender tow-headed little boy, in a faded shirt, torn trousers and muddy shoes, with eyes wide and mouth half open. Far away on the rising ground was the house of brown stones, which he had seen from the water. All about him on the lawn were so many beds of flowers of so many colors and sizes that they seemed to shift and change everywhere he looked. It was ten, twenty times as large as any lawn and garden in Michael's Harbor. Straight toward the brown-stone house, not far from where he stood, was a broad white path, running straight up steps and terraces among the flowers, and on either side of the path were figures of large green animals. Tommy could see an elephant and a lion and a long-necked bird.

"Golly!" said Tommy right out loud. "Every one of 'em made of bushes!"

As he spoke, a voice from behind him answered, "Of course they're made of bushes!"

The voice was soft and clear, like the running of cool water. Tommy could almost believe it was not a real voice at all, until he remembered, as he turned himself about, that the grass was thick and that the wind was blowing. He saw that a little girl was standing not ten feet away, looking at him with dark and level eyes.

She might have been a painting. She had that mysterious power sometimes possessed by a canvas to etch itself upon the memory. The tilt of her nose, the upward twist of her lips, her white frilly dress, her bare legs and socks and shiny little shoes were all a part of an impression and meant nothing in themselves. What Tommy remembered was an unsubstantial something, a lightness in her little body, a glimmer in the depths of her eyes that made you think, should you turn your head, that she might disappear into the sun and dancing shadows. She did not disappear. She even took a step toward him, a light feathery step, and stopped. Her hair was brushed straight down her back like Alice's in Wonderland. She was smiling faintly and that curious light was dancing in her eyes.

“Of course they’re made of bushes,” she said again. “They’re like the box trees in Pliny’s garden.”

Tommy drew in his breath; he had forgotten about the animals by the path.

“Who—who are you?” Tommy said.

“I’m Marianne,” she said. “Marianne Jellett. Who are you?”

Tommy Michael drew another deeper breath. For a moment Tommy came near to running away, for he knew he was in the enemy’s country, once he heard that name. He was vaguely aware of something which was not right, of a disloyalty to memory—and yet he stayed without ever knowing why.

“I guess you don’t know me,” he said. “I’m Tommy Michael.”

She put her head a little to one side, as a bird might, Tommy thought.

“Are you?” said Marianne. “I was just hoping something strange might happen, and nothing strange has ever happened until now. *C’est une bonne chance*—that’s French. Do you know French?”

“I’m going to study it,” said Tommy, “when I go to high school in the fall.”

“I learn it from Miss Meachey,” said Marianne, “she’s my governess, you know—and then I’ve learned some bad words too, from Cléone. She’s mamma’s maid, and sometimes when I don’t have anything else to do, I say them to Henri. He’s our chauffeur, and he’s French too. He thinks they’re ever so funny when I say them.”

She smiled at Tommy faintly. Her voice was exactly like the rippling of a brook, it seemed to Tommy Michael. He could not understand half of what she said. Yet it was so strangely pleasant that he stood there, not knowing what to answer, and it seemed to him again that soft hands were touching his face.

“You like me, don’t you?” Marianne inquired.

Tommy nodded slowly.

“Well, I don’t mind,” said Marianne. She smoothed the ruffles of her dress with a thin little nervous hand, and laughed. It was very pleasant to hear her laugh. It was like the singing of the birds, it seemed to Tommy, and the whispering of the wind.

“I knew you did,” said Marianne, “I could tell.”

“How?” asked Tommy.

“I don’t know, but I could tell,” said Marianne.

Tommy saw that she was looking at him, at his shoes and trousers, and at his sun-bleached shirt. It was that frank unwavering curiosity of a child, which sees everything without the light of charity or expedience. Tommy realized he was as different from her as a being from a different world. Tommy became aware that his shoes were caked with rich salt mud. His trousers, never very passable, were also muddy. Such things had made little difference where he came from, but on that lawn, beside the impeccable whiteness of Marianne, he felt a proper twinge of awkwardness. His shirt, of a sort known as the Garibaldi blouse, was secured about his middle by a string—a “stomach string,” Tommy called it, which he now noticed had become undone and was twining rakishly about his legs. He found himself blushing with a new shame as he endeavored to push it back.

“This isn’t my best clothes,” Tommy explained. “I’ve got a blue suit I wear to church.”

“Oh,” said Marianne, “I don’t mind, but we’d better go and sit under that tree, perhaps. If one of the gardeners came, he might not know what to think.”

“What,” said Tommy, “would he think?”

Yet even then he must have had an inkling of what she meant.

“Oh, nothing,” said Marianne.

She skipped before him, nervously across the grass, now and then looking over her shoulder to see if he would follow, just as Lorna Doone had done in the Valley of the Doones. She stopped beneath a young copper beech with bending branches which nearly touched the grass.

“Sit down,” said Marianne. “It’s—it’s really cooler here.”

She paused and patted the pleats of her dress and looked at him from the corner of her eye.

“It’s funny,” said Marianne, “I know who you are. I’ve seen you lots of times.”

“You’ve seen me?” stammered Tommy, and it seemed a most peculiar thing that she should have ever seen him.

“Yes,” said Marianne, “often when I go driving. I’ve seen you by the gates of that old house with a cupola on top. I’ve wondered who you were.”

Tommy felt his face grow red.

“It’s my house,” he explained. “It may be old, but it’s a pretty big house.”

Then he wondered for the first time, if she had invited him beneath that beech so that no one else might see him. It was not a pleasant thought, but it would not go away.

“What do you do?” asked Marianne.

“Do?” echoed Tommy. “I milk the cow and split the wood, and help my mother inside.”

“Do you?” said Marianne. “I’ve wondered what boys did down there. What else?”

“I work,” said Tommy, “for Mr. Cooper in the bank, running errands, sweeping out in the afternoon, winters, and all day, summers. I’ve got to help at home.”

“Oh,” said Marianne, and that was all. The decorous smoothness of the lawn, everything, seemed to be laughing at Tommy Michael.

Then in that way in which a mind will flash back sometimes, Tommy remembered who she was. It was on the road to Michael’s Harbor long ago. A carriage was coming down that road, with a body of yellow and red panelling upon it, and its wheels made a shining blur. Four bay horses were drawing it. Out of the white dust cloud which eddied about them they lifted their forefeet as though they heard music. A little girl in that carriage was watching him. Her hair was down her back like Alice’s in Wonderland. She wore a tiny hat with ruffles on it.

“Mamma!” Tommy heard her voice above the slapping hoof beats and the rattling of the wheels. “Look, Mamma, is that a common little boy?”

There she was looking at him again, with her hair still down her shoulders. She must have seen something astonishing on his face, for she had stopped smiling.

Tommy remembered, and got slowly to his feet.

“I guess,” said Tommy, “I hadn’t ought to have come here. I guess you never knew anybody like me.”

It was curious, but as he spoke, she looked like any other girl. She was standing beside him. Her lips were parted, small red lips.

"Why?" Her very voice had changed. "I don't know what you mean."

"I guess," said Tommy, "people like you and me ought never to know each other. We'd never know what each other means. I came over here because I remembered something. I hadn't ought to have come."

There was a moment's silence. She looked at him, then looked away, and pulled at the edge of her dress.

"But I want to know you," said Marianne, "and I can know you if I want to."

"No," said Tommy, "I guess you wouldn't want to if you did. I guess I hadn't ought to have come. I'm going now."

"But I want to know you." Music—her voice was like the softest music, and all at once she was gentle and very kind. "Don't you like me?"

Surely any one is very foolish to speak lightly of the intellect of children.

"Yes, I do," said Tommy, "but it wouldn't do any good. You'd only laugh."

"No, I wouldn't." She was strangely eager. "You can come here every day, right by this tree, and no one will ever know, and I'll bring you down ice cream. I don't suppose you often have ice cream."

"I guess you're always used to getting what you want," said Tommy, "from the way you sound. All you kids up here must always get everything you want. I've got to be going now."

Surely Tommy must have had a second sight that afternoon. He only knew much later how used Marianne was to getting what she wanted, even when she had no right.

"But how are you going?" Marianne's mind was always darting back and forth, like something in a cage, when she could not have her own way. "How did you come?"

"In a boat," said Tommy. "I'm going to sail her back."

"To the harbor?" There was more color in her face. "Well, I'm not proud. I'll sail back with you—so there. Patrick is over at the station to meet the train, and he can drive me back, and leave me by the gate, and no one will know a thing about it. He's only bringing a maid."

Often Tommy was to wonder what would have happened if he had told her no. He was standing in that sunny place with his whole life in the balance, though of course he did not know. Does any one ever know until it is too late?

"It won't make any difference," said Tommy, "you'll be proud just the same."

"And I'm going just the same. Where's the boat?" Her eyes were very bright.

"You'll get your dress all dirty," he objected.

"What if I do?" began Marianne. "I've got lots of others.—Oh, Jiminy!"

In the polite school which Marianne attended this was a strong expression. Her voice had dropped to a whisper.

"Jiminy! There's papa! He's coming down the path. We'd better run!"

"Marianne!" some one was calling not very far away. "Marianne!"

"Hurry!" Marianne seized his arm. "Run! He'll be furious if he sees us!"

"Why?" asked Tommy, and he did not stir a step.

"Marianne!" came the voice. "Confound it! Marianne!"

"Won't you run?" Her breath came very fast. "You haven't any business here. You're—oh—you're a village boy!"

That flame in Tommy flared into his face. That last thing Marianne had said was too much for him to bear. In a vague way he felt that it was time for action, and he wrenched away his arm.

"Run away yourself," he answered, and it was all because she had called him a village boy, though it was exactly what he was. He turned his back upon her and walked out from beneath the tree. She said something which he did not hear, but he heard the rustle of her dress, and Marianne had gone. Tommy Michael stood alone upon the sunny turf. He had drunk the wine of life itself, and now, whether he wanted it or not, the wine was in him. Whether he wanted or not, he was out in the sunlight to meet whatever came —and Marianne had run away.

X

A THOUGHT was pulsing through Tommy. It was in the wind about him and in the garden air.

"Come now, Tommy," the thought was saying, "your father wouldn't have been afraid."

That same thought had come to Tommy when he had taken his first high dive off Munsey's bridge, while every one waited to see if he dared, and earlier yet, when he first rode a horse in back of Mr. Marston's livery stable. But now those rustic feats of daring appeared slight tasks before what he was facing. Now he was risking himself for an idea, so half formed that he could not wholly grasp it.

Tommy saw that a short plump man was walking down that path which was lined with bushes cut like animals. He had on a gray suit with beautiful straight creases. His hair was sandy-colored and very thin on top of his head. His face was plump and placid, like a fat man's face, Tommy thought, but not as happy as a fat man's face; his eyes were the same light blue as Marianne's, but you could not see behind them. When he saw Tommy he stopped walking.

"Hello, young man," he said. "What are you doing here?"

"Nothing." Tommy swallowed, and strove to steady his voice. "Just looking around."

"Just looking around, eh?"

The plump little man did not seem angry, or even interested. He did not seem anything at all. Tommy did not guess till years were gone, that Grafton Jellett must have been in a very genial mood that day.

"What are you looking for? And how the devil did you get here?"

"I wanted to see," said Tommy. "I came over in a boat. There isn't any harm, is there, just looking around?"

"Over in a boat, eh? Well, how do you like it?"

"It's not so bad."

"Not so bad, eh?" A ripple of something—you could not tell what—passed over that gentleman's face. "Do you know who I am, son?"

“I guess,” said Tommy, “you’re Mr. Jellett, aren’t you?”

“You guess so, eh? Well, you guess right. And you’re not afraid of me, eh? Well, I own this garden, son.”

“Well,” said Tommy, for he seemed called upon to speak, “we’ve got a garden too.”

“You’ve got a garden too, eh? Well, well. . . . Did you happen to see anything of a little girl down here—about two years younger than you, son?”

“No.” Instinctively he lied. It seemed the proper thing to do, since Marianne had run away.

“Well, well,” said Mr. Jellett, and suddenly he began to chuckle; “and you don’t think the garden is so bad, eh? Not as good as yours, eh, son?”

Tommy’s face grew hot. He could feel, even then, the condescending impoliteness. Mr. Jellett, like Marianne, was amused because he was a poor boy with mud upon his shoes.

“I like our garden better,” Tommy answered, and closed his lips. “It’s got weeds in it, but I like it better.”

Mr. Jellett gave another coughing chuckle.

“Have you got time to see the rest of it, son?” asked Mr. Jellett.

“Yes, I guess so,” Tommy answered.

“You guess so, eh?” said Mr. Jellett. “Come along.”

As they walked side by side, the things that Tommy saw were blurred in his memory, for he knew that Mr. Jellett was laughing at him all the while. That was why, the only reason in the world, why Mr. Jellett let him walk along those paths. There were enormous flowers and miles of paths, it seemed to Tommy, always with flowers along their edges. They passed man after man on hands and knees, weeding and snipping at those flowers, and everything was perfect, without a single weed. Now and then the men would look up when they saw Mr. Jellett and Tommy walking side by side. They walked on shady paths where ferns grew on rocks and water gurgled out of fountains. They walked in the sun where flowers grew like the flames in a driftwood fire, until finally they stopped near that brown-stone house. There was a great stone railing in front of it, surrounding a flat space covered with grass, large enough for all the boys in the Harbor to play ball.

“Come up the steps, son,” said Mr. Jellett, “and you can see it all.”

They walked up the steps, and the garden lay beneath them,—terrace after terrace of garden. Suddenly the gardens seemed to Tommy Michael like a great wall, which was towering high above him.

"How do you like it, son?" asked Mr. Jellett. "Still think it's as good as your garden, eh?"

Tommy drew in his breath, and loyalty gripped him for the things he had always known.

"I like our garden better," he repeated. "We've got some roses too, awful big roses off some of the bushes by the barn."

"Awful big, eh?" said Mr. Jellett. "Well, well, you don't say, and here's my house. I suppose yours is pretty big too, eh?"

"Yes," said Tommy, "our house is pretty big."

Mr. Jellett chuckled again.

"Come inside, son," he said, "and see if it's like your house."

Tommy knew just as well as he knew anything that there was only one reason why Mr. Jellett let him in. Mr. Jellett was diverted by a grubby little boy who was standing by his guns. Now surely that was a cowardly thing to do, as Tommy himself could understand. Who says that children do not understand the niceties of life? A hatred for all the newness and all the splendor of it left Tommy close to tears of helpless anger, and all he could do was let Mr. Jellett chuckle and walk silently beside him.

"After you," said Mr. Jellett. "Here's the hall."

Now heaven knows Mr. Jellett's hall was a terrific place. It was a golden oaken glory which formed a horrid parody of an English country house. The stairs mounted to a gallery with Oriental rugs hanging over its balustrades; and upon the newel post an enormous gilded lady in a nightgown held a lamp. Close beside Tommy a huge open fireplace surrounded by colored tiles gaped like a cave, and on either side of it were two suits of armor. It was all very still and cool and filled with a dustless odor. Mr. Jellett was pointing to some pictures on the yellow oak paneling, close to a great door.

"Turners," said Mr. Jellett. "Turner was a great artist, and there's a Burnes Jones. I like him better myself, and here—" he opened a door —"here's the dining room."

Tommy had a glimpse of a tremendous table and a row of chairs with high pointed backs, and a sideboard as large as a boathouse, all covered with

plates and candlesticks of a yellow metal. They were gold.

"Does it remind you of home, son?" inquired Mr. Jellett.

"No," said Tommy. He could not keep his glance on one thing at a time. "No."

"Doesn't, eh?" said Mr. Jellett. "Well, what do you think of it?"

"It's not so bad," repeated Tommy, and drew his breath in hard. Who says that boys do not know? He could feel the humiliation of it as keenly as though he were a man. He wished he had never come. He wished that Marianne had called the gardeners to chase him home.

"Not so bad, eh?" said Mr. Jellett. "Dear me, now. Come this way, son." He walked across the hall and opened another door. "Here's one of the drawing-rooms."

It was all satin and plush and filled with chairs and tables that had very tiny crooked legs. The floor was as shiny and smooth as glass, and everywhere were mirrors and chandeliers, surrounded by twinkling glass prisms.

"Not so bad either, is it?" said Mr. Jellett. "And here's my library." He opened a door and pushed Tommy ahead of him into another room with bookcases along its walls almost to the ceiling. Through a soft haze of cigar smoke Tommy saw that three gentlemen were seated in soft leather chairs. They all stared at him in a way that made him cold. They all had on rich silk cravats, and enormous gold watch chains decorated their vests, but for a moment their faces were a blur.

"Now what the deuce," one of them said to Mr. Jellett, "have you brought in?"

"A young visitor," said Mr. Jellett. "I've been showing him the house and garden, and he says it's not so bad."

Two of the gentlemen who were younger than the third began to laugh.

"Bully!" cried one. "Perfectly bully!" He was the one who had spoken first, a thin man in a blue suit with a hard brown face. "I'd never have guessed you had a sense of humor, Jellett. But there—something's wrong with him. He doesn't join together."

The other younger man stopped laughing and also became very serious. He leaned over and stared cautiously at Tommy. He was pale; his hair was yellow and parted in the center.

“There actually is something wrong,” he remarked. “What made you bring him in here to spoil my concentration? Am I wrong or am I right? Is something hanging out of him? Am I wrong, or am I right?”

Tommy turned crimson and tugged at his middle. It was his stomach string again.

“Curious,” said the pale gentleman, “most awfully curious. Maybe we all are parting in the middle. It may be the end—to be parted in the middle.”

“Oh, Lord!” said the brown-faced gentleman. “Why won’t you go home, Wilmer?”

Then Tommy knew who the pale gentleman was. The man at the post office frequently spoke of Mr. Horatio Wilmer. They said he was very fast, though Tommy could see nothing speedy about him.

“Now Willie Judkins,” said Mr. Wilmer to the brown-faced man, “it isn’t right to say that. It isn’t kind. If I am not behaving, it is all your fault. Now stop, because you spoil my concentration.”

“Oh, Lord!” repeated Mr. Judkins. “Why won’t you go home? My car can take you. Where’s Marianne, Jellett? Weren’t you going to bring in the child?”

Mr. Jellett indicated Tommy with a stubby forefinger and chuckled.

“I couldn’t find her,” he explained. “I brought him in instead. Tell us about your house, son. He’s got some roses too, and some of them are awful big, down by the barn.”

The third gentleman leaned forward. He had not appeared to be enjoying the conversation, but had sat looking at every one with half closed eyes.

“Oh, dry up, Grafton,” he said. “Of course you’ve got a good garden, but what the devil will it matter in a hundred years?”

He spoke in a hoarse loud voice which made everybody turn to where he sat heavily, as though he had eaten too much to move. He turned his head slowly toward Tommy and raised a heavy hand.

“Sit down, boy,” he said, “and have a drink. Jellett, ring the bell and get him ginger ale. You asked him into your house, didn’t you? Then show your manners. Go on, Jellett, ring the bell.”

“I was just going to, of course,” said Mr. Jellett. “What’ll you have, son, ginger ale?”

A man had come to the door. Tommy knew enough to realize he was a butler.

“Ginger ale for the young man,” said the heavy gentleman, twisting a pair of gray mustaches. “Haven’t I seen you somewhere, boy? Don’t you work in the bank?”

Tommy nodded. A glass was in front of him, but he did not touch it. Everybody kept looking at him.

“What doing, boy?”

Tommy wished the heavy gentleman would not be kind, because kindness made it worse.

“What Mr. Cooper tells me,” said Tommy. “He had me work for him ever since my father died. We’ve got to work at home.”

“I’m sure Mr. Jellett can understand that,” remarked the heavy gentleman. “He used to do what people told him, too. And what’s your name, boy? My name’s Danforth, Simeon Danforth, since our host doesn’t introduce us.”

“Confound it, man!” Mr. Jellett’s face was different, Tommy could see, though it appeared as placid as ever. “How do I know what his name is? I picked him up in the garden. He’d sailed over the harbor in a skiff, and when he said the garden was not so bad—”

Mr. Danforth nodded sympathetically.

“Oh, quite all right with me, Grubby,” he said. “Don’t let it bother you for a moment. What is your name, boy?”

“It’s Michael,” said Tommy. “Thomas Jefferson Michael.”

For some reason Mr. Jellett seemed surprised, though his face looked just the same. In fact, every one seemed surprised.

“Michael, eh?” he said. “You’re not the son of Alfred Michael?”

Mr. Danforth coughed behind his hand, and shook the ice in his glass. Mr. Wilmer aroused himself.

“Michael?” he said. “Michael? Why, they’re the ones who won’t sell you that land, eh, what? That beach land, eh, what? Won’t some one tell me? It spoils my concentration!”

“Oh, Wilmer,” said Mr. Judkins, “do shut up!”

Mr. Jellett, however, did not seem disturbed. His concentration, at any rate, was perfect.

"And Mr. Cooper has you work in the bank?" he inquired. "Well, well—how much does he pay you, son?"

And now, at last, Tommy could speak proudly without pretending.

"Eight dollars a week," he answered, "when I'm not in school. I don't know what they'd do at home, if it weren't for me."

"Eight dollars," said Mr. Jellett, "is a lot of money." In later years Tommy learned to recognize the exact inflection of Mr. Jellett. He spoke as others might speak of the wind and tide and other laws of nature, with heads bowed before inexorable fact. It was the way in which very rich men always spoke of money, Tommy was to learn. The smaller the sum, the greater would be their reverence, because of course it was a symbol, like the rune on a pagan sword.

"Yes," said Mr. Jellett, "eight dollars is a lot of money." And he looked ahead of him at nothing and pursed his lips. Mr. Wilmer seized the occasion to giggle like a boy in church in the midst of prayer.

"Say it again," Mr. Wilmer begged; "oh, please, now, say it."

"Oh, Wilmer," said Mr. Judkins, "*do shut up*!"

Mr. Jellett seemed to rouse himself from a daydream.

"I don't see what's amusing," he said mildly, "when I remark that eight dollars is a lot of money."

For some reason every one fell silent. All those three gentlemen looked at Mr. Jellett curiously and soberly, as though waiting for something to happen next, but nothing happened. Mr. Jellett sat down in a leather chair, and at almost the same moment a door opened, admitting a tired-looking young man with a small mustache.

"The office is on the wire, sir," he said. Mr. Jellett rose.

"All right, Hewens." His gaze rested on Tommy, as though Tommy were a piece of misplaced furniture. "Show this young man out, will you? Good-by, son."

Mr. Jellett should have known. He had not been stupid, when he was young. Tommy could read what Mr. Jellett meant, which was something he did not say. He meant, "I'm through with you. Get out, you little snipe."

“Come on. This way!” said the tired young man. He meant, “Come on, you dirty little village boy.”

Yes, Tommy had sense enough to see, if the rest of them did not. They were putting him out of that house like a tramp, after inviting him inside. There was reason enough for his lips to close tight and for his eyes to grow wet and bright. His pride could not hold back what lay within him, as he ran down those broad stone steps from the terrace toward the mass of color from those garden beds. Tears sprang to his eyes; his shoulders shook. And there was the end of his voyage in a boat with a sail to a strange, far land. It was ending as many a voyage has ended—in a wild longing for what lay behind—for his own place where the wind was gentle in the elms and nothing was new, where weeds grew high upon the drive, and paint blistered on warped clapboards, and friendly voices called him from porches along the village street.

Then, as though a hand had fallen on his shoulder, Tommy Michael stopped his running and turned toward the brown-stone house, and said the most ridiculous thing.

“You just wait! I’ll be as rich as you some day!”

XI

THE tide had risen over the small sandy beach, so that the skiff was afloat; not that it made any difference to Tommy, in the bitterness which had fallen on his spirit. As Tommy passed that tumble-down shack by the beach, he was startled by some one calling. He had forgotten Marianne, but there she was, slender and eager in her ruffled dress.

"Why didn't you hurry?" said Marianne, with her lips curved slightly downward. "Aren't you going to sail me across the harbor the way you said?"

All Tommy's hatred veered like a weathercock, and centered on Marianne. He splashed into the water, shoes and all, and snatched up the anchor.

"Come on, then, if you like. Climb aboard, if you're not afraid of getting wet!"

"Wait!" called Marianne. "How can I get out there? Wait till I take off my shoes!"

"I won't wait!" She must have caught a hint of his anger, for she gave a startled cry. "Climb in or stay out! What do I care about your shoes?"

The water was nearly at his knees when he scrambled over the skiff's side, and snatched at the tiller and the sheet. Marianne was angry too, so angry that she waded out and climbed in beside him. Her dress was wet; she had bruised her leg, and she was crying. How was Tommy to know that never, *never* had any one spoken so to Marianne before?

"You nasty boy!" How hard and shrill her voice was! Marianne had her own fits of temper. "Only a—" she thought hard for a word and found it—"a mucker would treat a girl like that!"

A gust of wind caught the sail. The skiff heeled over on her beam. With a shriek Marianne clutched Tommy's shoulder.

"Say that again," said Tommy, "and I'll tip us both over, and then see how you like it!" And for the first time in Marianne's career, she did not answer back. Not that she was afraid. She was so angry that there seemed nothing at all to say. She was so angry that her lips set tight like Tommy's, and her thin little fingers closed tight on the side of the skiff. Gladly would

she have let him tip them over, if she had thought that Tommy would have drowned.

"I hate you—hate you!" whispered Marianne.

Without her telling, Tommy Michael knew she hated him, and the knowledge that he was strong enough to make some one hate filled him with a most unholy joy.

"What do I care?" He gave the sheet a jerk. "I hate you too. I hate your garden, and your house and everything in it, and your father, if you want to know."

They were tacking up Welcome River before she spoke again.

"I hate you—hate you!" repeated Marianne.

Perhaps because he hated himself by then, Tommy did not answer, and what was worse, he felt like crying right before a girl.

"What's that?" said Marianne. "There's some one shouting at you from the shore."

Tommy looked forward. Mal Street was standing up to his knees in the water. Until that moment he had forgotten about Mal.

"Come ashore, you yellow-bellied thief!" Mal's shout rang very clear across the water. "Yeh! Come ashore! I'll teach you to steal my boat!"

Marianne's eyes flashed. She looked at Tommy in a way that no one else had looked.

"Ugh!" said Marianne. "I might have known you stole the boat. I'm glad I can see him beat you for it, too!"

Tommy did not answer, but Marianne's voice was enough. It struck him like a whip. He put up the helm and drove straight for the shore. Almost before the skiff grounded in the mud, Tommy and Mal Street were rolling in that doubtful element, clawing, scratching, biting, without regard for chivalry and rules. Tommy Michael was no longer afraid. Dimly he could hear Marianne's shrieks and the barking of the water spaniels, but only dimly, for he was filled with a new magic—the magic which knows no pain. He did not know that Mal had pulled out a handful of his hair. He only knew that Mal was under him, and that he was striking Mal Street's face. He could feel the thud every time he drove his fist.

"Oh!" shrieked Marianne. She had forgotten half her anger in the glory of an unknown sight. "Get up! Do get up and hit him!"

And Mal did his best with all the knowledge of a boy who has risked his body in a hundred frays. And there was a sight for you, the story of which, one recalls, shook all Michael's Harbor. Marianne Jellett from Warning Hill, in a dress which was made in Paris, was standing in the mud of the Street dooryard with shining eyes and restless, parted lips. Surely it was a thing to remember, a revolt against all propriety and law.

Something pulled Tommy Michael up, and Tommy, willing still, struck out blindly, until all at once he perceived he was no longer struggling with Mal, but with a man. Mr. Street had a hold on Tommy's shirt. When the shirt began to tear, quickly he threw another arm around him.

"Easy, Tom," said Mr. Street. "Easy with them hands!" It was like coming to the surface of deep water to hear him. Mr. Street was never upset by such affairs. "I wouldn't have pulled you off, but I guess Mal's had enough."

There was no doubt for once, at least, that Mal had had enough. A cloud was rolling from Tommy's consciousness. He could see the sun again, and the litter of the dooryard. Mal was getting to his knees, and was rubbing a fist across his mouth, and the way Mal looked was most astounding. Mal was staring at Tommy as though he saw a ghost.

"Did I lick him?" Tommy was very hoarse.

"Yes," said Mr. Street gently, "yes, sir. You licked him, Tom. I didn't think it was in you—but you're like your father, a dead game sport, and there's something in sports, I guess."

Thus, in his languid way, Mr. Street unburdened himself of his knowledge of the world, and though it came largely from gutters and back alleys and a logging camp or two, and from the forecastle of a tramp steamer, it had the same justice as Mr. Jellett's statement that eight dollars is a lot of money. Mal did not say a single word, but he must have known, as Tommy knew, that something strange had happened that afternoon—that Tommy Michael was not the boy who had sailed across the harbor an hour or two before. As Tommy Michael sometimes said, it seemed that he had stepped into a land he had always feared and hated, and had stood in it alone and entirely unafraid. For once, there was no need of thinking, or of calling on phantom crews. For once he had his footing on the hard ground of fact.

"Hey?" said Mr. Street, "what's that you're saying, Tom?"

"My father," Tommy spoke distinctly, "my father said I'd do it some day."

It only went to show that Alfred Michael had died in the nick of time. Yet for Tommy he would be a splendid figure always, in a checked suit, with lightly swinging cane and a bushy brown mustache.

"Say now," gasped Mr. Street. His attention was no longer centered on Tommy. "May you strike me down!"

Jim Street was staring at Marianne, much as Tommy had first stared. His hand dropped limply from Tommy's shoulder. "Where'd she come from?"

Tommy had forgotten Marianne. Now that he saw her again, he was no longer angry. She should not be there, he suddenly knew, and he took a step toward her. Marianne was staring, in the same wide-eyed way that she had stared when they first met on Warning Hill.

"She came over in the boat," he said. "Come on, Marianne."

"All right," said Marianne, and gazed at Tommy with wide, admiring eyes.

"Over in the boat!" echoed Mr. Street stupidly. "May you strike me down—if she ain't Jellett's girl!"

