

A MORE
HONORABLE MAN

ARTHUR SOMERS ROCHE

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a <https://www.fadedpage.com> administrator before proceeding. Thousands more FREE eBooks are available at <https://www.fadedpage.com>.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

Title: A More Honorable Man

Date of first publication: 1922

Author: Arthur Somers Roche (1883-1935)

Date first posted: Oct. 11, 2023

Date last updated: Oct. 11, 2023

Faded Page eBook #20231012

This eBook was produced by: Marcia Brooks, Al Haines, Pat McCoy & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpcanada.net>

This file was produced from images generously made available by Internet Archive/American Libraries.

A MORE HONORABLE MAN

BY
ARTHUR SOMERS ROCHE

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1922

All rights reserved

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

COPYRIGHT, 1922,
BY P. F. COLLIER AND SON COMPANY,
in the United States, Great Britain, and Canada

COPYRIGHT, 1922,
BY ARTHUR SOMERS ROCHE

Set up and electrotyped. Published October, 1922.

TO ETHEL PETTIT ROCHE

Some folks misunderstand my scorn;
 What do they know, the profiteers?
Female things that they may adorn
 To prove their wealth among their peers.
 Life is a car of shifting gears
That grind unless the true God drives.
 Mortals make futile engineers.
I pity men who marry wives.

Burdens they bear that can't be borne.
 (Leap in the dark, my silly dears!)
Some are glad to be lewdly worn
 And plume themselves at strangers' leers—
 Behind them lie unuttered sneers.
Each may choose from a million lives;
 Too late for most the vision clears.
I pity men who marry wives.

Loveless passion is bastard born;
 Passionless love flees honest jeers;
And both are furtive, soiled, forlorn.
 Mistresses' smiles soon change to tears;
 Wives are alive to stupid fears.
But you, who *share*—how God contrives
 To run his Heaven, sans you, for years.
I pity men who marry wives.

ENVOY

Lady, in ecstasy he cheers,
 Who for divinity ne'er strives,
But sees you come and knows it nears—
 I pity men who marry wives!

LUKE, XIV, 8: When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him.

A MORE HONORABLE MAN

CHAPTER I

It is not that The Magnificent appalls one; it is that one's grip of the pen falters, as fingers reflect the uncertainty of the mind. Certainty! To know anything absolutely! And, not knowing, to presume to speak of facts. . . . One envies the sublime audacity of the biographer of, for instance, Napoleon; to deliver one's own interpretations of deeds so colossal that continents rocked before them. . . . As if the things he did, that are so clearly recorded for the student's gaze, are worth anything, in appraising the man, as compared with the unrecorded events of which he was part, as compared with the unuttered thoughts that animated him!

One lays down the biography and one knows the author, but one has not met his subject. We have seen the shell of the egg and admired its white symmetry, but we have not tasted the meat within; and if we have, we have lacked salt wherewith to savor it. . . .

And The Magnificent is not merely a man; he represents an epoch. Perhaps, too, that is what deters us. Cæsar, Napoleon—these were personalities, who stand out across the ages as Gibraltar dominates the inland sea. One is not conscious of one's limitations in dealing with a personality, no matter how overwhelming it may be. But with an era, an epoch, it is different. Time itself brings no solution of the riddles of the past; how shall one attempt to solve the riddles of the present!

The Magnificent, then, represents an era; he is no personality, although he eats and drinks and sleeps and loves and hates as Napoleon doubtless did. He will not be flattered when he reads this. He has always thought of himself as dominant, overpowering. But where is the dominant, overpowering personality since Lincoln died! Machinery, invention—these have made us alike in speech and thought. . . . Vague, nebulous shapes stand out from among us, but they are undefined. They are gigantic, but—formless. In sixty years, since the day that a mad assassin shot the Dreamer, there has been no other dreamer, of whom the world has heard.

So it seems that we are not attempting biography; we are attempting history; the task, too great, is put aside. . . . Yet, if we could make The Magnificent clear, could define him with his proper lights and shadows, we might get nearer toward the goal of "What's-it-all-about," the goal that seems to lean to each and all of us, that seems to beam—to mix our metaphors—and that, arrived at, is found to be something perished and

decayed, whose light is but some chemical reaction. . . . We may be that ourselves. . . .

To make him clear, then, to give him what personality God may have intended him to have, but which, under the unifying process of the Age of Machines, has been obliterated, we must turn to events, to people, and away from him. We may look at objects, but for understanding we seek their reflections. That is absurd; so is all truth; and falsehood.

Perhaps Uncle Frank Dabney can give us light. He is sitting upon the porch of The Commercial House, of which he is sole proprietor. He has just bitten off a generous mouthful of Navy Twist from the plug that is always available in his right-hand trousers pocket. He spits, generously, affluently, upon the grass below, clearing the porch rail by the scantiest fraction of an inch. He nods with self-approval; his eye is not losing its keenness, and his full lips retain their ejective powers.

“Who?” he demands of the drummer who travels for Perigord’s Soap.

“The tall gal with the yaller hair,” responds the drummer. “She can go buggy-ridin’ with me any time she wants.”

Uncle Frank expectorates again. His big chest, covered with fat, swells beneath the hardboiled shirt which was white on Sunday, but which, to-day being Thursday, is not as immaculate as it might be if Uncle Frank was not a bachelor. The look which he casts upon the drummer is devoid of the genial good humor which nearly always peeks from the fat-embedded eyes of mine host of The Commercial House.

He rises swiftly from his seat. One realizes, almost with a shock, that this great fat man is quite young; not more than thirty-five at the outside, and that his avuncular title is possibly mere tribute to his commanding position as the proprietor of Oldport’s one hotel. He advances to the porch rail and leans across it, sweeping his broadbrimmed straw sun-hat from his forehead with a lordly gesture.

“Mornin’, Miss Ramsey,” he calls.

The fair-haired girl looks up at him from the plank sidewalk. The drummer notices that her eyes are darkest blue; perhaps the thick curling lashes lend a violet tinge to them. There is pride in the way she carries her small head; there is pride in the lithe stride of her legs, in the swell of her gracious bosom.

“Morning, Uncle Frank,” she replies. Her voice is clear, cool, assured. The drummer shrugs his shoulders; she’s a beauty, but too standoffish, he

judges from her voice. The drummer is no cosmopolitan; he travels out of Boston, it is true, but most of his time is spent in small villages. A man of the world would have glimpsed the fire in this girl, and her “standoffishness” would have but whetted his ardor.

“Kinda glad to be back, I’ll betcha,” says Uncle Frank. “School ain’t home, is it?”

“No, indeed, it isn’t,” she agrees.

She passes on; Uncle Frank resumes his seat and his expectoration. The drummer stirs uneasily. Somehow or other he is conscious of rebuke.

“You mighta knocked me down to her,” he says.

“Say, young feller, whyn’t you quit smokin’ them stinkin’ cigarettes,” says Uncle Frank. “They keep you from growin’ up into a man, like your mother had hopes for you.”

The drummer laughs. “You’re old-fashioned, Uncle Frank.”

“You bet I am,” rejoins mine host. “So old-fashioned that I don’t like to hear men talkin’ about how they’d like to take girls they don’t know buggy-ridin’. Am I perfectly plain?”

The drummer reddens. Uncle Frank was the champion wrestler of Rockland County when he was twenty-two. He is fat, but still “able.”

“No offence meant,” mutters the travelling man.

“None taken,” replies Uncle Frank. He leans back in his comfortable chair; his eyes close; slowly he lapses into his morning nap; little bubbles, regrettably brown, appear at his mouth, induced by his heavy breathing. The drummer rises and saunters into the lobby of The Commercial House. A Ramsey may be unattainable, but a waitress may not be. He is very proud of his buggy and his stepping mare. . . .

The morning sun mounts higher in the heavens; its rays, no longer fended by the overhanging roof of the porch, alight upon Uncle Frank’s round, red face. His big straw hat has fallen to the floor; the brown bubbles have formed a little trickle to his heavy chin. A shameful sight of slothful ease.

Something tickles his ear. His hand rises, with great effort, from its perpendicular position where it is hanging until his finger tips almost touch the floor. His ear is brushed but the tickling continues. He digs at the annoyed portion of him. A critical observer would have noted that his nails

are stubby, as though frequently and vigorously bitten, and that they are not too sedulously tended in other respects.

Slowly, painfully, Uncle Frank's little eyes open. "Daggone that daggone fly," he grumbles. Then, sitting up, he notes the presence of a visitor. A tall, somewhat gangling youth, with a broad mouth, now opened in a grin that exposes white though large teeth; a youth with black hair that is coarse of texture, unruly, difficult to contain in the part of the period; a youth with a wide, high forehead, and a head well-rounded in back; a youth with gray eyes that can be keen, but that usually are twinkling as though he beholds something humorous whose sight is denied to other people: this is Uncle Frank's guest. And he holds a long blade of grass in his hand.

"Smart as paint, you are, ain't you, Sam Foyle?" grumbles Uncle Frank. "I suppose you got nothing better to do than prance around like a grinnin' idjut wakin' people up from their hard-earned rest?"

Uncle Frank brings a colored handkerchief—blue with white polka dots—from the rear pocket of his trousers, twisting and straining in his chair to get at it—and mops up the offensive stain upon his chin.

"Wanted to talk to you," says Foyle, briefly. He still grins amiably.

Uncle Frank eyes him with severity. "Want to borrow some of my hard-earned money, hey?"

"I know better than that," replies his visitor.

Uncle Frank, ridding himself of the fruits of mastication indelicately, brings into view his precious plug of Navy Twist. He supplies his needs.

"Glad you do," he grunts. "I wouldn't know better'n to lend it to you."

Into Foyle's eyes creeps a trace of some emotion different from the usual merriment to be found in them. "I won't forget that offer, Uncle Frank," he says.

"'Twan't an offer; just a confession o' weakness," Uncle Frank corrects him. "What you wake me up for, anyway?"

"To say goodbye," replies Foyle.

"Don't have to kiss me every time you go fishin' or swimmin', do you?" demands Uncle Frank.

"I'm not coming back," says Foyle.

Uncle Frank sits bolt-upright; his beady brown eyes seem to widen. “Whatchu mean, you ain’t comin’ back? Where in hell you goin’ to go, I wanta know.”

Foyle shrugs. “Don’t know,” he laughs. “Just going.”

“Why?” demands Uncle Frank.

Foyle stretches his long arms; one is able to note that his jacket, while neat, is somewhat threadbare. His shirt is of cheapest cotton, but immaculately white. Glancing down, one sees that his shoes, though patched, are polished.

“Nothing in Oldport for me, Uncle Frank,” he replies.

“That so?” Uncle Frank’s plump lips curl in a sneer. “Trouble with you, Sam Foyle, is you ain’t got no ambition. Plenty in Oldport for the right kind of young man. Plenty here for Jim Willoughby.”

Foyle grins. “Why—so there is. I hadn’t thought of that.”

Uncle Frank attends to the irrigation of the lawn. “Guess you ain’t thought nothin’ else, Sam Foyle, since Ramsey Blake come back from school Easter, and decided she’d stay home for a change.”

Color sweeps up the young man’s throat and stains his face to the roots of the hair above his high forehead. Uncle Frank eyes him with continued contempt.

“’F I was stuck on a young gal I’d not walk off and leave her to some other feller.”

Foyle twists on the porch rail until he is looking down Main Street and out upon the waters of the bay. “Suppose she told you to go, Uncle Frank?”

“What you talkin’ about?” demands Uncle Frank. “Ramsey Blake is the gentlest girl ever breathed. She wouldn’t tell no one to git outa this town. Don’t lie to me, young man.”

Foyle shrugs. “Of course, she didn’t say that, Uncle Frank, but—you know, I couldn’t stay here and see—someone else—”

“Jim Willoughby got her?” demands Uncle Frank.

“She’s going to marry him,” replies Foyle.

“Is that so? Is—that—*so*?” Uncle Frank heaves himself, by a mighty effort, from his chair. “Guess I’ll take a run up to the Blake house and talk to that young lady.”

Foyle's long arms extend and touch Uncle Frank's shoulders. Uncle Frank, at twenty-two, was the champion wrestler of Rockland County, and is still "able," but Foyle presses him back into the chair without effort.

"You'll do nothing of the sort, Uncle Frank," says Foyle.

"Why won't I?" sputters Uncle Frank. "Think I'm goin' to let Ramsey make a fool of herself?"

"She loves Jim," says Foyle quietly.

"That's ezzackly why I want to talk to her," fumes Uncle Frank. "Yeller skunk!" Foyle still holds him in the chair. "Jim isn't that, Uncle Frank."

"Is too!" insists mine host of The Commercial House. "I kin prove it. Tell her some things she don't know. Tell her some things he don't know. Daggone, tell her some things that *you* don't know. Yeller skunk."

"Cool off," advises Foyle. "You don't mean that at all. Jim is a good chap. Smartest young man in Oldport. Credit to the town. Going to be a big man."

"No bigger'n you could be if you had a mind to," declares Uncle Frank. "Why, daggone, any time you want I'll take you right in here with me. Best-payin' hotel this side of Portland. 'F that don't suit you, I got more money 'n I can use. Back you in any business you say. Daggone! Ain't a heluva lot on talk, but your daddy—" Uncle Frank blows his nose violently. "Staked me; I'll stake his son."

Foyle smiles. "A man that's reached twenty-five, without making some sort of a stake for himself, maybe wouldn't be helped by being staked, Uncle Frank."

"Who said so? Damn' fool! Good stuff in you. Too much readin'! 'S all's the matter with you. Best mechanic in this town. Lot better than Jim Willoughby, for all his factory and all. He's got a bicycle factory. Why shouldn't you have one? Put up the cash to-morrow. Daggone! Put it up to-day."

The pressure of Foyle's fingers on the fat man's shoulders is affectionate now. "No use, Uncle Frank. I'm going to study law."

"What's the sense of that? Take you three years to learn it—be twenty-eight, then. You ain't a sticker, Sam. Too much readin'. Good worker, but—no stick! You stick."

Foyle shrugs. "Can't do it. Want to be a lawyer, Uncle Frank."

“All right; come back here. We’ll make a daggone judge of you. But—lemme talk to Ramsey—”

Foyle shakes his head. “Jim Willoughby is all right; and she loves him.”

“Hell! What’s a girl twenty know about love?”

“As much as she’ll ever know,” says Foyle.

Uncle Frank stares at him. “There’s a lot more truth in that than you know, Sam. But Jim Willoughby—”

“Oh, The Magnificent is all right,” grins Foyle. “He’ll be a millionaire.”

“Will he make Ramsey Blake happy?” demands Uncle Frank.

“Would I?” counters Foyle.

Uncle Frank slumps in his chair. “Dunno. But happier than a yeller skunk would.”

“Why do you call him that?” asks Foyle.

Uncle Frank lifts himself from the chair. “Never you mind why. When you leavin’ town?” He changes the subject abruptly.

“To-day—now,” answers Foyle. “Going to try to get a job in a lawyer’s office in Boston.”

“Well, let’s hear from you,” says Uncle Frank.

He turns his back on the young man and clumps heavily into The Commercial House. Sam Foyle looks after him, something very much like moisture in his eyes. Then he descends the porch steps to the side walk. Coming down the street at a rapid walk is an alert young man. Even at this distance one senses his importance. He waves a peremptory hand at Foyle. But Foyle perhaps is blinded by the glare of the noon-day sun. He turns a corner in the opposite direction.

In front of The Commercial House the young man who beckoned stops. He hesitates only a moment, then enters the hotel. On the register he writes, in a big bold important handwriting, “Jameson Briggs Willoughby.” Then he walks into the dining-room, pauses a moment at the entrance to survey the crowded room, to accept, as it were, the homage of silence that his arrival brings, and takes a seat at a table.

He eats in silence, rapidly, though delicately enough. He tips the waitress twenty-five cents as he leaves. She shows it proudly to a companion, who is awed by such extravagant generosity.

“Name’s Willoughby,” whispers the recipient of the gift, “but everyone calls him ‘The Magnificent’.”

“Handsome feller,” sighs the second girl.

“Huh! Don’t set your cap for him. He’s goin’ to be a millionaire,” says the first girl.

But Uncle Frank Dabney, looking in upon his guests, and noting the departure of The Magnificent, sniffs audibly.

“Yeller,” says Uncle Frank Dabney.

CHAPTER II

The Magnificent stood for a moment on the steps of The Commercial House. If he had been conscious of the silent admiration paid him by the other dinner guests, or of the not so silent tribute of the waitress, he gave no outward sign. A man across the street waved and called a genial greeting. The Magnificent made no response, gave no acknowledgment of the salutation. The speaker showed no resentment. Probably The Magnificent was planning some new addition to the bicycle factory. . . . No, he wasn't a bit stuck-up. Not that kind of a feller at all. But his mind was always occupied. Great feller for planning. Smartest feller this town ever turned out. Look at what he's done. Sole pro-pri-eter of the Pinnacle Bicycle Company, and only twenty-five. You got to give it to him. Doing more for Oldport than any man in town. . . .

Observing him as he stood there, anyone would have conceded his immediate importance and the potentialities of his future. His deep-set green eyes, spaced widely enough away from the high-bridged nose; the high forehead from which the blonde hair was already receding; the oddly-full lips above the thin bony chin; all of these spoke of an alert mentality and a powerful will. If the lips denied the asceticism of the nose and jaw, they did not speak too loudly of sensuality. They seemed, on the contrary, merely to balance and well round out a strong character. He was, with his slim active figure, slightly above medium height, extremely good-looking. But one forgot his looks, even his mentality, as soon as one came into contact with his will. He knew what he wanted; one immediately conceded that he would get what he wanted.

But he was in a rare moment of indecision now. He glanced up the ascending street, then down, toward the water-front. He consulted his watch nervously, then shrugged his shoulders, pocketed the time-piece, and sloughing off his indecision strode swiftly down the street. At the first corner he turned in the direction taken by Foyle half an hour ago. Five minutes of rapid walking brought him to a frame house, a tiny story and a half affair, set back from the sidewalk a few yards, and beautified by vines and lilac bushes in the yard.

He did not bother to knock, but opened the front door and ran up a short flight of stairs, entering, at the top, a small and sparsely furnished bed-room. But there was that air of desertion about the room that is unmistakable. The

neat white covers on the chest of plain pine drawers and on the equally plain table, the tidies on the backs of the two cheap chairs, the rag rug, and the crazy-quilt on the bed spoke of a thrifty and accomplished housewife, doing much with little, but the room held no signs of habitation. It was ready to be lived in; unquestionably it had been lived in; but it was not lived in now.

The Magnificent sat down upon the bed, and the black brows above his eyes, that would be bushy when they became gray, shortened in a frown. He sat here only a moment, however. Then he rose, walked down-stairs and entered the kitchen at the rear of the house. A woman bending over a stove, looked up. She wiped her thin hands on her clean apron.

“Hello, Mr. Willoughby,” she said.

The Magnificent nodded shortly. “I’ve been up in Sam’s room. Looks as though he’d moved out, Mrs. Gray.”

“He has,” said the woman.

The Magnificent frowned. “What for? Thought he always said you were the best cook in town.”

The woman blushed at the flattery. “He was always kind, Sam was,” she said. “I’ll go a long way to find a boarder as nice as him, and as regular with his board money.”

“Well, where’s he gone?” demanded The Magnificent.

“To be a lawyer,” answered Mrs. Gray.

The Magnificent rarely showed surprise, but he did so now. His thick lips parted and his bony chin sagged. Mrs. Gray patently enjoyed her little sensation.

“Didn’t he tell you? I’d ’a’ thought you’d been the fust one to know. I swan, that’s funny, ain’t it?”

It *was* funny; The Magnificent felt a sense of insult. “Did he leave any word for me?” he asked.

Mrs. Gray’s hand was now cleaned of the grease or batter or whatever it was that had necessitated such rubbing upon her apron. From the pocket of that bit of apparel she drew forth an envelope.

“Left this for you, Mr. Willoughby,” she said.

She handed it to her visitor, who took it, thanked her, and left the kitchen. He did not open it until he was in the front yard. His brows were

narrower than ever, and in his eyes one might have fancied there was a trace of uneasiness.

He read the note. It was brief. “Dear Jim: Don’t worry—about *anything*. Life’s too short to worry. Happy days. Sam.”

A cryptic note, yet not without certain definite meaning to The Magnificent. He sighed with relief. Then he frowned again. Why the deuce should he worry—about anything? Still—Sam was a good chap. One of the best old chaps. . . . This nonsense about studying law. . . .

He jammed the note in his pocket, walked through the gate and turned toward Main Street. At the fourth house he hesitated in his stride. A bold-eyed, black-haired girl was leaning over the fence.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Jameson Briggs Willoughby,” she said. There was more than mockery, there was insolence, in her tones. Her appraisal of him was contemptuous. Despite himself, The Magnificent colored faintly.

“Good afternoon, Jennie,” he said. He stopped. For the second time today he felt indecisive.

“Getting too proud to see a body these days, ain’t you?” jeered the girl.

“I don’t see why you say that,” he said.

Her chin lifted and her nostrils widened. “You didn’t use to be ashamed to be seen with me,” she said.

“I’m not ashamed now, Jennie,” he answered.

“But a bit too careful, eh?” she jibed.

He was master of himself now. What self-possession he had lost at sight of her had come back to him now.

“There’s no need of you quarrelling, Jennie,” he said, pleasantly. “It takes two to make a quarrel, you know, and I won’t be the other one.”

She tossed her head scornfully. Her black hair was not too well combed, but it was vital, alive, shining in the early afternoon sun.

“Oh, I don’t want to quarrel with you, either,” she said. “I ain’t any more interested in you than you are in me. I ain’t got any right to *be* interested in anyone—except my husband.”

“Your—what?” He was dazed.

“You heard me all right,” she said, coolly. “Any reason why I shouldn’t get a husband?”

“None at all,” he said swiftly. “I—congratulate you, Jennie. Do I know him?”

She laughed. “Oh, I guess you do. You and Sam Foyle been pretty thick in days gone by.”

“Sam?” He gasped the word, then stared at her. Before his stare she whitened, moved slightly away from the fence over which she was hanging. Matters that the fence had hidden became visible now.

“Well, why not Sam?” she demanded.

“No—no reason at all,” he replied. His voice trembled; his hands were shaking. “But—but Mrs. Gray just told me that—that Sam had left Oldport.”

She nodded. “He done right by me before he left, though.” She held out her left hand; a plain gold band was visible on the third finger. “We done it this morning,” she announced. Exultation crept into her voice.

“And,” she went on, “as soon as he gets settled he’s going to send for me ___”

“But I didn’t know that—Sam—” The Magnificent stopped. Bewilderment overwhelmed him.

“There’s a lot that you don’t know, Mr. Magnificent,” sneered the girl.

“Well, Sam’s a good friend of mine. If there’s anything that I can do, let me know,” said The Magnificent.

The girl tossed her black mane again. “There ain’t a thing you can ever do, Mr. Jameson Briggs Willoughby. When you called me a blackmailer, and got those five men up in Lawyer Sneed’s office to tell what kind of girl I been—”

“Now, Jennie,” he began.

“Don’t ‘now, Jennie’ me,” she cried. “I just saw you goin’ by, and thought I’d tell you that a better man than you’d ever be had—” Her voice dropped. “A better man? Why it’s a—a blasphemy to mention men like you and those five in the same breath with Sam Foyle. He’s—he’s like God, he is.”

“Jennie!” The Magnificent was truly shocked.

“Oh—you!” The girl glared at him; her lower lip trembled; then she ran into the house. The Magnificent looked after her a moment. The breath whistled through his full lips. He felt a great relief. Of course, that consultation with Lawyer Sneed had been kept pretty quiet, but a vicious woman is a vicious woman.

The incident was closed; he would think no more about it. Only—just how had Sam come into the affair? Well, still waters run deep; for all his open way, Sam had his secrets; this amazing marriage proved that.

He turned up Main Street toward the Blake home. The news of Sam Foyle’s marriage had just leaked out. Oldport buzzed with it. A group on the porch of The Commercial House hailed The Magnificent. He joined them. He admitted to his own surprise. Yes, he was a close friend of Sam. As a matter of fact, knowing that Sam was probably the best mechanic in town, he’d been urging him to quit his little two-by-four shop and enter the Pinnacle Factory. He’d sent word to him twice in the last three days to call. Indeed, just now he’d been to Sam’s house, only to find him gone. Gone to Boston, to be a lawyer, Mrs. Gray said.

Others nodded. Sam had told Uncle Frank Dabney the same thing. Left town and got married the same day. Who’d have thought it? A feller like Sam and a girl like Jennie Smollen. Still—an older man intruded into the conversation—after all, it might have been expected of Sam. He, for one, hadn’t forgot the scandal about Sam’s birth. Oh, his father, Joe Foyle, had played up all right, and there wasn’t anything much more than whispers, but people had talked about Myra Foyle, Sam’s mother, and the speaker, for one, had always believed. . . .

“Well, I don’t,” said The Magnificent.

He turned on his heel and left the gossipers. He felt a certain sickly sensation at the pit of his stomach. Sam had done a reckless and foolish thing, but why drag out a lot of dirty scandal about his mother? It didn’t have anything to do with the matter, and was probably a filthy lie, anyway.

He jammed his hands in his pockets and one of them touched Sam’s note to him. It almost burned the flesh of his fingers, and he withdrew it swiftly. He’d forgotten the note. But now he understood all its implications. But Sam was silly. He’d taken a trivial entanglement seriously. Heaven knew that The Magnificent was ashamed of himself, for his yielding to the coarse attractions of Jennie Smollen, but that was over and done with months ago. . . .

He met Uncle Frank Dabney emerging from the Blakes' front yard. It was the most magnificent yard in Oldport, as the house was also the largest and finest. There were great elm trees and the grass was carefully mowed between them. There were cast-iron deer on the lawn, frozen in metal fright at sight of the dogs whose gaping iron jaws were so close to their flanks. The cupola on top of the house had windows that faced the four points of the compass. On a clear day one could see the smoke of Boston.

Uncle Frank glared at the newcomer. "Listen to me, young feller," he said thickly.

The Magnificent smiled. "Glad to, Uncle Frank."

"Maybe you won't be so daggoned glad when I get through talking," said the host of the Commercial. "I been in to see Ramsey Blake, and I been tellin' her some things about you."

The Magnificent's lean jaw jutted slightly forward; the skin over it tightened.

"Yes? Suppose you tell them to me, Uncle Frank?"

"I'm a-goin' to, young feller. I told her that that time you pulled her out of the harbor it wa'n't you at all. It was Sam Foyle, and she was so half-drowned she never knew the difference, and you was skunk enough never to put her right. Posin' round this town as a hero when Sam was the hero all the time."

"That was a long time ago, Uncle Frank," said The Magnificent mildly. "I was only twelve years old."

"But you're twenty-five now," cried Uncle Frank.

"And I told Ramsey the truth about it ten years ago," said The Magnificent.

Uncle Frank gasped. He breathed heavily; he seemed as though he had been punched, not too gently, in the pit of the stomach.

"So that's why Ramsey wasn't so excited about my tellin' her, eh?" he asked.

The Magnificent smiled. "Probably," he replied.

Uncle Frank shook his head. "Daggone me if maybe I ain't been doin' you a wrong, Jim Willoughby. But there's somethin' else. I ain't told it to her, but—maybe Lawyer Sneed did get you out of any trouble with the Smollen girl, but—"

“Ramsey knows I’m a pretty poor pup, Uncle Frank,” interrupted The Magnificent. “I’m not nearly good enough for her, and I know it. And I’ve told her, too.”

“About Jennie Smollen?”

“I didn’t mention names. Why should I?” demanded The Magnificent.

“Because names is important in this case,” said Uncle Frank. “Because I ain’t goin’ to have a nice girl like Ramsey Blake, whose father’s dead, made unhappy by a little trollop like Jennie—”

“Sam Foyle married Jennie this morning,” said The Magnificent.

Uncle Frank’s mouth opened. A brown stain appeared at one corner of his mouth and spread over the vast expanse of his chin. He wiped it away mechanically with his polka dot handkerchief.

“Well,” said he, at length, “I’m daggoned if I ain’t daggoned.”

“Anything else, Uncle Frank?” asked The Magnificent, pleasantly. “If there isn’t, I want to say something.”

“Go ahead,” said Uncle Frank meekly. “Call me anything you got a mind to.”

The Magnificent smiled. “Don’t want to call you anything. I want to thank you for thinking so much of Ramsey. I appreciate it. My life is an open book. Some of the pages, I admit, aren’t too clean, but—I’m sorry.”

“Guess you’re no worse’n the rest of us,” grunted Uncle Frank. He made the *amende honorable* gallantly.

“Thanks,” said The Magnificent. “But what I wanted to say is this: I’ve decided to enlarge the Pinnacle Company. Make it a quarter of a million dollar proposition instead of a little fifty thousand dollar affair. I’m going to issue preferred stock with a bonus of common. The bicycle, Uncle Frank, is in its infancy. I’ve got a couple of patents pending that are going to make the Pinnacle the best machine in America. I have a method for strengthening the frame, yet making it lighter at the same time. I can explain it in ten minutes —”

“Never mind the explanation,” said Uncle Frank. “I’ll take ten thousand of it.”

He waddled heavily down the street. The Magnificent looked after him with a smile. Then he turned and opened the gate and proceeded along the walk to the Blake mansion. Before he rang the doorbell he had forgotten

Sam Foyle and Jennie Smollen and Uncle Frank. He had even forgotten Ramsey Blake until her own fair presence apprised him of his purpose here. He had come up to urge her to advance the date of their marriage. She agreed. She was very much in love with the cleverest man in town who was also, she told herself, the most honest. Hadn't he confessed to things that another man would hide from a girl? Didn't she respect him the more for that confession? She did.

CHAPTER III

Now, then, anyone who knew Uncle Frank Dabney would tell you, unhesitatingly, that if ever a man lived who knew his own mind, who held strong opinions that verged upon prejudice, mine host of The Commercial House was that man. Yet, in the course of a couple of hours, we have seen Uncle Frank change, readjust, and abandon opinions and prejudices held closely to his heart; opinions that had endured for a decade.

What does it mean?

“Yeller skunk,” said Uncle Frank before dinner. “I’ll take ten thousand of it,” said Uncle Frank after dinner.

Man and boy, Uncle Frank had known The Magnificent for twenty-five years. Then, suddenly, at the gate of the Blake mansion, Uncle Frank discovered that he had not known The Magnificent at all. Waddling down the hill toward his hotel, Uncle Frank was discovering that he had not known himself, either. Uncle Frank, at thirty-five, was hovering upon the outskirts of wisdom. . . .

Puzzled at where to begin, we chose, almost at random, a day in the June of 1890. Yet not entirely at random, for we chose a day of events; the day on which Sam Foyle gave his name to Jennie Smollen and left town; the day on which Ramsey Blake yielded to the impetuosity of The Magnificent and “named the day”; the day on which Uncle Frank Dabney learned that the secret of The Magnificent’s skunkishness was not known only to him, but was also known to Ramsey Blake, and that therefore the said skunkishness had no existence, or that, at least, the evidence was inconclusive.

Inconclusive! Can any evidence, of anything, be other than that? Is anything, or anyone, what it or he seems? And, to make the puzzle more involved, is it or he what he or it seems not to be? But this is a silly puzzle, unanswerable because absurd, someone says. To which we make reply: so is the riddle of existence.

The Magnificent is before us, yet we look not at him, but at others, to discover him. We think that we have found him out, but learn how untrustworthy are the mirrors which reflect him. If we could get inside his own skull. . . . But to what use? For a moment we were within the skull of Uncle Frank and if we had not followed him to the Blake mansion we would have brought in a verdict based upon evidence which he retracted later.

Well, we can only try, remembering that it is not so much The Magnificent that matters, as it is the cause, or the time, of which The Magnificent is but an expression. . . .

There were other days which might have been selected; other people. The excitement of his birth Why not begin with the excitement over his father's birth, his grandfather's?

Or the day on which The Magnificent flatly and finally refused to go to college. . . . "I want money," he said. "I'm going to make it."

Possibly the story of The Magnificent is really the story of his parents. (But, on the same theory, perhaps it is the tale of The Magnificent's children that make his story.) Then, again, the beginnings and the end of the Pinnacle Bicycle Company may be the beginning and end of The Magnificent. Only, Pinnacle Bicycle is vanished and The Magnificent remains

One shakes the head, bewildered, when one contemplates Pinnacle Bicycle First, the sorrow, impinging on shame, of The Magnificent's mother. She was a New Hampshire Briggs, and her father had been, briefly, secretary to Mr. Polk after his retirement from the White House. Later, he had been in Congress; still later, a Circuit Judge. His father had been a lawyer and had been a signer of the Constitution. The law was inevitably the career of her son.

Nor had The Magnificent balked until it came time for him to go to Harvard. He had progressed nobly in the classics at the school maintained by the Reverend Zachary Henderson at Newburyport. And it was not until the very day that he was to take train for Cambridge that he revolted. There was a pitiful scene with his widowed mother, in which he was informed of the glories and grandeurs of the Briggses and Willoughbys, glories and grandeurs of which he had been cognizant for a dozen years.

"It don't seem to have got us anywhere," he retorted. "I'd just as soon sign my name to a check for a million dollars as sign it to the Constitution."

Mrs. Willoughby's hands had been piously uplifted. "What would your dear father say? A Willoughby in over-alls?"

"He'd say, I'll bet, that I'm right. I'm not cut out for a profession and—mother, there's millions in bicycles."

"There's honor in the law," she reminded him.

He laughed. "The real honor comes to the man who can pile up the old millions," he retorted. "I'll hire the best lawyers in Massachusetts to draw

my contracts, mother.”

She pleaded, of course. But the will of him was as powerful at eighteen as it was to be at fifty-eight. She yielded. She gave him the nest-egg that had been put aside for his education. A Willoughby wore over-alls.

But not for long. He knew machinery and mechanics. He went to Hartford for awhile and worked in the Columbia factory, as mechanic and salesman. Then he returned to Oldport. The Pinnacle Bicycle began to be manufactured. One wonders exactly what Mrs. Willoughby thought as the one building acquired a companion, and the two mated, and a litter of hastily-erected buildings sprawled over the landscape. Then co-ordination followed a fire that destroyed the Pinnacle works. A great single factory replaced the old group; it grew and grew, until, like an over-fed puppy, it became unwieldy, stumbled into sleep . . . Mrs. Willoughby died before the slumber began, but had she lived she would have known that slumber begets dreams and that of the dreams greater things would come. For she had come to faith in his genius, and knew that failures were but stepping-stones to—success? That is what we are trying to find out.

Another day, then, suggests itself as worthy of commemoration. It is a day almost exactly three months after Sam Foyle left Oldport and ten weeks after the simple wedding of Ramsay Blake and Jameson Briggs Willoughby. The young couple have returned from a brief honeymoon at Narragansett Pier. The Magnificent had not yet made his millions, but he was always The Magnificent.

Pinnacle Bicycle has been reorganized, revived with new inpourings of the precious blood of business, capital. Uncle Frank Dabney’s ten thousand has been matched by numerous other believers in the destiny of Pinnacle. Sixty mechanics have been lured away from Hartford to Oldport. With them is one who in another generation would be termed a “Red”; in August, 1890, he is termed, vaguely, a socialist.

He has the gift of gab, this fellow; magnetism, too. He can make a good cause seem better, and a poor cause good. He has been talking to his fellows, the importations from Hartford and the older hands. They want an increase of wages, an increase which The Magnificent has flatly refused to grant.

“I’m paying you better money than any of you ever got in your lives before,” he said. “And it doesn’t cost nearly as much to live in Oldport as it did in Hartford. That’s for you newcomers. As for you old-timers: if you don’t know me well enough to know that I’m fair to my men, there’s no use my saying anything.”

The discussion takes place in the center of the quadrangle formed by the Pinnacle buildings. Up-stairs, on the second floor, several young girls, employed in the clerical departments, are listening. They nudge one another. “Sure is handsome, ain’t he? Bein’ bald kinda becomes him, don’t it?”

Her mates sigh Why can’t all girls marry bosses?

“That all you got to say?” says Nordstrom, the socialist inspirer of revolt.

“That’s my final word,” cries The Magnificent. “Not one damn’ cent more. Take it or leave.”

“Wal, I guess we ban leave it,” says Nordstrom.

The Magnificent turns upon his heels and walks into the building. The girls, whose fathers, brothers, lovers, are in the group of malcontents, raise a quickly stifled cheer. A cheer for The Magnificent! An amazing thing!

The men file quietly out of the quadrangle; the smoke from the chimneys grows fainter; finally it vanishes; the hum of machinery is stilled. In its place one hears the hum of voices, some unpleasantly raised. For their owners have been visiting Sim Ranney’s Place, and Sim’s whiskey is not soothing to their tempers.

“He ban too damn’ fresh,” growls Nordstrom. “He thinks he makes Pinnacles all by himself. Who are we?”

“Oh, we’re a lot of filthy laboring men,” says a pert young Irishman, affecting a feminine falsetto.

“And ’e’s nought but a damn’ dude,” says a man who began life in a tin mine in Cornwall.

“And they call this a free country,” says a red-faced Nova Scotian. He spits heartily upon the saw-dust strewn floor.

“It’s a lot better than yours, Blue-Nose,” sneers an ex-fisherman from Gloucester.

“Quit that,” orders Nordstrom. “No fightin’, you ban hear me?”

“We hear you, Swede,” laughs the Irishman. “I’ll lick the lad that tries to lick anyone.”

Nordstrom glowers approval. “We gotta plan. First, we unionize, and get a charter——”

“Aw, hell, let’s burn the factory down. Serve him right; set him in his place, the upstart.” This from a reckless youth, whose southern drawl consorts oddly with his bloodthirsty sentiments.

“No use waitin’ an’ starvin’,” says another, approvingly. “Willoughby wants fight; let’s give it to him—right.”

There is a murmur of assent, quelled by the sheer force of Nordstrom’s personality. But Sim Ranney plies his trade; he has impressed into service his young brother as extra bartender; alcohol makes dreadful things seem natural; the impossible sounds plausible.

Into a quarrelling turmoil steps The Magnificent. He eyes, with disdain, the red-faced throng at the bar.

“I’ve come to tell you boys that I’ll give you until five o’clock to step around to my office and agree to come back to work. All who fail to do so will lose their jobs. I shall send to Hartford and Dayton, Ohio, for new workmen. Going to telegraph for them.”

“Is that so? Ain’t we got no rights?” demands Nordstrom.

“Not a single one,” replies The Magnificent. “I built this factory and I own it. I’m president of the company and chief stock-holder. You men haven’t a damn’ thing to do but work for me! Take my orders or get out, and I don’t much care which. That’s all.”

“Is that so? The hell you say! You listen to us,” says the young southerner. “You Yanks licked my folks twenty-five years ago to make the nigger free. I think it’s up to a man from Alabama to lick a Yank to make the white man free.”

“Would you really like to try it?” The Magnificent’s thick lips curl back from his white and even teeth.

“Are you man enough?” demands the southerner.

For answer The Magnificent closes with him; there is a flurry of fists and the southerner goes down. The Magnificent re-arranges his cravat. “Well, you men coming back to work?” he asks, evenly.

Nordstrom laughs harshly. “That’s the way with you capitalists. You lick a workman and think that settles it. But suppose that don’t settle it, eh, Mr. Willoughby?”

“Then I get other hands,” replies Willoughby.

The young Irishman steps forward. “We won’t let ’em enter the town,” he threatens.

Willoughby laughs. “Try to stop them,” he jeers.

The Cornishman approaches him. “Nought but a damn’ dude,” he growls. “Let’s rush him, lads, and stamp——”

They are in the mood for it; they are gathering in a group, about to rush, when into Sim’s Place strides Sam Foyle. He has heard, from a frightened small boy, of the impending trouble, and has run all the way from the far end of town. He wears a black suit and his hat is likewise black. Also, there are black gloves upon his big hands.

“Here, boys, you can’t do that,” he cries, sharply.

The Cornishman spits. “And ’oo are you to tell us what we mought or moughtn’t do, hey, mister? I’ve ’eard of you, I ’ave. The dirty pup that married your doxie and ran away from her, eh? She’s been sick and dyin’ and you come home for the funeral and that’s all, eh? Cheaper to bury a wife and child than stay with ’em and help ’em live, eh?”

“Aw, quit that talk,” says the young Irishman.

“It’s true, eyen’t it?” cries the angry Cornishman. “Didn’t I hear them talking about it only last night, a lot of the fishermen? Didn’t they say that when Sam Foyle come here to the funeral they’d ride him on a rail? Well, w’y not save ’em the trouble?”

“Better get out—quick, Sam,” whispers The Magnificent.

Foyle shakes his head. “You go, Jim. Get help. I’ll handle them. They’re in a bad mood. If they turn loose on you they’ll burn the factory——”

“But they’ll kill you, Sam,” whispers The Magnificent.

Foyle pays no heed. He walks suddenly toward the Cornishman.

“You called my wife a name,” he says, quietly.

The Cornishman’s broad shoulders square; his chest swells; his great hands knot. Then, as he looks into the calm eyes of Foyle, he seems to find something there that puzzles him. It is not anger; he doesn’t know what it is. Suddenly he puts out his great hand.

“Lad, it was the whiskey talkin’. I’d say nought myself to any man that lost his wife. Sit, lad.”

Foyle shakes his head. “We’ve got to settle a lot of things that have been said. Maybe it was the whiskey made you all say these things to Mr. Willoughby.” He looks about the saloon. “Boys, it’s none of my business, but—why not settle this matter now?”

“How?” demands the young Irishman.

“Well, Mr. Willoughby owns the Pinnacle, doesn’t he?”

“What of it?” growls Nordstrom.

Foyle smiles. “He must be considered, you know. We must render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, you know.”

“Yes, and that eye’n’t the end of the speech,” cries the Cornishman. “How about the things that are God’s?”

Foyle looks about the room; his glance rests, finally, on The Magnificent. “Well, Jim, I suppose God must enter even into a bicycle factory. Have you considered His side of it?”

The Magnificent was always quick-witted. He saw how close he had been to danger, how deftly Foyle, in some incomprehensible fashion, had mastered the men.

“I don’t believe I have,” he said. “But I’m willing to. Just where does He come in?”

Someone laughed, not ribaldly, but in great good humor. The Magnificent knew that the strike was over. And Sam Foyle had ended it. The Magnificent wished that he knew just how. Some day he would know. But that was many, many years in the future, after many complexities had resolved themselves into one simplicity.

CHAPTER IV

We have witnessed, in Sim Ranney's Place, the strange workings of the hearts of men. Labor has growled at capital and raised its knotted fist; capital has knocked labor down; like Antaeus, labor has been revived by the temporary defeat, has gathered for the rush; reason has entered the arena and truce has ensued. We have seen liquor arouse strange destructive ideas. We have seen a man who must be contemptible—has there not been talk of riding upon a rail?—quell the angry passions that might have led to murder. We have seen a man thoroughly admirable fail to quell those passions. We shake our heads. . . .

"One thing is certain!" The Magnificent is emphatic.

"So?" Foyle grins—sadly. "Jim, I'd just about concluded that nothing was certain."

The Magnificent is half a stride ahead of the longer-legged Foyle. They have walked, in the years of their friendship, scores of miles together, on hunting trips, or whipping the brooks with home-made flies; and always The Magnificent has been in the van, and always Foyle has been at his elbow, hurrying to keep up. A born leader; a born follower; so we would decide, if we had not witnessed the scene in Sim's Place.

"Sim has to go," says The Magnificent. His white, even teeth click together; his black brows, that contrast so oddly with his blonde hair, shorten and hump in the center, as he frowns.

"What's Sim been doing?" asks Foyle.

"You saw. That filthy rot-gut that he sells might have led to arson, murder—anything. There's no place in Oldport for a gin-mill."

"You take a drink occasionally, don't you?" asks Foyle.

"I can handle it," exclaims The Magnificent. "And I'm perfectly willing to give it up for the sake of the example. It's—immoral!"

"It *does* interfere with business," agrees Foyle.

The Magnificent turns upon him eagerly. "Exactly. Bad business is bad morals; good business is good morals. Isn't that true?"

"As true as anything I've heard," replies Foyle.

The Magnificent eyes his companion doubtfully for a moment, as though he suspects some implication, not too patent in the phrasing of Foyle's assent. But he is too busy a man to split the hairs of argument.

"I think I'll send for Halliday," he says thoughtfully. "Good, sound man, and popular with all creeds. Give him a week in Oldport and Sim Ranney himself will apply the match to his place. He doesn't talk hell-fire and damnation; he simply tells people that ten drinks of whiskey will buy the baby a new pair of shoes. That sort of talk. Fact stuff. Shows the men how they can do more work and make more money, too."

"And make more money for their employers," suggests Foyle, mildly.

"Why not?" demands The Magnificent aggressively.

Foyle shrugs. "No answer to that, Jim."

"It's a good work, isn't it?" persists The Magnificent.

Foyle nods.

"Then why—what—what you got against it?" demands The Magnificent.

"Not a thing in the world," laughs Foyle. "Except—you said that good business is good morals."

"Well, isn't it? You said it was true," cried The Magnificent.

"But don't forget," says Foyle, "that where there's a profit for the prophet, there's liable to be a hypocrite in the woodpile."

"Are you talking about Halliday? He's one of the noblest characters—"

The gray eyes of Foyle narrow. "I'm talking about you, Jim."

For a moment it seems that The Magnificent will take offense. Then he laughs. "Good old Sam! Talking in riddles, as usual." The smile leaves his lips and the mirth departs from his eyes. "No need for me to thank you, Sam, is there? I'd have got away with it, all right, but it might have been unpleasant."

"Oh, they're a good lot of boys," agrees Foyle. "You'd have handled them." He stops before the house where Jennie Smollen used to live. He holds out his hand. "So long, old man."

The Magnificent glances hastily at the little frame house. His eyes darken. "So long *nothing*," he says. "You're back now and—you're going to stay."

Foyle shakes his head.

“Yes, you are, too,” insists The Magnificent. “You always—Sam, you know, after all, my method of lightening the frame of the Pinnacle is your idea.”

“Rot,” says Foyle. “I had a thought—you made it practical.”

“Thoughts are worth money—good money,” says The Magnificent. “Besides—you can handle men. Darned near as well as I can.” He doesn’t smile as he says this. One begins to suspect that perhaps The Magnificent has little humor. “Need you—badly. Does three thousand a year sound like money? Supervising foreman.”

“Much obliged, old man,” says Foyle. “But—I’m interested in what I’m doing.”

“Really studying law?” asks The Magnificent.

“Trying to,” replies Foyle.

“Huh! More money in business,” says The Magnificent. “It’ll take years—come to Pinnacle, Sam.”

Foyle smiles, but nods his head. “So long, old man.”

He holds out his hand, but The Magnificent does not take it. He seems oddly embarrassed.

“Sam—that note you—left for me. I—Sam, why the devil did you marry Jennie?” he blurts out.

“Had to,” says Sam.

“That isn’t true. I—Sam, you hardly knew her. She—I had Lawyer Sneed—get the goods on her, and you—your name was never mentioned.”

“So? What does that prove?” asks Foyle.

The Magnificent is not a bit magnificent now. His head is hanging to one side, like that of a bad and embarrassed boy.

“I was—worried. You knew it. You knew that Jennie might have made trouble. You did it for me, and—it wasn’t necessary, Sam. I wasn’t *that* worried. It wasn’t necessary.”

“No? She might have killed herself,” says Sam.

“But—that wouldn’t have been your fault,” protests The Magnificent.

“But I knew about it; about the way she felt,” says Sam. Then, as bewilderment still is in the eyes of The Magnificent, “A man has to save his soul, Jim.”

The Magnificent shakes his head. “Sam, I don’t understand you at all.”

Foyle laughs. “Yes, you do, old chap. You only think you don’t. So long,” he says again.

This time The Magnificent takes the proffered hand. “You won’t come to Pinnacle?”

Foyle shakes his head.

“You’re throwing away a chance for fortune, Sam,” almost blusters Willoughby.

“Think how rich I am to be able to do that,” grins Foyle.

“Why, you haven’t got a nickel,” says The Magnificent. Despite his friendship for this companion of his youth, he cannot keep the contempt from his voice.

“Yes, I have, too. I’ve four dollars and eighty-five cents; enough to take me back to Boston,” says Foyle.

Before such absurdity The Magnificent is helpless. “Well, you can’t leave town this minute. Come up to dinner, will you? Ramsey will be glad to see you.”

“Sure of that?” asks Foyle.

“Why, of course,” replies The Magnificent.

“Then I’ll come,” says Foyle.

He pushes open the gate in the fence over which Jennie Smollen leaned on the day that The Magnificent last walked down this street. Willoughby seems to feel her presence, and his stride is hurried as he walks away. But, conscious of his flight, he deliberately slows his pace. He has nothing with which to reproach himself, save a sin of the flesh which he has repented a score of times since. He mustn’t be morbid. He was *good* to Jennie, the poor thing. He is suddenly saddened at her death; he is so vitally alive himself that he pities so vital a person as Jennie that her vitality is no more.

Should he have offered some sort of condolence to Sam, instead of the things he said? But how could he? Their marriage was such a mockery . . . Was it, though? He is bewildered. Anyway, he’ll see that this damned

nonsensical talk about riding Sam on a rail is stopped at once. He speaks to two or three people on Main Street, and learns, to his relief, that if any such idea has been in the minds of the fisherfolk it has been expelled. Mrs. Smollen, Jennie's mother, has told certain facts. But we might as well get them first-hand from her.

Foyle enters, without knocking, the front door of the shabby frame house, a house rendered pathetic by the neatness of the little yard. One feels that here is an effort to keep up appearances, a pride that will not admit defeat. But the drawn window-shades, the crape that the undertaker has not yet taken away from the front door, tell, somehow, that defeat has come here.

A fat woman, her head swathed in mourning veils, is seated in a rocking-chair in the parlor. The door from the front hall is open, and Foyle sees her at once. On her lap is resting a huge crayon portrait of a baby girl. On the wall, above the mantel on which rests, under glass, a stuffed parrot, and a dish of fruit, highly colored save where the paint has been chipped away to expose the white china beneath, is hanging another crayon portrait. It is of a man whose sweeping black mustache and thick lips and high-colored cheeks speak of vitality. He is patently the father of the infant whose portrait reposes in the fat woman's lap. One sees that here was a man who should have bred sons, whose excesses would be pardoned in a world which denounces feminine frailty. An animal sort of man, stupid but kindly, and filled with vigor. He bred a daughter.

Mrs. Smollen hears Foyle's quiet footstep and looks up. She, too, has been a vital person, though flabby now. At sight of Foyle she lifts the crayon portrait—an enlargement of a tin-type—and presses it to her lips, to her bosom.

“My baby girl,” she says.

Foyle puts an arm around her stout neck. “You've been so brave, Mrs. Smollen, that I want you to be brave a little longer. Jennie was brave, wasn't she?”

Pride gleams in the woman's eyes; it is a pride that comes from generations who have sailed the seven seas; the pride that makes her keep up appearances, even though they deceive nobody.

“She was brave—and she was *good*, too,” she says. “I ought to know. I was her mother. It's all right for people to sniff—there wasn't a mean bone in Jennie's whole body. Generous—laws, there wasn't no one like her; give

you her last cent. Think she'd ever have bothered Jim Willoughby! She didn't ask nothing—of no one. It was him went to Lawyer Sneed, when Jennie woulda died before she'd asked anyone for a cent—or anything.”

She bursts into sudden tears. Foyle soothes her as a son might have done.

“I guess there's other things besides bein' careful with men. Ain't there?” she asks.

Foyle considers a moment. “I'd say that the least important thing, to God, is what we do with our bodies. It's our hearts that count, Mrs. Smollen.”

“God!” she ejaculates. “If only all men was like you. And women, too. Jennie—I ain't fool enough to say she didn't know better; she did. Lots better. I taught her. But she was—alive. Seems a funny thing to say, but—she'd 'a' been a better mother, if she'd lived—her and her baby—than any girl I've ever known. You see, what Jennie wanted was some sort of purpose. That's all. She was easy flattered and—my girl was a good girl.”

“My wife was a good girl,” says Foyle softly.

She looks up at him; so may some suffering mother, in ancient times, have looked at a prophet.

“Your wife. God!” Her ejaculation is not profane: it is reverent. “When Jennie told me—I couldn't believe it. You doing that for her, her that you hardly knew. And yesterday I hear talk that they're gabbin' because you ain't here with her. I spoke my mind. I told them about how you been sick yourself, and couldn't come. Three months in a hospital and them gassin' because you ain't doin' your duty. Duty! What do they know about duty? Talkin' about you—you that—”

She slides suddenly from the chair; her stout arms go around his knees and she abases herself. “My little girl! She's dead, yes. But she begun to understand, from the moment you came to her. I don't believe she ever told you. She couldn't. But to me—when she knew that you'd given her a name, and that her baby—she talked like you was God, Sam Foyle. You saved her soul, you did, Sam Foyle. And God knows why. She was nothin' to you; you was nothin' to her. Until you married her. And then—Sam Foyle, if she'd 'a' lived, and you wanted her to come to you, she'd 'a' come walkin' on her knees—”

“And now she's happy, and you aren't to cry any more, mother,” says Foyle.

He lifts her, places her in the rocking-chair again. For all her great bulk he handles her as though she were an infant. Embarrassment appears in his eyes.

“I—the undertaker—he didn’t feel like trusting me, mother,” he says. “So—I haven’t any money, just now. But in a few weeks—”

Spirit returns to the dejected mother. “I’ve made my way since my husband died,” she declares, “and I won’t be beholdin’ to you, Sam Foyle. Not that it ain’t plain noble of you to offer to help, but—I don’t need it. If, some time, you make a lot of money, and want to put a stone over Jennie—”

He pats her tear-stained face. “It will be done,” he says.

A little later he leaves her. He walks as far as Main Street and there he hesitates for a moment. Men see him but do not speak. In the quaint and lovely fashion of a New England village, they lift their hats to him; he has been bereaved; this is their tribute to his black clothes. His hesitation passes. His broad mouth twists in a whimsical smile, and he mounts the hill toward the mansion that used to be known as the Blake house, but now is called the Willoughby Place.

As he reaches the gate the clock on the Unitarian Church tower strikes noon. He is vaguely bewildered. So much has happened since his arrival at seven this morning. He places his hand on the latch, then withdraws it. The Magnificent has opened the front door and is walking rapidly down the walk. Even a stranger might have sensed the embarrassment in his manner.

Foyle lifts a hand. “Don’t bother to explain, old man,” he says.

The Magnificent stares at him. “How do you know what I’m going to say?”

“Ramsey’s a woman, isn’t she?” counters Foyle.

“Yes, but you’re an old friend—”

Foyle interrupts. “She said, ‘I don’t want to judge Sam, but everyone knows that he married that girl simply because he had to, and his coming back to her funeral, after practically deserting her, is just a bid for sympathy, and I don’t want him in my house.’ That what she said?”

The Magnificent colors. “I’ve told her, Sam—explained as well as I could—Ramsey is the sweetest girl in the world, but—women are women, hang it! She says that next time you’re in town she’ll be glad to have you. I don’t understand.”

Foyle smiles. “I do,” he says. “It’s easier to forget than to forgive. Give Ramsey my love. So long.”

He turns and walks down Main Street. At The Commercial House he pauses; he is hungry and enters the hotel. He registers and enters the dining-room and consumes a mid-day meal. He tips the waitress ten cents—he has never had the *flair* of The Magnificent—and leaves the room. He goes to the clerk’s desk to pay the thirty-five cents that is the dinner charge. The clerk shakes his head.

“Uncle Frank says no charge for you, Sam,” says the clerk.

“Much obliged,” says Foyle.

Outside, on the porch, Uncle Frank is sitting. Foyle approaches him. “Thanks for the dinner, Uncle Frank,” he says.

Uncle Frank deliberately spits; he eyes deliberately a brown stain on the porch rail; he is not so accurate as usual to-day. Then he turns to Foyle.

“Don’t thank me. I wouldn’t touch your money. That’s all. Good afternoon.” He turns his head away, and ejects the fruits of the labors of his jaws in an uncertain stream. The rail is stained in the vilest fashion.

“Why not, Uncle Frank?” asks Foyle.

“Yeller skunk. How much did Jim Willoughby pay you to marry Jennie Smollen?” Uncle Frank’s mild blue eyes are wrathful.

Foyle smiles. “You know better than that, Uncle Frank.”

“Maybe I do and maybe I don’t,” snaps Uncle Frank. “Don’t lemme detain you,” he adds, with frigid politeness.

“I won’t stay a minute—after you’ve said you didn’t mean that, Uncle Frank,” says Foyle.

Uncle Frank heaves himself out of his chair. “Daggone me to a daggone old daggone! Don’t you tell me what I’m to do and what I ain’t to do. I’ll say what I want, when I want, and to whoever I want.” His polka dot handkerchief is brought forth from his rear trousers pocket. He wipes his forehead, apparently. In reality he wipes his eyes.

“You come back here without a word to anyone. You ain’t got no money and you don’t come to me. Ain’t I been your friend for years? Ain’t I got any rights? I brag about you, what a smart feller you are, for ten years, and you marry a girl you ain’t got no right to marry, and you borry funeral expenses from someone else—”

Foyle shakes his head. “I managed to do some saving the last few years, Uncle Frank. I didn’t borrow from anyone.”

“Must have,” snorts Uncle Frank. “Yeller skunk. Why the hell did you marry Jennie Smollen? Don’t lie to me, young feller. I *talked* to Jennie, I did. Why?”

Foyle stands there, making no reply. Uncle Frank glares at him. “Why don’t you answer me?” demands Uncle Frank.

“I don’t think you have any right to ask the question,” says Foyle.

“Well, why in hell didn’t you have spunk enough to say so sooner?” cries Uncle Frank. “Want any money?”

“A hundred dollars for a stone to put over Jennie,” replies Foyle.

“Well, why the hell didn’t you say so before?” demands Uncle Frank.

“You didn’t give me time,” says Foyle, smiling.

“Yeller skunk,” mutters Uncle Frank.

CHAPTER V

An hiatus here. . . . We have talked with Uncle Frank Dabney; twice he has said “yeller skunk”; once he meant it and later changed his mind; the second time it seems that he did not mean it at all, that pique inspired the bestowal of the title. As a mirror, whereby we may observe the reflections of others, Uncle Frank seems somewhat faulty, as though the quicksilver were rubbed off the back.

We have listened to the ex-miner from Cornwall and have heard him say, “nought but a damned dude.” Yet the “dude” whipped a man in fair fight immediately after the epithet was uttered.

We have learned that men had planned to ride Sam Foyle upon a rail, and at the moment when the assault was to have occurred we have seen these men lifting their hats to him in respect for his bereavement.

We have seen what two women thought of Foyle; each drew conclusions from what seemed to be unassailable evidence, and the conclusions were opposed. Suddenly the thought occurs that Foyle is as important to the story as The Magnificent himself. Perhaps Foyle is another mirror whereby we may seek to see The Magnificent. Or perhaps The Magnificent is a mirror for Foyle. The interdependence of people, their tangled relations, the interwoven meshes of their lives, the absurdity of thinking that there can be such a thing as an individual. . . .

But perhaps as people grow older their judgments become sounder. An hiatus, then, of eight years, while our characters mature. The country matures too; at least it grows bigger; its limbs are more muscular; its appetite is heartier; its ambitions outgrow the bounds of provincialism; people know more of one another. It is the bicycle that brings this knowledge.

“The city man is enabled to spend a healthful holiday within sight and sound of purling brooks; the farmer is enabled to visit the art galleries of the metropolis. I tell you, gentlemen, that the two wheeled horse has done more for mankind than any invention in history.”

Thus, at the banquet of the board of trade of Oldport, The Magnificent. Pinnacle has just completed a fiscal year; the company in the year ending this fifth of May, 1898, has manufactured three hundred and eighty-three thousand bicycles. It employs twelve hundred men and women; the

quadrangular building that seemed so large eight years ago is dwarfed by the three new structures that have been erected. The concern is now capitalized for five million dollars and pays dividends that have made the original investors wealthy beyond their dreams.

Humorless The Magnificent may sound; yet not an eyebrow is raised at his boasts. A state governor nods appreciatively; a senator will later arise and make the statements of The Magnificent seem tame. For the nation has gone mad over the “two wheeled horse.”

Good roads are being made in order that the farmer hastening to the art galleries, and the broker racing to listen to the purling brook, may achieve their desires in the easiest fashion. Every office building in the cities is equipped with bicycle racks; stockholders in city transportation lines are becoming nervous. Ministers have a new cause upon which to blame the immorality of the youth of to-day.

Bloomers! One strolls through the city streets. Hips! Higher than their heads! All right for men, but how brazen of the women! Is the hoop skirt so far away that women have forgotten that their most important task in life is to disguise the fact that they have anatomies? Not merely bloomers but skin tight breeches! We turn away in horror from the sight of these women bicyclists, these female “scorchers.” To what dreadful excesses will their daughters descend? Of course we realize that the better class of women blush at the sight of their frailer sisters, but even among this better class we hear whispers of divided skirts. We must take stern measures; the rotten immorality of the day must be purged.

Yet what can we expect of young girls so long as women are permitted to wear tights upon the stage? Surely God will give us some sign of his disapproval of the *fin de siecle* girl. . . .

Century runs; the League of American Wheelmen; Major Taylor; Eddie McDuffee; the little Welchman, Jimmy Michaels; Harry Elkes, the pride of Glens Falls; records falling every day; tandems; sextuplets; Michaels jumping ahead of his pace; if he can do that at the finish what good is his pace? Can Murphy really ride a mile, behind a railroad train, in less than a minute?

The chainless; the thousands that were poured by credulous investors into the coffers of the promoters of puncture-proof tires. “I tell you, I seen a big fat man ride right over a lot of tacks and broken glass and never puncture a tire.”

The health of the race! Hear the doctors! What will happen to the lungs of a man who bends over his handle bars inhaling the dust of the road? Will the spines of the future generations be curved? What will this precarious seat upon a joggling machine do to the delicate inner organisms?

Hear the judges! The speed-mad maniacs who race down hills and knock over inoffensive pedestrians, maiming, even killing! The laws should be sternly enforced. Shall we breed a race contemptuous of all legal restraint?

Listen once again to the clergy. Hear them deplore their empty pews. Watch them as they draft the Eleventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not ride thy bike upon the Sabbath."

The end of the century, and to what is it bringing us? Perdition, answer the preachers. Crime, say the judges. Disease, howl the doctors.

And through it all the bicycle thrives. And Pinnacle grows and grows. Guaranteed tires, the lightest of rubber mud guards; geared up to ninety-six if you happen to be a "scorcher," and down to sixty-eight if you are an old fogie. Ram's horn handle bars or the puritanically upright ones recommended by your family physician. A racing saddle, tilted rakishly, or one hygienically designed, and highly advertised with drawings of the pelvis and diagrams of the liver.

One hundred and twenty-five dollars; ninety dollars; seventy dollars; forty-five dollars! "Look at it! Watch the wheels spin; heft it. Not so light that we've sacrificed stren'th, and not so heavy that you'll notice it goin' up a hill."

The Pinnacle Daisy; your wife couldn't be safer in the old family rocking-chair. The Pinnacle Sweetheart; so named because every girl ought to have one. The Pinnacle Monarch; king of the road. All kinds of Pinnacles from the tiny one for little Robert to the sedate one for grandma. Tandems, too; triplets, quadruplets; quintuplets; sextuplets; and the great octuplet that paced Eddie McDuffie in one of his races, but that really was more for an advertisement than anything else. The crowds turned out to watch the Pinnacle team aboard the great octuplet as it went along the roads from Boston to New York.

Clubs everywhere. Hardly a person too poor to own some sort of wheel. All over the world; revolutionizing character, broadening mankind, making for that mutual acquaintance which would do so much to stop international jealousies. Americans touring Europe; Europeans touring America. . . .

Full dinner pails. Mr. McKinley has put the country upon a sound financial basis. Factories belching smoke. Warehouses crammed with goods to-day and emptied to-morrow at the importunities of buyers. Growing, growing.

“Bustin’ right out of our pants,” says Uncle Frank Dabney. “Built an annex in ’95. Built the new addition last year. Daggone if I don’t have to serve meals in relays. Same all over the country.” He is still loyal to Navy Twist, and now bites off a large chunk. He moves it with his tongue into his left cheek. He clears the rail of the porch with inches to spare. He leans back comfortably in his chair. He has just served the board of trade banquet. Peace descends upon him. Suddenly he leaps to his feet and stares down Main Street.

“What’s the matter?” asks his companion, once again the drummer for Perigord’s Soap.

“Daggone,” says Uncle Frank.

Up the street is coming a man in uniform. It is not an unusual sight. This noon, at the board of trade dinner, not a speaker but referred to Dewey, not one but laughed gaily at the temerity of the Spaniards in daring to pit their effete civilization against the mighty youth whose head rested in the Great Lakes, whose feet were laved in the Gulf, whose right hand touched the Pacific, and whose left playfully splashed the waters of the Atlantic into the astounded eyes of Europe.

“To hell with breakfast, let’s finish ’em now!”

When Dewey’s gunner made that immortal remark—he had made it only a few hours ago and his countrymen had not heard its echoes yet—he spoke the spirit of America. Why wait? Who the hell were the Spaniards? Who the hell was anyone? Let’s finish ’em now.

No, uniforms were not rare in Oldport. In fact there was a recruiting station down on Front Street, and many a Pinnacle workman had exchanged his over-alls for the livery of his country. But this man, coming up the street, with a somewhat shambling stride, had not been seen in Oldport for eight years.

Uncle Frank’s great body took the steps from the porch to the sidewalk in two leaps. The Navy Twist that long experience should have rendered secure against any sudden movement slipped from its lodgment in his cheek. Uncle Frank gasped, sputtered, choked. A uniformed arm rose and descended heavily, driving a broad hand thumpingly between the shoulder

blades of mine host of The Commercial House. The Navy Twist shot, in a compact ball, half way across the street.

“Got me so daggone excited you made me lose my chaw,” complained Uncle Frank.

“I’ll buy you another,” said the uniformed man.

His arm now encircled the great shoulders of Uncle Frank; beneath the pressure Uncle Frank squirmed uneasily. From his trousers pocket, rear, he draws a handkerchief. It is a polka dot; Uncle Frank was born a conservative. “Made me get juice all over my chin,” he says. But he wipes his eyes. Sometimes it seems that Uncle Frank is rankly sentimental.

“What the dickens you doin’ in Oldport, Sam Foyle?” Uncle Frank demanded.

“Captain Foyle, please,” replied the officer.

“Daggone!” said Uncle Frank. “How’d you do it?”

“Been in the militia out in Ohio for three years,” explained Foyle.

“Ohio? Thought you went to Boston. Whyn’t you write me, anyway?”

“Nothing to say,” said Foyle.

“Is that the way to treat a friend,” demanded Uncle Frank. “I got a check for a hundred dollars from you and that’s the last I ever heard. That was six years ago. I suppose you’ve made so much money practising law that you’ve been too proud to keep in touch with poor folks.”

Foyle grinned. “I haven’t made any money at all, Uncle Frank.”

“Same thing. Too proud to let me help you. Yeller skunk.” But there was something in his voice that took away the barb of his words. “Captain Foyle,” he said. He lingered over the title, mouthing it as though it were as delectable to the taste as his beloved Navy Twist.

“What you doing here?” he asked.

“I’ve been doing recruiting work in Boston,” explained Foyle. “Tomorrow we entrain for Tampa, and, I hope, Cuba. Took a day off to run up and say howdy.”

Uncle Frank returned to his grievance. “Mrs. Smollen told me about you once in a while until she moved away, and then I lost track of you completely. Are you a lawyer?”

“Admitted three years ago. I’ve been practising in Cincinnati, and not doing very well,” said Foyle. “I’ve been thinking that I’d come back here after the war. You know you promised to make a judge of me.”

“Daggoned if I don’t,” exclaimed Uncle Frank. “And if I can’t, Jim Willoughby can.”

“How is Jim?” asked Foyle.

“Speaking of angels,” said Uncle Frank. “Look.”

Out from The Commercial House, where he had lingered to talk business with several people, came The Magnificent. Uncle Frank put his arm in proprietary fashion, about the waist of Sam Foyle.

“Look who’s here,” he cried.

Willoughby took the steps at a bound. There were handshakings, back slappings, gentle curses of delight. Captain Foyle must come right up to the house and see Junior and little Robert. The two sturdiest, handsomest kids in the world. Uncle Frank, exacting a promise that Foyle would have supper with him, permitted his departure. Up Main Street, halted every few steps by patriots who must show their regard for an old acquaintance become a defender of his flag, Foyle and The Magnificent made their way. At the gate of the Willoughby place Foyle paused.

“Remember the last time I was here,” he said.

“It’s all right now. Ramsey will be delighted to see you,” The Magnificent assured him. “What do you think of the way I fixed up the house?”

The iron deer and dogs were gone. The cupola had been raised. A glassed conservatory had been added.

“It looks fine,” said Foyle heartily. “You’ve done well, Jim.”

“Thirty-three and worth over two millions,” said The Magnificent. “Pinnacle is a great concern. I’ll hate to quit it.”

“Quit it?” Foyle was amazed. “Why?”

The Magnificent’s eyes took on a speculative expression. “I’ve got about as far as I can get with the bicycle,” he said. “The fact is, Sam, I’m not sure that the bicycle will last much longer.”

“What will take its place?” demanded Foyle.

“Have you heard anything about the experiments with the horseless carriage?” asked The Magnificent.

“Something,” admitted Foyle.

“I’ve been studying it,” said The Magnificent. “Let’s sneak around the back way where Ramsey won’t see us, and get up to my study, and I’ll show you some drawings.”

“But I want to see Ramsey and the children,” expostulated Foyle.

The Magnificent had been perfunctory in his boast of his children, in his references to his wife. He had shown real enthusiasm when he mentioned the horseless carriage. Now the enthusiasm disappeared from his face and voice. He was perfunctory again as he had been when he had congratulated Foyle on his uniform.

“All right,” he agreed politely.

He led the way into the house. Ramsey came to the living-room at his call. She stood for a moment on the threshold of the room, staring at the tall man in the uniform. Her hair was as beautiful and blonde as it had been eight years ago; her eyes seemed if anything more deeply violet; motherhood had lent a gracious roundness to her proud figure. Something seemed to grip Foyle’s heart as he looked at her. He felt himself grow white, and then felt the blood come racing back to his cheeks.

“Sam,” she cried.

She came to him, holding out her hand.

The Magnificent laughed genially. “The women always love a hero,” he said. “I’d have enlisted myself, only Ramsey wouldn’t let me.”

“Of course I wouldn’t,” exclaimed his wife. “Everyone knows that you wanted to go, but you’re a married man with children. The country doesn’t need you.”

The Magnificent waited until Foyle and his wife had exchanged half a dozen platitudes, and until the children had been exhibited. Then, restless, he demanded that Foyle come to his study.

“I won’t let him,” said Ramsey. “I want to talk to him myself.”

The Magnificent looked at his watch. “Well, I think I’ll get down to the office, then,” he announced. “Drop in to see me later, Sam.”

The kiss that he bestowed upon his wife was perfunctory. The handshake that he gave to Foyle was meaningless. Here was a man so wrapped in affairs that he had little time for humanity.

Alone with Ramsey, Foyle seemed to detect a certain sadness in her eyes. Yet her voice was gay as they chatted of old times. Not until he was leaving did she become serious.

Then, "Eight years ago I wouldn't see you, Sam," she said. "I've learned the truth since."

"That's all right, Ramsey," he told her.

Suddenly her coolness, the coolness that made the unseeing think her "standoffish," left her. She was warm, emotional.

"Sam," she said, "You never asked me to marry you, but I knew."

His face was white. "Of course you did, Ramsey."

"I didn't love you," she told him.

His broad mouth twisted in his whimsical grin. With an unsteady hand he smoothed his unruly black hair. "Of course you didn't, Ramsey."

"I don't love you now," she went on.

"Well, of course not," he cried in surprise.

Her voice became dull. "I am married to a millionaire; he is going to be one of the richest men in the world. He is infinitely kind to me and to our children—when he thinks of us. I love him, Sam. But I was unjust to you eight years ago. I didn't love you then; I don't love you now. Sam, I wish that I had; I wish that I did."

He was thinking of those words of hers when the bullet of a half-starved undersized Spanish boy struck him, six weeks later, as he crossed a Cuban swamp.

CHAPTER VI

A large, sumptuous lady; sables are heaped upon her shoulders; rustling silks adorn her ample form; diamonds gleam from her hair (we suspect that it has been retouched); pearls shimmer from her plump neck; rubies sparkle from her manicured fingers; perhaps her corsets are a shade too tight, but she breathes easily, freely, lifting her capacious bosom somewhat haughtily. Watch her driving down Fifth Avenue; behold the obsequiousness with which porters of the great stores and the banks salaam before her. Observe also, if you will, the winks that are exchanged when her back is turned; note the shrugs of disdain; the vulgar whisper insults.

See the flush of shame upon her countenance as she overhears these mutterings, as in a mirror she glimpses the winks and shrugs. Ah, what is wealth when one must live a life of infamy?

Hear her sobs as she talks with her lover that evening in their magnificent home overlooking the Park. Her pleadings would soften a heart of stone. "Marry me," she cries. "For the sake of our children, give me a name!"

Here is a liaison that has endured for decades. Long usage has dignified it and rendered it honorable. The lady is Politics; the gentleman is Business. Shortly after the Civil War these two came together. At first there were stolen meetings, but little by little they became bolder, or perhaps their passion became more irresistible. But as both prospered the necessity for secrecy seemed less vital. Kings flaunt their mistresses before the world; shall the modern king, Business, have fewer and lesser privileges? Shall an outworn morality, a cheap prejudice, prevent the gentleman from doing rightly by his lady?

Out of this mating, illicit though it may have been, have sprung the brilliant children, Imperialism and Expansion. Shall these handsome children be denied access to society? Shall Mugwumpery and Provincialism hold the keys to decent society, or shall a newer society supersede the outgrown one?

Ah, what a wedding was there, when the slick city man did rightly by our Nell! Our darling Nell, goddess of ten million homes! For is not every American youth taught in the cradle his presidential potentialities? Does not

every American maiden in her dreams dispense the hospitality of the White House?

Mark Hanna kissed the bride; Reed and Foraker and others of the newer clergy blessed the ceremony. Mr. McKinley, broadminded gentleman that he was, refused to listen to the lurid tales of the lady's past. Divines from every pulpit sang the praises of the wedding. Only a few nasty-minded people, and these for the most part ignorant laborers, stupid philosophers, and cranky reformers, sneered at the happy couple and said that the lady still kept the bawdy ways of her girlhood.

But who were these as compared with church and state and finance? Especially finance, whose temples held the real congregations of the righteous?

After all, a man's a man and there's no use expecting him to live like a nun. He has to have his fling, and if in the course of his fling he has given hostages to fortune, why blame the children? Look at Cuba; those Spaniards never could have developed Cuba rightly; we'll give them a helping hand and a good market. There's Porto Rico; watch her thrive once she gets good roads and sewers. Look at the Philippines; do you mean to say those people aren't better off under our benevolent protection than when they were always fighting with the Spaniards and themselves? It's all very well to disapprove of liaisons, but doggone it, when the man has made a lot of money, and the woman behaves herself and they've raised two fine citizens like Imperialism and Expansion, there's no sense in being narrow-minded. Anyway, the best people invite the couple to dinner, and if you go to their house you'll see their marriage certificate hanging on the wall. Besides, we're a young country and it doesn't do to be too fussy. Are you going to the party that Mrs. Politics-Business is giving next Tuesday night? I hear there are going to be seventeen courses and eight kinds of champagne. . . .

Let us be just; the lady had no intention of debauching her friends; she was too proud of the respectability which she had lately achieved. But here was a simple society, unused to seventeen courses and eight kinds of champagne. Pimples appeared on the faces; gout swelled the feet; indigestion attacked the stomach; livers hardened, and here and there an artery grew brittle. Gorged and obese, like an over-fed goose fattened for the market. . . . Physicians fingered the nation's pulse. Too much to eat and too much to drink; insufficient mastication of chunks of nutriment bitten off too largely and too hastily; maybe this wedding wasn't such a darned fine thing after all.

A new man in the White House; when we legitimized our two handsome, natural offspring, perhaps we didn't realize that, due to careless upbringing, they might have formed undesirable acquaintances. These acquaintances seem to involve us in all sorts of unforeseen and surprising difficulties; we have interests all over the world, and these interests seem to require troops, navies; we bristle; we seem to have become rather touchy.

But the marriage has been sanctioned. Our darling Nell has an honest name; let's make the best of her children and her children's deeds. But, now that Nell has a name, it's absurd for her to pretend that a fat old woman like her can possibly still feel the pangs of love. Justice has been done her; let her keep her honest name and her dower rights, but let her not do it again. Let her get a decent divorce, quietly and with dignity; we don't expect her to retire to a convent, and if she accidentally runs across her ex-lover, we don't mind them drinking a cup of tea together, but let it end there.

"It makes me laugh," says Uncle Frank Dabney. "Here we bawl hell out of politics because she flies around with business, and give business hail Columbia because he sneaks off to keep a date with politics. Then they live openly together and everybody's satisfied. For a while. Now times ain't so good and we're blaming it on the couple. That'd be all right only we're telling business to look out for politics and see that she's a good girl."

He is sitting on the veranda of the Willoughby mansion. His vast chest and stomach are armored by a stiff white shirt; the white tie around his standing collar is slightly askew; the collar itself is wilted by honest sweat; the tails of his evening coat are folded across his plump knees. These are his concessions to the prosperity of The Magnificent and to his own enlarged stature in the public eye. For be it known that Uncle Frank has acquired property in addition to The Commercial House, that he has interests in many diverse affairs.

The Magnificent frowns. "Politics are rotten, Uncle Frank," he declares. "The decent sentiment of every community is against the boss. He has to go."

"I guess, all things considered, the best policeman is a reformed burglar," says Uncle Frank. "But daggone it, how you goin' to know that he *is* reformed?"

"Unquestionably," says The Magnificent, "things have been done in the last twenty or thirty years that were wrong. Nevertheless, the times justified them. We wouldn't have our great and prosperous nation if the men of genius had been compelled to explain every move they made to a suspicious

and bigoted populace. The people let themselves get under the control of venal politicians; these politicians hampered every public-spirited work undertaken by our great men. I'll grant that ethically it might have been better if the great financiers and merchants had refused to deal with the bosses; but, if they had refused, progress would have been delayed for years. The people cannot be led; they must be driven. Which is better worth while; a railroad whose building gives employment to thousands, and whose accomplishment opens up new territories that will house and feed millions, all of this secured by what may be crudely termed bribery; or an undeveloped territory, lying barren because the financier refuses to deal with the political boss?"

"I ain't arguin' against all that," says Uncle Frank. "I'm simply sayin' that it looks funny to me that when it comes to a question of political reform the rich are always found at the same table."

"They're wiser; they understand what is to the public interest," retorts The Magnificent.

"And they never lose no money by their understanding," laughs Uncle Frank.

From the usual trousers pocket he brings forth a plug of Navy Twist, He eyes it frowningly, seeming to lack his old ingenuous delight in it. "Daggone if they make anything the way they used to," he grumbles. "Here they put a tax on tobacco to help pay the expenses of the war with Spain, and the tobacco people ain't content with reducing the size of the plug—they adulterate the tobacco. It ain't right." He bites off a chew.

"It seems to me that for a man as successful as you are, you do a lot of grumbling," smiles The Magnificent.

It is a summer evening and the screens keep out the insects; therefore the electric lights are turned on, and Uncle Frank can see his host clearly. He studies The Magnificent. He sees a man who, in this early September day of 1904, looks older than his thirty-nine years warrant. His blonde hair has receded until the crown of his head gleams whitely beneath the lights. There are innumerable fine wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, and deep furrows appear horizontally across his forehead. When he frowns his eyebrows gather together and there are vertical furrows crossing the others. The shape of his mouth has changed in recent years; the lower lip has retained its fullness, but the upper lip seems to have thinned and lengthened. The mouth is still sensuous but seems to have acquired a new and stronger tenacity. The chin and jaws are still lean and bony. His figure is still slim.

“Successful? That depends on what success means,” says Uncle Frank. “I suppose you consider yourself pretty successful!”

There seems to be something questioning, almost challenging, in his tone. The Magnificent looks at him with faint surprise. “I got five million cash when I sold out my interest in Pinnacle last year,” he says. “I wouldn’t take three million for securities I own besides that five million. And my automobile company will make me as much as Pinnacle did and in less time. If that isn’t success, what is?” he demands.

“I dunno,” replies Uncle Frank. “How’s Ramsey?”

“Last letter she wrote me said she was having a wonderful time. Junior speaks French beautifully and Robert does almost as well.”

Uncle Frank forgets that this is not the porch of The Commercial House and is screened in; he apologizes for the forgetfulness that mars the screen. “I oughta quit chewin’,” he declares.

The Magnificent likes Uncle Frank; he waves aside the apology.

“Still,” says Uncle Frank, “if I had a couple of kids, I’d rather hear ’em say ‘Daddy’ in plain American, than in all the languages of Europe.”

“Oh, they’re doing very well abroad,” smiles The Magnificent. “And they’ll be back next week.”

“It’s about a year and a half since you’ve seen them, ain’t it?” asks Uncle Frank.

“No, you forget that I went to England last year on business. I had three days in Paris with them, then.”

“That’s right,” says Uncle Frank. He changes the subject abruptly. “Let’s get back to what we were talking at supper.” Even the donning of evening dress cannot make Uncle Frank term the evening meal “dinner.”

“All right,” says The Magnificent. “It gets down to this. You’ll grant that I haven’t made many business mistakes so far.”

Uncle Frank nods assent. He stops himself just in time and rising heavily opens the screen door. Returning, he sits down again.

“The bicycle is all through,” says The Magnificent. “We’re a nation of faddists. To-morrow we’ll have something else driving us crazy.”

“Maybe your automobile will be only a fad,” suggests Uncle Frank.

The Magnificent shakes his head. “There’s work running a bicycle. The automobile is going to be easy.”

“Huh! Get a horse,” scoffs Uncle Frank.

The Magnificent smiles. “Well, never mind that; we’ll see who’s right later. Now I’ve had trouble enough with the town government in the past. I’ve done more for this community than any man in it. I want to be dead certain that when I start the Willoughby Company I’ll have no petty politicians butting in. I want to be certain of being let alone. I want a good reform government in this town. I’m going to do more than merely start an automobile factory. I’m going to take over the electric light plant, and several other things in this town. I don’t want to be hampered. I want Oldport to give me the right kind of a charter, and I don’t intend to bribe anyone to get it. Oldport is a city of fifty thousand people now. When I started Pinnacle about fifteen years ago there were less than ten thousand here. Fifteen years from now there’ll be a hundred thousand here if I’m given the proper encouragement.”

Uncle Frank shifts nervously in his chair. “Get to the point,” he suggests.

“You have a lot of influence,” says The Magnificent. “Roosevelt will carry the country and the state; every Republican nominee will be swept into office. I want the right sort of Republican nominated for mayor of Oldport.”

“You ain’t suggestin’ that I run, are you?” cries Uncle Frank.

The Magnificent smiles. “I know there’s no use in asking you. I want Sam Foyle nominated.”

Uncle Frank purses his lips. “Never was a nicer feller,” he says. “But he ain’t very reasonable.”

“Oh, I know he has wild ideas,” admits The Magnificent, “but he’s sound.”

Uncle Frank laughs. “You ain’t quite so candid as you might be, Jim. You’re sort of afraid that even Teddy can’t carry in the average Republican in this town.”