Tommy was about to speak again, when he was interrupted by the tooting of a horn and the barking of the spaniels. If a fiery chariot had descended from the sky, it would hardly have been stranger than the sight which met his eyes. An automobile, all red paint and brass, with a man in uniform at its wheel, was in Mr. Street's yard, between the woodpile and the barn. The ducks were scuttling from it, and a hen was squawking. The automobile was panting and shaking, as such machines once did in the early days of motors, like a dog after a furious race. A man was descending from it, a plump little man, who gave one of the dogs a kick.

"Marianne!" he shouted. "Marianne!"

It was Mr. Grafton Jellett, but Mr. Jellett's face was no longer tranquil. He came toward them, panting and red, somewhat like the automobile itself.

"Marianne!" he said. "Get into that car!"

And then he walked straight toward Tommy Michael.

"You dirty little liar," he said.

Tommy's knees grew weak. His mouth was very dry. He was glad that Mr. Street spoke before he could. Mr. Street straightened his shoulders and pulled at the neck of his shirt. The actual sight of Mr. Jellett in his dooryard had quelled him temporarily, but Jim Street had a wild streak, as all the

neighbors said. The neighbors heard his answer too, from open windows, and from the edge of the road, which perhaps was why the news spread so fast over Michael's Harbor.

"Now that don't go!" said Mr. Street, "Tommy ain't a liar. I've known him since he was that high."

Mr. Jellett looked at him blankly; his eyes were stony blue.

"That's enough, Street," he said. "I asked him where my daughter was, and he said he didn't know."

Mr. Street grinned and thrust his hands in his pockets.

"Did you think he was elopin' with her?" he inquired.

Then Mr. Jellett no longer seemed angry. It was surprising how quickly Mr. Jellett could grow calm.

"That will do," said Mr. Jellett evenly. "Now listen to me—carefully. You've had it coming for some time—and any one in the road outside there, come in and listen. I've heard what you've been saying in town about me, Street, and I don't give a damn for it—understand? I know what you think I'm doing to the Michaels. It's what every one thinks about people who are rich, isn't it? Simply because I've offered several times to buy a piece of land from an old woman and a widow, you make it into melodrama. That's rot. There's too much popular rot. I'm living here peacefully. I'm paying taxes, as heavy as any one can assess, and I won't be disturbed, and I won't have a piece of property next mine that's a nuisance. You make anything out of that you want to—and be damned to you."

"You needn't blame Tom," said Mr. Street. "He don't know anything about it. They've seen to that."

"Very well, I've told you." Mr. Jellett might have been speaking about the weather. "I'm tired of all this nonsense—and I can take measures to have it stopped."

Mr. Street may have been an undesirable character, but for once he expressed a sentiment which was growing very prevalent. He pulled a hand from his pocket, and doubled up a heavy fist.

"Hell!" said Mr. Street. "I ain't afraid of you. I know what you used to be—a checker in a coal mine, by Jings! Hell! you rich fellers want to own the earth! What harm does it do you to have a poor woman's property next yours? It gets in your craw when some one else has what you want—that's

what. I know your kind. You're the sort that gets so set you'll kill. You'll grind down widows and orphans! You'll—"

Mr. Jellett tapped Mr. Street's arm with a plump forefinger.

"Don't you forget one thing," he said. "I know toughs, Street, and I have enough on you, if I want to use it, to have you put out of town, just like that. I don't have to pull you apart to see the way you work, Street. Now don't make any more speeches, because I know exactly how you feel. Ho, hum . . . I'm sorry I made a scene. Where's young Master Michael? Oh, there you are. Don't come on my place again, if you know what's good for you. It's much better to keep where you belong."

Tommy Michael found his voice. Mr. Jellett should have noticed then that Tommy was not afraid, as Mal Street might have been.

"You wouldn't say that," said Tommy, "if I was as big as you!"

Mr. Jellett did not bother to answer. Instead he climbed slowly into the automobile. The engine spluttered and the gears began to grind. Mr. Street's face was scarlet and his eyes were bright as coals.

"Get out of my yard," roared Mr. Street. "You don't own that!"

Already the automobile was moving from the yard in a haze of rich blue smoke, when Mal Street gave a loud derisive shout. Mal seemed entirely recovered, and he obeyed his smoldering instincts as he always would, without a second thought. He snatched up a piece of marsh mud and sent it hurtling on its way. It struck Mr. Jellett's hat and knocked it to the road, but the automobile did not stop.

"Good boy, Mal," said Mr. Street.

And Tommy understood why Mr. Street, ever after that, hated Mr. Jellett worse than he had before.

XII

At the poker tables on Warning Hill of a Saturday night, it used to be a marvellous thing to see the faces beneath the swinging lamps, when the cigar smoke grew thick and steady fingers flicked out chips across the soft green cloth. Young Wilmer, as you might expect, could not conceal a thing in that great game of ours, which was so much like life. His hand would begin to shake very early in the session. His eyes and cheeks would glow. Neither could Horatio Judkins hide the signal flags, though he secretly prided himself that his face was an iron mask. On the other hand, Mr. Simeon Danforth could sit for six hours, weary and urbane, gently sipping from the tall glass by his side; and as for Grafton Jellett, a veil would descend upon him which never broke or shivered. To see him leaning back in his chair, with the lower buttons of his dinner vest undone, and his thick neck sunk deep into his high collar, staring vacantly at those beautiful mustaches of his adversaries, which still adorned a poker face in the early nineteen hundreds, you would have said he was very stupid, and though that stupidity of Grafton Jellett's was a great deal too good to be true, and though every one on Warning Hill knew better—in one way, after all, you might not have been so wholly wrong.

It was a very stupid thing that Grafton Jellett did, when he clamped the screws down tight upon the Michael house, as he did after that fateful day by Welcome River. There must have been a blind side to him, or he would have seen the way it looked, but that was the trouble with Warning Hill. So many of them did not see and did not even try. There was a serene indifference in kindly folk, miraculously removed from all the pulsing heat and fear which lurks behind the simple act of living. They did not mean to be unkind, for, after all, how could they be, when they could not understand? Grafton Jellett himself did not think of the unkindness of it. He had lost that power long ago of projecting himself into other people's minds because he did not need it in taking his own straight course.

He did not hate Tommy, or old Sarah, or Estelle Michael. It was worse than that, because he did not think of them at all. It was that urbane, impersonal disregard that made it nearly right to think anything of Grafton Jellett that one chose. And thoughts were free. What were thoughts to Grafton Jellett, who did not give a damn?

Cléone was the one who told what Mrs. Jellett said when Marianne got home that day—bright-eyed, vivacious Cléone, who fixed the cushions behind Helena Jellett's head. Cléone told Edward Street, who was pressing Mr. Jellett's clothes, and so it got beyond the gates.

"My dear," said Helena Jellett to Marianne, "I think it's time we had a little talk, my dear, about people. Cléone, *levez la fenêtre un peu mais—mais* —Marianne, what is 'take care' in French?"

"*Prenez garde*," said Marianne.

That weary frankness of her mother's Marianne always liked. Helena never put on airs before her children, because, perhaps, she knew there was no need.

"*Prenez garde*, Cléone, *au courant d'air*. Sit down, Marianne, on the little stool. *Mon Dieu*, Cléone, don't open the *fenêtre* quite so wide. . . . Now, Marianne, I've seen a lot of people—particularly before your dear papa and I were married, and when people reach a certain position they become entirely different. I've noticed it so often and I don't ask you to understand, because I'm sure I don't. We're different from most other people, particularly people like those you saw this afternoon. We act differently; we do things differently; and we see things differently—so the less you have to do with such people, the happier you'll be. Dear me . . . you may understand why I'm so emphatic some day. Cléone, *donnez-moi une cigarette*!"

"Oh, Mamma," Marianne gave a small shiver of delight, "are you going to smoke a cigarette?"

Those were the days when such a gesture from a lady was enough to shock you, but Helena Jellett smiled tolerantly.

"Yes, my dear," she said, "I've never minded much what people think—most people. *Merci*, Cléone."

She blew a cloud softly toward the ceiling through delicately pursed lips. Her hand, holding the cigarette, was exquisite. The fingers tapered softly like Marianne's. Her arm from which her gown slid back was like an arm in alabaster. With half-closed eyes Helena examined Marianne through that thin curtain of smoke.

"My dear," she said, "you're not going to be bad looking. You'll look like me, thank heaven!"

“But, Mamma,” said Marianne. Naturally she did not care what her mother said about being good-looking, because she knew as much already. “Mamma, I don’t see, just the same, why I can’t know Tommy if I want to.”

Her mother sighed and blew another cloud of smoke.

“*Donnez-moi* the ash tray, Cléone,” she said. “No—no, not there—on the little teakwood table. Now listen to me, my dear. I’ve always done everything I wanted—particularly when I was little. I wanted not to learn my French. I wanted not to improve myself. I’m not saying I didn’t enjoy it—but just the same, my dear, I shouldn’t endeavor to know people outside my class, if I were you. It is one of the things I wanted to do which I have most frequently regretted. I rather think one can’t help regretting it eventually. See them if you like when you get older, but laugh at them, Marianne. You’ll be very disappointed if you take them seriously—and now run along. If I’m not mistaken, that’s your dear papa tapping on my door.”

Sure enough it was Grafton Jellett. He walked into the room softly as, Cléone noticed, was his habitual way when he entered madame’s boudoir, not debonairly like a gentleman of the world, as surely monsieur should have been, but as though he had a fear of the powders and perfumes and other articles of the toilette.

“Helena,” he said, “are you smoking again? I wish you wouldn’t, Helena.”

“Grafton,” said Helena, “I wish you wouldn’t be so boringly *bourgeois*.”

At this juncture Cléone noticed that monsieur permitted himself just the suspicion of a frown.

“Helena,” he said, “what were you saying to Marianne?”

Now madame, Cléone had reason to know, was very *beau monde*. It was a pleasure to make the service for madame.

“I was advising her not to associate out of her class, Grafton dear. Cléone, a glass of water, please.”

Any friend with sympathy may be sure that Cléone came back as quickly as possible with the water. She could not guess what madame had said in her absence but truly it must have been something *épatant*. Monsieur’s face was somewhat suffused and what small amount of sandy hair which he possessed was disarranged, possibly because Monsieur had permitted his hands to run through it.

“I’m glad you think it’s so—damned funny,” monsieur was saying.

“Now Grafton,” said Madame, “please, not before the servants, Grafton. Oh, dear me, why are you always boring? It’s such a ridiculous affair.”

Ah, those were the days when sleeves billowed like balloons and skirts still made what polite observers called a frou-frou when ladies walked across the floor, and little baskets were invented to cover carriage wheels when ladies went to drive. Yet surely Grafton Jellett must have found that all the yards of silk and laces which were invoiced on the bills did not temper a single whit the sharpness of a lady’s tongue. He was not the only one to feel it that afternoon, however, because of course Cléone repeated the whole conversation. It was marvellous how bits of gossip used to travel through the gates of Warning Hill. Long before Tommy Michael knew who she was, he knew what Mrs. Jellett had said. It all, to Mrs. Jellett, was a ridiculous affair, when it came to forcing the Michaels to sell their beach. . . .

But it was not ridiculous to Mr. Joseph Cooper, whatever they might have thought on Warning Hill, for Mr. Cooper could understand what went on in simple minds. He had learned it in a hard school of his own, where emotion must give way to common sense, and whence materials were drawn for lurid barn-storm melodrama. Mr. Cooper had seen a dozen farms back in the country go under the auction hammer, while men stared blankly at unpainted walls and women wept, but they had not been friends of his. That was what made the Michael business hard. The Michaels were friends of his, and he knew what people would say downtown.

Promptly at four o’clock on Sunday afternoon, just a day after that fray by Welcome River, Mr. Cooper walked between the gateposts of the Michael driveway. Tommy could remember it perfectly, because the day had marked a great event already.

That morning, after church, Tommy had told his mother everything that had happened on Warning Hill. She had led him into the old front parlor where Thomas Michael had so often stormed at Alfred, and Aunt Sarah had listened too. Aunt Sarah was sitting there like a distant reminder of something which was past, a gnarled old piece of furniture, which had the gift of speech. Her hands moved mechanically at her knitting with an even, dogged skill. Aunt Sarah could carry the most elaborate stitches in her head —knit one, purl one—purl three, so swiftly and so endlessly that every month Tommy would bring a package of Aunt Sarah’s knitting to the dry-goods store for sale. All the time that Tommy spoke—in a loud tone, so that she might hear—Aunt Sarah kept on knitting.

“Hey?” Aunt Sarah would say occasionally, and Tommy would repeat politely the sentence he had said before, always with that suspicion that Aunt Sarah had heard him the first time well enough.

His mother had sat with her head bent forward, very thin and pale in her rusty alpaca dress, with her hands, reddened and chapped, folded tightly in her lap. Only once she interrupted.

“You are as good as any of them. Don’t forget it, Tom.”

When Tommy had finished Aunt Sarah spoke.

“Tell him the whole of it, Estelle. Only don’t, for goodness’ sake, be bitter, the way you always get. Ho—ho—ho—you’re always bitter.”

And Estelle Michael, her lips tight, her eyes flashing, told about the beach and how his father died.

“It was an accident,” his mother had said, looking at Aunt Sarah hard.

“Hey?” said Aunt Sarah. “Yes—of course it was an accident.” And then she added a remark which others might have thought surprising. “You keep away from those Jelletts, Tom. They’re a bad lot, and not the same as you. Now, Estelle, why will you always be getting bitter?”

Tommy was thinking strange thoughts, when Mr. Cooper came up the drive that Sunday afternoon, which seemed to scud across his mind like clouds across the sun. They were unpleasant and half-formed, those thoughts, exactly like clouds mounting in the west before a heavy storm. When Tommy saw Mr. Cooper he put down his ax by the woodpile where he had been splitting stove wood, and came towards him.

Mr. Cooper was growing stouter, and his head and face had changed little from earlier times. The skin was slightly looser, especially around the jaws, making the beginning of curious little wrinkles. Mr. Cooper had a large handkerchief in his hand which he occasionally passed over his forehead.

“Tom,” said Mr. Cooper, “why did you sling that piece of mud at Mr. Jellett?”

“I didn’t sling it,” answered Tommy.

“Then who did?” asked Mr. Cooper. “Of course I said you didn’t—understand.”

“So you’ve come about that?” said Tommy. “Well, I won’t say.”

“None of your sass, Tom,” said Mr. Cooper. “Is your mother in?”

Already his mother had opened the old front door, and once they were in the hall, Mr. Cooper took her hand.

“Estelle,” he said, “you’re looking dreadful ill.”

Tommy looked quickly at his mother. But she seemed exactly as he always remembered her, her face thin and transparently white, and her hands very slender.

“I’m well enough, I guess, Joe,” his mother said.

Tommy had never seen Mr. Cooper look as oddly as he did in their dim front hall. His face had puckered in the strangest way, and he kept looking at his mother.

“Estelle,” he said, “why will you keep on with this when I—I—?”

It surprised Tommy to see his mother smile. She looked up at Mr. Cooper and her hand was still in his.

“Now don’t begin talking nonsense, Joe,” she said, “it won’t do a bit of good—for me.”

Mr. Cooper rubbed his handkerchief across his forehead. He seemed very much disturbed. He still seemed disturbed when he entered the parlor and gazed at its tarnished lace curtains and at its rug worn full of holes. The parlor had been looking very badly lately, even Tommy could see. The water had leaked through the frames of one of the tall windows, causing a great piece of heavy wall paper to peel. The bottoms of several of the chairs were broken and the upholstery was badly frayed.

“My goodness,” said Mr. Cooper, “I used to think this room was the grandest sort of place. Good afternoon, Miss Michael!”

“Didn’t expect to see me about, did you, Joe?” inquired Aunt Sarah. “Well, well, I’m not dead yet. I get up and downstairs every day.”

Aunt Sarah gave you the most creepy sort of feeling now and then. To Tommy, who had known her always, she was like the Michael house, devoid of any other personality, except what lay beneath the leaking roof. She was a part of the house, speaking for everything else, telling when it all was new, even to the ornaments upon the mantel and the pictures of the Roman Forum on the wall.

“Yes, yes, I can recall you, Joe, playing in the garden with our Alfred. You used to stuff with cookies. You were a greedy boy.”

Mr. Cooper endeavored to laugh. He sat down cautiously upon a wicker chair, which groaned protestingly beneath his weight.

"So I was," said Mr. Cooper, and when he began to speak he did it so rapidly that you might have thought he had learned everything he had to say exactly like a piece in school. The wrinkles on his face, Tommy saw, tightened, and relaxed with every word.

"Times have changed a lot since then. I wonder if you know how much they've changed—gas lighting everywhere downtown and an electric car line, and trains that only take an hour and a quarter to get you to New York. We used to be a sleepy sort of village. And now we're a suburb and—" Mr. Cooper nodded his head very slowly, "we can't stop it—none of us. I'm going to talk business. Do you want Tommy here?"

"Hey?" said Aunt Sarah.

"Move nearer and speak louder," said Estelle Michael. "Yes, Tommy's old enough to stay. You've been kind to Tom, Joe. I don't know what we'd do if you hadn't given Tommy work."

Evidently Mr. Cooper felt averse to speaking louder. He drew out his handkerchief and mopped his head.

"I wish," he said, and his voice was different. "I wish you could see Mr. Jellett in a generous way, like you ought to."

"Hey?" Aunt Sarah set down her knitting. "Jellett? So that's why you've come. I thought that was why."

"Now listen," Mr. Cooper spoke louder. "I've been friends, haven't I? I've done my best—because—because—it hurts to see good folks going down hill. Look at this house—look at the grounds. You can't go on like this—I don't know how you do it, anyway—honestly I don't, when I know what you have to live on. Now, Estelle, I've come here as a friend to-day. You've got to believe I've come here as a friend."

"Yes," said Estelle Michael; "of course, I know you do."

"Hey?" said Aunt Sarah suddenly. "I guess you'd be out talking to Estelle in the kitchen, if it wasn't something else."

Tommy could only understand half of what they were saying, although he was fourteen. The changing tones made more impression on him than the words.

“It’s about that beach land up to Warning Hill. You can’t keep it, when Mr. Jellett’s bound he’ll have it.”

Tommy had noticed Mr. Cooper was prone to speak incorrectly when he became excited. As Mr. Cooper spoke, he saw his mother’s lips close tight. All around the room invisible strings seemed to tighten.

“Well,” Aunt Sarah said, “you talk to me. I own that land.”

Tommy was looking at his mother. A sharp little sigh slipped from her as if she had been hurt.

“Aunt Sarah,” she said, “now won’t you listen? Joe’s doing his best.”

“I’m listening,” said Aunt Sarah. “You be quiet, Estelle!”

Aunt Sarah spoke as though his mother were a little girl, and just as though she was a little girl, she was quiet. She was afraid of Aunt Sarah, it seemed to Tommy, just as he was afraid; and Mr. Cooper, too, did not seem wholly at his best. Perhaps, as Tommy sometimes thought, he already knew that nothing could shake Aunt Sarah. When Mr. Cooper sat in his favorite room in the bank he was large and calm and cool, but now he did not seem to know exactly what to say.

“No, Miss Michael,” Mr. Cooper cleared his throat as if something impeded his speech. “I know the way you look at it, but Mr. Jellett does not feel the same. He may not understand the way I do. He has too many other affairs to think about, but he means to do right. He came to see me yesterday and he sent me to say he’ll give six thousand dollars for those two acres of beach. Now think of it, Miss Michael, six thousand dollars, and he says it is his last offer. Now think of it, Miss Michael. Alfred was ready to take five.”

At the sound of such an enormous sum there was a silence in the Michael parlor. The old velvet hangings on the wall seemed to shake, and Tommy saw his mother’s hand was trembling, as she sat looking at him. He heard Mr. Cooper breathe deeply. There was a creaking in the hall outside, as old houses will sometimes creak, which sounded exactly like a footstep. You could almost think that some one had strode across the hall and was standing by the parlor door.

“Hey?” said Aunt Sarah at length. “Six thousand dollars?”

“Now, Miss Michael,” Mr. Cooper spoke hastily, “it’s more than it is worth. You can’t go wrong to take it. Think of Estelle, think of your grandnephew! Can’t you forget a piece of spite, Miss Michael—or sentiment, if you want to call it that?”

Then his mother spoke suddenly—the first and only time that Tommy had ever known her to beseech.

"Can't you do it? Can't you? I'm so tired—and can't you think of Tom?"

"You be quiet, Estelle," Aunt Sarah's head tossed back. "You never cared for Alfred and that shows it! Don't it matter to you to have pride?"

She was not an old woman for a moment; her face was like old Thomas Michael's in the portrait by the stairs.

Now what made Mr. Cooper angry Tommy did not guess, until, long afterwards, he knew that Joe Cooper had known his mother years before. Perhaps he never rightly guessed the strain under which Mr. Cooper was laboring, or he might have forgiven Mr. Cooper for what he said out of charity, instead of remembering always, with bitterness fresh distilled, that it was Joe Cooper with his fat red face who rent the veil of illusion and tarnished everything Tommy thought was bright.

"Pride?" said Mr. Cooper. "Pride, is it?" Mr. Cooper was a coarse man whose life had made him coarser. "What you see to be proud of in Alfred Michael's more than I can guess. Why should you hang on to anything out of sentiment for him? What has he ever done for you except lose your money? What's he ever done?"

Aunt Sarah pulled herself forward in her chair.

"You be quiet," she said. "We all knew Alfred, Joe—and Tommy's here."

Oh, the way that children learn! You cannot hide a truth from children without its appearing noiseless as a shadow at some unexpected time, and striking with a careless angry word. Perhaps Joe Cooper would never have said it except for an old woman's stubbornness, but Tommy was bound to learn. Mr. Cooper was speaking of his father, yet nothing struck him down, and no one said a word in his defense. That was the worst of it. No one said a word. His mother sat white-faced and silent. Aunt Sarah's thin blue-veined hands lay motionless on the arms of her chair.

"And what if Tommy is here?" Mr. Cooper cleared his throat again, and Tommy stood quietly on the torn old carpet, and his eyes were very wide. "Ain't it time he knew what his father was? I want to know why any one should suffer out of sentiment for a man who never did a decent thing by anybody. Now, Miss Michael, I've been doing what I could. Mr. Jellett's offered you six thousand, and he's bound to have that beach. Won't you take it, ma'am? If Mr. Jellett wants something, you can't stop him."

“Hey?” said Aunt Sarah. “What’ll he do if I don’t sell?”

“If you don’t sell, ma’am,” Mr. Cooper had difficulty in keeping his voice pitched high, “he’s going to make the town put it on sale. He knows there’s five years back taxes on it.”

“Ho—ho!” said Aunt Sarah. “Does he? I guess I know where he found that out. Well, he won’t get it while I’m above the ground. I’ll pay up the taxes. We can manage, with what Tommy makes, I wouldn’t wonder.”

Mr. Cooper shifted his weight on his chair so that it creaked; and drew out his handkerchief to mop his forehead.

“Miss Michael,” he said, “I guess I can’t keep Tommy any more.”

“You can’t?” Suddenly Tommy’s mother spoke with that strange energy of hers whenever Tommy’s name was mentioned. “What’s wrong with Tom?”

When Mr. Cooper turned to face her he was very red indeed.

“He took the Jellett girl across in a boat, and he chucked a piece of mud right square at Mr. Jellett’s neck—and Jellett found he was working in the bank. I couldn’t keep him after that.”

“You can’t!” A bright spot stood out on his mother’s cheeks. “And he put you up to getting rid of Tom? Haven’t you spine enough to say you won’t?”

There was nothing tired about Tommy’s mother then. That flame of energy in her which was never quenched was so real to Tommy that he could feel the force of it; and a strength, infinitely greater than his own, seemed to hold him up. Estelle Michael was the one who gave Tommy his streak of hardness and his flash of fire.

“Now there,” Mr. Cooper wriggled in his chair. “Don’t you see, Estelle? I’ve done what I could. I even paid him more than he was worth, and Jellett was mad enough, too, when he found it out. I can’t go against Jellett. He controls the bank stock. You ought to know that. Jellett’ll fix it so no one’ll dare have Tom work for them, even if they want. He owns half the town or *can* own it. You can’t go against Jellett; Miss Michael, won’t you listen to sense and sell that beach?”

Now there was a picture for you, blatant in its melodrama, and ringing yet with a faint, far laughter of absurdity, for every one was struggling with an oddly different thought. There was old Aunt Sarah Michael, standing for some sort of pride or tradition, or heaven knows what, as though the

Michaels had anything really to be proud of. There was Tommy, facing something that was gone forever, knowing that all he had thought had been as nothing, and that all he had believed was a misty sort of fancy. And there was Estelle Michael and the corpulent Joe Cooper face to face with something else; and perhaps, though Tommy could only guess in later days, another hero was falling in the dust. Aunt Sarah regarded Joe Cooper evenly through her spectacles and spoke in a level voice.

"You tell Jellett that he don't get that beach from me while I'm above the ground."

Then Estelle Michael turned on Joe Cooper, so quickly that he pushed back his chair.

"You yellow dog!" she said. Though her voice was low, there was an undercurrent in it that made it like wild laughter.

"Oh, say!" Poor Joe Cooper! He was never a valiant man. "Now, Estelle, it ain't my fault. I'm doing the best I can."

And so perhaps he was. But Estelle Michael leaned over him with both her hands tight clenched.

"You coward!" she said. "To help kick over my boy! Go and help starve us out! You leave the house, you double-dealing coward!"

Poor Joe Cooper! There was nothing left for him to do. He tried to explain, but what was the good in telling Estelle Michael that Grafton Jellett owned half the town, when it was Tommy who was struck? As Joe Cooper left she slammed the door behind him and he never came back again. She slammed the door but not so quickly that Tommy did not follow Mr. Cooper down the drive—a little boy, half out of breath, with round gray eyes. But Tommy did not feel like a little boy. He was out of the land of make-believe again.

"Is that true," he asked, "what you said?"

"About what?" Mr. Cooper stopped to look at him. After all, Joe Cooper had done the best he could.

"About—my father. It isn't true that he never did a decent thing?"

Mr. Cooper coughed. There was a whispering in the elm trees. The shadows of the leaves danced against the walls of that ugly square old house.

“Forget it, Tom,” said Mr. Cooper. “Tom, I’m awful sorry for anything I said.”

His gaze wandered to the overgrown bushes and the sagging shutters, and a score of little wrinkles creased and uncreased on his cheeks.

“It’s shirt sleeves,” said Mr. Cooper sententiously. “Shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves in three generations. . . . You forget it, Tom.”

It was useless to ask him. Tommy Michael was not the forgetting kind. He sat by the old gateposts, as he had often sat before, watching Mr. Cooper vanish down that white and dusty road, towards that bridge over Welcome River. The bushes rattled in the breeze just as though another child might be near him, but Tommy had given up pretending. He was thinking of his father, an immense and kindly figure. He could remember little things, the sparkle of his watch chain, and the sweet smell of tobacco smoke from that curiously carved pipe.

“Tommy,” his father was saying, “Tommy, please don’t cry.”

Then he heard that rustling sound again, and it was louder than the wind.

“Tommy,” some one was saying, “Tommy!”

It was Mary Street, and not that boy he had once known. Mary Street, bareheaded and bare-footed, with those dark restless eyes of hers, as shy and unsubstantial as that child of make-believe. She must have been hiding, watching him all the time.

“Tom,” said Mary, “I’ve been waiting for you ever so long. Tell me what you saw, Tommy, up to Warning Hill.”

In those last visions of a childhood that was fading, it never seemed strange that Mary should come to hear of the strange and golden place. He knew, because he was still young enough not to be dull, that she thought of it too. In her mind also there was something that was bright; and Mary was trying to reach that something. Perhaps he knew already that the curse of restlessness was on them both, pulling them forward from where they both belonged.

“It wasn’t much,” said Tommy, “only they’re different from you and me.”

“No,” said Mary, “you’re fooling, Tom. How do you mean it wasn’t so much?”

How could Tommy tell her? He could not know how few adventures are very much when all is said and done. But he told her as best he could of that path lined with bushes cut like animals—and of the room with silver on the sideboard that might have been gold. Was there any wonder that Mary listened with her gaze very far away? Her little hands tugged restlessly at an edge of her gingham dress, and she nodded her head when Tommy had finished.

"Tom," she said suddenly, "will you take me when you go again? I guess I don't want to think about it any more. I want to see it too."

Tommy Michael rested his chin upon his knees and shook his head.

"No," said Tommy, "no, I'm not going any more."

All at once grimly he seemed to know the world and his own place in it. All at once he was dwarfed before a power and a magnificence which he could never touch.

"Look," said Mary softly, "here comes a carriage."

Sure enough, it was coming down the road. Tommy could hear the horses' hoofs go slap-slap-slap. A victoria was coming, for there still were horses on Warning Hill. A pair of bay horses drew it whose coats were shining as brightly as the carriage wheels, as brightly as the top hat and buttons of the man who drove them. A lady and a little girl were in the carriage. The lady was in a billowing white dress which took up so much room that the little girl seemed crowded to one side. She was holding a sunshade above her head, twisting it carelessly this way and that. As she looked from side to side, her eyes met Tommy's and lingered for a moment before she looked away. The little girl was looking too. Indeed she turned half around as the carriage passed—slender in a white frilly dress with her hair straight down her back; all at once she smiled and quickly waved her hand.

"Oh!" gasped Mary. "It's the girl you brought over in the boat. Lookit! she's waving again!"

Tommy could not explain what happened; he found that he was smiling also and looking down the road; and Mary Street's eyes were very dark and very far away.

"Tom," said Mary, "you like her, Tom, and you'll go back. She knows you will. You'll go back some day and—and whether you go with me or not, I'm going too!"