“Glad to hear you say that,” says Willoughby sharply. “I suspected as much, but if you say so, it’s a fact. I said I wanted the right sort of Republican nominated, but I want him to run on a Fusion ticket. Now Foyle is popular with both parties. He’s been practising law here since he came back from the war. The poor people are strong for him; the rich haven’t

anything against him. He's a war hero; wounded and all that sort of thing. He can get both nominations or run independently. He'll be elected."

"You ain't seen much of Sam in recent years, have you?" asks Uncle Frank.

"Not as much as I'd like to," says The Magnificent. "Why?"

"You think he's sound. He's pretty radical."

The Magnificent laughs. "Let him be as radical as he wants; the Board of Aldermen have a lot to say in the government of this city."

Uncle Frank's stomach quivers as he chuckles. "There's several ways of skinning a cat, ain't there?"

The Magnificent smiles faintly. "I don't think I understand you, Uncle Frank."

Uncle Frank rises and opens the screen door; he attends to certain necessary matters, then wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

"A-course you don't. I'm certainly a terrible rough-neck and I use vulgar language. Think of talkin' about skinnin' cats on a beautiful verandy like this."

He is still chuckling as he enters The Commercial House ten minutes later.

CHAPTER VII

Let us, in the interests of art, science, and vulgar curiosity, peep over Uncle Frank's shoulder as he sits, writing, at his desk in his private office in The Commercial House. Or we might, perhaps, glance about the room before we peruse the private correspondence of Uncle Frank.

On the wall is a representation of waves breaking upon a rocky shore. Not merely is it done in oils, but it is hand-painted. The frame alone cost Uncle Frank fourteen dollars in a Boston department store. It would be unfair to tell the price of the painting itself, although there must have been at least a dollar's worth of paint on the canvas. Opposite hangs an enlarged photograph of Mr. McKinley. A very thick red carpet is on the floor; the paper on the wall is pleasing to the tired eye, presenting a most realistic scene of large and brilliantly colored butterflies hovering over sturdy roses and pansies. There is a couch in the room whereon, when winter comes, Uncle Frank may take those siestas which in summer he enjoys on the porch. It is upholstered in a red of the exact shade of the carpet upon the floor. Uncle Frank has, unquestionably, the artistic sense.

His desk makes no pretense to beauty, however, but is a plain roll-top affair, and the chair in which he bestows his bulky form is stout and strong. Upon the floor at his right hand is an article upon which has been lavished all the imagination of a great craftsman. It is a vessel cunningly contrived of hammered brass; it bulges in the middle and upon this bulge is a chaste representation of a satyr peering around the trunk of a tree at a nymph. Above the bulging belly of this receptacle is a narrow neck, which opens out into a generous mouth, fully a foot in diameter. Uncle Frank has publicly boasted that he can't miss it in the dark. It is a great comfort to him, and is a birthday gift from the kitchen staff of The Commercial House. Uncle Frank makes use of it now. He eyes it almost affectionately as he sweetens his mouth with some fresh Navy Twist. He turns once more to his epistolary task. His eyes are almost buried in the flesh of his cheeks, and the muscles of the hand that hold his pencil are taut. Plainly, writing is an effort. He signs his name, and then gathering up the several sheets of his long letter, begins to read it. He makes it easy for us.

"Dear Ned," the letter begins. "Well Ned, I'm glad to hear that everything is going well with you and I think you done well in going to California. I think maybe this winter I'll take a trip out to San Diego and see

you. I ain't ever seen my nephews and nieces and in particular I want to see little Frank. I suppose he's old enough to chew tobacco now and I hope you don't let him smoke them stinking cigarettes. My health is good and I expect I'm as able now as I was twenty years ago. I don't see nobody getting fresh with me anyway.

"Well Ned, things don't change much from year to year except that Oldport is a regular city now and help has got so uppity that there's no pleasing them. When you and me was boys the whole family helped buy us a pair of pants and when we got a pair they had to last two or three years. Now my cook's son goes and charges his own clothes. And you know that what you get on credit you don't examine very careful for fear the storekeeper may get offended and change his mind. I keep raising wages all the time and if I couldn't raise prices for meals and rooms I don't know what would happen.

"Well Ned, I guess you'll listen to your big brother next time. I told you that Judge Parker didn't have a chance and I hope you'll listen to me next time. Teddy's election is a good thing for the country, because we can't monkey around with new ideas. They're bad for business.

"Election was pretty exciting here. We had regular old-fashioned torch-light parades, and I wore a rubber cape myself and marched at the head of a big procession. Roosevelt carried the city three to one. But I expect that a wooden Indian could have beat Parker at that.

"Well Ned, I'm getting old. I'll be fifty next March and it don't seem to me that I've got any more sense than when I was fifteen. And I'm sure that I don't grow any handsomer. I'd like to know what age brings a man without its laughs. I certainly get plenty of those looking at people. But I guess they get as many looking at me.

"I've been having a good one lately. You know, I sort of mix in politics a little. Running a hotel I sort of get in touch with people and kind of have my ear to the ground. Well, last September Jim Willoughby had me to dinner at his house. Remember how the other boys nick-named him The Magnificent years ago because he always had such big ideas? It was a joke at first, but by and by it became a matter of course. And when he began making such a big success people forgot that the nick-name was invented to make fun of him. Makes you wonder, his success, if there's anything in a name. For a nick-name is as much of a name as the one the minister gives you. Anyway he certainly lives magnificently with the only butler this town has ever seen,

and women all over the place with lace caps on their heads. And he dresses up each night. So did I when I ate up there.

“Well Ned, The Magnificent is taking life pretty seriously. He’s got more money than a bank and it’s running him. Instead of chucking everything overboard and taking a good look at the world he’s busy with new schemes to make more money. But you have to respect him. He’s got more brains than any man I know. More vision too. I thought he was making a mistake when he got out of the bicycle business but now I know he was right. He’s going in for automobiles now and when I said to him that I didn’t think people would ever have enough money to buy them and run them, he just laughed. That was several years ago. He knew.

“‘There’s always a buyer for every single thing that can be made’, he said. There’s a lot of truth in that Ned. But I don’t envy him nothing but his two kids. He’s fond of them too and of Ramsey, in his way. But it ain’t the kind of a way that a woman wants to be loved, if she’s a real woman, or that children want to be loved. The Magnificent seems to think that giving them things is as good as giving them yourself.

“Well to get back to my laugh. The Magnificent has a lot of schemes and when you get to dealing in big affairs nowadays you got to know which way the political cat will jump. So The Magnificent wants a trained cat. He’s against corrupt politics as strong as any man. But he ain’t got much faith in the ability of the people to do the right thing by themselves. They need good sound restraining influences, and The Magnificent is going to provide them.

“So because he wanted a good government he got me and some others to see that Sam Foyle was made mayor. You remember Sam, and anyway I’ve written you quite a lot about him in late years. I never been able to understand him. I think myself he’s as brainy as Jim Willoughby. But he’s got a knack for doing the wrong thing. Never could understand why he married that Smollen girl. Neither could anyone else. And since he come back here to practise law he ain’t built up much of a practise. Does too much charity work. Won’t make people pay him. Kind of a radical in his views, but so daggone tolerant that there ain’t many people suspect that. Always seems to think that everybody’s doing about the best he can and that it’s a shame to blame a man that’s trying.

“Well, there’s one thing that I’ve always known about Sam Foyle. That is that he’s so daggone honest that he leans over backwards. And when you get that kind of a man you’ve got hold of a pretty stubborn person. Everybody in town knows that Sam is honest. But Jim Willoughby didn’t

know how honest he was. Not that Jim would do anything that wasn't strictly legal and moral enough, when it comes to that. Only Jim's ideas of morality are a little different from Sam's. You see Jim thinks in a big way and when you get thinking that way you're liable to overlook little things. But those little things would seem mighty important to a man like Sam Foyle.

"Well Ned, I like Jim Willoughby. A good, generous fellow. But Sam Foyle's father helped me a lot once, as you know, and I've had a sneaking fondness for the boy always. Time and again until I found it was no use arguing with him I've tried to get him to plan his life the way I thought it ought to be planned. I'm just getting old enough to realize that everyone has to plan and live his own life. I'm getting old enough to realize that Sam and Jim represent two entirely different ideas. Jim stands for money in the bank, big houses, success. Sam stands for what is usually known as failure. It's only lately looking at the two of them that I've begun to wonder which is making the success and which the failure.

"Well Ned, don't get impatient, I'm coming to my laugh. You see Jim sort of figures that Sam lacks something. He figures that Sam would like to be a millionaire just like himself. He thinks that Sam figures things just the way he does as far as he's able. He figures that Sam, being a lawyer, naturally has the viewpoint of the educated. He thinks that Sam as mayor will approve of certain things that Jim Willoughby approves of. Jim's clever too. He's seen to it that the Board of Aldermen are men who think his way. If Sam puts up an argument the Board of Aldermen will override him. That's where my laugh comes in. I'm thinking of what Jim Willoughby's going to look like and what he's going to say when he finds out that all the aldermen in the world can't ride over Sam Foyle.

"Maybe it ain't such a big laugh to you, but to me, knowing both these boys like I do and having sort of got the idea that they stand for two contrary points of view, it's funny. A good scrap is always interesting, anyway.

"Tell little Frank for me that if he don't use tobacco in any form until he's twenty-one I'll give him a thousand dollars and that if he must use it, let him use it like God intended it to be used, chewed.

"Your affectionate brother,
"Frank Dabney."

Uncle Frank folds the letter, puts it in an envelope, and we tip-toe from the room. We are as puzzled about The Magnificent and Sam Foyle as

perhaps we have been since we first met them. But Uncle Frank has given us a vague clue, which, followed, may lead us to some place of understanding.

Having spied upon a gentleman's private correspondence, let us not become suddenly finicky. We are here to get certain facts, to consider them as evidence, and finally to draw what conclusions we may. Let such an end justify any means! Wherefore let us ensconce ourselves in a corner of the humble living-room-study of the Mayor of Oldport and look and listen.

The Mayor is dressed rather shabbily for one occupying his exalted position. The sleeves of his jacket are shiny and there is a patch upon one of his shoes. Even on two thousand a year a single man without, so far as is known, any one dependent on him, should dress better than this, should have more luxurious surroundings. Can it be true that the Mayor is, as is commonly rumored, a mark for every hard luck story that is told?

A corn-cob pipe is in his mouth; this is undignified; mayors should smoke fat cigars with golden bands around their middles. Yet he puffs with apparent enjoyment; probably his tastes are uncultured.

He looks up from formidable looking documents which lie upon a table before him as someone knocks upon the door. A neatly dressed woman, his house-keeper, enters.

"A lady to see you, Mr. Foyle," she says.

The Mayor sighs. He wishes the days had twice as many hours. For he has peculiar ideas as to the relations that should exist between a public servant and his employers, the people. Since, some months ago, he took office, he has denied himself to no one. Only by listening to the complaints of his constituents can he hope to do his duty by them. But, frequently, as now, he wishes that there were two of him, in order that he might keep up with his work.

"Show her in," he says, somewhat wearily.

But the weariness departs from his eyes as he sees, a moment later, his visitor. This is no drab, tired-out mother, or wife, who wishes the Mayor to use his influence with some judge in order that the man of the family may not spend the next few days or months in prison. This is Oldport's proudest lady, and in the Mayor's eyes flashes a light of something more, even, than the respectful courtesy due to Mrs. Ramsey Willoughby.

"Am I disturbing you?" she asks. She raises a gloved hand; the movement seems to send fragrance through the room. The Mayor could not be expected to know that this perfume costs twenty dollars an ounce. He

thinks that it is merely the natural aroma of her lovely femininity. One suspects that the Mayor is not what is technically known as a ladies' man.

“Don't put your pipe away, Sam,” she says. She flashes upon him a smile whose brilliance has been favorably commented upon at the Court of St. James.

He touches the gloved fingers now, and is conscious of the fact that his face is very red. He has not realized that Ramsey's hand, strong and capable though it is, is so much smaller than his own. He offers her a chair and she sinks gracefully into it. Fourteen years of being a matron, and the possession of two half grown children, have not robbed her of a girlish grace of movement. Her figure is more charming now than on the day she married The Magnificent, and her face is even more beautiful. Intelligence, and the authority that comes with it, have invested her features with a new allure.

He stands awkwardly in front of her until she commands him to sit. “And I won't say another word until you've lighted your pipe,” she threatens.

He obeys her command. There ensue a few minutes of silence, while her eyes roam about the shabby room. Perhaps she is contrasting it with the charmingly appointed luxury of her own home.

“Sam,” she says suddenly, “will you explain just what is the nature of the impeachment proceedings brought against you?”

The Mayor laughs. “You read the papers, don't you, Ramsey?”

“I want to hear your side of it.”

“Well, the Oldport Light and Power Company asked for a charter to run a street railway in the city. The Board of Aldermen granted the charter and I signed it. The next day I discovered what I should have discovered earlier: the charter prevented anyone else from running any sort of passenger vehicle on streets given over to the Power Company to use for its trolley cars. I immediately tried to annul the charter. Naturally trouble followed. The Power Company didn't like it. They had been given an absolute monopoly and they wanted to keep it. The general run of the public thought that I was a fool. The fact that many charters have been granted to other companies in other cities with similar clauses in them didn't affect my foolishness. You see, it's possible that some day automobiles will do away with trolley lines. I thought of that too late. But when I did think of it and saw that under this charter no automobile could run and carry passengers without the consent of

the Power Company, I did what I could to remedy my error. So, it wasn't difficult for political opponents to work up sentiment against me."

"Do you know that if you withdrew the annulment proceedings, the impeachment proceedings would be dropped?" she asks.

His mouth twists in his familiar grin. "It's a funny thing, Ramsey, that, while the impeachment proceedings were started by a labor organization which accused me of incompetence and neglect of duty, all the offers to stop the impeachment have come from persons of wealth, interested in the Power Company."

She flushes. "I'm not making an offer, Sam."

He colors, too. "I didn't mean that, Ramsey," he says hastily.

She pays no heed to his disclaimer. "I don't suppose there's any chance of your withdrawing, Sam. I only came down here because I wanted you to know that Jim has done everything possible to stop this impeachment. But he isn't the only big man interested in the Power Company, and the rest won't listen to him. He doesn't know that I'm down here to-night. He doesn't know that I know what I have just told you. I overheard him arguing with some of the others."

Foyle laughs. "He wouldn't like it if he knew that you were here, Ramsey. If I should subpoena you to say at my trial what you've said now, I'd win."

"Would you do that?" she asks.

"Do you think I would?" he counters.

"I know you wouldn't," she says. "But you do believe me? You believe that Jim has done all that he can do?"

"Of course I do," replies Foyle.

She looks at him uncertainly. "I don't," she cries. "He ought to testify in your behalf."

"Do you suppose he could prove that his friends inspired the labor organization?" demands Foyle. "He knows it and you know it and they know it, but proof is something else."

"If I do my duty I'll testify," she cries.

He looks at her; he sees the light of purpose forming in her eyes. Shortly after she leaves he writes out his resignation as Mayor of Oldport. He is a

fool to resign under fire. But if he doesn't resign Ramsey will testify. It will mean the breaking of her marriage relation with Willoughby. Better that Sam Foyle should suffer humiliation than that the parents of Junior and Robert should be estranged.

And Uncle Frank Dabney had thought that the dash of contrary ideas would be interesting—and funny.

CHAPTER VIII

The Magnificent surveyed the breakfast room with high approval in his deep-set green eyes. The flowers on the table, the dainty linen, the gleaming silver, the fruit, the aroma of the coffee, the delicate omelette, the crisp golden toast, the two boys, the woman across the round table, the attentive butler: all these things contributed to his satisfaction, belonged to him.

His health was good, his appetite excellent, his digestion unimpaired. His house, the old Blake place, was easily the most imposing in Oldport. He was the most imposing figure in Oldport. Nor was his success circumscribed by the petty limits of his home town. Boston knew him; New York was proud to shake his hand; and now Washington—*vide* the letter which he held in his hand—was acknowledging his achievements.

It was a habit of his to read much of his mail at the breakfast table. In the early days of his marriage there had been a greater lure in watching the curve of Ramsey's wrist as she poured the coffee, in saying things that brought a change of expression to a face that was as lovely in the morning as in the afternoon. Too, in those days, it had seemed impossible for the tongue of either to find sufficient time in which to tell the other of thoughts, of happenings, that were vital. In those days, love had broken down the barriers of reticence which a certain dignity of soul had imposed upon the speech of Ramsey; it had seemed to The Magnificent—he was not frequently given to flights of fancy—that Ramsey, at breakfast, was like some lovely bird that violated natural history by possessing a lovely voice, and that her speech was a song, exultant joyous, and—possibly—adoring.

Now, indeed, it afforded him pleasure to watch her; he liked to listen to her. But she was no longer his mistress, whose condescension amazed, thrilled, and submerged him in ecstasy. She was the charming mother of his two sons, a cultured and beautiful woman of whom he was extremely proud, whom he loved, but with whom he no longer maintained the rapturous intimacy of ten years ago.

The little teasings, the jests, the mock quarrels—after all, there is a time for everything and youth is the time for these things. . . . He read his mail at breakfast.

His two boys, looking at their mother for permission, rose from the table. Junior, passing by her chair, leaned over and kissed her on the wrist;

Robert placed his forefinger against his lips, kissed it, and tapped his mother on the mouth. She made as though to bite the finger and he leaped away from her in pretended fear. Then both of the boys came to their father's side and dutifully held up their mouths to the paternal salute.

Willoughby, fighting against a frown, kissed them, and watched them leave the room. A moment later they were scuffling in the hall. Their father felt vaguely uncomfortable. There was a certain indefinable something in the attitude of his sons toward him that annoyed him.

"Here's a letter that will interest you, Ramsey," he said.

She reached to meet his extended hand; their fingers touched. His satisfaction with himself and his possessions had oddly vanished for the moment. He caught at her hand and the letter dropped upon the table. Her eyebrows lifted in surprise; meeting his eyes, her cheeks were invaded by a rush of color. For a moment the hand in his grasp trembled, then, casually, she released her fingers from his and picked up the letter. The Magnificent felt, in some vague way, a sense of bafflement. . . .

A cry of surprise came from her lips.

"From the White House," she exclaimed.

He nodded. "Read it."

She opened the brief note. It contained an offer of appointment to the First Assistant Secretaryship of the Treasury, and Mr. Roosevelt himself had signed it, in that round bold manuscript of his.

"Why—that's practically a cabinet position," she marvelled.

He laughed. "Not quite."

"But it will lead to that—sooner or later—it will have to," she declared. She sighed, then laughed mockingly at herself. "After getting this place in order for the summer, to have to leave . . ."

"Leave?" His laugh was incredulous. "You don't expect me to accept, do you?"

She stared at him. "You'll refuse?"

"Why, of course I will. I'm just getting the Willoughby Motor Car Company so that it's a going concern. Good Lord, Ramsey, what do you suppose I've been working for these past twenty years? To take a five thousand-dollar job in Washington?"

“It’s in the government—the Cabinet,” she said.

“It isn’t in the Cabinet, as I’ve already told you,” he retorted. “And suppose it were! I think Cabinet officers get about eight thousand—something ridiculous.”

“But we have—all the money we can ever need, haven’t we?” she asked.

He laughed again. “If you mean that we probably won’t ever be hungry, and that we can send the boys to college—yes.”

“Then why let the salary paid by the government prevent your acceptance of the President’s offer?” she demanded.

“You seem anxious to have me quit my work and bury myself in Washington, don’t you?” he asked.

She shook her head. “I’m not—anxious, Jim. But I—I’d like to know just why you won’t consider it?”

His voice showed signs of exasperation. “You want to know why I won’t desert a business, that will make me millions, for a tuppenny-ha’penny job in Washington! You certainly puzzle me, Ramsey.”

“Not nearly so much, I’m afraid, as you puzzle me, Jim,” she replied.

“Now, just exactly what do you mean by that?” he cried. “I’d like to know what other woman in the world would be puzzled at my refusal.”

“I think that many of them would,” she said.

“Well, I don’t! I’m just *beginning* my business life, and you want me to drop it, and mix in a lot of dirty politics—”

“Being in the Treasury isn’t being in dirty politics, is it? And Mr. Roosevelt wouldn’t ask you to mix in anything dirty, would he?”

“Oh, you needn’t take me so literally,” he retorted. “You know what I mean.”

She shook her head. “No, I don’t, Jim. Explain.”

“But what on earth is there to explain?” He was more than merely exasperated now. He was slightly angered. “If you don’t understand without asking, there’s no hope of giving you understanding. Hang it, Ramsey, I don’t think you understand me at all, anyway.”

“I’m afraid that I don’t, Jim,” she agreed.

“But, without understanding, without *trying* to understand, you manage to enjoy what I give you pretty well.”

“Are you sure?” she asked, surprisingly.

“Sure of what?”

“What you just said.”

He grinned. His long upper lip and the protruding lower one parted, but the movement partook of no humor, unless it was cynical.

“I run over your bills once in a while, Ramsey, just for the fun of it. I’d say, if you asked me, that you enjoy life pretty well.”

“Because I spend a great deal of money?” she asked.

He raised a deprecating hand. “For Heaven’s sake, don’t think I’m criticising your spending. The Lord knows I’m only too glad to have you do it. What else do I make money for, but my family?”

“Do you make it for us?” she inquired.

He was blankly bewildered by now. “Well, what on earth do you think I work like a dog for?”

“That’s what I’m trying to find out,” she told him.

“Well, I guess you have found out, then, eh?” he replied.

She shook her head. “I’ve heard what you say.”

“And don’t believe me, eh?” His face was slightly red now.

“Let’s not quarrel, Jim,” she pleaded.

“If we do, it will be your fault, not mine. Heaven knows, when I show you a letter from the President, I don’t expect that it will start a row. Any other woman that I ever knew would have been tickled to death, flattered that her husband received such a recognition. Instead, you begin to pick on me—”

“Jim! That’s childish.”

“Is it? Why is it? Haven’t you been picking on me? What on earth else do you call it, then?”

She pushed back her chair and rose.

“That’s the way,” he cried. “Start a quarrel with me, and then walk off, offended, hurt.”

“What is there to say?” she asked.

“There’s a lot to be said, it seems to me,” he replied. “You’re so darned critical of me.”

“When have I criticised you?” she asked.

“Right now. You think I ought to accept the President’s offer, don’t you?”

She shook her head. “Not if you feel that making the Willoughby motor car is more important than serving your country.”

“Well, isn’t it just *as* important? Isn’t it rendering service to my country to provide its people with a cheap, useful automobile? Isn’t it going to bring the farmer and the city man together? Isn’t it going to promote the spread of knowledge, making access to the country easy to the city man, and isn’t it going to bring the farmer in closer touch with the affairs of the city? Isn’t it going to improve the lot of the people in a thousand different ways?”

“I think it is,” she agreed.

“Then why can’t I serve my country as well in my factory as in Washington?” he demanded, triumphantly.

“Is that why you are going to refuse the President’s offer?” she asked.

“Is what why?” he countered.

“Service. Because you can give better service here than there?” She paused a moment. Then she went on, “Or is it, after all, Jim, the money? I’ve heard you talk the same way about Pinnacle, Jim. And yet, somehow, I feel that it’s the money more than the service.”

“Well, suppose that I do make a profit? Anything wrong in that?” There was the faintest suspicion of a sneer in his voice.

“Not the least. Only, you shouldn’t deceive yourself. Why not admit, frankly, that it’s money that interests you?”

“I guess it interests you about as much as it does me,” he jeered. “You spend it.”

“But I’d be willing not to,” she told him.

“That’s what you say; it’s easy to say. How much did your last hat cost?”

“Do you really want to know?” she inquired.

He rose, too. “Of course I don’t; you know that I don’t. I’m just putting it up to you. You spend a year at a time in Europe. That costs money. Everything you do costs money. Why sneer at me for making it?”

“Jim!” Her voice was reproachful, pathetic with the tragedy of misunderstanding.

“Oh, it’s all very well to say ‘Jim,’ with that butter-won’t-melt-in-your-mouth expression! But when it comes to helping your husband, it’s different, isn’t it? Wanting me to go into dirty politics—”

“And make them clean,” she interrupted him.

“I’ve got more important things to do, my dear Mrs. Willoughby,” he said, mockingly.

“Is there anything more important, Jim?” she challenged.

“Yes, there’s something important for you,” he said. He was thoroughly angry. “You can make my sons behave better to me.”

“Your sons? They’re perfectly polite, always respectful,” she said.

“Yes! But when they come to kiss me—like just now—you’d think it was a job they had to go through. I want them—”

She laughed. “You want them to *like* kissing you? Is that it?”

“Well, it isn’t funny if I do. Of course I do,” he cried.

“Well, why not *like* kissing *them*? I do.”

His brows humped together. “I don’t know what you’re talking about, Ramsey.”

“That’s the pity of it,” she told him.

He stared at her, puzzled. Ramsey wasn’t the kind of a person who talked vaguely; she was direct, honest, sincere. Yet she’d said some things this morning that he didn’t understand.

“Ramsey,” he asked suddenly, “do you love me?”

The question was so unexpected that it was like a blow. Woman-like, when such a matter as love is under discussion, she evaded.

“Don’t you think so?” she countered.

His eyes were glowering now, not angrily, but as though he were looking beyond her, at something that puzzled, bewildered him.

“I always have—until just now,” he answered. “I—you go abroad—and stay there, but—that’s all right. I *want* you to. But—I haven’t done much thinking about—love. I just—assumed, of course, you did. But now—do you?”

Still she evaded. “Do you love me, Jim?”

“Better than anything on earth, Ramsey. You believe me?”

“I believe that you think so,” she told him.

Her answer added to his bewilderment. “That doesn’t mean anything. If I think I love—love’s only thinking, anyway, isn’t it? What more do you want? Do you love me?”

Her violet eyes suddenly flashed scorn at the question, a scorn that might possibly include the questioner. “Do you think,” she cried, “that, if I didn’t love you, I’d care at all about what you did?”

He stared at her a moment, then suddenly swept her into his arms and kissed her. “I’m a cross old man, Ramsey,” he said. “But I’m so darned busy—now, this Washington matter—”

“Don’t talk about it,” she said. “I understand.”

“Honest?” His voice was apprehensive.

“Honest,” she smiled—through tears.

For a moment his arms gripped her tight; it seemed to him that that embrace crushed misunderstanding, drove life from its evil bosom. He wondered, suddenly, how it had happened that his morning kiss, on leaving for the office, had become perfunctory. There was something thrilling in holding Ramsey to him, feeling the vitality of her. He did not know that only spontaneous passion is alive. . . .

He released her; both of them were flushed. The moment seemed propitious for the broaching of a subject, thought of which had kept Ramsey awake for the better part of the past two nights.

“Jim,” she said, “don’t you think that, somehow or other, you can have the impeachment proceedings, against Sam, dropped? I went to see Sam, the other day, and—”

“So!” The Magnificent was interested instantly. “That was bad, Ramsey. Oh, I don’t mean scandal; I mean—”

“I know,” she said. “But—he explained to me—a lot of things. Jim, can’t you cause the impeachment to be dropped?”

He grimaced. “Hang it, Ramsey, I worked all day yesterday with a bunch of men. Sam’s my friend, you know. Well, I began to get sore. Told them that if I spoke right out in meeting it might do me some damage, but would hurt them a lot more. They agreed to quash the matter, and then—well, when I had them won over, Sam sent his resignation to the Board of Aldermen, and they accepted it on the spot—”

“Oh,” she cried. Her disappointment was poignant. But, in the moment of her sorrow for Foyle, there was rejoicing in her heart because of her husband. “If you’d only been sooner, Jim. Not that I’m criticising—”

“I know. It’s too bad. But, hang it, Ramsey, the older I get the more wedded I become to the belief that you can’t do a darned thing for anyone else. They have to do it for themselves.”

She mused on this aphorism for hours after he had left the house. But she was applying it to her husband, not to Sam Foyle.

CHAPTER IX

A shabby figure; dusty; striding along in ungainly fashion; a fishing-pole over its shoulder; a battered felt hat upon its shock of coarse black hair; the gut leaders of trout flies dangling from the hat; a worn wicker creel suspended from the shoulder over the left hip; high waders caked with mud. . . . A sportsman, not a sport. . . .

“Swee-eet Adeline, Sweet Ad-e-line,
At ni-i-ight, dear heart,
For you I pine——”

An automobile—upon the radiator, in letters of brass, is the name, “Willoughby Motor Company”—overtakes him; the driver glances over her shoulder, waves a gauntleted hand, and stops. The fisherman ceases his song, and his shambling stride quickens. He reaches the automobile. He extends his hand, somewhat timidly.

The lady shakes her head. “Above the roar of my engine, Sam Foyle, I thought I heard the strains of music. This is a world of machines, in which art is smothered under science. I will take no part in the smothering. Sing, Minstrel.”

The wide mouth of Foyle opens, in a grin, exposing a score or more of large, but well-kept teeth. He needs no further urging.

“In all my dreams,
Your fair fa-ace beams,
You’re the id-ol o-f
My heart, Sweet Ad-e-line.”

It isn’t a trained voice; but its baritone is pleasing. The lady claps her hands together, and her mouth opens as she cries, “Bravo!”

Foyle sweeps his battered cap from his head and dusts the road with it; he replaces it upon his unruly hair and takes the lady’s hand in both his own.

“This is mighty good, Ramsey,” he declares.

She withdraws her hand and frowns upon him. “When a lady condescends to make advances to a gentleman, and her advances are

spurned, the gentleman is silly to think that he has purchased forgiveness by a song.”

“I’ve been away,” he says quickly.

The lady elevates her pretty nose; its delicately carved nostrils contract in what seems to be a sniff.

“You’re not away now,” she charges. “And you weren’t away last week. I saw you on Main Street,” she accuses.

“Slinking along, furtively, with downcast eyes?” he grins.

“As brazen as brass, with your shoulders squared, as though you had nothing to be ashamed of,” she exclaims.

He toys with the creel over his left hip. Then, suddenly, he stares her in the eyes. “Do you know, Ramsey, that’s the terrible thing about me: I can’t feel any shame.”

“God Almighty hates a quitter,” she reminds him.

Now he flushes; the strong chin seems to harden. “I had my reasons, Ramsey.”

The simulation of scorn leaves her eyes; they fill with tears. “As if I didn’t know, you silly, stupid, foolish man! But if you’d only waited—” Something very like a sob comes from her parted lips. “Now—you resigned under fire—people are contemptuous—they don’t know—”

“I deserve it,” he declares.

“Because you didn’t catch the trick in the charter? A trick that would have fooled anyone?” She is indignant.

He shakes his head. “Because I didn’t trust Jim. I might have known—*ought* to have known, that Jim isn’t the kind to let a friend suffer when he can help it.”

Her eyes are grateful. “He had it all fixed, Sam, and then—like a bombshell, your resignation exploded. . . . Sam, I know why you did it.”

“I didn’t know that God was a lady,” he smiles. “Or is there really something in this mind-reading business?”

“There always has been something in it, Sam,” she replies gently, “when a man—loves—a woman.”

He does not blush, now, beneath her accusation; he becomes white, and his pallor is accentuated by his black hair. The hand that is resting upon the side of her car shakes. In his eyes is a pleading expression, the sort of look one finds in the eyes of a dog, sometimes. His trembling lips simulate a smile, and he strives pathetically to put gayety in his voice.

“Don’t remember ever telling you anything like that, Ramsey Willoughby,” he says. “Don’t remember it at all.” His voice grows firmer as he speaks, as though its sound gave him confidence. He is whistling to keep his courage up. “I guess, Ramsey Willoughby, that you’ve been so flattered and courted and sought-for, abroad and here, that you kind of think you’re irresistible. Isn’t that about right, Ramsey?”

“Them’s harsh words, Sam Foyle,” she says. “But probably they’re true. I guess I have what Junior terms the swelled head. I guess that I’ve imagined things. Silly things. School-girl things. About a true knight, leal and loving, who would always see me as I was, say, a dozen years ago, upon whom I could always depend. . . . Sam, a married woman should not think such things. Especially if she happens to love her husband. A man would have a right to think that the married woman was cheapening herself, indulging in a nasty flirtation. Wouldn’t he?”

He nods gravely. “A man certainly would, Ramsey. But a true knight, leal and loving, like you mentioned, would know better. He’d know that nastiness was as far from you as heaven is from hell, Ramsey Willoughby. That true knight, too, wouldn’t be thinking of you as you were a dozen years ago. He’d think of you as you are now, Ramsey Willoughby, and he’d think that you grew more beautiful every day. And that true knight would know that you weren’t vain, and didn’t think you were irresistible, but that you were just kind, gentle” He forces from his eyes the expression that has been in them, and replaces it with merriment. “Glad to’ve met you, ma’am, and thank you kindly.”

She is his match; the sophistication that years of residence abroad, the possession of money, and the acquaintance of cultured persons, bring, flashes in her eyes.

“What did you catch, Sam?” she asks.

“Twelve of the handsomest steel-heads you ever saw,” he answers. He opens the creel and permits her to view the trout.

“Where? I thought that all the brooks around here were fished out,” she exclaims.

He grins. “You may know the Louvre and Buckingham Palace, Ramsey, but when it comes to Rockland County—I know a lot of places where they’re hungry all the time,” he tells her.

She smiles at his naïve pride. “Sam, I’ve written and asked you to dinner.”

“I’ve been away, I told you,” he retorts.

“And somehow, though I suppose I could force you to invite me to dinner, The Commercial House lacks appeal. Though don’t tell Uncle Frank that.”

“I won’t,” he promises.

Decision begins to form in her violet eyes. “You don’t know where I’ve been, Sam Foyle.”

He peers into the tonneau of the touring car. “You haven’t been shopping on Fifth Avenue,” he says gravely.

“Marvellous man,” she cries. “I’ve been to Agatha Simpson’s farm; she hasn’t been well, and, anyway, it’s easier for me to run out in the car than for her to drive that played-out old horse of hers to town, poor dear.”

“You don’t have to apologize to me because you happen to be kind,” he tells her.

“Interrupt me again, Mr. Foyle, and you’ll miss something,” she scolds severely.

“You got as far as Agatha’s old horse, Mrs. Willoughby,” he says humbly.

“Very well,” she continues, mollified. “I have butter and eggs and some home-cured ham, and, for good measure, Agatha gave me two dozen of the loveliest biscuits, brown on top, but inside—”

“Souls of snow,” exclaims Foyle.

“And you have a dozen trout, and probably a knife,” she says.

He fishes in his pocket and produces a sizeable jack-knife. “It *could* cut ham,” he announces.

“It will,” she declares. “Jump into this machine, Sam Foyle, and—”

“Let the tongue of gossip be unconfined,” he interrupts.

She eyes him queerly. “Do you think, Sam, that anyone in Oldport will gossip about me? Or that I’d care if they did?”

“They’re talking,” he says slowly, “of having the Bar Association take action against me. I’m pretty disreputable, Ramsey.”

“And I,” she retorts, “am fairly reputable. Get in the car.”

He obeys her. After all, if there is one person in all of Oldport immune from scandal, Ramsey Willoughby is the person.

“Where?” she asks.

“Any place at all,” he answers.

She thinks a moment, a frown that Foyle thinks not unbecomingly wrinkling her pretty brows. “Haslett’s Cove,” she cries.

“I am in your hands,” he informs her.

Ten minutes later she stops the car at the edge of the rocky beach at Haslett’s Cove. In another five minutes he has gathered sun-baked driftwood and has thrilled her by producing, from the lower compartment of his creel, a tiny collapsible frying pan, a similarly constructed coffee pot, and two tin cups, spoons, knives and forks. He has coffee and sugar, too, and condensed cream.

Ecstatically Ramsey arranges her comestibles upon a flat rock; she insists upon brewing the coffee and frying the trout and ham. She sends Foyle upon long journeys to a spring, makes him gather more wood than could be consumed in the cooking of a dozen picnic luncheons, and finally waves him to her stone table.

They eat, with many “m’m’s” and “ahs” and “ohs.” Finally their appetites are satisfied. Foyle, leaning back against a boulder, produces a pipe; a battered affair that, having received Ramsey’s gracious permission, he cuddles against his nose, imparting, from the facial oils, new gloss and burnish to its disreputable bowl.

Ramsey, from a little handbag, produces a cigarette case.

“I’m a lost woman,” she announces. “Give me a match.”

For a moment there is silence between them. Then Ramsey says, “It’s been a bully picnic, Sam. I wish Jim had been along.”

He winces, but she doesn’t see the flickers of his eye-lids.

“Jim loves anything like this, Sam. But he’s so wrapped up in business. . . . Ah, well. Time to go home, Sam.”

He rises, and knocks his pipe against the boulder. He tramples upon the fire, like the good woodsman that he is, seeing that every tiny spark is cold. He gathers together what remains of Agatha Simpson’s produce and puts it into the tonneau of the car. He assists Ramsey into the driver’s seat, then steps back. She motions him to climb in beside her, but he shakes his head.

“Want to walk, thank you just the same, Ramsey,” he tells her.

She purses her lips, almost poutingly, then accepts his decision.

“All right, Sam. It’s been bully, hasn’t it?”

“Best meal I ever ate,” he says.

She leans from her seat, extending her hand. “And now that I’ve shown you that the foremost lady of Oldport, Oldport’s social leader—stop me if I seem to boast, please.”

He grins at her. “You’re well within the bounds of fact, Ramsey.”

“Maybe I won’t stay there. To resume: Oldport’s arbiter of social matters puts the seal of approval upon you. Oldport’s queen of fashion declares to you that she has but to say a word, and every door in Oldport is open to the ex-Mayor of the town. Shall she say the word?”

He still grins. “It would be mighty sweet of Oldport’s queen to do that thing, but what’s the use? The ex-Mayor of Oldport wouldn’t go through those doors.”

“Why not?” She is crisp, terse.

“Well, Ramsey, what would Oldport’s queen say if she knew that I didn’t care a tinker’s hoot about the dukes and duchesses of her court? That would be pretty strong language, coming from a discredited and disgraced man wouldn’t it? But it’s the truth, Ramsey. You see, outside of a labor group who got behind the impeachment proceedings, the poor people of the town kind of like me. Lord knows why, but they don’t think I’m a pariah, at all. They think I’m sort of stupid, footling, maybe, but that’s all. But the people over whom you queen it—well, Ramsey, it doesn’t seem to matter much to me what they think about me.”

“You don’t care what the respectable people think of you, Sam?” she asks. She is apparently amazed.

“Ramsey,” he answers, “I don’t lose much sleep over what anyone thinks of me, so long as—but you don’t want me to be priggish, do you?”

“I want to hear what you have to say, Sam,” she informs him.

“All right, I’ll be a prig, then. So long as I do what seems to *me* to be right; so long as I get the approval of Sam Foyle—nothing else matters, Ramsey.”

“Except what I think,” she says, bluntly.

He stares at her and his chin once again is hard. “Ramsey, you keep harping on that. Why? Is it because—Ramsey, you don’t want to hurt me. I know that. And I don’t want to hurt you.”

“Don’t want to hurt me?” She is bewildered. “How, Sam?”

“How? I’ll tell you how. You’ve been imagining things about a true knight, Ramsey. Well, it hasn’t been imagination. But that true knight—he isn’t much of a knight, but he’s true—that knight, Ramsey, has got a devil inside of him. You don’t want to rouse that devil, Ramsey. For I’m telling you, Ramsey, that if that true knight of yours ever once let himself go—ever let himself get to the point where he’d look his love in the face and let it rule him—My God, Ramsey, if I ever once tell you that I love you, do you think I’ll let you go?”

He seems to grow bigger as he speaks; his eyes are fiery.

“I know that you think it will ease the ache—bless you—for me to tell you. And I know that you’re too big, too fine, to stoop to gratification of vanity. You want me to speak, not because you’re disloyal in thought or deed, to Jim, but because you think it will help me to speak.

“Help me? Ramsey, I’m a man! By the living God that made me, if I once confess I’ll take you.”

“Take me?” She is suddenly haughty.

“Yes, take you!” he cries. “From your home, from your children, from the husband you love—Ramsey, for God’s sake, don’t be kind to me; you don’t know how to be kind to me. Nobody knows. Ramsey, I haven’t told you, yet, that I love you. For God’s sake, for your sake—for Jim’s sake and for mine—for Junior, for Robert—go before I tell you.”

She laughs once, uneasily. Then, suddenly, she leans forward and touches his bared head. Then she drives away, steering with one hand,

brushing tears from her eyes with the other, marvelling at the difficulty with which she breathes. . . .

CHAPTER X

We have looked at The Magnificent through the eyes of Uncle Frank; we have glimpsed him, perhaps, through the eyes of Sam Foyle; certainly we have seen him as Ramsey, once or twice, has glanced at him; we have even, somewhat unfairly, peeped at him with the eyes of Junior and little Robert. We have seen the reactions of waitresses, and factory hands, and even poor dead Jennie Smollen, she who, if she had lived, would have crawled upon her knees, according to her mother, had Sam Foyle signaled for her coming.

The poet pleaded for the power to see himself as others saw him. Yet, unable to see others correctly, would we not be as badly off if we possessed that extra vision? Would we not have as distorted and untrue an image as we have now?

There are other persons from whom, before our case is closed, we shall hear. But the time seems opportune to let The Magnificent himself take the stand again. We have heard from him earlier and perhaps have formed opinions. Let us hear from him again and see if those opinions are firmly lodged in our minds.

Behold him, then, in one of his rare moods of excitement, bursting into Ramsey's bed-room. (It may be worth while to note that, beginning with the year before Ramsey's long sojourn in Paris with the two boys, the Willoughbys have occupied separate bed-rooms.)

The Magnificent is flushed; even the top of his head shines redly through its sparse hair. He still is wearing a light overcoat, and gauntlets on his hands. Without the formality of knocking he pushes through the door. His wife is standing before her mirror applying to her features those last beautifying touches which differentiate the artist from the craftsman. Not that Ramsey is an artificial product by any means, but she has learned that beauty must be as carefully tended as any other valuable and delicate possession. She is softening now, with the tips of her fingers, the too definite lines of her mouth. She licks her lips with her tongue, daintily, and the rouge blends naturally into her flesh.

Over her shoulder she looks in surprise at her husband. For the moment he forgets the impulse that has brought him racing up the stairs to her room and made him dispense with the formality of a knock.

"You're a peach, Ramsey," he declares.

He is guilty of no exaggeration. Standing there in her silk drawers and chemise she looks as slim as a girl. Her legs, sleek in silk, taper gracefully to her ankles, round and small. She is one of the rare women whose legs are straight, whose knee-caps are not bunched. Her throat and shoulders and bosom are white and smooth, as are her arms, and the gracious swell of her breast is the only indication of her motherhood. She wears no corsets, only a narrow girdle from which are suspended her garters. Seeing her thus, even a husband must have been extremely preoccupied with other matters to have foregone a compliment.

She colors and reaches swiftly for a negligee hanging over a chair. "You should have knocked," she tells him.

He stares at her, his brows humping and almost meeting.

"Don't be alarmed; you're safe with me," he tells her.

Her flush deepens; she turns her face away, drawing the silken wrap closer about her. But The Magnificent has already forgotten her embarrassment and his own preliminary remarks. He strides up and down the charming bed-room, dropping his coat on one chair and tossing his motor gauntlets upon her dressing table. Ramsey rescues an overturned bottle of scent.

"Well, I've done it," he cries.

She is angry with herself because she has been embarrassed at his unexpected entrance into the room. She shows intense interest.

"Tell me," she says. She walks to him, her mouth parted in excitement or, certainly, an excellent simulation. One would have forgiven a man had he deferred announcing his election to the Presidency until he had clasped that provocative figure to him. We do not find it necessary to forgive The Magnificent; she is no longer a charming and beautiful wife; she is hardly sentient so far as he is concerned; she might be anything or anyone; she is a pair of ears, and that is all.

Exultant, boastful as she seldom has seen him, he does not know that her lips are perhaps ready to be kissed, that her eyes are softened by shame and regret for her recent embarrassment.

"Of course I'll tell you! The minute it was over I grabbed my hat and coat and raced for the car; I wanted you to be the first to know it." He really means it; he actually believes it. Perhaps in this unwitting, unmeant untruth, we are afforded a better view of him than we have had before.

She humors his excitement; she goes to the dressing table and from one of its drawers brings forth a gaudily labelled box. She opens it, having some difficulty with the tiny nails that keep the cover shut, disclosing cigars. It is the first time that the box has been opened; the cigars are dried, almost crumbling. Evidently they have been here, in the strange lodgment of a lady's bed-room, for many months. If the cigars could talk to us perhaps they would tell us how infrequently the lord of the household has visited this room. One feels a sudden sympathy for Ramsey. Cigars are not usually associated with sorrow or romance, yet one wonders what were Ramsey's thoughts when she purchased them, what hopes have grown dry and crumbly with the cigars.

But Willoughby does not notice that the cigars are stale; he does not even seem to be surprised that Ramsey should have a box of his favorite brand. He lights one, moves it around in his mouth, chewing the end, almost forgetting to draw the smoke into his throat.

Suddenly he sits down; he sighs as might the victor after a hard race. Words pour from him. "I licked the whole bunch; had 'em feeding out of my hands, licking my finger tips. Brewer, Riker, Sammis—the whole tribe! Thought they could take Willoughby Motors away from the man that made the company! Thought they could dictate the policy of the company, change *my* policy, and destroy the thing that I have been working to build! They think differently now."

She does not interrupt him; she draws a foot-stool across the room—he does not offer to assist her—and sits down before him. Her face is hardly on a level with the middle of his waistcoat, but her eyes look up to his. He does not see how deeply violet they are.

"Annual election of officers to-day," he says. "They caught me napping. I ought to have known better, ought to have known that business is business and friendship lives in another street. But how could I know that my friends would turn on me? I believed that Brewer and Riker and Sammis were my friends, that they had more sense than to question my judgment."

The last sentence is illuminating.

"I guess they won't question it again," he continues. "They've had all the fight knocked out of them. Think of it! I came into the meeting of the stockholders and directors a little late. I had been busy closing a deal with a steel man from Pittsburgh. New method of treating steel for springs. Well, I supposed that all the routine business would be attended to, that I'd be re-elected president of the company.

“And they’d elected Riker, with Brewer as treasurer, and Sammis as chairman of the board of directors. The last two were all right; same places they’ve held for the last two years; but why Riker in my job?”

“Sitting there like a lot of Chessy cats; Chessy cats that had been licking cream and didn’t care a damn who knew it.

“‘Why?’ I asked.

“You ought to have heard ’em then. No future for an automobile made to sell for way below a thousand dollars. People never would get the idea that the motor car was a necessity, not a luxury. Only field was the rich. Lot of damn’ vision-less fools! I told them so. They laughed at me. And I walked out. They didn’t like my policy; they thought the man who had made the Pinnacle Bicycle didn’t have his fingers on the pulse of the people. They thought the man that built Willoughby Motors, in less than five years, into a concern doing a ten million dollar business, didn’t know the capacity of the American people for acquiring new needs. Didn’t like my policy!”

“I went out; I knew they’d be there a couple of hours, arranging details. I jumped in my car and went to Bromfield. Got there in twenty minutes. Old Belton was in his office. I walked right in and sat down before him.”

He looks around for a place in which to deposit his half-smoked and half-chewed cigar. Ramsey’s fingers take it from his; he is unconscious of her action; he lights another cigar which she hands him. She does not throw the old stump away; her eyes are shining and her lips are parted; if excitement were simulated before, it is not now. Perhaps this is The Magnificent’s greatest hold upon her: he interests her.

He leans back in his chair and chuckles; he puffs at the fresh cigar. “‘How much stock in Belton Motors do you own?’ I asked him.

“‘Why?’ he questioned me. Trust the old Yankee to answer one question with another.

“‘I want to buy it,’ I told him.

“‘Fifty-five thousand shares,’ he answered.

“‘How much will you take for them?’ I asked.

“‘Par,’ the old burglar answered.

“I looked at him; I’ve done a little business with him before; I know him and I know the breed.

“‘Take my note?’ I asked him.

“I’d want about twenty percent cash, and I’d want the notes to begin maturing within six months,” he told me.

“It was a hard bargain, but I closed with him. I gave him a check for a million, my notes for four and a half million and agreed to have the stock put in escrow as security for the notes, with me, however, to have the privilege of voting the stock. We made a memorandum of the agreement, had it witnessed by a notary in his office, and I was back at the Willoughby Company an hour and a half after I had left, with my copy of the agreement in my pocket.

“I didn’t waste any time at all. I walked into the board room and found the gang still in session.

“Gentlemen,” I said, “I own thirty thousand shares of Willoughby Motors. They’re worth a hundred and ten. I’ll take eighty-five for cash.”

“Riker was the first to speak. I never knew how oily he was before. Told me that I mustn’t be impetuous; said that they wanted my business and executive brains in the company. Said that simply because they didn’t agree with my idea of making a cheap car didn’t mean that they considered me a poor manufacturer or a poor merchant. I must stick with the concern.

“Too late,” I told them. “I’ve acquired control of the Belton Company. To-morrow I’m going to move my things over to Bromfield. Within six months there won’t be any guessing about the willingness of the American public to buy cheap motor cars in quantities. We’ll *know*!”

“I had them! I knew it and they knew it. They’d never dreamed that I’d walk out of the company. They needed me, and I knew they did. But they thought they could keep me as a subordinate. They’ve learned better.

“They fussed and fumed and begged and pleaded. But I had them.” He laughs loudly. “I made them draw up agreements on the spot whereby the Willoughby Motors Company took over my agreement with Belton; I made them pay me nine million dollars for what had cost me five and a half million. I made them give me two million cash. There are a lot of details to be settled yet, but the result of it all is that we formed a holding company to own both Willoughby and Belton; I’m to be president of the holding company, owning fifty-one percent of the stock.

“Now, what do you think of that?”

Ramsey looks slightly bewildered. “I don’t think I understand it all,” she says, “but it sounds Napoleonic.”

He smiles complacently. "I don't know," he admits, "just what sort of a business man Napoleon would have made, but I'm sure he would have been a great poker player. And any poker player would admire what I got away with to-day. If Riker and the rest had known that I was bluffing they'd have burst blood vessels."

Ramsey is more than slightly bewildered now; she is completely puzzled.

"Bluffing?" she asks.

The Magnificent laughs gaily. "When I gave old Belton that check for a million I didn't have a hundred thousand cash in the world."

Ramsey knits her brows. "How could you give a check for more than you had?"

"I couldn't, but I did," he tells her. "Now, of course, I have deposited two million in the bank. The check I gave Belton will be met all right to-morrow."

She is still uncomprehending. "But suppose that your bluff hadn't worked? What about the check you gave Mr. Belton, in that case?"

"Oh, I'd have had to sell, or borrow on securities I have, until I raised the money."

"But that might have taken several days," suggests Ramsey.

"It certainly would have taken some time," agrees The Magnificent.

"And what would Mr. Belton have done?" asks Ramsey.

"He couldn't do anything, unless he could prove fraud," says her husband. "He'd have got his money."

"But not to-morrow morning, as he expected when he made the contract with you." Ramsey's voice seems, to The Magnificent, to hold accusation.

"Well, what of that?" challenges Willoughby.

"You said that you were bluffing. If Mr. Belton couldn't do anything, but must go through with the agreement, how were you bluffing?" asks Ramsey.

For an instant The Magnificent's aplomb leaves him. "Well," he concedes, "he might maintain that time of payment was of the essence of the contract, and so make our agreement void. What are you driving at, anyway?" he demands. There is suspicion in his voice.

“I’m not sure,” says Ramsey slowly. “I’m trying to understand.”

The Magnificent’s forehead wrinkles in a frown. “What’s there to understand? Anyone would think that you disapproved of what I’ve done.”

She straightens up on the foot-stool. “It isn’t a matter of my approval or disapproval.”

“Then what’s it a matter of?” demands her husband.

She rises from the foot-stool and walks to her dressing table. “Let’s not discuss it,” she says.

“Damnation! Let’s discuss it. Anyone would think, to listen to you, that I’d done something dishonest.”

“Haven’t you?” she asks, turning to him.

“Belton will get his money—to-morrow. If I hadn’t been able to bluff Riker and the others, he might have had to wait a few days for the million. But delaying payment isn’t being dishonest, is it?”

“Why ask me?” says Ramsey. “Haven’t you already answered it for yourself?”

“You don’t understand a single, solitary damn’ thing about business,” he cries.

“I wish you wouldn’t swear so much,” protests Ramsey.

“Hell,” says her husband, storming out of the room.

CHAPTER XI

Mine host of The Commercial House watches sullenly the labors of a group of laborers in the street below the porch whereon he sits.

“Lazy Ginnies,” he mutters.

The drummer for Perigord’s soap—his real line nowadays is the establishing of agencies for the selling of varnish and nickel polish for motor car bodies—grunts approval.

“Ruinin’ the country,” he says.

Uncle Frank leans forward; he clears the veranda rail easily; he leans back again in his chair, comfortably, his manner slightly self-applauding. An upper tooth has been bothering him a bit lately and against its sensitive surface he presses, with his tongue, a well masticated chunk of Navy Twist. He holds it there a moment, until its emollient touch has soothed the aching nerve and gratified his soul.

“I wouldn’t say they was exactly ruinin’ anything,” he remonstrates. “That’s a nice lookin’ sewer they’re diggin’.”

“You know what I mean, and you said yourself they were lazy,” retorts Perigord’s representative.

“Everybody’s lazy,” explains Uncle Frank.

“But look at ’em!” says the drummer indignantly. “Just soldiering on the job. A lot of damn’ foreigners coming over here and driving honest American labor into the poor-house!”

Uncle Frank yields to the filthy necessity which his regrettable self-indulgence creates; once again he clears the veranda rail. Some day his aim is not going to be so accurate, and then we will know that Uncle Frank is growing old. At present the muscles of his cheeks and lips are vigorous. For upwards of twenty years he has sat every morning in the same place on The Commercial House porch; he has not yielded to time by moving one inch nearer the rail.

“I ain’t much worried about American labor being driven into the poor-house by a lot of wops,” says Uncle Frank. “It’s been being driven there too daggone long. First the Irish was goin’ to do it, and it looked like the Germans might, and it was a cinch the Ginnies would, and there wasn’t any

doubt about the Polacks. Them are Polacks down there, not Ginnies.” He corrects his first description of them.

“They all look alike to me,” says Perigord’s ambassador. “All lazy good-for-nothing foreigners.”

“My great grandfather was probably usin’ them same friendly words about your great grandfather,” says Uncle Frank, sarcastically. “Seems to me you got a Heinie sort of a name, ain’t you, Kramer?”

“My family been here two hundred years,” protests Kramer indignantly.

“Mine’s been here two hundred and fifty,” says Uncle Frank. “You smell kind of new to me.”

“Aw, you know what I mean,” says the drummer. “What are we coming to with all Europe dumping its leavings on us? What’s gonna happen to the American ideal?”

“Oh, it’ll keep right on making money,” Uncle Frank assures him.

“You don’t take it serious,” reproaches Perigord’s plenipotentiary.

“The older I get the less I believe that anything is serious except toothache and dyspepsia. I’ve been through eight or ten national campaigns and I’ve seen the country rocking to ruin so daggone often that I’ve kind of lost my faith in catastrophe. It don’t come off on schedule. If we ain’t big enough to take a lot of half-starved Europeans and put some meat on their bones, we ain’t big enough to do anything. Once get the beef on them and they’ll be all right.” The healing juices of well chewed Navy Twist have made Uncle Frank forget his toothache. His sullenness has left him.

“But here’s Mr. Roosevelt tellin’ us that if we don’t raise bigger families we’ll suicide the whole race,” argues the drummer. “What you got to say to that?”

“I notice the Japs are knocking hell out of the Russians,” says Uncle Frank.

“What’s that got to do with our argument?” demands the drummer.

“It just proves that bigness ain’t everything,” answers Uncle Frank.

“If all them foreigners raise big families like they’re doing now, you’ll find that bigness means a whole lot,” says Perigord’s man.

“They’ll quit raising them in another generation,” says Uncle Frank.

“You ain’t worried then because Americans are getting fewer and foreigners getting more and more numerous? It don’t mean anything to you that they’re changing American life?” The man from Perigord is patriotically indignant.

“We’ve changed anyway,” says Uncle Frank. “I hear a lot of talk about the Europeans coming over here and taking away our birthright. I hear gab about the changed American idea and ideal. As if anything but ourselves could have changed us. The whole country is like a man that’s worked like a slave most of his life, and then found out that he had money enough to keep him the rest of his life, and that he was sick of work anyway. What does he do? He travels awhile, and then builds a big house, and packs it full of servants, and maybe takes up this golf that I hear the young fellers mention. He takes it easy. He ain’t changed any; his opportunities have changed; that’s all. The way folks like you talk you’d think this country had an ideal all printed and posted around everywhere for everyone to look at and learn by heart. And you’d think the people in Europe, as soon as they got over here, went around tearing down the posters.”

“Well, they take jobs away from our own boys,” insists Perigord’s man.

“Is that so? I don’t see any mothers in this town weeping because their boys have been robbed of their opportunities to dig sewers,” says Uncle Frank. “As long as the foreigner will do the dirty work we’ve grown too proud to do, there ain’t much kick. It’s when his sons get to college and land a good job that talk begins.”

“Well, ain’t that natural?” asks the drummer.

“Sure it is,” agrees Uncle Frank. “Everything’s natural. What you going to do about it?”

The man from Perigord’s arises from his chair. “You don’t talk sense,” he declares. “There ought to be a law.”

He stalks across the veranda and into the lobby of The Commercial House. Uncle Frank sinks lower in his chair; his eyes half close; he is wooing slumber; it does not come to him. For all his light treatment of weighty subjects, Uncle Frank sometimes takes them quite seriously. The only difference between Uncle Frank and the majority of his neighbors is that Uncle Frank is inclined to believe that certain things are inevitable. A child, muses Uncle Frank, may lose his first front tooth by biting on a hard piece of candy; but the tooth would have fallen out within a week, anyway. What was happening to America was inevitable. To shut people out because

they thought differently from the founders of the nation would not prevent the entrance of those different thoughts into American life. Shutting them out might delay the entrance, but only temporarily.

Mr. Roosevelt might preach the simple life, but people who could afford opera tickets and liveried servants would not accept his preaching for themselves; he might inveigh against small families, but without avail. Uncle Frank wonders how many of the mothers of large families of the earlier American day welcomed each new addition to the household. Was woman's repugnance to being a brood animal something new, or had it always existed? Increased wealth meant increased opportunity for education; education tends to rob a man of his crass brutalities; he looks upon his wife as a companion more than as a relief for his passions and a provider of cheap labor.

Uncle Frank ceases pondering the insolvable; his eyes completely close and his head falls forward on his great chest; he sleeps. A waitress emerges from the front door and crossing the veranda, touches Uncle Frank upon the shoulder.

"Dinner's ready," she announces.

Uncle Frank awakes with a start; he heaves himself from his chair. Across the street a woman waves a gay hand to him; Uncle Frank returns the salutation, and accompanies it with a word anent the weather. Ramsey Willoughby agrees that it is pleasant, and continues down the hill.

Uncle Frank's eyes are rarely harsh; they are nearly always kindly. But as he looks after the graceful figure of Ramsey, his eyes are more than gentle; they are affectionate. Also they seem slightly worried. The sigh that comes from his lips as he turns into the hotel cannot be caused by any recollection of his discussion with Perigord's drummer. The cares of the nation do not weigh that heavily upon Uncle Frank.

He enters his hotel and makes a brief toilet; it consists in removing from his mouth, with the palm of his hand, that portion of Navy Twist which has lived its life. Then he enters the dining-room. But the greetings that he exchanges with his guests lack his usual joviality. He dines with less gusto than usual. Finished, a certain unwonted restlessness possesses him.

Why did Ramsey Willoughby turn left on Front Street? Where was she going? Not that it is any of Uncle Frank's business, but still . . . He guesses that he'll drop down the hill and look in on Sam Foyle. He hasn't seen Sam lately; he disapproves most highly of the manner in which Sam dodged a

fight. Better for Sam to have been impeached than to have resigned without a battle. It doesn't sound like Sam. Nevertheless, friendship is friendship with Uncle Frank. Just because a friend doesn't measure up all the time is no reason why one should forget his existence. Thus Uncle Frank answers a conscience which tells him that he is a nosey busybody.

He enters the house where Foyle still lives, dispensing with the formality of a knock. He walks to the door of the living-room of the ex-mayor of Oldport. He pauses a moment; he hears a feminine voice. It is saying,

“Nothing matters, Sam, except you and me.”

Uncle Frank's heavy fist strikes the door. In a moment it is opened by Foyle. The face of the ex-mayor is white, and his voice, as he greets his visitor, trembles.

“How-do, Uncle Frank,” says Foyle. “Come in.”

“I'm comin',” says Uncle Frank. There is a hint of grimness in his tones. He enters the room and sees Ramsey Willoughby. She is seated in a chair; her hands are lying limply upon the arms of the chair; her face is as white as Foyle's.

“Well, it's good to see you, Ramsey,” says Uncle Frank.

“It's good to see you, Uncle Frank,” says Ramsey.

Uncle Frank turns to Foyle. “Now you say that you're glad I'm here and we'll all three be liars.”

“What do you mean?” demands Foyle.

“What's she doin' here?” Uncle Frank jerks an accusing thumb at Ramsey.

Mrs. Willoughby laughs. “What a dear old-fashioned thing you are, Uncle Frank.”

“And what a dear old-fashioned thing you're doing,” says Uncle Frank. “You don't think so; you think you're doing something noble. Hell!”

“Why, what do you mean?” Ramsey is highly indignant as she puts the question that Foyle has already asked.

“You know what I mean,” says Uncle Frank. “And you know that I ain't so far behind the times but that I know a lady can call on a gentleman without anything being wrong. I'm up to date, all right. The point is that while a lady can, she don't.”

“Be careful, Uncle Frank,” says Foyle.

“You be careful,” blusters Uncle Frank.

A pause follows, in which the only sound is the heavy breathing of Uncle Frank. Suddenly he speaks. “Ramsey, I heard what you were sayin’. I heard you say that nothing mattered except you and Sam. How many women do you suppose say that every year? How many women do you think been sayin’ that for thousands of years? You call me old-fashioned. But it’s pretty old-fashioned to run away from your husband. Women been doin’ that since time began. And it ain’t ever done any good yet. It never *will* do any good.”

“I suppose,” says Ramsey, “that if people make a mistake they must suffer for it until they die.” She is contemptuously sarcastic.

“What mistake did you make when you married Jim Willoughby?” demands Uncle Frank. “You loved him, didn’t you? He loved you, didn’t he? Where’s the mistake in that?”

“We’ve changed; we don’t love each other now,” says Ramsey.

“What’s that got to do with it?” asks Uncle Frank.

“Love has everything to do with marriage, hasn’t it?” retorts Ramsey.

“You make me tired,” says Uncle Frank. “You talk like you were seventeen. What’s love got to do with marriage? There’s children and the home. If you’ve got love, too, you’re lucky, but it ain’t necessarily part of marriage.”

“And you see nothing wrong, nothing indecent, in two people who no longer love each other living together as man and wife?” asks Ramsey.

“I see something a daggone sight more indecent in people quitting on their responsibilities. What’s this love thing, anyway? If you cease to love one man, how do you know you’re not going to stop loving another man? And anyway you can wait a few days.”

Ramsey’s eyes are bewildered. “A few days?” she asks.

“Until he’s decently buried,” says Uncle Frank.

“Until who’s decently buried?” demands Foyle.

“Jim Willoughby, of course,” replies Uncle Frank.

The languor leaves Ramsey; she leaps to her feet; one hand goes to her bosom and the other uncertainly touches her lips.

“Is Jim—” She sways, and her pallor is suddenly ghastly.

Uncle Frank laughs. “I thought I’d show you,” he says. “There ain’t a thing the matter with Jim Willoughby, so far’s I know.”

Ramsey sits down again; she almost falls into the chair. Uncle Frank glares at her. “You know daggone well that you’d never left your husband, Ramsey Willoughby.” He turns to Sam Foyle. “You’re a hell of a home-wrecker! Why didn’t you throw me out when I first came in?”

Ramsey laughs scornfully. “He was glad when you came. A few days ago he threatened to take me. But when I offered myself, he didn’t dare.”

Uncle Frank looks at Foyle. “Is that true?” he asks.

Foyle colors. “Ramsey didn’t mean what she was saying.”

Uncle Frank laughs shortly. “Ashamed to admit you got decency, eh?” He turns to Ramsey. “You come along with me,” he orders.

She follows him from the room, out of the house, to the street. Opposite The Commercial House Uncle Frank stops. He eyes her curiously.

“Ramsey,” he says, “if I hadn’t come down there, would you and Sam have run away together?”

Ramsey has recovered her self-possession; there is the faintest twinkle in her violet eyes. “I think, Uncle Frank,” she says, “that Jim would have known about our flight in time to stop it.”

Uncle Frank shakes his head. “I suspected something like that. Only, while that might have been a good way to make The Magnificent realize certain things, I’m not so sure that Foyle would have let go as easy as you think.”

“He never would have dared take hold,” says Ramsey. Her eyes are hard as she speaks of Foyle.

“I ain’t altogether sure, Ramsey, that you’re a good woman,” says Uncle Frank severely. “Furthermore, I think you’re half crazy.”

She laughs at him, dropping him a little curtsey of mockery. Long after she is out of sight Uncle Frank stares after her. Unaccountably he feels that he has made a fool of himself; or, more correctly perhaps, that Ramsey has made a fool of him. He expectorates savagely upon the sidewalk. He mutters to himself as he crosses the street.

“Damn’ lot of foreign ideas getting into people’s heads—divorces—
foreign—un-American—”

CHAPTER XII

Cranahan's girl. . . .

A youth who preferred overalls to cap and gown; a youth who turned his back on the traditions of his fathers to make his own traditions; a petty manufacturer; a great manufacturer and merchant; a controller of local politics; a business man who by his shrewd stroke becomes a financier: we have seen these phases.

Pinnacle has faded away, dimmed by the radiance of Willoughby Motors. Once we said that the beginnings and the end of Pinnacle might be the beginning and end of The Magnificent. The solid foundations, then the sudden growth, the terrific expansion, the oblivion. But had we confined ourselves to Pinnacle we would have told only the story of one Magnificent; feebly we are attempting the story of several. How alike they are. . . . Do we live several lives in our brief existence, and are they all the same? Are all the other lives lived around us exactly the same as our own? We see no difference between the two worms crawling on the rain-wet earth. Yet the scientist with his magnifying glass sees two identities. Perhaps the glass is levelled at us. . . . Is our identity what we are, what we do, or what we think?

Cranahan's girl! We come to her, and, coming to her, we laugh or weep or shrug our shoulders, depending on our point of view. The face that launched a thousand ships is born anew in every generation. She had that face, had Cranahan's girl.

Compare her with Ramsey Willoughby and wonder. Set the two faces side by side; note the long-lashed violet eyes, gentle, honest, livened by a gleam of merriment, of the wife; see the black eyes, bold, provocative, and hard, of the mistress. Look at the sweet, warm mouth of Ramsey, and then at the lips of Minta Haydon, and observe how thin they are. The black hair of Cranahan's girl has no more beauty than the blonde curls of The Magnificent's wife. The lithe figure of the kept woman is hardly more slender, and certainly no more beautifully moulded than the body of the honorably wedded wife. Yet any man will look twice at the mistress and once at the wife. For it is not the unattainable that attracts the errant fancy of the male; it is that which he thinks he may acquire.

Sex! The curse and the blessing and the *raison d'être* of humanity. Minta Haydon, in every glance of her brilliant eyes, in every quiver of her thin

nostrils, in every strand of her burnished hair, in every muscle of her body, speaks of sex. She is the body; Ramsey is the body plus the soul. No permanent victory can be won by the Helens, but the ruin of their temporary triumphs may not be repaired in one lifetime. In the end love must conquer passion, but what if there be not love?

She is Cranahan's girl, and, until Cranahan should tire of her, as inviolate to the rest of male humanity as Cranahan's wife. For Cranahan can make or break anyone. The banking house on Wall Street which bears his name has existed for three generations. No considerable financial matter can be transacted in the United States if Cranahan disapproves, and if he grants approval, in some way the matter inures to the profit of Cranahan and Company. Cranahan has branches in London, in Paris, in Berlin, in Vienna, in Rome. He has agents in the other lesser capitals; governments float loans through Cranahan and Company. Our own Federal government leans, in times of stress, on Cranahan.

A word from him and the obscure bank in your obscure town will refuse a loan to your obscure self. For the nerve center of the nation, financially, is in Wall Street, and Cranahan is Wall Street.

He lives like a king, and princes are his intimates. He bids against royalty for the art treasures of a nation and then royally presents his purchase to the unsuccessful bidder. He ravages and rapes the store-rooms of the world, and he builds himself a castle in which to house his conquests. We read that he has paid four hundred thousand dollars for a painting and we thrill with justifiable pride. He is taking from Europe the evidences of her culture; we have made America the business center of the world; Cranahan will make it the cultural center. A great man who does things greatly, who hires experts to tell him what he shall admire and how much to pay for it.

We like to imagine him walking into the great hall of his castle to superintend his experts as they unpack an ancient vase for which he has paid thirty thousand dollars, and which he has not seen until to-day. The best in sewers, plumbing that would make a Roman emperor sick with envy, the best trains in the world, the best French cooking, the best English boot makers, the best Irish linen, the best Spanish lace, the best African diamonds, the best Chinese lacquer, the best Russian furs—the whole world works for us! Lean back in your chair and pick your teeth with a solid gold toothpick and brag! Hell, we got more art in New York City than they got in the whole of Europe! No wonder we love Cranahan.

No wonder we permit him liberties and licenses beyond the law. If a visiting potentate arrives in this country, it is Cranahan, not the government, who entertains him. If Cranahan returns from a trip abroad he is permitted to leave the ocean liner at Quarantine, and his less fortunate fellow-passengers, who must endure the discomforts of the Customs, envy but do not protest at this favoritism. If a bill is pending in Congress, Federal officials cheerfully respond to summonses from the over-lord of American finance, and hasten from Washington to explain, to placate and, perhaps, to agree to changes in the wording of the proposed law.

Time-servers and lickspittlers surround him. The American public adores him. What he wants he buys, and woe betide the man who tries to take from him that which he possesses or covets.

Let us slip quietly into his inner office and observe him as he bestows largesse upon one and refuses alms to another. It is the panic time of 1907. Currency has almost disappeared in the business houses of New York. Clerks are being paid their pitiful wages in checks. Well-to-do men are having difficulty in finding the cash with which to pay for theatre tickets. It is a time of stress and turmoil. The name of Roosevelt is never uttered by the upper classes without adjectives that are vigorous, expletives that are warm. It is no time for the raising of capital.

So Cranahan is informing The Magnificent.

He has lifted his massive head, with the untidy mass of iron-gray hair, from the barrel chest on which it continually rests. It seems that his neck muscles are not strong enough to support the weight imposed on them. His sunken eyes—somewhat blurry—our national hero is not too abstemious as regards rich foods and rare wines—rest on the face of his caller. There is disapproval in the eyes. For there is a jauntiness in the manner of The Magnificent that is slightly offensive; there is a confidence in the way he leans back in his chair that somehow seems slightly disrespectful.

“I received you, Willoughby,” says Cranahan, “because you’ve been doing good things, and I don’t want you to make any mistake. You have a future.”

“That’s very kind of you, Mr. Cranahan,” replies The Magnificent. “I’m thinking of the present more than of the future, however.”

The over-lord frowns. “This is no time for expansion. It is a time for retrenchment. Your plan for amalgamating the leading motor companies of

the country is a good one—bye and bye. At present I strongly disapprove of tying up capital in any new venture. I want you to drop the matter.”

The Magnificent smiles deprecatingly. “I’ve gone quite a way with the plan,” he says quietly.

“Drop it,” orders Cranahan.

He turns a heavy shoulder toward his caller; his chin touches the second button of his white shirt. Patently, the interview is over; the king has spoken. But The Magnificent lingers, does not even arise from the chair in which he is seated, even crosses his knees and caresses an ankle with one hand.

Cranahan looks up again. “You heard me?” he demands.

“You haven’t heard me,” protests Willoughby.

“You’ve talked with members of my firm,” says Cranahan. “They’ve heard all your arguments. I can’t waste any time on you. A hundred people are waiting to see me now.”

“But I’ve put time and money into this amalgamation.” The Magnificent’s voice is stubborn, and his bony chin is prominent.

Cranahan cannot believe his ears. “Do you realize that you are throwing away your whole career?” he asks.

The Magnificent laughs; but his green eyes hold no mirth. “This isn’t poker, Mr. Cranahan,” he says. “If you people don’t want to help me I’ll get the money from the public.”

“In this state of the market?” jeers Cranahan incredulously.

“In this state of the market,” replies Willoughby. “And if I find that any bank refuses legitimate loans, or harasses me in any way, I’ll make New York too hot to hold the man responsible. That goes even if his name is Stephen Cranahan.”

“Get out,” roars Cranahan.

The Magnificent rises; he walks quietly to the door. He turns. “Even if his name is Stephen Cranahan,” he says again.

He strides from the office, smiling quietly. He has not been betrayed, by momentary anger, into doing something that he regrets. He has planned this defiance, this threat. He made his first entrance into finance when he forced the stockholders of Willoughby Motors to recede from their chosen ground, and pay him millions as punishment for their temerity in conspiring against

him. He was bluffing then; he is bluffing now. Yet he knows exactly what he is doing.

Let us listen to Cranahan's girl, to the words of Minta Haydon; she can tell us better, perhaps, than anyone else, exactly how The Magnificent made his second and definite entrance into finance. She is speaking to Volkman, her impresario.

"Like him? Why I'm crazy about him, Abe," she declares.

Her manager frowns. "That would be all right, Minta, if Cranahan was anybody else. But, my God, he's worth a hundred million dollars, and this Willoughby guy is nobody."

Cranahan's girl smiles. "I wouldn't exactly call him nobody, Abe. He has a dollar or two, you know."

Volkman looks around the expensively furnished boudoir. Even to his eyes it seems garish, a bit too flamboyant; but it certainly looks like money.

"Yes," he admits, "but how long will he have it?"

"About as long as Cranahan," replies the kept woman. "And I've got mine, Abe."

The manager grins approval. "Then you ain't joking about the theatre he's going to build for you?"

"I wouldn't have cabled you to hustle back from London unless I was in earnest," she assures him.

Volkman lights a cigarette; he eyes with relieved admiration the beautiful woman in the silken negligee. "Tell me about it, Minta."

"Well," says Miss Haydon, "you know I have ambition. And you know Steve Cranahan doesn't care about ambition in anyone else. There have been times when I've wanted to slap his ugly face and order him out of my house. Twice he ruined successful plays of mine because he wanted me to go to Palm Beach or London or some other fool place. I have a long time to live, I hope, and I grew tired of giving the best years to Cranahan. Jealous beast!"

Her manager whistles softly. "You never talked this way about him before," he declares.

"Because I didn't dare call my soul my own," she answers.

"Well, what happened?" demands Volkman.

She laughs reminiscently; the animalism of her is more evident in her laugh than in anything else about her.

“I’m getting near the breaking point with Cranahan,” she explains. “Like almost every other man that’s born to money he’s stingy. I can charge anything I want anywhere, and he’ll always back a new show. But actual cash.” . . . She shrugs, and her manager nods understandingly.

“Before I tied up with Cranahan there were plenty of men that would give me anything I wanted. But as soon as he and I became friendly every man steered away from me. That is, every man worth while. They were afraid of him. Then one day, Jim called on me. I didn’t know him, but he gave Marie a hundred dollars to take his name in to me. That would interest any girl, so I had him come in.

“He didn’t waste a minute. He got right down to cases. He told me that he was having a financial battle with Cranahan. When I told him that he’d better run along before his keeper came and caught him, he reached into his pocket and drew out a thick package. Abe,” her voice lowers, “there were one hundred thousand-dollar bills in that package.

“‘Miss Haydon’, he says, ‘you’re Cranahan’s girl. Don’t tell me you love that bloated old man.’

“‘All right, I won’t,’ I replied. You know, Abe, a girl can’t quarrel with a man who’s tapping his knee with enough money to make the first payment on a theatre.”

Volkman whistles again; his eyes are eager.

“‘I know Cranahan’s kind,’ he tells me. ‘How about changing him for a real man?’

“And with that he tosses the package of money in my lap. Well, Abe, you know I’m not a street woman; I don’t suppose I could call myself *good*, but I’m not common.”

“You’re all right, Minta,” says the manager. “Go on.”

“I’ll cut it short,” says the woman. “I told him to get out. After all, some things are too raw even if they are seasoned with a hundred thousand-dollar bills.”

“But you’ve left Cranahan,” protests Abe.

People who knew Cranahan’s girl only by reputation would have been surprised if they had seen the wave of color that made her rouge seem pale.

“Let me finish,” she says. “He tells me what he wants. He wants me to pretend that I’ve shaken Cranahan and taken up with him. It sounds crazy but he says it’s worth a fortune to him. He says that there are lots of big men dissatisfied with Cranahan’s financial boss-ship. All they need is a leader; they can’t find one who’s game enough to tackle the old man. He, this Willoughby man, is game enough. He wants to hit Cranahan in his pride; that means me. Oh, there’s a lot to it that is too long to tell.

“That night Cranahan calls. I tell him that he’s a drunken old beast, and that I’m through with him. I tell him that I’m in love with Jim Willoughby, and order him out of the house. You know that if Cranahan hadn’t inherited a huge banking concern, he’d never have built one for himself. He’s too gabby. Next day all his friends know that I’ve thrown him down for Jim Willoughby. By the day after that a lot of his friends have looked Willoughby up and have offered him the backing he needs. A week after that and Cranahan goes to see Jim. Mind you, he doesn’t send for Jim, he goes to see him. They come to terms; Jim heads the amalgamation of the motor car industry, and gets the Cranahan backing.”

Abe Volkman whistles for the third time. “Women certainly play hell,” he declares fervently. “But I ain’t sure that you done altogether wisely in completely busting with Cranahan. Why didn’t you make it up with him?”

Once again Cranahan’s girl—let’s call her The Magnificent’s girl now—colors.

“How could any girl look at Steve Cranahan after she’d had Jim Willoughby?” she asks.

“Nice chap?” inquires Abe.

The bold black eyes of Minta Haydon flash. “I’d like to kill his wife,” she says.

“Why? Is he that kind?” asks Abe.

“No,” she cries. “I have him, but part of him belongs to her. And I want him all!”

Even kept women, it seems, have something that functions like a heart, after all. Perhaps the face that launched a thousand ships might have been content with one canoe.

Let us tip-toe from the room where Minta Haydon’s bosom rises as she thinks of The Magnificent. Let us pause outside and marvel at the

achievements of the man who now is keeping her. He has beaten Stephen Cranahan; he is a power in finance; he has won Cranahan's girl. Let our envious hearts thrill at his success! We wonder how Sam Foyle, reading a four-months' old New York newspaper, containing paragraphs of praise of Jameson Briggs Willoughby, can be content with his own lot.

But Foyle is but human. One would think that, contrasting his own position as super-cargo of an ocean tramp with the high place of The Magnificent, he would despise himself as an utter failure. A discredited wanderer, penniless, without even an unfashionable mistress. . . . Yet his smile, as he reads of Willoughby, is one of pleasure. The man must lack ambition; let us turn away from one guilty of the unpardonable American sin. He has no spirit; a failure, he can be happy in the success of a friend.

CHAPTER XIII

We must rid ourselves of our prejudices, our narrow-mindedness, our intolerance. It is all very well to take a proper pride in the rigid virtues of the founders of the nation. But, after all, there is a difference between sin and relaxation. As a matter of cold fact, the early pioneers had no opportunity for relaxation from the stern labors of each day. They didn't dance or go to the theatre for the simple reason, in the one case, that they were too dog-tired from plowing, and planting, and chopping down forests and fighting Indians; and in the other case, because there weren't any theatres in their day.

Honor them and sing their praises; but try to remember that the country has changed. If the labors of the day have not exhausted you, it is your duty to add to your culture. Life was not meant to be a mere routine of work. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

Let's quit sneering at Europe. Europe has been getting along fairly well for a thousand years or so, and we only show our own bigoted provincialism when we sneer at her and call her effete. We are a great nation, not a scattered collection of rude villages. Our own bigness compels us to view things largely.

Of course, a lot of things have been done in the past three or four decades that will not stand the closest sort of scrutiny. But why be so petty-minded as to scan suspiciously the unimportant details? Look at the results! Look at the railroads; look at the great combinations in industry that have cheapened products essential to our daily living. Suppose that somebody did make an extra million because he formed a secret alliance with a political boss? What of it? If you get right down to cases, you'll probably discover that the early Pilgrims didn't always treat the Indians exactly as the Bible orders one to treat one's brother. But look at what they accomplished! You surely aren't going to claim that their occasional peccadilloes weren't justified by the results. You'll find, if you study history, that nation-builders must necessarily be above the law. Greatness makes its own laws.

You'll find out, if you study, that in every era there have been lots of small-minded people ready and anxious to condemn the strong men of vision who were accomplishing things. But they haven't erected any monuments to these carping critics, haven't even named a single street after them. If a man can't find anything better to do with his time and his voice

than to spend them in abuse of bigger men than himself he's a pretty poor shoat. Don't you suppose that good old Daniel Boone ever bumped off an Indian when his own life was not in immediate danger? You'll admit that Daniel Boone did a lot for this country, won't you?

The greatest good for the greatest number: that's the way to look at it. And also remember that you, with your clerk's mind, can't expect to understand the great business and financial geniuses of your day. And for heaven's sakes don't condemn what you can't possibly comprehend. Don't expect perfection in everyone; take a look at yourself. Considering their opportunities, our big men behave pretty well. Of course Mr. Roosevelt did a good work when he exposed all the wrongs that existed in business and politics; and Mr. Hughes did a fine job of housecleaning. But don't run away with the idea that everyone of our big men is rotten simply because we find an occasional scalawag. Human nature is pretty human and that means pretty decent.

So the crisis passes. We realize that growth is not always smooth and symmetrical. One passes through the gawky awkward stage. It's the same with nations. All boys have pimples; so do all boyish nations.

What a glorious feeling strong maturity brings. Look at our children. It's true that some of them, like the Philippines, have been adopted, but they'll soon be regular members of the family. Let's wish Mr. Roosevelt a happy hunting trip, where he can rid himself of all that superabundant energy, and let's draw a long breath of relief. You can't be always sprinting; Bill Taft certainly is a restful sort of cuss. He won't go off at half-cock. Let's get to work again and quit talking scandal.

Once again the country resumes its march to prosperity. Mr. Bryan has been well whipped for the third time, and anybody who says that the American people aren't satisfied with their leaders is talking through his hat. We're a big country, but we haven't any room for Populists, or Socialists, or Anarchists, or anything else like them. The nation apparently is pretty well satisfied with its general condition in this year of 1909.

So is The Magnificent. Two years have passed since he defied Cranahan. None but he could have conceived so bizarre a defiance, could so clearly have foreseen its effect. Once again a bluff had won for him. For had not powerful opponents of Cranahan been impressed by his outre assault upon the over-lord of finance, The Magnificent would have sunk in the deepest depths of ruin. For all his available cash, and all his available securities, had

been pledged. The panic had caught him unprepared, and only by a desperate gamble could he extricate himself.

He would never gamble again. His first efforts would be to amass a huge cash reserve to protect himself against any future emergency. He has that cash reserve now. But it is not likely that emergency will ever arise again. Cranahan might never have been able to have achieved his great fortune and position without the inheritance that birth brought him. But he knew how to safeguard what he had. When any man seemed able to combine powerful elements in American finance against him, Cranahan took that man to his bosom.