Now why should Mary Street have said a thing like that so very long ago? She saw the world in a strange clear way which was nearly always right. For after all it was always Marianne, cruel, wilful, careless Marianne —with restless eyes and slender hands as restless as her thoughts. Yet Tommy Michael could not know that. He was too near to something which was inexorable and cold and strong.

"No," said Tommy, "I got other things to do, I guess. And didn't I tell you once? They're not like you and me." But even as he spoke, his mind was on a painful, lonely path which a million others had also trod, without Tommy's even knowing. He hardly heard his own voice because of another voice.

"Tommy," his father was saying, "Tommy, please don't cry."

There was one thing he must do. It was absolutely clear, and it seemed so simple then, as all things did. As simple as the tasks of heroes which were invariably met and conquered. He would have to be as strong as Mr. Jellett before he could have peace. He would have to start at once to be as strong as Mr. Jellett.

XIII

Mr. Cooper was right when he said that no one would give Tommy work in Michael's Harbor,—not the butchers, nor the grocers, whose business was growing large, nor Mr. Green, the druggist with his brand-new soda-water fountain, nor any one at all. That was how Tommy became a servant, as his mother chose to call it; his mother was as proud as Sarah Michael in her way.

The sequel to that Sunday afternoon stood out as another of those moments which have the property of remaining clear in spite of time. The recollection of it sometimes made a lump rise in Tommy's throat, because he had been such a very little boy. There was the veranda of the Harbor Country Club, and laughing talk and a clattering of dishes. And there he was, in dirty shoes and stockings, plodding up the wide front steps from the carriage block, too innocent to know those steps were not for him. A thin man in black was hastening forward.

"Get to the caddy house where you belong," said the thin man. "Don't you know the rules?"

"Wait a minute, Charles," said a voice, and ever afterwards it seemed to Tommy the kindest voice that he ever knew. "Never be too hasty, Charles. Come here, boy. Don't you remember me?"

Tommy remembered surely enough. It was Mr. Simeon Danforth, sitting heavily before a round table on which were some teacups and some tall glasses. Mr. Danforth did not smile and Tommy liked him for it.

"Charles is always officious," said Mr. Danforth. "Don't mind Charles. Sit down, boy, and don't think any one is looking at you. Catch your breath. There isn't any prison sentence for walking up those steps. Have a cup of tea? Charles, pour our some tea for Mr. Michael."

Mr. Danforth did not laugh or even smile, but looked at Tommy soberly, with a weary, urbane countenance.

"Drink your tea," said Mr. Danforth, "and you'll be doing more than I've done for a long, long time. You don't think I'm making fun of you, do you, boy?"

"No, sir," Tommy said.

"That's right," said Mr. Danforth. "I don't want anybody to think I'd do that—and no one else will either, while you're sitting at this table—understand?"

Everywhere there were voices and a clattering of dishes in the kitchen. Mr. Danforth's hair was gray, but his eyebrows were very black, and they moved together as he spoke.

"Yes, sir," Tommy said.

"That's right," said Mr. Danforth. "Treat everybody decently. It won't do any harm. Now, boy, do you want to talk? What brought you here besides your shoes?"

"I'm looking for a job," said Tommy. "They won't give me one downtown."

"Oh," said Mr. Danforth, "so that's the game? Come on this way."

Mr. Danforth rose from the table and walked slowly down the steps. They walked down a path past a row of automobiles and then by a carriage shed, where horses were waiting and coachmen lounged smoking in the sun.

Everywhere there were voices and a clattering of dishes in the kitchen. As early as that the Harbor Club had risen in all its gigantic shape from out of a hard-working farming land to stand as a monument of something, rather beyond one's grasp. For those were the days when one still wondered what such things were all about; and the idea of play was novel enough to set the vulgar laughing. Tommy could imagine what his Aunt Sarah would have said, if she could have seen that enormous building of decorated shingles surrounded by broad piazzas.

"Do you know what this place is for?" inquired Mr. Danforth.

"No, sir," Tommy said.

"Well," said Mr. Danforth, "perhaps the less one knows the better. Come along."

Beside the path was a small house, like one of the fishing houses on Welcome River, standing in a grove of yellow pine trees. The door was open and Mr. Danforth walked inside, with Tommy following; and they were in a room not unlike Mr. Street's carpenter shop, where he sat whittling duck decoys in the winter. In the full light of a window was a workbench with a vice and tools, and along the wall were a great many of those sticks that gentlemen carried in bags. A tiny little man in short trousers with a hard red face was looking over a driver, whistling between his teeth.

“Morning,” said Mr. Danforth. And that was Tommy’s first sight of Mr. Duncan Ross, as good a hand as ever took a rich man’s money. “How are the fairways?”

“Only moderate,” said Mr. Ross, “and the greens is thick enough with worm casts so a good hoe couldn’t clear them.”

Mr. Ross wrinkled his face and winked in a way that made you want to laugh, without knowing what there was to laugh about.

“Always give the members an excuse,” said Mr. Ross, “and then they’ll keep on trying.”

“Here’s a boy for you, Ross,” Mr. Danforth slapped his hand on Tommy’s shoulder, “to work in the shop; and Ross, if anybody doesn’t like him working here, you let me know.”

Mr. Ross rubbed his hands on the side of his trousers, and the muscles rippled in his forearms.

“Very good, sir,” said Mr. Ross.

“That’s all,” said Mr. Danforth, “but let him loose on Monday afternoon. I want him to come sailing with me. Three o’clock sharp, boy. Walk right through the gate and ask for my house. The man’ll let you through. And now, Michael, keep your tail up. Keep it up and wagging.”

Without another word, Simeon Danforth turned and strode out the door, and not until he was gone did Tommy remember that he had not thanked him. Curiously enough, through one of those odd complexities of a boy’s mind, Tommy never thanked him in open words, but it may have been as well. He did not know till later that the finest deeds are the ones for which no thanks are given or expected, such as the careless help of tired men for boys in dusty shoes.

Tommy stood alone in the professional’s shop. Duncan Ross looked at him with narrow eyes.

“Well, laddie,” said Mr. Ross, “I’m hoping you’re not lazy—because I’ll work it out of you if you stay here.”

“No, sir,” said Tommy, “I’m not lazy.”

“That’s it,” said Mr. Ross. “Mind your manners and your ‘sirs,’ understand, when the toffs come to the links.” Mr. Ross screwed his face into a little knot, and winked his eye. “Have you ever read now ‘The Legend of Montrose’?”

“Yes, sir,” said Tommy. And when he answered a lump rose in his throat. A picture of the room in the Michael house had come before him, with the rain pattering on the windowpanes, a friendly quiet room where even his mother seldom called him, where everything was dingy and yet still bright. “Yes, sir. We’ve got a library at home.”

“Have you so?” said Mr. Ross. “Well, maybe, I’m not promising, but maybe we’ll agree. Take hold of this, now. No—no—with the thumbs around it so—”

And for the first time in his life Tommy held a golf club in his hand. For the first time without his knowing it, Tommy had walked with bowed head beneath a yoke of spears. But his mother knew it, with an illogical intuition all her own, when Tommy told her at supper, and her face grew very hard.

“Tommy,” she said, “hold your spoon right and sit up straight.” But she looked across the table at Aunt Sarah, who was stirring her cup of tea. It was a cloudy look like smoke above a heap of wood before the flames burst through.

“I hope you’re satisfied,” she said.

“Hey?” said Aunt Sarah, peering through her spectacles.

“I said,” and suddenly his mother’s face was like the flames, “I hope you’re satisfied to see your grandnephew turned into a servant.”

“Hey?” said Aunt Sarah. “Nonsense! Blessed are the meek. Don’t you forget that, Estelle. Ho-ho-ho—why can’t you be meek like me?”

Those were the days when one’s elders could quote the Scriptures and do them up in cross-stitch suitable for framing.

It was all a background of words in Tommy’s mind. For Tommy seldom listened. Aunt Sarah and his mother were forever wrangling; words were clashing in that house like broken china, fierce words of his mother’s and Aunt Sarah’s answers, calm and biting, springing from a wrack of shattered hopes. It was just as well that Tommy took it all as part of every day, and that his mind was on something else. Sitting at the table in the lamplight he was thinking of Warning Hill, and the garden, and the waves of Michael’s Harbor danced before his eyes. There was a brightness to it, too different from his life for Tommy to forget, and Marianne had waved to him and smiled.

“Where are you going, Tom?” said his mother.

"Downtown," said Tommy. But he was not. It was the first time he did not tell her the truth.

Looking back, it was so inevitable that Tommy wondered why he was so surprised at what happened that very morning when he was trudging up the road after looking for work in town. If he had known Marianne better, he would have known it would not be the end, for Marianne was used to getting what she wanted. Ever since she was five years old Marianne knew how to skip gracefully along the pathways of deceit, if they led her where she wished.

Tommy remembered as he trudged along the road in the morning that there was a sound of hoofs and wheels behind him which made him step aside. A buggy with one of those shining horses drew up beside him to stop. A man in brass buttons was driving it.

"I say," he called in a singular voice, "I say, are you Master Michael? 'Ere then, catch 'old of this. It's from Miss Marianne. And don't say I delivered it. Don't say nothing, if you please."

The man in buttons gathered up the reins and the whip went—snap. Tommy did not know till later he was Henry, one of the Jellett grooms, and probably Henry never realized that for once in his life he drove a chariot of destiny. Tommy was holding an envelope with his name—Thomas Michael —written across it in uncertain little letters.

For a long time Tommy kept that note safe beneath the paper in his upper bureau drawer, and later he kept it in his pocket until the paper parted where it folded. Whenever he read it, he could think that Marianne was speaking through the dancing little letters, it was so like Marianne.

DEAR TOMMY MICHAEL:

I think you're very strong and very nice. I believe I love you. I know I don't love anybody else. I want to play with you because there isn't anyone else to play with. Come down to that old house where you came in the boat to-night, and I'll steal some nuts and candy off the table. I can come down after bed time, because Meachey won't dare stop me, or I'll tell Mamma about her. I didn't mean to be mad. Here's a piece of my hair. Ladies give away their hair in books. Don't be afraid of Papa. He won't catch you because he'll be with Meachey. Perhaps I can steal some ginger ale from the pantry, so please come, if you're not afraid.

Yours truly,

And that was why Tommy came back to Warning Hill, in spite of all he said. Those last words—"if you're not afraid—" would have been enough to fetch him. Tommy Michael had enough of Alfred Michael's spirit to take a dare.

"It sort of looked," said Tommy Michael once, "as if it was always intended. I guess I was bound to forget."

He meant that he forgot in time that he was different from Marianne in the fair republic of adolescence. Everything was possible when they were a boy and girl, whispering in the dark, on evenings when the wind was fair and the sky was clear. What would Grafton Jellett have said if he had heard them.

"Hello, I knew you'd come," said Marianne.

"How'd you know?" asked Tommy.

"Because people always do what I want. That's why," said Marianne.

Now every one can guess what Marianne would want, for even as a little girl it was written in her eyes and lips. Marianne wanted ponies and dresses then, and caramels and little dogs with flapping ears and yelping barks. That providence which guides the destiny of restless little girls was bound to change the dogs to beings more exciting to control, both of fickle and faithful breeds, and Tommy would be one.

XIV

The trouble was that it was all too vague to put your finger on it, but Tommy knew that he was different from all those other boys and girls who plodded to the high school when the autumn came. His life was as hard as theirs, exactly as penurious and as devoid of grace. It was his thoughts that made him different, his life of thought like a foreign land, glittering and unattainable. It was to grow always more distant with the years, though he did not know that it would grow more distant then. How could he know any more than any boy has known, that all life was a struggle against reality until acceptance of it came?

It might have been better if Mr. Danforth had not been kind in that careless way of his which never regarded consequences. He had forgotten, which was not strange, that all things seemed possible in that gay period when boyhood changed to youth.

There was Mr. Danforth's sailboat. Tommy never forgot that day altogether, for its very contrast with his life gilded with exaggeration times like that, until the folly and the grandeur of them were scattered into distorted, prismatic lights of memory. The sails of that boat were like the sides of great white barns. Her deck was like a ballroom floor. Sailors in white duck stood by the side, and even a steward in a white starched coat. There was a table in the cockpit and easy wicker chairs.

"Whisky, James," said Mr. Danforth, "and tea for Master Michael."

Somehow it did not seem strange to Tommy that he should be there. It was Mr. Danforth's fault, or grace if you wished to call it that, but Simeon Danforth should have known that there was danger in it. Perhaps he had an intuition when that day was nearly over.

"James," he said, "call the dogcart to take Master Michael home." And then he looked at Tommy with a slow weary smile. "And now you've seen it all," he said; "and all this isn't much. I'm the one who ought to know. It ain't worth a continental unless you use it right, and no one knows just how."

He should have known better than to say that, for everything seemed possible to Tommy Michael then.

Mary Street was the one who knew. Long afterwards he wondered at the clarity of her vision, for it seemed to him sometimes that the whole story

had lain before her always, the story of Warning Hill. She was ever in the background, a silent wide-eyed girl, and it sometimes seemed to him that she had been watching always.

The Street house was a pleasant place to visit. There was an aura of adventure about it in those days, when anything might happen. There were always guns and rubber boots and fishing tackle in the kitchen, and a dog beneath the table. You could take your coat off in the Street house, and sprawl languidly in the chairs.

"Make you easy," Mr. Street would say; "make you easy, Tom."

"Yep," Mal Street would say, "leave your manners at the door."

Mary was the only one who did not speak. She would brush her hair from her eyes and smile, and that was all.

Life was easy at the Street house, even when he grew older, and when Mal grew tall and lank and scornful. It seemed to Tommy that nothing changed there ever, and it startled him the night he found that he and Mary Street were changing. It was when he had turned seventeen, and he remembered it was a November night, rainy with wind squalls from the northeast; often that night came back to him with the rattle of the rain, as the last of those scenes to be etched clearly on his memory, before he was caught in the tide of life, when all recollections became jumbled in struggle and hope and fear.

He was going to the Street house to pass the night, which was a common incident enough, because he and Mal and Mr. Street were leaving for the duck blinds before daylight. There was a light burning in the kitchen when he arrived, dripping from the rain, and a kettle was simmering on the stove, filling the place with warm moist air that brought out the smells of grease and rubber. Mary Street was sitting at the table, her chin cupped in her hands, and her arms were bare and white.

"They've gone to bed," said Mary Street. "I've been waiting for you, Tom."

Now he never knew why it was that the first thought which should come to him was that they were all alone. Though he could not tell why, he was startled by the thought, half startled, half elated. He could see himself standing there, already growing tall, and there was nothing but that hissing kettle and the rain and wind, and he and Mary Street. It seemed to him that he had never looked at her before, that he had never seen her white throat and her bare white arms. All the room was the same as it had been always,

but Mary Street seemed different, filled with a new radiance, mysterious and bright.

"We're all alone," said Mary Street. The same thought must have been upon her. "Every one's asleep."

A shutter went crashing against the wall outside and he heard the rain come down like a million hurrying steps.

"Yes," said Tommy, "and it's an awful stormy night."

Then there was a catch in her voice that made him start.

"Tom," she said, "did you ever think—you and I—we've always been alone?"

All at once he understood. They both were lonely, as lonely as the wind.

"Yes," he said, "that's so. I guess we're always wanting things."

She nodded, and her eyes were on him wide and deep, as though she could see everything.

"Yes," she said, "we don't want what we've got. We want all sorts of other things. Tommy, isn't it awful always to be alone?"

"Yes," Tommy said. "Yes . . . I guess I know what you mean."

Yes, Mary was the one who saw. He always remembered that.

"Tommy," she said, "I wish we weren't—"

"Weren't—what?" he said.

"Weren't always thinking about other people—other things that aren't like us. I see it from my window. I always see it now."

"See what?" he asked, but even when he asked it, he knew what she saw, and perhaps even then the vision of it lay somewhere behind her dark still eyes.

"You know," she said. "It's Warning Hill."

Mary Street, Mary Street!—He could remember always something delicate and unreal, as she sat by the table that stormy autumn night, staring into nothing, speaking of Warning Hill. And he always thought of Warning Hill, immense and ominous, and of Mary Street before it, slender, solitary, lashed by the wind and rain.

"Listen," said Tommy, and it always seemed to him that he was afraid of something in the night outside. "It isn't so much Warning Hill. I've been

there, and I know."

She had risen as he spoke, and was standing near him, and he knew she was not listening to what he said, but to something in the night outside.

"No," she said, "no, Tom, you don't know."

"Listen," said Tommy. "Listen, Mary. If you want something badly enough, you get it, if you only keep on wanting. You get it. Wait and see."

"No," she said, and how should Mary Street have known? "I'll never have it because it's always changing, once you get it. Don't I know? And I'm not made like that, nor you. We'll go on wanting always."

There seemed to be something, that drew nearer in the storm that made him set his lips and clench his hands.

"Tom," she said, and all at once her voice was very sharp and very certain, "we'll never get there. We'll never get to Warning Hill."

"Just the same," said Tommy, "I'm going to keep on trying."

"Yes," she said, "I know you will. We'll neither of us stop."

Then all at once he was startled and very ill at ease, because suddenly her face was different, as though a light were on it. He tried to laugh, but he could not. Even his voice was strained and hoarse.

"Mary," he said, "I don't know what you're talking about—really, Mary Street. I don't understand half of what you're saying."

He saw her smile that fleeting smile of hers before she looked away, and then he heard her breath drawn sharply. It was almost like a sob.

"Oh, yes, you do," she said. "You just don't want to see. We won't be happy, either of us, Tom, not ever. Now—good night."

She was standing there in front of him, her face turned up toward his. Mary Street, Mary Street!—He could remember that she was no longer aloof or far away. It was the strangest thing. In that moment they were just alike and both alone, and yet he stood there with his heart pounding in his throat.

"Good night," he said. "Good night, Mary."

Somehow when he spoke the whole room was different. Somehow just by speaking, he knew that he and Mary Street would never be the same again. Something that was struggling with him loosed its hold.

“Tommy,” she whispered in the strangest, trembling way, “Tommy Michael—please. . . . Oh, well, good night.”

And then he knew he had lost something. He knew it even then, but only later he knew that Mary Street had seen, that Mary Street had tried to bar the way to Warning Hill.

All that came to be left to Tommy Michael were pictures such as those, flashing bright from a haze of other days, which were gone into some space behind forever, as the winds must go. Sometimes of a sunny day in some quiet place he could nearly hear their echo in the ceaseless hum of little living things like small, distant voices of forgotten years. From a distance, those years seemed a peaceful time for all that everything was changing, with new faces and new voices. The tapping of Aunt Sarah’s cane would return on that thin air, and the memory of her voice, always fainter like a dying echo, telling of the greatness of the Michaels when the house was new.

“Tom!” It would be his mother’s voice filled with an energy that had always pushed him on. “Stand up straight, Tom, when you’re walking down the road!”

“Tommy!” It would be Mal Street calling from that sad Elysium where vanished playmates go. “Pa says to git your gun. There’s ducks out in the bay.”

“Hist!” There would be Jim Street’s whisper. “Keep your head down, Tommy. Don’t shoot till I tell you when.”

“Hey, Tom!” Out on the lot behind the school they would all be shouting, “Throw it all the way!”

“Here, boy, don’t you hear? I gave you my clubs yesterday.”

“Ay!” Duncan Ross would be speaking again. “You’re learning the swing. It takes a working boy to make a golfer, Tom.”

Voices and faces, and now and then sharp little lashes of pain, which would always smart and awaken a memory of indefinable injustice—those were all that were left to Tommy from his legacy of early youth; and with them was a loneliness, a lurking background of loneliness, which never went away.

Yet, vague as it all came to be at last, like some land in the moving clouds, there was an order to everything which was most amazing. In the end it all seemed like a road, inevitable and straight, leading to something

which Tommy realized it was always bound to reach; and somehow, no matter what the pain, there was something brave and bright.

Tommy was cleaning a bag of clubs on a wonderful new invention, a buffing wheel, which ran by electricity. Bang—the club's head would go against it and then the iron would be warm and smooth beneath his hand. Tommy was eighteen. Tommy's shirt was open at the neck; his arms were brown and bare; he wore an apron over his white duck trousers to keep them from the dirt. The duck trousers had been the idea of Mr. Ross.

"You're not a kid, now," Mr. Ross had said. "This is a course that's rated first class, I'll let you know. How'll we sell our clubs, eh, if we're not dressed up to 'em?"

Mr. Ross was seated in a camp chair, thin still, and red of face, in an immaculate golfing costume, presented him gratis by a leading dealer in athletic goods. That afternoon he was in the best of moods, and as he watched Tommy he winked and smiled; and still it almost made you laugh to see him wink.

"What I say," said Mr. Ross, "you must learn golf as a boy. It's an art, a great, fine art that doesn't come with having the chauffeur drive the Missis to a lesson. Now, man, you were just right when I got you. Eh, you still will press, though so did I at your age, and now I sell my clubs with 'Duncan Ross' across 'em. Tommy, I'm giving you a graduation present. Listen to me now."

Two weeks ago Tommy had finished high school, and Duncan Ross had insisted on going to see him sit on the platform of the town hall stage on that occasion. So had Charlie, who ran the club dining room, for the matter of that, and his mother, and even Aunt Sarah herself, although she was very old.

"To-morrow," said Mr. Ross, "you put on your best clothes, Tom. There'll be an exhibition match, with all the toffs to see it. That smart chap, now, is coming from the Bayside Club."

Tommy shut off the electric wheel and turned to Duncan Ross.

"I guess you'll best him," Tommy said. By that time Tommy had come to guess that Duncan Ross could beat anything that walked.

"Me?" said Duncan Ross, and winked. "I wouldn't soil a club for him. You're the one who'll play. Now don't be getting red, Tom. It's time the toffs see you play, with your living to make and that. Ay, and they like you too. Mr. Danforth himself was asking to see you play, and there now. And

besides, besides, boy, you've been good and steady; and besides, they'll all say, 'Ross taught him.' See? Eh? Now mind you—all clean white with the new low shoes. Eh, well . . . they'll take you for a toff."

Tommy Michael stood up straight, a good, clean, steady boy, as Duncan Ross had said. He was broader and taller by then, but still looked slender for his age.

"But," Tommy found himself stammering and struggling with a curious diffidence, although he had known for a long while that Duncan Ross would make him play sometime. Now why Tommy should still have been proud was something he often wondered. But some instinct told him it was not right. He knew it was not right to play a professional in front of Warning Hill.

"But—" Tommy stammered again, "but I'm not good enough for that."

Of course he could not tell Duncan Ross. Not for the world would he have hurt his feelings. And then all at once he realized what he was—they would all have laughed if they had known he hesitated. He was a club boy and nothing more.

"Gad!" said Duncan Ross. "If you're not now, you never will be!" He looked at Tommy and wrinkled up his face. "You're too good to be a club cleaner. You're coming fine. You'll be my assistant with the lessons this year, Tom, and we'll be getting in another boy to help. Now don't be worrying, eh? You'll lick me in another year, let alone that poor inexpert chap who's coming up to-morrow, eh?"

Tommy gazed out the window where the first tee stood, with the turf below it, rolling soft and green. There were lots of things he wished to say.

"I guess you're much too kind to me," he said; "I'll lick him, if you say so."

Perhaps Duncan knew what Tommy was thinking, for, as Duncan looked at Tommy, his face twisted into little knots.

"Now—now—" he began, but suddenly his tone changed to brisk subservience. "Good afternoon, Miss. A club, Miss? I've some fine new drivers now—"

"No, I want a lesson, please."

"When, Miss? Tom, get the appointment book."

“When?” There was that same hint of laughter, such as the immortals must have laughed when they visited the earth, and Tommy remembered it, or it may have been he had never forgotten. “When? Why, I want a lesson now!”

And she had always had what she wanted. You could tell it from her eyes; they were weary, almost, with having what she wanted. It was written on her delicate red mouth, and in every little twist of her shoulders. She had not learned how to be still, and perhaps she never would, no, never. You might have thought that life had touched her with a restlessness that made her always wish.

“Sorry, Miss.” Duncan Ross lived by rules. “It’s after five—”

He could not keep his eyes off her, although he was refusing. That was the way with men already.

“But my assistant will do it,” said Duncan Ross. “Tom, take off your apron and give the young lady half an hour and mind you lock up when you get back.”

With a bag of balls and two drivers, Tommy walked beside her to the professional’s tee. What was there for him to say? He had thought again and again what he would say, if he saw Marianne, but now there was nothing, and she was the one who spoke the first.

“My!” she said. “I was surprised to see you! Don’t you remember me?”

“Yes,” answered Tommy, “yes. You’re Marianne—Miss Jellett, I ought to say. Yes, I remember you.”

She glanced at him quickly. Their eyes met, and Tommy stumbled on a stone and then she laughed.

“Call me Marianne! The way you used to. I don’t care. I’ve been abroad at school, with Meachey to look out for me. Haven’t you wondered where I’ve been?”

“I knew it,” said Tommy. “I guess everybody knows about you fellers—people, I ought to say. I—” Tommy stopped.

“You what?”

“I guess I’ve sort of wondered how you were.”

“I was going to send you a letter once,” said Marianne, “but then I didn’t. I never thought you’d be so grown up. Do you remember how you used to come to play and no one knew it?”

“Yes,” said Tommy, “yes; I never told.”

“Neither did I. And no one ever knew.”

“No,” said Tommy; “no one ever knew.”

“Except Meachey, and now you’re going to teach me golf,” said Marianne. “I never thought of that.”

“I guess I never thought of it either,” and Tommy Michael smiled.

They stood on the professional’s tee. It was backed by a willow hedge and nothing was in front of them but a broad stretch of the links, empty and quiet in the slanting sun. Tommy took a pinch of moist sand from the box and looked at her again.

“What are you thinking about?” said Marianne, and he told her. There had been a whirling in his head which stopped all at once, and he said what he had often thought.

“I was thinking about—that,” said Tommy. “I guess I ought never to have gone back. I don’t know why I ever sailed over again, except you waved to me going by in the carriage. I guess that’s why. I didn’t think I’d ever go—” He stopped because something about her puzzled him and stilled his voice. “Well, have you ever played golf?”

“No,” she answered, and gave a little sigh. “I ought to learn though; everybody ought to learn.”

“All right,” said Tommy. “Let’s—let’s see you try to hit the ball.”

She took the driver in her slender little fingers. Her hair, he remembered, was done in a club in back—neither up nor down.

“Don’t move your head,” said Tommy. “Now!”

“The devil!” said Marianne. She had not even hit the ball.

“All right!” said Tommy. He knelt before her with another pinch of sand. “Now try again, and listen to what I tell you.”

Now who would have expected Marianne to listen? And as a matter of fact he never told her. She was smiling at him; it seemed from a very great distance.

“Tommy,” said Marianne, “I think you’re awfully nice.”

“Who?” said Tommy. “Me?”

“Who else do you think? Tommy, let’s see you do it.”

Tommy was good to look at, standing with a driver. It was as pretty as a picture to see his body in perfect effortless rhythm, but only the discipline of his muscles made his club head meet the ball that afternoon. It was all as inevitable as that club falling in a perfect arc. Her eyes were different, alight with something new, shining with soft brilliance.

"Tommy," said Marianne, "stand behind me and take hold of my club—and perhaps I can do it too."

And why should there have been any more to it, when that was where the road had always led? The touch of her hand was enough, the touch of her shoulder against his and a bit of her hair that blew across his face. Nevertheless, it was as unreal as the wildest thought, and wholly out of reason. Marianne had dropped her driver and turned half round. He heard her draw a quick sharp breath, and a moment later he stood motionless, his hands limp at his sides.

"Silly!" There was that laughter in her voice softer than any laughter he had ever heard. "Silly!" said Marianne. "Don't look so frightened. I wouldn't have let you if I hadn't wanted you to do it."

"You—you wanted me?" It was too incredible for Tommy to believe, even when she had told him. It was as though he had sailed across another sea to another garden far more splendid than any made by man. There was music (oh, what music!) which took away his breath and made his blood like fire.

"Tommy," said Marianne, "you've got that boat?"

Tommy nodded because he could not speak. Mal, he knew, would let him have the boat again any time he wished.

"All right. I'll be on the beach. Now hush!"

Marianne had ears, hidden though they were beneath her hair. Some one was walking toward the tee. She started swinging at the grass without bothering to look up, making sullen little stabs at the turf, because of course she knew who it was. From the path behind the willow bushes came a tall lady with wide brown eyes, in a dress so plain that her face was what one looked at. It was a face even and regular, like that of a heroine in a steel engraving. Behind her walked a boy about Tommy's age, but not as tall. His face was plump and pale; his hair was sandy red.

"Marianne," said the lady, "it's time to go."

“Oh, all right, all right, Meachey.” Marianne tossed down her club. “We’re all through. Don’t you know the professional’s boy? He’s Tommy Michael, Miss Meachey, and that’s my brother Sherwood.”

Miss Meachey held out her hand to Tommy. Her fingers when he touched them were very cold and light, and you might have thought she had known him for a very long while. She smiled the same way some one might who had met a friend whose ways were quite familiar.

“I’ve always wanted to meet you,” Miss Meachey said. “Always.” But Tommy was too surprised to ask her why.

Tommy and Sherwood followed them up the path without speaking for a time.

“Don’t it beat hell?” said Sherwood at length, and looked at Tommy, scowling. “You must think I’m a hell of a feller being dragged around by a governess. Well, it’s not my fault, and of course I’m not really. I don’t know why she stays. Say, I hear you’re going to play to-morrow?”

“Yes,” said Tommy, “but I’m not much.”

“The hell you’re not,” said Sherwood.

Tommy was not surprised that Sherwood should be pleasant, because all the boys at the club had been nice to him of late. He could play golf as none of them could play it, no matter how they tried.

“Say,” said Sherwood, “do you want a drink?”

“No,” Tommy shook his head, “thanks just as much.”

“Well,” said Sherwood, “I always snap on to something when the old boy isn’t around. Say, do me a favor, will you? You know all the kids downtown.”

Yes, Tommy knew them all. At any hour he could walk the Michael’s Harbor streets and voices from porches would call, “Hi! Tom! Evening, Tom!” They all liked Tommy Michael.

“Well—there’s a girl down there, a peach, dark-eyed, with wild hair—kind of. Her name’s Street. Introduce me to her, will you, sometime?”

Now as Sherwood spoke the queerest thing happened, something which Tommy never quite forgot. It seemed that something was touching him, drawing him away from a soft, warm light. For an instant everything was bleak and cold. He could not have been jealous. Of course it was not that. Yet he felt a sharp uneasiness that was almost resentment. He had never

thought of Mary in that way before. It must have been some one else thinking of it first that startled him and made his color change. He thought of Mary looking at him as she sometimes did, her eyes dark and distant with a vague reproach.

It was over in a minute—a cloud across his thoughts, a twinge of uneasiness and she was gone.

At last the waters of his life were running, running, and his heart was beating fast, and "Marianne," his mind was saying, "Marianne." For he had kissed her. Yes, for just a beat of time, Tommy Michael had held Marianne Jellett in his arms and had touched her lips, the lips of that fragile denizen of a land so far away. The utter naturalness of it was what made it beautiful. And she had not minded what he was. He knew she had not cared.

Up to the very doorway of the Michael house his mind kept saying "Marianne!" and the creaking boards were soft beneath his tread, and the slanting sun was bright on everything, with a soft warm light that seemed to rob the porch of its decrepitude and to make the windows shine as if everything inside were lighted, and fires were burning on the hearths. Even the dark front hall seemed brighter as Tommy slammed the door. He knew Aunt Sarah would be waiting for him. She was always sitting in the parlor whenever he reached home, with her shawl about her shoulders, whether the day was hot or cold.

"Alfred!" Lately her voice had grown high and quavering, and now and then it had a strongly plaintive tone, like some one calling from the dark; "Alfred, are you back again?"

Tommy paused at the parlor doorway. His great-aunt sat motionless in a half light that strayed through yellowed lace curtains and vines before the windows.

"I'm Tommy," he said. "That's all, Aunt Sarah."

"Yes," said Aunt Sarah, "yes, yes, of course. My mind keeps running back. I'd admire to know why my mind does keep running back. Ho-ho-ho! Sometimes it seems I was a girl and going again to dances, and this . . . I'd admire to know why you slammed the door just the way Alfred slammed it when he came home. But I'm not underground yet. No, sir! I'm not underground."

"No," said Tommy, "no, Aunt Sarah."

"No," said Aunt Sarah. "And that's what I told the young man to-day. You were out. Of course you didn't know. A young man came to try to buy

the house. Hey? Yes, to buy the house, and when I said 'no,' he wanted the lower fields. Ho-ho-ho! I told him he couldn't have it till I was underground."

"The house?" cried Tommy.

He did not know why he should have been shocked at such a piece of news, but somehow it was all he had, that house. It had been a part of him for so long with all its chillness and its pain, that now the insolence of some one wanting to buy it filled him with a warm dull anger. Aunt Sarah must have seen it. Now and then she had the strangest way of seeing. She reached out her hand and touched his sleeve.

"Don't worry," she said; "no one'll get it while I'm above the ground."

"No," said Tommy, "I guess they won't."

"Marianne," his mind kept saying. "Marianne," and he knew he could do anything. It was no time to think that the world was changing very fast and that carriages soon would be laid away and that all the life his father knew would soon be gone forever. "Marianne," his mind kept saying; "Marianne."

His mother was in the kitchen, bending over the stove, pale except for a touch of color in her cheeks. As she looked up quickly at his step, she must have seen or felt somehow that he had changed, for when he kissed her she pushed him gently back. Her hands on his shoulders were very thin.

"What's the matter, Tom?" she asked, and Tommy Michael stopped, though his mind was saying "Marianne."

He had meant to tell her. He had always meant to tell her everything. Yet now that he came to do so, something made him stop, and he knew why. It came over him as he stood there in the middle of the kitchen, that he had always been afraid of her, and that he had never told her much, even when he was a little boy. There was that gap between them which no parent can wholly bridge, that chasm between the generations where disillusion and hope converse in a tongue that neither can understand.

"Well," said Estelle Michael, "what is the matter? There's something. Can't you—won't you tell me, Tom?"

But he could not tell her a word about Marianne.

"I'm going to play in a match to-morrow," he answered, "against the professional for the Bayside Club."

She drew a step away.

“What?” Her voice grew sharp. “With everybody looking on, as though you were an actor?”

“We’ve got to have the money, haven’t we?” Tommy found himself stammering as he spoke. “I—I don’t like it any better than you do, but I’ve got to do it.”

If she had asked why he did not like it he could not have told, but she did not ask him. Instead he was surprised to see her face soften into a pathetic eagerness.

“Don’t you?” she asked, “don’t you like it really, Tom?”

“No,” said Tommy, and then his mother threw her arms about his neck, and held him very tight.

“Then I don’t care!” How fiercely, eagerly she spoke! “As long as you don’t like it, I don’t care. All I’ve tried to do—ever—all I’ve ever wanted for you to know is that you’re as good as anybody else, Tom, as good as anybody else. Tommy, is that all? It isn’t anything about that Mary Street?”

How she could have seen, Heaven only knew.

“No,” said Tommy very quickly, “no, there isn’t anything about Mary—of course not—why?”

When it was too late, Tommy could understand that eagerness. When it was all too late to make a difference, he too would know the hopelessness of watching over another life, soon to set its own course upon a cloudy sea. And then the recollection of his mother would return sharp defined and poignant—robbed of her freshness and wistful, watching him with steady anxious eyes.

XV

Is it one's imagination or was there a stiffness to life in 1913, a touch of decorous discipline that is entirely gone? Perhaps it is too close to the present for accurate judgment, but if you were a member of the Harbor Club in those days, you must recall a punctilious rustle, and even in the bar off the locker room, with its relaxing atmosphere of lemon peel and rum, a cool formality that stilled a turbulent spirit. One recalls a kind of Olympic power in those spotless white persons who wandered from the verandah to the putting greens. There was a magnificent richness in their leisure that might have given pause to a week-end guest. As far away as the professional's house, Tommy felt it that next afternoon. It made his mouth turn dry, and his face grow drawn and pale.

Sitting upon the workbench, swinging his legs, was a tall hard-faced man with a curling black mustache.

"Oh, now!" he said, when Tommy came in. "Is this the kid? Oh, now!"

"It'll do you no good putting on airs," said Duncan Ross. "He'll give you a game now. I'm telling. This is Mr. MacWorth, Tommy, who'll play you. Are you ready? They're waiting on the tee."

"Who?" Tommy began to stammer. "All—all those people?"

Out of the windows by the first tee he had a glimpse of ladies' parasols and white flannels of the gentlemen. Through the open door he could hear a buzz of voices.

"And what ails you if they are?" asked Duncan Ross. "That's no way to take on about a gallery."

Mr. MacWorth laughed gently. "Listen," he said, "listen, boy, this is business for me, understand that? I won't give you any chances. So don't you start to cry."

"Who'll you want to caddy, Tom?" asked Mr. Ross.

Tommy cleared his throat.

"I want Mal Street. He's out there."

"Him?" Duncan Ross frowned. "He's been running a horse mower. He's forgotten how."

“Yes,” said Tommy, “but I’d like to have him.”

Mr. Ross walked to the door.

“Street!” he called. “Come here!”

The sight of Mal Street did Tommy good. Lank and dark and sullen, Mal picked up Tommy’s bag, and they all walked toward the tee.

“Tom,” whispered Mal. “Hey, Tom!”

“Mal,” said Tommy, “you don’t mind caddying? I—I sort of wanted to have a friend.”

“Mind—? Hell!” said Mal, and it did Tommy good to hear him.

The contempt which Mal had cultivated for his surroundings was like a cooling breeze. It quieted the jump of Tommy’s nerves to know that Mal would be behind him, indifferent to those people all in white, unshaken in his knowledge of his own superiority, and still a friend.

“To hell with ’em!” whispered Mal. “That’s what I say. Take your driver, kid.”

Nevertheless, when Tommy stood upon the tee with his driver in his hand, he had again that feeling that he was alone, beyond all help, save for what lay within himself. He seemed very small standing on the tee, clad in his clean white ducks and his new low shoes. All about him was a circle of faces peering at him in silence, idly interested. Mr. Danforth was standing there, and Mr. Wilmer too. And the Hotchkiss girls—dozens of people, all from Warning Hill. As Tommy saw them all, he remembered that his mind moved in a panic, for it was just as his mother had said. He was standing like an actor to amuse them of an afternoon, not one of them more than the saturnine Mr. MacWorth, who was coolly addressing his ball. And then, just as Mr. MacWorth was taking his back swing, Tommy’s eye encountered Mr. Jellett, and beside him, with eyes as cool as Mr. Jellett’s own, was a tall lady in an embroidered dress. It was Mrs. Jellett, and beside her was Sherwood, scowling slightly, and beside Sherwood was Marianne. Marianne was smiling and her eyes were dark and soft. As Tommy looked at her she nodded, making a little face at him as a girl might at school.

“Click!” Mr. MacWorth had hit his ball. Marianne looked at Tommy and made another face.

“You can do it,” she seemed to say. “You can do it just as well.”

Now Tommy was a golfer, as Mr. Ross had known. The moment his eye was on the ball the tautness left his wrist and shoulders. He forgot about Warning Hill and everything, as Warning Hill stood watching. Mr. Ross himself could not have made a cleaner drive. MacWorth stared at him. Mal Street silently took his club.

"The brassie," said Tommy, and then, as he walked down the fairway, he heard low voices everywhere.

"Why!" It was a lady who said it. "He did much better than the man!"

"Did you see him? Did you see him hit that ball?"

"He's the Michael boy. Yes . . . that's the one, who used to work in the professional's shop. . . . Ross taught him. . . . That's the one . . . the old house on the road to the station . . . yes, he lives here . . . one of the village boys."

At last Tommy knew they knew him, every one in Warning Hill. It came over him in a wave of pride, for of course he was still young. He knew he would never be entirely the same again, and Marianne was watching him. "Marianne," his mind kept saying, "Marianne!"

"Hist, Tommy!" It was Mr. Ross whispering in his ear. "That MacWorth will try to rattle you. Don't you care."

"No," said Tommy, "I don't care," and laid a brassie shot dead upon the green. No, Tommy Michael would never be the same again. He was crossing from boyhood into manhood with each step across the turf, with everybody there to see. Tommy could hear the gentlemen betting even money when they began the ninth all even. From the tee he could look over toward the water and the roofs of Michael's Harbor.

"Steady now, boy," whispered Duncan Ross, "and they'll be after you for lessons as much as me."

If you were a member of the Harbor Club, you may recollect how the news spread when they took the turn towards home. The men passing the tea things spoke of it, and Joey had the news down in the bar. One of the village boys, whom Duncan Ross had taught, was beating a professional,—a village boy who had hung around the club. In groups of threes and fours they began trooping down the steps to see them, until, when the sixteenth hole was reached, fifty or sixty persons must have trailed behind.

Of course, no one ever guessed the half of it, because people are so very dull, or perhaps one did not care. All one saw was a slim tanned boy in

white ducks, whose plain thin face was set, and a worried looking man with a black mustache—but it was a good show just the same. Mr. Jellett himself must have thought it was a good show since he had bet on Tommy. He permitted himself to smile slightly as Mr. MacWorth hooked into the woods on the seventeenth, and he asked Mr. Danforth a question in his old dull way. Tommy heard him over the footsteps and whispers, and Tommy nearly stopped his walking.

"What did you say the boy's name was?"

"Michael." Though Tommy's back was turned he could hear Mr. Danforth wearily polite. "The name is Michael, the boy you chucked out of the bank, Grafton."

"Chucked out of the bank, eh?" said Mr. Jellett. "What bank?"

Then Tommy heard some one laugh in a hard tinkling way, which made him look across his shoulder. It was Mrs. Jellett laughing.

"You ought to know that Grafton never remembers anything." Her words were like the lazy tolling of a bell. "And he isn't much of a boy to remember, is he? Isn't this ever going to finish? Marianne, why do you insist on walking all the way around?"

"Mamma, don't talk so much!" Tommy's heart gave a little jump, for it was Marianne who answered. "He's doing awfully well!"

"Why, Marianne!" It was Mrs. Jellett. "Whatever's getting into you, Marianne?"

"I don't care," said Marianne. "You needn't talk when he's playing. It's awfully mean!"

But Tommy only half heard for his mind was not on them then. He was on the eighteenth green, and Mr. MacWorth was two down, just a friendly match, of course, as Mr. MacWorth was the first to say, and of course Mr. MacWorth was glad to give the boy a chance. He had done it very well, though of course he could not have kept it up, and Mr. MacWorth had never played the course before. Then Tommy knew that he was no longer a village boy, as he stood upon the eighteenth green.

It was enough to puzzle him that everybody seemed very pleased that he had won. Men who had never looked at him before came crowding up to shake hands or to slap him on the shoulders, until he wondered why he had ever thought them distant.

"Yes, sir," Duncan Ross was saying. "A good boy—that's what he is."

“Take him down and give him a drink,” suggested Mr. Wilmer. “Boys, they’re all on me!”

“Oh, Wilmer,” said some one, “do shut up!”

It was very pleasant; they all seemed to like him. Toward them all he felt a sudden warmth and kindness, and just for a second, he always said, he was plunged in a glittering illusion. For one bright beat of time Tommy Michael thought that he was one of them. They were proud of him. They all were saying it. They never knew that he could play like that. He must enter the open in August. They would see that he did. For a moment Tommy stood with bright eyes and parted lips before illusion crashed.

“Thanks,” said Tommy, “you’re—you’re awful kind.”

Afterwards every one remarked how nicely he took it, naturally and modestly and not in the least like a spoiled boy. But Tommy always said he should have known what would happen if he had not been so young.

“Tom,” said Duncan Ross, “Mr. Jellett wants to see you. Look, he’s over there.”

Sure enough, there was Mr. Jellett, plump and small in his white flannels. He was standing a little apart on the edge of the green with Mrs. Jellett beside him, and—yes, Marianne, very cool and prim.

“Oh, Michael,” said Mr. Jellett, “Michael,” and Marianne made a little face exactly like a little girl in school.

Then Tommy knew there was something which was not right. It was in the way that Mr. Jellett called his name, exactly as if he was calling for a cup of tea. As Tommy walked towards him, he thought that every one was watching him, which was not true, of course, but Mrs. Jellett was watching him, and so was Marianne.

“You did very nicely,” said Mr. Jellett. “Here—take this!”

Tommy’s eyes grew round. Mr. Jellett had stretched out his hand. He was holding a brand new bill. Tommy opened his lips, but he could not speak. He was staring at that bill and a slow dark flush came to his face.

“Here,” Mr. Jellett could read faces still, “what’s troubling you? Haven’t ever been tipped before?”

“No,” Tommy could hardly find his voice to answer. “No!”

The strange thing, Tommy always said, was that he never realized exactly where he was or what he was until he saw that bill; and now he was

all alone, hemmed in inexorably by circumstances and all alone; and he was ashamed, though he could not tell why, most horribly ashamed. He had always been brought up to something else, yet there was Mr. Jellett handing him a bill, for nothing, his eyes upon Tommy stupidly round and blue.

"Never had a tip before, eh?" said Mr. Jellett. "Well, it's time you got used to it. Take it, son."

Tommy's knees were weak beneath him and he felt deathly sick.

"I don't want it," Tommy stammered; "really, thank you, sir, I don't."

"Don't want it?" said Mr. Jellett. "Why, what confounded nonsense!"

And then it was all clear, perfectly clear in spite of the years which lay between. Slap-slap . . . once again the horses were trotting down the road, and once again, as though it were yesterday, that shining carriage was going by while he stood with his father staring through the dust. Tommy was not one of them any more than he had ever been.

His voice choked, "No, sir, I don't want it."

"Papa!" cried Marianne. "Don't you see he's—of course he doesn't!"

"Why, Marianne!" said Mrs. Jellett. "Marianne!"

And then they all were looking at Marianne, and her face turned very red. As Mr. Jellett looked, she raised her eyebrows slightly.

"How do you know anything about him? Do you, Marianne?"

"Know him, eh?" said Mr. Jellett stupidly.

There was a pause, the slightest beat of time, but it seemed to Tommy that all the world was in it, as they stood there watching Marianne. Marianne smiled ever so slightly and gave her dress a little pat.

"Always picking on me, aren't you, Mamma?" Marianne spoke in the weariest way. "How should I know him?"

"That's what I'm asking you, my dear," replied Mrs. Jellett. "You've been doing nothing but talk about this match, now I come to think of it. And no sooner did you drag me here than you insisted on following all the way around."

Now how was Tommy to guess, for he did not know her then, at the rareness and subtlety of Marianne? Marianne knew what was what. Marianne had begun to laugh. Yes, she was looking at Tommy and laughing, as unattainable as something in a picture.

“Mamma,” said Marianne, “sometimes you’re awfully funny. Of course I know him—in a way.”

“Don’t tell me, Marianne, that you’re my daughter and telling me the truth? Grafton, do be quiet. So you know him, do you, dear?”

“Of course!” Again that little laugh of hers rang out as sharp as an arrow. And as sweet as evening bells. “He gave me a lesson yesterday afternoon. How else could I know him? Isn’t he the professional’s boy?”

Yes, just like that she said it, looking straight at Tommy Michael and Tommy stood there looking back. She had denied him, without a quiver.

“Oh,” said Mrs. Jellett. “Perhaps Mr. Ross had better give you lessons after this. Come, Grafton, it’s very late.”

“Just a minute,” said Mr. Jellett.

Dumbly, stupidly, Tommy stared. That laugh of Marianne’s had cut him like a whip. Mr. Jellett had moved closer and was speaking gently.

“Young man,” said Mr. Jellett, “do you realize you’re being devilish rude?”

“Rude?” Something in Mr. Jellett’s tone made Tommy start, as lots of others had started. “I—I didn’t mean to be rude, sir.”

It was sheer surprise that made Tommy answer so, even in the anger that suddenly surged through him.

“Didn’t mean to be, eh?” said Mr. Jellett. “Well, I didn’t think you did. If you didn’t mean to be, take this bill or I’ll report you for incivility and see how you like that.”

That was what Grafton Jellett said, and it was like him to say it. Tommy Michael knew what happened to employes who were uncivil just as well as Grafton Jellett knew. Tommy could still remember what had happened when he had walked from store to store in Michael’s Harbor alone in his dusty boots, though Grafton Jellett had forgotten long ago. Tommy Michael’s lips were straight, exactly like his mother’s.

“I—I’m sorry, sir,” he said.

“Sorry, eh?” said Grafton Jellett. “Well, that’s all right. Here!”

“Thank you, sir,” said Tommy.

And that was the second time that he met Grafton Jellett face to face.

Oh, Tommy was drinking bitter beer, and beer is never bitterer than when you are eighteen. His body was numb and cold and when he tried to think he could not, because a cloud of anger would whir like a tempest through him. All that he might have said came singing to his ears until he could almost hear himself reply, "Keep your damned old money!"

And Marianne had looked at him and laughed. Yet he walked down the path to the professional's house as though not a thing had happened.

"Hey, Tom!" Mal Street trudged behind him with the clubs. "Did he loosen up? Did he give you anything?"

Without answering Tommy groped for the knob of the door, and then he and Mal were alone inside, with the workbench and the bags of clubs.

"I said," Mal had a way of sticking to the point, "did he give you anything?"

"Take it," Tommy spoke like some one in his sleep. "Take it. You can have it, Mal."

There was no use telling Mal, of course, because Mal would never have understood. In fact, even to that point Mal did not understand.

"Hey?" cried Mal. "Have you got bats in the belfry? It's *five* dollars, Tom!"

Tommy stood looking out of the window. Though he wanted to turn on Mal with a shout, Tommy didn't move. Some part of himself that he did not know had taken full control.

"I wish you'd go away," said Tommy. "I kind of want to think."

Mal slammed the golf bag he was carrying to the floor and scowled.

"Aw, what the blazes!" he said. "You always want to think. What good does thinking do you? Switch me if I see."

Those were strange thoughts, lonely thoughts, that Tommy was thinking then, such as Mal would never see. They were in the trees outside, and in the sunlight. There was a new strength in Tommy's hands. How could he tell Mal Street that he was thinking about things that did not grow old because they were ideas? There was no good telling Mal, for he was some one whom Tommy had passed miles back in a race, as Mal himself sometimes seemed to know.

"Hey, Tom!" Mal scowled and scratched his head. "We're pals, ain't we, you and me?"

Of course they were, and had been for a long time, and Tommy told him so. Nevertheless, Mal still scowled and scratched his head again. Long ago he had given up understanding Tommy Michael and his silences, as lots of others had, and accepted them instead as you accept the mysteries of the tide and wind.

"Tom," Mal coughed and kicked at something on the floor. "You're not thinking about Mary, are you? Mary thinks a lot of you and . . . I'd kick anybody else she thought a lot of. I'd kick 'em straight to hell!"

Poor Mal Street! Even in the embarrassment that surged over him, Tommy could feel the hopeful friendliness. It almost seemed, though Mal stood still staring at the floor, that Mal was stretching out his hand to him where he stood entirely alone, too far away to touch.

"No," said Tommy, and he dug his nails deep into his palms. "No, it isn't Mary, Mal—and please don't be mad. I wish you'd get away before—before—Mal I wish you'd let me have your boat to-night. I want to take—a sail."

And then Tommy was alone in a place of hopeless grief, where all of us have been, to the borderland at least, when anger and humiliation fly in stormy clouds, and pain, not of the body, flashes in forks of light. That was where Mr. Simeon Danforth found him, his face on the workbench, his hands opening and shutting on nothing but the air.

"Here," said Mr. Danforth. "I saw it. Don't mind me."

Tommy had never been as bitterly ashamed as when he heard Mr. Danforth speak, because it was more than he could bear to have Mr. Danforth see him in his weakness, with his face all wet with tears. He forgot that Mr. Danforth had been kind to him. He was always ashamed of that. But what shamed him most was that he could not speak because of the sobs which shook him.

"Don't say it," said Mr. Danforth. "There's nothing to be ashamed of, boy. The best of us get taken that way now and then. We'll just pretend that no one saw you. Are you feeling better now?"

Tommy Michael nodded and bit his lip.

"I wish," he said, and it was terrible to hear himself speak, "I wish I was dead rather than anybody saw me."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Danforth. "I know what happened. It really wasn't Jellett's fault. Here—shake hands."

Mr. Danforth was not joking. His hand was as steady as a rock.

“Now,” said Mr. Danforth, “what are you going to do?”

Already Tommy had been asking himself that question. What was he going to do?

“You’ve got to do something, boy,” said Mr. Danforth. “You see, you’re not the kind to stay here always.”

Tommy Michael was standing at the crossing of the ways. He drew a sharp breath.

“Yes, I see,” he said, “but I don’t want any help. I’ve been alone. I guess I’ve always been alone.”

Mr. Danforth’s face did not change a single wrinkle, but Tommy knew that Mr. Danforth was watching him in a different way, and often afterwards Tommy wondered what he thought, and whether he saw the road ahead as an older man sometimes can. Sometimes Tommy thought that Mr. Danforth was the only one in all of Michael’s Harbor who really knew him, or guessed that he walked with shadowy thoughts trooping close behind.

“God bless my soul!” said Mr. Danforth. “I never helped anybody in my life, and I’m too old to start if I wanted. Don’t be afraid of that. But it won’t hurt to see there’s some decent people up on Warning Hill—before you get as hard as nails.”

They must have made a strange sight enough in the professional’s house, old Simeon Danforth, heavy and indolent, with his hands deep in his pockets and eyes very dark and still, and Tommy with the sharp straight Michael nose and with his mother’s lips. Sometime much later, Tommy would feel a sharp uneasiness. How much did Simeon Danforth know? He had a marvellous capacity for watching while those around him struggled in the muddy water. He might—Tommy would not have put it beyond him—he might have known about Marianne that very afternoon.

“Yes,” said Mr. Danforth, “hard as nails, and not afraid to hitch your wagon to a tissue-paper star.”

XVI

DEEP in his heart Tommy always knew that Marianne was as right as could be, for Marianne could not be wrong. There was no reason why Marianne, lovely as the night, should have understood that he was sensitive beyond the ordinary. It must have been splendid enough for her to have felt that storm of anguish was all for her, to rise in fury at her touch, and to be quiet at her word. It was all for Marianne, and already she must have had the premonition of a hundred starlit nights and of a score of arms around her and of scores of other voices made faltering by the misty whiteness of her upturned face and the invitation of her lips.

There was a brightness to it, then, though later it might have been to laugh, to weep, for all bright deeds are close to tears and laughter. There was a brightness to it which she would always remember, ridiculous though it was, and a mystery and a danger also, which made it very sweet. From out of the dark a boy was coming ever so different from other boys, and Marianne was there at the beach to meet him, when she should have been safe in her bed. No one heard her creep down the servants' stairs nor saw her slip down the garden path with a wrap around her shoulders, that was very soft and dark.

The poplar trees were so tall by then that no one from the house could have seen the beach where she and Tommy used to play, even if it had been day. It was shut off from Warning Hill by a whispering curtain of leaves darker than the sky, with the water before it rippling in the starlight to a tune as old and lonely as the earth. Tommy Michael saw her by the porch of the old gunning shanty when he beached his boat, so indistinct that she did not seem much different from a bit of mist. When he was besides her, she was still like some unsubstantial figure one might conjure from the dark-white cheeks, white throat and faintly shining eyes.

That faint sight of her was enough to make him pause in a sort of bewilderment, forgetting almost what he had to say, in spite of all his planning. He was like the King of France who marched his men up the hill only to march them down; he could only stand bewildered when Marianne touched his hand.

"Sit here," she whispered. "I knew you'd come."

That was the trouble. Marianne always knew. Tommy could always remember how his heart beat fast and in his throat, and how his blood leaped

when she touched him.

"Marianne," only the agony within him made him speak, "why didn't you say you knew me? Why didn't you *say* so, Marianne?"

"Oh, hush!" whispered Marianne. "Oh, Tommy, don't be such a goose!"

"But why didn't you say so?" Tommy seized her wrist and suddenly his awe of her was gone. "You're ashamed of me, that's why."

"Don't!" whispered Marianne. "Tommy—you hurt! Tommy—really I'm not like that! Tommy, listen . . . don't you see, Mamma would send me away from here if she even thought—"

"Thought what?" Tommy's voice was like the clang of metal, and Marianne gave a little start.

"Thought we knew each other . . . thought we saw each other. . . . You don't know Mamma. She always thinks I'm perfectly dreadful because she does dreadful things herself, I suppose—I don't care—but don't you see?"

And Tommy Michael saw, as clearly as he saw later what part was played by the stubbornness of his blood.

"Yes," said Tommy slowly, "yes, I see. You're ashamed of me. That's it."

"No!" whispered Marianne. "You know I'm not. I never was. I wouldn't be here now. Don't you see I—oh, Tommy—I—I love you, Tommy," whispered Marianne.

Call them what you like, those golden moments when the whole world pays a graceful homage. Call it the sly trick of life that plays the dancing music. Call it calf love or puppy love, or anything at all; there is an instant that keeps its luster no matter what may follow.

Beautiful, unattainable though she was, suddenly his arms were around her and she was no longer like the mist. All at once he was holding Marianne as fiercely as if some one else would snatch her from him. And for Marianne too, that moment must have been ineffaceable and bright, and she too must have understood the sad impermanence that made it sweet.

"Tommy," she whispered. "Please don't let me go. No—never-never-never!"

Her words were only a whisper, as soft as the faintest rustle of the breeze, but sometimes Tommy could believe that she had cried them out, for they stayed in memory like a cry; and, though his answer was only a

whisper too, it always seemed to him as if he must have shouted it until it echoed across the harbor so every one could hear.

"I'll show you. You wait and see. I'll walk in your front door some day, and no one'll be ashamed!"

XVII

THERE was a firmness to Tommy Michael that was not plodding. He had a sort of high-strung steadiness already, forged from lean, hard years. It was just as well, for he needed it that night.

He never understood why he knew that something was not right; it came in that strange, sharpening of the sense such as all of us have known. It came to Tommy as a voice might come, when he was sailing back toward the lights of Welcome River. All at once he stared about him as if he was just awake. There was nothing, no sound save the lapping of the water on the bow of that yellow skiff. There was only that lightness of the water such as lingers even on the darkest night. Yet it seemed to Tommy that some one had called him.

"Tom!" Just as clearly as though some one had spoken he had heard that soundless voice. "Tom!"

And then the night was so dark that he could seem to touch the black. He seemed to be a small boy again, afraid to cross the hall because there was something in the dark. Some one was on the shore of Welcome River, in the Street's backyard.

Already Michael's Harbor had electric lights. There was one in that narrow lane in front of Jim Street's house which filled the yard with a dull illumination, made erratic by the darting shadows, where an elm branch waved across it. But there was light enough to see that Mary Street was standing on the shore. Though Mary had put up her hair that spring, little strands of it still broke and blew across her face. Her eyes had a distant look. It had seemed to Tommy that her eyes had often been like that of late, as Mary had looked at him always across the room at school or across the kitchen table, on those mornings when the men came in from gunning. Mary looked at him without a word and Tommy understood what Sherwood saw. It must have been her mother's blood. He remembered what they once had said—that she flew in the face of things. Mary would also fly, heedless of what might happen, if once she chose to go. You had a wish to hold her, or follow until she came to rest. That was what Sherwood must have meant.

"I know where you've been," said Mary. "Yes, I know."

But Tommy scarcely heard her. It was not the voice of Mary which had called him in the dark. He saw Mary put her hand to her throat, exactly as

though something hurt her.

"And you needn't act so big about it!" Mary took a step towards him. "I can do it myself if I want to, Tommy. You're not the only one they look at. I —oh, I wish we both were dead!"