He had so taken The Magnificent. Perhaps he had become slightly tired of Minta Haydon. Perhaps the fact that, by backing The Magnificent's amalgamation of the leading motor car companies, Cranahan had made an almost immediate profit of fourteen million dollars assuaged his hurt vanity. Certainly, by no slightest implication did he ever refer, in conversation with The Magnificent, to the defection of Minta. Cranahan was close to seventy when Willoughby took his girl away.

Coming up town from the Cranahan offices, where now he has a suite of rooms all his own, The Magnificent finds the late April afternoon almost too warm. He is riding in a limousine whose windows are opened. There are freshly cut flowers in dainty vases. Ash receivers and electric lighters add to the comfort of the car. The cushions are luxuriously soft. Everything tends to lull the busy mind, comfort the tired body.

But The Magnificent sits stiffly upright; his cigar lacks savor; he has before him an unpleasant task, one from which he shrinks in apprehension. As his car passes Twenty-third Street, his nervousness becomes so intense that it can be soothed only by physical exertion. He speaks through the tube, ordering his chauffeur to deposit him at the next corner.

He hopes that by walking a mile or so he may be able to compose his mind, to regulate his thoughts. Instead, he finds himself, when he arrives before a house just off the Avenue, in the middle Forties, wet with perspiration, more nervous than when he left the office. He resolves to ease off work; he is softer than he imagined; a brisk walk of a mile, even on so unseasonably warm a day, should not reduce him to this state of limpness. He resolves to take up golf this summer, to ride and swim. Perhaps Ramsey would consent to forego her annual spring trip to Paris and run down to White Sulphur for a few weeks. He would speak to her about it this evening. It would be a lot of fun.

Then he forgets Ramsey as he presses the bell button of the house up whose steps he has turned. A French maid, prettily capped and aproned, admits him with a smile of welcome. She takes his hat and light overcoat, and informs him that Madame is expecting him. He pauses before a mirror and smoothes his tie. Then he shrugs his shoulders and mounts a flight of stairs. On the next landing he enters the room where Minta Haydon, behind a tea table, is awaiting him.

She rises and approaches him swiftly. Her tread is catlike, and the sheer silk of her negligee affords a glimpse of the gorgeous lines of her figure. She puts her arms about his neck, and her lips press his with a fervor that one cannot believe is inspired merely by the money and gifts which he has lavished upon her.

She releases him and pouts. His kiss has been perfunctory and she resents it. "You haven't been to see me for a week, and now you kiss me as though it were a duty," she accuses him.

He forces a smile. "I'm tired," he tells her.

She is all a-flutter in a second. She forces him into her most comfortable chair, presses a pillow behind him, arranges a foot-stool and brings his tea to him. Her hands continually touch his face, smooth his scant blonde hair. Minta Haydon may be harsh and cold and mercenary to all the world outside, but to The Magnificent she is soft.

"There," she says. "Comfy?"

He smiles wanly and makes no reply. She sits beside him and pours tea for herself. She reproaches him no more for his absence. For a long time she says nothing at all. She can talk, when she wills, as few women can. Minta Haydon could have won an honest success in the theatre had she not been blinded by the glamor of the dishonest way. Or perhaps she could not; the very lack in her that made her willing to sell herself might have militated against her career. But if she has sold herself to Willoughby, she has also given; for that she loves the man no one can doubt, who sees this restless, feline thing achieving a quiet repose that will be soothing to her man.

Abruptly Willoughby breaks the long silence. "It must end, Minta," he says.

The big black eyes gleam, a shiver runs down the sinuous body. She knows exactly what he means and does not profess misunderstanding. This willingness to meet an issue is one of her attractions.

"Why?" she asks.

“It isn’t fair to you,” says Willoughby.

“Why not?” demands the woman. Her voice is quiet, but her eyes are flashing now.

Willoughby looks uneasily away from her. “You’re making a great success, Minta. The whole country acclaims you as a great actress. It’s a shame that there should be any scandal about you.”

“I can stand it,” she says quietly.

“But it’s not fair. You’re a beautiful, lovely woman, and there’s no reason on earth why you shouldn’t marry some man, some fine fellow, who can love you honestly,” says Willoughby nervously.

“Fine fellows don’t give honest love to harlots,” she replies.

The Magnificent is shocked. He rises, spilling tea as he does so. He approaches her and takes her hand. “You mustn’t call yourself such a name.”

She jerks her hand from his; she rises, too, and faces him. Her glorious bosom rises and falls before the tempest of her emotion.

“Why not? It’s what I am. And because I am what I am, you’re leaving me!” she cries.

“Not at all,” he answers. “I respect you with all my heart.”

She laughs scornfully. “Don’t lie to me, Jim,” she says. “You’re tired of me.”

“I’m not,” he denies her.

She turns her back to him and walks the full length of the room away. Then she turns and slowly comes back to him. If she had planned to recaptivate him by an exhibition of her grace of movement and beauty of form she could have been no more effective than in this unpremeditated display of her charms. She holds out her arms; the silken sleeves fall away and expose the beautifully modelled flesh to her shoulders.

“It’s been two years, Jim,” she pleads. Her hands touch his cheeks lightly for a moment; fleeting as the contact is, it brings the blood racing to his face. She laughs merrily, confidently. She feels her effect upon him, knows that if she is not mistress of his heart she is mistress of his body.

“You can’t give me up, Jim,” she tells him.

His pulses pound against his temples; he feels that same fever that always rules him when she is near, that has mastered him since the moment

when, dismissing Cranahan, Minta Haydon threw her arms about his neck, and said, “Your money isn’t enough; I want you.”

Away from her, she has no hold upon him. Not all her brilliance of intellect, her charm of manner, can grip his mind or his emotion. Her appeal, for him at any rate, is solely of the body. But base as that appeal is, it is overpowering when she is close to him.

He fights against it now. “I must,” he tells her.

She steps back from him. “Has your wife—”

He cuts short her question with a lifted hand. “My wife doesn’t enter into this, Minta. She doesn’t know anything about it.”

The pupils of her eyes dilate. “Then why?” she asks again. “You’re tired of me.”

“It’s wrong,” he declares.

“Is it any more wrong now than it has been for two years?” she challenges.

“It isn’t fair to you.” He repeats his chivalrous assertion.

She laughs, but the merriment has gone from her mirth. “Such nobility!” she cries. “Deserting me because of a sudden rush of virtue to the brain. Not to the heart, but to the brain. You haven’t any heart.”

He attempts deprecation. “Now, be reasonable, Minta,” he pleads. “I’m as fond of you as ever, and I’m telling the simple truth when I tell you that it’s for your sake.”

She stares at him a moment. “You think that because I’m what I am, I haven’t any feelings. I suppose you’ll be offering me money now.”

He is un-warned by her words, by her manner. “Of course I intend doing the right thing, Minta. I brought a check with me. It’s for two hundred and fifty thousand.”

“Let me see it,” she asks.

She takes it from his extended hand and looks at it. Her hard mouth twists in an unpleasant sneer. Beauty leaves her. Then her slim strong fingers fasten on the bit of paper, and tear it into tiny shreds.

“Isn’t it enough?” he asks in swift dismay.

For answer her fingers land stingingly upon his cheek.

“Get out,” she orders.

He steps back, rubbing the red mark upon his face. “Why, Minta!” he cries.

“Get out,” she says again. Then, as he stands there in bewilderment, she turns and walks falteringly to a couch across the room. She hurls herself upon it in an abandon of grief. He stands in the middle of the room, looking down at her. He has never felt more miserable in his life.

“I’m sorry, Minta,” he tells her, “but it has to end.”

Her voice comes muffled from the pillows in which her face is buried.

“Get out,” she says for the third time.

“Let me stay long enough to write another check,” he asks.

She lifts her tear-stained countenance from the couch.

“My God, won’t you let me save my soul?” she cries.

He tip-toes from the room. Exactly what she means he doesn’t know. Still, it’s a worthy pride she is showing. There is good stuff in Minta Haydon after all. He will send her another check in the morning; she’ll take it then.

In the street outside his nervousness leaves him. He’s been a fool—and worse. No more of it! He hasn’t appreciated Ramsey, but from now on He wonders if perhaps Ramsey suspects; he prays that she doesn’t. Still, if Junior knew He recalls the speech that he heard Junior, home from school for the Easter vacation, making to a boy friend.

The two boys were looking at an illustrated newspaper. “That’s Minta Haydon,” said Junior. “She’s my father’s girl.”

That was last evening; The Magnificent did not sleep all night. It was bad enough that Junior knew; but that he should share his knowledge with a chum, and that neither should be shocked. . . . For a moment a question flashes in The Magnificent’s mind: whither is his success leading him, and where would it take his sons?

CHAPTER XIV

“Well, what do you think of it?” Ramsey, a trifle flushed, breathless, sinks into a huge chair in the library. Her bared arms lie lazily upon the wide arms of the chair; her blonde head leans against its wide back; her silken ankles are crossed and the jeweled buckles of her slippers gleam from the foot-stool on which they rest. But for an expression in the violet eyes and the least suggestion of heaviness in the hips, she might be twenty-seven instead of thirty-seven. Yet the slight exertion of showing Uncle Frank over her home on the avenue has apparently exhausted her. Perhaps, though, it is excitement that has colored her cheeks and makes her bosom rise and fall. After all, it is a long journey from the Blake home in Oldport to the Willoughby palace in New York.

Some such thought enters Uncle Frank’s mind as he looks from the face of his hostess to the countenance of his host. Willoughby’s heavy brows are grayer than they should be, Uncle Frank thinks, at forty-four. There are lines about his deep-set green eyes; there are twin creases running from each nostril to the corners of the full mouth that, despite its fullness, droops at those corners. The thin, bony chin has lost the flesh that softened it in boyhood; it is aggressive now. His figure is slim, but no longer gives the impression of wiriness. He too has dropped into a chair and lies there relaxed, as though worn out by the mere demands that living makes.

Uncle Frank has been impressed; he has not been stingy in expressions of admiring awe. He has exclaimed over the electric elevator, the sunken baths, the formal dinner service, the conservatory with its exotic blooms, the ballroom, the paintings here in the library. Yet now he recognizes the duties of a guest and performs them. He is not like most country folk; he is willing to be impressed and not averse to showing it.

“Daggone if it ain’t the swellest place I ever seen or heard of,” says Uncle Frank magnificently. “It makes me feel like I’m visiting a duke and his queen.”

“His duchess, you mean, Uncle Frank,” laughs Ramsey.

“Queen, I said, and queen I mean,” says Uncle Frank. “I’ll admit that Jim is only a duke, but daggone if you ain’t a queen, Ramsey.”

She blows him a kiss; Uncle Frank reaches out a fat hand, intercepts the caress in mid-air, brings it toward his lips, then shakes his head. He carefully

places the kiss in an inside pocket of his dinner jacket. “I’m going to save it until I get time to sort of linger over it, Ramsey,” he declares.

“Why didn’t I marry you?” cries Ramsey.

“It ain’t too late,” says Uncle Frank.

“Jim might not like it,” suggests Ramsey. “If I married somebody else, divorcing him, it might interfere with his freedom.”

The atmosphere suddenly becomes electric; Uncle Frank senses the invisible lightnings. He swiftly changes the subject, aware, somehow, that there is danger ahead. Yet Ramsey’s tone has been quiet, and her words, though cryptic, have been innocuous enough.

“You got everything in the world that’s ever been invented to make people comfortable, except one thing,” says Uncle Frank.

“What’s that?” asks The Magnificent.

“No use in telling you; you wouldn’t think it was necessary,” says Uncle Frank.

Ramsey sits upright. “Uncle Frank!” Her voice is reproachful. “I thought you’d sworn off.”

“You ain’t got the least idea what I’m talking about,” retorts Uncle Frank defensively.

Ramsey sniffs delicately. “It’s bad for your insides, Uncle Frank.”

“I’m fifty-four years old, and I’m able enough yet to take care of myself,” boasts Uncle Frank. “I guess I proved there wasn’t much wrong with my appetite at dinner, even if I didn’t know what half the things was.”

Ramsey sighs. “You haven’t been a bit impressed with all our grandeur, Uncle Frank. If you were, you’d try to control yourself.”

“What the deuce are you two talking about?” demands The Magnificent. “Have you a secret code that makes your words mean something else?”

“Only husbands practice that code,” replies Ramsey, a bit too sweetly. “Uncle Frank is a bachelor, and I’m merely a wife.”

Once again the storm clouds gather and the air is heavy with electricity. Uncle Frank again disperses the imminent lightnings.

“Well, anyway, you ain’t got what I need,” says Uncle Frank, “so I’ll just suffer.”

“If you hadn’t shown that bit of self-denial, of decent restraint, I’d never show you this,” says Ramsey.

She rises and walks across the room. There is, beside a desk, a wrapped-up package. From the desk she takes shears and severs the string. She unfolds the paper; she puts excelsior in a waste-basket. Then she holds aloft a wide-mouthed, round-bellied utensil, made of china, with flowers and birds painted on its squat form.

“The symbol of American democracy,” she cries. She walks toward Uncle Frank, makes a low obeisance, and places the gaudy utensil before him. Uncle Frank rises; he leans over and kisses Ramsey on her bowed head.

“Nobody but a great lady, daggone it, would be so thoughtful of her guest,” says Uncle Frank with deep emotion. From his right-hand trousers pocket he draws forth a strong-smelling oblong of navy twist. He bites off a huge chunk; he sinks back into his chair; his jaws move up and down and sidewise. He leans forward in a moment and with deadly accuracy hits the exact center of the cuspidor. He leans back with a sigh of contentment.

“Daggone if this ain’t the life,” he says. “I’ve had my dreams, same as everyone else; many’s the time, when I was a boy, I saw myself swapping chaws with the King of England, and now it’s come true.”

The Magnificent laughs. “The King of England isn’t here, Uncle Frank,” he says.

“You’re here, and you could buy the King of England,” exclaims Uncle Frank.

“Not quite that,” says The Magnificent. But he is not entirely insensible to Uncle Frank’s flattery. He clips the end of a cigar and lights it with signs of enjoyment. “You make the place seem homelike, Uncle Frank,” he declares.

“Advice to mismated couples: buy a cuspidor,” says Ramsey. There is a certain acidity in her voice. Yet her lips form a reluctant smile. Uncle Frank notes it and has less fear of the storm breaking.

“Anyway, I never dreamed that an honest-to-goodness queen would buy me such a nice present,” he says. “Speaking of queens, how many have you met?” He looks at Ramsey.

“Two,” she laughs.

Uncle Frank looks at The Magnificent. “How many kings do you know, Jim?”

The Magnificent laughs. “Only one,” he replies.

“Daggone, it sure beats all,” says Uncle Frank. “Just think of you twenty years ago, beginning to make Pinnacle, and look at you to-day. A palace on Fifth Avenue and chumming around with people like Cranahan. And then think of me chewin’ tobacco in your library, as easy as a cat lickin’ cream. Daggone if I ain’t climbed in the world myself. First thing you know I’ll be going abroad and chumming round with foreign dukes and lords and the like of them.”

The Magnificent laughs. “Just be able to give them a tip on the market and you won’t find it difficult to make the grade.”

“I guess there ain’t any European that won’t take a tip, when you come right down to it,” observes Uncle Frank. “For that matter, there ain’t hardly any American that won’t. Why, twenty years ago, if you handed an American workman two bits, he’d belt you on the jaw. Now he just puts it in his pocket and don’t even say thank you.”

“Times have changed, Uncle Frank,” says The Magnificent.

“So have the people. We thought, back in ’76, that we’d licked Europe. We’re just finding out that Europe is licking us. Every rotten thing they have they give to us. There ain’t any spirit in the country any more.”

“Uncle Frank, you’re growing old,” says Ramsey.

Uncle Frank hits the bull’s-eye again; he eyes his achievement with complacency. “I guess I am,” he admits. “Half Oldport is dead, and the rest I don’t seem to know. When you folks going to visit us again?” he asks suddenly.

“Why, I don’t know,” replies The Magnificent.

“Why don’t you come home this summer?” demands Uncle Frank. “There’s your house all ready for you; the trees was beginning to leaf when I left yesterday; the grass is green; the view from your front lawn is more beautiful than ever. Why don’t you come home?”

“I’d like to,” says Ramsey. She looks at her husband. The storm clouds that have been gathering all evening seem suddenly dissipated as though the sunshine of Oldport has dispelled them.

The Magnificent looks eager. “How about your trip to Paris?” he asks Ramsey.

“How about all your business?” she counters.

“Paris in the spring ain’t a patch on Oldport,” says Uncle Frank, who has never seen the Bois in blossom time. “And why should a man with all Jim Willoughby’s money be bothered with business?”

“So that I won’t lose my money,” says Willoughby.

“You could make more if you did lose it,” asserts Uncle Frank. “If my hotel burned down to-morrow, and the insurance companies failed, I could git me a job. Probably be good for me to have to hustle. Wouldn’t do you no harm either, Jim.”

“It’s all a question of Ramsey and Paris,” says Willoughby. Into his eyes creeps a light almost of excitement; his voice quavers the least bit.

Eyes and voice meet with response from his wife. Something glistens on her lashes, and her throat moves as she swallows. “I can give up Paris,” she says.

“I can give up business for a while,” declares her husband.

Ramsey is immediately practical; the mistress of a great establishment must be so. “We could dispense with most of the servants we have here. I suppose the house could be got ready in a week.”

“In a day,” roars Uncle Frank. “What sort of a person do you think Amanda Barrett is? You’ve been away two years, but Amanda has looked after the place like she expected you home on the next train.”

In his excitement he half misses his objective; he remedies his carelessness with his handkerchief, apologizing profusely. But the husband and wife neither note his deed nor hear his apology. Both of them are breathing a little more rapidly than is their wont. They have eyes only for each other, and ears only for the unspoken speech that passes between them.

Uncle Frank suddenly feels *de trop*. He yawns gustily. “Wonder if you folks would excuse me if I trotted along to bed,” he says. His host and hostess suddenly become aware again of his existence. Of course he must be tired; not merely was he on the train all last night, but he’s been rushing around the city all day. Certainly he may go to bed the very minute that he feels like it. This is the minute, and Uncle Frank is escorted by them both to the magnificent chamber overlooking Central Park.

In the hall outside his room his host and hostess look diffidently at each other. Constraint comes upon them. Ramsey turns away. "Good night," she says over her shoulder.

Her husband colors. His "good night" is faltering. He follows her along the hall to the electric elevator. He presses the button for her, and when the lift arrives he enters it with her. On the floor below he still lingers by her, and when, at the door of her apartment, she holds out her hand, his grip is more than formal.

"I'm not a bit tired," he says.

She smiles, and the drop that shines in her eye seems to render her glance more warm. "Neither am I," she tells him.

Never, in her most carefully planned gesture of provocation, has Minta Haydon been as alluring as Ramsey is now. Minta Haydon would catch the fancy of any man in the first moment; Ramsey Willoughby would be holding him securely at the end of an hour. It is the tragedy of the Ramseys that they must maintain their grip so long, after novelty has departed from allurements. That grip can be maintained only with the mind, and it is not every man who appreciates the mind of a woman. The Magnificent had not appreciated the mind of Ramsey.

It cannot be said that he appreciates her now. But he is sick to death of Minta Haydon, and ashamed of the hold which she has had upon him and which he broke only last week. He has suddenly and newly discovered the beauty and charm of his wife. He is in a frame of mind where he realizes that he has wasted his married life. Duty, a week ago, made him break with Minta Haydon. But it is not duty that makes him linger now at his wife's door, that makes him, at her alluring glance of invitation, cross the threshold.

Barriers have been unconsciously builded between them. Matter of fact acceptance of the gifts the gods bestowed has been followed by neglect; neglect has aroused the pride of Ramsey. Yet suddenly, as Willoughby closes the door, she seems, by that very action of his, to have consented to her own surrender. Neither of them could have told, eighteen years ago, why they had both yielded to the emotion of love at the exact moment when they did. Ramsey only knew that suddenly she had been in his arms.

Now she does not know why, after years of estrangement, of brooding over wrongs done to her, she has forgotten everything except the craving to be once more within the vital clasp of him. Flushed, dishevelled, her blonde hair loosened and tumbling invitingly over her lovely shoulders, she releases

herself from her husband's embrace. Her face is crimson, and her eyes are like stars; stars that shine not coldly and remotely, but through the warm silver of unshed tears.

"Leave me, Jim," she pleads.

He laughs with that loud masterfulness that charmed her in their intimate moments years ago.

"You're my wife," he tells her, "and I'm your husband."

She comes close to him, and with a sigh leans in his enfolding arms. "What a wonderful summer we'll have at Oldport. Away from everyone except the boys."

There is a telephone by her bed. It rings. She extricates herself from his embrace and answers it. "It's for you, Jim." Her hand slips over the transmitter. "It's Mr. Cranahan."

Willoughby walks to the 'phone; there is reluctance in his stride, and a touch of impatience in his voice as he speaks to his partner, the over-lord of finance. But as he listens his eyes grow eager. Disjointed fragments of his speech reach, through a fog of emotion, the understanding of Ramsey. She becomes alarmed. Her husband hangs up the receiver.

"Cranahan wants me to leave for Mexico in the morning. Oil concessions," he explains.

"I didn't hear you tell him that you couldn't go," says Ramsey. Her voice and eyes are hurt.

"It means millions," cries Willoughby.

"You have millions," she retorts.

"I can't refuse Cranahan," he argues.

"You just said that I am your wife; you can refuse me," retorts Ramsey.

"I'll only be gone six weeks; we can go to Oldport then," says Willoughby.

"I'm sailing for Paris on Saturday; I'll be gone four months; the summer will be over then," says Ramsey.

Willoughby advances toward her; she halts him with a glance.

"Let's not discuss it, Jim. You made your decision years ago; I should have known that it's too late for you to rescind it now."

“Be reasonable, Ramsey,” he begs.

“I want the luxury of being unreasonable for once,” she tells him.

“You want me to give up my whole career,” he accuses. “My business—everything.”

“Including your women,” she jeers.

He reddens. “What do you mean?”

“The papers say to-day that Miss Haydon is going to call her new theatre ‘The Magnificent’,” she says.

Willoughby’s flush deepens. He knew, of course, that on second thought Minta Haydon would accept his second check. But that she should blazen their ended liaison to the world, was more than he had expected. Minta Haydon had her sardonic moments.

“What does that prove?” he demands.

“Do I seem the vulgar sort of woman who demands *proof* of what I know?” asks Ramsey.

“Please let’s not quarrel,” says The Magnificent.

“Please leave my room,” says Ramsey.

“That affair is all over; I’m sick to death with shame, Ramsey,” he says pleadingly.

“What broke it off? Money?” She is harsh.

“It’s ended! Why isn’t that enough? You didn’t mind it a minute ago. But because I have to make a trip to Mexico—”

“That isn’t it at all,” she cries.

“Then what is it?” he demands.

“You wouldn’t understand,” she tells him. “Please leave the room.”

“You’d drive any man crazy,” he affirms.

“You’d break any woman’s heart,” she rejoins.

He stamps out of the room. Uncle Frank isn’t a very permanent Cupid, after all.

CHAPTER XV

When does a nation's decadence begin? The answer comes pat to the tongue of the reader of history: when its citizenry turn away from the pursuit of arms and engage mercenaries to wage their wars.

But the answer is too pat; one suspects that the very obviousness of the truth renders it less than true. Is it not possible that before the mercenaries were engaged decadence had already arrived? We have a better answer: when honest labor begins to be considered menial and degrading, decay is evidencing its symptoms.

Consider the Pilgrims. He would be silly indeed who would deny that they were a very hardy group of gentlemen and ladies; the Indian of their day—and he was a very discerning person—preferred, when he engaged in battle with them, to have the odds considerably in his favor. A tough bunch of tough babies, one concludes in the argot of the moment.

From them is descended our modern aristocracy. Above wealth is held the possession of a few drops of Mayflower blood. A sturdy band of pioneers, they laid the foundation of the nation. And not one of them had a servant!

Their children, and grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, did not deem it beneath them to engage in such homely pursuits as making fires, smoothing beds, sweeping floors, cooking meals, and, one is forced to assume, removing the ancestral garbage.

When a family became over-blessed with girl children, it was not held undignified of one of them to turn her home accomplishments to neighborly use, nor did she disdain fifty cents in payment above her board and lodging for a week of assistance in the household next door. It was possible, even highly probable, that she would wed the elder son and chief heir of the family with whom, according to our modern standards, she had held a position of menial servitude. Her social status suffered nothing by her willingness to do honest and helpful work for an honest, though tiny wage. "Hired help" was not a phrase that branded one with shame.

Came wealth to the new country. And with wealth came snobbery. How can the possession of wealth be proved save by ostentation? When all the neighbors' children are working, it is ostentation and proof of riches to engage servants to do the tasks that the neighbors' children are doing. The

housewife who delegates her duties to a hired person advertises her husband's success.

Occasionally an American went abroad. In Europe he saw perfect servants, especially in England, where the climate nourishes a magnificent servility. The best statesmen and the best servants are English born. Perhaps the same cunning suavity is essential to both careers.

As the Roman general exhibited proudly his savage captive, so the Yankee millionaire exhibited his English butler, his French chef. America enthusiastically took up the task of making its domestic help conform to the European standard. Not all could afford English butlers and French chefs. Moreover the country was still young, and believed that a man's strength was better employed in outdoor labor than in performing domestic tasks. It took us a long time to outgrow these vulgar beliefs. So we combed the countries of Europe for women who could cook our meals and turn us into a nation of dyspeptics. The Irish colleen, the German fraulein, the maid from Scandinavia—these usurped the place of the American housewife. And their brothers came and dug the sewers and builded the roads and did all those things of the hand which, done by the Pilgrim pioneer, evoke our ardent admiration, but done by dirty foreigners arouse in us an aristocratic contempt.

Susie was going to be a lady and Johnnie was going to be a gentleman. This was the prayer, the wish, the hope, and most pitiably laughable of all, the expectation of the American parent. And a gentleman and lady should soil their hands only in sport, never in honest work. God help us, we thought that smooth hands and a white collar made for breeding. No wonder, with all the youth of the country avoiding work, we became a race of salesmen.

Over night, the standard of living changed. For several decades, save in the slave-owning South, the standard of living of the rich and the poor had varied but slightly. We had no upper class, no lower, and none in between. Honestly bourgeois, it took our European servants to make us aware of class distinction. Schools at which the rich man's son must be registered an hour after his birth sprang into existence. Seminaries whose sole purpose was to venerate red-handed maidens with a cultural polish became crowded with the daughters of the wealthy. It was necessary for us to look like Englishmen and Englishwomen, or Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, in order that our imported servants might not grow homesick.

It was the pug dog period of American life, those eighties and nineties. Let us thank God that we have outgrown such crude barbarities and now

have a genuine aristocracy that has known what a country club is like for a generation and a half. Gone is the pug dog; hail the Pekinese! And if you are so crude that you discover little essential difference between the pug and the Peke, in the name of culture hold your vulgar peace.

Let us turn shudderingly away from the spectacle of grandfather packing pork, while we erect a monument to grandfather's grandfather who never packed the pork, but put it in the smokehouse for home consumption. Time will make country gentlemen of the Pilgrims, yet.

And, turning away from the vulgar scene of the nineties, our eyes light quite naturally upon the group gathered in the servants' hall of the Willoughby mansion on Fifth Avenue. Now that we are here, let us use our ears, also. We are trying to find out what we may about The Magnificent; perhaps his servants may shed light upon a subject that we like to fancy of importance.

It is good to enter this dining-hall. The world up-stairs is filled with argument, albeit unspoken, over matters of place and precedence. The world up-stairs has doubts as to its own security; it is eternally invaded by rank outsiders; every so often the failure of a bank reduced an aristocrat from his proud position. We begin to have a faint suspicion that the world up-stairs is founded solely upon money, and that birth and breeding and fine tradition have nothing to do with that world.

But down-stairs there is no striving. Edward the butler, is the son of a butler; he was born to the glamorous social prestige which is his. The Magnificent may fail but Edward will not worry; the world is crowded with servants' halls; in one of them he is sure to find his place. Comfortable, secure, rotund, red-faced, he is the picture of ease as, with a word of apology to the lady at the head of the table, he leans back in his chair and crosses his knees. The lady at the head of the table smiles pleasantly in acceptance of his apology.

"'Ave another glass of port, Mr. White," she says cordially.

Edward the butler accepts the invitation. He holds the newly filled glass to the light and eyes rather sternly the garnet liquid.

"Not so bad," he says. "Of course it can't be compared with what we used to 'ave from the cellar of 'Is Grace the Duke of Rockingham. But I will say that Mr. Willoughby does very well by himself, Mrs. Woodason."

The house-keeper nods assent. "Considering 'is lack of early advantages, 'e does very well, 'as a nice taste in things."

Edward raises his eyebrows. "I understand that Mr. Willoughby came of a quite aristocratic family."

Mrs. Woodason laughs. "'E was a mechanic in 'is early youth; worked with 'is 'ands."

Edward shakes his head ponderously. "Those things don't matter like they used to, Mrs. Woodason," he states. "'Is Grace of Rockingham 'as gone in for trade. Leastwise, I call it trade, though some call it invention. Flying machines 'e's trying to make, and only last September I saw 'im myself, in a suit of greasy cotton, in the shed where the machines are kept. No, I wouldn't say that 'ad anything to do with Mr. Willoughby's rightful station."

Mrs. Woodason defers to sober judgment; her mother was a scullery maid, and her father was an under gardener on the estate of a brewer; she does not feel qualified to debate delicate social matters with a gentleman whose father and grandfather and great grandfather have all been gentlemen's gentlemen in the family of His Grace the Duke of Rockingham.

From the foot of the table Miss Freda Wyberg speaks. She is a pert, pretty little blonde German girl, whose functions are those of chamber-maid.

"Tell us about the difference between English and American homes, Mr. White," she says.

Edward lowers his glass of port to the table; he stares rebukingly at Freda. "The chief difference, as I 'ave observed it, is that there is no understanding on the part of American employers of the difference between a chamber-maid and a butler. In a properly regulated English 'ome, the 'ouse-keeper and the butler and possibly one or two other ladies and gentlemen would dine by themselves, where their conversation would not be interrupted by common servants."

Little Freda colors furiously. "I didn't mean to be impertinent; I hope I know my place," she says.

"You only 'ope it; you don't know it," says Edward severely.

Mrs. Woodason archly taps Edward upon the wrist. "You 'ave such a witty way of speaking, Mr. White," she declares. "You'll be the death of me."

Edward expands beneath her flattery. "I did 'ave quite a reputation as a wit at 'ome," he admits. "But usually I try not to be sharp." He looks forgivingly at Freda. "It's all right, my dear."

Freda restrains her imminent tears. Edward, having proved his gentlemanly worth, turns again to the house-keeper. As though she, instead of Freda, had put the question, he answers it. One suspects him of a ready and willing loquacity.

“The main difference between English and American ’omes of the better class is that the English ’ome *is* a ’ome. It ain’t just a place to eat and sleep; it’s a place where you belong.”

“But don’t you think,” suggests the house-keeper, “that in time the American ’ouse will be a ’ome, too?”

Edward shakes his head. “It takes centuries to learn ’ow to live,” he declares. “The British gentleman ’as learned ’ow. For instance, even if ’is grandfather didn’t ’ave no money, ’e was able to see people with money, and watch ’ow they lived. ’Is son, making money, knew what it was for: to live like a gentleman. It takes time for that sort of thing. Over ’ere, they ’aven’t learned what to do. They try to imitate us at the same time that they’re trying to make more money. They don’t seem to realize that being a gentleman takes as much time as making money.”

Mrs. Woodason interjects a question. “Can’t a man do both?”

Edward considers the matter judicially. “ ’E can, but most frequently ’e don’t.”

Willets, the chauffeur, English by birth, asks a question.

“You consider Mr. Willoughby a gentleman, don’t you?”

Edward frowns. “I’ve already said that I considered ’im such. Back ’ome people would know that the mere fact that Edward White worked for a gentleman was sufficient proof that the gentleman was a gentleman. I’ve never worked for gentlemen that weren’t gentlemen.”

No one smiles at his rather involved explanation; one is forced to conclude that in the lexicon of servantry the word “gentleman” is susceptible to various shades of meaning.

Edward continues. “As I was saying, an English gentleman usually inherits ’is father’s, or ’is uncle’s, or ’is cousin’s ’ouse. It’s a ’ouse that ’as been lived in by generations of the same family. When ’e goes into it ’e expects to die there. But over ’ere people live in a ’ouse only so long as they can’t afford a better one. The ’ouse never becomes ’ome.”

He clears his throat, reaches for his glass of port, and solemnly drinks it. There is much nodding of heads around the table; Edward is unquestionably

a prophet not without honor.

“You make things so clear, Mr. White,” says Mrs. Woodason. “What do you think of American ladies?”

“I ’ope that I’m too much of a gentleman to think anything but nice things about any lady,” replies Edward gallantly. “But I will say that I’ve seen the finest ladies in all Europe at the castle of ’Is Grace. When the late queen visited us, I ’ad the opportunity of serving her and her entourage. And I want to say that among them all I’ve never seen a finer lady than Mrs. Willoughby.”

Somehow we begin to like Edward; his claims to discriminating knowledge seem to be founded on no idle boasts, but upon solid facts.

Mrs. Woodason shakes her head doubtfully. “I’ve never ’ad such opportunities as you, Mr. White,” she concedes. “And until the other night I would ’ave agreed with you. But you can’t tell me that any real lady will install a—” She pauses; she coughs delicately; she even colors faintly. Then boldly she resumes. “I never ’eard before of a lady putting a spittoon in a gentleman’s library, or carrying it to ’is bed-room.”

Edward waves a genial hand. “When in Rome you do as the Romans do, Mrs. Woodason. Our own beloved king, Hedward the Seventh, once drank out of a finger bowl rather than embarrass a guest who ’ad mistaken the finger bowl for a goblet. I consider that providing Mr. Dabney with a—er—the article you mentioned, is a perfect proof of her gentility.”

Mrs. Woodason, having already, on various occasions, yielded to Edward’s superior social authority, finds it difficult to contradict him now. She lets the point go by without further argument.

“Mr. Willoughby is one of the kindest men I ever met,” she says. “’E’s always thoughtful and considerate. ’Is manners are as fine as a duke’s.”

“Finer,” agrees Edward emphatically. “’Aving good manners don’t make anyone a gentleman. One ’as to be born to it. Some of the greatest gentlemen in England act like hogs. Mr. Willoughby is a gentleman, and ’as good manners, too. It’s a pity ’im and ’is wife don’t get along better. I suppose it’s because of ’is carryings-on though. That’s another difference between English and American people. An English lady wouldn’t mind; she’d expect it.”

Freda, the chamber-maid, dares rebuke. “It’s his all the time wanting to make money,” she says.

“Wouldn’t you think ’e’d be content with all ’e ’as?” asks Mrs. Woodason. “It’s miserly, ’oarding it up the way ’e does.”

Edward shakes his head. “It ain’t the money, Mrs. Woodason,” he explains. “It’s the fun ’e ’as in making it. Look at the way ’e gives it away to charity. It’s ’is sport, ’is pastime, like before ’e became interested in invention, raising pigs was to ’Is Grace.”

Mrs. Woodason nods sagely. “You do express things so remarkable clear, Mr. White. Tell us, just for fun, who you think is the finest American gentleman you’ve met.”

Edward scratches his head; he drinks another glass of port. Solemnly he renders his decision. “Mr. Dabney,” he announces.

His statement is received as though he had uttered an excruciatingly humorous remark; laughter shakes the chandelier. It is necessary for Willets to slap Mrs. Woodason upon the back before that lady can regain her composure.

“You’re ’aving us on, Mr. White,” she finally manages to say.

“Indeed I’m not,” asserts Edward the butler.

“But why do you say such a thing?” demands Willets. “’E’s nothing but the keeper of a public-’ouse.”

“’E’s a great gentleman for all that,” declares Edward. “The day ’e arrived ’e met me in the ’all. ’E put out ’is ’and and shakes mine.

“‘You’ve made a mistake, sir,’ says I. ‘I’m not a gentleman; I’m the butler.’ I was terribly upset.

“’E looks at me. ‘The ’ell you say,’ says ’e. ‘I ain’t a gentleman either; I’m just a man. So we can’t do any ’arm shaking ’ands. Shake,’ says ’e; and ’e grabs my ’and again.

“Now that’s what I call putting a person at ’is ease. Naturally I was frightfully embarrassed, and ’e knocks the embarrassment right out of me. It takes a great gentleman to cover up a mistake like that. I ’aven’t felt so proud since ’Is Grace slapped me on the back one night seven years ago; but ’Is Grace unfortunately ’ad been drinking ’eavily at the moment, so it wasn’t quite the same thing.”

Mrs. Woodason sniffs. “I should say not. ’Is Grace never chewed tobacco in ’is life.”

A grin shatters the solemn immobility of Edward's face. "Quite true, ma'am. 'Is Grace uses snuff."

Let us tip-toe out of the room before our ideals are shattered. Uncle Frank Dabney a great gentleman? Yet Edward the butler, who surely ought to know, to win whose golden opinion we would endure much, so declares. Upon our word, we begin to feel a real warm affection for Edward.

CHAPTER XVI

A package, about a foot square and half an inch thick, lies upon the desk of the city editor of the New York Trumpet. It is postmarked from Mombasa, British East Africa. Five weeks ago the ex-president of the United States landed in this remote port to begin his hunting trip in the jungle. Already civilization has lost track of him. Yet anything, bearing however remotely upon his activities, is of the greatest interest to the people of the world.

The city editor tears open the package. He calls loudly to the art editor, who is carefully cleaning a pipe with a broom-straw.

“Take a look at these, Mack,” cries the city editor.

Mack crosses to the city editor’s desk. He holds up the photographs that are the contents of the package and eyes them with approval. Mr. Roosevelt is seen talking with guides; he is admiring the huge proportions of a native bearer; he is seated with his son upon a platform erected over the cow-catcher of a railroad engine; beneath his white pith helmet his glasses shine and his strong teeth gleam.

“Where from?” asks Mack.

“In the morning’s mail; not from any of the agencies, though,” replies the city editor. He picks up a note and reads it. “From a man named Foyle,” he says slowly. “Says he arranged with a native photographer for these pictures, and study of steamship schedules convinces him that they will arrive at least three days before any of the photos of the regular correspondents arrive. Says he had photographer stay up all night developing these to catch mail boat. Encloses an article.”

“Any good?” asks Mack.

The city editor runs his eye down the first page of the typewritten manuscript. He begins the second page; then he turns back to the opening lines. A chuckle comes from the parted lips. “The boy can write,” he announces. “I’ll give it to Williams of the Sunday. Get busy with those pictures, Mack; we’ll beat the town.”

Let us leave the Trumpet’s city room, where we have seen the first dawning recognition of news and literary talent, and look upon the established correspondent. We find him emerging from a building on the Rue St. Honoré. It is not a particularly impressive building from which he

comes, but one can understand that comfort exists in the rooms above the pretty milliner's shop. Indeed one could understand a willingness to dispense with comfort for the sake of the smile which the pretty milliner flashes, through the opened door of her establishment, to the lodger from upstairs.

The correspondent sweeps his Homburg hat from his head with a gay gesture; he does not seem to mind the shrill mirth of the milliner's work-girls, nor even the laughter of the charming proprietress herself, as he stumblingly utters, in dreadful French, a salutation.

He walks half a block to the Rue de Castiglione; he stops at a florist's. The buxom proprietress beams upon him.

"Bo'jour, Monsieur Foyle," she cries. With her own fat fingers she places a flower in his buttonhole. She implores him to view himself in the mirror; surely nowhere in all of Paris is there so fetching a boutonniere; and absolutely nowhere in all of France is there a cavalier of such distinction. But, ah, nowhere in all the world is there so beautiful and gracious and charming a vendor of nosegays. Thus our correspondent returns flattery for flattery. In Paris one tries to be Parisian.

From the flower shop he proceeds to the Lotti. The concierge meets him with a bow and a smile. Monsieur Lotti himself escorts the late breakfaster to the restaurant, exchanging pleasantries, and with exquisite tact making no effort to hide his mirth at Monsieur Foyle's amazing French. The *maître d'hôtel* almost rushes from the rear of the room, where he is holding an animated conversation with three waiters and an omnibus, to aid the proprietor in selecting a seat and table for the guest. Francois and Simon and Pierre almost come to blows for the privilege of serving the gentleman. It is decided by the judicial Monsieur Lotti that all three may share the duty.

The proprietor, with injunctions that the Lotti chef must out-do himself this morning, leaves the room. Francois and Simon and Pierre, after dispensing certain vital news items concerning the wellbeing of the grandmother of Francois, the wife of Simon and the daughter of Pierre, which matters are heard by Foyle with grave or merry attention as is most fitting to each case, remove themselves to a decent distance. Monsieur Foyle devotes himself to his morning Times, Mail, Herald and Manchester Guardian. Also, be it noted, he does ample justice to the Spanish melon, the chocolate, the omelet and the rolls.

While he disposes of breakfast and the newspapers' grist of gossip, we are afforded an opportunity to study him. He is not the boy of twenty-five

who married Jennie Smollen; nor is he the older youth who was struck down by a Spanish bullet; nor yet is he the mature man who first threatened to take Ramsey Willoughby and later refused her.

His hair, in this summer of 1910, is as black as it was on the day, twenty years ago, when he settled the strike of the Pinnacle workmen. His gangling figure is as slim as it was then; his smile is as ready. There are few lines in the big face. The gray eyes are still keen, and their twinkle has not left them; they still seem to behold something humorous whose sight is denied to the rest of us. But back of that twinkle is an indefinable sadness as though the things that are humorous are also pitiful. His broad mouth, too, that smiles so easily, has, in repose, the faintest droop at the corners; among the few lines in his face are two that run from those corners to the nostrils. Somehow or other, he seems even more gentle of nature than he was a decade or two decades ago. Perhaps he looks wiser, as though he had suffered and from suffering had learned.