"You wish we both were dead!" echoed Tommy. It was utterly beyond him for Mary had been so quiet always.

"I do," said Mary. "I wish we both were dead!"

"But why?" And still it was utterly beyond Tommy Michael. Mary pushed the hair savagely from her eyes. "Why are you angry at me? I've never done a thing to make you angry, Mary."

Then she gave the queerest laugh, unlike any laugh that Tommy had ever heard.

"Ever done anything?—No, you never would—not you!"

Tommy was glad when the back door opened. The sight of Mal walking down the steps filled him with curious relief.

"Hey!" said Mal, rubbing his eyes. "What's all the noise about?"

"No noise!" Mary whirled about to face him. "Tom's just back—from seeing the Jellett girl."

"Huh!" said Mal. "From seeing the Jellett girl?" Mal Street scratched the back of his head as a new thought dawned on him. "So we ain't good enough for you, hey? After you coming around here—and everything. What have those dudes ever done for you? Say, Tom, ain't you and me pals?"

That was all Mal ever said about it. Yet Tommy could always recall Mal's look and it always hurt him, the surprise in it and the pain, exactly as though Mal had never grown up, though Mal was six feet tall. There would surely have been more to it if Jim Street had not come round the corner of the barn, walking very fast.

"Mal," he called, "have you seen Tommy Michael? What, you here, Tom?"

Mr. Street paused. Tommy could remember that Mr. Street was growing old. There had been an added stoop to his shoulders lately and a shuffle to his step, which made him lose in height as if the world had worn him down. That impression was nothing more than a flash in his mind, however, running weakly beside another thought. How had Mary guessed that he had seen Marianne that night? All Michael's Harbor would know it before

morning. Tommy knew that marvellous intuition for gossip which could seize upon a whisper, and he was not wrong. All of Michael's Harbor always guessed the story. But Jim Street was speaking so harshly that Tommy had to listen.

"You here, Tom? Well, they've been looking for you all over town. Your ma's been taken awful bad. She's had a sinking spell. Ah, what's the use in pussy-footing, now you've grown to be a man? I guess your ma is dying."

The silence was what Tommy remembered most, when he reached his mother's door, that silence which gave his breath an indecorous loudness, for Tom had run all the way. It was not a peaceful silence, but a stillness of suspense which made it plain that everything was waiting, even the house and the shadows in the hall. His Great-aunt Sarah was waiting in a stiff chair beside a yellow bed. It always seemed terribly grotesque to Tommy that little trivialities dashed before him first. The room was stifling from the light of a glass oil lamp upon the bureau. There was a smell of straw matting from the floor, which mingled with unburned kerosene. Aunt Sarah's face, yellowish-white from the yellow light, and damp from the heat, made you think of a school relief map, worn and wrinkled with eroded hills and valleys. The bed was yellow and grained in imitation of wood. Tommy could remember how bright and new it had seemed when he had climbed upon it as a little boy, and how the roses and lilies painted at its head and foot had seemed richer and more splendid than any living flowers.

A fat square woman was seated by the window, with stolid red hands folded on a clean white apron. She was Mrs. Jiggs, known in Michael's Harbor as a practical nurse, which was a good enough title, for there was no illusion or evasion once Mrs. Jiggs came in. Mrs. Jiggs dispensed with her professional smile when she saw Tommy.

"Sh!" hissed Mrs. Jiggs. "She's resting. It's her heart. Oh, me, she's had an awful spell!"

"Hey?" It was marvellous how Aunt Sarah could catch the faintest snatches of conversation. "Sell? We don't have to sell anything."

"I said—spell," hissed Mrs. Jiggs.

Estelle Michael was lying so motionless that she did not seem alive. Her head was propped up by a pillow; her hair was in two braids, one over each shoulder, and the hardness had left her lips. As Tommy leaned over her, she

opened her eyes, and Tommy had the oddest thought that he was not looking at his mother at all, but into the face of a pale and frightened child.

"No, no, no," Aunt Sarah was whispering behind Tommy's back. "I don't have to sell anything, I'll have you know, Mrs. Jiggs, in spite of what people say. No, no, no, I've got enough to live on while I'm above-ground, and I can pay for a funeral too."

"Tom," said his mother, in a thin voice exactly like a little girl's. "Is that you, Tommy dear?" How seldom she had ever called him "Tommy dear!" Tommy had knelt by the bed and held one of her hands which had grown oddly frail. "Tell that old woman to leave the room, and—that Mrs. Jiggs!"

"Hey?" said Aunt Sarah. "What's that? Is she asking for me? Here I am, Estelle."

"Is she pretending she doesn't hear me? Tell her to leave the room." Again his mother's voice was faint and thin. "Tell her she won't bully you and me any longer—no, not any longer, Tommy dear."

"Hey?" said Aunt Sarah. "Pretending I don't hear?"

Tommy knew that she had heard it all, if only from the way her head went back and from the way she drew her shawl about her, as he helped her up and led her to the door.

"Have they gone, Tommy?" said his mother. "Tommy, talk to me. I want to hear you talk, Tommy. Where did you go to-night?"

And Tommy Michael told her, kneeling on the straw matting beside that hideous yellow bed, and ever afterwards he was glad he told her everything there was to tell. He told her about Marianne, beginning with the carriage down the road. He told of the garden at Warning Hill and of the sideboard with its gold, and of the nights he ran away to play upon the beach, when he got that note from Marianne. Whatever it was that had stilled his speech was gone. She was no longer older than he or stern, as she lay there so very still, robbed of her harsh energy and pride. Nor was she angry or even disapproving at the wild flight his fancy took, when he told her all he meant to do, because he would be a great man some day. He could never think of those minutes as being so very sad. They both seemed to be like children, stealing a minute from Time, when his back was turned, looking at his glass. She was smiling exactly like a child, or perhaps as she may have smiled when she first heard Alfred Michael speak.

"Tommy," she said, "I'm so glad, Tommy dear . . . so glad: I used to be a little afraid that you'd be like every one else and . . . and they can't stop you

now, Tommy. I want to tell you something. Don't worry about Aunt Sarah. Do you know what I've found? I found her bank books in the desk to-night. I shouldn't have looked, I know. It gave me a dreadful turn because, Tommy, she's been *saving* money all the time. And when I told her what I thought, I . . . something stopped inside me. Remember, you won't have to work for her any more. Tommy, it's a little funny, isn't it? *She's been saving money all the time.*"

It always seemed strange that he could smile, without a touch of bitterness. All the mornings when Tommy had brought Aunt Sarah's bank books to be mailed with never a thought that she was not drawing from the columns, all the catalogue of Aunt Sarah's acid complaints seemed to be echoing yet, mingling with the thumping of her cane upon the stairs. Something was grotesque and something else was marvellous, even at that hour, in the thought of that old woman deceiving them both.

"Tommy," his mother was speaking again, "I'm so glad, Tommy dear. I'm glad for everything, I guess. . . . Tommy, tell me some more about Marianne before I go to sleep. . . . You always talked of sailing boats when you were a little boy."

Then the time when he was little came back from the mist. He even remembered the poem he had made up, lying in the tall grass by the summer house, and he heard himself repeating it, as he knelt beside the bed.

> "Then I will get a boat with a big sail, a big sail
> And I will sail it and sail it fast
> And the wind will blow it until it goes rush and splash
> Where the waves are on the rocks."

But all the while, in back of Tommy's mind, another voice was speaking, and praying to its god a prayer that would have brought laughter to any earth-bound mortal's heart, as it rose from that stormy ground where childhood and manhood meet.

"Oh, Lord," Tommy was praying, "she thinks I'm as good as any one; oh, Lord, won't you make me so,—if not for me, for her? Won't you make me so that no one will be ashamed of me—for my mother's sake, oh, Lord?"

They were kind to him; every one was kind, Duncan Ross and Mr. Danforth and the rest, but Mary Street was the one who knew that something was done forever, and she was the one who told him, the week his mother died.

The wind was blowing off Welcome River, and the waves were rippling on the muddy shore, and the ducks in the Street dooryard were walking toward the river in a solemn even row. Mal was painting a gunning float. His shirt and trousers were splashed with the slate-gray paint, and Mary Street was watching. She was in a new dress, and she kept looking toward the road beyond the broken paling fence, and she was the one who saw him first. She watched him walking toward them without any sign of welcome.

"Tom," she said, "what are you doing here?"

Mal Street looked up and scowled.

"Aw, shut up!" said Mal. "What's getting into you, anyways? Tom's come to see his friends."

Mary shook her head, and her face was like a stranger's and her voice.

"No," she said, "we're not friends of his, Mal. Can't you see?—it isn't like it used to be."

And Tommy heard himself speaking in sudden futile pain, for, sure enough, something had gone, something which he had always known.

"That isn't so," he said. "You know it isn't so."

But even as he spoke, he knew that she was right, and it hurt him more than he cared to think. It left him bewildered and he could not understand. Yet even Mal must have seen it, though he flung his paint brush slap against the boat.

"Hell!" cried Mal. "Of course it ain't. Tom isn't skunk enough to forget his friends."

Then Mary smiled, and suddenly her glance was warm and friendly.

"No," she said, "it isn't that, but can't you see? Tommy isn't here."

"Not here?" shouted Mal. "Are you going crazy, kid?"

Then she reached for Tommy's hands and smiled up at him, not bitterly, but as though they had a jest in common beyond Mal's stolid reach.

"Of course he isn't here," she said. "He's gone and left us both behind—the way he ought to, just the way he ought to. And you were always going to do it, weren't you, Tom? And I'm glad of it. Yes, I'm glad. Tom, I'm not angry any more, because it was just right. Tommy, don't you see?"

But somehow it did not seem right, now that she had said it, for suddenly he was ashamed. And she was better than he was, now that her hands were

in his, gripping him very tightly, better, stronger, wiser.

"Mary," he began, "Mary—"

"No," she said. "Don't be silly, Tommy—dear. I used to be, not you. You're going places, and you're going to see all sorts of things, all the things I want to see, I know. You've got to. Don't you see you've got to? And you mustn't come back. You mustn't ever. I don't want it—ever. Do you remember when I sent you in the boat, ever so long ago? You're sailing off again. Tommy, don't you see? You're going, and I'm going and—and that's all."

"Hey!" shouted Mal. "Are you crazy? Where the blazes are you going?"

Mary shook her head.

"I don't know," she said, "but somewhere—somewhere. Tommy and I can't stay like you."

"Mary," Tommy said, and all at once his voice choked him, "I'm not going anywhere. I—"

But Mary laughed and snatched her hands away.

"Yes," she said, "we're both going. Good-by, Tommy dear."

A motor horn was blowing shrill and discordant from the street as Mary said good-by, and some one was calling.

"Mary! Come on, can't you?"

"Hey!" cried Mal. "Who's that sport out there in that bus?"

Then Mary turned on them, her head high, with that wild swiftness that had always lain behind her calm.

"It's Sherwood Jellett, if you want to know. He's come to take me for a ride. Good-by. I'm going."

"The blazes you are!" roared Mal. "Don't you know no better, you sappy little fool?"

But she was gone already, running toward the broken palings of the street, but even as she ran, she turned her head, lithely, quickly. She was like a shadow running.

"Good-by!" she called again. "You're not the only one who knows them up at Warning Hill."

And Tommy and Mal Street stood staring at each other, without knowing what to say.

“Gosh!” said Mal. “She shouldn’t be going out with him, but you can’t stop her. No, sir, you can’t stop her when she gets like that.”

XVIII

It was the thirty-first of August, nineteen-seventeen, when Tommy stood for the first time in his life on Mr. Jellett's steps at Warning Hill. It was when he had been made a reserve officer, with the bars of a first lieutenant upon his shoulders and crossed muskets on his collar, fresh from the Plattsburg camp. An officer's garrison cap shaded his eyes. His fingers played nervously at his pockets, smoothing out his blouse, made rather more hastily than well by one of those army tailors whose shops once appeared like mushrooms just outside the Plattsburg gates. Incongruous though the thought may be, he was not unlike a drab species of butterfly, hatched like so many thousands of others, after three months of frantic incubation, into a new existence.

It was Tommy Michael, standing beneath Mr. Jellett's *porte-cochère*. His face was thinner and sharper; the lines of his jaw were harsh, but he was Tommy Michael.

There he was on Mr. Jellett's steps, and now, as on every other journey, it did not seem so odd that he had reached those steps at last. Before him was an iron grilled door with plate glass behind it. Through the glass he could see a vestibule, paved in black and white marble, with a red carpet running up the middle to a second door. There was an utter absence of life as Tommy stood there. A pair of yew trees by the steps were as exquisitely groomed as horses. The blue gravel of the drive was so freshly raked that Tommy was almost positive, without hearing a sound or seeing a soul, that the marks his boots had made two minutes back were already perfectly obliterated.

For the life of him Tommy could not help wondering why it was that the inhibitions of childhood stuck to him like a spell. Only an hour before as he had stood in his own hall at home until his eyes should grow accustomed to the dark of the closed shutters, he had found himself listening for his mother's voice and the tapping of Aunt Sarah's cane. He had started when Jim Street, who was with him, spoke.

"Yes," Jim Street had said, "I'll see to having it painted. I'm good enough for that."

It would have taken more than painting to make poor Jim Street new. His fingers had grown so gnarled and twisted and his body so racked by rheumatism that he could not scull a float or hold a gun. It did not make

much difference, since shooting was no longer good. The ducks had grown so shy you could not get among them. They were frightened, Jim Street said, by the lights from automobiles along the road. Jim Street would sit watching those motors, morose and hollow-eyed, with his long face scarred by sleepless nights. Tommy could not get the two Jim Streets straight, the one who was with him and the magnificently lazy man he used to know.

"And the roof shingled," said Tommy. "And the carriage house—you'd better tear it down."

"Yep," said Jim Street, "there ain't no use in carriages any more, and hell—how they used to drive 'em, before the roads was all made hard! Well—that's all, ain't it? I'll just be limping home."

As Tommy spoke he knew it was nearly all—all there was to a hundred pleasant hours, some of the few he had ever known.

"I'll leave you a check to-night," said Tommy, "before I take the train—and keep the change, Jim, if I don't get back."

There had been an awkward silence. They both were passing through a hall of retrospect, where memories stood as futile as the objects of forgotten lives, which museums have disturbed to put upon their shelves. Jim Street cut a sliver from a cake of hard tobacco.

"When you git there," he said, "keep an eye out for Mal. He felt bad not to see you before he went. . . . Like as not he'll get killed. . . . He was always hell for fighting, just like his old man was. Why, I can recall—but what the hell? So long, Tom, Mary'll be back to-night. At six o'clock they leave off at the store."

There it came, inescapable, out of those other days. For the life of him, Tommy could not keep his face from growing red, though Mary was nothing at all to him, except as a part of that other time. She was only a figure in that background of faces which he had left ever so far behind. He could seem to see her as he might across a river, and yet his face grew red.

Mr. Jellett's house seemed like a castle even yet. Tommy could have walked to Mr. Danforth's house without a qualm. He could have walked up the Country Club steps by then, serene in his self-confidence, but logic left him at Mr. Jellett's gate. He had the most childishly embarrassed sensation, when he pushed the mother-of-pearl button beside that iron grilled front door. There was not the slightest sound of ringing. There was not the slightest creak of hinges as Hubbard opened that masterpiece of plate glass and iron and looked at Tommy Michael with the courteous wordless

question which a good butler learns to phrase. If Hubbard was curious he did not show it. The times had grown puzzling, now that a whole new aristocracy had been created overnight by a single act of Congress. He must have seen Tommy Michael give a gulping swallow before he spoke.

"Is—is—?" Tommy Michael's voice trailed off into his throat.

"Yes, sir?" And Tommy always said he spoke kindly, as butlers go. "You wanted to see some one, sir?"

"Yes," said Tommy. "Is Mr. Sherwood in?"

It was not what Tommy had meant to ask. It was the result of a frantic groping for a reply. It was hard to believe. An inhibition of childhood, which he thought was dead was back.

"No, sir," said Hubbard; "Mr. Sherwood isn't in."

Mr. Sherwood, it so happened, was generally out. Though Hubbard knew what most young gentlemen of a certain age were up to, he betrayed none of the deep wisdom which was his. He looked at Tommy in his uniform, thinking, probably, that riding breeches must be worn from infancy to be carried off. Hubbard's eyes traveled to Tommy's leather leggings—imitation pig-skin.

"Shall I say who called?" asked Hubbard, with his hand upon the door, but Tommy's panic had vanished beneath Hubbard's incurious stare.

"No," said Tommy. "Wait a minute. Is Miss Marianne at home?"

Even as he asked it, Tommy hated himself. There was actually a quaver in his voice when he said "Marianne." Tommy had that instinctive belief, possessed by all of us, that butlers are endowed with all sorts of uncommon faculties. But Hubbard did not bat an eye. He stood as benignly as Saint Peter at the pearly gates.

"Is she expecting you, sir?" he asked.

"No." Tommy had developed a most wonderful talent of being able to detach himself from all that was going on, if the time and place was right. Buzz—a locust in the trees was singing of the waning summer, and of the crickets soon to chirp on clear cool nights. Tommy seemed to be somewhere among those sounds, watching himself standing by the door.

"No, she doesn't expect me," Tommy Michael said.

Hubbard hesitated. It was hard to reach decisions as easily as one had once, now that the world was upside down.

“Miss Marianne has another caller, sir,” Hubbard paused and coughed.

“I supposed she would,” said Tommy. “I can’t very well come again. Will you give her this, please?”

He awkwardly unbuttoned the upper left-hand pocket of his blouse, and produced a pencil and a card.

“Give Miss Marianne this. I’ll wait for an answer.”

He handed Hubbard a visiting card, across which he had written a sentence. Then he replaced his pencil and buttoned up his pocket. It had come over Tommy Michael all at once that his whole history was written on that bit of cardboard, all the aching of his back and head, all rebuffs and loneliness. The coal gas of a score of furnaces was in it, and the grease of waiters’ trays, and the cold of misty mornings.

“I told you I’d come by the front door some day,” he had written. And beneath in square engraving was his name—“Mr. Thomas Jefferson Michael.”

He had finished a journey over a long black road, and had finished it all alone, and he always knew that he would never have finished it if it had not been for Marianne. He would never have had that phlegmatic patience which holds the anvil quiet. Over that road he had come—now is there any use to laugh?—with Marianne Jellett to guide him, like a will-o’-the wisp against the black, always, always Marianne.

XIX

Of course Marianne would never have understood what Tommy Michael had done and seen. Perhaps even those of us who came to know him better could never exactly visualize what happened. When Tommy Michael spoke of the years before he finally rang the Jellett bell, his face would alter. You might have thought some one had struck his face, it would grow so taut and thin. His nerves were always taut. His pride was always smoldering, although you might never have thought it, when he walked across the Harvard Yard, fresh from the Michael's Harbor high school, slender, rather pale in a threadbare overcoat, decorated by a mourning band upon the arm.

If a bitterness always lingered like the aftermath of an ugly taste, he never complained when the taste was strongest. It was always Marianne, always, always Marianne. That was why Tommy Michael went there in the first place, because, though they told him it was a rich man's college, Marianne had told him she was fond of Harvard men. It may have been that very warning that Harvard was a rich man's college which sent him on his way. Only when it was all over did Tommy realize it was a fallacy. Harvard was no more a rich man's college than the world was a rich man's world. There were the same gradations, and in the end there was hardly any one who did not find his level. Only later did he realize it was not a rich man's world, but a world of spirit, which lingered in the cloudiest day, untouched by the clanging of the surface cars on Harvard Square. It was the tolling of the college bell, in the clattering of dishes, in the voices and the shuffling feet. It was in the coldest autumn night, and in the languor of the spring. There was something of the past which had never died, far older than the Michael house and yet as bright as new.

Back in the strange region, known only to the serious, where Cambridge nearly touches the dead level of three-deck tenements, was where Tommy Michael landed. It was a street of lean frame houses, all of them unbeautiful in line and nearly all painted in stone-grays and drabs. It was a lean and dusty street, even in the sun of an autumn afternoon. The leaves were falling from the trees, making hissing futile noises as the wind eddied them on a concrete sidewalk. The shrubbery upon small patches of lawn was already bare of leaves. Tommy, a straw suitcase in his hand, clad in a rumpled suit, was standing on a front porch. A thin lady in a sensible woolen dress, with a

face made acid by plain living, was looking at Tommy. He remembered that she held a copy of the *Atlantic Monthly*, the place marked by her forefinger.

"Yes," she said, "I'm Mrs. Schoule. So you're the boy they sent? You don't look very strong."

"No," said Tommy, "but I'm strong enough, I guess."

"Well," said Mrs. Schoule, "you may be strong, but you don't look sturdy. I don't want anybody who gets sick."

"Don't worry," said Tommy. "I won't get sick."

Mrs. Schoule fetched a deep sigh, which sounded like the autumn wind.

"Of course you won't mean to get sick," said Mrs. Schoule, "but you probably will, and then I'll be the one to fix the furnace. I'll have to show you about it myself. I don't want more than one shovel of coal on it in the morning and two at night. That will be more than enough to keep the pipes from freezing."

Mrs. Schoule paused and sighed again.

"Your room's upstairs—two flights up," she said, and sighed once more.

He followed her up two narrow flights of stairs. Here and there a photograph of an Italian primitive stared at him sadly from the shadows and spoke of higher things. Mrs. Schoule halted at a room beneath the eaves. It was more of a prism than a cube, because the roof cut it nearly in two. There was a cot bed, a bureau and a small table with a gas lamp upon it, whose green rubber pipe ran like a serpent towards the wall. Out of a single window jutting from the eaves, Tommy could see the roofs of more houses and small back yards.

"The lamp will keep you warm," said Mrs. Schoule. "Here's your towel and I don't want you to use the bathtub. When you fix the furnace you're to light the kitchen fire for the maid. Then you can get your own breakfast—your dinner and supper will be outside."

"Yes," said Tommy.

"And I don't want any carryings on," sighed Mrs. Schoule. "I had a girl who got into trouble once."

"No," said Tommy, "you needn't worry, Mrs. Schoule."

Mrs. Schoule looked at him. He followed her glance. Mrs. Schoule was now looking at a great gold watch chain that hung across his vest.

“You must be in by ten,” said Mrs. Schoule, “or you can’t get in at all. Is that your watch chain?”

The bleakness of the room closed upon him, and the bleakness of Mrs. Schoule.

“Yes,” said Tommy, and he tried to smile. “My father gave it to me.” A terrible loneliness had seized him, filled with a longing as sharp as knives. He hated the street and the gray houses. He hated Mrs. Schoule. Back at home the elms would be whispering in Michael’s Harbor, whispering in the autumn breeze, and the sun would be setting, giving the water a softness which was never in the sky. The automobiles would be in a long line at the station platform to meet the evening train. There would be people at the post office waiting for the mail, while the sky grew a darker blue. “Hey, Tom!” he could hear them saying, “Evenin’, Tom!” And instead, like some caricature in a Dickens’ novel, Mrs. Schoule was speaking.

“I think,” said Mrs. Schoule, “I’ll ask you to let me keep that chain for the next two weeks.”

“Keep it?” Tommy started. “Why?”

Mrs. Schoule fetched another sigh.

“Until I’m sure you’re honest,” she explained. “I dare say you are. I don’t mean to be personal—but I have to be careful with strangers in the house.”

Then Tommy was alone in that bare room. His straw suitcase was slumped on the floor. His overcoat lay across the bed like the skin of an aged animal; Tommy Michael’s face was red as fire. For a moment he stood motionless, looking out the window and then he raised his fist and shook it toward the sky, a hackneyed gesture, yet as full of pathos as when the world was new.

“I’ll show you!” muttered Tommy between his teeth. “I’ll show you before I’m through.”

Already Tommy Michael was becoming as hard as nails; he was not speaking of Mrs. Schoule. He was speaking to the world that hemmed him in, and if it had been a wordless thought it would have been as plain, as it mingled with the other thoughts and prayers above the city’s smoke.

“You wait!” muttered Tommy. What would Marianne have thought if she could have seen him there, his whisper stumbling across a sob? “You wait—I’m not started yet.”

Then Tommy was on his knees, wrenching open his suitcase. He rose with a photograph which he propped up against the wavy mirror of his bureau, in a silly way perhaps, cheapened by a million repetitions. It was a picture of Marianne, looking at him with a half smile on her full red lips. For it was Marianne with Tommy, always Marianne. . . .

XX

Now why they ever took to Tommy Michael, he could never guess, but they were good boys. Though it required months for Tommy to understand them, he always knew they were good boys. Sometimes it rather frightened him when he realized he might never have known it, if he had not been an assistant to Duncan Ross at the Harbor Club, where there were other boys like them, to whom life seemed entirely amusing. They were emerging from a tobacco shop, when he saw them first, five or six of them in winter coats, bowing beneath the dejection of early morning. Tommy looked at them as he might at foreigners, and they did not look at him at all. First there came a tall boy with very black hair and a placid languid face and deep blue half circles beneath his eyes.

"I don't know why," he was saying. "My head doesn't seem to stand the strain as it did when I was younger. Sherwood, just as a friend, a schoolboy friend, will you please stop blowing in my face?"

The name made Tommy stop, and there, sure enough, was Sherwood Jellett, shorter, with sandy hair. A glow of friendliness made Tommy smile. Sherwood's was the only face among a whole new world that he had ever known before. It made Tommy think of a hundred different things.

"Why—hello!" said Tommy Michael.

Every one had stopped. Tommy felt their eyes upon him, languid and indifferent, but Sherwood knew him. The peculiarly elaborate indifference of Sherwood left no doubt of that.

"Hi!" said Sherwood. "Come on, boys, what are you stopping for?"

He walked by Tommy without another word, and all the rest walked too. Their overshoes made a flapping sound, like wings, as they walked, leaving Tommy to look after them. That was something which Tommy never forgot, because he was not the sort to laugh, or philosopher enough to understand the eccentricity of youth, that revels in its arrogance. Sherwood was not the man to guess that many a night Tommy Michael would awake with a vision of Sherwood's pale and erupted face. Every inflection of Sherwood's voice would come back through a hundred nights. For Sherwood had added a remark in loud clear tones which Tommy had to hear.

"Well, why do I have to be nice to everybody? Do you know who he is? He's the professional's assistant at our golf club."

Tommy Michael was not the boy to laugh. He did not have the balance or the thickness to his skin. Yet, if it had not been for Sherwood, those others would never have given him a thought. If it had not been for Sherwood, they would never have been his friends.

The very next morning Tommy saw the tall one coming towards him,—the one with the dark circles under his eyes whose head could not stand the strain. Though Tommy wanted to run away, there was no place to run, and the tall boy remembered him. Tommy could see him smile.

"Hello," he said, "I hear you teach golf."

Tommy stopped and looked at him and started to move on. No one ever needed to snub him more than once.

"Is it any business of yours if I do?" he asked.

The tall boy shrugged his shoulders.

"I knew it," he sighed. "I knew that you'd be mad. I'm the one who always gets the blame. Why is it I should always get the blame? I wish you'd tell me why. I can't. My head won't stand the strain."

Tommy paused. Tommy was rapidly forgetting what it meant to laugh.

"What's the matter with your head?" he asked. The tall boy made a weary gesture.

"It's the responsibility," he said. "I continually have to struggle beneath a burden of responsibility—not that I'm not glad nor proud to struggle, but sometimes it's a little hard. Do you find it so?"

"Find what so?" asked Tommy.

"Don't!" The tall boy raised his hands pleadingly. "Don't ask me questions. I never can answer questions in the morning. That's my trouble. My head won't stand the strain."

"Then what do you want?" and Tommy had begun to laugh, without knowing exactly why. It seemed to Tommy suddenly that something dark had left him.

"I want you to know," said the tall boy, "that we're not all like Sherwood, just as a matter of pride, you understand, just pride. Between you and me, Sherwood isn't quite—what shall I say?—not quite. He never was—at St. Swithin's or any other school—not quite. And there's another thing. I don't know why the burden always comes on me, but it does. I want you to

give me golf lessons. It's purely my own idea. There must be recreation, mustn't there?"

"Don't you get enough?" asked Tommy.

"No." The tall boy shook his head again. "Not of the proper kind. We all of us need something to keep us out of trouble in the afternoons—purely my own idea. My name's Milburn and I want you to teach me golf. I've got a net to put on front of the windows and a jute mat. Will you come down this afternoon?"

That was how Tommy Michael met Winthrop Milburn, whose head could not stand the strain, and all those others who gathered about him. That was how Tommy learned to look any one in the eye before he was finally through and how to wear a hat and coat. Of course it was luck, as Tommy often said, all luck, which might not have occurred again in a hundred years, for Tommy was no fool. He had learned long ago that the answer for everything lay inside himself. They liked him for what he was, and that was all. It was astonishing to think of it, but somehow it was true that Tommy Michael more closely resembled the graduates of St. Swithin's School than he did those other boys who tended furnaces and struggled towards a goal.

Tommy wondered sometimes why he never lost his head, in those hours he spent in warm soft rooms. It had nothing to do with his will. Rather everything that went before seemed to keep him moving, regardless of what happened, so that all that time, whenever he looked back, had an unreality which was something like a dream, and all those times which were so much more distant seemed more real. The slamming of a blind upon the Michael house at night was louder than the breaking furniture in Winnie Milburn's room. The sound of his Aunt Sarah's voice was more distinct than all those others, when everything was done. Though Tommy could shut his eyes and call off the names, they were like the shades that Dante and Virgil saw beside the Styx. He could understand them but their lives were so far from his, and their thoughts were all so far. Winnie Milburn, with his dark hair and his pale face, and Charley Lothrop Jones, who drove his car into the river, and Percy Wright who was arrested for fighting a policeman,—he could go on for fifteen minutes calling their names, and they would only be like the names on a plaque of bronze commemorating something which was past.

"Hey!" said Aunt Sarah. "Hey? Who's that?"

"Jones!" said Tommy in a louder tone, "Charley Lothrop Jones. He's asked me to spend a week with him. That's what I was saying."

It was one of the last times he ever saw her. She was seated in her bedroom in that black walnut chair he remembered when he was a boy. It seemed to him even that last time that neither Aunt Sarah nor the chair had changed, though everything else was changing. Mrs. Jiggs had wrapped her shawl tight about her shoulders. Aunt Sarah's stick was still close beside her chair.

"Hey?" said Aunt Sarah. "Charley Lothrop Jones. . . . Well, what's that you said about him?"

It was growing harder to make Aunt Sarah understand. Tommy could almost suspect that Aunt Sarah took a pleasure in making it difficult.

"He asked me to spend a week with him—and play golf."

"He did, hey?" said Aunt Sarah. "Well, you needn't shout about it."

"I'm sorry," said Tommy. "I didn't mean to shout."

"Didn't mean to, hey?" said Aunt Sarah. "Well, you needn't take on so about it then. It ain't so remarkable, upon my word."

"I didn't say it was," cried Tommy. Aunt Sarah still possessed the gift of stirring anger, although she was so old.

"Ho-ho-ho," said Aunt Sarah. "You act as though it was. You act as though you weren't a gentleman and as good as any of 'em. Ho-ho-ho, don't you forget you're going to own the house once I'm underground."

Was there ever any one who stuck to an idea as tight as his Aunt Sarah? He could understand how she might love the house, but it was more than that. It gave him a sensation not far removed from awe to see Aunt Sarah fixed in her belief up to the end that the Michael house was splendid, though the water was coming through the roof and its chimney had fallen before a northeast storm. To Aunt Sarah, though her eyes were dim and though everything was fading, there was something to the Michael house which had never grown old for her, and was still as bright as when everything was new.

Marianne was the one who was surprised when she heard that he knew Winnie Milburn and Percy Wright and Charley Lothrop Jones. It was the nicest thing that had happened in a long while when he told Marianne, because Tommy knew that Marianne loved him then. He never saw her except on that beach at night. She made him understand that it would do no good to see her anywhere but there. Say what one might, there was a high romance in those still nights, that made the spirit rise to rare and dangerous heights.

There were difficulties to be overcome, for Warning Hill was very gay. There were parties at the Jellett house, and visits down the shore. All sorts of strange young men were calling for Marianne, young men in automobiles with roaring engines. Up at the Harbor Club Tommy could see them come and go, with sharp misgivings. Sometimes it seemed wonderful that they were ever able to see each other in those flashing, noisy days. It was Marianne who managed, always Marianne.

Behind a loose stone in the Michael gateposts Marianne would leave a note, or she would pass him at the Harbor Club with a quick nod and a whisper. Marianne had ways of arranging everything, hundreds of little ways. You had the most remarkable illusion that you and she were sharing a marvellous secret which you alone could see. There were a thousand secrets, no matter who you were, when Marianne went by. There were whisperings in the rustle of her dress and dancing in her eyes. But Tommy Michael always knew that they were all for him.

"See," her eyes would say, "I want to tell you something."

"Whisper," her dress would go, "whisper . . . whisper."

Now those were the times that Tommy could remember best. He could remember the way his heart would beat when Marianne went past, because he knew she loved him, and somehow inside him all the things they said were locked away, as you might lock letters in a box. And perhaps somewhere just beyond the borders of human consciousness there lies a space where all words go that were spoken once on dark still nights, those banalities which seemed so splendid once, and later were as monstrous as the lines of a schoolboy's poem.

"You know them?" How quickly she turned her head that night! "They're friends of yours—Winnie Milburn, and Charley Jones and—all those other boys? You're not joking, Tommy, are you?"

"No!" A suspicion flashed across him, and it made him start. "Marianne—you didn't think I'd lie to you—any more than you'd lie to me?"

"Oh, Tommy!" gasped Marianne. "Of course I don't—only—only—"

"Only what?" She was sitting very still, looking at him through the dark, and yet he knew that her spirit was dancing like firelight, forever beyond his grasp.

"Only it's so remarkable," said Marianne. He knew what she meant, and that old pain surged over him, to which he had never become inured.

“Marianne,” he asked, “is it any more remarkable than—than you and me?”

“No,” whispered Marianne. “Oh, Tommy, I think you’re ever so wonderful. You know that. I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t think so. I wouldn’t have said I had a headache just so I could come.”

Then he heard his own voice.

“Marianne, you do love me, don’t you, Marianne?”

“Yes.” How often she had told him that! “Yes, of course I do!”

“And that’s the only thing that matters!” How often Tommy had said so! “It’s the only thing, I guess. Don’t you forget some day I’ll call for you right at your own front door.”

Those were the days when everything was changing. There was tar upon the roads. The automobiles were going faster, and the music was playing a restless tune. There was a dance called the “one-step” which was driving the waltz to cover, like some rare animal unfit to cope with a new struggle for existence. A one-step tune was running through everything, chiming into thoughts, and changing the very sound of life. Tommy himself could hear it. He did not know how much he had changed until his Great-aunt Sarah died, leaving him the house at Michael’s Harbor and thirty-five hundred dollars in the bank. It seemed to Tommy that a rope had been cut away, which had held him to a shore. He did not know until much later that it was his boyhood and his youth he was leaving, as one leaves a land forever that grows fairer and still fairer as it approaches the horizon’s rim.

They were sitting in easy attitudes in Winthrop Milburn’s room when Tommy came walking in that last year they were together. It was two weeks after his Aunt Sarah died. They called to him in lazy pleasant voices. They made remarks about his new overcoat and his new brown hat.

“Is anything the matter?” some one asked. “Look at him—he ought to be at home with Mrs. Schoule.”

A year before Mrs. Schoule had become a joke. One by one they had come to call, just to look at Mrs. Schoule, but they were all good boys. They did not bother to admire Tommy’s more sterling characteristics, but accepted them with weary resignation, as they accepted all that smacked of energetic virtue.

“Don’t worry,” said Tommy. “Please don’t any of you strain yourselves. I’m through with Mrs. Schoule!”

“Through with Mrs. Schoule?”

“Yes,” said Tommy, “through with Mrs. Schoule.”

“Through with Mrs. Schoule?”

“Listen,” said Tommy. “I wish you’d all shut up.”

“We won’t shut up,” said Winnie Milburn; “he’s through with Mrs. Schoule.”

“And what’s more,” said Tommy. “I want to know if you won’t come out for dinner. I wish you would. You’ve all done a lot for me—and I want to do something.”

“Don’t,” said Winnie Milburn, “please don’t make me cry.”

“Well, you know you have,” said Tommy. “If it hadn’t been for you—”

He stopped because every one was begging him in strangled voices please to stop.

“Won’t you shut up?” said Tommy Michael.

“All right,” said Winnie Milburn, “all right, but don’t take Sherwood Jellett along. Don’t be big-hearted and take Sherwood Jellett!”

Maurice, who ran the basement dining room in that hotel which the young gentlemen frequented most, looked at Tommy questioningly, because Tommy had not been there before.

“Champagne,” said Tommy Michael, and looked at Maurice in just the right way, as old Simeon Danforth might have looked. “I’ll leave the brand to you.”

And then, ever so much later, he and Winnie Milburn were in a taxicab. Tommy never knew how they got there, or where the rest had gone. He only remembered that his head was very light and singing with soft laughter.

“Where’s all the rest?” asked Tommy.

“You’re tight,” said Winnie Milburn. “They’re all in cabs behind. Where’re we going now?”

“I don’t care,” said Tommy. “Anywhere at all—just as long as it’s somewhere bright.”

“You’re tight,” said Winnie Milburn.

“I don’t care,” said Tommy; “so are you.”

“Oh, well,” said Winnie, “does it matter?”

There was a silence and then they both began to laugh, but Tommy’s mind was very clear.

“Winnie,” said Tommy, “I want to ask you something.”

“Then don’t talk—ask it,” Winnie said.

Tommy placed his hands very carefully, one on each knee.

“Winnie,” said Tommy, “suppose I wanted to marry your sister—would you mind?”

“Who?” said Winnie. “You?”

Winnie Milburn’s eyes were on him. He could feel them in the half light.

“Yes,” said Tommy. “Me.”

“I get you,” said Winnie. “No. Hell, no. Why should I mind?”

Tommy leaned back in that swaying cab. He seemed to have traveled a long distance. It seemed as though he had always been jolting along a road.

“I guess—” said Tommy, and his voice grew stronger, “I guess I’ve shown you, then.”

“You’re tight,” said Winnie. “Don’t be so vague, because it hurts my head. Showed me what, I want to know?”

“I don’t know,” and perhaps Tommy Michael didn’t. “But you and everybody—I’ve showed you just the same.”

XXI

Yes, Tommy Michael had shown them, or he thought he had, even if he did not know what. Things were going too fast to be sure of anything by then, but he must have shown them something of what he was. A year in business might have taught him differently, but he went to Plattsburg that same May. He dropped everything and went, remembering that his great-aunt's thirty-five hundred dollars was waiting in the bank. He had arrived somewhere entirely by himself. He would never have become an officer at Plattsburg, if he had not. You could not get away from that, even though officers and gentlemen were being manufactured in wholesale lots that spring. He had shown them at Michael's Harbor. He could hear their voices behind his back as he walked down the street.

"Lookit—he's an officer! Look at Tommy Michael. Lookit! He's going to the war!"

Yet, as he stood on Mr. Jellett's doorstep, he had a sense of being nowhere, not of Michael's Harbor and not of Warning Hill. As Tommy Michael waited, he remembered that his mouth had grown very dry, and that he had pressed his nails into his palms so tightly that an hour later he could see the marks. He could stand straight with a lean hard straightness. He could walk with the swift grace of coördinated muscles. He could look anybody in the eye—and yet it all seemed as nothing now that he had reached his journey's end. Instead, an odd thought kept crossing his mind in aimless circles, and the thought was like a panic, for though he had fought against it for as long almost as he could remember, there it was, as strong as ever, the stronger for being ground into the earth.

"I'm just as good as they are," his mind kept saying; "I'm just as good as they are. Of course—of course I am."

Even so, he gave a start when Hubbard came back to the door. He hated himself because he knew that Hubbard noticed.

"Miss Marianne will see you, sir," said Hubbard; "this way, if you please."

Tommy was in that hall again, and it was curious that nothing at all seemed changed. Though other places had grown smaller, that hall was as large as ever—the same enormous place of golden oak, with a great stairway mounting upward to a gallery, and a fireplace with a suit of armor upon

either side, and a row of pictures near the light. And Tommy was just like a very small boy when he walked through that front door, exactly as though time had meant nothing. He stood for a moment looking at those pictures, not because he wished to see them, but only to catch his breath.

"Turners, sir," said Hubbard.

"Yes," said Tommy; "yes, I know."

"Beg pardon, sir," said Hubbard. There was a difference in the way he spoke that made Tommy turn and watch him. There was just the slightest difference in Hubbard, though he was still impassive and perfectly polite. "I didn't hardly realize until I saw your card. Your father once admired those pictures, sir. I thought you might be interested to know."

"Oh," said Tommy. "Thank you."

"Thank you, sir," said Hubbard; "may I take your hat?"

"Thanks," said Tommy.

"Thank you, sir," said Hubbard. Now what was Hubbard thinking? Tommy never knew, though he sometimes had a suspicion that Hubbard knew everything that was to happen, when Tommy walked down the hall.

"This way, sir," said Hubbard, "if you please."

Tommy had never seen the room before. It was the music room, which looked over the garden and out towards the harbor. There was a great black grand piano and sofas and chairs in slip covers of flowered chintz. He could hear the piano as Hubbard opened the door, and he knew the tune, already old even then, whose words went roughly as follows:

"I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier,
I brought him up to be my pride and joy:
Who dares to put a musket on his shoulder
To shoot some other mother's darling boy?"

Then some one began to laugh and Hubbard said "Mr. Michael," and the music stopped, and Tommy stood by the door.

The room was smoky. Tommy remembered, and the smoke seemed to go with the song. He could remember just the way that room looked ever so long afterwards, the sun coming through the window, the small red and yellow flowers upon the chintz, a table with glasses, a siphon and a bowl of ice. Marianne was sitting by the piano in a dress of filmy blue. Marianne was laughing, her eyes were dancing and bright. Seated beside Marianne at

the piano, very tall and thin, was Winnie Milburn. It never occurred to Tommy that Winnie might be there, and for some reason Winnie also seemed surprised. Winnie was also in a uniform with a lieutenant's bar on his shoulders, and he looked at Tommy very queerly.

"Hi, Tom," he said.

Marianne waved a hand at him as he stood by the door, and made a little motion with her head.

"You're late," said Marianne. "I was just saying I've been expecting you all afternoon."

There was something puzzling about it. Tommy knew that Marianne had not expected him at all. Her hands moved nervously over the piano keys, high and low in little tinkling sounds, and again he had the same feeling that had possessed him in the hall when Hubbard had spoken—that every one could tell him something if they wished. He had never dreamed of telling Winnie Milburn about Marianne, but Winnie must have put two and two together. Winnie must have remembered the question that Tommy had asked him once, for his eyebrows went up and his forehead wrinkled.

"And ten minutes ago," said Winnie Milburn, "you told me nobody was coming in."

"Silly!" Marianne's fingers danced up and down the scale. "I'd given up expecting him, because he was so late."

"And I never knew you knew him," Winnie Milburn said and smiled; "there's always some one else. Look here—why the deuce didn't you tell me you were coming to call on Marianne?"

Their glances met for a moment and Tommy stammered.

"I—I never thought you were," he said, and then he squared his shoulders. "It's the only time I've ever called."

Again Winthrop Milburn raised his eyebrows, but he never asked how it was that Marianne knew that he was coming, and instead he looked at Marianne and laughed.

"So there's another of 'em, is there?" he inquired; "you might have told me about Tom. We're in the same outfit, as a matter of fact—and it doesn't pay to keep everybody separate. You're getting us all mixed up. There's too many dozens of us. Well,—good-by, Marianne; see you later, Tom, if you're taking the night train."

Then Marianne was seeing Winnie Milburn to the front door. He heard her speaking to him in the hall, because he could not very well but hear her.

"Winnie," she was saying, "you'll come again to-night, won't you, Winnie. He'll be gone."

But Tommy hardly noticed at the time. Marianne had never been so beautiful. She had never been so sweet. And there he was. He had walked through the front door, just as he had said he would, ever so long ago.

When Marianne came back, Tommy remembered that the room was very still. There was a faint, sweet smell of cigarette smoke, and the sound of a motor lawn mower outside. And Marianne had never been so beautiful. She was standing very still, now that they were alone, and her face was almost pale and her eyes were dark and staring, and her lips half parted. She almost looked afraid but it made her still more beautiful. And now that they were alone, Tommy also felt a little frightened.

"Tommy," she said, "I never thought you'd do it."

For a moment they stood looking at each other, nothing more, but both their hearts were beating faster.

"I told you often enough." Tommy's voice was hoarse.

"Well, you needn't have been so sudden, Tommy." All at once Marianne remembered the facts and became indignant. "You might have let me know. It's awfully hard—I don't know how I'll explain. Papa's at home. He may come in here any minute."

"Suppose he does?" Tommy's lips closed tight.

"But I'll have to explain, won't I?" Marianne's voice went to a higher pitch. "He doesn't even know I know you. It—oh, Tommy, it was much nicer down on the beach."

Tommy drew a deep breath.

"Well," said Tommy, "I'm not going to sneak around to see you any more."

"Oh, Tommy!" cried Marianne. "Don't be so awfully silly, Tommy, please!"

Sometimes, years later, Tommy could seem to see himself standing there, and the callowness would make his spirit writhe. What a fool she must have thought him in that new uniform, which did not fit too well when he came to beard the Jelletts in their den. Poor Marianne! Was there any

wonder she looked ill at ease? The things he said were like the pages of a cheap romance.

Then, "Marianne," he was saying, "listen, Marianne; I don't care what any one thinks but you. Do you know what I thought when they made me an officer? The first thing I thought was—'I can walk in the front door now.' Well, here I am."

She stood looking at him, and he could almost think that Marianne wanted to cry, just for a moment. She put her hand up to her throat, a little fluttering hand, so delicate that he wondered how he had ever dared to touch it. He always remembered that she put her hand to her throat, and her eyes were dark like the sea on a windy night.

"Oh, Tommy!" whispered Marianne, "I do love you—I do love you so!"

And surely she must have loved him then. He always remembered that. He wanted to take her in his arms but he did not, because there was something else he had to say.

"And I love you too," said Tommy, "and I guess it's time that every one knew it now."

He saw her give a start as though a noise had startled her.

"Oh—how do you mean?" gasped Marianne.

Perhaps he should have guessed then what was sure to happen, but her sudden start—her bewilderment—meant nothing.

"I mean I'm going over to France." Even when he said it, it had a tinny sound. "We've got a twenty-four hour leave to say good-by. Any time after that we go. We're at Camp Merritt now."

"You mean you're going right away?" asked Marianne.

Tommy nodded, because for a moment he could not speak.

"I think it's dreadful—dreadful!" whispered Marianne.

"No," said Tommy, "it isn't dreadful, when everybody's going, but Marianne"—his voice choked, "will you marry me if I come back?"

That was how he said it, standing in the Jellett's music room, and it may have been a childish gesture, though he said it like a gentleman, just as he had read in books.

And there was Marianne. Now that it was over, it seemed as though he had plunged into some sea of emotion, which blinded his eyes and stopped

his ears; and now that he could hear, there was Marianne upon a distant beach.

"I—I didn't mean to frighten you," said Tommy. "What's the matter, Marianne?"

Marianne was face to face with a definite fact at last, and of course it made her angry. It made her want to cry.

"Marry you? Marry you?" said Marianne in the queerest way. "But what's the use of talking about it if you're going? Tommy—don't be such a *fool*!"

Her voice had ended in an indignant clatter, and even Tommy could see that something was not right, and then he heard her speak again, and hardly knew her voice.

"I never thought you'd dream of such a thing!" cried Marianne. "And I don't see, either, why you have to do this, just before you go!"

"I guess I know what you think," said Tommy Michael, but he did not know, for none of it was right. She did not seem to realize that he had taken his heart and thrown it at her feet. "I guess you think I'm selfish, but I didn't think you'd mind."

"Mind?" There was something piteous in the way she repeated the word after him. "Oh, why shouldn't I mind, when you go and spoil it all?"

"Spoil it?" Even then Tommy did not understand it. "Why am I spoiling anything?"

"Don't! Oh, don't!" cried Marianne, just as though he had hurt her. "Tommy, won't you *stop*—? I—I just couldn't, no matter how much I wanted to, Tommy. Tommy, please be sensible. You know you don't really mean it! You can't mean it. It isn't fair of you, Tommy. You say this to me, but you know you wouldn't dream of saying it to anybody else. You—"

"I don't mean it?" Tommy raised his voice. "You love me, don't you? And I love you. I guess I wouldn't be afraid to tell that to every one in the world."

It seemed incredible that she could not understand. It was a part of him, and a part of all his thoughts, his love for Marianne. Now why did she just stand there with a strange light on her face? Why did she look half angry and half afraid?

“It’s nonsense!” He hardly knew her when she spoke. “Oh, Tommy, don’t be such an idiot! Oh, Tommy, don’t you see? I don’t want to hurt you. It is all so dreadful. You wouldn’t dare to tell my father, and if you couldn’t ever do that—Oh, Tommy, I shouldn’t have let you come here. Now, please, don’t be silly,—Tommy, *please*!”

Of course, she never knew that it was all his life which she was calling silly. For a moment Tommy felt his knees were trembling, when she told him not to be silly and that he didn’t dare.

Tommy did not know how it happened. Often afterwards he would wonder at himself. He found himself very close to Marianne, staring into her face, and his hands were on her shoulders, very soft beneath her dress.

“You love me, don’t you?” he was saying. “Didn’t you say you loved me, Marianne?”

All he could see was her face—wide eyes staring into his, red lips parted, and a sea of misty hair.

“Yes, I—I said so! Tommy, you’re hurting me! Tommy—please!”

She was what she was, for once. For once, he forgot that sense of delicacy which surrounded her always, making her something to be worshipped and only half understood.

“Then where’s your father?”

There was nothing he was afraid of asking, since she loved him, but how could she know that?

“In his library. Tommy, please!”

“Where’s that? Across the hall?”

“Yes, of course—across the hall. Oh, Tommy, let me go! Oh, Tommy, you’re not—”

But it was—exactly what he was going to do. He always said it was the only thing. She should not have said that he did not dare. Marianne must have thought he was just pretending, even when he opened the music-room door. Not until he was half across the hall did she run after him and try to hold him back. The door of the library was in front of him, and there was not the slightest doubt.

“Tommy!” she whispered. “You mustn’t, Tommy! Can’t you think of me?” And then her whisper changed and was charged with venom. “All

right then, if you won't! You'll be sorry," hissed Marianne, but Tommy did not notice.

He had knocked on the door already, two sharp raps and, very faintly, because the door was thick, Grafton Jellett was telling him to come in.

Tommy could remember that room as clearly as if he had been there yesterday instead of years before. There were the books, in shelves reaching to the ceiling, and the tall French windows, looking out across the terraces and gardens to the harbor and the sea. The heavy leather armchairs were still there, and the great Empire writing table of rosewood and gilt. It was curious how recently Tommy seemed to have been there, for Mr. Jellett was seated in one of those armchairs with a book across his knees and a paper cutter in his hand, and Mr. Jellett did not look very changed, in spite of all the time. He was rounder in the vicinity of his waist. His hair was thinner and what was left was more pepper and salt than reddish, but his hands, though they were small, had their old capable manner of grasping what they held. He had on a gray suit, for his tastes always ran to gray, and his face was as dull as ever, and his eyes had their old glassy look of perfect vacancy.

"Eh?" said Mr. Jellett. "How did you get here?"

If he was surprised there was not a ripple of it. He looked at Tommy dully and leaned back in his chair.

"I knocked on the door, sir," said Tommy. "You told me to come in."

"Told you to come in, eh?" said Mr. Jellett. "Who are you, anyway?"

"My name is Michael, sir," said Tommy. "I—"

He stopped. Mr. Jellett leaned forward with a grunting noise and laid down his book on the Empire desk. There was no doubt he remembered, because a flicker of it crossed his face.

"Michael, eh?" said Mr. Jellett. "I don't know why the servant didn't tell me, but never mind. Sit down, Michael. I've been expecting you'd show up."

In his bewilderment Tommy did not answer. There was no doubting Mr. Jellett's words. He was asking him to sit down. He was almost cordial as he asked it. Now Tommy thought—but why say what he thought, when Mr. Jellett told him to sit down that afternoon when Tommy had been turned out so recently an officer and a gentleman? Often, when he was in France, the thought was enough to make him start awake and stare into the black, when fear instead of shame should have stood at his right hand. He could see Mr.

Jellett fingering the paper cutter again with his plump stubby fingers, and he could hear Mr. Jellett's voice.

"So you're an officer, eh?" said Mr. Jellett. "Well—now, that's the stuff." And Mr. Jellett's head went slowly up and down. "And infantry, eh?"

"Yes, sir." Tommy nodded, and so did Mr. Jellett.

"Well, now," the dullness sat heavily on Mr. Jellett's face. "That's the stuff.—A great experience for you. Going over soon?"

"Yes, sir," Tommy nodded. "Almost any time." And again Mr. Jellett nodded, and Tommy could not help thinking that Mr. Jellett was almost kind. He could almost feel approval in Mr. Jellett's nod.

"Almost any time, eh?" said Mr. Jellett. "And you came to see me first—well, that's right,—absolutely right."

"It's awfully good of you to say so, sir," said Tommy. "It—of course it was the only thing to do."

"The only thing to do, eh?" Good old Mr. Jellett! Why had any one ever said that Mr. Jellett was hard? "Well, it's just what I'd do in your place, and you've come to the right man. Now, Michael, I'll be frank, and it isn't so often I'm frank, either. I've had my eye on you."

It was like something splendid in a book, and Tommy did not guess that it was all too good to be true—the kindly rich man speaking to the poor boy in a friendly voice.

"Surprises you, eh?" said Mr. Jellett. "Well, I may look half asleep, but I can see. You've made something of yourself. I've been watching. You've had a damned bad start and you've come through, and I like boys who do that. They're the only kind. When you do come back, you come around to see me—I can't say any more than that. Heh! Heh! It's a funny thing . . . I was just thinking . . ."

Yes, Mr. Jellett was laughing. He leaned back in his chair. His stomach went up and down in little ripples, and Tommy tried to speak. Tommy still thought—actually thought—

"I'm awfully glad you feel this way, sir," Tommy said. "I—I had an idea . . ."

"Heh, heh!" said Mr. Jellett. "It's a funny thing. . . . I was just thinking your father came here once about that land, and he said I'd never get it. Heh! Heh!—a funny thing."

“About that land?” All at once Tommy Michael felt dizzy, and he gripped the bulky arms of his chair, and all at once he saw the irony of it. Mr. Jellett had been talking about that land all the time, that bit of beach and the tumble-down house beside the harbor. Now there was a void in the pit of Tommy’s stomach, and once again he was all alone.

“Heh! Heh!” said Mr. Jellett; “when you get as old as me, you’ll remember lots of funny things. Now let’s get down to business. I thought you’d come around. You’re the first one to have any sound sense, and I’ll see it’s worth your while. Lots of people don’t like me in the Harbor, and I don’t give a damn—but I know when to be generous. I want that beach, and you know I want it,—and I’ll pay a fancy price just so we can forget all about it—and no hard feelings, eh? How about ten thousand dollars to call it square?”

Now how the gods must have laughed, if the gods are not tired of old jokes. Mr. Jellett was lounging in his chair, blinking his pale blue eyes, as Tommy Michael answered, and perhaps already Tommy knew his ship was very near the rocks in his land of make-believe.

“I—” and Tommy played the game right to the end, “I didn’t come about the land.”

“Eh?” Mr. Jellett pulled himself up straight. “You didn’t come about the land, eh? Then what the devil did you come for?”

And Tommy told him, and Mr. Jellett’s face was very calm and dull. The library seemed much larger. Its walls were stretching back, leaving him in a vast and open space, where his voice echoed hollowly about his ears.

“Because—” Tommy remembered that he stopped. For an instant he felt the terrible power of a thing which held him down, and he was struggling with it as he had struggled always. “Because,” said Tommy, “I want to marry Marianne.”

Lots of people would have loved to have seen Grafton Jellett in that second, lots of spiteful residents of Warning Hill, but it was really not much to see. For a moment he looked stupider than ever and that was all.

“Eh?” said Mr. Jellett, “would you mind saying that again?”

“Because I want to marry your daughter,” Tommy Michael said.

Mr. Jellett placed his paper knife on the Empire table beside his book, and gazed at Tommy vacantly, without passion or interest.

“You want to marry my daughter, eh?” said Mr. Jellett. “Does she know you want to?”

“Yes, sir,” Tommy Michael nodded, and Mr. Jellett also nodded slowly.

“And may I ask,” inquired Mr. Jellett, his face was a shade pinker as he spoke, “how long this has been going on?”

Though Mr. Jellett’s words were as calm as ever, Tommy felt a tingling in his blood, and a dull surge of anger. There was a whispering in his ears, as though all the past were whispering.

“I’ve known her a long time, sir,” and he felt afraid when he said it, and he hated himself for feeling afraid, “and—and why shouldn’t I know her? I used to come to see her down on that beach you were speaking of—in a boat. You saw me the first time I came.”

“I saw you, eh?” Mr. Jellett looked puzzled, and his face broke into little lines.

He was as good as they were. Over and over to himself Tommy kept saying it, and yet it did no good before the vacancy of Mr. Jellett’s stare.

“And you showed me your garden,” Tommy Michael said. “It was a long time ago.”

“Ah,” said Mr. Jellett, “I remember. And you had a garden too. And didn’t I tell you not to come back?”

“And I never did come back,” said Tommy, “except on my own land.”

“So you were that little tad?” said Mr. Jellett. “God! I’d nearly forgotten that. Sit still—don’t get up. We’ll get to the bottom of this in a minute. Every one does things behind my back. Now don’t say anything. I’ll do the talking, Hewens! Where the devil are you? Hewens!”

There was no answer. Mr. Jellett got up and pressed a button by the fireplace, and turned again to Tommy, and Tommy could not tell what Mr. Jellett thought. That was the trouble with Mr. Jellett. No one ever knew.

“Which is it?” inquired Mr. Jellett placidly. “Have you got a hell of a nerve, my boy, or are you just a plain damn’ fool?”

“Mr. Jellett,” began Tommy, “Mr. Jellett—”

There was something he wanted to say, though he did not know just what, and he had no time to say it, for all at once Mr. Jellett, as he looked at

Tommy, chuckled, just as he had once long ago, just as though Tommy was a little boy in muddy boots.

"Sit down," said Mr. Jellett placidly. "Don't say a word. Heh! Heh! I remember—You had some awful big roses over by the barn. You used to see Marianne at the Golf Club, I suppose. Girls will be girls—"

"Mr. Jellett," began Tommy, but Hubbard was at the door. If Tommy's face was red, Hubbard did not appear to notice.

"Hubbard," said Mr. Jellett, "where the devil's Hewens? He ought to be here doing letters."

Hubbard cleared his throat.

"He went out to drive, sir," said Hubbard, "with Mrs. Jellett, sir."

"With Mrs. Jellett, eh?"

For just a second Tommy remembered that Mr. Jellett looked very queerly, but he did not think of it then.

"Yes, sir," said Hubbard.

"All right," said Mr. Jellett, "tell him I want to see him when he gets back—and now Hubbard, will you ask Miss Marianne to come here right away—er—no matter what she's doing?"

"Mr. Jellett," began Tommy. If Mr. Jellett had not smiled, it would not have hurt him so, but Mr. Jellett still was smiling placidly.