He finishes breakfast and newspapers at the same time. Now, perhaps, we shall see why the waiters seem so fond of him. It is true that he only paid fifty centimes for the flower; certainly no lavish extravagance of his called forth the attentions of the buxom seller of boutonnières. But a French waiter looks upon a patron, especially if that patron be an American, as a flowing fount of gold. Nothing but the distribution of great largesse could account for the florid welcome given him by the porter at the door, by the hotel owner, and by Francois and Simon and Pierre. Have we not read the writings of travelers?

So we watch him as he adds up his bill. It comes to four francs, fifty centimes, and from his pocket Foyle produces a five franc piece. That is all; and yet Simon who is technically his waiter, accepts the equivalent of ten American cents with loud protestations of gratitude. Francois and Pierre are as vociferous in their farewells as they were in their greetings. There is something behind this which we do not understand. If we hark back we shall recall that we have been puzzled once or twice before by this same Sam Foyle.

He chats a moment with the clerk at the desk outside; he exchanges badinage with the concierge. He seems as greatly amused at his own clumsy French as they do. At the corner of the Rue de Rivoli he is saluted by a gendarme. He returns the salutation gayly, and continues his leisurely stroll. Coming to the Rue Royale he turns to the right; a short way down the street he crosses it, and threads his way through tables upon the sidewalk, passing through the portals of Maxim's.

Shall we leave him in this notorious haunt of sin, the most famous—in deference to the prejudices of the day we are willing to call it infamous—bar in Europe? Or shall we with a highly moral curiosity follow him through the doors? Surely, if we are pure, the sights we may behold will do us no harm.

A little delayed then by our scruples, we arrive before the bar at the left of the entrance too late to hear his opening remarks or the words addressed to him. But we find him with a glass in his hand; worse; its rim is touching his lips; his rather prominent Adam's apple is moving; he is swallowing his morning cocktail. He sets down his glass, leans back in the settee along the wall and fills and lights a pipe.

On either side of him are two alert young men. Grouped about a marble-topped table before him are three other equally alert youths. They represent the leaders of the New York newspapers and of the American press associations.

"What's new?" asks Foyle of the group at large. "I haven't been to the Trumpet office yet."

"Now that Teddy's home again Europe has settled down to peaceful ways," says one of the young men. "I guess the Willoughby yarn is the only one worth while."

Foyle leans forward. "Jim Willoughby?"

"The Magnificent himself," says the other man.

Foyle has only returned last night from a fortnight's trip to Spain, gathering material for a series of Sunday stories. He is not up to date, and asks for information.

"You knew that his wife was over here, didn't you?" demands the spokesman of the others.

Foyle shakes his head. "I thought she was in Scotland."

"Sort of mysterious," says the other. "All of us got the tip when The Magnificent sailed last week. It was in the French and English papers."

"I've been sifting the sin from the sun in Seville, and finding that the first isn't nearly so warm as the second," laughs Foyle. "What's your mystery, Tom?"

Tom Reynolds, the brilliant representative of the Amalgamated Press, tersely explains. "They've been living apart for about a year; she's been making annual visits to Paris for some time; shopping trips; came over last

spring and hasn't been home since. Riley, of Gambodin and Riley, the international lawyers, made a trip to New York last month. There's a rumor that she is going to sue Willoughby for divorce in the French courts, and that Riley represents her, and went over to settle terms with The Magnificent. Now Willoughby has raced over here, she's back from Scotland, and there is, or there isn't, as juicy a little domestic story for the head-line writers as we've seen in some time."

"There isn't," says Foyle quietly.

Manners, who represents a great New York daily, eyes Foyle. "Your fact or your fancy?" he asks.

"My fancy," admits Foyle, "but I'll make it fact in half an hour."

Bellows, a trifle older than the rest, flicks ashes from his cigarette. "I suppose, with that winning way of yours, you'll just go over to the Meurice, send up your card, be received, and get the whole story in five minutes."

"Unless they've both changed so that they've completely forgotten old friends, that's about the way it will happen," laughs Foyle.

Sedley of the Crier speaks. "I hope to gosh you're right, Foyle," he declares, "but I didn't know that you traveled in such exclusive circles."

"I don't," replies Foyle. "But I knew them years ago."

Sedley is about thirty-five; he is the dandy of the corps of correspondents; many persons would be deceived by his meticulous dress into thinking that his thoughts never rose higher than his carefully tied cravat. As a matter of fact he is perhaps one of the ablest newspaper men in the world. His memory is remarkable. A sudden light gleams in his eyes now.

"The Magnificent comes from a New England town—Oldport, isn't it?" he asks.

Foyle nods. "My town," he says.

Into Sedley's brown eyes come a far away look. He is putting the names of Foyle and Foyle's home town together. They evoke articles that appeared in the Boston papers some years ago. Sedley nods shrewdly.

"Oh yes, I remember," he says. Sedley is a bit too shrewd to be popular with his fellows, despite his great ability.

Foyle smiles. "Yes, I was mayor for awhile. Impeachment proceedings were started against me, and I resigned. The papers all said that I quit under

fire.”

“Who the hell believes the papers?” demands young Reynolds hotly.

In the laugh that follows, Foyle arises, places his Homburg hat upon his thatch of black hair, places a coin for the garçon upon the table before him, and says, “I’ll be back at the usual hour, five, and tell you all what I find out.”

No one has anything else to say. They know that Foyle, according to usual newspaper custom, will attend to this branch of the day’s labors for all of them. In return they will give him information concerning other matters.

There is a silence after he leaves, finally broken by young Reynolds. “Sedley,” he says, “I should think that a man as clever as you are would know better than to insult a man about ten times as fine as you can ever hope to be.”

“What the deuce are you talking about?” demands Sedley. “How did I insult him? What did I say?”

“It isn’t what you say,” interposes Bellows. “It’s the nasty way you say it, Sedley.”

“My God, I can’t help remembering things, can I?” objects Sedley. “And that’s all I said: that I remembered that Oldport was Foyle’s town.”

“You ought never to say anything; just write it,” observes Manners.

It seems that men of shrewd ability are as fond of Sam Foyle as waiters and flower sellers and milliners. We wonder what his secret method of attracting friendship is. Yet as we watch him retracing his way along the Rue de Rivoli, and note him exchanging greetings with crossing-sweepers, we decide that perhaps there is no secret. So open a countenance could hardly veil a secret. Perhaps it is because he loves everyone that everyone loves him. Of course this is a trite and copy-book observation, but because a thing is trite and copy-book doesn’t absolutely prove its utter falsity.

He has not been bragging, either, for when his card is sent up to the apartment of Mrs. Ramsey Willoughby both she and her husband walk down the hall to the *ascenseur* to greet the caller. They seem to have forgotten that they were in the midst of a situation that might be termed tense when he was announced.

CHAPTER XVII

It is dark in the hall, and once they are in her rooms Ramsey seizes Foyle by the hands and draws him to the window overlooking the Tuileries Gardens. There, in the shaft of sunlight, she stares at him.

“Sam Foyle, you’re just homelier than ever,” she declares.

“Ramsey Willoughby, you’re more beautiful than ever,” asserts Foyle.

“For that, sir, I think I shall kiss you,” she says.

“Why think about it? Why not do it?” asks Foyle.

She steps forward; she lifts her cheek to him. He shakes his head, refusing the tempting offer. “You were going to kiss me,” he states.

Her head turns swiftly, and in the movement her lips brush his. Certainly no loverlike caress; nothing to evoke a blush; yet, as she retreats from him, the color floods her cheeks. It is not unbecoming, this warm flush. It lends a certain virginal air to her, this readiness to color. Indeed, still, but for the slight thickness of her hips and torso which we have already mentioned, Ramsey Willoughby has preserved the youth of her figure. Her face in this thirty-eighth year of her life might be the face of a woman slightly past her late girlhood. Although she is modern enough to use cosmetics, she hardly needs them, save late at night, during those hours when the toll that nature exacts may not be denied even by the most juvenile of matrons. She is still a woman to make men pause and stare.

The Magnificent looks on smilingly. “I didn’t know that you two were chummy enough to kiss,” he says.

“I keep my secrets better than you do,” retorts Ramsey. There is perhaps, even in this lovely nature, a tendency to wifely tartness of expression. It is Willoughby’s turn to color; he does so.

“You’re looking fine, Jim,” interposes Foyle. He senses the strain; it is atmospheric.

“Feeling fine,” says Willoughby. “Smooth trip over. First rest I’ve had in a coon’s age.”

“That so?” asks Foyle. “I had an idea that you millionaires did nothing but rest.”

The Magnificent eyes him. “If we weren’t looking after our millions every minute, some one would be taking them away from us.”

“Suppose they did?” asks Foyle.

“Answer that, Jim,” says Ramsey. “This gentleman, according to the card which he sent up to us, represents the New York Trumpet. His hundreds of thousands of readers would be delighted to know the philosophy of life of Jameson Briggs Willoughby. If any,” she adds, a bit too sweetly.

“It would make mighty interesting reading,” admits Foyle.

The Magnificent laughs uncertainly. “I’ll get some bright young man to write it out for me, Sam. Then I’ll memorize it, and tell you all about it. What have you been doing? I’ve seen the name Foyle signed to articles in the Trumpet this past year, but hanged if I ever dreamed it was you.”

“So have I,” says Ramsey. “And if you’ve been in Paris all these months without coming to see me, I want to know why.”

For answer Foyle looks at her; Ramsey colors slightly again. Foyle’s look seems to tell her something that is not unpleasing to her. He has not, then, forgotten a certain day when they picnicked on the beach.

“If you’d signed your first name as well as your last, we’d have known,” says Willoughby. “I’d have bragged all over New York that I was a friend of the great correspondent.”

“It’s vanity,” says Ramsey. “How could there be more than one Foyle?”

Foyle laughs. “It’s sheer accident. After I got my present job I signed my first cables with my last name and the cable editor ran them without change, even to the signature. That’s all.”

“But how did you happen to do this?” asks Willoughby.

Foyle shrugs his broad shoulders. The suit of English tweeds which he is wearing accentuates the ungainliness of his figure, making his shoulders seem even broader than they are.

“I didn’t come here to be interviewed; I came to get an interview. Are you two silly people going to be divorced?”

Ramsey is the first to rally from the sudden shock of the question. She turns to her husband.

“Are we, Jim?” she asks.

“It’s the first I’ve heard of it,” declares The Magnificent. There is something more than mere disclaimer in his tone. If he were anyone other than The Magnificent we would say that there was a hint of pleading in his voice. But pleading seems so foreign to such a person that we hesitate to believe in it. Men with bony jutting chins, hard green eyes beneath bushy brows, strong aggressive noses, and full lipped firm mouths are not the pleading sort. They command; they do not ask: they take; they do not give.

But Ramsey doubtless knows her husband far better than we can ever hope to know him, and into her violet eyes comes a light of triumph. Perhaps it is not exactly that, however, for the violet eyes seem to glisten; it may be that there is a tear behind her triumph. All triumphs are partly tears.

Foyle turns to her. “May I state that Mrs. Willoughby was as surprised at the question as her husband?”

“More surprised,” says Ramsey.

“How did such a silly story get started?” demands Willoughby.

Foyle lifts his irregular eyebrows. “All I know is that a Paris lawyer is supposed to represent Ramsey and that he took a flying trip to New York, supposedly to see you, and that you immediately came to Europe—”

“All true,” interrupts The Magnificent. “Ramsey was dickering for a house in Paris, and I thought that she was being cheated. It’s all straightened out; the papers will be signed this afternoon.”

Foyle heaves a sigh of relief. “I knew that you couldn’t be that foolish.” His speech has the liberty of an old friend.

The Magnificent hastily leaves the subject. “Tell us about yourself,” he orders.

“Nothing much to tell,” says Foyle. “It seemed to me that there wasn’t much left in Oldport. Of course I still had friends; I could make a living. But what’s making a living? A friend of mine, skipper of an ocean tramp, was going to South Africa. He offered me a job as super-cargo. I took it. After we left Cape Town we went to Australia. We came back to the east coast of Africa. We touched at Mombasa the day that Roosevelt arrived there. I happened to see him, and it occurred to me that photographs of him would be of value. I had them taken, looked up steamship schedules, wrote a little article and sent them along to the New York Trumpet. Not knowing whether they were using the stuff or not, but having been bitten by the writing bug, I sent them some more stuff from Calcutta. I gave them my next address, which was Honkong. When I got there I found a cable waiting for me

offering me a job as assistant in the Paris office. I took it, and they seem to be liking what I give them.”

“I should think they would,” cries Willoughby. “You’re the only man that ever got humor into a cablegram. When you get back to New York you’ll be a hero.”

“To think that Oldport should have produced a great journalist,” says Ramsey admiringly.

“It has produced a great financier,” says Foyle.

Ramsey purses her lips. “Financiers grow on every bush.”

“There’s the wife for you,” says The Magnificent with a grimace at Foyle. “If I were the correspondent she’d sneer at journalism.”

“‘Sneer’ is not a pretty word,” objects Ramsey.

“I withdraw it,” says The Magnificent. “Let us say ‘jeer’.”

“Even that,” says Ramsey, “doesn’t seem to be flattering.”

“Well, how about ‘fleur’?” offers The Magnificent. “It’s the only other word that rhymes.”

Ramsey eyes him judicially. “I’d have to look that word up in the dictionary before I could accept it. But I don’t think it really expresses me.”

A trifling bit of by-play, of no particular dramatic or humorous significance to us, but filled with meaning to the Willoughbys. For lightness has departed from their conversation with each other many years ago. Indeed there has been practically no conversation at all between them during the past year. They have met once for a day in England but their talk was formal. It seems as though the presence of Foyle has brought something to the relationship of husband and wife that has been lacking.

“Tell me about Uncle Frank,” says Foyle.

Ramsey laughs joyously. “On his last birthday I decided to buy him something really beautiful. I searched all Paris for something that would really please him. You know Uncle Frank likes beautiful things, for all he may seem crude. Well, I bought him a Grecian vase; its lines were simply divine. And what do you suppose the old reprobate wrote me?”

“Give it up,” says Foyle.

“He said it was the handsomest cuspidor he’d ever seen,” says Ramsey.

Foyle laughs. "I'd give a lot to see him," he declares. "If I can ever save up money enough to have a vacation at home, I'm going to spend it in The Commercial House."

For a moment, surprisingly, it seems that Ramsey is going to burst into tears. One suspects that the pride which has separated her from her husband has not conquered her homesickness. But she is a woman of the world. Her poise does not need to be restored; it restores itself. She glances at an enamel and gold clock upon a desk.

"My hairdresser will be here in one minute," she announces. "And I can't put her off; she's as haughty as a duchess, and fifty times as important. You'll have to go—both of you. But you'll come back, won't you, Sam?"

The Magnificent looks dazed. "Am I invited, too?" he asks.

Ramsey looks at him; it is somewhat over a year since he postponed the trip to Oldport and went to Mexico at Cranahan's behest. Save for that single formal meeting in England, these two, husband and wife, have not seen each other. To-day The Magnificent, having hastened across the Atlantic to persuade his wife not to buy a residence in Paris, but to return to America, has yielded to her cool aloofness, and has agreed to the purchase. He knows that their separation will be final once Ramsey is installed in her Paris home. He loves his wife; he always has loved her; he always will love her; yet because he knows he has not played the game, he has yielded to her wish for separation. Now he cannot keep from his voice his hurt. To be ignored by the woman who has become in her aloofness more precious than a dozen Minta Haydons is too much for his pride. His heart leaps and his cheeks flush as she replies,

"Why, I'm getting myself beautified for you, Jim."

The Magnificent cannot trust himself to reply. He doesn't know what has happened to change her attitude; neither does she. Perhaps the sight of an old friend has aroused a different sort of pride in her, a more honest pride than the false one that has made her refuse to forgive a man who has not understood. For it is not the sin of the flesh that Ramsey has found it hardest to condone; it is the sin of the heart. And Willoughby has sinned against her in his heart; he has committed the gravest sin that husbands may commit: the sin of not trying to understand.

During their conversation, before Foyle came, The Magnificent has let no hint of the feelings of his heart creep into his speech. He has argued that separation for long periods is bad for the boys. This has merely hardened

Ramsey in her determination to acquire the Paris residence. For the boys are away at school practically nine months a year now. She does not want them to live in New York, and Willoughby will live nowhere else. She sees the boys as much in Europe almost as she would in New York. In fact she has just left them in Scotland where they are learning golf in its home.

But now something has come into The Magnificent's voice that is more potent than any mere words, uttered by the million, could be. Her lovely bosom rises and falls in a sudden tumult, in response to that subtle something.

She walks to the door with her husband and Foyle. She makes an engagement for tea in the Bois. It is to be followed by a motor ride and dinner. She detains her husband in the doorway as Foyle goes on ahead.

"Perhaps you'd better not close for the house to-day, Jim," she whispers.

He stares incredulously at her.

"And you might buy two cabins on the Lusitania for next week," she suggests.

His heart almost stops beating. During the past year since he broke with Minta Haydon there has been no other woman in his life. The sight of Ramsey has aroused in him the old fever for possession that made him plead with her twenty years ago to advance the date of their marriage. For the hold of the Minta Haydons may be broken, but the grip of the Ramseys endures.

He becomes suddenly bold. "Why not one cabin?" he asks.

She has blushed before this morning, but now the flame surges up to the roots of her still fair hair, into which no trace of gray has crept.

"Why not?" she breathes.

He leans toward her. "It will be our second honeymoon, Ramsey," he says thickly.

A touch of that odd virginal manner of hers, a manner that blends so seductively with the passion that is as evident in her, to the discerning, as it is in Minta Haydon, makes her draw back.

"You mustn't say that," she whispers.

But he is emboldened now. "Why not? It will be, won't it?"

"Well, maybe," she concedes. Then she almost pushes him through the door. She runs to the mirror in her bed-room. Her face is still suffused with

color. She is happy for the first time since the moment when Cranahan's telephone message sent The Magnificent from her New York boudoir to Mexico and herself to Europe.

And because she is happy she gives free rein to her emotions. Pride has kept her in the past from weeping; joy conquers pride and permits her tears. The coiffeuse has to wait fifteen minutes before she is admitted to the presence of Madame.

Down-stairs in the lobby of the hotel, Willoughby cannot restrain his exultation. He puts his arm about Foyle's shoulders.

"It's great to see you, old man," he declares. "What's all this damn' nonsense about saving up for a vacation? Don't you know that all you ever have to do is draw a draft on me for any amount? I said *any amount* and that's what I mean."

"That's mighty good of you, Jim," replies Foyle. "If I ever need it, I'll do it."

The Magnificent lights a cigar. "I'm not going to buy that house, after all. Ramsey just said I didn't need to."

Foyle grips his hand. "She is worth a million other women, Jim."

"I've found that out," says Willoughby. The perfume of his cigar combines with Ramsey's sudden surrender, to make him expansive.

"I made a damn' fool of myself over a woman, and Ramsey never got over it until to-day. Never again," he says fervently. "I mean it," he adds.

"I believe you," says Foyle. "Then that divorce—"

"We hadn't got that far, but we easily might have. I'll give you a bigger story than that. Cranahan is retiring from all active participation in business. I'm taking his place. You can quote me."

Foyle whistles. "That's a real bit of news. Why, it's a whale of a story. My goodness, Jim, that makes you the most powerful financier in America."

"And if America doesn't mean the world, it damn' soon will," says The Magnificent.

We can pardon the boast, so seldom does he brag. And we are rather inclined to agree with him. We share his patriotic fervor.

CHAPTER XVIII

At two o'clock the following morning continued pounding upon the door of his room awakens Foyle. For a moment he lies in bed, stupefied with sleep. And before his mind can arrive at the present it must traverse the immediate past. Tea in the Bois; a motor ride; dinner at the Meurice. Not an extraordinary series of events, but highly exciting to Foyle. To talk over old times with The Magnificent; to look at Ramsey and suffer pains whose poignancy but renders them more pleasurable; to hear her voice. . . . To him she is as desirable now as she was twenty years ago. Moreover, it is a long time since Foyle has seen old friends, and even ones less dear to him—he has never lost his boyhood fondness for Jim Willoughby—would make a day memorable.

Irritation creeps into the heart of the person knocking on the door. He becomes dissatisfied with the effect created by the impact of his knuckles against unyielding wood, and lifts his voice. Foyle suddenly sits up, crossing, with the movement, the border-line between dreams and realities. He swings his long legs out of bed, and gropes with his feet for a pair of slippers, at the same time switching on the electric light, whose bulb is in such close proximity to the bed that we believe this man frequently reads himself to sleep.

He runs his fingers through his tangled black hair, then stretches in a mighty yawn. He cries to the person in the hall outside to contain himself in patience for another moment. A grumbling response comes through the door. Then Foyle opens it.

Before him stands a messenger from the cable office. He gives Foyle an envelope, and accepts gratefully a ten centime tip. He understands that the latter part of the delay was due to Foyle's searching for this piece of money. He departs in high good humor.

Foyle opens the envelope and reads the telegram. It is from the managing editor of the Trumpet, and states that Cranahan indignantly denies any intention of retiring from business, and that he further declares his disbelief that Willoughby has given the interview attributed to him. The editor orders Foyle to secure an immediate affirmation of the interview.

Before switching off the light again Foyle sits a moment on the edge of his bed and smokes a cigarette. He has been correct in his belief that the

announcement of Cranahan's retirement would be a big story. But Cranahan's denial makes Willoughby's statement even more important. Certainly the managing editor must have been greatly stirred to cable Foyle at his home address instead of merely at the office. Unquestionably a duplicate of the cable would be at the office in the morning. Well, he could hardly rout *The Magnificent* out of bed at this hour of the night. So he quenches his cigarette and goes back to sleep.

He breakfasts at the usual hour, wearing his usual boutonniere, his patronage fought for in the usual manner by Francois and Simon and Pierre. He exchanges the customary pleasantries with the concierge at the Lotti, with the gendarme regulating the traffic at the corner of the Rue de Rivoli and the Rue Royale, and with the porter at the door of Maxim's. The memory of the cablegram received last night seems not to disturb him.

But once within the portals of the restaurant, his manner of easy unconcern leaves him. Perhaps he is more sensitive than most people. At any rate he is immediately conscious, as he crosses to the bar, of chilliness in the atmosphere. Sedley, immaculate to a dandified degree, is the first to speak.

"A fine bunch of goats you've made of all of us," he says viciously.

Foyle removes his Homburg hat and wipes his forehead with his handkerchief. The morning is almost oppressively warm. He nods to the bartender who immediately starts the composition of the morning cocktail. Foyle leans against the bar.

"I suppose you mean, Sedley, that New York has wired Cranahan's denial of the story I gave you yesterday," he says quietly.

"Marvelous man," exclaims Sedley. "You guessed it the very first time."

"I can't see how Cranahan's denial of what Willoughby says affects us," remarks Foyle. "We aren't responsible for errors made by *The Magnificent*."

Sedley whistles softly. "Certainly there's nothing the matter with your nerve, Foyle," he states.

Foyle accepts his cocktail from the bartender. He lifts the glass to his lips. "Happy days," he salutes the group of correspondents.

Ordinarily various responses would have been made to his toast. A muttered word, the wave of a hand, the nodding of a head, the reciprocal lifting of a glass: these, any of them, would have been the proper and natural response. But to-day none of them are in evidence. Instead, the group of

men seated on the bench against the wall, and about the marble-topped tables, simply stare questionably at him.

Foyle slowly puts down his glass, its contents untouched. He looks from Sedley to Bellows, and from Bellows to Manners, and from Manners to young Tom Reynolds. But even in the eyes of the latter, his closest friend in the group, he reads doubt. Slowly his tall figure straightens. It seems to lose its gangling quality; it suddenly seems closely knit, invested with dignity.

“Perhaps,” he said quietly, “explanations are in order.” His gray eyes fix upon the face of Sedley. “Suppose you make them,” he suggests to the correspondent of the Crier.

“Gladly,” Sedley accepts the challenge. “You didn’t come here at five yesterday as you told us you would do. Instead, you telephoned and I talked with you. You said that you had seen both of the Willoughbys; in fact, that you were taking tea with them that very moment at Armenonville. You said that both of them emphatically denied any thought of divorce. Then you very generously”—Sedley’s thin lips curl slightly beneath his blonde mustache—“told me that Willoughby had given you an exclusive story, but that in view of the fact that you had been representing all of us when you interviewed him, you felt that the exclusive story ought to be shared by the rest of us. Am I correct thus far?” His voice is acidly polite.

Foyle nods slowly in assent. “Thus far,” he says quietly. There may be an implication in his voice, although he seems to us too frank a person for that. But Sedley colors angrily.

“Correct me if I make any mistakes,” he invites Foyle.

“I will,” replies Foyle laconically.

“I asked you,” continued Sedley, “what the exclusive story was. You told me that Willoughby had announced to you Cranahan’s retirement from business, and Willoughby’s succession to his place. You said that Willoughby gave permission to quote him. Is that right?”

“Absolutely,” replies Foyle. “What’s the matter with you boys, anyway? This isn’t the first time that one prominent person has denied the statement of another prominent person is it?”

“No,” admits Sedley. “But it’s the first time in my recollection that the foreign correspondent of a New York newspaper has been flatly contradicted by the man whom he professed to quote.”

“I don’t like that word ‘professed,’ ” says Foyle quietly.

“We don’t like having to cable retractions to our newspapers,” snaps Sedley.

“You mean to tell me that The Magnificent has denied making the statement about Cranahan?” asks Foyle.

He puts his question directly to Sedley. By tacit consent the conversation has been confined to these two. Sedley replies to him.

“Shortly after midnight I received a wire from the New York office. It said that Cranahan denied his retirement. I managed to get Willoughby on the telephone. I got Mrs. Willoughby first, and she had me connected with her husband. Evidently they’re occupying two different suites.” His lips curl again in the sneer that has not won him any great measure of popularity among his fellows. “Of course that doesn’t mean that they’re contemplating divorce, but neither does it mean that they are particularly intimate. However, let that pass.”

“Let’s,” suggests Foyle. “I’d hate to be called a liar twice in the same moment.” His voice is calm; but there is a light in his gray eyes that is not exactly amicable.

Sedley is not at all lacking in courage. “No one here has called you a liar, yet, Foyle,” he says. “Even Willoughby didn’t say that.”

“Exactly what did he say?” asks Foyle, still quietly.

“I read him my cable from New York containing Cranahan’s denial. He told me that he had never made any such statement. Naturally I was surprised. I told him so. He admitted that you had spent several hours in the company of himself and his wife yesterday. He said that you and he were friends of long standing. But he also said that he had never made the statement attributed to him by you, and that you must have completely misunderstood him.

“I think that puts it up to you, Foyle.”

Foyle looks at him; he looks at each of the others in turn. He finds something akin to sorrow on the faces of all except Sedley; young Tom Reynolds, indeed, looks as one might who has received a mortal blow.

“I’ll have to see Willoughby,” says Foyle. “There’s some mistake.”

Sedley laughs mockingly. “I rather think there is,” he says.

Foyle ignores him. “I’ll see Willoughby as soon as I can. I’ll make an appointment for him to receive you all and straighten this matter out. My

God,” he becomes suddenly aroused, “why on earth should you boys be so willing to believe that I deliberately deceived you? I thought you were my friends! Why would I lie to my friends?”

“No one has used the word ‘lie’ but yourself. You seem fond of it,” says Sedley. “You ask us what your motive might be? Well, as I recollect the matter over several years, wasn’t Willoughby, or Willoughby’s friends, mixed up in the affair that resulted in your resignation as mayor of Oldport?”

“You mean that I might try to get even by involving him in trouble with Cranahan?” asks Foyle.

Sedley shrugs his shoulders. “There’s a possibility, isn’t there?”

Foyle eyes him. “Knocking a man down doesn’t prove anything, does it, Sedley?”

“You’re at liberty to find out if it does,” replies the Crier man. Certainly Sedley does not lack physical courage. Neither does Foyle, but after a moment of silence, a moment in which the others are tense, their muscles rigid, ready to interfere, Foyle turns and walks from the room. After all, Sedley is only repeating what Jim Willoughby has told him. Foyle cannot blame Sedley. He knows, too, that, after all, Sedley will apologize handsomely when Willoughby has cleared up the misunderstanding. Sedley may be small of spirit, but he is a man for all that. Realizing how easily Foyle could thrash the Crier correspondent we are forced to respect him for refraining.

He walks directly to the Meurice. On this journey he does not see the greeting waved to him by the gendarme. His eyes seem to be turned inward as though he is searching his own soul. He sends up his name to The Magnificent and is told to ascend to his apartment. He finds Willoughby fully dressed, eating a late breakfast.

The Magnificent smilingly waves Foyle to a seat. “Have some coffee, Sam? Not that any Frenchman ever learned how to make it, but still it’s wet and warm.”

Foyle comes directly to the point. “What’s the idea, Jim, in denying the interview you gave me yesterday?”

The Magnificent laughs; one suspects that his mirth is not too genuine. “Teddy Roosevelt set the example, and you can’t be a good American unless you deny to-day what you said yesterday,” he says.

“But aside from the little tribute to a great man, the sweet flattery of imitation, why?” demands Foyle.

The Magnificent grimaces. “A rotten trick of me, Sam, but it had to be done.”

Once more Foyle asks, “Why?”

“It’s this way,” explains The Magnificent. “A select few of us have decided that Cranahan is an old fogey, behind the times, blocking progress with his too great conservatism. Of course he has too much money to be got entirely rid of, but we decided to edge him out by degrees. If I had remained in New York, instead of coming over here, he’d have *been* out by now. But my absence weakened us. However, I received cables on my arrival here telling me that a little hint would not do any harm. So I gave you the interview. I thought that the old man would lie down under it. But he has lots of friends and powerful connections. He’s showing a little fight. So I received cablegrams last night from friends of mine, who are also friends of his. As soon as newspapermen went to see him about his retirement from business, he told these friends of mine of my statement. They cabled me to withdraw the statement. They got a promise from Cranahan to retire next fall, but if we fight, now, he’ll fight, too. That would be bad for business.

“Cranahan’s a proud old boy. When he retires he wants to make the announcement himself. And when a man is worth a hundred million dollars, and controls a billion more, one has to consider his pride. I’m considering it.”

“I wish you’d consider mine,” says Foyle mildly.

“I’ll make it all right with the Trumpet people,” laughs The Magnificent. “I own a block of stock in that paper.”

“How about making it right with my associates? They consider me an unqualified liar,” objects Foyle.

The Magnificent abandons his pretence of light good humor.

“I’m sorry, old man,” he says earnestly. “When I gave you the statement I had no idea in the world that Cranahan would fight. But you can see how a reiteration of my statement would seem now.”

“I’m so darned petty-minded that I can only see my side of it,” says Foyle. “Every correspondent in Paris will think me a deliberate lying faker. The Trumpet editors will think the same.”

“Damn it,” cries The Magnificent, “I’ll buy the Trumpet to-day! I’ll wire my lawyers to buy the majority of the stock. I know where it is and how much it will cost. I’ll make you managing editor. How’s that?”

“It’s magnificent, Jim, like yourself,” concedes Foyle, “but it isn’t what I want. I want back the good name you’ve taken from me.”

Willoughby grins. “Do you know what you sound like, Sam?”

“Like a girl pleading for her seducer to marry her,” says Foyle. “But, hang it, Jim, that’s what I feel like. I don’t want to be managing editor of the Trumpet. I want the gang here to know that I’m not a liar.”

He is smiling, but his eyes are fixed purposefully upon The Magnificent, who stirs uneasily beneath that steady stare.

“To start a fight with Cranahan might, as I just told you, be bad for business,” says The Magnificent. “It might bring on another panic. It would certainly upset public confidence in the leaders of finance.”

“A lot of confidence in me has been upset,” asserts Foyle.

Willoughby’s brows, gray and thick, hump in the middle, in their old fashion. His thin upper lip draws in. The sensuous lower lip protrudes stubbornly. “I’d rather give you a million dollars, Sam,” he declares.

“I wouldn’t take ten million,” retorts Foyle.

They stand there—The Magnificent has risen and has been walking up and down—looking at each other. A knock upon the door breaks the tension. Willoughby calls, “Come in.”

Ramsey enters the room.

CHAPTER XIX

There is a pretty color upon Ramsey's cheeks as she knocks upon the door. She has felt that, in coming to her husband's apartment, she is doing something that is almost naughty. The knowing smile of the elevator man, and the sympathetic enthusiasm of the maid on Willoughby's floor, who directs her to the apartment of monsieur her husband, have contributed to her feeling of indiscretion. It is, however, a delicious feeling, one that she would like to prolong.

Indeed, perhaps this feminine desire on her part was responsible for Willoughby's being sent to his own rooms last night. For on their return from the party *à trois*, Willoughby clearly shows a willingness, now that Foyle has left them, to continue the party *à deux*. Had he followed his attitude of pleading by a resumption of his familiar one of masterfulness, he would undoubtedly have crashed through her petty defences of pride.

But he has kept to his manner of humility. He has never quite understood what it is in him that affronts and hurts Ramsey, that drives them apart. Now that she is apparently at the point of forgetting whatever it is that has separated them, he is reluctant to do anything hasty. He has waited years to re-win her; he will not jeopardize his victory by a too great impetuosity. So, when he has but to reach out his hand and draw her to him, he permits caution to rule him.

Little sleep has Ramsey that night. Yet as she knocks upon the door her face is not haggard, as one might expect the face of any woman of thirty-seven to be after a restless night. Indeed, it is fresh and blooming, and her eyes have that misty look which happiness brings. For if The Magnificent feels that he is winning a victory, Ramsey feels exactly the same. And she has not had other campaigns to help her to forget that a battle is being waged.

It is a gentle impulse that suddenly makes her hasten her toilet. So patently does Willoughby desire her that it seems cruel to keep to her aloofness. With such reasoning, at any rate, she argues against the pride that bids her go slowly. Like all people of generous nature, Ramsey, when she has won, disdains to impose harsh terms upon the vanquished. Perhaps, though, it is a hunger for love, as much as generosity, that moves her.

The color upon her cheeks spreads to her throat and forehead as she enters the room and sees that Willoughby already has a guest, and that the guest is Foyle. The presence of a stranger would not have embarrassed her, but the finding of Foyle in the company of her husband is disconcerting. We cannot understand this, any more than we can understand why people who will go to extremes to hide domestic discords from the members of their families, will discuss them frankly over the bridge table or in Pullman smoking cars.

Her own confusion makes her oblivious to the tenseness of the situation upon which she has intruded.

“Oh,” she says blankly. “I didn’t know anyone was with you.”

“Good old Sam isn’t ‘anyone’,” laughs The Magnificent. “He’s somebody.” The aplomb that always characterizes him does not desert him now.

Ramsey is too much a woman of the world to be unable to cover up her temporary loss of *savoir faire*. “I should say he is somebody,” she says warmly. “Have you finished breakfast, or am I in time to join you?” she asks her husband as she gives her hand to Foyle.

The Magnificent is relieved at her presence. He has not meant to injure Foyle by his denial of the interview he gave to the correspondent yesterday; he has only meant to protect himself and those vast interests which he helps to control, and which have come to him to seem more important than any individual, or group of individuals, or the nation itself. In fact, those interests seem to him to *be* the nation. He is one of the many Americans who did not smile when Mr. Baer spoke of the divine right of the coal operators; he is one of those who indignantly disapproved of Dr. Pentecost when he refused the gift of a certain millionaire on the ground that his money was tainted. He is one of the many who do not smile when sycophants speak of the great millionaires as stewards performing the tasks entrusted to them by a discerning God. He is one of the many who firmly believe that big business is not merely moral, but is the higher morality itself.

That Foyle’s injuries could not be assuaged by such offers as he has just made is not understandable to him. He would not hurt Foyle merely to save himself hurt, but when business might also be injured he cannot consider Foyle. For he tells the literal truth when he says that a quarrel between himself and Cranahan might precipitate a panic in the financial world; who is Foyle that he should be considered more important than the stability of finance?

“You certainly are in time,” he tells Ramsey. “Only, had I known that I was to be thus honored, I’d have had flowers here. I’ll ring for a waiter.”

There is something hasty in his voice and manner that, having had time to conquer her confusion, Ramsey notices. She looks from him to Foyle and discovers that the face of the latter is more grim than she has ever noticed it to be. She is suddenly aware of the tensivity in the air.

“Are you two boys quarreling?” She blurts out the question almost without realizing what she is saying.

The Magnificent turns from the telephone where he has been giving precise orders to the steward on duty at “room service.”

“Quarreling? Why on earth should Sam and I quarrel?” he asks.

Ramsey laughs nervously. “It was a silly question to ask; but you two seem so—funny.”

The Magnificent’s laughter is almost boisterous. “That’s a chance for you, Sam,” he cries. “I’ve been called everything else by the gentlemen of the press, but never ‘funny’. I’d like to have the papers get a little humor out of me, instead of finding me a source of menace.”

Ramsey comes immediately to his defense. “It’s only the yellow journals that do that,” she declares. We find her almost amusing. Rather, we would find her amusing if we did not have pity for her. For there is nothing really humorous in the spectacle of a woman fighting for her love.

“I know,” responds The Magnificent, “but there are too many of them. It’s a shame that more of our better citizens haven’t realized the possibilities of the press and gone in for publishing newspapers.”

“Quite a few papers are owned by our better citizens,” says Foyle, mildly.

“I know that, but more of them should go in for publishing. It’s a menace to the nation, the yellow press. We are flooded with immigrants who naturally, being ignorant, uneducated, almost illiterate, are attracted by glaring headlines and crude cartoons. They see, in type and picture, vilifications of the men who are *making* America. They believe these news articles and cartoons. If the people at the bottom have no faith in the people at the top, how long can society endure?”

“Why don’t you buy some newspapers?” suggests Ramsey. In the glamour that has suddenly surrounded The Magnificent—for her—she is whole-heartedly in accord with what he is saying. At another time she might

analyze his speech and find that it is founded on selfishness. But just now her heart is completely master of her mind, and Willoughby has resumed his old sway as master of her heart.

“I’m going to,” says her husband. “I’ve just offered to buy the Trumpet and make Sam its managing editor.”

Ramsey looks at Foyle. “So that’s why you were so serious.”

Foyle looks at her; it seems a full minute before he replies. He reads her easily. He knows how much, deep down in her heart, she loves her husband. He also realizes how deeply he, Sam Foyle, loves this wife of another man. It is a great love which he holds for her; it is a love that is willing to give everything, and to forgive everything. Even that day when she offered to go away with him; he has forgiven that. For he knew that no matter what she considered, at that moment, her intentions to be, they were not what she considered them. He knew that she was merely trying to use him as a means to regain her husband. And he did not bear resentment then, nor does he bear it now.

He loves her so much that he places her happiness above everything else in the world, even his own honor. He resigned from the mayoralty of Oldport in order that no cloud should cast its shadow over the Willoughby menage. That the resignation made him seem venal did not matter. He was nothing; Ramsey Willoughby was all.

He knows that there has been estrangement between these two, and he can tell that the breach is closing, indeed, is closed. Who is he to re-open it?

“Yes,” he says. “That is why I am so serious.”

Willoughby sighs with relief. For a moment he has feared that Sam would not have ordinary common sense. Sam has shown so little common sense in the past that The Magnificent has little reason to expect him to evince any now.

“You’re going to take it, Sam?” he asks.

Foyle’s eyes seem suddenly sad, weary. “We’ll talk it over later, Jim,” he answers. “Meanwhile—I’ll think about it.”

He picks up his hat from the chair on which he has placed it. The waiter is just entering the room, staggering beneath the breakfast tray ordered for Ramsey.

“I’ll run along,” says Foyle.

Politely Ramsey asks him to stay, but she does not urge him. She is fond of Sam Foyle, but she loves her husband, and it is a long time since she and Willoughby have breakfasted together. The Magnificent follows Foyle from the room to the elevator.

“Is it all right, Sam?” he asks.

Foyle twists the Homburg hat in his strong, big-knuckled fingers.

“You know it isn’t, Jim,” he answers. “It’s all wrong.”

“But if you’re made managing editor of the Trumpet, that’s answer enough to any tale of your having written a fake,” argues Willoughby.

“I couldn’t be managing editor of any paper,” objects Foyle. “I don’t know anything about running a newspaper.”

“Rot! You can learn, can’t you?”

“I wouldn’t want it, anyway,” says Foyle. “I’m happy doing my work here.”

“Then continue that work.” The Magnificent laughs. “You needn’t worry about the Trumpet doing anything to you. That was a good hunch of mine, to buy the paper. I’ll cable New York to-day.”

Foyle shakes his head. “Don’t do it for me,” he says. “I think I’m through corresponding, Jim.”

The Magnificent’s eyes show vexation. “Damn it all, Sam, all you have to do is say that you misunderstood me. I’ll say the same thing. That makes it all right, doesn’t it?”

“With the Trumpet office, yes. With the public, as much of it as cares a hoot, yes. But I just left the Paris correspondents in Maxim’s. I told them that I had told the truth. If I go to them now and say that I was mistaken, what will they think?”

“To hell with what a lot of damn’ penny-a-liners think! Who are they, anyway?” cries Willoughby.

“It doesn’t matter who or what they are,” retorts Foyle. “For that matter, the more unimportant they might be, the more I’d want them not to think me crooked.”

The Magnificent is thoroughly exasperated. “That’s just the sort of nonsense I’d expect from you. You always had the wrong slant on life. You

never cared what the respectable people thought. You always cared more for what the no-account people thought.”

“Well,” says Foyle smiling, “it’s too late for me to acquire a new philosophy, and practice it, Jim.”

The two men stare at each other. Foyle’s gaze is somewhat quizzical; certainly it is tolerant. The Magnificent’s expression loses its exasperation; it becomes tinged with regret, with something more than regret.

“Sam,” he says, suddenly, “I don’t care a damn what happens. I don’t care if it does smash business. You’re a friend of mine, and I don’t throw down my friends. I think you’re fussy, foolishly fussy. But hell’s bells, if a man can’t be fussy about his own business, I’d like to know what he can be finicky about. I say that the opinion of half a dozen newspaper writers isn’t worth thinking about. You say it is. All right. I’ll send for them at once and tell them that your interview with me was correct. Does that satisfy you?”