"Don't bother," said Mr. Jellett; "Marianne will be here in a minute. Then we'll know what's what. And thanks for letting me know, Michael. I'll check you down for that. Out on your land, under the moon, eh? I suppose she sneaked down the back way. Everybody seems to be sneaking lately. Gad! It must have been exactly like a story. And now you're in the army, going to the war. 'Good-by, sisters, wives, and sweethearts, it won't take us long.' Gad! It is all pretty—oh, there you are, Marianne, and now we'll find what's what."

Yes, there was Marianne. She seemed to be coming toward them from a great distance, a slim, feathery figure in a dress of blue, clear-eyed, with a pale set face, her lips closed in an ugly curve, like a child's about to be punished. Any one could read what was written on her. A coldness came over Tommy Michael, a numbness, so that he seemed to be standing on the air, and then a flurry of shame and a conviction of deep wrong. That wrong was more than the present. It was biting to his soul.

“You haven’t any right to make fun of me,” he said, in a thick, strained voice.

“Fun of you, eh?” said Mr. Jellett. “I’m not the kind to make fun. I don’t think this is funny—Be quiet! I’m doing the talking now. Marianne, did you send this boy in here?”

“No,” Marianne answered at once, like a child who had learned her lesson, as every one answered Grafton Jellett. “No, of course I didn’t.”

Grafton Jellett examined her for a minute without a jot of expression in his pale blue eyes.

“You didn’t?” said Mr. Jellett. “Well, he came. Now let’s see you answer this, and tell the truth for once: What the devil’s all this about?”

It seemed to Tommy that he had never known her. For a moment Marianne’s eyes were on him, dark and contemptuous. That was the only word.

“Oh, don’t you *see*?” cried Marianne. Her voice went through him like a chill sharp wind. “It isn’t anything, Papa? Do you think I’m such an idiot? I never dreamed he’d come in here to you. It was only in fun. Everything was only in fun, and of course I thought he knew it. Now let me go away, won’t you, please?—and if it does you any good, I hope I never see him again. I never want to see him again. No—never.”

Marianne’s voice ended in a dry little sob, and Tommy always remembered that, for a second, they all stood very still, as one stands sometimes when a delicate piece of china has crashed upon the floor. Mr. Jellett, and even Marianne, must have shared that sensation, and given it an instant of involuntary tribute. For everything had broken. Tommy could hear the echo of it as he stood very still, and then there was a soft noise in his ears. His head was full of hollow sounds.

She had never meant a word of all she said, but surely she might have spoken differently, in a kinder, gentler way. Tommy stretched out his hand to the Empire table, because his knees felt weak. His face was pale and his eyes were very wide.

“Only in fun?” he said. The shock of it still crushed him. He seemed to have fallen, fallen from some high place, and the ground had hit him and robbed him of his breath. “So that’s what you’ve been doing—laughing at me all the time.”

"You heard her?" replied Mr. Jellett, "and I guess that's that. Got anything more to say?"

"No," Tommy squared his shoulders, and his face was very white. "I guess—after that—there isn't any more."

"No," said Mr. Jellett, "I guess there isn't, and I won't say what I was going to say—but I'll say this,—" He took a step nearer Tommy, a short plump little man, and spoke in a level voice. And who knows? Perhaps he meant it kindly. "You're a damn' fool, boy, but it isn't all your fault. It's this idea that everybody's as good as everybody else. They're not—that's all. What the devil's getting into everybody? Is everybody going crazy? I did it, I suppose you'll say. Well, what if I did? Not one in ten thousand can ring the bell. And when they do, do you think they're going to let their children go back to where they started? It's all damned rot and insolence—and now get on back to the Harbor where you belong. Eh—here—what's this?"

And for once in all that interview, the veil of placidity fell from Mr. Jellett, and Tommy was not the reason. The library door had opened so violently that it went against a bookcase with a crash. Sherwood Jellett was the one who opened it. Sherwood was in tennis clothes, and his face was very red. His sandy hair was sprinkled about his scalp like unraked hay, and Sherwood was grinning in a vacant moon-faced way.

"Sherwood! Go upstairs!" cried Marianne, but Mr. Jellett stepped forward before Sherwood could answer, and Mr. Jellett's face was also red.

"What do you mean?" roared Mr. Jellett. "Smashing in here like this? By Gad, are you drunk again?"

Sherwood took two deliberate steps into the room. The resemblance between himself and his father was startling, yet curiously different. Though their faces were just alike, you could see he would never be the man his father was.

"Now don't you bully me," Sherwood shook a playful finger. "I'm free, white, and twenty-one and I didn't ask to be born. You can't always be treating me rough. I can have a drink with a friend, can't I? I met Winnie Milburn—in the hall—good old Winnie Milburn."

"You didn't ask to be born, eh?" said Mr. Jellett. "By God, you'll wish you hadn't been, before I'm through. You'll wish you weren't a son of mine. You'll—"

"Sherwood!" cried Marianne. "Oh, go out! Sherwood, please!"

“Huh! I wish I weren’t a son of yours right now. What have you ever done to me but yell at me since I was a little kid? I’m twenty-one, that’s what, free, *white*, and twenty-one. Why, what’s all this anyway? Hi, Michael—what’s Tommy Michael doing here?”

“Oh,” said Mr. Jellett. He never stayed angry long. Even at the sight of Sherwood his placidity came back. “So you know him too, do you?”

“Know him?” Sherwood looked at Tommy with elaborate care. “Sure I know him. The boys have him around because he shows ’em golf for nothing, when he isn’t washing dishes and flirting with the village girls. What’s he doing here?”

And then the blood in Tommy Michael boiled at last in anger. He always had to thank Sherwood for that, and Mr. Jellett made a sound, which might have been a laugh or else a groan.

“He wants to marry your sister,” said Mr. Jellett, “in case you want to know.”

“Wants to marry Marianne?” Sherwood’s mouth opened in a shout. “Wants to marry Marianne? Ha! Ha! That’s a sweet one. Now maybe she’ll watch her step. Ha! Ha! That’s the richest yet. Wait till—tell Winnie Milburn—Ha! Ha! Ha!”

Tommy never knew that he had done it until it was over. Sherwood Jellett was on the library rug, struggling to his knees, and Tommy heard Mr. Jellett speaking.

“Serves him damn’ well right,” said Mr. Jellett. “Hubbard, show Mr. Michael out. Hewens! Where the devil’s Hewens?”

But Tommy Michael only half heard him. There were voices all about him. Sherwood was shouting something, and so was Marianne, but the voices all meant nothing. A hand was on his arm, firm, courteous, and gentle.

“This way, sir,” said Hubbard. “This way, sir, if you please.”

And it seemed to Tommy that he was the one who had drunk too deep, for he seemed to be moving before an inevitable force, along that great high hall. Voices meant nothing—nothing mattered. He seemed to be entirely alone. Then the sun was on his face. He was out on the blue gravelled drive and the grilled door was closed behind him.

Then from the haze that was around him, penning in his thoughts, he heard another voice, and, without knowing where he came from, Tommy

saw that Winnie Milburn was beside him, as serious as the morning after.

"Tom," said Winnie Milburn, "Tom—"

And Tommy Michael stopped and turned. The gravel hissed like spray under his boots. The sight of Winnie's thin pale face and his lips that never lost a trace of a smile was suddenly an answer to everything. That fierce energy which once had been his mother's was tearing at his voice, for all at once everything seemed sharp and clear in a blaze of furious light.

"Go back!" The fury in Tommy's voice made Winnie Milburn start. "Go back where you belong."

"But, Tom!" cried Winnie Milburn, "don't you see I'm sticking with you? I heard all the row and I'm sticking right along."

But Tommy only half heard him in that sudden blaze of light. He was choking with a hatred of himself and a hatred of the world, a hatred of that close cropped lawn, and of the impeccable gravel on the drive; and the very sight of Winnie Milburn was like a whip lash on his pace.

"And that's a lie!" cried Tommy Michael. "Don't you think I know you now? You're all a pack of liars. Don't you think I know? Liars or else damned fools, like me. Don't I know why you ever looked at me twice? Because I could hit a golf ball and you wanted to hit one too, or else you wouldn't have noticed me any more than if I'd been a yellow dog. That's it—a yellow dog. And it was all funny to you too, wasn't it? Fun to watch me make a fool of myself? I guess it must have been, to see me think I was just as good as you. I guess you must have laughed."

"That isn't so!" In spite of his astonishment Winnie Milburn answered quickly. "It may have been at first. I heard what Sherwood said—"

"You did, did you?" Tommy Michael's mouth grew thin as he tried to erase the agony from his face, and then, in his wretchedness, even pain was gone. "Then—I guess that's all. I know where I am now, all right. It's the first time I ever knew, and I guess he had a right to laugh. I never ought to have said a word to any of you. I'm not like you, and I won't ever be. I guess that's all."

And Tommy Michael turned without waiting to hear what Winnie Milburn answered, and walked down the Jellett drive, past the rhododendron bushes and through the Jellett gates. But once through those gates his walk became almost a run. Tommy Michael was running, or almost running, away from Warning Hill. Not until much later did he realize that no matter how

fast one traveled, or how many friends one spurned, or bridges one might leave crashing into smoky ruin, it did no good to run away.

Already memory was on his back, grimmer than Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea, for not even drink could ever shake its hold. Yes, memory was lashing him already and goading him on toward hate.

XXII

TOMMY MICHAEL always said the idea of their laughing was the worst. He could seem to hear them laughing as he hurried down the road. There was Sherwood's hoarse, high shout, and Mr. Jellett's chuckle, and perhaps by then Marianne too was laughing, softly, ripplingly in little waves of sound. Just behind him, no matter how he hurried, her laughter seemed to be just behind him, although the road was empty and he was far away from Warning Hill. On that causeway which crossed the marshes toward Michael's Harbor the wind was blowing fresh and strong. It caught at him playfully with caressing invisible hands, just as the wind had always done, as long as he could remember, but her voice was in the wind, mocking and driving Tommy on.

"I meant it just in fun . . . just in fun," the wind was saying. "I never want to see him again. . . . No, never, never,—never."

And there was only one wish in him definite and clear, which every one must know. He wanted to go home. Once inside those crumbling gateposts of the Michael grounds, the bushes would shut him out, and there would be a shadowy something which would bring him peace. There would be a friendly something and the wind would change its tone. There would be a whispering in the trees, and the leaves and the dead vines would be moving, as though some one else was there.

And once he got there, it was true. The sun was going down, covering the land with a soft, forgiving light. It was the time when shadows grow as long and as distorted as the darkest thoughts, falling suddenly across the very lightest places, silent warnings of the dark. And the breeze was going down with the sun, sinking to the faintest murmurs. The lulling of the wind was like the passing of a storm. Up through the elm trees rose the walls of the Michael house, gray beneath their cracking paint, taller than he had ever remembered, and solemn with a mystery of their own. And softly, invisibly, about Tommy Michael were moving the ghosts of other sorrows and memories of all sorts of vanished things, which gather about old places and never wholly go. There were a thousand mournful hopes and fears, moving and restless with the setting of the sun, and they made him think half-finished thoughts, formless, unconsoling and yet tranquil in their sadness. Those ghosts were trooping from the door of the carriage house with its

sagging roof. They were wandering along that choked path that once led to the water through a mass of shrubs and weeds.

Yet by the shore the waves of the harbor were fresh and new. Tommy Michael wondered sometimes what led him to the shore. It must have been because he had played there so often long ago. The summer house where he had played was a formless thing covered by its vines, and the grass, already sere and brown, was tall about it, billowing softly in the dying wind. And Tommy did not seem to matter. Nothing seemed to matter as he stood there. Across the mouth of Welcome River the houses of the town stood faintly white, like graves, and the elms above them were like the trees on plates and the sky behind them was very red.

Through the pain in Tommy Michael there ran memories of frayed ribbons of mornings beneath the sun. It must have been the billowing of the grass which brought him so near to the beginning. It was not hard for Tommy to think back. He was lying in the grass. His father was standing above him in his checked suit, leaning on his cane.

"No?" his father was saying, and you might have thought his voice had never gone. "Well, you'll see what I mean some day. The world isn't made for people out of the ordinary running."

There was a frightful clarity to it, and then all about him memories were darting through the dark—his father's voice, his mother's voice—and then there came a surge of loneliness, so bitter that it was almost fear. The grass was moving in the dusk, exactly as though some one was running on it, with a noiseless step as light as air.

It must have been that loneliness which made him call, involuntarily, in a tortured voice. It did not seem absurd out there in the dark, to call on something that was lost, never to be found.

"Spurius!"

He was calling to something that was gone, and he gave it that same old name.

Even when his own voice broke through everything, he could not stop himself.

"Hi! Spurius! Are you there?"

There was a rustling, nothing more, only the rustling of the wind; and he was all alone. That magic he once had known had never been; and Tommy

Michael was all alone, faced with the most terrible truth that man has ever learned.

"There's only me," said Tommy Michael; "yes, there's only me."

And that was how Miss Meachey found him, standing by that ruined summer house, staring at the grass. When Tommy Michael first saw her, surely he had a right to be startled. She was walking down the weed-choked path with a long dark cloak about her, like a shadow come to life.

"Is that you?" He heard her call before he saw her. "Is that you, Tommy Michael?"

Then Tommy saw her, tall, dark, and bareheaded, and all wrapped in her cloak.

"Who—who are you?" asked Tommy Michael, and he did not know. Except once when he had shaken hands, years back, he had only seen her from a distance.

"I'm Miss Meachey," she said, "Isabel Meachey. I'm the Jelletts' governess. Don't you know?"

Tommy Michael did not answer. She was nearer, and he could see her clearly.

"No one sent me," said Miss Meachey. "I just came. I thought you might be here."

"But what did you come for?"

Miss Meachey still was good to look at. There was hardly any need to think how much more beautiful she must have been ten years before, as she stood there in the dusk.

"Because you need some one," Miss Meachey said, "you may not know me, but that doesn't mean I don't know you. I know all about you—everything. There wasn't much for me to think about. I've watched you all the time."

She paused, and Tommy saw that she was smiling.

"Poor Tommy Michael!" Miss Meachey said. "You'll let me call you Tommy? You don't mind? Why did you ever love her?"

"Did you come here"—it was not strange that Tommy was incredulous—"did you come here to be kind? It's too late, I guess, for anybody to be kind."

Miss Meachey nodded.

"I know, but that's just why I came. I suppose it does seem queer to see me all at once, all alone in the dark, when you've never seen me before. I never thought, because it seems we've been friends for so long. I know just how you're hurt."

"How do you know?" It was all very curious. It no longer seemed strange that Miss Meachey should be there. Before she ever told him he knew there was a sadness in her and a disillusion exactly like his own. Miss Meachey too was hurt. The only difference was that she had suffered it so long without complaint, as women can.

"Don't you see?" There was an eagerness in her answer. "Because we're on the fringe of things, and we're the saddest people in the world, brought up to something that we've never had, and wishing for all sorts of things, wishing, wishing. If we don't take care, we get to be the courtiers,—and the courtesans. And it's dreadful. . . . Oh, I know."

"Yes," said Tommy dully. "I guess you're right. I guess that's what we are."

Miss Meachey's throat was quivering. There was a trembling about her lips. It was startling, because a moment before her face had been so calm.

"Don't say that. I may be, but it isn't what you are—not yet. Don't let the Jelletts smash you. They're always glad to do it—but they haven't smashed you yet. And don't you care for the Jelletts. They'd never understand. Hate them—the way I do, Tommy Michael."

"Why do you hate them?"

Somehow it was as though she had snatched away her cloak, and her breast was white with scars.

"Why?" Miss Meachey raised her hand. Her fingers gripped his arm.

"Because they don't know what it is to be kind. They've forgotten all about it. They're rotten and they'll smash themselves—like—like rotten apples. That's the way they'll go."

It was ugly—that idea of Miss Meachey hating them all the time.

"What's the use?" Tommy sighed and shook his head. "I suppose you thought you were as good as they were too. What's the use?" Through the darkness he could see the lights already twinkling on Warning Hill, tiny

specks against the sky. “Nothing can ever happen to the Jelletts. They’ll be laughing,” Tommy Michael’s voice broke; “I wish I was dead. I wish—”

And then Miss Meachey began to laugh. It was not pleasant to hear her, and she still held his arm very tightly.

“I know,” she said, “I’ve wished it too—and I used to think they were wonderful, but they’re not. You wait and see. Do you know what happened to-night? What do you think Grafton Jellett found after you went away?” Miss Meachey laughed again. “He found his wife had run away with his secretary. Yes, she ran off with that blond Hewens this afternoon. And I’ll tell you something more. I might as well. Do you know what Grafton Jellett thinks? He thinks I’m going to marry him. . . . And I’m going to laugh in his face. I can do it now—laugh right in his face. I’ve got enough of his money—and I’ll laugh at him. I’ll laugh—”

Miss Meachey had begun to laugh already. She threw back her head and her shoulders shook at the immensity of her joke, whatever it might be.

“Don’t!” cried Tommy, because the sound was terrible. “Won’t you please be quiet?”

“Why don’t you laugh too?” inquired Miss Meachey. “I had to tell some one, and I thought you’d like to know. Are you still thinking about Marianne?”

“I wish,” cried Tommy, and again it seemed as though everything was breaking, “you’d leave out Marianne.”

“Then leave her out yourself,” replied Miss Meachey. “You’re the one who’ll have to do it, because she won’t leave you. She’ll want you again. She’ll change her mind before to-morrow, because she cares about you, Tommy. In her way, she cares. You’ll have to do the breaking. She’ll want you back again.”

“She can’t want me much—not after—what she said.”

It was worse than if Miss Meachey had never told him that Marianne cared.

“Oh,” said Miss Meachey, “they never mind what they say. She had to say something hard to make things right. That’s why I say they’ll hurt you if you love them. You won’t be the only one. There’s a girl in the village now, and I suppose she cares, but wait till Sherwood’s finished—”

Bitterly, sneeringly, Miss Meachey spoke, and it was an ugly thing to hear. Between the words he could feel the venom and the pain, and all at

once Mr. Jellett's house was like a hideous dark shape. Slowly on the harbor breeze the last fair thought was leaving Tommy Michael. Out of the shadows Miss Meachey had come to send it spinning with her laugh and her twitching face. Slowly Tommy Michael raised his head.

"What girl are you talking about?"

"Haven't you heard?" inquired Miss Meachey. "If you hadn't been away, you would. It's the Street girl—Mary Street."

Tommy Michael drew in his breath, and something seemed to be pressing on his chest. He could remember so well. He remembered with a sharp tenderness that choked him and hurt his eyes. It was not so long ago, back in the beginning, that she was standing barelegged by Welcome River, her hair in wild wisps across her face, staring across the harbor to that magic place where the houses stood,—tall like castles.

"Tom," she was calling, "you take that boat . . . I want to see you go. You tell me what it looks like, Tommy, when you get back home."

And all that time he had been away, and now his boat was on the rocks with that big sail that would carry him so fast. The waves upon the rocks were lashing at him, not waves of water, but more like tongues of flame.

"She is—is she?" Tommy Michael was startled by the sound of his own voice. "Well, I'm enough for the Jelletts. You tell Sherwood that for me. You tell him to keep away from her, or Mal will kill him, when he gets home, or else I will, if I get back."

Miss Meachey gave a puzzling answer.

"Good," said Miss Meachey. "Now I'm glad I came."

"You'll tell him?" said Tommy. "I'd tell him myself if I had time."

"Yes," Miss Meachey's eyes were bright. "I'll tell him, Tommy, and you'll feel better now. It is always better to think of some one else. I wish I'd seen you long ago. I always wanted to. Don't forget, and now I'll tell you all about the Jelletts. You'd better know it all."

After she turned and left him at the gate, he never saw Miss Meachey again. It was singular to remember that he and she had only talked that solitary time, for she was like an old friend as he watched her walking up the road to Warning Hill. She had told her whole life, and it was curiously like his own. It left him dizzy and tired. She had told him enough and more than enough about the Grafton Jelletts, all sorts of little tarnished things that were better left unsaid.

XXIII

MARY STREET was the only one at the station to say good-by when Tommy Michael left for the war that night. It was curious that he should have felt badly about it, for after all she meant nothing. They had hardly spoken since that night when he came back from Warning Hill nearly five years before, but he was very grateful when she walked with him to the train. It kept his thoughts away to have her stride beside him, slender and silent through the dark.

"Mary," he said, and as she turned toward him he knew that she was still thinking everything he used to think. The dark was still mysterious to her, and the sun was bright, and anything might happen, no matter how impossible.

"Yes," she said.

"Thanks for coming."

"Why not?" she said. "You were lonely. So was I. We're always sort of lonely, aren't we, Tom?"

He never knew how much he told her or how much she may have guessed. Once their hands touched, he remembered, and for a second, though a hundred windows were lighted on that street, he and Mary seemed to be entirely alone, walking in a shadowy silence where she alone knew the way. It was only when he touched her hand. Afterwards his head was aching and he felt very tired.

Not until the train came in could he make up his mind to tell Mary Street what he wanted. Just when the train came in, Mary threw her arms about his neck and kissed him right where every one could see.

"Good-by, Tom," she said, "and you tell me all about it when you get back home." She was standing beneath the lights of the station platform, looking at something beyond him, and a wisp of her hair was blown across her face.

"Mary," he said, and stopped.

She did not answer. Her silence was like that silence in the garden by the summer house when he had called in vain. And he knew that he was leaving something, not Mary, but something of himself.

“Mary,” said Tommy, “I want to tell you—don’t have anything to do with Sherwood Jellett. I know what I’m saying. It won’t be any use.”

Then Mary Street’s face had grown scarlet, and her lips were quivering.

“I guess,” said Mary Street. “I know why you told me that.”

“No, you don’t,” said Tommy; “but it’s true.”

“I know why,” mockingly Mary Street raised her head, and her voice followed him as the train began to move. “Because she threw you over,—didn’t she? So you weren’t good enough for them—not you.”

Mockingly she waved her hand, and he could see her try to smile, but all the while her lips were trembling, as if she was angry or sorry for him, either one. And the train was moving faster. It was taking him away as the current of his life had taken him to regions of which he could never tell Mary Street, when he got back home.

“Promise,” Tommy called. “Won’t you promise?”

“You don’t care,” and her face was wet with tears beneath the platform light. “You don’t care. You tell me about it, Tommy, when you get back home.”

Would she have promised, if he had spoken sooner, and if the train had not moved away? What would have happened to them both, if he had spoken sooner?

Winnie Milburn saw him in the smoking car, Tommy’s face pale and set, staring straight ahead of him, and Winnie sat down beside him as though nothing at all was wrong.

“Hi!” said Winnie Milburn. “I’m feeling awful drunk.”

Tommy Michael started and stared at Winnie Milburn in blank surprise.

“I never thought,” he said, “you’d speak to me again.”

Winnie leaned back comfortably.

“Don’t be an ass,” he said. “If we want to fight, haven’t we joined the army?”

All at once Tommy felt ashamed, with a leaden shame that made him sick of everything he was.

“Winnie,” he began.

“Yeh?” said Winnie Milburn.

“I didn’t mean what I said up there. I don’t know what was the matter. I guess I was sort of crazy—I—”

“Hell,” said Winnie Milburn, and he opened his eyes lazily. “That’s all right. You had to take a crack at somebody. Every one takes cracks at me.”

“I mean,” Tommy was groping for an elusive thought. His head was aching, and he was very tired. “I mean I was no good. I ought to know enough to take a licking. I always get licked—and I didn’t take it right. That’s what I mean.”

He was still speaking. He was telling Winnie Milburn everything that had happened before he knew that he was going to tell him. He was telling Winnie about his father, and the house, and the mud by Welcome River, and of the houses that looked like castles up on Warning Hill, and while he spoke it sounded like an old story. He hardly seemed a part of it all while he told.

“Hell,” said Winnie Milburn. “That’s all right. But here’s what you don’t see. You’re not any different from anybody else. Everybody’s about the same—good and bad, no matter where you see ’em. You think it’s money, but you’re crazy in the head. There’re kinds of people, that’s all—some you like and some you don’t. It doesn’t do any good to kick it all over when you’re mad. You’re still the same kind, whether you want to be or not. And what I say—if you want to fight, we’re going to the war, and if people throw you out, you’re not their kind and you ought to be damned glad.”

Winnie Milburn took a gold cigarette case from his pocket and tapped it softly with a delicate forefinger.

“The trouble is,” he said, “you think everybody who carries one of these is like everybody else that does. You’ve been talking half an hour and that’s all you’ve been saying. What difference does it make, if you’re the same breed of cat? Here—take the damned thing. Take it!”

“Here!” cried Tommy. “What are you doing that for?”

“Oh, don’t argue!” sighed Winnie Milburn. “Take it when I tell you. There—now do you feel any better? You ought to. You’re just as good as I am now, except you’re not as drunk. And what I say—if you want a fight, we’re going to the war.”

Winnie Milburn smiled cheerfully. Apparently the idea of the war pleased him, for he began to sing, in a way which made others in that car turn and stare at them, the very same song he had laughed at earlier that

afternoon. It was the one about not raising my boy to be a soldier. As Tommy Michael listened, he clutched at the back of the seat in front.

"Can't you sing something else?" he asked.

Winnie Milburn stopped and asked him why.

"Because—it makes me think," and he did not want to think.

"About Marianne?" inquired Winnie Milburn airily. "Don't be such a hog. Do you want to know something amusing? She gave me the sack just before you came in. You're not the only one."

Winnie was a better man than he was. Tommy could never understand why Winnie should have been the one to go. They were in a patch of woods all cut with little paths. The trees were small and broken, and branches with fresh leaves were on the ground. They were standing up, both of them very dirty, and Winnie was lighting a cigarette, when all that woods became a shrieking torment, like other woods at the end of marches through the dark. When Tommy staggered to his feet, there was nothing left of Winnie Milburn but a heap of rags and blood, not a face and not a voice. Winnie Milburn was nothing any more.

XXIV

Tommy Michael thought he was through with them. It showed how little he knew of the world, or of the Jelletts either, to have thought he could get away for good from the Jelletts or from what the Jelletts meant.

Tommy Michael was thin and pale and his uniform was old. There were those gold V's on his left cuff and one on his right—eighteen months and wounded once.

Fifth Avenue was filled with motors, for it was five in the afternoon. There were hundreds, thousands of them, all new and shining, like the cars which once passed his house toward Warning Hill, and once he heard a clattering of hoofs. Perhaps you remember that carriage that rolled in solitary splendor back in nineteen-nineteen, like the last of a species, but vigorous and new. A pair of bays drew it, in silver-mounted harness; a coachman and a footman were on the box in silk hats and plum-colored suits and silver buttons. It was a pure association of ideas. When Tommy Michael saw that carriage, he always said he did not seem to be upon a sidewalk. He was standing on the edge of a dusty road and that other carriage was rolling by.

"Now there's a fine turn-out for you," his father was saying, "though personally I wouldn't check those horses quite so high."

And really it was the most singular thing. Tommy Michael said that nothing which had happened made the slightest difference. He had not escaped in the least from anything he used to think. His uniform was shrunken and creased; his shoes were scarred and scuffed about the toes. The voices on the sidewalk, and all the roar of noises upon the air became hushed before the slapping of those hoofs upon the asphalt. He could even hear the jingling of the curb chains as the pair of bays went past, and again he thought that he had never seen anything so splendid. There was exactly the same insolence and splendor which he had known before, and nothing he had seen or done had diminished it one jot.

"It's just the same," he found himself saying; "it's just the same."

And then he knew, in spite of everything, that he was Tommy Michael still, that he had only lost himself for a little while. It had always been the Jelletts, and it was the Jelletts still. The idea which they personified was mocking him, laughing at him again, in the voices all around him, and he

could not get away. That was what Tommy always said. He could not get away.

"Tommy!" He remembered how he had started, when he heard his own name. "Hey—don't you know me, Tom?"

Mal Street was the one who saw him. He did not seem just right to Mal, because though Tommy looked, he did not appear to see. Mal was in a private's uniform, which was a good deal too small. His face was very angular and brown and mobile, that same wild face where anger and humor ran unchecked. Even the army had not managed to take the slouch from Mal's shoulders. From looking at him you could imagine what he thought about the army and all discipline in life. A lock of his hair had slipped from beneath his cap and was dangling across his forehead.

"Buddy," said Mal, "they can't make me salute you now. I got out yesterday. Say—who won the war?"

Tommy began to laugh, and all at once everything was better.

"The M. Ps," said Tommy.

"Yeh?" said Mal. "And who helped the M.Ps?"

"The Y.M.C.A.," said Tommy.

"Yes," said Mal. "You know your stuff, but I won some of it, now I'm saying, when I wasn't in the pen."

Mal was sure to have been the sort you saw around the guardhouse who never fitted in. But it was not a time to think of that. The sight of Mal filled Tommy with a nostalgic pain.

"And now," said Mal, "I'm going back home, I'll tell the world—just as soon as I hit the station, kid. Ain't you coming too?"

Tommy always said it was very strange that the sight of Mal and the sound of Mal made him want to go back again. It seemed as though a black veil that was all around him began to shake. Something bright and peaceful came in little flashes through his mind. It was June, and the sun would be out, the long summer sun. It would be sparkling on the water. It would make the shadows dance through the trees. He could remember. The waves would go rippling on the shore, more and more loudly as the sun went down, and shot a final beam toward the houses on Warning Hill.

"Not yet," said Tommy. "I don't want to go back—much."

Then Mal said a surprising thing, because you would not have thought that Mal had the intuition.

"Oh," said Mal, "it's them Jelletts, is it?"

Tommy looked up quickly, his face a painful red. For some reason Mal's guessing only added to his humiliation.

"How did you guess that?" he asked, and he did not seem to have been away at all, and it all might have happened yesterday.

"Mary," said Mal. "She wrote."