Foyle looks at his friend. “You’ll really do that, Jim?”

“You know I will, if I say so,” says The Magnificent.

“I beg your pardon, Jim. Of course I know it,” apologizes Foyle.

“Get your bunch of newspaper men over here right away,” says Willoughby.

Foyle hesitates. “It will be rather difficult for you, Jim. You know you told Sedley that I had misquoted you.”

“Do you suppose I care what Sedley thinks?” demands The Magnificent.

“Maybe not; but I do,” objects Foyle. “You’re a friend of mine, and I don’t want to embarrass you.” He stands there before the elevator shaft, his brows wrinkled in thought. “Jim,” he says suddenly, “exactly what would be the effect of a row between you and Cranahan now?”

“Exactly what I told you a while ago,” answers The Magnificent. “Panic. That means withdrawal of credit, which means unemployment.”

“I guess,” says Foyle, slowly, “you needn’t withdraw your denial. After all, I’m not important enough to matter that much.”

Willoughby shrugs his shoulders. “It’s up to you, old man,” he tells Foyle. “I want to do what’s right by you.”

“And I want to do what’s right by the people who would be affected by a financial panic,” states Foyle. He is suddenly angry, a rare emotion with

him. At least he rarely allows it to be perceptible.

“Jim, you shouldn’t have put me in this position.”

“I didn’t mean to, Sam,” replies The Magnificent. “Make up your mind.”

Foyle’s shoulders sag. “Let it go, Jim,” he says.

Willoughby slaps him on the back. “Don’t you worry about your job, either,” he advises.

Foyle stares at him again. “My job? I’m quitting that to-day,” he announces.

“Oh, that’s nonsense! You talk like a damn’ fool,” cries The Magnificent.

“I act like one, too,” sighs Foyle. “But I can’t help being what I am, Jim, any more than you can help being what you are.”

The Magnificent flushes. “I don’t understand that, Sam,” he says. “What the devil do you mean?”

Foyle laughs gently. “I couldn’t explain to you, Jim. Some day you’ll know.”

The Magnificent’s face grows redder. “Look here, Sam, I’ve offered to do what you want, what could be fairer?”

“Nothing,” admits Foyle.

“Then what are you kicking about?” demands Willoughby.

“Nothing,” answers Foyle.

“It seems to me you’re doing a lot of talking about nothing, then,” says The Magnificent.

“Then I’ll stop,” says Foyle.

The elevator arrives and he steps into it. The Magnificent reaches out and grasps his elbow.

“Look here, old man, you can’t go away angry.”

“I’m not,” says Foyle. “But I can’t help feeling sorry.”

“Damnation,” says The Magnificent, “haven’t I told you that I’ll fix it up with the Trumpet?”

“I’m not sorry about myself,” says Foyle.

“That sounds as though you meant you were sorry for me,” says Willoughby.

“Does it?” asks Foyle.

The elevator man slams the door, and the lift descends before Willoughby can answer. For a moment The Magnificent stands in the hall. At first he is angry; then he is perplexed. But after all, Sam has plenty of common sense, even though he frequently doesn't use it. If he hadn't had common sense he'd have insisted on The Magnificent's retraction of the denial he made to Sedley. Of course Sam is a little peeved now, but he'll get over it. The Magnificent will make matters all right. A word to the men who employ Sedley and the others will square matters for Sam.

Thus The Magnificent quiets a conscience that Foyle's last question has awakened. It is easily quieted. After all one must consider the greatest good to the greatest number. That's what Foyle did. The Magnificent does the same thing. It is not to be expected that those entrusted with the destiny of a great nation should always fail to injure anyone. Indeed, it is remarkable that accidents are so few. And this is such a slight accident, so readily repaired. The Magnificent will see to it that Foyle's salary is raised.

That ought to help. He'd like to find out something that money couldn't help. He hasn't found it yet. Except, and this is a disquieting thought, in marriage. Still, it hasn't done any harm there. Suppose that he and Ramsey had been poor: they'd have been a lot unhappier than they have been.

He is smiling eagerly as he re-enters his apartment.

CHAPTER XX

He does not lose his eager smile throughout the course of the meal. It is true that he has not passed a wakeful night as Ramsey has; he has slept as calmly as though business battles and domestic discords were trifles. Nevertheless, although his iron will controls his emotions; although he can face an aroused Cranahan or a disdainful Ramsey with a fatalistic philosophy that regulates his pulse, he is not completely immune to excitement. Excitement has never been permitted by him to make him deviate from what he considers to be the course of hard common sense; it has never interfered with his sleep. But there are times when it is a pleasurable relaxation, from the stern business of life, to yield to excitement.

This is one of the times. He has been under something of a strain. But now his long continued struggle with Cranahan is ended; the great financier will retire in the fall, making way for a greater. The Magnificent has not conquered the last steep ascent, but it presents no difficulty to the man who has climbed so far. He is merely resting now, taking in the marvelous scene below him. He sees an overalled mechanic in a little bicycle repair shop; he sees Pinnacle in its glory; he sees Willoughby Motors; and then the scene becomes so varied, and so vast, that it is difficult to pick out any particular point and say that it is more important, or more grand, than the others. Traction and textile, oil and steel, bank and mill, ranch and refinery, mine and plantation, steamship and wheat field: these are all in the valleys below, trophies of his might.

Remains only the over-lordship that is Cranahan's, the over-lordship from which Cranahan will abdicate in a few months. It is well to rest before making that final rush up the peak; it is well to let one's lungs become accustomed to the rarefied air, one's eyes to the glitter of the sun upon the ice fields.

There has also been Ramsey. He has not understood her, and he is sure that she has neither understood nor sympathized with him. But she too is conquered now, unless he reads wrongly her utterances, the thoughts that are expressed in her misty violet eyes. And she is as well worth the conquering, almost, as the heights that lead to Cranahan. To be sure, he would not have qualified her worth as we have done; he honestly believes, at this moment, that Ramsey is the most desirable thing in the world. Perhaps that is because he has not yet attained her.

But the attaining of her is only a matter of a few days. He can wait, despite the fact that his eyes and smile are eager. Her eyes and her smile match his own eagerness. But there is, as we have said, a mistiness in her eyes, and her smile is tremulous.

They talk banalities. Finally, Ramsey can find no further excuse for lingering at the table. She rises. He hastens to assist her and his hand touches hers. Color leaps simultaneously to the cheeks of each. Her eyes melt; his burn. Only the knock, upon the door, of the waiter, prevents him from seizing her, from crushing her to him. She is waiting for that very thing.

But when the waiter has gone, the moment also has gone. For Willoughby is taking no chances this time. He has almost had her before, and has lost her. One who has waited as long as he has, can wait until the Lusitania sails.

“I really have to go to London to-night,” he tells her.

Her warm mouth trembles. “Must you?” she asks.

He remembers the night, two years ago, when Cranahan’s telephoned command sent him to Mexico and away from her arms.

He hesitates. “I suppose it can be postponed,” he admits.

She shakes her head. She only wanted to know if business still was more important to him than herself. “Don’t postpone it,” she says.

“Oh, I can, all right,” he declares.

She shakes her head again. “No; I won’t let you,” she insists.

He eyes her closely. “You’ll be here waiting for me when I come back from London?”

In his voice she reads an implication. Her color becomes more deep. “I’ll meet you at Liverpool,” she evades him.

He shakes his head now. “But the Lusitania doesn’t leave for several days. I thought we might play around Paris together a while.” Once again his voice holds the pleading note that yesterday disarmed her.

“I’ll be too busy for play,” she states.

“Nonsense! I mean, hang business! Both of us!” He looks at his watch. “If I started this minute I could be in London this evening. The conferences I ought to have could be arranged by wire. Some of them for to-night. The

rest for to-morrow morning. I could be back here by the morning after. Couldn't you give me the next few days?"

She answers the blaze in his eyes with dew in her own. If he could guess how she aches for him, he would forget everything of caution that now rules him. She is waiting for his embrace. But she has made as many advances as seem consistent with her dignity. She can make no more; another moment, in which the last vestige of her pride and his remnants of caution would have been melted away by passion, passes. She could give him the next few hours, but this he does not know, and she will not tell him.

"I have so much shopping to do," she says. For if the next few moments are not to be theirs, she can wait.

"Shopping? I'll bet you have clothes enough to last for years," he laughs.

She laughs, too, with a mischievousness that is rare for her. "Ordinary clothes don't make a trousseau," she says.

Another moment has arrived, in which barriers of delay may be swept aside. But there has been a mistake in the breakfast bill; the waiter comes to the room to correct it. And when he has gone, this other moment also has gone. Caution again rules him, and pride rules her. Perhaps, also, the desire to prolong anticipation bolsters up her pride.

But she insists that he go to London now. Inasmuch as he was willing not to go, it is all right for him to go. So she tells herself. She is not going to start their new life by interfering in his business affairs, especially as he, apparently, is not going to start by letting business rule their relations with each other.

But, returned to her own apartment, she weeps gently. She wishes that there could be more spontaneity between them. When they were first married and the light of the honeymoon still lingered, there was no reason in their actions, in their regard for each other: there was only love.

But now there must be reasoning before each action, each word. Craft and artifice and even guile enter into their relationship. The pretty coquetries natural to young love must be supplanted by the planned devices of mature love.

These debased love; love that was not spontaneous in every thought and word and action must be something less than the one that used no reason. Yet the pale carbon copy that had taken the place of the original was better, oh infinitely better, than nothing at all.

So she weeps; but the carbon copy, little by little, becomes magnified in the lens of each tear-drop; until it seems as clear as the original.

She is compelled to make her toilet over again, and spends an hour removing the last trace of tears. For be it known, if we have not made it clear before, that Ramsey Willoughby is extremely careful of her beauty. It is, she knows, one of woman's strongest weapons in the battle of life, and she has never proposed to let it become tarnished.

She spends the remainder of the morning at the Maison Blanc, thence walks through the Place de l'Opera to the Rue de la Paix. She pauses there for a moment before the Mason Maret. But, consulting her watch, she decides to have luncheon before visiting the *parfumeur*. She continues, then, to the Place Vendome and the Ritz. There she consumes salad and toast and tea. Refreshed, she returns to the Rue de la Paix.

Her objective, now, is the perfumery shop, but she cannot resist the sight of some pearls in the window of a shop on the corner of the Rue Daunou. She enters and asks to be shown the string. The obsequious clerk removes it reverently from its place in the window. A glance at madame has told him that, though she might happen to be looking from idle curiosity, she can well afford to buy if curiosity transforms itself to interest.

She appraises it carefully; she clasps the necklace about her throat; she surveys herself in triple mirrors, aided by a fourth glass which she holds behind her.

“How much?” she asks the clerk.

“Eight hundred thousand francs,” he replies.

His eyebrows raise as madame produces a tiny check book; but when he sees the name that she signs to her check, his manner loses its blend of scorn and surprise. He almost kisses the ground upon which she walks, so low is his bow. For the name of Willoughby is as potent in Paris as it is in New York, as, for that matter, it is in Peru.

Certainly The Magnificent has not permitted estrangement to vitiate his generosity. We get some idea of the immensity of the fortune which he has amassed, from this almost careless purchase of his wife. Also we get some idea of the intensity of the emotion which is surging through the soul of Ramsey. For during these recent years her extravagances have made no effort to keep pace with the accumulations of his fortune. She has lived, it is true, without thought of cost, but there has been nothing of the attitude of the parvenu about her. Her jewels are comparatively few, and positively modest.

But for years she has desired a rope of pearls similar to this one which she has just purchased. Only the canniness of the New Englander has prevented her from acquiring one long ago; that, and a feeling of reluctance to spend so great a sum of her husband's money. But now that she is to be again truly the wife of Willoughby, and he is to be truly her husband, the imminent granting of one happiness seems as a key which unlocks the doors to other gratifications.

Of course, having spent the huge amount of eight hundred thousand francs, she is visited, as soon as she leaves the jewelers, by qualms of conscience, pangs of remorse. But they stay with her only momentarily.

For is she not the bride—this designation of her is her own, not ours; romance, which touched her twenty years ago, has come back to embrace her fervidly—of the greatest man in the world? Undoubtedly she is. Can she go to him less wondrously bedecked than any queen in Europe? Must she not make herself more beautiful, more desirable, more worthy of his love?

It seems that by some strange alchemy The Magnificent has undergone a marvelous transformation. The laboratory of a woman's love contains more potency for the miraculous than the workroom of any scientist that ever lived.

Shedding her brief scruples, then, Ramsey continues down the Rue de la Paix until she is before the building that houses the establishment of M. Maret. She enters, through a narrow hall-way, a circular open court, from which stair-ways lead to offices on the upper floors of the building. One of these she mounts, and at the first landing she opens a door which bears upon its glass panels the name of the Sultan of Scent. She enters a plainly, almost severely furnished room, whose most noticeable objects are highly polished cabinets ranged along the walls. In these are the treasures of the Prince of Parfumeurs.

Her entrance causes a bell to ring, and from an inner room comes a young woman dressed in severest black, and with a countenance as austere as her apparel. However, she relaxes at sight of Ramsey; she even smiles. Monsieur, it would appear, is engaged at the moment, but if madame will have the goodness to wait, he will be presently disengaged. In the meantime, perhaps madame would like to test the fragrance of some of his more recent discoveries, not yet offered to the public, but reserved for those endowed by God with the quality of appreciation, of whom madame is one.

From the cabinets ranged along the wall the young woman abstracts chaste bottles and jars. Watching her, one understands that the sale of perfume is no vulgar sordid trade, but the practice of a great and noble profession; nay, more, an art.

For these precious liquids are not poured out crudely upon a handkerchief. Rather, the moistened stopper is waved delicately in the air. One does not smell the perfume; one permits the soul to imbibe its fragrant essence.

Ramsey is coolly unimpressed; she has been here before. True, they are exquisite; nowhere in the world, she concedes, can such sweetness, of so great delicacy be encountered. But, and she smiles, these are not the supreme achievement of the art of M. Maret. The French woman nods appreciatively. She will hurry Monsieur. She leaves the room, a room that has become as fragrant as the dreams of the poets of Persia.

The little prelude to the drama, or comedy, in which Monsieur Maret plays the lead, has been performed. In a moment he will come forth, filled with almost violent flatteries; he will tell madame that what she has been permitted to breathe, thus far, are perfumes more precious than any yet given to mortal nostril—be sure that he will phrase it more daintily than this—to enjoy. But he will perceive that madame is one of the elect, a connoisseur par excellence. For her he will produce a perfume, to make one drop of which ten thousand violets have died, a perfume that not only has not yet been given to the world, but that will be madame's exclusive property if she will honor M. Maret by its acceptance.

Only, the curtain rises, the star enters, and the audience has gone. For Ramsey has picked up, from the table in the center of the room, an afternoon newspaper left there by an earlier patron. She reads French fluently. Seeing the name of Willoughby in a head-line she has read the article below it.

Something like panic attacks her; she rises, clutching the crumpled newspaper in her hand, and swiftly leaves the room. She almost runs down the stairs, through the narrow hall-way, and out upon the Rue de la Paix. There, glancing over her shoulder almost as though she fears pursuit, she walks rapidly toward the Place Vendome. Passing the Ritz, the instinct of the fugitive impels her to enter the hotel. In a waiting room she sits down and stares blankly at the newspaper. She does not, at first, see the printed page; instead she sees the scene of this morning. She sees the almost grim countenance of Foyle; she feels again the tension that rendered the room electric.

Slowly the vision passes, and her mind returns to the present. Her eyes once again are able to focus upon the print before them, and she reads, with careful slowness, the news article which has sent her fleeing from the imminence of M. Maret.

It begins with a brief cablegram from New York which states that Stephen Cranahan has denied the intention imputed to him by his partner, Jameson Briggs Willoughby, of retiring from the leadership of Cranahan and Company. The cablegram is followed by a few brief paragraphs which contain the information that correspondents, in Paris, of American newspapers, have received word from *The Magnificent*—it is interesting to note that the French press terms him “*Le Magnifique*”—to the effect that he never made the statement attributed to him. The account goes on to say that the original interview was announced by M. Foyle, of the *New York Trumpet*, with whom it has been impossible, up to the present moment, to get in touch.

Ramsey puts the paper down; she begins to understand why Foyle’s expression was odd, why there was tension in the air. She sees clearly, too, the crude bribe wherewith her husband sought to placate Sam. Her lip curls as she reads her husband’s transparency.

Well, once before Sam Foyle has suffered; he might have continued as Mayor of Oldport, might have progressed from that office to the governorship of Massachusetts, to the Senate. . . . Unwittingly he crossed the path of Jim, lingered there a moment, blocked the progress of *The Magnificent*, and was hurled from the road.

She sees what has happened now. She has not lived with *The Magnificent* without learning something of his methods. *The Magnificent* has committed an indiscretion; immediately he has denied its commission. Immediately, also, he has tried to smooth over the matter with the person whom he has injured.

She wonders if Foyle has accepted the offered bribe. But she knows, even as she walks to the telephone, that Sam Foyle has rejected the managing editorship of the *Trumpet*. And a few words with the man who answers the telephone in the Paris office of the *Trumpet* confirms her knowledge. Mr. Foyle has visited the office this morning. He has cabled New York, resigning his position. He has packed his personal effects and has taken them from the office. His address? On the Rue St. Honoré.

It is a brief walk to Foyle’s lodgings, and Ramsey hurries there. She does not glance over her shoulder now, for the indescribable unreasonable feeling

of panic that possessed her in the reception room of M. Maret is gone; it is replaced by honest anger.

The pretty milliner on the ground floor scents romance. She is waiting at the foot of the stairs when Ramsey, having knocked unavailingly upon the door of Foyle's apartment, descends. The pretty milliner emerges from her shop.

Madame inquires for M. Foyle? Ah, it is of a strangeness. M. Foyle came home an hour or two ago; he packed a bag; he paid his rent until the end of the month. He said that he would not be back. The pretty milliner eyes appreciatively the pallor that comes to Ramsey's cheeks. Of course M. Foyle has been of a great discreetness, but what man is there into whose life comes no woman?

But her eager volubility brings no response from Ramsey. The milliner spends the rest of the afternoon denouncing the coldness of American women. Had a French woman's lover departed from her without warning, hysteria at least would have been in proper order. Bah! They do not deserve men, these American women. But who would have thought it, that M. Foyle could have been so secretive? Where did they hold their rendezvous?

The walk of Ramsey is not hurried as she returns to the Meurice. She is deliberate; she is equally deliberate as she instructs her maid to pack trunks, as she telephones to the office down-stairs to procure her accommodations on the first train de luxe for Rome. She is quite calm as she writes a brief note to her husband.

"Dear Jim: A married couple can have only one honeymoon. We had ours twenty years ago. After twenty years we know each other too well. I do not criticize what you have done to Sam. I only hope that some day you may understand."

She signs her name and later gives it to the clerk down-stairs to be delivered to The Magnificent when he returns from London. A little later she boards the train. She can never understand the intricacies of high finance, the duties which devolve upon God's stewards of the earth, duties which compel them to disregard the one in favor of the many. Too, she is one of those who think that natural or economic laws cause financial panics; she does not understand that even stewards may quarrel, and that the shock of their combat may wreck the houses painfully erected by those who are not stewards, but merely pygmy people.

CHAPTER XXI

The lush years end; the prodigalities of youth are superseded by the conservatism of middle life. Maturity has come upon us in the night, while we slumbered away the effects of youth's debaucheries. Riotously we have lived through the eighties and nineties and, barring the slight indigestion of 1907, through almost a decade and a half of the twentieth century.

A slight headache induces a philosophic moment. We have eaten of life so heartily that even pepsin cannot entirely remove discomfort. We begin to ask questions.

What does bigness prove? Is happiness measured by our possessions? What is success? What is failure? Has the progress of invention advanced the cause of human happiness? Does speed mean joy? Was the bicycle better than the horse? Is the motor car better than the buggy? What do we mean by "better", anyway?

Vaguely, in this philosophic moment, trying to discover the cause of a vague ache that attacks us, we search for panaceas. We, who for a century or more have not hesitated to diagnose the ailments of the rest of the world, and offer ourselves as models the following of which will assure perfect health, discover that we are not in the best of condition.

We turn to the Federal Government, forgetful of the state pride that formerly made us jealous of the encroachments of Washington. It might be that we have mistaken elephantiasis for development, but this does not occur to us.

"It don't seem sensible to come to you, Doctor," we say, "but the wife is kinda worried about me."

"Your color seems good," says the doctor. "How's the appetite?"

"Kinda peaked," we reply. "All we had for breakfast was some fruit, and cereal, and a mess of buckwheat cakes, and maybe a couple of eggs, with some bacon on the side, and four or five cups of coffee; and when the wife brought in a nice little steak, we couldn't touch it."

The doctor feels our pulse. "How do you sleep?" he asks.

"Rotten," we exclaim. "Only got twelve hours last night, and we're used to fifteen."

The doctor looks more solemn. "That's bad," he says. "How about exercise?"

"Drove a hundred and forty miles yesterday, without our chauffeur stopping once, except when we ran into a hay wagon, and he had to change a wheel," we answer proudly.

The doctor orders us to put out our tongue. "H'm. Spotty," he declares. "I guess what you need is a good big dose of castor oil."

We look at him; doesn't he understand that we are able and willing to pay any sort of a fancy fee? Why, *anybody* could prescribe castor oil. And anybody could say what he's saying now. Telling us to quit riding, and walk; to limit ourselves to fruit and toast and warm water for breakfast. Out upon such an old-fashioned physician!

We discharge him; we engage a new medical adviser. An alert up-and-coming young fellow, who advises operations. He removes our appendix, explores our gall bladder with keen and shiny instruments, but when he offers to cut open the back of our heads, we turn away from him.

There's another new man down the street; he rips the clothes off you and puts you on a table, and takes you by the ears and yanks you forward and back and sideways; he kneels on your spine and jumps on your neck. They say he's done some wonderful things. Let's try him. We do so, and we feel worse when he has finished than before we went to him.

Our dentist extracts all our teeth; you know it's wonderful the way they've discovered that the seat of all illness lies in the gums. Our oculist operates cheerily upon our eyes. You know, every disease is due to trouble in the eyes. An orthopedic surgeon puts our feet in plaster casts. You know, falling arches upset the whole system. Our throat specialist eyes us pityingly. No wonder, he tells us, that we feel badly. We have the finest collection of adenoids he ever looked at, and modern science has proved conclusively that one little adenoid is more dangerous than a swamp full of malarial mosquitoes. Snip, snip, go the scissors and the adenoids are gone.

Have you heard about the new dietician? My *dear*, you must go to him; he's *marvelous*. If you'll just follow his advice and measure your kilowatts and proteids and amperes and vitamins, and mix them up the way he tells you, you'll be *surprised*.

We do as he tells us, but somehow we aren't surprised. For we are beginning to believe that our case is hopeless. In the height of our powers,

we have become an interesting neurasthenic. We have new symptoms every day, and gosh, how we enjoy them!

Suddenly we begin to realize that if we cannot help ourselves, we cannot be helped. We find that no matter how often we change our physicians in the Capitol at Washington, disease remains. We fume, we worry, we are fretful. Mr. Taft gives way to Mr. Wilson. Teddy retires to his tent. Life becomes more complicated every moment.

We ought to be happy, but we are not. We raise more things to eat and wear than anyone else, and yet we are hungry and naked. We build more houses than anyone else, and yet we are homeless. We have more money than anyone else, and yet we are poor. Vaguely we begin to comprehend that our ailments have their derivation in spiritual, not material sources. Yet where shall we find a doctor to minister to the spirit?

Thank God for one thing! We have no wars upon our hands, and can foresee none. It is possible, of course, that we may have to shoot a few greasers across the Rio Grande, but you wouldn't call that a war. We were there before, you know, in '48, and, being familiar with the road, travel will be even simpler this time.

Meantime, while waiting for our general health to improve, let's go to the movies.

Suddenly the earth shakes in Europe. The wires tell us the news, and we thrill with excitement. Of course, it can't last long, this war; they haven't money enough to fight for more than six months; but it is going to be tremendous while it does last.

Business, which has been poor, due to our complicated and mysterious ailments, becomes bad. But the word of hope is preached: Europe, unable, while warring, to produce for her own needs, must turn to us to buy.

A veil, thrown across the struggling legions, is lifted. We thought that the Belgians were holding the Germans, but the Prussian horde is on the edge of Paris. It lifts higher; Joffre has stopped them at the Marne.

Behold The Magnificent in his office. He is walking up and down the magnificently furnished room, that holds, as its sole memory of the overlord who abdicated four years ago, a bust of him done by Rodin. From his eyrie high up on the twentieth floor, he sees the harbor and the bay crowded with alien shipping which dares not go out upon the high seas until the German fleet has been destroyed, or until England has yielded the mastery of the ocean.

He owns many of these ships, though they fly a foreign flag. It is cheaper to engage an European crew than an American. In the name of cheap costs we have tossed away the sovereignty of the seas that was ours after the Civil War.

He can see the Jersey shore, bulking with factories and storehouses that belong to him. From another window he can look across the East River upon lands that are his. Upon the walls are maps of railroads, ranches, and mines that he owns. Also, in his desk are the names of scores, aye hundreds, of business and financial institutions that he controls.

In the evening paper spread out upon his desk are the names of the King of England—The Magnificent has dined with him; of the Kaiser—The Magnificent has cruised aboard his yacht; of the Premier of France—The Magnificent has visited at his home; of the King of the Belgians—The Magnificent has been hunting with him; of the Czar of All the Russias—The Magnificent has been entertained at one of his palaces; of the Mikado of Japan—The Magnificent has a decoration bestowed upon him by that potentate; of Theodore Roosevelt—the ex-president has more than once asked the friendly advice of The Magnificent.

Statesmen, soldiers, and financiers; the newspaper is crowded with their names, and there is not one who has not called The Magnificent friend.

But neither wealth nor friends can aid him now, as, pale, sunken-eyed, he paces the floor. Ever and again secretaries enter the room, bearing cablegrams from the great of the world. Perfunctorily he reads them; almost carelessly he decides matters of tremendous moment. And then comes a secretary bearing the message that for three dreadful weeks he has been awaiting. For all his power has been unable to secure word of Ramsey.

He has not seen her since that breakfast in Paris. He has long since given up all hope of reconciliation. But the absence of hope but makes his love for her grow greater with each passing hour. There has been no divorce; there will be none, because of the boys. But they are strangers, holding no communication save through their attorneys.

And now he receives the first direct word that he has had from her since he found, four years ago, the note that shattered the dream that he had had. He can tell, before he accepts the paper from the secretary, that the message is from Ramsey, and that it is good news. For the tears are frankly streaming down the face of the young man, and a child could tell that they are tears of joy. It is worth while pondering the significance of these secretarial tears. The Magnificent is able to attract affection from his subordinates, it seems.

He reads the message. It tells him that Ramsey, in Belgium when the war broke out, has escaped, via Holland, to England. She is leaving for France the next day, where she is to enter the French hospital service.

The secretary tip-toes from the room. For already the world is filled with rumors of atrocities. One may discredit them, but one is sick with horror at the thought of one's womankind in the path of the invader. As the door closes upon the young man, The Magnificent leans forward, until his face is hidden in a mass of papers upon his desk. For the first time in his adult life he weeps.

Recovering at length, he presses a bell which brings a secretary to his side. He dictates a cablegram to Ramsey, telling her that as soon as it is humanly possible he will join her in France, telling her also something of the agony he has undergone and the joy that now is his. Then he dictates telegrams to French officials here and abroad. He presents the French nation with ten million dollars for the foundation and equipment of hospitals. He makes a similar present to the British Government. Up to this moment he has tried to be neutral; but Ramsey has taken sides, in a way, and he stands with his wife.

He stays late at his offices that night. He devotes himself to the direction of a thousand tasks that have needed performance, but that worry concerning Ramsey has prevented him from attending to. It is after midnight when he arrives at his home on Fifth Avenue.

The great mansion, lacking a mistress, has become a bachelor establishment, used almost solely by The Magnificent. For Junior and Robert are still at college, and are away during the university term. Their vacation periods are spent usually in Europe with their mother, although this year certain important golf tournaments have kept them on this side of the Atlantic.

The Magnificent has not seen either of them since the outbreak of the European war, although each of them has daily telephoned the office from Newport or Manchester or Tuxedo, to make inquiries concerning their mother. Only the fact that sailings of the ocean liners have been so uncertain, and passage so difficult to obtain, has prevented them from going to Europe in search of their mother. Such difficulties could have been overcome by The Magnificent, but he has pointed out to them, over the telephone, that it would be silly to go to France when Ramsey might be in Russia, or to England when she might be in Italy. He has promised that as

soon as word is received from her, one or both of the boys may attempt to join her.

So, expecting to enter a home deserted save for silent servants, he is amazed to hear sounds of revelry as he opens the front door. His hours are so uncertain that he carries a latch-key rather than keep a servant in attendance on the door bell all night.

The noise seems to come from the great dining-room, and his brows, shaggy gray they are now, hump up in two mounds, as he walks down the hall. The door of the dining-room is closed, but not tightly. He opens it, and a young woman screams at sight of him.

In her way she is attractive. Her way is like that of Jennie Smollen, dead these twenty-four years. She is vital, exuding health and animal spirits. One not too insistent on refinement of feature might term her beautiful.

She is seated on the knees of Junior. Her right arm is about the young man's neck; her left hand holds high a glass of champagne. The uncorked bottles on the table indicate the nature of the liquid. Junior's left arm is about the lady's waist, and his right hand holds a glass of wine.

Both glasses are set upon the table as The Magnificent enters. The girl endeavors to slip from the knees of Junior. But the young man, although his face crimson a deeper shade than the champagne has given it, retains his grasp upon the lithe waist.

He hiccoughs. "Stick around, Jennie," he says. "Dad's a good scout. He's been around himself."

Fresh from tears, The Magnificent turns to wrath. Before his furious gaze the girl whitens. Before it Junior's clasp relaxes. The girl slips to the floor. The Magnificent looks from her to the door. She sidles from the room.

"Here, you can't leave, Jennie," says Junior.

"I think the young lady can find her way around the streets by herself," says The Magnificent icily.

The boy leaps to his feet. He gets the implication in his father's words.

"Take that back," he cries.

The Magnificent stares at him. "Don't use that tone with me," he says.

"Change your tone, then," says Junior. "Jennie's a good girl."

The Magnificent sneers. “Standards of goodness have changed since I was young.”

“The hell they have,” retorts Junior. “I’ve heard some tales about you and a girl in Oldport—her name was Jennie, too. And it isn’t so long ago that you stole Cranahan’s girl away from him. Why, Jennie here, is ten times as good as the women you’ve played around with.”

“Send that girl home, and go to bed! I’ll talk to you in the morning, you drunken dog,” cries The Magnificent.

The girl is lingering in the doorway. “We’ve only had one glass,” she says.

Rage surges up in The Magnificent’s throat. “I told you to go home,” he says.

“This is her home,” says Junior. “We were married to-day.”

For a moment The Magnificent is speechless. Then he turns upon the girl. “I suppose you think I’ll give you a million to get rid of you,” he sneers.

Junior walks past his father to his wife. If the girl, in defending the boy, has not told the exact truth about the quantity of champagne they have drunk, Junior’s manner now would tend to support her statement. For his voice is clear and his walk is steady.

“Come on, Jennie,” he says.

Silently they leave the house, the Magnificent making no effort to detain them. Oddly, the only feeling that he has is one of extreme age. He is only forty-nine, yet to-night, somehow, he feels ninety. For while he has been piling up his fortune, he has grown away from his family. He and they are strangers. The sons of his body are unfamiliar; their ways are strange and unknown to him.

CHAPTER XXII

Kings, emperors, popes, and corner grocerymen pass away, and the world goes on. The tide of life ever rises; Canute would have been as futile with a bucket as he was with a broom. But Nature designed us wisely for her purposes. Each man is monarch of himself; he is locked securely behind boundaries of flesh and bone, through which the rest of the world may never penetrate. And so, aloof and remote, he magnifies his own importance. And this is well, for if the universe could get inside his skull and prove to him his own insignificance, he would abdicate, would not bother with the piffling business of living.

How shall I make him endure himself? Nature answered her own question. She gave him vanity, and so he has increased and multiplied, and endured, and gained dominion over the lands and the beasts thereof, the sea and its creatures, the air and its denizens. He is ruler of everything except himself.

The Magnificent has passed a busy week since he received the news of Ramsey's safety and of Junior's marriage. He has spent eighteen hours a day in his office, and his few hours of rest have been broken by telephone calls, by visits from persons and personages of importance.

For America is already rallying from the stupendous blow that, struck full at the heart of Europe, has shaken equilibrium here. The Magnificent has never been so important as he is now, as he restores balance to the nation.

Supplies of all sorts; munitions; ships; Europe is already crying for them, and America, under The Magnificent's leadership, is answering her cry. The exodus from the farm to the factory has been steadily increasing during the past few decades, but now the city-bound stream of humanity has become a flood. Later on that flood may drown us, but we do not think of that now.

His mind at ease about Ramsey, The Magnificent is directing all his energies toward the further entrenchment of his position as America's leading capitalist. All the work that he has done in the past years seems as nothing to the incredible labors that he undergoes now. Although he will not admit it even to himself, it will be impossible for him to go to France and see Ramsey for months to come, unless it becomes necessary for him to hold

conferences in Europe, with the governmental and financial leaders of the Allied nations.

For he cannot be spared from his tasks here. It does not occur to him that unquestionably Cranahan, now a querulous old invalid, often told his medical advisers that his withdrawal from activity would bring desolation to the country. It does not occur to him that since the beginning of time men have magnified their own importance until they have shed tears of pity at thought of what would overcome the world when death should claim them. He does not remember that he was ready to step into Cranahan's shoes long before the feet of his predecessor had been ready to kick them off. He does not realize that in his own office are a dozen men who look at him with disgusted envy, wondering when he will have the grace to put on carpet slippers, and permit a better man to lace on *his* boots. He believes, with all his heart, that not merely is the nation better off with him at the head of its financial affairs than it would be with another man, but that, with anyone else in his place, chaos would descend upon his native land.

So Ramsey recedes farther and farther into the background. True, he wept with joy a week ago at news of her escape from Belgium. In that moment of his tears nothing seemed of importance save his wife. But Ramsey is safe; at least it is to be presumed that hospitals will be safe. But it is not to be presumed that the great financial structure of which he is the key-stone is safe. He was able to oust Cranahan; who may be able to oust him?

But this is a question that he never puts to himself. He does not know that it is in his mind. A certain early reluctance to examine into his own motives has solidified into habit. A healthy conceit has grown into a colossal vanity. Long ago he has come to regard himself as kings, in the older days, regarded themselves. His is a task, and if one should ask him the nature of that task, he would be so amazed at one's ignorance that it would not enter his mind that he himself could not answer the question.

True, on numberless occasions, addressing various business groups, he has spoken of the great responsibilities which devolve upon the possessor of wealth, but he has never defined those responsibilities. He has talked of duty, but has never made that duty clear. He has even told a class of college graduates that at times the weight of his burden seems unendurable, but he would think you a madman if you asked him why he continued to carry it.

But he shakes it from his shoulders for a moment now. A clerk brings him in word that Mrs. Jameson Willoughby, Jr., is waiting in an ante-room.

The Magnificent tells the clerk to show her in. As he watches the clerk depart his upper lip grows thinner, and his lower lip protrudes stubbornly. He has not seen Junior or Junior's bride since they left the dining-room of his Avenue home a week ago. But he has had detectives, retained by his lawyers, investigate the young woman. They have found nothing against her; except the fact that she comes of an obscure family, and that she has been in the chorus of a musical comedy. In fact, she has not left the cast of the play. The Magnificent smiled grimly when he was told this. The girl, then, did not count too greatly on the generosity of her father-in-law.

The Magnificent has received no word from Junior. But he has ordered his secretary to discontinue the young man's allowance. It is a generous allowance, yet always drawn upon in advance. The father knows well that the son's supply of ready cash must be very low. Junior will swallow his pride when necessity arises.

He has been gratified that the young couple have kept their marriage secret. The harshness of his thoughts concerning Junior is somewhat mitigated by this fact.

He has waited for a week before sending for the girl. Then, hoping that the first flush of passion might be cooled, he has had an emissary, while Junior was out, visit her in the quiet hotel where she and Junior are staying. For a moment the almost cruel obstinacy in his expression is replaced by triumphant gratification. The young lady knows on which side her bread is buttered. The smile vanishes as she enters his private office.

He rises and with cold courtesy offers her a chair.

"I'll stand, if you don't mind," she tells him.

He nods and himself remains standing.

"We won't waste time, young woman," he says. "You have good sense; I can tell that from looking at you. You didn't come here expecting my blessing. But you came; that means you're prepared to talk business. Now, I expect to live a long time. My doctors tell me that my health is good. I have what the insurance men term a long life expectation.

"Not that I got you here to listen to an elderly man's boastings regarding his health." He smiles in somewhat wintry fashion. "I got you here to talk business."

"Then talk it," she suggests.

A light of approval shines in his green eyes. She has courage, this girl. If she only had breeding and family. . . . She is good-looking, too. For a moment his eyes blur; he seems to see before him the vital face and figure of Jennie Smollen, so like this girl who is his son's wife. Then the vision passes, and his eyes are hard again. He wasn't fool enough to marry a girl whose sole attraction was her body; why did he breed a fool?

"All right; I'll make it brief," he retorts. "If you will agree to divorce my son, or permit him to get a divorce, I'll pay you one hundred thousand dollars. If you don't agree I give you my word that during my lifetime—and I've told you that I expect to live a long time—my son will not receive from me, directly or indirectly, one penny. I will engage that neither his mother nor his brother will contribute anything to his support."

"He can get a job, can't he?" she asks.

The Magnificent smiles. "Answer that yourself," he advises. "What can he do?"

The girl stares at him. In her eyes, big and black and gleaming, he seems to read contempt. He flushes slightly.

"Take it or leave it," he tells her. "But before you make up your mind I'd like you to think it over. I suppose that you expected more. Be assured that you're mistaken."

She has been twisting a vanity bag in her fingers, with movements that suggest an indecision hard to credit to one so vital. Now she looks up again and her eyes, that gleamed so coldly as his own a moment ago, seem softened.

"It's all a matter of money to you, isn't it?" she asks.

"Exactly as it is to you. But simply because this is a financial transaction, don't think that the amount is debatable."

"Suppose that I should tell you that I truly love Junior?" she asks.

"I should remind you," he replies, "that one hundred thousand dollars ought to heal the most badly broken heart."

The blur, or film, leaves her eyes; they shine coldly again. "I suppose you have the check here," she says.

"A check for ten thousand; the balance will be yours when the divorce is secured. You can see my lawyers at any time with regard to the details."

"Let me have the check," she says.

He takes it from his desk and offers it to her; she accepts it; she leaves the office without another word; The Magnificent turns back to his momentarily interrupted labors.

They are interrupted again the next day. Junior, hot with anger, is admitted to the presence of his father. He has a note in his pocket; he produces it and almost waves it in his father's face.

“What the hell have you done?” he cries.

“Sit down,” says The Magnificent calmly. “And please do not use profane language. Remember that I am your father.”

“Damn it, don't remind me of it! As if I could help it; as if I wouldn't rather be anyone's son, rather than yours! What have you done with Jennie?”

“Done what you should have done, what you would have done, if you hadn't been a jackass,” replies the father.

“What do you mean?” demands Junior.

“I bought her, that's what I mean. If you'd had sense enough to know that she was for sale—”

He stops, made to do so by the expression in Junior's eyes. “My God,” says the boy, “I knew that you were low, but not so low as this. Where is she?”

His father is calm; of course it is natural that Junior should show excitement, and he, the father, will show his magnanimity by ignoring this outburst. “She is probably spending the first payment which I made her on condition that she'd secure a divorce.”

The pupils of Junior's eyes narrow. “You mean to tell me that she took your money and is going to divorce me?”

“I am doubtless, as you say, low,” replies The Magnificent. “But I assure you that I rarely lie. I gave the young lady to understand that so long as I lived you would not receive one penny from me unless you and she were divorced. It was unnecessary to tell her that I would not leave you a dollar when I died. She is a lady who, in addition to considerable physical charm, is gifted with common sense. She understood.”

“You did this?” asks Junior. He is extremely quiet.

“I paid a hundred thousand dollars to rid you of her. Now do you understand what I mean when I say that you could have bought her? It

probably would have cost less, too.”

“I suppose it would,” says Junior dully. He stares at his father a moment. “Yes, it would have cost me a lot less. Good-bye.”

He turns and walks to the door. The Magnificent rises and follows him. “Come back here,” he calls. “I want to talk to you.”

In the doorway Junior pauses. His dull eyes travel from his father’s feet to his face, resting at last upon his eyes.

“What on earth have you to say to me?” he asks.

The Magnificent laughs, albeit with a trace of nervousness.

“A lot of things,” he says.

“Do you suppose I care to listen to them?” demands Junior.

“I think you’d better,” says his father. “You know I’ve discontinued your allowance. I certainly won’t begin it again until your attitude changes.”

“Have I asked you for money?” Junior’s voice is even.

The Magnificent makes an effort to assume command of the situation; somehow Junior seems to have wrested it from him.

“Don’t forget that I’ve done the best thing for you,” he says.

There is cynical mirth in Junior’s voice now as he says, “I certainly won’t. I can hardly forget that you have proved to me that my wife is for sale.”

The Magnificent’s bushy gray eyebrows hump in the middle; he doesn’t quite know how to take this last remark.

“And don’t forget that I’m your father,” he says.

Junior stares at him. “You bet I won’t,” he cries. “To my dying day I’ll remember that you’re my father.”

The Magnificent chooses to ignore the sneer that now is in the boy’s tones.

“It is hard now,” he says, “but you’ll live to thank me.”

Junior smiles; it is an ugly smile, a smile of disillusionment that sits unbecomingly on the lips of youth.

“Do you really think so?” he asks.

The Magnificent, anxious for peace, permits himself to be deceived by the mildness of his son.

“I wouldn’t have done it, if I hadn’t known you’d be grateful to me in the end,” he declares.

Junior looks at him with a simulation of frank admiration. “You’re wonderful. Not only can you grab all the money in the world, but you can read the future. You take people up in your hands and mould them as you see fit. You’re just about God, aren’t you? You’ve made such a wonderful success of your own life that it’s nothing at all to you to make a success of my life. Just as you made a success of mother’s life.”

His scorn bites through the skin of his father. “Never mind about your mother,” he snaps.

“Oh, I forgot that she was your wife. And talking about anyone’s wife, dragging them into the conversation, is bad taste, isn’t it?”

“You be careful, or you’ll be sorry,” warns the Magnificent.

“That’s right; I mustn’t forget all your money,” says Junior. “You know, you can’t take it to hell with you, so I’d better be civil so that you’ll leave it to me.”

“One more word like this and I’ll never speak to you again,” cries The Magnificent.

His son looks at him. “That makes it unanimous,” he jeers, “for so help me God I’ll never speak to you again.”

He kept his word. Three months later he was killed in France, fighting as a soldier of the Légion Etrangère.

CHAPTER XXIII

The flags are half-masted over the City Hall, the Masonic Lodge, the Elks' club house, and the rooms wherein the Woodmen of the World hold their meetings. A guard of honor is drawn up in the square outside the railroad station; it is composed of bent old men in the faded blue uniforms of the Grand Army of the Republic, of straighter and sturdier men of middle age who fought in the war with Spain; back of them is a company of the state militia. Crowding the sidewalks and mounted on the steps of the buildings in the square are the citizenry of Oldport.

A whistle shrieks and the crowd becomes alertly expectant, ceases its gossip and badinage. The faint rumble of a train becomes more audible; hissing and groaning it pulls into the station. From the ordinary day coaches the casual travelers descend; policemen urge them from the station; glancing over their shoulders they join the crowd outside, beyond the police lines.

From the rear car of the train descend men in the uniform of the French army, a garb that is becoming increasingly familiar to American eyes. They go hastily up the platform to the baggage car from which other French soldiers, these latter privates, are already lifting to the platform a long box. Upon that box are draped the flags of America and France. Upon it also are floral pieces, and it takes a hand truck to carry outside the flowers for which there is no room upon the coffin.

Six sturdy *poilus* raise the coffin to their shoulders, and at the command of an officer proceed through the station. The crowd outside is deathly still, and the clatter of the hoofs of the horses which draw a gun-carriage into the square sounds discordantly. The coffin is deposited upon the gun-carriage and the *poilus* stand at attention.

From the last car of the train now descends The Magnificent. His green eyes, always deep-set, are more sunken than ever; pouches of loose flesh hang beneath them; his bared head exposes the fact that what hair remains to him is almost snow white. Not so long ago his slim body seemed to hold the trimness of youth, but to-day it seems shrunken as though with years. The hand which he holds up to assist the heavily veiled woman who emerges from the car is shaking.

But she does not need his support, nor that of the man in the frock coat, who will shortly be recognized by the crowd outside as the French

Ambassador. Firmly she places her feet upon the steps and descends to the platform. She stands there a moment beside her husband, in that indecision which the occasion begets. The Ambassador comes to their rescue; he escorts them through the station, and to a carriage drawn up before it. Here he leaves them, and takes his place, bare of head despite the bitter January cold, behind the gun-carriage.

With difficulty the crowd has restrained itself at sight of Ramsey Willoughby. This is the woman who, escaping from Belgium, returned again to a self-elected post of danger. She has been, since the outbreak of the war, almost, not merely doing hospital work, but nursing as close to the front as the authorities will permit. She is a heroine, and her dead son is not the only Willoughby who has received the Croix de Guerre. The crowd wants to cheer.

The procession starts; it leaves the square, marches along Front Street and turns up Main. Slowly it climbs the steep ascent, passing The Commercial House, the old Blake homestead, and finally reaching the weather-beaten frame building that is the Unitarian Church.

Bells are tolling from schools and other churches as the cortège halts before the church. Oldport mourns her first sacrifice to the demon of war; Oldport does not know that within three years it will be mourning scores of other heroes.

The father and mother enter the church. Robert, who has arrived in Oldport yesterday to make funeral arrangements, enters with them. Behind follow officials of The Magnificent's numerous enterprises, officials of the state and national governments. After them the people of Oldport crowd into the small building. Among them is Uncle Frank; his face is contorted with grief; he was genuinely fond of Junior. Only the pressure of Sam Foyle's hand prevents Uncle Frank from bursting into tears.

Foyle's face is gray; his eyes are sunken and have within them a look of agony, as though he saw things, things of horror, invisible to the other mourners. His mouth seems to have lost the humorous lines which formerly characterized it. Of course, we do not expect him to be smiling now, but neither do we understand why lines of permanent sadness are graven in his face. We know that life has been none too kind to Sam Foyle, but we thought that life was too humorous a thing to be taken seriously by him.

The minister takes his place in the pulpit; in deference to the expressed wishes of The Magnificent the services in the church are brief. They are soon ended and the congregation remains in the little edifice until the family

and immediate friends have departed. Once again the procession takes up its way to the graveyard on the side of the hill overlooking the bay. Here again the services are brief. The minister utters a prayer, and the French Ambassador expresses briefly the sorrow of his government and its gratitude to the hero who died for an alien flag.

The veterans of two wars, and the militia, and the French soldiers march away. The group of close associates and friends enter their carriages. The spectators, come to pay their last tribute of respect, melt away. The Magnificent and Ramsey and Robert are left alone. They remain only a few minutes, standing silently before the flower-strewn mound of freshly turned earth. Then they, too, enter their carriage.

The old Blake mansion has been prepared for their coming. To it they drive; the day has become more bitterly cold, and flakes of snow are drifting down from a leaden sky. Inside the house The Magnificent offers to assist Ramsey in the removal of her wraps. She accepts his aid and then they walk together into the living-room. Robert follows, lingers a moment, and then softly withdraws. He goes to a room up-stairs, that was once the nursery wherein he and his elder brother used to play. He sees broken toys, the remains of the telegraph system that he and Junior made, even an old battered doll. He throws himself upon a frayed old horsehair sofa, and weeps for the brother whom he has lost. He does not know why Junior so suddenly raced abroad and enlisted in the French army. He did not know that Junior had taken the war so seriously. He himself has not done so, but now that his brother has been slain, the urge of revenge is within his soul. He wonders how his parents, having lost one son, will take it when he declares his intention of enlisting.

Down-stairs there is a long silence between husband and wife. The Magnificent has drawn chairs up before an open fire, and together they stare into the leaping flames. Ever and again he glances from the blaze to Ramsey's face. He marvels that she looks so well. He seems to detect a trace of gray in her blonde hair, but it renders it none the less beautiful. She is no heavier in this, her forty-third year, than she was nearly five years ago when he last saw her. In fact, she is thinner; exhausting labors have taken toll in flesh. There are dark semi-circles below her eyes, and her sensitive nostrils seem a little more clearly defined. Nevertheless, she looks remarkably well.

There are a score of things that he wishes to ask her; but he does not like to break the silence. She arrived on the Lusitania yesterday, bringing with her the body of her son. He knows that the agony of that journey must have been almost unendurable; it must be racking her soul now. If, with the strain

ended, she should break down, it would be the normal, the expected thing. And it would give him opportunity to break the barriers that are still between them, that their son's death somehow, he feels, should drive away. He wants to comfort her, but he does not know how.

It is she who finally speaks. "I had forgotten how lovely, how homely, the old place is. Amanda Barrett is a treasure."

He is glad that she chooses to utter a commonplace. "A jewel of purest ray serene," he says.

Ramsey sighs. "It's home," she declares. "I wish we'd never left it."

He leans forward and takes her hand. "You shall never leave it again, Ramsey," he tells her.

She smiles wanly. "I'm needed over there; at least, I like to think so."

"You're needed here," he says.

She shakes her head. "I haven't been—why should I be?"

He presses the fingers that lie so limply within his own.

"I've always needed you," he says.

She returns faintly the pressure of his fingers. "That's nice of you, Jim, but—you don't have to. It's sweet of you to want to comfort me but—you can't."

"I know I can't," he replies. "Any more than I can be."

"Such a boy. Remember how we laughed at his first words?"

He groans. "Don't, Ramsey," he begs.

She suddenly snatches her hand from him. "If I'd only known—you never wrote me that he was over there."

"I didn't know it, myself," answers The Magnificent.

She stares at him. "You didn't know it?" she asks incredulously. "What do you mean?" The pupils of her eyes dilate. "Why, that's the strangest—you must have quarreled. You *did* quarrel! You must have! What about?"

"Not now, Ramsey," he says, soothingly. "Not to-day when you are all worn out."

"I've borne so much that a little more won't hurt." Her eyes flash sudden anger. "What did you do to him?" she cries accusingly.

“Nothing,” he tells her.

“Nothing?” She is unbelieving. “Junior wasn’t the kind to quarrel over nothing.”

Her eyes hold his, impelling him to answer, to explanation, to extenuation.

“He was hot-headed, excited, his pride hurt,” he says.

“How?” she demands.

“Let it wait, Ramsey,” he begs. “It’s all over now; I may have been hasty; but I thought I was doing the right thing.”

“What were you doing? What did you do?” she insists.

“He got tangled up with a—my God, Ramsey, you don’t want to listen to this. Not to-day.”

“Tell me.” She is imperative.

“A woman; a chorus girl. She had him in her clutches,” he says.

“Well? Did he have to run away? You don’t mean to tell me that you refused to help him?”

“I did help him, but he refused to understand,” The Magnificent defends himself.

“Stop talking in riddles! What did he do?” she asks.

“He married her; I knew what she was. I sent for her, told her that she’d never get a nickel as long as she was Junior’s wife. I gave her money to leave him.”

Ramsey is aghast. “You *what?*”

“Gave her ten thousand dollars with a promise of ninety more if she’d divorce him. She took it and left Junior. He came to me. He was angry. Instead of being grateful to me for showing him what a mercenary little baggage she was, he was furious. We had—words.”

Ramsey’s jaw sinks downward; she has a fatuous expression upon her face, an expression of bewildered, dazed amazement.

“You had—words?” she asks. “Is that all?”

“All? What do you mean?” asks The Magnificent.

She rises suddenly from her chair; she walks the full length of the living-room, stopping before the French windows that open upon the glassed-in conservatory that The Magnificent built in the early years of Pinnacle. From her lips suddenly burst peals of laughter, at first scornful, but slowly rising into the uncontrollable stages of hysteria. The Magnificent leaves his chair and comes toward her. His approach, the nearness of him, help her to master herself. Rather than be touched by him, she will control herself.

“All? What do you mean?” The Magnificent repeats himself.

Hysteria suddenly leaves her, as suddenly as it came, it seems.

“Mean? Didn’t he strike you? Didn’t he knock you down? Didn’t he even *try* to kill you?”

The Magnificent is horrified. He can understand and deal with hysteria; hysteria, under the circumstances, is not merely natural, it is almost inevitable. But with this sneering malignity, so foreign to all his conceptions of Ramsey, he is unable to cope.

“What are you saying, Ramsey? I did what I considered the wisest thing. How did I know, how could I possibly tell that he would take it seriously?”

“How could you?” She mocks him. “God knows you never took marriage seriously. You never let it interfere with business. Why should your son be different from you? If your father had bribed me to leave you, you’d never have run away to your death. How could you possibly expect that a son of yours would have a heart?”

“Be fair, Ramsey,” he pleads.

“Were you fair?” she counters. “You wouldn’t let him learn for himself what his wife was. Why, you don’t even know yourself what she was. You bribed her and threatened her; you never gave her a chance to prove herself, nor Junior a chance to make her what she might be.” Her voice breaks and becomes shrill. She pauses, breathes deeply, clenching her hands tightly to keep self-mastery. Then she continues. “What right had you to do this thing?”

He is becoming angry now. “The right of a father,” he replies harshly.

“What about the right of a mother?” she demands. “He was my son as much as yours.”

“You weren’t here,” he reminds her.

She eyes him as though she has never seen him before.

“You kept the marriage out of the papers. I can understand that. But the divorce? How was that kept so quiet? But perhaps she hasn’t got it yet? Is that it?” Her voice is eager. “We can stop her. Why,” and she is suddenly threatened with hysteria again, “she’s his widow. She can’t divorce him now.”

“I don’t know that she even started the divorce proceedings,” says The Magnificent. “I got through with her when I gave her the first check. I told her to communicate with my lawyers. I’ve heard no more from her and don’t want to.”

“But I do,” cries Ramsey.

“In the name of God, why?” demands her husband. “We’re well rid of her. The mercenary little baggage.”

Ramsey stares at him. “Mercenary? Jim, do you know how funny that sounds?”

“Funny? On this day of my son’s funeral I can see humor in nothing,” he declares stiffly.

He advances suddenly toward her. The stiffness leaves his manner. “Ramsey, perhaps I did make a mistake; perhaps I was wrong. But is this the time to tell me so?”

She looks at him, bewildered by his sudden change of manner.

“The time to tell you so?” She echoes his words. “I don’t know. Is there any time for reproaches? Aren’t they always too late? I have no right to judge you. I have no—no wish to.”

Her hands suddenly go up and clutch her hair.

“Oh, my baby boy,” she cries.

He comes nearer to her; his arms go around her. For a moment she stands quiescent in his clasp.

Then she shudders. “Don’t,” she says. “I can’t stand it.”

“Not even my touching you?” he asks, hurt and mortified. “Not even my touching you?” he repeats.

She turns in his arms until their faces are close together.

“Not your touching me; my loving you,” she says. “Oh, God, why must we love where we want to hate? My baby boy!”

She is limp and unresisting now in his arms. The Magnificent's greatest defeat is his greatest victory.

CHAPTER XXIV

One hundred and ten million Messiahs loudly chanting our own virtues; the figure of Uncle Sam replaced by a wild-eyed virgin gone slightly mad from suppressed desire; war, once the recreation of a gentleman, debased to the uses of four-minute-orators; the fiction of sportsmanship giving way to the reality of the propagandist; reason dethroned and the back-house philosopher supreme.

“I didn’t raise my boy to be a soldier.”

“Over there.”

The whiner and the braggart: his apotheosis.

The slacker, the one hundred percent American, the woman who discovered spies, the men who thanked the woman, the pacifists, the militarists, the profiteers.

Food will win the war; ships will win the war; tin-foil will win the war; prohibition will win the war; peach stones will win the war; turning golf courses into potato fields will win the war; gasolene will win the war; the newspapers will win the war; the girl scouts will win the war; cigarettes will win the war; chocolate will win the war; railroads will win the war; Dollar-A-Year Men will win the war.

The hero who riveted God knows how many bolts on the hull of a ship that never sailed; the prize fighter who gave boxing lessons to recruits; the millionaire who bought ten million dollars’ worth of tax free Liberty Bonds; the other millionaire who dispensed with the services of his valet; the magnificent woman who wore last year’s dress; her sister who wore herself to a shadow dancing with officers; the man who printed the Kaiser’s picture on toilet paper and the gentleman who purchased it.

And then, God forgive us that we have forgotten them, the fifty thousand Yankee dead upon the fields of France! The maimed and the blind, who were to be enshrined forever in the hearts of their countrymen, but who have traded long enough on their war services.

The boys who went away that I might hold my job; I promised them that while I had a dollar of my own it was their own upon the asking. How have I kept my word?

We won the war; the English fleet won the war; the French army won the war; Clemenceau won the war; Lloyd George won the war; Wilson won the war.

Take the last dollar from the dirty Hun. Don't take anything from him. When is Europe going to pay her bills? We'll be ruined if she doesn't; we'll be ruined if she does.

We're ruined anyway. The impetus of war's activities has carried us for a year or so, but now, with Europe prostrate, we have no market. A million men are suddenly idle; two million; three million. . . .

What are we going to do? Obviously, we must pass some laws. Prohibition is enacted; it is a success. Thousands of men, but yesterday out of work, have become prosperous boot-leggers. Let's stop tobacco and coffee and everything else.

There's too much sex in the country; of course the war is responsible.

There's too much crime in the country. Well, we've just been through a war; what can you expect?

From his long sleep the Puritan awakes. He has never had much imagination, and what he does not understand he hates and fears. He has no confidence in his own powers of resistance to the things which he thinks evil, nor has he much faith in his harsh God. God helps those who help themselves: this is his philosophy, and he does not know how cynical it is. His God will not help him destroy temptation, so he must manage to do it by laws. He has great faith that man in the mass can do what man as an individual cannot hope to do.

For a hundred years he has deluded himself with the belief that hatred for a king constitutes a love for democracy. He has never been a democrat, but thinks he has. He does not cherish freedom of conscience, despite his affirmation.

He wakes from a bad dream; he is terrified by the spectres that have tormented him in the night. The pretended tolerance of a century, a tolerance that existed only when there was a need and a place for cheap labor, leaves him. A yokel at heart, he has the yokel's inhibitions, the yokel's distrust of a superior man.

He asks, not that his representative in public life be a man of understanding culture, but a peasant, understanding and interpreting his constituents' peasantry.

He does not ask if his representative has brains. Instead he prefers to know the quality and the number of his morals. In his ignorance, he knows but one sort of morality, the morality of the flesh. His womenkind, unlovely and unloved, rule him utterly. She has formed a partnership with his clergyman, and from neither woman nor the clergy has enlightenment ever come, for enlightenment is arrived at only by the road of new ideas, and woman and church have opposed these from time immemorial.

A nation cries for food and he gives it a censorship of moving pictures. It cries for shelter and is told that Darwin was a monster. It asks for work and is told that its legislatures are busy disfranchising ignorant and harmless Socialists.

We fought for civilization and won a Ouija Board.

We look at Europe's chaos and wonder when it will engulf us. We look at Versailles and weep; we look at Washington and grin; we look at Genoa and laugh; we do not hang the Kaiser; we pay him two hundred thousand dollars for his memoirs. Oh, hell, let's go to the Follies.

Uncle Frank Dabney is seated upon the veranda of The Commercial House. There is a bulge in his left cheek, and if we did not know him we would suspect that he had a toothache or a beginning boil. But now his lips pucker and he leans forward; a certain process assures us that Uncle Frank's teeth and blood are all right, but that he has never wavered in his devotion to Navy Twist. He leans back in his chair and politely wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

He composes himself for his morning siesta. A conservative, he still affects, on mid-summer days like this, the wide-brimmed straw sun-hat of his youth. He tips it forward upon his face now, to shield his features from the sun. He is as fat, in this July of 1922, as he was on that spring day of 1890 when first we met him. Physicians, professional and amateur, without number, have told him that unless he diets he will come to an early end. And yet here he is at sixty-seven, still "able" and eupeptic, and disdaining the aid of a jack-knife when he needs a chew of Navy Twist. Verily, there is a lesson in Uncle Frank. But, then, there is a lesson in everyone if we only knew how to receive it.

Up the front steps of the hotel comes a tall thin man, perhaps fifty-five years of age, attired in white knickers and a brown Norfolk jacket. Upon his head is jauntily perched a cap. He carries his years extremely well. There is a chair close to that occupied by the huge bulk of Uncle Frank and into it the newcomer drops. He takes off his cap and with a fine linen handkerchief

mops his moist brow. The clatter made by his golf clubs, as he dropped them on the veranda floor, has caused Uncle Frank to straighten in his chair and push back his hat. He eyes with disapproval the newcomer.

“You’ll die of apoplexy or heat rash or something if you keep on chasing a golf ball over the medders on hot days like this,” he says severely.

“Die nothing,” exclaims the other. His voice is familiar, although we have not heard it for many years. He is our old friend the drummer, who sold Perigord’s Soap. Now, though, he is president of the concern which he used to represent on the road, and spends his summers at The Commercial House because of its proximity to the Oldport Country Club with its noted eighteen hole course. He occupies the best suite in the hotel and is still a bachelor, although scores of pretty waitresses did their best to ensnare him in the days of the buggy and the mare, and as many ladies, of more exalted social standing, have tried to capture him now that the buggy has been superseded by the Rolls-Royce that his chauffeur is now driving to the garage.

“It’s you that’ll die, you fat old rascal,” he declares. “I’ve done eighteen holes this morning; broke a hundred, too. I’m going for a sail and a swim this afternoon, and to-night I expect to spend five hours improving my technic at the fox-trot.”

Uncle Frank surveys him scornfully. “Who in Tophet you think you’re fooling?” he demands.

“The undertaker,” chuckles Perigord’s president.

Uncle Frank snorts contemptuously. “I can do that settin’ here,” he states. “Without gettin’ all sweated up, either.”

“Think of the fun I have,” argues the owner of Perigord’s.

“Think of the fun the young folks have laughing at you,” says Uncle Frank with a grin.

“Let ’em laugh,” retorts the other. “I notice that they’re willing to go riding in my car. Especially the girls,” he adds complacently.

Uncle Frank snorts again but disdains further comment. The president of Perigord lights a cigar and looks contemplatively down Main Street. Its sidewalks, cement now, instead of the planks of thirty years ago, are crowded with people; the road itself, asphalt instead of dirt, is jammed with motor cars. Fashionable sports clothes have replaced the work-a-day garb of a generation gone. The hired hand who condescended to drive his mistress along Main Street thirty years ago, and thought that if he fastened a collar

and tie around his usually bared neck he was degrading his masculinity, is replaced by a liveried chauffeur. The residences on lower Main Street have been torn down; shops occupy their sites. The residences on upper Main Street have been replaced by apartment houses; their spacious lawns have been sacrificed to man's herd instinct. Only the old Blake mansion, of all those fine and dignified Colonial houses, with their red brick walls and white shutters, the only type of house that America has been able to build and make look like home, remains. Only a multi-millionaire like The Magnificent can afford to resist the offers of real estate speculators.

Unconsciously Perigord's president sighs; like all the rest of us he wonders if change is always improvement. But the lips that are parted in a sigh now curl in a smile. Thirty-two years have not changed our drummer.

"Now *that's* what I call a peacherino," he announces.

Uncle Frank looks contemptuous again. "If you was really young, instead of an antique imitation, you wouldn't use such language. You'd call her a swell dish, or some Susie, or even Cutie," he remarks. "Which one you mean, anyway?"

The boss of Perigord's points. "If I was ever sucker enough to get married, that's the kind of woman I'd want," he declares.

"You'd do better to adopt her," says Uncle Frank.

"Aw, you're jealous," says his companion. "Why, at that, she must be close to forty."

Uncle Frank straightens up in his chair. "Why, I thought you meant the young one. She's mighty pretty."

"She is," admits the ex-drummer, "but the older one is a queen."

Uncle Frank rises, but the two women, old and young, have not seen his waving sun-hat, and are lost in the crowds that throng the sidewalks. Uncle Frank returns to his chair. He eyes, with reluctant approval, the tenant of the best suite in The Commercial House.

"I've known you goin' on thirty-five years, since you were a snip of a fresh young drummer," says Uncle Frank, "and that's the first time you've ever shown any sense at all. You've been wrong on politics and prohibition and religion and everything else, but daggone if you ain't right this time. You said 'queen'. Queen is absolutely dead right."

Perigord's chieftain looks pleased with himself. Praise from Uncle Frank is a rare morsel for his mastication.

“Who is she? Sister of yours?” he inquires.

“That’s Jim Willoughby’s wife,” replies Uncle Frank.

His companion rises and stares down the street; he sighs as, unable again to see the object of his admiration, he resumes his chair.

“All I can say is that The Magnificent is a lucky dog. He’s got all the money in the world, and the best looking wife—hell, she’s over forty.”

“Fifty,” says Uncle Frank.

The summer resident whistles. “She certainly don’t look it.” He puffs at his cigar. “Wasn’t there lots of talk about her giving The Magnificent the air?”

“There’s always talk,” snaps Uncle Frank. “I’ve even heard it said that a little girl who checked hats, up at the Adams House in Boston, gave you the mitten.”

His guest flushes. “Lyin’ talk,” he exclaims.

“Most talk is,” asserts Uncle Frank, smiling faintly.

“Who’s the young woman with her?” asks the soap plutocrat.

“Her son’s widow,” Uncle Frank informs him. “I suppose you heard talk about her, too?”

“Well, there was some talk in the paper about The Magnificent not liking it. She’s good-looking though.”

“She’s a nice girl,” says Uncle Frank.

Perigord’s ruler shows no inclination to continue the subject. His eighteen holes of golf have tired him, and he puffs languidly at his cigar for a while. But he was ever loquacious; he cannot keep silent long.

“I should think you’d be inside somewhere, rehearsing your speech,” he says slyly.

Uncle Frank sniffs. “Think I’ll get nervous at talking to a lot of people I’ve known all my life?” he demands.

“There’ll be lots of people there that you don’t know. Ain’t the Governor coming, and a lot of Willoughby’s millionaire friends?”

“I got a million myself; money don’t scare me,” says Uncle Frank.

“Well, I’m glad to hear that; it don’t scare me either; not when it’s mine,” asserts his companion. “It’s sort of old-home week, this dedication of

the Willoughby Memorial, ain't it? Everybody coming home, eh?"

"Nearly," says Uncle Frank.

"I've seen a lot of the old-timers. More people that I'd forgotten have come up to me and called me by name—what happened to that Foyle fellow? Didn't he get in some sort of jam during the war? Seems to me I read about it."

"He was always in a jam," says Uncle Frank.

"But I mean a real jam," says the former salesman. "Refused to go to war, and defended a lot of damn' pacifists."

Uncle Frank nods. "That's what he did. Said he'd been through one war, and couldn't make up his mind that war was a good thing. Of course, he was way over the age limit and they couldn't make him go to this one. Then, when he tried to get into the hospital service, they turned him down. Said they didn't want any damn' pacifists around.

"Well, he'd gone back to Ohio, to practice law again. He had a good job in the newspaper business, but he lost it. I saw him and asked him about it, just before we went into the war. He was down here for a few days. I never could get the straight of it from him. He just said he was a damn' fool, and after hearing Jim Willoughby's side of it—"

"Oh, yes," interpolates the other, "he sent out some story that Willoughby denied."

"That was it, and I couldn't hardly blame Willoughby," says Uncle Frank. "Anyway, I've quit blaming people for things. Well, Foyle tried to help a lot of conscientious objectors, and that got him in pretty bad out in Ohio."

"What's he doing now?" asks the ex-drummer.

"I don't know," says Uncle Frank. "I wrote him last week asking him to come on and hear me speak to-night, but I ain't heard from him."

"I shouldn't think you'd want anything to do with him," says Perigord's president.

"Why not?" demands Uncle Frank. "Sam Foyle is the squarest man I ever knew."

"Damn' pacifist," says the soap man.

"A lot of people say that about Christ," ventures Uncle Frank.

As he speaks a uniformed bell-boy emerges from the hotel, bearing a yellow envelope which he hands to Uncle Frank. We understand how prosperous The Commercial House has become; it has its own telegraph office. Uncle Frank dismisses the boy and opens the envelope. He takes in the message at a glance, and his face grows white.

“And wasn’t there a lot of talk about him marrying some fast girl?” Perigord’s president does not note the ashen pallor of Uncle Frank’s face. Telegrams are such common occurrences that he attaches no particular, certainly no tragic, significance to this one.

“Lots,” says Uncle Frank tersely.

“And didn’t they say—wasn’t there some talk about his father not really being his father?” persists the soap man.

Uncle Frank climbs heavily out of his chair. “There was,” he says. “What’s more, he’s been crucified, too.”

Something in the intonation of his voice causes Perigord’s president to look sharply up at him. Uncle Frank’s fat face is twisted and contorted in agony; tears stream down his cheeks. He walks unsteadily across the veranda and into the hotel.

The jaw of the ex-drummer drops in amazement. He sees upon the floor the telegram which has slipped from Uncle Frank’s fingers. He obeys the behest of curiosity and picks it up. He reads it aloud.

“Samuel Foyle died yesterday. Submitted to transfusion operation to save life of a child. Loss of blood and effects of old wound aggravated by malnutrition caused death. Named you as friend. Will you guarantee funeral expenses?”

It was signed by the superintendent of a hospital in an Ohio town.

CHAPTER XXV

On Windmill Hill, on the outskirts of town, have been erected a group of buildings. They are of red brick, with white doors and window frames; one knows at once that they comprise an institution of some sort, but the cheery informality of their design lends them a warmth not usually associated with institutions. Charming cottages, with carefully groomed lawns, and old-fashioned flower beds, surround the larger buildings. These latter are the homes of the professors who form the faculty of the newly organized Oldport College. It has not yet been thrown open to the public, but the president and staff of teachers have been engaged, and over three hundred pupils have enrolled for the term beginning in September. It has no traditions, but it needs none. For it is the gift of Jameson Briggs Willoughby to his native town. His name supplies any lack of romantic tradition.

A ready-made college, with a ready-made faculty, and a ready-made student body waiting eagerly for the opportunity to enjoy its advantages. Where else in the world could such a thing occur? Let Europe sneer at our lack of cultural background; give us a little time, that's all we ask.

Five million dollars have been spent already in buildings—labor and materials were never higher than they have been the past few years—and in equipment. Ten million dollars have been put aside as an endowment fund, bringing in an income of half a million dollars. There are to be nominal charges for tuition and rooms, and board is to be supplied at cost. It is to be essentially a college for the poor boy and girl. Although it is named after Oldport, and the town authorities are always to have a representative on the board of regents, residence in Oldport is not a condition precedent to matriculation. Oldport College is to be without restriction as to nativity, race, creed or color.

To-night Uncle Frank Dabney, on behalf of the town of Oldport—we should say city of Oldport now—is to accept Oldport College from its builder and founder. The ceremony of acceptance is to take place in the Willoughby Memorial Hall, the chief building of the group, and one dedicated to The Magnificent's oldest born, who preceded his countrymen by three years upon the battlefields of France.

Uncle Frank has presided at county conventions. Once he was temporary chairman of the Republican state convention in Boston. He has spoken times without number at banquets in his own hotel, and at meetings of the hotel

association. He did not boast when he told Kramer of Perigord's that he was not nervous at prospect of the oration which he must deliver to-night.

But he made the statement before he had received the telegram containing the information that Sam Foyle had died. For a while it seemed to Uncle Frank that it would be impossible for him to go on with his part in the night's program. Malnutrition was such an ugly word. It evoked a picture of a man who had never asked aid of anyone for himself; of a man who, on the one occasion that Uncle Frank had known him to borrow money, had done so to erect a stone over the body of the woman whom he had married to save from shame. It conjured forth a representation of a man whose pride was so great that he preferred to be misunderstood rather than to offer excuse or explanation. Uncle Frank seemed to see a man who, time and again, had stepped aside for others. He seemed to see a man, who, scorned unjustly by his fellows, is sinking into an unmourned grave. Malnutrition! Hunger! Starvation! Blood transfusion! A hero dying that a child might live! Uncle Frank could hardly bear the picture evoked by the telegram.

But he has recovered himself by night, and at eight o'clock he makes his way to the Memorial Hall. He pauses outside a small door at one corner of the building, a door which leads directly to the back of the stage in the great auditorium. Here, secluded, Uncle Frank removes from his mouth the chunk of Navy Twist that has served him well since supper. From the rear pocket of his trousers he pulls forth a polka-dotted handkerchief and rubs his lips and chin carefully. Then he passes through the doorway, to take his place, shortly, upon the stage.

He finds notables here. The governor of the state rises and shakes hands with the owner of The Commercial House. Ramsey Willoughby flashes him a smile. The Magnificent rises and shakes his hand. The president of the college indicates Uncle Frank's chair, and he takes it. The great hall is filled now, and the pastor of the Unitarian church rises and utters a brief prayer.

Then the president introduces The Magnificent to the audience. There is loud applause as, standing upright, he looks, having bowed to the president, at the throng in the seats below him.

He is fifty-seven years old, but in late years he has not seemed to age as rapidly as he did in the decade between forty and fifty. He has lost some of the shrunken appearance that was his when war began. His mouth, always a queer blend of obstinate asceticism and vigorous sensuousness, seems slightly softened. His eyes are keen; he has never worn glasses. His head is balding, and the fringe of hair that remains to him is snow white. His

clothing, formal evening dress to-night, is carefully tailored. Altogether, while not an imposing figure, he is by no means negligible.

He has never made any pretensions to being a public speaker. Nevertheless, his voice, while somewhat harsh, carries well. And there is always about him an appearance of earnestness that arrests his hearers' attention.

"Mr. President, Your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen," he begins. "I am grateful to you for the manner in which you receive me. I wish that I could feel that your applause is due me, and is for me. No man could fail to be deeply moved at applause from the people of his own home town. But somehow I know that your greeting is not for me. And as I think upon the fact, I withdraw my wish. For I am prouder that you should applaud the person you do, than if I were the object of your kindness.

"For I know that your hands beat together in acknowledgment of the valor of my son, to whom this building is dedicated, and whose memory will live longer than my own."

He pauses, and instantaneous applause fills the room. For his audience senses that this is no dramatic effort on The Magnificent's part. He is speaking in deadly earnestness, with a sincerity that can not be denied.

"My son," he continues, "gave all that he had to give. I am giving less than all I have to give. In behalf of my son, then, I hereby give these buildings, this institution, to the youth of America."

He bows and walks to his chair beside Ramsey. One of her hands is over her eyes; the other gropes for his and clasps it. Her shoulders move; we know that she is weeping.

The president signals to Uncle Frank. Resplendent in his brand new evening clothes, the chief speaker of the evening advances to the place on the stage left vacant by The Magnificent. He acknowledges the presence of the distinguished people on the stage and addresses the audience.

"Man and boy," he says, "I have known Jim Willoughby for fifty-seven years. I've watched him grow from a little baby into the richest man in America, in all the world. And I want to tell you all that it ain't accident that made him what he is. It was hard work and vision.

"He saw the possibilities of the bicycle. It's true that other people saw it, too, but none of the rest of them saw it the way Jim Willoughby did. Other people wanted to make good bicycles. Jim Willoughby wanted to make good bicycles *cheap*. He saw the possibilities of the automobile. So did other

people, but Jim Willoughby dreamed of the motor car available almost to the poorest purse, and made his dream come true.

“He’s done more than make a fortune; he’s been of service to the community, the nation, and the world. And now, having made transportation cheaper and better, he’s going to do the same thing for education, in so far as one man, or one college, may be able.

“He made his own chance, created his own opportunity. He didn’t go to college, although he could have done so. But he wants the boy who may be different from him, who may want to go to college, to have his chance.

“We hear a lot of wild talk about the crimes that millionaires commit. We hear it said that because huge fortunes are piled up, the poor grow poorer. I’m no economist, just a plain hotel keeper, but I don’t believe what they say.

“It ain’t the hoarding of money that’s wrong; it’s the hoarding of opportunity. And nobody has been able to collect all the opportunity in the world, and lock it up where no one can get at it. But some men refrain from offering opportunity. Jim Willoughby ain’t that kind. These buildings, the endowment fund that he has created, prove that.

“He said that we were not applauding him, but his son. It is true that every one of us here honors the memory of his son. But we also honor the achievement of his father. It may not be a good thing for a country to be the most prosperous and powerful in the world. God knows; I don’t. But inasmuch as every country tries to be prosperous and powerful, those men who help to make it should be honored by their countrymen. For prosperity and power mean increased opportunity for everyone, and opportunity is all that any man should ask for himself or his sons.

“Jim Willoughby to-night is offering opportunity to the sons of men that ain’t been born yet. On behalf of the town of Oldport I thank him.”

He sits down and mops his forehead, while the audience cheers him. He listens abstractedly to the brief speech of the governor. Then, still mopping his forehead, he follows The Magnificent and Ramsey from the building, his huge bulk enabling him to crowd his way to them.

“I want to go home with you,” he says.

“Why, of course,” says Ramsey. “Shall we walk?”

“I’d like to,” says Uncle Frank.

“I’ll ride, if you don’t mind,” says The Magnificent. “I have some letters to get off. I’ll have them done by the time you people reach the house.” He reaches out and grips Uncle Frank’s hand. “That was mighty nice, what you said about me.”

“It’s all true,” says Uncle Frank.

“Now you’re making it twice as nice,” laughs Willoughby. He climbs briskly into a waiting motor car and the chauffeur starts along High Street toward Main and the old Blake house.

Uncle Frank and Ramsey walk a few rods in silence. Then Uncle Frank, having tried in vain to think of some gentler way of breaking the news, gives up in despair, and blurts out, “Sam Foyle’s dead.”

Ramsey stops short; her hand clutches at her heart; her violet eyes widen.

“Sam? Dead?” She is incredulous.

“Got a telegram to-day. Malnutrition and his old wound,” says Uncle Frank.

“Malnutrition?” Ramsey is horrified. “I can’t believe it.”

“Everybody ain’t rich, Ramsey,” says Uncle Frank. “There’s lots of poor people that are hungry.”

She holds out her hand before her eyes as though to fend off some dreadful sight. “Don’t, Uncle Frank.”

“There was something else, too,” says Uncle Frank. “A child, and blood transfusion.”

“And he gave, as always, more than he could afford!” There is a proud, almost exultant note, in Ramsey’s voice. But suddenly she leans against a fence. “Why didn’t he tell us? Poor, hungry—”

Uncle Frank laughs to avoid sobbing. “Catch Sam sharing his troubles with anyone! He was too busy sharing the troubles of other people.”

Ramsey is gripping the fence as a drowning woman might clutch at a raft. Her shoulders have shaken gently this evening at mention of her son; now they move convulsively and from her throat come harsh sounds.

Uncle Frank puts an arm around her. “You mustn’t, Ramsey,” he says. He looks back over his shoulder, but there is no one coming their way. The rest of the audience have returned to the center of the town by way of

Windmill Hill. Uncle Frank makes no further effort to still Ramsey's sobbing. For a full five minutes she weeps; then she is in control of herself.

"What can we do?" she asks.

"I've telegraphed to send—" Uncle Frank gulps—"the body home. There ain't anything else we can do."

In the moon-light Ramsey's face is streaked with tears. Her voice, however, is firm. "No one ever could do anything for Sam. He went his own way. And what a lovely way it was!"

"He died like a man," says Uncle Frank. "Greater love—"

"He *lived* like a God," cries Ramsey. Uncle Frank utters a shocked exclamation. He starts to speak, but she interrupts him. "You spoke of Jim's services, to-night."

"And every word of it was true," declares Uncle Frank stoutly.

"I know it," says Ramsey, "but there are two kinds of service. One takes payment and the other refuses it."

"You're talkin' about your husband," Uncle Frank warns her.

"And about Sam Foyle," she amends his statement. "Oh, Uncle Frank, if Jim had only had the eyes of Sam!"

"I don't know what you mean," asserts Uncle Frank.

"You do know," says Ramsey. "If Jim had had Sam's heart!"

"I won't listen to such talk. Don't you love your husband?" demands Uncle Frank.

"You know I do," cries Ramsey. "And because I love him I feel the way I do. He could have been—anything. He chose to be—what he is."

"He's the richest man in the world," says Uncle Frank.

"'Riches and honor are with me,'" she quotes.

"Ramsey Willoughby, are you intimating that your husband ain't honorable?" asks Uncle Frank with severity.

"Of course not. But every man acts according to his lights. I wish that Sam's lights had been Jim's."

"You never really were in love with Sam, were you?" Uncle Frank is shocked at his own question. "That time I found you in his room—"

She interrupts him with a scornful laugh. "I never could love anyone but Jim in this life. We love with our bodies, our passions, our simple misguided hearts. We cannot help ourselves. But in some world where the body and the emotions are gone, and our minds remain, and we see the truth—"

"You think you'll love Sam then?" demands Uncle Frank.

"I know I will," she tells him.

"Ramsey, you're beyond me," says Uncle Frank. "And yet, maybe not so far beyond me. I kind of think—Ramsey, I loved Sam like a younger brother. I—Why didn't he do better by himself? I tell you Ramsey, that all that Jim has done, Sam could have done."

"And more," she whispers, softly.

"Then why didn't he?" cries Uncle Frank.

"Perhaps he did," says Ramsey. "When I think of Jennie Smollen—and other things—Oh, Uncle Frank, why don't we understand that the things that matter are not our wealth, our position, our achievements, but our sacrifices?"

Uncle Frank laughs cynically. "When we understand that, Ramsey, the world will be heaven."

"Why shouldn't it be?" she asks.

He makes no answer. Silently they walk along High Street and down Main to the Willoughby home, the home that they have come back to after many years. Uncle Frank leans over and kisses her on the cheek. Heavily he walks down the hill, and Ramsey enters the house.

A light shines through the crack at the bottom of the door of her husband's study. She stands outside the door. She thinks of her life with Willoughby. She realizes, suddenly, her own mistakes. She expected perfection and she got a husband. Was she perfection that she demanded it, for so many years starving her passions, her love, while she waited?

Why did she not make the best of it? Because she let pride rule her. Pride, the curse of all mankind. She thinks of what Uncle Frank said in his speech to-night. Suddenly it seems to her that her husband is something more than a man; he is the very spirit of the America of to-day. Sam Foyle seems to her to be the very spirit of an America that is to come. But one loves the America of to-day, even while praying for the future not to delay.

To take more than one gives, or to give more than one takes: one is business, and the other is idealism. One's mind accepts idealism, but one's flesh thrills at business.

She thinks of the parable in St. Luke's gospel. "When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him. . . ."

Yet The Magnificent, her husband, sat down in the highest room. . . . Yet, perhaps, there was even a higher one. That was it; there was a higher one, but only a few people could see it, even knew of its existence.

Sam Foyle had occupied that higher room.

She slowly shakes her head as she opens the door. If her husband, when he received the invitation to enter the Cabinet and dedicate his life to public service, had accepted, might not he have entered that higher room?

But it is too late now to ask questions, to ponder. For higher or lower she took him; she accepts him now. He is not perfect; but, oh, his very imperfections belong to her. She tip-toes into the room to tell him of Foyle's death.

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.

Book cover is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *A More Honorable Man* by Arthur Somers Roche]