"Mary?" Then Tommy remembered something else. "Is—is she still playing around with Sherwood Jellett? Look here—I said—"

Sometimes it struck him as curious that he had nearly forgotten, for all at once he knew it was the only thing that mattered in the wreck that he had left behind. Mal Street leaned toward him. His eyebrows came together in a thick dark line.

"If there's any worrying about her," he remarked, "I'll do it, and I guess Mary can look out for herself. Don't you worry. Hell's smoke! You ain't afraid of them Jelletts?"

"No, you fool!" Tommy always said that he was startled by his own anger, because he could not understand why he should have been angry. Mal seized his shoulder. For once Mal displayed marvellous good sense.

"Then you come back home," said Mal. "Say—you've gotta come back home. Pa's laid up with rheumatism, but you can stay with us. What'll it get you being yellow and not wanting to come back? I guess you've been in lots worse places than our house, and don't call me a fool when you're a bigger one. Honest, Tom—you come back home. You've been there before."

And then Tommy knew that it was the only thing to do. No matter what might happen, he could not get away. Sooner or later, he would have to see the Jelletts in the flesh instead of imagining he saw them.

"Will you take me in if I come?" He asked it almost humbly, and it was like the ending of a struggle, and the glow of Mal's friendliness was all about him.

"I said so, didn't I?" said Mal.

"Then thanks," said Tommy. "I'll be down to-morrow night."

"I'll be down to meet you, kid," Mal Street said, "right when the train comes in."

That was how Tommy Michael went back, and sometimes he said that he never knew when he would have come if it had not been for Mal. But Mal Street, in spite of what he promised, was not there to meet the train.

It was eight o'clock on one of those misty evenings such as come in early June. The air was thick and gray and smelled of the salt water. That was the only difference from a hundred other places in the dark—the damp smell of the sea. It was like memory, but ever so much stronger. It was the town and everything he knew, and days were in it which he had never known.

Tommy brought nothing home with him but his trench coat, which was torn and patched, and one of those musette bags, slung across his shoulder. He did not expect any one to recognize him, but they did. He should have remembered how wistfully he himself once had watched the passengers from the evening train. Old Mr. Quinn, the baggage-master, dropped the handle of his truck, and Jimmy Griffin, who ran a car for the taxi service, for there was a taxi service by that time, jumped down and left his motor running.

"Hey, Tom," said Jim, and Mr. Quinn, of an older and more courtly school, said, "Welcome back," and they shook hands. It was curious, Tommy sometimes thought, that they knew him so well, when he had nearly forgotten both of them. They were like fixed objects in some room which he had left years back, and now that he had opened the door of that room again, it was exactly as he had left it. It had been waiting for him all the while. It seemed to him that all of Michael's Harbor had been waiting, and that it was his place, and that there would be something always waiting, whenever he got back home.

There were all sorts of things he wanted to say. All sorts of thoughts were crowding through him, but he did not speak them.

"Where's Mal Street?" he asked instead.

"With his old man, I guess," said Jim. "Jim Street's got the rheumatism so he can hardly hobble. It's what comes of being out in boats. Are you going any place?"

"Thanks," said Tommy, "I'll walk. I'm sort of used to walking."

"Hey!" he heard some one calling, as he stepped into the dark. "Did you see him? Tom Michael's got back home."

It never occurred to him to think it strange that Mal did not meet him. The wind was coming from the northeast. It was whispering through the trees. Now and then drops of water would fall from the elms splash upon the sidewalk. The lights from the houses along the street turned the mist into millions of little glowing specks. Down toward Welcome River his heels clicked sharply on the bricks, and he remembered how his father's heels had clicked one morning, ever so long before, and how the old drake had whispered by the door. He remembered later that all the while he walked he had not thought of Mal.

It was the stillness of the Streets' dooryard that made him uneasy first, indefinably uneasy. No dog barked, for the last of the water spaniels had been buried years ago. A light was burning very dimly in the kitchen window, but no one opened the door when he walked up those rickety back steps. Tommy never knew why he went in without knocking, except that he had been used to acting on instinct. It must have been some instinct that things were not right which made him snatch at the knob before he thought, and step inside and slam the door behind him.

A lamp was burning on the kitchen table. The sink was full of dishes, and the kettle was steaming on the stove. Jim Street was seated near it in a grimy upholstered chair. He was gripping at the arms with ugly distorted fingers; he was trying to pull himself up, but, as Tommy looked, he sank back with a grimace of pain. Mary Street was by the table. Her hair was loose as it had been when she was a child.

"Well," said Jim, "git up and take his bag, Mary. Don't you see it's Tom?"

"What's wrong?" said Tommy.

He had not intended to speak so sharply, but any one could see that something was very wrong. It was written on Jim Street as plain as print, and Mary gave him an odd look when she pushed back her chair, half questioning, half defiant.

"It's Mary," Jim Street's eyes were on her, dull and burning. "Oh, what's the use? She—Now who'd have thought it of Mary? Was it my fault? Tell me that."

And then she spoke, softly, gently, her voice very far away, and it always seemed to him that she was a picture of all the Mary Streets he remembered, when she spoke. There was the sadness in her, and the wildness, and the

mystery and something that was new. Her face was like his own face. Her eyes were dark and weary.

"You needn't tell him, Pa," said Mary Street. "Tommy understands."

Now why it was he understood he could not tell, but all at once it was as clear as clear. It was something which had been bound to happen, as sure as the course of stars. Something seemed to strike him straight and hard, so that he caught his breath; and nothing was over, nothing.

"Oh," said Mr. Street. His voice was weak and listless. "So you've got some shame, have you? That's sweet now, coming from the likes of you. You—All right, I won't say it. What's the use in talking? But I'll tell him, never fear. He's got enough against 'em. It's them Jelletts. Damn them Jelletts. She was aiming to go off with that young Jellett—God knows where, and I'll be bound it's not the first time, either. Mal's the one who shook it out of her. Mal's gone up there now."

"No," said Mary Street, "it's not the first time, either. Tommy, don't be like the rest of them. You ought to understand."

For a moment Tommy stared at her, and he could not find his voice. She was beautiful. She had never been so beautiful, and she was broken. Mary Street was broken, finished just as he had been, and that was what she was trying to tell him in that wordless way of hers.

"Where's Mal gone?" he asked. "Up where?" But of course he knew where Mal had gone, even as he asked.

"Where's he likely to have gone?" Jim Street's voice came to him dully, like a voice through a wall. "Up to Warning Hill, he's gone, just like I would, if I could walk that far. And I hope to God he kills him! Damn them Jelletts! There's some things we haven't got to stand."

But Mary did not seem to notice. As she looked at Tommy, she spoke in that distant voice of hers, as though none of the fury touched her.

"I was planning to be away," she said, "before you came."

All the while the kettle was hissing and bubbling on the stove, and the room was very close, and it seemed, as Tommy listened, exactly like a dream. It had the same grotesqueness that robbed everything of logic. He remembered thinking, very clearly, how often Sherwood must have held her in his arms. He could see his lips touch hers, as she was trying, as he had tried, to get to Warning Hill. It was the Jelletts. It was the Jelletts still.

"Tom!" Mary was pulling at his coat. "You've got to go and stop Mal. Tommy, won't you go?"

It was as incongruous as a dream when Mary pulled at his coat. Something inside him was breaking like the ice on Welcome River in the spring, and his mind was whirling like the water with broken thoughts upon it.

"Mary," said Jim Street, "you be still. We know what to do. We'll show them Jelletts they don't own the town."

Mary, wide-eyed and white, was pulling at his coat.

"Tommy," she was saying, "I don't care what anybody thinks—but you know Mal. He—oh, won't you hurry, Tom? Mal took his gun along."

Tommy should have known. A harebrained quality in Mal would have made him do just that. He seemed to be watching himself, half wearily, half critically, but at the same time he was aware of the logic in it. It was rolling toward him like stones and gravel on a slope until it crashed in that fantastic end.

"How long has he been gone?" he asked.

"Not more than twenty minutes," she said. "He went up by the road."

Tommy was used to thinking quickly then.

"All right," he said; "then he won't be there unless he got a ride. Mary, will you bring the lamp?"

"Hey!" shouted Mr. Street, half pulling himself from his chair. "Where are you going?"

"To call a taxi," Tommy said. "I'm going up with Mal."

The Streets had a telephone near the stairs. He stumbled over some old boots before he reached it, and half a minute later he was asking for Mr. Grafton Jellett on business he could tell no one else. It surprised him that there was no tremor in his voice. He did not seem to be the person who was speaking.

"Is that you, Mr. Jellett?" he was saying. "This is Tom Michael speaking. It's important, so please don't interrupt. . . . In about five minutes Mal Street will be there looking for Sherwood. . . . Yes, Sherwood. When he comes, have all the men on the place ready to grab him—and keep him till I get there. I'll be up right away. Be sure you get him—that's all. . . . I'd rather not tell you over the telephone. . . . Oh, you want to have it, do you? Very

well. It's Sherwood and Mary Street. . . . Yes, that's exactly what I mean. And you better do what I told you. I'll be up right away."

Then he was calling the taxi service, and then he was mopping his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Mary," he was saying, "it's all right now. It doesn't do any good to beat the Jelletts. There'll only be some more."

It still was like a dream. Mary was clinging to him, sobbing, her face buried in the wet of his coat, and there seemed nothing more to say. There seemed nothing more, and yet he was speaking.

"Mary," he was saying, "do you love him?"

Her head moved, and she looked up at him wide-eyed, with that half-frightened look of hers that he remembered best.

"No," she said. "Love him? No, I don't. I—I guess I've always hated everything—but you."

"Mary," he said, and he knew that he was right, "neither of us was made for it. We ought to have kept away from Warning Hill—both you and I."

Yet it all was so futile when he said it, and he knew she thought it so, for all at once her glance had gone beyond him, as though she were looking at something very far away.

"I don't know," she said. "Oh, I don't know. It would have been—so awful—if we hadn't. It's just as well we tried."

And then his arm tightened about her, and he was filled with a strange vague wish for something that was gone.

"Mary," he said, "there's you and me. It's what you said. We've always been alone."

But she shook her head, for she was the one who saw, and surely she must have always been stronger than he and wiser. There was something in her clear and fine, mysterious and bright.

"No," she answered. "No. You've gone too far. You can't go back. Neither of us can. And besides—I wouldn't let you, Tommy—dear. There was once . . . Do you remember in the kitchen and the rain? Oh, Tom, I'm glad you've gone. I'm very glad—for you."

And then his voice was choked, and he could not tell—was it pity for himself, or what? He was tired, very tired.

“Mary,” he said, “it’s awful—always to be alone.”

“Yes,” she said, “it’s awful. I’ll be all right, Tommy dear. Tommy, please don’t cry.”

Even when he reached the Jellett house it was all unreal. He could almost believe that he was imagining as he had imagined before so often, that he was standing before the plate glass and iron grill of the Jelletts’ door.

He noticed absently that Hubbard’s face was white.

“Mr. Street has arrived, sir,” said Hubbard. “He—is in the library with Mr. Jellett. Will you please come, sir?”

Only a few of the lights were burning in the hall. The stairs went upward, seemingly for an immense distance, into shadows. The two suits of armor by the fireplace were like figures guarding a gaping gate.

“Mr. Michael, sir,” said Hubbard. After passing through the hall, the library seemed startlingly alight. Everything was stark in a glare of brightness which made Tommy blink. Mr. Jellett was standing, staring blankly at the room. He turned slowly as Hubbard spoke, and Tommy had a sensation of surprise when Mr. Jellett faced him. Mr. Jellett looked ever so much older. There seemed to be little weights at the bottom of his chin and cheeks, pulling at the flesh above and drawing it to wrinkles.

“Ah,” said Mr. Jellett, “there you are, eh?”

Tommy did not bother to answer, for the sight of Mal Street held all his attention at that moment. Mal was sprawling on one of the leather armchairs, livid, with blazing eyes, and a trickle of blood was running down his cheek. A man was standing on either side of him and one behind his chair, and all their clothes were very much deranged. Henri, the chauffeur, was one of them; the second was that groom who had handed Tommy a letter once, and the third was Campbell, the foreman of the place. On another chair, Sherwood was sitting. There were beads of perspiration on Sherwood’s forehead.

Sherwood was in evening clothes and his hair was rumpled. Upon perceiving Tommy, he got up and scowled. “So you’re the boy who spilled the beans, are you?” he remarked. “What the hell’s all this to you?”

“Be quiet!” said Mr. Jellett.

“Why should I be quiet?” said Sherwood. “I remarked: ‘What’s all this to you?’ It isn’t any of your business, is it?”

“Will you be quiet?” said Mr. Jellett.

“No!” said Sherwood. “No, I won’t. Why can’t you be calm like me? That’s it—calm. Don’t shoot! I’ll marry the girl.”

“You’ll what?” Mr. Jellett’s eyes flickered and the veins stood out on his forehead. “Be quiet,” he said softly. His voice was most unpleasant when a glimpse of his face went with it. “Don’t you see the servants?”

Sherwood looked around slowly and put his hands in his pockets. “Yes,” he said. “What of it?” And then he looked at his father and grinned. “This is going to be one in the midriff for you,” remarked Sherwood. “And I don’t care who hears me say it! As long as you’ve been so sharp and found out all about it, I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll marry her, if I can’t get her any other way—that’s what! Now think that one over and stop the argument.”

“Perhaps,” said Mr. Jellett, “you’ll be saner after you and I have a private talk. Now get out. I’ve got business here.”

“Would you mind telling me,” said Sherwood, “why I shouldn’t marry her, if I want? She’s a damn sight better than Meachey, when you come right down to that. And really,” Sherwood lighted a cigarette, “don’t look so worried. We’ll stay in the Social Register. And now you’ve caught me on the home plate—”

Mr. Jellett’s expression did not change. He did not move a muscle. He simply said, “Get out!”

Sherwood nodded and rubbed his hands. “All right,” he said, “nightie-night,” and walked toward the door.

Just then Mal lurched forward in his chair so suddenly that they snatched at his shoulders. “That’s a lot of bunk!” roared Mal. “You damn lousy little liar!”

Sherwood, however, was already out the door and the door was closed behind him.

“You’re wrong, Mal,” said Tommy. “He means it.”

You could tell he meant it from the way that Grafton Jellett looked.

“Well!” said Tommy Michael. “I never thought—”

It was the last thing he would have thought. A most curious thing. It was exactly like a dream without an end or a beginning.

“No,” said Tommy again, “I never thought of that.”

“Neither did I,” said Mr. Jellett, “if you want to know.”

There was a revolver on the Empire writing table. Tommy crossed the room, and picked it up. It was an army Colt’s revolver, such as the infantry sometimes traded with the artillery, on the theory that revolvers never jammed like automatics. For a moment Tommy balanced it on his palm, and finally slipped it into his pocket, and looked at Mal again.

“Let him go,” said Tommy, “and go out. He’ll be all right now.”

And then, just when those men were going out, the strangest thing occurred. Perhaps it was the light in the room, or a fleeting look of Mr. Jellett’s, but Tommy Michael knew all at once that nothing was the same. He always said it seemed as though a mist were rising from his mind, and everything was clearer, like water in the early morning when the wind blows over it with the rising of the sun.

“Michael,” Mr. Jellett was saying, “I want to thank you very much.”

As Tommy looked at Mr. Jellett, he knew again that nothing was the same. Grafton Jellett was only a little man, plump about the waist with sagging cheeks and nervous swollen fingers, and that room of his was an ugly room, overstuffed, and overfurnished. There was nothing splendid about that room or Grafton Jellett either. They both possessed a sort of vulgarity that was curiously the same. For the life of him he could not imagine why Mr. Jellett had ever made him ill at ease, because all at once he knew that he was a better man than Mr. Jellett. He could look straight at him and actually, instead of awe, have nothing but a feeling of supercilious dislike.

“That’s all right,” said Tommy. “You understand how—all this is, don’t you, Mr. Jellett?”

“Yes,” said Grafton Jellett. “There’s no use beating about the bush. I won’t beat. I don’t have to ask you to keep quiet about it, do I?”

“No,” said Tommy, “of course you don’t. Come on, Mal. Let’s be moving on. Mr. Jellett understands, and he’ll do everything he can.”

Mal moved his head slowly like a drunken man.

“Aw,” said Mal thickly, “to hell with Mr. Jellett!”

“No,” said Tommy, “don’t say that. It doesn’t do any good.”

“That’s right. That’s sense,” said Mr. Jellett.

“Come on, Mal,” said Tommy. “Mr. Jellett is going to do everything he can, and that’s all any one can do now.”

“Look here,” Mr. Jellett looked at Tommy dully, “if you’ve got any idea that you’re going to bully me—”

“Bully you?” Tommy Michael looked at Mr. Jellett with faint distaste, but Mr. Jellett’s eyes were dull as a misty window.

“Yes, bully me,” said Grafton Jellett. “You needn’t try that on me, by Gad. If you think for a single minute my son is going to marry any little—I won’t say what.”

“No,” said Tommy Michael, “I wouldn’t, Mr. Jellett.”

“You wouldn’t, eh?” said Mr. Jellett.

For a moment they stood looking at each other and neither of them moved. But Tommy Michael’s mind was ringing with an elation that was like wild music, and Tommy’s blood was tingling. Though he always said that he could not analyze that elation, he knew that it meant the end of something black which had always been with him. A spell that had been cast upon him was leaving him forever. Mr. Jellett’s anger was gone in a second, and again his eyes were like misty windows, very stupid and very dull.

“Excuse me,” said Mr. Jellett slowly. “I didn’t mean to lose my temper, Michael. It’s a damn bad habit; always is. Excuse me. I’ve been having a devil of a time lately. Everything’s upside down, and this is a damned nasty business. I only mean Sherwood can’t. That’s what I mean—and be damned to you, if you think so! And—and, confound it! He means to do it.”

Mr. Jellett walked to the fireplace and pushed a bell.

“Whisky, Hubbard,” said Mr. Jellett, “and cigars. Two glasses. By Gad! I need a drink.”

Tommy Michael stood looking at Mr. Jellett, and Mal Street cleared his throat.

“To hell with you!” roared Mal. “I’d rather have her—”

“Be quiet, Mal,” said Tommy; “you leave this to me. You understand what he wants to say, Mr. Jellett? All any one can do is keep things quiet, and they can count on you. That was all I meant.”

“Count on me, eh?” said Mr. Jellett. All at once Mr. Jellett looked years older. That poker face of his was not what it had been once, for suddenly all

sorts of thoughts rippled behind it. “Yes,” he said, “you can bank on me. There’s been—er—trouble enough here. I’m sick and tired of trouble.”

As he finished there was a clinking of glass and ice.

“Set it on the table,” said Mr. Jellett. “That’s all, Hubbard.”

“All right,” said Tommy Michael; “now we’ll be going, Mal.”

“Wait a minute.” Mr. Jellett nodded toward the tray and glasses. When Tommy thought of it later, he understood how amazingly fast Mr. Jellett must have been thinking. “Wait a minute, Michael,” said Mr. Jellett; “I’m not through yet. Will you have a drink?” He did not bother to glance at Mal. Already Mr. Jellett had eliminated Mal entirely.

“No,” said Tommy.

“No whisky?” said Mr. Jellett. “You’re making a mistake. It’s a special distiller’s selection. Well, here’s looking at you. It isn’t everybody who’d have handled things so well. I want to thank you, Michael.”

“That’s all right,” said Tommy, but a look at Mr. Jellett told him it was not all right. There was a gentle flickering about Mr. Jellett’s eyes, and any one could see that Mr. Jellett had something more on his mind than gratitude.

“And now,” said Mr. Jellett, “I’m going to talk to you frankly.” Mr. Jellett set himself down solidly in one of the leather chairs, and took a sip at his whisky. “Michael, things have been in a devil of a way up here. Of course you’ve heard—everybody has, but never mind, I remember when you were here last. If I offended you, forget it, will you?”

He was surely trying to get at something, but what was more than you could guess.

“It isn’t always that I speak frankly,” Mr. Jellett glanced at Tommy dully over the edge of his glass. “People have been talking about us. There’s been too damned much talk already—talk, talk, talk—and I won’t have any more. Michael, you come from the village, and you know the girl. *This thing has got to stop!* Sherwood’s got to stop or it will be the limit. People are getting the most confounded ideas about us. Now listen, Michael—*Sherwood can’t marry that girl*.”

Mr. Jellett slowly raised his hand and leaned back in his chair more comfortably.

“I’m going to say something that may surprise you, but I’m willing to back it up, and you won’t lose and I won’t lose. There’s been too much gossip. There’s been—but never mind. Michael, how much will you take to marry her yourself?”

Yes, Mr. Jellett was himself right to the very end, and nothing could alter Grafton Jellett. Right in front of Mary’s brother he asked it, naïvely, without a qualm.

“What!” cried Tommy, but Mr. Jellett stopped him before he could go on.

“Now wait a minute,” said Mr. Jellett placidly. “I’m talking sense, and I know when not to bargain. Of course, this is a sacrifice for you—of inclination—but not a social sacrifice. It would be different if this were common property, but we can arrange all that. You’ve always been in the village, and if I know Sherwood, she’s good looking. Now what would be more natural? Name what you want, Michael. I’m on the paying end.”

Mr. Jellett paused, as he might have paused at a directors’ meeting, set down his glass, and placed the tips of his fingers together; and there he sat, a plump little man in a carefully pressed dinner coat. It all was most astonishing because he was so insignificant, and looked so very dull. As Tommy Michael stared at Mr. Jellett, for the life of him he could not think of a word to say, and yet he was no longer surprised. It was remarkable to remember that surprise left him in a moment. He remembered that a gilded clock chimed on the mantelpiece in a sweet birdlike way. Mal was the one who spoke first. Mal pushed toward Mr. Jellett so violently that Tommy seized his arm.

“Hey!” cried Mal. “What do you think Tom Michael is—you damned old fool?”

“Wait,” said Tommy, “don’t say that.” The strangest thing about it was that he did not grow angry. “Mr. Jellett’s only trying to do the best he knows how.”

He knew he was perfectly right. Mr. Jellett was doing his very best. He was trying to bolster up a wall, invisible, but none the less real, which was crumbling all about him. There was a marvellous certainty about Mr. Jellett. He at least was serene in his confidence that all the Jelletts were of finer clay. He was only using Tommy Michael as he had used people all his life. “They are rotten,” Miss Meachey had said. “All of them are rotten.” As far as Mr. Jellett went, it was not so.

“That’s right,” said Mr. Jellett. “That’s what I’ve always tried to do—my best. I’ve built this house for my children. I’ve given them everything, and if all I’ve got back is—” Mr. Jellett pursed his lips and, for a second, his eyes grew narrow, “is a plugged nickel, I can’t help it. I’m taking a licking when I thought I’d never take another. Say the word, Michael. My check book’s in the drawer.”

There was more to it than anything that Mr. Jellett said. There was a hint of so many things which Mr. Jellett had tried to do, most of which had failed. And Tommy had a new conviction which he had never possessed before. The Jellett house was crumbling like the Michael house. Its garden would be choked with weeds some day, and the paint would be off its shutters: and Grafton Jellett guessed it. There were forces with which he could not cope.

“I’m sorry,—” Tommy began. It was surprising to remember that he told Mr. Jellett he was sorry.

“Sorry, eh?” Mr. Jellett leaned forward slightly. “There’s nothing to be sorry about—for you. You can do this perfectly easily, and no one will think less of you. You’re just that much different from us. You can see what I mean? You couldn’t once, but I’ll bet you see it now.”

“Yes,” said Tommy, “I know what you mean. There is that difference.”

He would always be a village boy to Mr. Jellett, no matter what he did.

“Well,” said Mr. Jellett, “always let the other fellow make the offer, if you can. If you won’t, I will, and I won’t be sharp. I’m not forgetting what you did to-night. There are reasons to me why money doesn’t count in this. What would you say—to a hundred thousand dollars?”

Involuntarily Tommy looked at Mal. Mal’s face was blank. His mouth was opened wide.

“I’m sorry,” Tommy dusted his fingers against his trench coat very carefully. “It won’t do any good—to talk like this.”

“Rubbish!” said Mr. Jellett. “That’s more money than you’ll ever make—and here—I’ll throw in something more. I’ll have you here to dinner the week after it’s done—both of you. How’s that?”

“Thanks.” In spite of himself Tommy felt his lips twitch. “I don’t want to come to dinner.”

“You don’t want to, eh?” said Mr. Jellett and leaned forward. “Then—what the devil do you want—more money?”

“No,” said Tommy Michael. “I don’t want anything at all.”

“Rubbish!” said Mr. Jellett. “Two hundred thousand, and give me that land down by the beach.”

It was like him still to be thinking of that land right to the very end.

“Come on, Mal,” said Tommy. “Let’s be going.”

“Confound it!” Mr. Jellett was on his feet. “What the devil’s the matter?”

As he answered, Tom Michael found himself smiling suddenly not altogether pleasantly. “Take the land down by the beach,” he said. “I’ll give it to you. Take it and go to the devil!”

“Eh?” said Grafton Jellett.

Yet even then Tommy was not angry. In that moment he seemed detached from anger; he seemed to be dealing with quantities that were as absolute as time.

“I mean,” said Tommy, “that I don’t want anything you want; that’s what I mean. I used to, but not any more. When I was listening to you, I was thinking that. I supposed that’s why I listened. Now wait! Don’t think it’s temper when I tell you this. I don’t know whether you’ll believe, but it’s the truth. Mary wouldn’t marry me, if you paid a million dollars—not Mary Street. She’s—oh, what’s the use? It would only sound like rot, if I told you. I’m Tommy Michael, and she’s Mary Street, and you can’t change it. You might have once, but you can’t change it any more.”

Tommy turned on his heel and slipped his arm through Mal’s, and pulled Mal toward the door. He did not look back at Mr. Jellett, nor did he answer when Mr. Jellett spoke.

“That’s all rot, of course,” said Mr. Jellett, and he laughed. “You’ll come back. They always do.”

“Aw—go to hell! You make me sick,” roared Mal.

Then they were out in the hall.

“Now look, Mal,” he was saying, “there isn’t any use—”

And then he stopped, with his sentence in the air. Another door had opened, making a rectangle of light, and Marianne was standing in it, in a dark blue dress with bare white arms and shoulders, and Tommy Michael stopped and his heart was in his throat.

“Why, Tommy,” said Marianne, and her voice was very soft, almost a whisper.

She had been waiting all the time. Tommy could tell that much, in spite of her surprise.

“I didn’t think,” there was a catch in her voice that he had often heard before, “I’d be so glad to see anybody, Tommy.”

“Didn’t you?” said Tommy.

Now it was very strange. Her voice did not ring right and neither did his voice, and yet his heart was hammering and all his blood was in his face. She had never seemed so delicately beautiful, or so desirable to touch.

“Tommy,” said Marianne, and nodded at Mal, “Hubbard will show him out.”

“Will he?” said Tommy, in a queer choked way, and he hardly knew that he was answering. All that night, he always said, his mind played the strangest tricks. It kept jumping backwards almost to the beginning, and he was thinking that nothing was ever wholly over. Inside you were the embers of everything that happened, ready to flare up again when the fire was raked. “Thou turnest man to destruction!” Now it was odd that he should remember his Aunt Sarah reading it years ago. “Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep—”

“Silly!” Marianne was whispering. “Of course he will. Tommy, come in here. I want to say something. I want—”

“No,” said Tommy, “not to-night. I’ve got to be going home.”

“Silly,” began Marianne, “you don’t know what I want. If you did—”

It was curious to realize that nothing mattered to Marianne. Not a thing that had happened had made an impression and she would always be wanting while anything was left to want. Tommy’s cap was on a high Italian chair. He stepped toward it.

“It might be something you wanted once, Tommy,” ended Marianne.

Something very remarkable had happened. He still wanted nothing the Jelletts had to give.

“Why, Marianne,” he said, and laughed. Hubbard had appeared by then and was standing by the great front door. “All right, Hubbard. Good night, Marianne.”

Always, no matter how carefully he considered, all his memories of that night were unconnected and grotesque, but behind them all was an elation which he could not quite define. There was a softness in the mist and vigor in the wind, which filled him with a deep new strength, and all the while he was thinking. He was thinking the strangest thoughts.

They only came clear to him when he was at home, for he stopped at his own house that night. He remembered he was standing in the dark front hall, with a match flicking in his hand. There was oil in the glass lamp on the table still, though it was thick and yellow. The wick hissed and spluttered in a most uneven way before the flame caught hold, and there was a pervading damp and musty smell, and mysterious creakings in the dark. Then, as the flame grew higher, he saw the dusty wall paper, and the mirrors and the chairs: and at the same time he must have seen the rest. The dinginess did not depress him, nor the damp or cold, nor all the memories with them. He found himself staring into the mirror, and he could see his own shape in the dusty glass with wide eyes and half-opened mouth.

"Do you know what?" he heard himself saying. "Do you know what?"

His own voice rang back at him through the stillness, but he was not surprised. At last a revelation was on him, for at last he knew exactly what he was thinking—and why he felt so free. It was only what so many had endeavored to tell him all that while,—his mother, his Aunt Sarah, old Mr. Danforth, and the rest; but until then he had never believed. All that while he had been struggling with an idea, which at last was broken down,—the most absurd idea, and yet the only one which had mattered in his life. For his struggle with that idea had led him where he stood, staring at the gutting lamp wick, while the smoke curled up toward the ceiling.

And he knew what, just as surely as though a voice had told him from the dark. He had grown stronger and they had not. Yes, he had grown stronger every time he had hit the ground; and somehow everything that lay behind him seemed soft and bright, as though a kindly beam from that lamp had struck it. Of course no one was there to hear him, but nevertheless he spoke out loud, because in some way his speaking seemed a perfect vindication; and he always said that he could almost believe that he was speaking to something, though nothing was there at all but the silence and the damp.

"Do you know what?" said Tommy Michael, and his voice told of his own surprise; "I'm better than they are—that's what. And what's more, I have been better all the time!"

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *Warning Hill* by John P. Marquand]